

Chilternrailways

Continuous Improvements in Complaints Handling 2023/24

Internal / External Knowledgebase

During July 2023, we launched a new 'knowledgebase' system for both internal and customer use. When customers complete the online webform, the system will pick up key words/phrases and suggest knowledge articles to the customer that they may find useful. This is designed to provide customers with information, that may save them time waiting for a response to their form (see below example).

The screenshot shows a contact form with the following elements:

- Subject*:** A text input field containing the word "Refund".
- Reference:** "lei:0345/ 484950"
- Website:** "Visit www.nationalrail.co.uk"
- Suggested articles:** A list of links including "Refunds, Complaints, General Enquiries and Praise", "Refund Information", "How do I get my refund?", "Can I receive compensation if I don't get a seat?", "My train was delayed or cancelled and I chose to travel on a delayed service or on a following service - can I get any money back?", "Can I claim compensation if the timetable changes?", "Bicester Stations - Can I use my Bicester North to London Marylebone ticket to travel to and from Bicester Village station?", "When does the CRA apply?", "Are there other types of compensation available?", and "Can I claim compensation if I paid for a First Class seat and there were none available?".
- Complaints Handling Procedure:** A section with a link to "our complaints handling procedure" and a note: "If you're not happy with how a complaint has been handled we have further guidance in our FAQ section".
- Registered Office Address:** "1 Admiral Way, Doxford International Business Park, Sunderland, SR3 3XP".
- Fields marked * are mandatory.**
- Provide Detail*:** A rich text editor with a toolbar containing icons for bold, italic, list, link, and other text formatting options.
- Footer:** "* If applying for a refund, please provide the payment method you used to purchase the ticket. If you purchased with a credit/debit please state the type of".
- Chat Bubble:** A blue circular chat bubble with a white speech bubble icon and the text "Hi. Need any help?".

In addition to the suggested articles feature, our 'Contact Hub' webpage gained a search function. This allowed customers to actively search the knowledgebase for helpful articles that may prevent the need for the customer having to get in touch and wait up to 10 days for a response. This search function allows Chiltern Railways to see key words customers are searching for and whether any or the right articles are provided during the search, allowing us to see where there is missing information customers are needing.

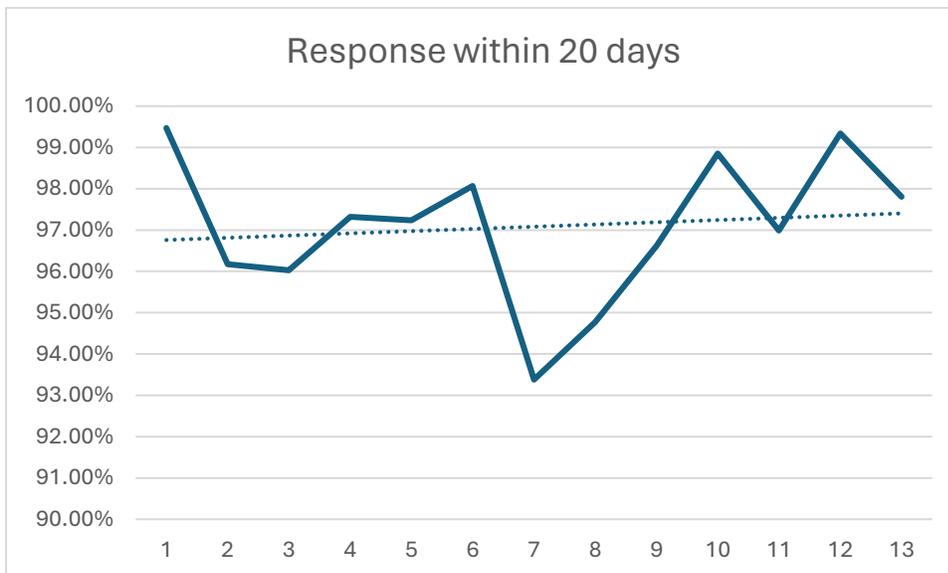
As an example, we found articles were not providing helpful results when customers were searching for information about blue badge / disabled parking and once we identified this, we created a new article to give customers the information that was needed.

As well as the knowledgebase being a helpful tool for customers to use, the Knowledgebase is also linked to our Customer Relations Management system. This means that our Customer Relations Advisors have the same articles available to them when managing a complaint (articles suggested to the team based on key words within customer correspondence) and can also link customers to the pages to enable quicker responses and improved knowledge.

Staffing of the Contact Centre

Staffing of the Contact Centre proved difficult earlier in the year, with a roster not allowing for staff turnover. This meant that response times to customers were taking longer. The Contact Centre structure and roster were reviewed, adding an additional member of staff to the team and work patterns amended slightly to provide a more robust roster catering for absences and staff leavers.

By implementing this change, we were able to provide better coverage within the Contact Centre and improve customer response times from Period 7 onwards.



Accessible Travel Information

Following an industry review, we were advised that it was not clear across all Train Companies on how to get in touch when customers visited the 'Accessible Travel

Information’ page. As a result, we have provided an additional link to the ‘Contact Us’ page of our website, at the very top of this page. A link to the Contact Us page now appears 3 times on the ‘Accessible Travel Information’ page, as well as within further documents at the bottom of that page.

Top Complaints and Learnings

Sufficient room for all passengers to sit/stand	As more people returned to rail throughout the year, we found some services were starting to become crowded. We continuously review the capacity on board all of our services and made some changes to our timetable in December 2023 in order to add capacity where it was most needed. In addition to continuing to use online capacity checkers, we have started a new trail across a small number of stations to show live information on station screens, advising customers where there are a reduced number of carriages and capacity challenges so that customers can see expected capacity on board our services and make informed decisions before travelling. We continue to monitor capacity on board and forecast predicted future customer numbers so we can continue to make changes as required. Our complaints data and forecasting has allowed us to plan ahead for the June timetable change where we will add more capacity in required areas and a new train Tuesday to Thursday to combat one of our busiest routes.
Punctuality/Reliability (i.e. the train arriving/departing on time)	There have been a couple of major incidents across our network, including a landslip which heavily influenced these complaints. We continue to work with colleagues across the industry to minimise disruption across our services. We continue to use technology to monitor trends where delays are occurring and meet with colleagues internally and externally to review, in order to rectify any ongoing problems and reduce delays on our network. We have also introduced a ‘Service Updates’ page on our website to allow customers to see the most up to date live travel information before and during their journey. Our complaints data has been used as part of our conversations with Department for Transport in order to work towards procuring more rolling stock, which we hope to be newer and more reliable.
The attitudes and helpfulness of the staff at stations	Our Customer Service Standards Programme continues to be rolled out to new employees and refresher training to those who had already undertaken this programme. The training sets our expectations on the standards our customers can expect from our staff and how we can all work together to provide the best service for our customers. In addition, new ‘Empathy Lab’ training has been rolled out across some of our front line teams, allowing staff to experience first hand, similar situations our customers find themselves in and learn how to best help them. We will continue to roll this out to staff later in 2024.
Ticketing and Refunds Policy	This category continues to be heavily influenced by the industry refunds policy when Industrial Action is

	<p>taking place. We continue to use a dedicated strike page for customers to see full information and FAQ's ahead of purchasing tickets or travelling in order to provide customers with as much detail as possible to allow them to make informed decisions. We continue to adhere to the industry guidelines in this area.</p>
<p>Upkeep and repair of the train</p>	<p>Complaints in this area were primarily down to on board temperature during the Summer months. We increased the level of routine maintenance to all of our train units in order to improve the reliability of air conditioning/heating, which has seen a reduction in complaints in this area since Period 6 and also continue to work with the Department for Transport in order to make progress with plans to procure newer, more reliable rolling stock. More information on our plans to procure more rolling stock can be found here: Chiltern Railways 2030 Vision Chiltern Railways</p>

In addition to the top 5 complaints, we saw a sudden slight rise in customer complaints around Online retailing of tickets within Periods 4 and 8. We shared the detail of these complaints with our Online Retail team who held various meetings with our suppliers and Customer Relations team to further trouble shoot. This allowed us to find the root cause of the problem and implement fixes. These meetings have continued to take place every 6 weeks to monitor the fixes in place and identify/manage any future problems. Updates on such meetings are also shared within our Customer Experience Committee to ensure that it is monitored business wide, alongside any other complaint trends that identified, such as the top 5 already mentioned. The Customer Experience Committee is attended by Senior Management across all areas of the business ensuring that where complaint trends arise, the right people are placed to address.

Future Planning

Going in to the 2024/25 business year, we have identified that many customers contact us using 'Refunds' as their enquiry type, although the customer is quite often required to contact another company (unused tickets retailed elsewhere) or they need to apply for Delay Repay. We are therefore looking to trial an automated processes within our Live Chat function, which will direct customers to the correct place, preventing any delay to resolve their request. We look to implement this improvement in May 2024.