

Greater Anglia makes fare dodgers and fraudsters pay up

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Fare dodgers and fraudsters paid more than £4 million to train operator Greater Anglia in 2021.

Those that got caught either tried to make a journey without paying, or tried to claim money – as compensation or a refund – on a trip they didn't make.

In all, the business's ticket inspectors issued more than 54,000 penalty fares in 2021, to the value of £1.63 million.

Penalty fares can be issued to rail passengers who catch trains without buying a ticket or travel with an invalid ticket. This can include using a child-rate ticket when an adult, claiming a railcard discount without a railcard or using an Oyster Card outside the Oyster Card boundaries of Shenfield and Broxbourne/Hertford East.

The penalty fare is either £20 or double the single fare, where the fare is more than £10.00 for a single ticket.

Greater Anglia also prosecutes fare evaders in Magistrates' court for not having a valid ticket. For instance, if they were travelling without a ticket and had no intention of buying a ticket with no means of payment on them, or they bought a ticket for only part of their journey.

People who do not pay their penalty fares can also be prosecuted in court.

Last year, Magistrates awarded a total of £1,789,337 in fines, costs and compensation in 5,980 cases brought against fare evaders caught on Greater Anglia trains.

Meanwhile, Greater Anglia's fraud department uncovered £451,184.16 in fraudulent delay repay claims, where passengers had claimed delay repay compensation for journeys they hadn't made.

Passengers were asked to pay back the money they had fraudulently claimed with no further action taken. If they didn't, their details were passed on to the British Transport Police for investigation and prosecution. Several cases are currently outstanding.

Greater Anglia's Fraud Team recovered a further £287,331.86 in settlements from passengers they reported for fare evasion. The undercover team investigates longer term fraudulent travel, and targets individuals committing such fraud and can follow and stop passengers during any part of their journey.

Another £8,000 was recovered from passengers claiming refunds with a third party retailer for journeys they never made.

Kim Bucknell, Greater Anglia's head of revenue protection, said: "People not paying for their journeys or fraudulently claiming delay repay compensation or refunds for journeys they haven't made are effectively stealing from Greater Anglia.

"It's not acceptable – it's the equivalent of going into your local supermarket and either not paying for your shopping or only paying for some of it.

"The railway is now funded by the government – and ultimately the taxpayer – so not paying for a ticket or making a false delay repay claim is effectively stealing from other taxpayers.

"Not paying fares and making fraudulent claims means there is less money available to keep the railway running and improving for everyone – which could result in fares going up higher or other implications."

Money recovered by Greater Anglia in fines, court fines and costs and out of court settlements in 2021

Fare evasion fraud investigations out of court settlements: £287k

Penalty Fares: £1.63 million

Prosecutions: £1.79 million

Third party refund fraud: £8k

Delay repay fraud: £451.2k

Total £4.17 million