

TfW introducing emergency timetable to tackle COVID's impact on staffing

December 21, 2021



Transport for Wales (TfW) has introduced an emergency timetable to help prepare for an anticipated surge in Omicron cases.

TfW expects there will be a rise in staff shortages due to the COVID-19 variant and said the change was to make sure it could continue to deliver a reliable service.

The emergency timetable is temporary and is being put in place for the festive period.

TfW said it would result in a marginal decrease in services – about 10-15% of the current timetable. It is designed to reduce late-notice cancellations for customers as much as possible.

It said it and **Network Rail** had already seen a rise in absences since the start of December, which has begun to impact services.

The new timetable will remain in place over the coming weeks. It will be reviewed regularly as the rail industry in Wales monitors the impact of the new Omicron variant on staff levels.

All customers are urged to check www.tfw.wales before travelling and follow the up-to-date guidance from the Welsh Government.

Colin Lea, Tfw planning and performance director said: “We are still very much dealing with a pandemic and have seen a major rise in colleague absences over the last few weeks. Since the beginning of December, the number of rail colleagues absent due to COVID 19 has doubled, and this will continue to rise with the ongoing risk of the new Omicron variant.

“It’s fundamental we continue to run as reliable a service as possible for our customers, and therefore we are introducing a new timetable from Wednesday 22 December, reducing the risk of late notice cancellations.

“Wherever we can, we’ll use any additional carriages made available due to the reduced timetable to run longer trains than normal, to aid with social distancing and provide supplementary road transport, when possible.

“We appreciate this will be frustrating for some customers, and we have not taken this decision lightly. We ask that all customers check online before they travel and follow all advice from Welsh Government.

“I’d also like to thank all our colleagues who are continuing to work in difficult conditions.”

Rachel Heath, Network Rail’s operations manager for Wales & Western, said: “Our colleagues are working very hard in very challenging circumstances and are dedicated to keeping the country moving, as they did during the height of the pandemic.

“However, we are currently dealing with high levels of sickness across the rail industry due to the virus which, unfortunately, means we may have to make difficult decisions, at short notice, that impact rail services.

“We will continue to give clear and timely updates on any changes that might affect passengers’ journeys, and we ask that everyone checks their journey before travelling.”

Customers who have already purchased tickets for services affected by this change will be able to use their tickets on alternative Tfw rail services. Alternatively, they will be able to request a refund by visiting www.tfw.wales.