

Dealing with your complaints

Who we are

London TravelWatch is the official watchdog representing the interests of transport users in and around the capital.

Our job is to look into complaints on behalf of passengers who are having difficulty sorting out problems with transport companies. We also conduct research on issues affecting transport users and maintain a regular dialogue with transport companies.

London TravelWatch is independent of transport operators and is sponsored and funded by the London Assembly, which forms part of the Greater London Authority.

This document sets out our procedure for dealing with your complaints and tells you how we might be able to help you.

When to contact us

If you have a complaint about the service you have received from a transport company, you should first contact the provider of the service. If you do not know who or where to complain to, we can advise you.

While we always welcome your feedback and comments about the service you have received, we can't get involved in your complaint until the transport company you are complaining about has had the opportunity to resolve the issue.

Anyone can complain to us about transport issues in the London area. We deal with most public transport in and around London including the Underground, the National Rail network, London's bus network, Docklands Light Railway, London Tramlink, taxis and other users of the Greater London Road Network.

Our remit has been established by Parliament, and we cannot get involved in other transport issues. Therefore if you have a complaint about air services, coaches, bus services outside London, private taxis or some issues relating to local authority maintained roads and streets issues that are outside our remit, we will forward it to the relevant council, consumer body or company, or tell you whom you should contact.

If your complaint is about a rail journey, incident or service outside the London area, we will forward your complaint to Passenger Focus. They are the national rail consumer watchdog set up to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers. We will let you know if we do this.

If you are not happy about the way in which the transport company handled your complaint, or you are not satisfied with the outcome, we want to hear from you.

How to contact us

Our contact details are outlined below. You can also find them on buses and trains; at every station in our area; and in local phone books.

- **Our website:** www.londontravelwatch.org.uk has a comments form that you can use.
- **By Email:** enquiries@londontravelwatch.org.uk
- **In writing:**

London TravelWatch
6 Middle Street
LONDON
EC1A 7JA

- **By Phone: 020 7505 9000**

Our advisors will be able to tell you the best way to make a complaint and can put you in touch with the best company to handle it. The call is charged at local rate for those in and around London.

- **By Fax: 020 7505 9003**
- **In person:** at our offices, by appointment only, during our usual opening hours. A map is available on our website.

Opening hours

You can speak to us between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Outside these hours you can leave a message and one of our advisors will contact you the next working day if you leave your contact details.

We are closed on bank holidays.

How we can help you

If you have a complaint, and you have not got in touch with the relevant transport company before contacting us, we will pass your complaint to that transport company to reply to you direct.

If you contact us because you are unhappy with the way a transport company has handled your complaint or you are unhappy with the outcome of your complaint, we will review your complaint and decide whether we can appeal to the transport company on your behalf. When you contact us, if possible, please provide a copy of your original complaint, any reference number given to you and a copy of any response you have received.

If we are able to look into your complaint, we will contact the transport company and ask them to look into it again to try and sort the matter out so that you are satisfied.

Alternatively, where we already know the answer to your concerns, we will write back to you direct.

Whatever your complaint, we will tell you when we have received it and let you know exactly what we are doing. We will tell you which transport company we have passed your complaint to and will ask them to respond to us within 20 working days. We aim, wherever possible, to provide you with a prompt response to your concerns and a satisfactory outcome.

When we can't help you

Unfortunately, we will not be able to help you in the following circumstances:

If you have written to the transport company direct, but have also sent us your complaint. We are grateful for your information, but we won't get involved until the transport company has responded to you – and only if you tell us that you are not happy with their response.

If the transport company has not replied to your complaint but their advertised response time has not passed. We will contact the transport company on your behalf to make sure they have received your original complaint and ask them to write back to you direct.

If the transport company has no record of you contacting them. We will ensure that we provide them with any details we have of your complaint and ask them to reply to you direct. When you contact a transport company make sure you ask them to make a record of your complaint in your name and ask them for a reference number and indicate how you expect them to respond.

If your complaint is about heritage rail services, tram railways or charter operators. These services are outside our remit. However, if your journey is covered by a National Rail ticket or if you have a through ticket which connects the heritage or charter service to a journey on the National Rail network, we may be able to help you.

If your complaint is about a decision made by one of the organisations who deal with penalty fare appeals or penalty charge notices (parking, congestion charging and traffic appeals). We cannot deal with complaints about decisions made by the independent appeal bodies set up to consider these issues. However, we can look into their procedures if you think that they have not followed them properly. In exceptional circumstances, we may ask the transport company to address your concerns.

If you or the transport company has started legal action in relation to your complaint. We cannot get involved if a court of law has made a decision about your complaint, even if you are not satisfied with their decision.

If you fail to register your concerns within a reasonable timescale. We cannot deal with complaints if they are not made within a reasonable timescale. This can vary depending upon the nature of your complaint. We recognise that transport companies may be unable to consider issues if they are not raised quickly enough for them to investigate them. Where we are unable to assist you, we will inform you that this is the case.

Our Targets

If you contact us by phone

We aim to:

- Answer your call within 20 seconds
- Handle your call in a polite, professional and helpful manner
- Tell you if we have to put you on hold
- If for some reason you can't get through to an advisor and you leave us a message, we will return your call within one working day.

If you contact us in writing (by post, email or via our website)

We aim to:

- Acknowledge your letter or email within five working days of receiving it and tell you what we will do about your complaint
- Pass your complaint to the relevant transport company within five working days
 - If you contact us first, we will ask the transport company to respond to you direct.
 - If you have already contacted the transport company, we will ask them to provide us with a response to your concerns within 20 working days. Where we already know the answer to your concerns, or are unable to assist you, we will write to you within 20 working days.
- Upon receipt of the transport company's response, we aim to respond to you within 20 working days. If we are not happy with our response to your concerns, we will contact them again, and keep you informed about what we are doing.
- Reply to you within five working days if you have asked us a question and within 20 working days if you are complaining about us.

We try to keep to our targets and response times. However, there may be times when we are not able to if we are very busy or if there are delays in getting the information we need from the transport company to be able to respond to you. In these cases we try to tell you what is happening.

How we work

If you ask us to look into your complaint about a transport company, we will investigate the matter fully and fairly.

We will consider whether the transport company:

- Handled your complaint within its set timescales
- Answered all of the issues that you raised in your complaint
- Gave you factual and accurate information
- Was clear and easy to understand
- Explained how it is going to try to prevent the matter happening again, or what it is doing to deal with the problem
- Dealt with your concerns in its response
- Offered, where appropriate, an appropriate apology or amount of compensation in line with any industry guidelines or what we consider is a reasonable gesture of goodwill.

If we do not think that the transport company has handled your complaint appropriately, we ask them to look at some or all of the issues raised in your original complaint again. We will pass your complaint to the transport company's management if necessary, or to the relevant regulatory body.

If you are not happy with our first response and contact us again, we will review your complaint. In this review we will consider:

- Whether we have dealt with your case appropriately and accurately, and that we have not made any mistakes
- Any new evidence which could affect our decision

If our review finds that we have not kept to the above points we will review our response to you and if necessary contact the transport company again on your behalf.

If after a further response you still remain dissatisfied, we will ask our Board or one of its subsidiary bodies to review your case. If at this stage you remain unhappy with our handling or decision, we will explain why we cannot get the result for which you were hoping and inform you about your right to contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

We do not have to carry on looking into your complaint if we think that you are not being serious, or if you are aggressive or abusive towards us. Our management team will make the decision to stop looking into your complaint. If we do this, we will write to you and tell you why.

Our Reply

We aim to provide you with a clear and concise response, answering each of the points you raise. We will outline how the transport company has dealt with your complaint and, where appropriate, will also provide details of our policies or plans to address the issue in the future.

Where possible, the same member of staff will deal with you each time you contact us, from when you first contact us to when we give you our final response.

We carry out regular surveys of passengers who have contacted us for help. This helps us to measure your satisfaction with the way we have dealt with your complaint. The overall findings of these surveys are reported to our board members and our sponsors, the London Assembly. We also carry out regular internal audits to make sure that our responses meet our quality targets. We will use this information to improve how we do our work.

Our commitment to you

We will try to respond to you how you choose to contact us – in writing, by phone, by email or through our website. We are content to receive complaints in person at our offices by appointment or to facilitate a meeting between you and a representative of a transport company where we consider that this is likely to provide the best way to resolve your complaint.

We will try to reply to you in your own language if English is not your first language. However, we may need extra time to do this, and may not be able to meet our targets.

We will respond to you using the format you ask us to use if you have problems with your eyesight or you are hard of hearing (we can respond to you in large print, in Braille, or on audio tape). However, we may need extra time to do this and may not be able to meet our targets.

Your information

We will make sure that we keep your details confidential, and keep any information we hold about you in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. If you want copies of any information held about you, we are able to do this in line with our procedures. Please note that we will usually charge a £10 fee for any such request.

In order to progress your complaint, we will need to share details of your complaint and your name and address with the transport company you are complaining about. In our acknowledgement we will keep you informed about how we intend to take forward your complaint and with whom we will share details of your complaint. If you do not wish us to share your personal information, please indicate this when you contact us. However, if you do not wish to share your personal details with the transport company, we may not be able to take up your complaint meaningfully. If we take forward your complaint, we will usually ask transport companies to liaise with us. However, occasionally, in order to resolve a complaint more quickly for example, they may use these details to contact you direct.

We may give some or all of your details to another person or organisation if we need to carry out our own duties. This will include providing information to regulatory bodies such as the Department for Transport or organisations who need these details to carry out their legal duties (for example, the police).

We aim to be open and clear about the work that we do and we keep to the Freedom of Information Act 2005. We deal with any requests for information in line with our procedure on freedom of information. Our publication scheme which sets out our procedure is available on our website.

Acting on the information you give us

Your feedback is important to us. It helps us to identify areas where transport services can be improved to prioritise the issues that matter. We will regularly review the information and issues that you tell us about, so we can identify trends or issues which affect transport users. This will help us to shape the work that we do.

To make sure that this feedback helps us to improve transport services, our casework team will:

- tell management about issues you are concerned about so that we can use these to influence and plan the work we do for transport users
- provide regular reports on trends in complaints and issues to senior managers and the Board, as well as our sponsors at the London Assembly
- send specific reports to the transport companies where we feel this will help them improve the service that they provide
- give people with an interest in our organisation information on how we treat our customers and compare this with similar organisations.

If you have a complaint about us

We aim to deal with all your comments and complaints efficiently and make sure you are satisfied with the way we resolve your complaint.

However, we know that we won't always get things right. Where something has gone wrong, we believe it is important that we try to put it right.

What can you complain about?

Anyone who contacts us and is dissatisfied with our service can complain.

For example, you may wish to complain about:

- inaccurate advice or misleading information that we have given you
- how we have handled your complaint
- our decision to close your case
- our response to consultations or our news releases
- your treatment by our staff (such as rudeness or not doing what we said we would do)
- your dealings with administrative support services in the organisation.

How can I complain?

You can complain by letter, fax, email or telephone to either the staff member who you have been in contact with or to our Casework Manager, who will arrange for the matter to be investigated by the appropriate manager and reply to you.

If still not happy with the handling your complaint after contacting the relevant member of staff or manager, you should write to:

Janet Cooke
Chief Executive
London TravelWatch
6 Middle Street
London
EC1A 7JA

How we will deal with your complaint

We are committed to responding properly to complaints about our staff and our services. We recognise that it important to try to sort out your problem immediately.

We take all complaints seriously and aim to carry out a full investigation and get back to you within ten working days.

If we can't, we will:

- write to you to let you know who is dealing with your complaint
- let you know and give you a new time limit for our response.

Unfortunately, there may be times when we are not able to achieve the outcome you want, even though we have handled your complaint in line with this complaints procedure.

What happens if I am still not satisfied?

If you are still not satisfied with the way we have handled your complaint or believe that we have not represented you appropriately, you may want to make a complaint about us to the Local Government Ombudsman. Their role is to consider complaints about the administrative actions of councils and bodies such as London TravelWatch, and can be contacted on 0845 602 1983 or at PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Please note that the Ombudsman is not able to look into your complaint if you are not satisfied with the outcome.

Reviewing our complaints procedure

We will keep the complaints procedure under review to ensure that it is accurate and up to date.

February 2009