
Secretariat memorandum

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Casework report for the periods quarter one and two April to September 2016

1. Purpose of report

To record the operator performance in handling appeals made by London TravelWatch on behalf of passengers, and identify key concerns.

2. Summary

In quarter one there was an overall increase of contact received of just under 30% on the previous quarter. However, in quarter two there was a decrease in the quantity of all cases received with the exception of appeals.

3. Performance

There are six parts to this report

- i. A breakdown of all contacts received during the previous twelve months
- ii. Rail operators and Transport for London (TfL) response times to London TravelWatch appeals
- iii. The operators' average response times, split per operator or per TfL mode
- iv. Information about appeals where the rail operator has taken longer than 20 days to respond and TfL has longer than 10 days
- v. The pie graphs in this section depicts the subjects of the appeals received
- vi. Information on issues received by the casework team

4. Appendix

The appendix is a line chart which shows the incoming casework over the previous few years

5. Equalities and inclusion implications

There are none arising from this report

6. Legal powers

Section 248 of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 places upon London TravelWatch (as the London Transport Users Committee) a duty to consider – and, where it appears to it to be desirable, to make representations with respect to – any matter affecting the services and facilities provided by TfL which relate to transport (other than freight) and which have been the subject of representations made to it by or on behalf of users of those services and facilities. Section 252A of the same Act (as amended by Schedule 6 of the Railways Act 2005) places a similar duty upon it in respect of representations received from users or potential users of railway passenger services provided wholly or partly within the London railway area.

7. Financial implications

There are no specific financial implications for London TravelWatch arising from this report.

1: Contacts received

This report covers incoming casework received from April to June and July to September 2016.

In quarter one a total of 3,190 contacts were received by London TravelWatch via telephone, email and web form. Quarter two shows reduced contacts of 2,766.

Case types	Jul to Sep 2016	Apr to Jun 2016	Jan to Mar 2016	Oct to Dec 2015	Jul to Sep 2015
Casework related telephone enquiries	738	1,003	860	761	504
Enquiries email	51	60	45	76	51
Initial cases	1241	1,362	880	732	562
Request for papers	137	111	160	98	90
Appeals made to operator	246	235	209	182	228
Appeals responded to directly	353	419	310	276	250
Appeals sub total	599	654	519	458	478
Total contacts	2766	3,190	2,464	2,125	1,685

Enquiries telephone

This is a record of all telephone calls that has been received by London TravelWatch.

Initials

An initial case is one where the complainant has written to London TravelWatch but has not yet approached the operator.

Papers

A case classified as request for papers is one where we have asked the passenger to forward copies of all correspondence between themselves and the operator. We cannot consider taking forward a case without this information.

Appeals made to operator

Where the passenger has already complained to the operator and London TravelWatch has taken it forward as an appeal.

Appeals responded to directly

A 'direct' categorised case is one where London TravelWatch responds directly to the passenger without needing to contact the operator.

2: Operator response times – closed cases

National Rail operators

This target, agreed with the rail operators, requires them to respond to 75% of referrals within 10 working days, and 100% within 20 working days. It is accepted that in some complex cases it may not always be possible to meet these deadlines. We expect to receive a holding response from an operator followed by regular updates on progress. Performance to this target relates to the substantive response from the operator rather than the holding response.

NATIONAL RAIL				
Working days elapsed	July to September 2016		April to June 2016	
	No of cases closed	No of cases closed	No of cases closed	Percentage closed
Days 0-10	149	90%	149	92%
Days 11-20	12	7%	7	4%
Days 21-40	5	3%	1	1%
Day 41+	0		5	3%
Total	166		162	

The response times from the railway operators has improved slightly when compared to the last two quarters of the previous financial year

2. Transport for London

TfL has no franchise obligation to respond to London TravelWatch but has traditionally followed the same policy as the rail operators. In late 2013 TfL reduced their response targets for passengers and London TravelWatch from 20 to 10 days.

TRANSPORT for LONDON				
Working days elapsed	July to September 2016		April to June 2016	
	No of cases closed	Percentage closed	No of cases closed	Percentage closed
Days 0-10	43	96%	43	80%
Days 11-20	1	2%	6	11%
Days 21-40	1	2%	4	7%
Day 41+	0		1	2%
Total	45		38	

London TravelWatch usually liaises with the central TfL executive team with whom there is a very good relationship. The casework team also deals directly with other TfL modes who can take longer than the standard 10 day to respond.

In quarter two, most appeals were dealt with by the TfL executive team. The increase of cases responded to quickly reflects their commitment to sending full responses to London TravelWatch appeals within 10 working days.

3.National Rail operators' response times – closed cases

Operator	July to Sept 2016		Apr to June 2016		Jan to Mar 2016		Oct to Dec 2015		Jul to Sept 2014	
	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days
ATOC	1	1							3	59
BTP										
c2c	3	13	1	1	6	21	2	5		
Chiltern	5	5	3	1					2	33
CrossCountry										
Department for Transport										
Deutsche Bahn										
V East Coast	1	0			1	104	7	7	7	18
East Midlands Trains							1	28	1	1
Eurostar	19	3	17	2	7	1	10	6	15	2
FCC/GTR	20	5	31	2	28	3	14	5	11	11
GWR	6	3	3	5	1	0	1	2	2	11
Grand Central										
Gatwick Express										
Greater Anglia			9	1	8	1	4	3	5	5
Heathrow Express	2	11	3	56			2	71	1	3
First Hull Trains							1	9		
AS	6	0	16	1	13	1	3	6	18	1
IPFAS	2	0	3	0	2	1	5	9	10	1
London Midland	1	1	3	2	2	1	3	18	6	13
NR Enq										
Network Rail			1		2	3			1	25
ORR			1	2						
RailEurope										
RPSS					1	1	2	1	1	1
Rail Easy										
ScotRail										
Southeastern	6	5	12	2	11	15	7	11	13	16
Southern	55	6	38	7	29	5	27	11	14	27
South West Trains	25	4	19	7	25	3	20	4	16	9
Trainline			1		2	2			1	15
Virgin West Coast	8	4	1	1	1	1			3	9

Transport for London

Operator	Jul to Sept 2016		Apr to Jun 2016		Jan to Mar 2016		Oct to Dec 2015		Jul to Sept 2015	
	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days	No of cases	Average working days
Docklands Light Railway					3	7				
London Overground	3	9	3	21	4	12	7	3	6	10
TfL London Buses	15	5	15	8	9	10	8	6	20	19
TfL London Underground	5	5	9	2	3	15	7	5	16	22
TfL Roads & Streets	2	3	3	6	2	7	2	5	3	7
TfL Dial-a-Ride	1	0			1	28	1	2		
Oyster	10	7	14	6	11	10	14	6	12	18
TfL Other	7	3	6	6	2	11	9	6	7	9
Tramlink	1	7			1	0				
TfL Rail			3	2	2	0				
TfL cycles			1	5						
Victoria Coach Station	1	10								

**IPFAS, AS and RPSS are all appeal or revenue collection bodies. AS also manages the first stage penalty fare appeal for Transport for London.*

The table above and on the preceding page shows the average time taken by each operator or TfL mode, to respond to appeal cases. The average response times should be treated with caution, as a delay in responding to a single case may significantly affect the average.

4. Response delays

Not all cases that are open longer than usual are because the operator has not responded to the caseworker. Some cases take longer to deal with as they require further necessary investigation and other cases can be kept open to allow ongoing negotiation between London TravelWatch and the operator. This is acceptable as long as the caseworker keeps the appellant updated on a regular basis.

Some cases where the transport operator has taken what could be considered too long to respond to London TravelWatch, have nevertheless been resolved to the passenger's satisfaction. The caseworkers are aware that response delays from operators do not necessarily mean negative outcomes for passengers and keep this in mind when chasing the transport operator for a response.

The transport operator sometimes asks for further information which can delay the case being closed while the caseworker requests this from the passenger. Such cases can become lengthy; particularly if the passenger is away at the time the request is made.

Rail cases with longer than 20 days response times

Over the previous two quarters there were eleven rail operator cases which took over 20 days to send the response to London Travelwatch. As one of these cases took 21 days so just over the time limit, an explanation for this particular case is not given here.

Heathrow Express (two cases)

The main London TravelWatch contact at Heathrow Express left and for a while the casework team were not receiving responses. The new customer experience manager at Heathrow Express was quick to introduce herself and dealt with the outstanding cases to the passengers satisfaction.

Virgin East Coast

Mrs B had difficulty with tickets but further detail cannot be given regarding this passenger's case. This case was more complex than usual which is why it took longer to close.

Southern (four cases)

- i. Mr A approached London TravelWatch as Southern were stating that his refund had been sent but the passenger had not received it. The delay in closing the case was because, as it was a financial matter, further information had to be obtained from the passenger. More delay was caused by the caseworker being on annual leave. However, Mr A was satisfied at the outcome.

- ii. Ms E wrote to London TravelWatch as, despite repeated efforts, she could not get a response to her delay repay claims. The delay was caused because Southern was searching for her emails to find out what had happened and why they had not responded. It eventually transpired that Southern had already made payment and the case had been closed. The emails between Southern, the passenger and London TravelWatch and those between the passenger and Southern had crossed at the same time.
- iii. Mr G appealed to London TravelWatch as he did not think his complaint about the volume of platform announcement was being taken seriously. The caseworker was informed by the rail operator and then could advise the passenger, that as more than one department at the rail operator would be involved in addressing the complaint, the response may take a few days longer than usual.
- iv. An administrative error by the caseworker meant that one case was open eight days longer than usual. The passenger was advised.

South West Trains (two cases)

- i. Mr P appealed to London TravelWatch as he felt he had not been given good advice by the customer service agent. The passenger had moved home, but still would be using South West Trains, and needed to know whether or not to surrender his season ticket

The passenger was advised by South West Trains to surrender his ticket but as it was near expiry, the value was low. The caseworker argued that the passenger should have been offered a change over ticket. The passenger would have been better off as a change over ticket would have allowed him to travel for a longer time period, than if using the surrender refund to buy a new ticket.

South West Trains eventually agreed and refunded the passenger who was happy with the outcome.

- ii. Mr R could not get a response to his questions about void day refunds before he purchased a new ticket. The reason for the delay was as South West Trains customer services were visiting the London TravelWatch casework team, the caseworker thought it best to deal with the appeal at this visit and advised the passenger.

C2C

A gateline took Mr N's newly purchased monthly season ticket. A staff member unlocked the gate and handed the ticket back. Later the passenger realised he had been given the wrong ticket. Mr N applied to C2C for a new or duplicate ticket for which there would be a £20 charge. MR N disputed the charge as he was having to buy new tickets while C2C were looking at the complaint. Meanwhile the remaining time left on his ticket was reducing.

Mr N appealed to London TravelWatch. The caseworker appealed the £20 charge and also asked C2C to refund the full monthly ticket cost instead of issuing a duplicate ticket as there was only a few days validity remaining. C2C agreed and also gave the passenger a small good will gesture for the inconvenience caused.

Transport for London cases with longer response times than 10 days

Four of TfL's cases took 11 days to respond. As these are only just over the time limit, an explanation is not given here. Details of the other eight cases are given below.

London Overground

Mr T received a penalty fare because the contactless payment card had been declined. The passenger believed that the card reader was faulty but the operator did not accept this. Additional time was taken to show the passenger that the card reader was not faulty.

Oyster (three cases)

- i. Mr L had not received his refund although Oyster had insisted it had been paid into his account. The caseworker appealed and the delay was caused by waiting for the payment reference from TfL and confirmation from the passenger's bank. The refund had been made but the passenger did not notice that it was on his statement.
- ii. Ms G had previously written to TfL and enclosed the original letters from another rail operator but not kept copies. TfL said that they had not received them so therefore could not help. The passenger appealed and delay was trying to locate this information.
- iii. A passenger can nominate a station where all refunds and compensation can be credited to their Oyster card when they touch the reader. Mrs T appealed to London TravelWatch as her refunds were appearing at quite random stations. TfL staff had tried to help and ensured she received her refunds, but Mrs T wanted a resolution to prevent her from having to keep telephoning TfL.

The case was open longer than usual because the technical team at TfL wanted to monitor activity on the passengers Oyster card. They noticed and corrected an error and monitored activity again to make sure that refunds were appearing at the passengers nominated station.

The caseworker advised Ms T that the problem had been corrected and that TfL were issuing a good will gesture for the inconvenience. Also TfL are working on a system that would allow refunds to be collected onto a passengers Oyster card the next time they touched a reader, regardless of the station.

This case is also an example of where casework has achieved change for all passengers who use an Oyster card to travel.

TfL Streets

A driver appealed to TfL about the traffic light phasing just off the north circular. Despite promises from TfL, the issue had not been resolved. The caseworker appealed and both TfL and the caseworker kept the case open until the engineers had checked and officially diagnosed the issue, which was a faulty traffic detector, and the repair made.

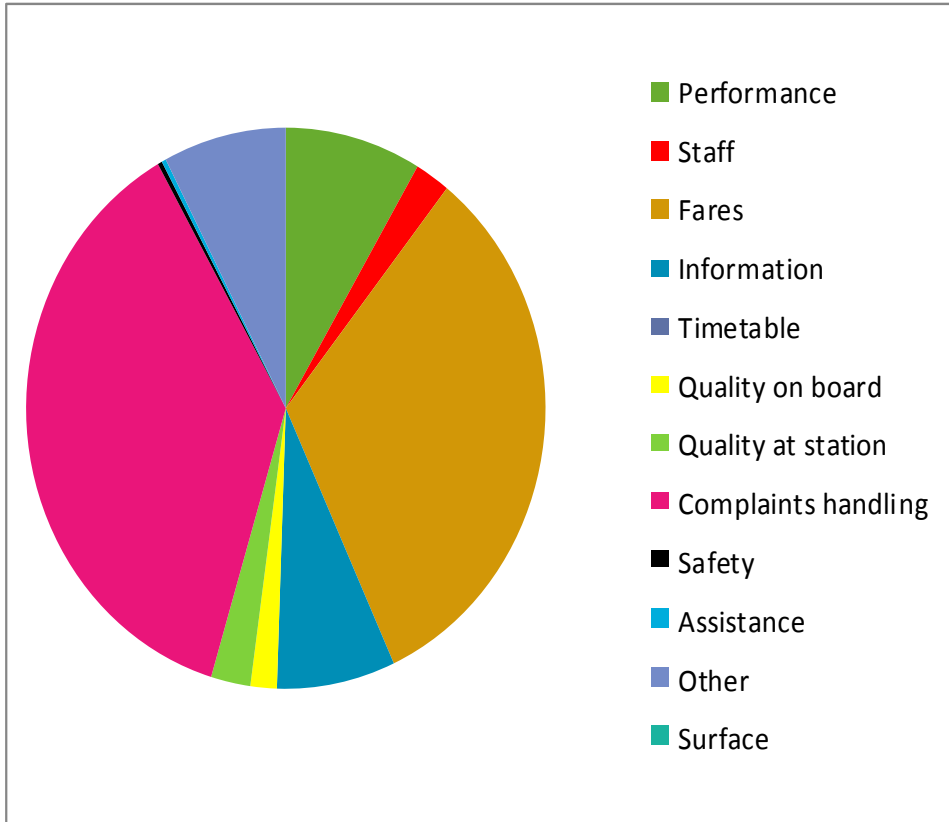
Buses (three cases)

- i. Mr H's original complaint was a claim which had been sent to the bus company who had not responded. On appeal TfL chased the bus company who wrote to the passenger. The bus company would not divulge the contents of the letter but the passenger appeared satisfied.
- ii. Mr M appealed that his route had a timetable change and he had not had a satisfactory response from TfL. The caseworker advised the case may be open longer as the route would require checking and the causes for any delay. Mr M was unsatisfied as the frequency on his route was not going to be increased.
- iii. A parent appealed because her childrens school bus was constantly departing two minutes early in the morning and she was not satisfied with the response she had received. On appeal TfL could see that a request had been made for the bus to depart early but could not see why. Eventually their investigation revealed that a different school, served by the same route, had asked for the bus to leave slightly earlier at a particular time in the morning.

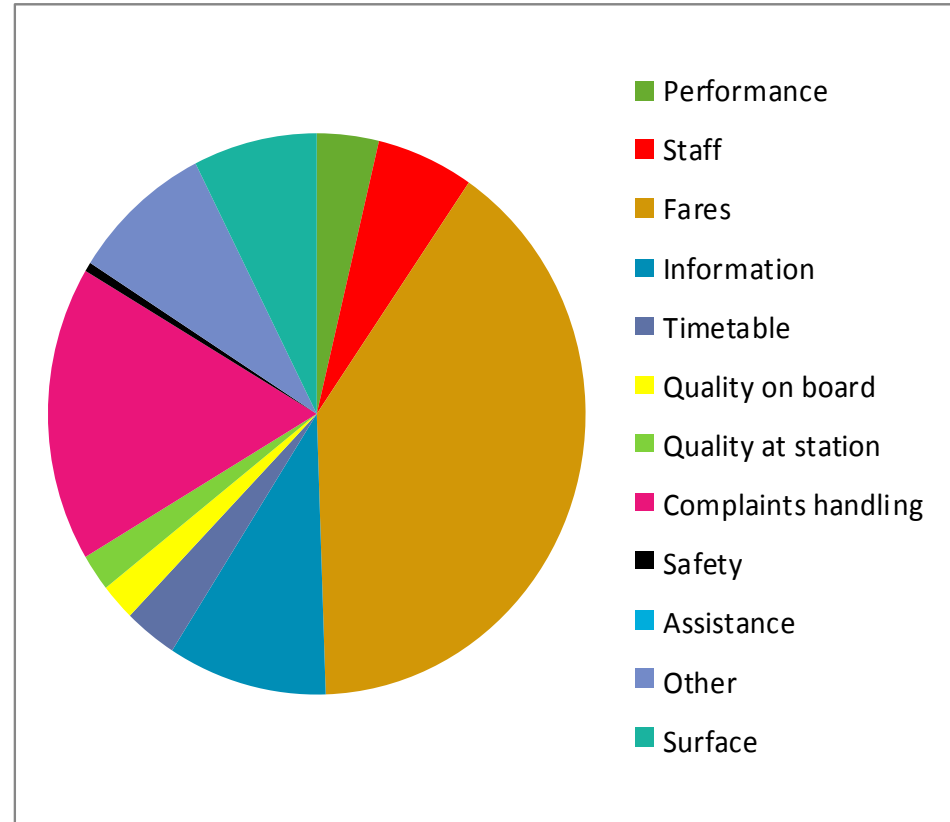
5: Appeals by category

The charts below clearly demonstrate the categories of appeals received by London TravelWatch regarding both National Rail operators and Transport for London.

Rail operators



Transport for London



6. Appeals by Category - main issues received

This part of the report highlights some of the issues that were raised from passenger contact.

Delays

Poor performance across all the modes is a concern for passengers who cannot understand why constant delays and cancellations do not attract higher compensation. Many passengers believe that operators are 'in breach' of their contract when services fail.

GTR and Southern

The continuing disruption on Southern and GTR has impacted on appeal, direct and initial cases but surprisingly there has not been a large increase in telephone contacts.

Appeal cases for Southern have risen by approximately 50% within the last 12 months. Most appeals are about their complaint handling which includes the speed at which refunds and compensation claims are dealt with. The exceptional volume of work that their customer service team are dealing with is, unsurprisingly, leading to delays and mistakes.

To prevent the passengers from incurring further delay, the London TravelWatch casework team are careful to send short and accurately worded appeals. This together with excellent working relationship between the casework and Southern contact teams, ensures that responses to appeals are returned to the casework team in an average of 6 working days.

Eurostar

More contacts than usual about Eurostar were received in quarter one. Generally, passengers are unhappy with compensation arrangements when train types are changed at the last minute meaning seating formats are changed and passengers are unable to travel seated together as previously planned.

This has continued in quarter two. Eurostar are committed to resolving cases quickly and where staff mistakes have been made, trying to remedy the situation to prevent similar problems occurring for other passengers.

Transport for London

Appeals

We get relatively few appeals about TfL modes. This could be because passenger complaints are being handled well in the first place, or passengers do not know to contact us or, and most likely, in our view the TfL webform is very clunky and difficult to use on smart devices. This could potentially deter passengers from leaving feedback or complaints, particularly those who don't have access to desk top or lap top computer.

Their complaints page is being updated with new systems under trial. However, TfL have advised London TravelWatch that it will be considerable time before the new system is entirely complete.

Appendix one: Quantity of cases received

