
Secretariat memorandum

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Casework report for quarter three October to December 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

When compared to quarter three 2015/16, there has been an 18% increase in contacts. However, there has been a 7% decrease compared to quarter two of this year.

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 October to December 2016.

In quarter three a total of 2,506 contacts were received by London TravelWatch via telephone, email and web form.

Case types	Oct to Dec 2016	Jul to Sep 2016	Apr to Jun 2016	Jan to Mar 2016	Oct to Dec 2015
Casework related telephone enquiries	617	738	1,003	860	761
Enquiries email	140	51	60	45	76
Initial cases	791	1241	1,362	880	732
Initial plus cases	235				
Request for papers	194	137	111	160	98
Appeals made to operator	248	246	235	209	182
Appeals responded to directly	223	353	419	310	276
Appeals responded to directly plus	58				
Appeals sub total	529	599	654	519	458
Total contacts	2,506	2,766	3,190	2,464	2,125

Enquiries telephone

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

Enquiry

These are cases where the passenger has contacted London TravelWatch looking for information which is not a complaint.

Initials

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

Initial plus (new case type)

As an initial case but where the caseworker has felt the need to respond to the passenger and/or forward the case to 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.

Appeals responded to directly plus (new case type)

These are cases where more correspondence is required but London TravelWatch is not appealing. Examples of this type of case are where an appellant

- wants more information following an appeal made with London TravelWatch
- is unhappy with a response sent as a 'direct' and requires further communication
- or the caseworker needs to obtain further information before responding.

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	October to December 2016		July to September 2016	
	No of cases closed	No of cases closed	No of cases closed	Percentage closed
Days 0-10	122	79%	149	90%
Days 11-20	21	14%	12	7%
Days 21-40	11	7%	5	3%
Day 41+	0		0	
Total	154		166	

The appeal response times from the railway operators has not been as good when compared to the previous quarter. Both GWR and South West Trains have reported large backlogs although they try to prioritise London TravelWatch cases.

GTR continue to be overwhelmed by contacts due to poor performance and the continuing strike action. Now that GTR also offer compensation at the point of 15 minutes delay, the quantity of contacts has increased further.

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. Their response targets for passengers and London TravelWatch is 10 days.

TRANSPORT for LONDON				
Working days elapsed	October to December 2016		July to September 2016	
	No of cases closed	Percentage closed	No of cases closed	Percentage closed
Days 0-10	26	70%	43	96%
Days 11-20	6	16%	1	2%
Days 21-40	4	11%	1	2%
Day 41+	1	3%	0	
Total	37		45	

An appeal about London Overground took over 50 days for the caseworker to obtain a response. In November 2016, the TfL executive customer services central team took over the management of complaints from passengers and appeals from London TravelWatch. This executive team try very hard to respond within the 10 day target, so an improvement in response times is expected.

The TfL executive customer services team are also the main public contacts after emergencies on the TfL network. Their response times to London TravelWatch slipped for a few weeks following the Tram derailment incident in November.

3. National Rail operators' response times – closed cases

Operator	Oct to Dec 2016		July to Sept 2016		Apr to June 2016		Jan to Mar 2016		Oct to Dec 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
ATOC			1	1						
BTP										
c2c	5	18	3	13	1	1	6	21	2	5
Chiltern			5	5	3	1				
CrossCountry										
Department for Transport										
Deutsche Bahn										
V East Coast	1	5	1	0			1	104	7	7
East Midlands Trains									1	28
Eurostar	6	1	19	3	17	2	7	1	10	6
FCC/GTR	32	5	20	5	31	2	28	3	14	5
GWR	7	14	6	3	3	5	1	0	1	2
Grand Central	1	33								
Gatwick Express										
Greater Anglia	6	7			9	1	8	1	4	3
Heathrow Express	7	9.5	2	11	3	56			2	71
First Hull Trains									1	9
AS	2	1	6	0	16	1	13	1	3	6
IPFAS	1	1	2	0	3	0	2	1	5	9
London Midland			1	1	3	2	2	1	3	18
NR Enq										
Network Rail	1	11			1		2	3		
ORR					1	2				
RailEurope										
RPSS							1	1	2	1
Rail Easy										
ScotRail										
Southeastern	15	7	6	5	12	2	11	15	7	11
Southern	38	10	55	6	38	7	29	5	27	11
South West Trains	20	6	25	4	19	7	25	3	20	4
Trainline	2	4			1		2	2		
Virgin West Coast	10	5	8	4	1	1	1	1		

Transport for London

Operator	Oct to Dec 2016		Jul to Sept 2016		Apr to Jun 2016		Jan to Mar 2016		Oct to Dec 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	2	5					3	7		
London Overground	4	40	3	9	3	21	4	12	7	3
TfL London Buses	10	9	15	5	15	8	9	10	8	6
TfL London Underground	2	10	5	5	9	2	3	15	7	5
TfL Roads & Streets	1	9	2	3	3	6	2	7	2	5
TfL Dial-a-Ride			1	0			1	28	1	2
Oyster	13	9	10	7	14	6	11	10	14	6
TfL Other	1	1	7	3	6	6	2	11	9	6
Tramlink			1	7			1	0		
TfL Rail	4	1			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

During quarter three there were twelve rail operator cases which took over 20 days to send the response to London Travelwatch. As three of these cases were only just over the time limit, the explanation for those particular cases are not given here.

C2C

Mrs O wanted the loyalty points she had accrued from her recent season ticket purchase added to her on line account. C2C said that she could claim the points as she collected her pre-purchased ticket from a station which is not part of the scheme. The caseworker appealed as the passenger had purchased the tickets online with c2c, so it should not matter at which machine they were collected. The delay occurred because c2c did not receive the original appeal and further delay was because the caseworker closed the case in error. This error was quickly discovered and c2c were contacted again. They agreed to add the loyalty points to Mrs O's account and she was satisfied with this outcome.

Heathrow Express

Mr K appealed to London TravelWatch as he was unsatisfied with the amount of compensation offered following a delay to Heathrow airport. Heathrow Express responded quickly but the case was kept open longer as the passenger wanted further information which he had not previously raised. The information was obtained but the additional request for compensation was refused.

Southern

- i. Mr T had not received responses from Southern regarding his delay repay claim so he appealed to London TravelWatch. The caseworkers investigation revealed that the passenger had not completed the claim form correctly and was also missing key Oyster information. The caseworker obtained the information required from TfL and sent it on to Southern who issued the full compensation. The caseworker also sent a jpeg of the Oyster information to Mr T in case he needed to make future claims. The delay with this case was because the

caseworker was liaising with more than one operator. Mr T was satisfied with the efforts the caseworker made on his behalf to resolve this appeal.

- ii. Mr S appealed to London TravelWatch as he did not think that Southern had understood that the action of staff meant that he felt pressured to take the Gatwick Express instead of the cheaper stopping service. The delay in responding to our appeal was caused because the staff member on duty was away and this prevented Southern obtaining the information they needed quickly. Southern agreed that due to service disruption, staff may have been more insistent to passengers to board any departing train in order to get them to Gatwick Airport. Southern refunded the difference in cost between the Gatwick Express and the stopping service. The passenger said that he was satisfied by this outcome.
- iii. Mr J wrote to Southern as he missed his flight because a bus replacement service was operating due to emergency engineering works. Mr J did not receive a response so appealed to London TravelWatch. Our investigation revealed that if the train Mr J had wanted to catch had ran as per the timetable, he would have arrived at Gatwick with considerable time to spare before his flight. Mr J accepted a good will gesture from Southern as they recognised the difficulties the passenger had experienced and agreed that it was exceptional circumstances. The delay in closing the case was because the caseworker and the Southern staff representative liaised for some time before the outcome was reached.
- iv. The other Southern case that was open longer than usual was due to the passenger being away so not responding to requests for clarification. The part time caseworker was also off sick for a few days.

GWR

- i. Mr N appealed to London TravelWatch when GWR refused to give delay repay compensation. The caseworker found that the passenger had misunderstood and not given the information required in order for GWR to make payment. The caseworker forwarded the information and GWR paid the missing compensation in full.
- ii. Mr M complained to GWR regarding poor advice he was given by staff during disruption. He did not receive a response to his complaint so appealed to London TravelWatch. GWR advised that they could not find Mr M's original complaint but they did agree that the information given by the staff member was not to a standard that they would like. They gave a full response and a small good will gesture in recognition of the efforts Mr M to have his complaint heard.

Grand Central

Mr A was travelling with his family to London to attend an event when his train was cancelled due to difficulties outside the operators control. The family tried to continue their journey using an alternative route option given by Grand Central staff. It was not a feasible route and Mr L and family returned home. When he complained, Grand Central refused a refund for his journey and the event in London quoting consequential loss. The London TravelWatch caseworker appealed as this was not strictly accurate. Grand Central agreed and the passenger accepted the option of free upgraded tickets for him and his family on any other day.

Transport for London cases with longer response times than 10 days

There are eleven cases which took longer than TfL's 10 day response target. Four of TfL's cases response times are just outside of this target so details are not given in this paper. Details of the remaining seven cases are below..

It must be noted that some appeals that were sent around the same time as the tram derailment. The staff at TfL who deal with London TravelWatch cases were also the TfL liaison with casualties, and the families of casualties, of the derailment in November.

London Overground

- i. Mrs C appealed to London TravelWatch as she believed that some of the questions she had asked in her complaint had not been addressed. The caseworker appealed at the same time that the London Overground's complaints management was being handed to TfL and there was a delay. However, TfL did respond in full and the passenger was satisfied.
- ii. Mr R was having difficulty getting any response to his complaint regarding early departing trains. The caseworker also struggled to obtain a full response and it was not until the TfL executive customer service team took management of the London Overground passenger complaints, that London TravelWatch was able to get a full and detailed response.

Oyster

- i. Ms G appealed to London TravelWatch as her online account was not working and she could not get a helpful response from TfL. Despite the caseworker appealing and chasing twice for a response, there was a delay from TfL. Further investigation revealed that the technical team had been liaising directly with Ms G without advising London TravelWatch.
- ii. Mr R had surrendered his season ticket online after over 9 months use and was unhappy with the surrender value. Mr R said that if he had known how little refund he would receive, he would not have surrendered his ticket. He complained to TfL who refused to give him anything further as he had been refunded the correct amount. London TravelWatch appealed on the basis that the passenger would have kept his ticket had he been made aware of the surrender value. As Mr R had surrendered his season ticket online, TfL could show that Mr R was made aware of the surrender value and he would have had to respond to the question of whether to continue with the refund process after the automated system had shown the total refund he would receive. Therefore, any further compensation was refused.

London Underground

- i. Mr K appealed to London TravelWatch because he felt that the explanation of why an empty out of service tube train was not being used in a busy period, was too generic. The delay was caused by TfL trying to locate the specific train in order to be able to respond in full.

- ii. Ms W tried to claim delay repay from London Underground who refused as she had an Oyster which they said gives her free travel. London TravelWatch appealed for Ms W and pointed out that her ticket was discounted but not free. TfL agreed and apologised for the poor customer service Ms W received. Full delay compensation was given plus a small good will gesture.

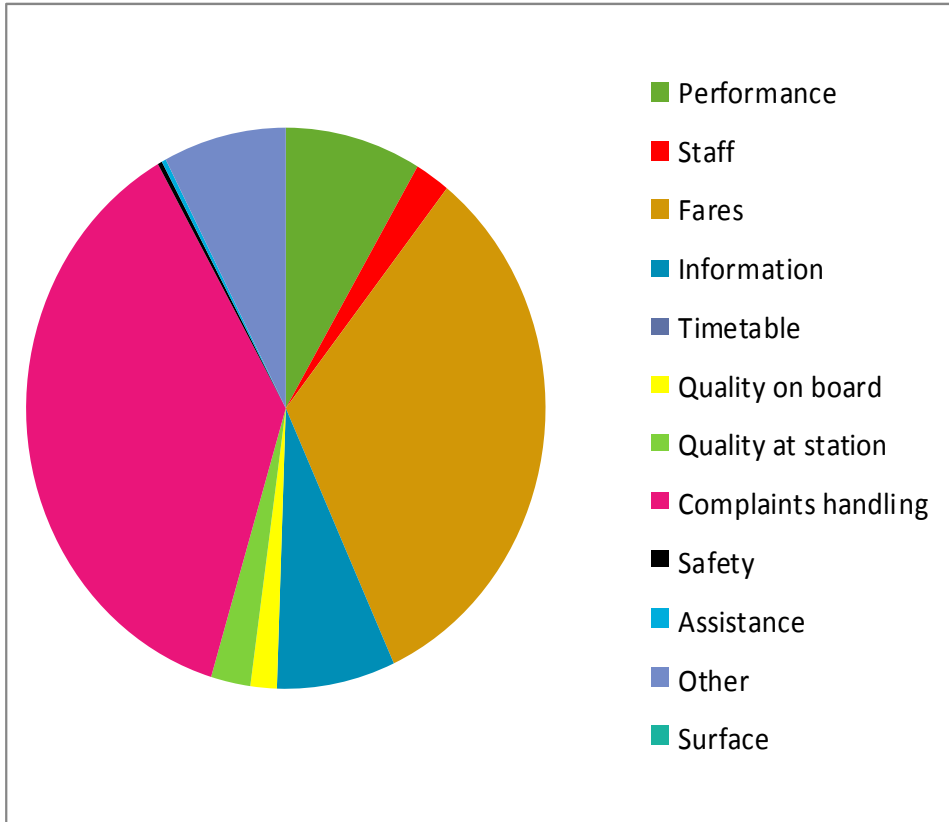
London Buses

Mrs B had complained to TfL regarding the intermittent ibus announcements on his route. In response to previous complaints TfL had checked individual buses but the problem remained. When the London TravelWatch caseworker appealed she requested that all buses that operate, however infrequently, on this route be checked. The delay was caused as the case was not closed until all buses had been checked and repairs made.

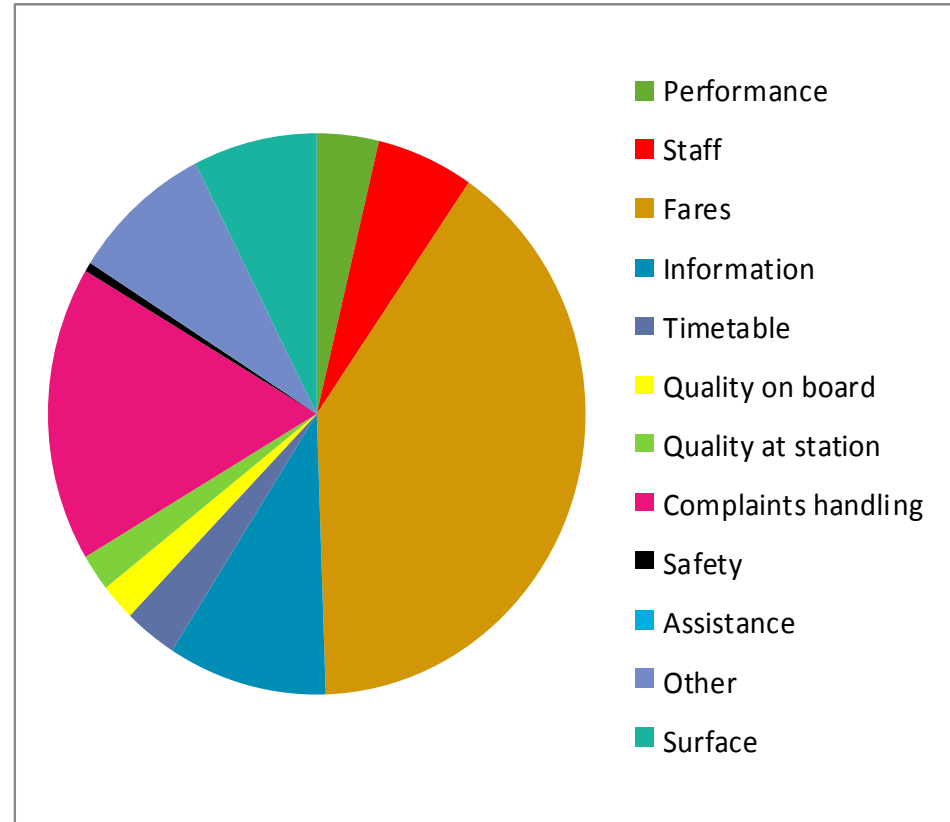
5: Appeals by category

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 and service cancellations across all the modes is a concern for passengers who cannot understand why constant delays and cancellations do not attract higher compensation. Passengers also do not understand why there is no public body or similar that can intervene and make the trains run on time. Rail passengers believe that operators being 'stripped' of their franchise will end the industrial action.

Response delays

GWR have advised London TravelWatch of backlogs in dealing with passenger complaints. This happened because the contact centre was changed and the time lapse, the lack of experience at the new centre and a surge in contacts caused a backlog of over 60,000 cases. More call centre staff were recruited and trained in December 2016 plus 8 further staff for the escalations team. In January 2017, GWR advised that an additional 65 call centre staff had been recruited and they are currently holding the training for those staff. Barring any further logistical problems, they hope that their 20 day response target will be met by the end of March 2017.

GWR are advising passengers of this delay on their help and contact page and in their automatic acknowledgement.

To manage the outstanding GWR appeals, I wrote to all London TravelWatch appellants to advise them of the reason for the delay and to reassure them that their caseworker would continue to chase for a response on their behalf.

South West Trains

South West Trains have recruited 17 agency staff and established a dedicated incident team to deal with specific disruption complaints, in order to deal with the backlog of cases.

At the end of February, SWT wrote a standard communication to advise all those passengers, whose response is outstanding, of internal delays and to reassure that a more personalised response will be sent as soon as possible.

GTR (inc Southern)

Performance problems due to industrial action on top of other issues continues to be the main issue raised by passengers. Southern's post bag has also increased substantially with the introduction of 15 minute delay repay. It is therefore surprising that few of the appeals from passengers is about lack of response from their initial complaint with GTR.

The ongoing disruption on Southern and GTR continues to impact on appeal, direct and initial cases received but a very low number of calls are received by Southern and GTR passengers.

Eurostar

In quarter three, the casework team received the first contact from a Eurostar passenger who purchased their ticket via Eurostar snap. These tickets are much cheaper in that the passenger nominated a preferred travel time but this is not confirmed until 48 hours prior to the journey

taking place. Passengers make reservations by signing in using their facebook account. Eurostar have no current plans to allow passengers to sign in using other methods.

Transport for London

Some complaints were received about the Piccadilly line performance problems due to trains breaking down. These problems with the old carriages appear to have now been managed although not resolved as train breakdowns are still occurring albeit less frequently.

Other initial cases that are being raised with London TravelWatch are regarding buses failing to stop. Although these cases rarely return as appeals, they do give an insight into the service level bus passengers are experiencing.

The TfL complaints page is being updated with new systems under trial. The Oyster complaints page has been updated and is much more user friendly regardless of the type of device being used by the passenger to make the complaint. This is reflected in the marked reduction of contacts London TravelWatch has recently received about Oyster.

The Underground and London Buses complaints pages, arguably the most popular, are still on the old system and therefore difficult to use on a tablet or smartphone. It has been advised that all modes will be on the new system by Summer 2017.

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.

Appendix one: Quantity of cases received

