
Secretariat memorandum

Author: Susan James

Agenda item: 8

PC121

Date: 20.09.17

Casework report for quarter one April to June 2017

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

2.1 Due to an error on the TfL website, London TravelWatch received a high volume of initial cases during quarter one. This has been corrected and numbers have reduced.

2.2 There are 8 parts to this report

- 1) Contacts received – breakdown of contacts received during the previous five quarters
- 2) National Rail operators and Transport for London (TfL) response times to London TravelWatch appeals
- 3) National Rail operators and TfL response times
- 4) Information about appeals where the National rail operator has taken longer than 20 days to respond or TfL has taken longer than 10 days
- 5) Pie graphs depicting appeals received by category
- 6) Issues received - information on issues received by the casework team
- 7) Appendix A shows the incoming casework over the previous few years
- 8) Appendix B shows the outcomes to appeals closed in quarter four.

3. Equalities and inclusion implications

There are no specific implications arising from this report.

4. 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.

5. 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 2017.

In quarter one a total of 2,584 new contacts were received by London TravelWatch via telephone, email and web form.

Case types	Apr to Jun 2017	Jan to Mar 2017	Oct to Dec 2016	Jul to Sep 2016	Apr to Jun 2016
Casework related telephone enquiries	440	401	617	738	1,003
Enquiries email	83	173	140	51	60
Initial cases	1155	631	791	1241	1,362
Initial plus cases	226	246	235		
Request for papers	156	212	194	137	111
Appeals made to operator	208	227	248	246	235
Appeals responded to directly	209	212	223	353	419
Appeals responded to directly plus	107	107	58		
Appeals sub total	524	592	529	599	654
Total contacts	2,584	2,209	2,506	2,766	3,190
Appeals carried over from previous quarter	57	46			
Total cases	2,641	2,255			

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 that 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

An initial plus case is where the passenger has not yet approached the operator but where the caseworker has felt the need to respond to the passenger and/or forward the complaint to the operator.

An example of this type of case is one where a passenger's initial contact clearly demonstrates that they are struggling with the English language. In these cases, we forward the complaint to the correct operator and ask that they respond directly to the passenger and

we then close the case. In these circumstances, we would usually also advise the passenger of our actions.

Papers requested

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. This is because London TravelWatch already has the information needed to answer the passengers query.

Appeals responded to directly (plus)

These are cases where more correspondence is required but London TravelWatch is not appealing. Examples of this type of case would be one where we do not have to appeal to an operator but we do need some additional information, usually from the passenger, in order to respond fully.

Appeals carried over from previous quarter

Where the appeal was started at the end of one quarter and carried over to the next. It was previously very difficult to separate cases carried over from cases received. However, with some system changes, we can now see the both the newly received cases and those that are existing without duplication.

2: Operator response times – closed cases

National Rail operators

This target, agreed with the rail operators, requires them to respond to 75% of appeals referred to them 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	April to June 2017		January to March 2017	
	No of cases closed	No of cases closed	No of cases closed	Percentage closed
Days 0-10	90	70%	108	65%
Days 11-20	25	19%	24	14%
Days 21-40	14	11%	28	17%
Day 41+	0	0	6	4%
Total	129		166	

The response times from rail operators has improved as the number of received appeals has fallen.

The difficulties and delays experienced by GWR and their new contact centre appear to have improved in this quarter and response times are starting to return to what they were previously. However, GWR have informed the casework team that due to the recent signal problems and power outage at Paddington, they have seen a significant increase the number of contacts they are receiving. This increase is not yet reflected in the number of cases received by London TravelWatch.

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. TfL have set their response targets for complaints from passengers and appeals from London TravelWatch at 10 working days.

TRANSPORT for LONDON				
Working days elapsed	April to June 2017		January to March 2017	
	No of cases closed	Percentage closed	No of cases closed	Percentage closed
Days 0-10	16	67%	18	41%
Days 11-20	8	33%	13	29%
Days 21-40	0	0	12	27%
Day 41+	0	0	1	3%
Total	24		44	

The customer service executive team at TfL are now generally responding to London TravelWatch appeals within 10 days. Some of the other teams, such as the team who look at congestion charge appeals, may take longer but their investigations are more detailed and the additional time they take is not usually extensive.

3. National Rail operators' response times – closed cases

Operator	Apr to June 2017		Jan to Mar 2017		Oct to Dec 2016		July to Sept 2016		Apr to June 2016	
	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	1	2	4	2	5	18	3	13	1	1
Chiltern	1	13	6	30			5	5	3	1
CrossCountry										
Department for Transport										
Deutsche Bahn										
V East Coast	1	0			1	5	1	0		
East Midlands Trains	1	17								
Eurostar	6	3	4	1	6	1	19	3	17	2
GTR	21	9	22	9	32	5	20	5	31	2
GWR	18	15	35	15	7	14	6	3	3	5
Grand Central					1	33				
Gatwick Express										
Greater Anglia	3	7	11	6	6	7			9	1
Heathrow Express	4	9	6	1	7	9.5	2	11	3	56
Heathrow Connect			1	0						
First Hull Trains										
AS*	6	4	2	0	2	1	6	0	16	1
IPFAS/PFS*			0	0	1	1	2	0	3	0
London Midland	1	5	1	0			1	1	3	2
NR Enq	1	2								
Network Rail					1	11			1	
ORR									1	2
RailEurope										
RPSS*										
Rail Easy										
ScotRail										
Southeastern	15	10	8	14	15	7	6	5	12	2
Southern	20	6	30	12	38	10	55	6	38	7
South West Trains	22	6	15	8	20	6	25	4	19	7
Trainline	1	1			2	4			1	
Virgin West Coast	7	1	16	4	10	5	8	4	1	1

Transport for London

Operator	Apr to Jun 2017		Jan to Mar 2017		Oct to Dec 2016		Jul to Sept 2016		Apr to Jun 2016	
	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			1	18	2	5				
London Overground	1	7	2	31	4	40	3	9	3	21
TfL London Buses	3	5	9	13	10	9	15	5	15	8
TfL London Underground	2	11	4	11	2	10	5	5	9	2
TfL Roads & Streets	8	8	13	14	1	9	2	3	3	6
TfL Dial-a-Ride							1	0		
Oyster	9	11	9	13	13	9	10	7	14	6
TfL Other	4	5			1	1	7	3	6	6
Tramlink							1	7		
TfL Rail			4	20	4	1			3	2
TfL cycles									1	5
Victoria Coach Station							1	10		

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

AS was formerly known as IAS and IPFAS is closing and being replaced by Penalty Fare Services.

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 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 that 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 one there were nine cases where the rail operator took over 20 days to send a response to London TravelWatch. A further five cases were only just over the time limit, so an explanation for those particular cases are not given here.

Appeal Service (formerly Independent Appeals Service)

Ms G appealed her penalty fare but then decided to pay it instead. She could not make payment as the appeal she had made had temporarily suspended the penalty fare in accordance to standard practice with this operator. Ms G did not get a penalty fare rejection email but instead received a notice that her penalty fare was now at £80 with no possibility for reduction or further appeal. London TravelWatch took the matter forwards because the penalty fare would have been paid if the IT system the appeals body used was more flexible. Appeal Service, who usually responds to the casework team on the same day, did not respond until the caseworker chased it. Appeal Service agreed that not being able to pay because an appeal had also been sent was a flaw in the system. Ms G was allowed to pay either the penalty fare at the lower rate or continue the appeal pathway if she preferred.

GWR

- i. London TravelWatch had two very similar cases regarding compensation payments. A single claim had been made by two passengers travelling together but the compensation payment had only been sent to one passenger. GWR did not initially respond but when the caseworker chased it, GWR sent the correct compensation to passengers immediately but the explanation for the issue came a bit later. Apparently, their refund system has to be overridden to make more than one payment per claim and this can cause errors to happen. GWR stated that they are looking at ways to address this to prevent it from happening in the future. London TravelWatch has not seen further complaints regarding this issue.
- ii. GWR forgot to notify London TravelWatch had sent a cheque had been sent to the passenger. The case remained open until the caseworker was advised of this.

Southeastern – 3 Cases

Southeastern have had a change in staff who manage escalated cases. This led to three cases that took longer to close than usual. The casework manager discussed this with Southeastern who confirmed that they were aware of the delays and that safeguards had already been put in place to manage the problem. The casework team are reporting that Southeastern are now responding in a reasonable time frame.

GTR – Great Northern

Mr B appealed to London TravelWatch because he was having difficulties paying for parking as ticket machines were randomly not accepting certain coins or card payments. GTR advised that all ticket machines had to be updated to accept chip and pin facilities. They confirmed that the programme of works to do this has been completed and all the ticket machines in their carparks will now accept cards again. The introduction into circulation of the new pound coins coincided with the update which did cause a delay. GTR also suggested that Mr B may be interested in a parking app which could be used as another alternative to make cashless payment. Mr B accepted these points but remained unsatisfied. He asked the caseworker to obtain more detailed information regarding the ticket machine update. The caseworker obtained this on his behalf but it did mean that the case was open longer than usual.

Southern

Mr F had ongoing problems with his smartcard that was not getting resolved. On appeal, London TravelWatch liaised with Southern who tried many times to resolve the problem with the card using their back office IT functions. Eventually, Southern asked if Mr F would be willing to meet with them so that they could see his difficulties for themselves. Mr F was happy with this arrangement and the appeal with London TravelWatch was closed.

Transport for London cases with longer response times than 10 days

There are four cases that took longer than TfL's 10 day response target and these are detailed below. A further four case responses took just over the target so details of these are not given in this paper.

Oyster/contactless payment

- i. Mr C received an auto reply to his complaint and also a survey completion request but not any response to his complaint. He made several calls but did not get promised call backs. After waiting for three weeks Mr C asked London TravelWatch for help. TfL advised that the calls Mr C had made had been listened to and they agreed that he should have received call backs and follow up emails. They asked to liaise directly with Mr C to resolve his issue. Mr C was satisfied with this and his appeal with London TravelWatch was closed.
- ii. Ms J was authorised to have a season ticket refund but she did not understand why the amount was less than thought she would receive. She felt that she had not received a proper explanation to how season ticket refunds are calculated. Although the caseworker advised Ms J how season ticket refunds were calculated, an appeal was also made due to poor response standards. TfL made an administrative error with this case which caused a delay but they did contact London TravelWatch quickly

to advise of this. TfL's subsequent investigation revealed that the information that had been given to Mrs J was below the standard they would expect to see. They made sure that Mrs J had received her refund and send a further small goodwill gesture in recognition of the numerous calls Mrs J had made to try to get an answer to her questions.

TfL Streets

Mr P tried to pay his Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) online but it was not accepted. His bank confirmed that there was no issue with his account. Mr P started to receive letters demanding increasing amounts as the PCN remained unpaid. Mr P emailed TfL but had not received a response. Following London TravelWatches' appeal, TfL investigated and eventually found that a small online administration error with Mr P's PCN code was preventing payment being accepted. TfL cancelled the entire PCN as it was felt that they delay and difficulties incurred by Mr P were unacceptable.

TfL Underground

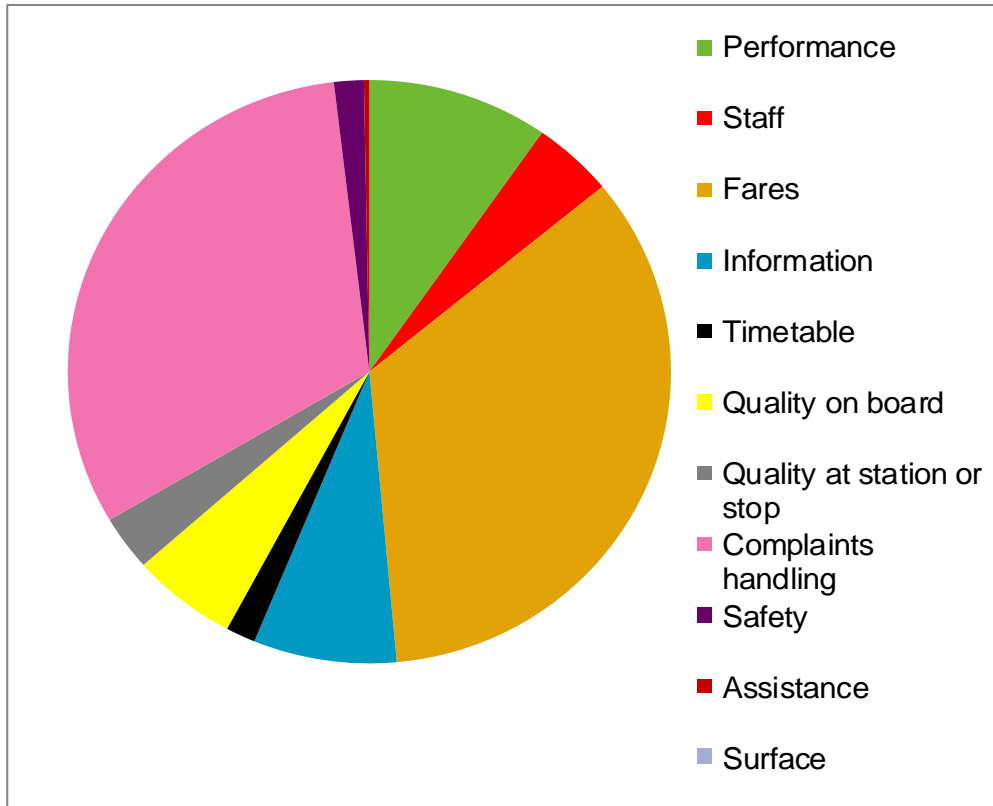
Ms L was concerned that all the help points the westbound underground platform at Bank Station were not working. When she complained, Ms L was given a date when the help points would be working again but she was not told why they were taken out of service in the first place. When London TravelWatch appealed, the TfL customer service executive struggled to find the reason why they were taken out of service. Eventually, it was confirmed that while they were being wired into the new control room and they could not be a 'live' function.

5: Appeals by category

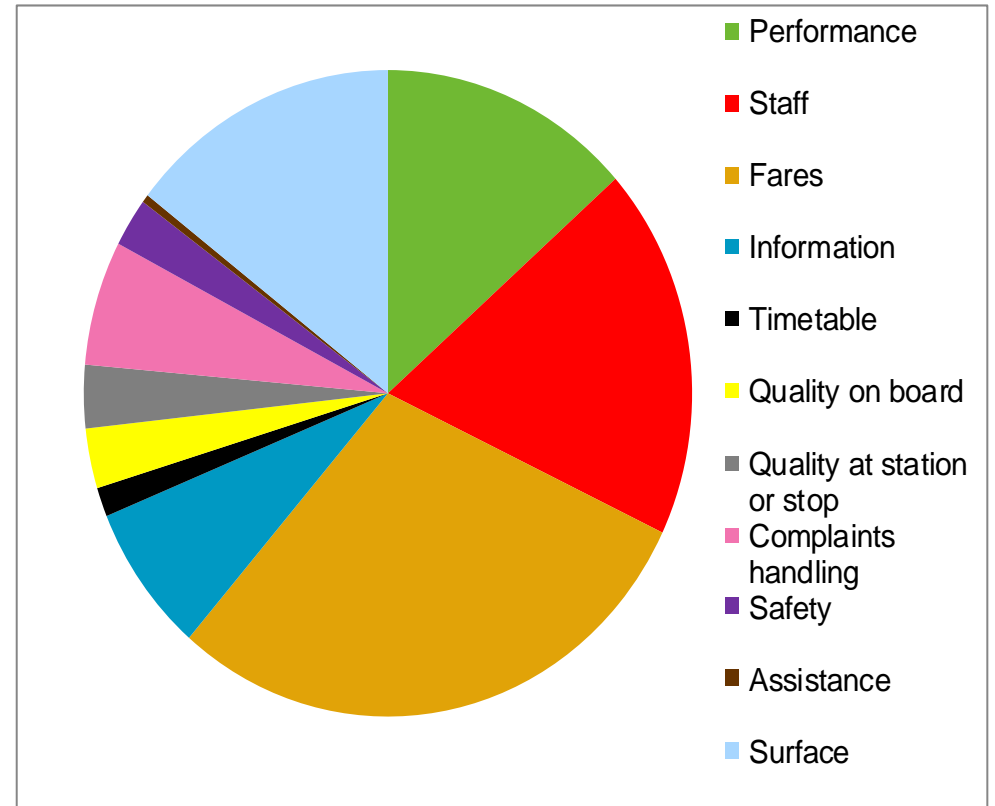
The charts below summarise the main types of appeals received by London TravelWatch regarding both National Rail operators and Transport for London.

There was an increase in appeals regarding TfL staff, service performance and surface issues such as PCN's. However, the data size is small and does not reflect a increase of appeals overall.

Rail operators



Transport for London



6. Main issues received

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

National Rail operators

Virgin West Coast continues to be inflexible particularly when passengers complain about poor staff advice. This issue has caused passengers to miss trains and force them to purchase new tickets in order to travel.

London TravelWatch has received phone calls from passengers who are struggling to contact Eurostar. They have given reports of long waiting times to speak to a staff member or not receiving a response to an urgent request when put in writing. The casework team raised the problem with their contacts at Eurostar and the situation has improved but will continue to be monitored over the next few weeks.

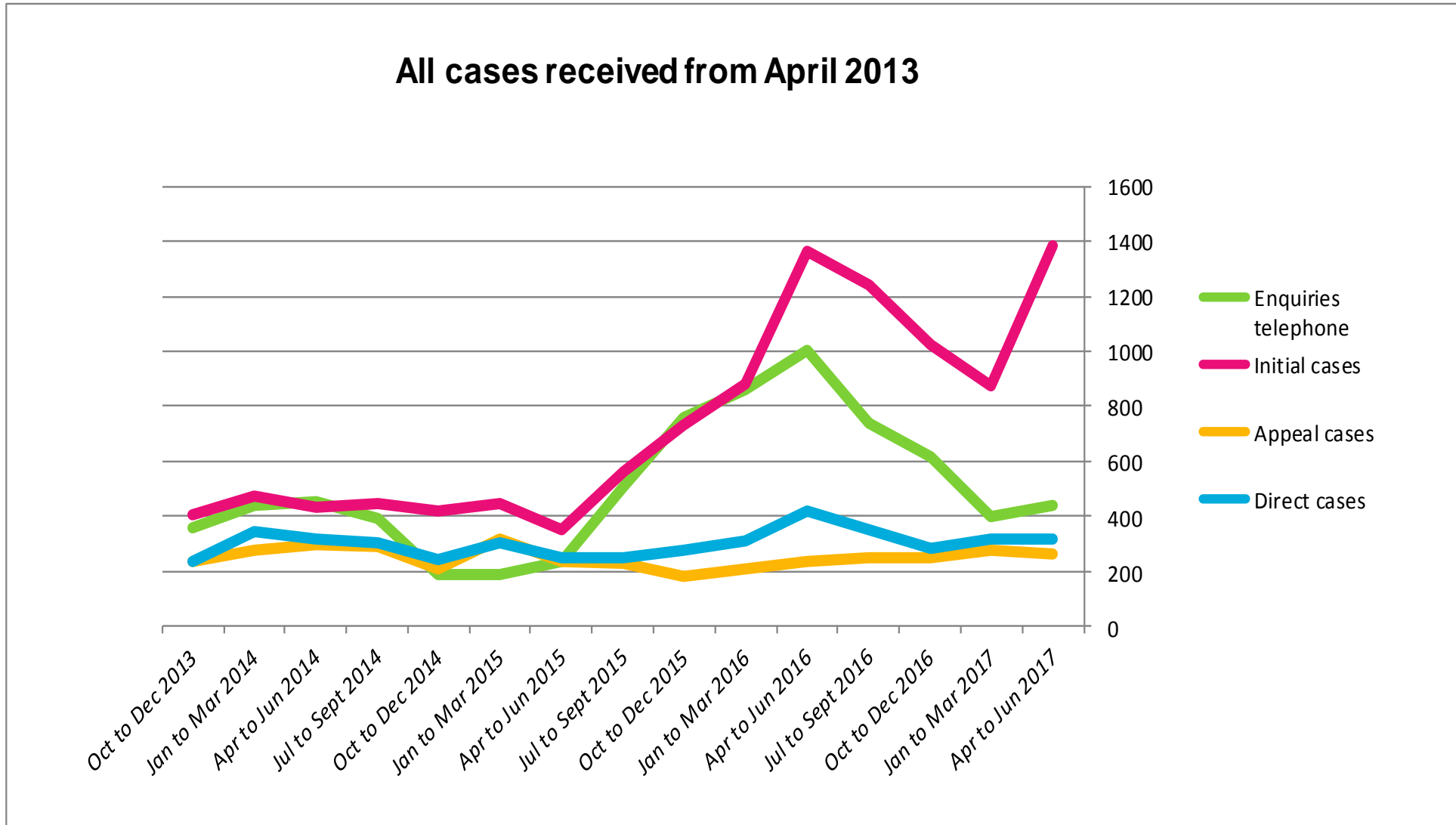
A growing number of complaints regarding penalty fares issued to passengers who have mistakenly used their Oyster/contactless payment cards to travel to Stansted airport. This issue will be monitored and reported.

Transport for London

In quarter one, the casework team received a higher number than usual of contacts regarding buses. Although very few return to London TravelWatch to appeal, it could be an indication of increasing dissatisfaction with performance and how passengers perceive they are being treated by the driver.

Since the London Underground ticket office closures in 2015, London TravelWatch has received an increase in contacts (when compared to the quarter one in 2015 and 2016) from passengers making complaints about London Underground staff or the lack of them.

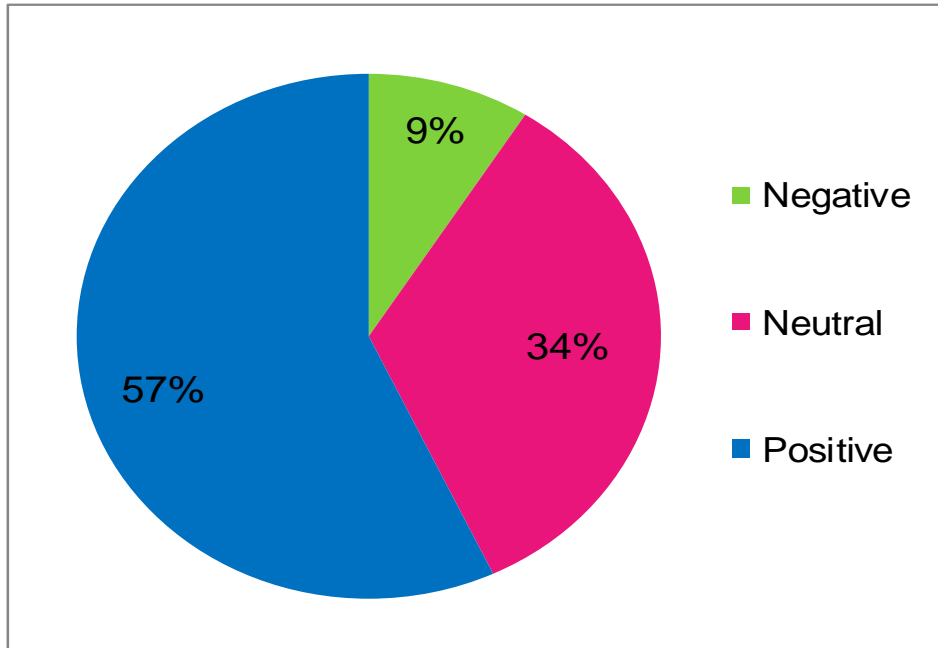
Appendix A: Quantity of cases received



Appendix B: Outcomes to appeals – quarter one

The casework team achieved a high number of successful outcomes to TfL appeals in quarter one, although the quantity of appeals received in this quarter was lower than usual.

Rail



TfL

