

Penalty fares and prosecutions

Here are some frequently asked questions that we receive about penalty fares.*

*London TravelWatch is not a penalty fares appeals body.

What is a penalty fare?

It is the maximum fare that can be charged if a passenger fails to show on demand a validated Oyster/contactless payment card or valid ticket for the journey that they are making.

The journey cost was less than £2. Why is the cost of the penalty fare so high?

Penalty fares are set high to act as a deterrent. A lower cost is usually accepted if the penalty fare is paid within a specified timescale.

Why can't I just pay for the ticket?

A penalty fare is issued because a ticket was not purchased or an Oyster/contactless payment was not made before the journey started.

I couldn't find my ticket/Oyster/contactless payment card when the ticket inspector asked to see it so I was issued a penalty fare. But I know that I had paid.

A ticket inspector needs to see that a ticket has been purchased (e.g. via a receipt or ticket confirmation) or an Oyster/contactless payment has been validated for the journey you are making. If a passenger fails to show this, a penalty fare may be issued.

I have been issued a penalty fare. What do I do now?

All those who have incurred a penalty fare have the right to appeal. Details of how to appeal will be given on your penalty fare notice. The subsequent correspondence will detail how to continue with this process.

All appeals must be made within the timescales given. If the timescales are not met, your appeal may be refused and you may not be allowed to continue to the next stage.

I did not appeal/pay in time and now there has been charges added and I can no longer appeal.

Further charges can be added if the appeal process is not followed or payment has not been made.

I have gone through three stages of appeal but they have all been rejected. Can I still pay the lower amount.

Yes. You can pay the lower amount if you have followed all the appeal timelines. You will usually have 14 days following the final appeal stage to pay the lower amount.

I can prove that I have paid as the journey is listed on my journey history (via TfL account)

Send this information as part of your appeal.

I can prove that I have paid as the payment is recorded on my bank statement.

Bank statements show that payment has been made to TfL. Unfortunately, they do not show the journey made and do not provide evidence that payment has been made for an individual journey.

I appealed online and did not realise it had been rejected as the response went into my spam folder.

At the point of appealing online, there is information provided regarding your penalty fare information potentially being automatically diverted to spam folders and how to prevent this from happening.

The gateline was open and I forgot to touch in. I shouldn't have to pay the penalty fare because if the gates were closed I would have remembered.

It is a passenger responsibility to pay for the fare before they travel by having the correct ticket or validating their Oyster/contactless payment card.

I know I touched in and the CCTV footage at the station/on the bus will show this.

The CCTV cameras in London are for security purposes. They do not focus on gatelines or readers and will not be able to provide evidence that an Oyster or contactless payment card has been validated or if a paper ticket was used. However, your Oyster journey history will show that you touched in and this can be used to support your appeal.

The staff member was rude.

Please make any staff complaints directly to the transport provider so that they may investigate your concerns. This is considered completely separate from your penalty fare appeal.

The name on my penalty fare notice is spelt incorrectly. Does this invalidate the penalty fare?

No. Minor errors such as spelling mistakes will not invalidate a penalty fare.

I can't afford to pay the penalty fare.

Please advise the independent appeal body of any financial hardship at the first point of your appeal and you may be offered a payment plan.

I ignored the penalty fare I was issued and am now receiving letters demanding payment of an increased/threatening court action.

Fare evasion is taken very seriously. Please do not ignore any letters or emails sent to you regarding your penalty fare.

I think this is wrong and I refuse to pay/appeal.

Non payment of fares is taken very seriously. If the penalty fare remains unpaid, the transport provider may choose other options to recover the outstanding amount.

Why can't London TravelWatch overturn this penalty fare? What's the point of London Travelwatch?

London TravelWatch is not a penalty fare appeal body. London TravelWatch has not been given the authority to overturn a penalty fare or force an appeal to be upheld. We can check that the strict penalty fare process has been correctly followed and we try to provide information, such as this FAQ guide, to help passengers to understand the process.

Other revenue protection

The inspector took my details but did not give me any paperwork.

If you do not have a ticket or validated Oyster/contactless payment for the journey you are making, the inspector may decide to report this to the transport Revenue Protection team. They will decide how they wish to proceed and contact you directly.

I was using someone else's zip card/concessionary travel card. My details have been taken and the card has been confiscated.

Concessionary travelcards such as a zip card can only be used by the card holder. If you are found to be travelling on card that is not in your name, the card may be confiscated and the holder will need ask TfL if they are willing to return it. The person found to be using another concessionary card will usually be subject to a penalty fare or other revenue protection process.