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Casework report

Author: Susan James, Head of Casework

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Casework Report covering 1 January to 7 March 2024

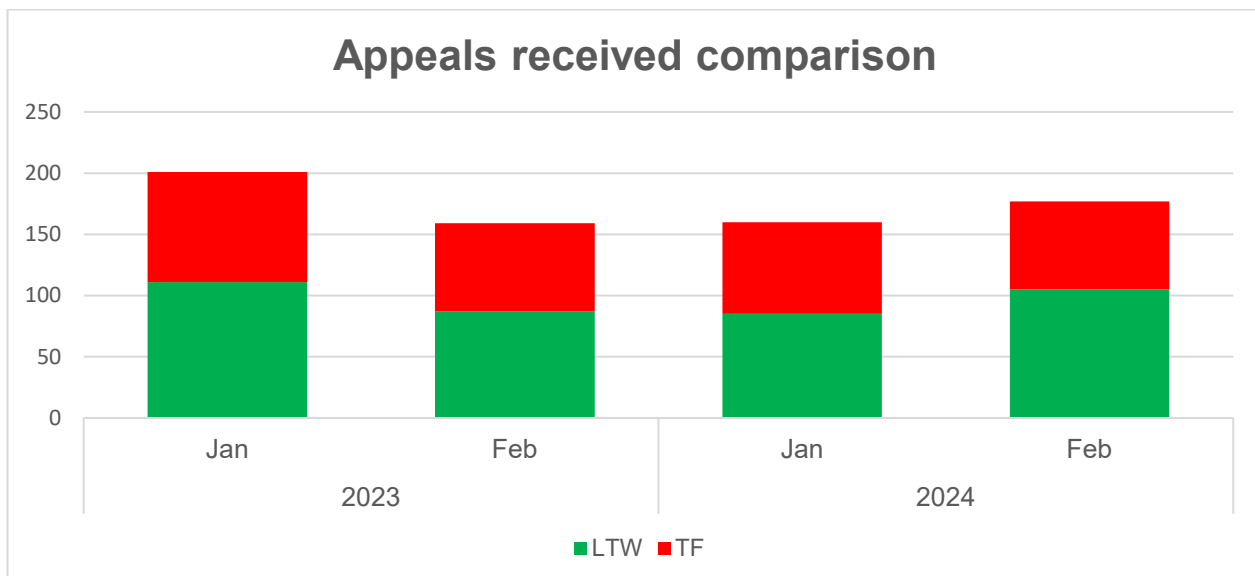
Spotlight on casework

The casework reports are usually written at the end of each quarter with one report covering both London TravelWatch and Transport Focus. This means the statistics will be comparable with previous quarters in previous years.

As this Board meeting falls short of the end of quarter four, this report is from 1 January – 7 March 2024 and focuses primarily on London TravelWatch casework.

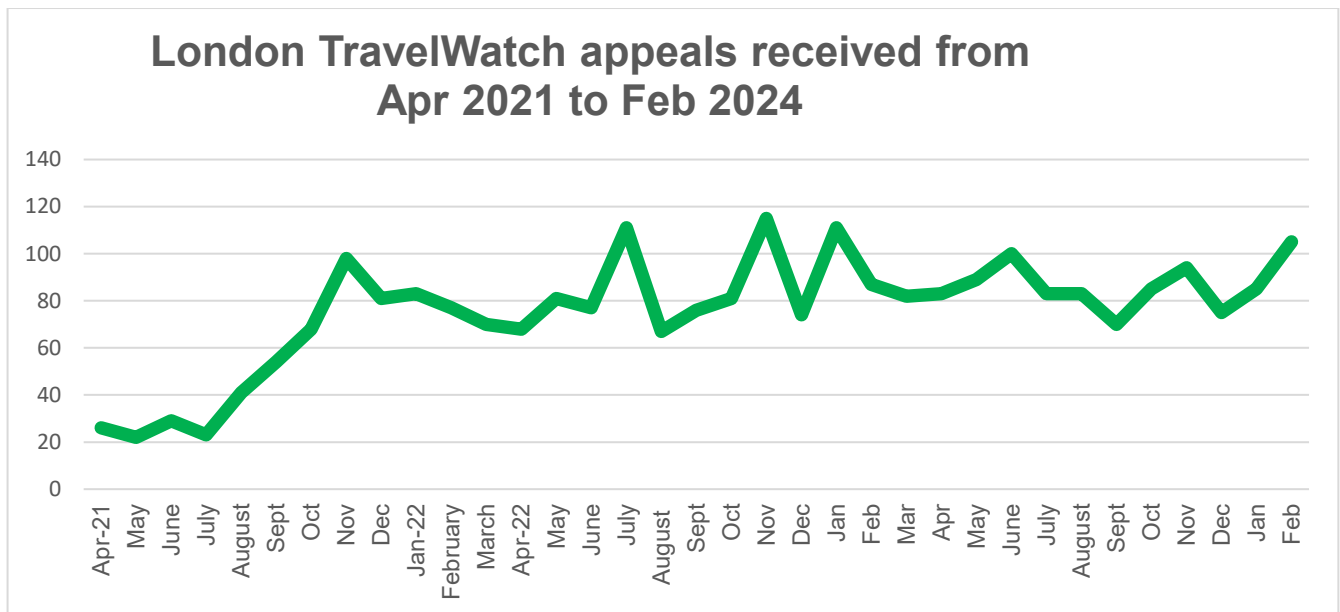
Casework and appeals

In January and February of this year, London TravelWatch received 287 contacts of which 190 were appeals. This compares with 339 contacts of which 198 were appeals (received in the same time frame) in 2023.



Transport Focus received 284 contacts of which 147 were appeals. This compares with 338 contacts of which 162 were appeals (received in the same time frame) in 2023.

Historical data – appeals received



The casework team continue to record the complexity of cases being received and the time taken to handle them, with some cases taking many hours to investigate and provide an outcome.

Outsourced provider - Foundever

The contract for the new outsourced initial contact providers will start on 2 April 2024. We have carried out a full and thorough training programme which will continue up to the start of the contract. The Head of Casework and Transport Focus Senior Stakeholder Manager will work from their offices in Stratford Upon Avon for this first week to help them settle in and be on hand to support and answer questions. If further support is required, Caseworkers will spend some time working from Foundever's offices in subsequent weeks.

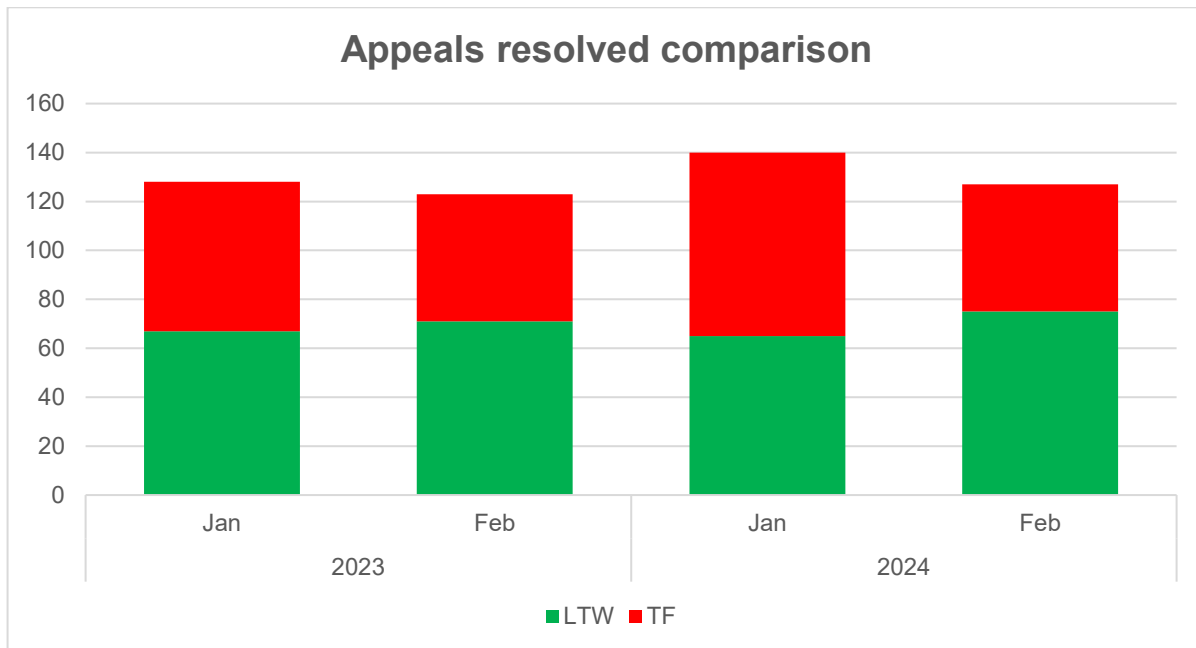
Eurostar

Eurostar are reporting a more manageable number of outstanding cases although contact is likely to increase following the changes to passenger visa requirements expected in the Spring 2024.

Transport for London

In 2024/25 further work will be undertaken with TfL to improve the processes for appeals. Although the Casework Team are fully confident to which team at TfL appeals should be made, it would be sensible to revisit these processes and procedures to improve flows between the two organisations.

Number of appeals closed



In January and February 2024, London TravelWatch resolved 140 appeals compared to 138 appeals in the same months of 2023.

Transport Focus resolved 127 appeals were resolved in January and February 2024 compared with 113 appeals in the same months in 2023.

Case examples

Simple – case opened and closed within three weeks. Limited correspondence received and little required to manage the case.

Mrs F had been overcharged due to errors on the TfL website. After waiting for over a month for the promised refund, Mrs F came to London TravelWatch. The Caseworker took up her complaint and contacted TfL. She asked for the refund to be made quickly and also for a good will gesture as Mrs F had been put to inconvenience chasing for a refund which should not have been taken in the first place.

TfL agreed and a full refund plus a good will gesture was made to Mrs F.

Complicated – case opened in early December 2023 and closed in March 2024. Extensive correspondence received from the outset with continued high levels of contact from the passenger.

Ms J had a regular weekly booking with Dial a Ride (DaR) before Covid and was now looking for this to be reinstated. DaR said that they did not have sufficient resources to be able to

offer a regular booking, so Ms J came to London TravelWatch and provided extensive correspondence that she had had with DaR.

In response to the Caseworker, DaR explained that following Covid their resources had changed considerably and that they could not provide a regular booking at this time. In addition, the times requested were very popular and DaR have to ensure that fairness is applied so that they can offer a service to as many passengers as possible although this meant that regular bookings could not be accommodated at this time. DaR did confirm that they had maintained contact with Ms J and could provide evidence of this.

The Caseworker provided a full response, but Ms J remained unsatisfied citing that friends of hers have been provided regular booking slots to go to the same place. The Caseworker arranged a call with Ms J rather than continue via email.

Following the phone call with Ms J, the Caseworker went back to DaR and challenged them on the handling of the appeal as she did not believe that the process was fair and therefore she understood why Ms J did not have confidence that her complaint was being assessed independently. The Caseworker also suggested that it appeared as if refusal for other trips requested by Ms J was a deliberate act. The Caseworker organised a phone call with the Assistant Manager at DaR to see if we could resolve the issue to the passenger's satisfaction.

Unfortunately, DaR maintained that their resources were insufficient to cover the requested repeat booking and also could not create a trip to carry one passenger. The DaR schedulers had re-visited Ms J's request and concluded that they did not have the space to accommodate her journeys at this time. DaR categorically denied that there was any deliberate denial of service and Ms J has absolutely not been blacklisted. DaR have suggested alternative modes of transport but there would be a cost attached. DaR has advised that there not much more that they can add at this current time. They have suggested reassessing this again in 6-12 months.

The Caseworker requested that DaR continue to look for openings to accommodate Ms J and also discussed options for regular albeit less frequent bookings going forward.

The Caseworker wrote again to Ms J to explain the current situation and why London TravelWatch cannot insist that DaR provide a service when they do not have the resources to deliver it to all those who wish to utilise the provision. Case was closed.

Survey responses

The Casework satisfaction survey is returned anonymously so it is difficult to know to which watchdog a passenger is referring.

Over the last three years, the Casework team have made subtle changes to case handling and their final response. We include a document at the outset that explains who we are, what

we do and our limitations. Within the first contact from the Caseworker, we more directly explain our limitations for all cases about penalty fares. In addition, if we are unable to help a passenger achieve the outcome they are looking for, we explain this under a specific heading in our final response. This approach has helped passengers better understand the position of the watchdogs and this is evidenced by some of the feedback.

You did the very best you could with a stubborn operator (Northern) who doesn't seem ready to face a key weakness within its organisation that is not only upsetting passengers but is causing significant stress to employees.

A genuine thank you for your efforts.

It was dealt with by you, but I was unsatisfied with the outcome via TfL, which refused to provide any further details about what action was taken.

Despite the outcome being unfavourable, I believe you provided the best service you could.

I found the service to be fast and efficient. However, my appeal was unsuccessful which was very disappointing but not the fault of the watchdog.

However, further thought must be given to ensuring passengers understand our limitations at the outside as evidence by these comments.

An absolute waste of an organisation. As an organisation, seek to gain power from the relevant governing body so that you can truly hold rail operators to account and force them to pay fair compensation when things go wrong.

You are doing critically important job. But you lack teeth to make meaningful changes to the poor service provided by the rail operators.

I feel the system is corrupt. There is no intervention power here. It all just goes along with the provider. Very disappointed