

Customer Complaints Handling Procedure



Committed to quality customer service
o Respect o Transparency o Professionalism o Accountability o Innovation

Introduction

ITAL Group Limited (ITAL) offers independent revenue collection and support services (IRCAS) to the transport industry as well as providing transport users with an Appeals Service (AS) through which to submit appeals against Penalty Fare, or Unpaid Fare Notices. The Appeals Service independently consider all cases fairly and consistently following an approved, assessment criteria which, in turn, forms part of the Appeals Service Code of Practice.

Meeting, and ultimately exceeding our customer requirements and expectations is what we strive to achieve. Likewise, we strive to provide to the users of the various transport services a professional and consistent approach to penalty fare and unpaid fare appeal and payment management.

ITAL understands that recipients of penalty fare and unpaid fare notices may feel aggrieved by the issue. We aim to make the process for either paying a notice balance or appealing its issue as easy as possible for all passengers.

Payments can be sent to the office (the address stated on the notice) or made via our website (www.ircas.co.uk) or automatic telephone payment line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Likewise, appeals may be submitted in writing to AS by post, online (www.appealservice.co.uk) or fax. Our website also offers passengers the opportunity to track their appeal online – again, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

As a wholly separate and independent company to the various Train Operating Companies and all other transport providers we must ensure, in our handling of appeals, fairness and consistency to all appellants. Likewise, complete compliance with the Code of Practice and Assessment Criteria at all times.

Our websites intend to help people navigate through the appeals process and making a payment and includes frequently asked questions, a document library and downloadable forms.

Key to the delivery of quality is both our commitment to continued research and development and associated technical growth coupled with, our staff. We believe that it is important to invest in and, develop, the skills and competencies of existing and new staff to ensure that ITAL provides a premier service to its customers.

Principles

This procedure describes the expected minimum activities for addressing ITAL's Customer Complaints for matters arising from the handling of a payment, an administrative issue or an appeal in respect of a rail or bus penalty fare or unpaid fare notice.

Financial Conduct Authority – Consumer Credit Licence

As a business ITAL is not required to hold a consumer-credit licence.

ITAL do however follow the licence requirements in respect of the handling of complaints. In simple terms, it states that there must be in place, and actually operating, an in-house complaints-handling procedure to comply with the rules of licence. The rules are designed to ensure that customers are aware of how to complain and that complaints are dealt with promptly, efficiently, consistently and impartially.

The Role of Transport Focus and London TravelWatch

If passengers remain unhappy with our handling of a complaint or believe that AS has failed to process an appeal correctly, they must refer and escalate the matter to Transport Focus or London TravelWatch, as appropriate.

Both Transport Focus and London TravelWatch are independent, statutory watchdog bodies for transport users. London TravelWatch represents the interest of transport users in and around the London area and Transport Focus aims to protect the interests of Britain's rail passengers and England's bus passengers outside London as well as coach passengers on scheduled domestic services and tram passengers.

Whilst funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) their operations and policy-making are independent of government.

Transport Focus and London TravelWatch, although unable to simply override or overturn an appeal decision made by ITAL through its Appeals Service (AS), will consider whether AS has acted correctly in its handling of the appeal. Both independent parties will intervene should AS fail to resolve a complaint.

Transport Focus Contact Details



FREEPOST (BTEH-XAGE-BYKZ)
PO BOX 5594
Southend on Sea SS1 9PZ

Telephone: 0300 123 2350
passenger helpline open 8am – 8pm Monday – Friday and 8am – 4pm weekends

Fax: 0845 850 1392

Email: advice@transportfocus.org.uk

Website: www.transportfocus.org.uk

London TravelWatch Contact Details



Europoint
5-11 Lavington Street
London
SE1 0NZ

Telephone: 02031762999
passenger helpline open 9am – 5pm Monday – Friday

Website: www.londontravelwatch.org.uk

Complaints Handling Summary

What Procedure must ITAL follow?

To deal with customer complaints ITAL has in place and operates an effective and clear complaints handling procedure. This procedure must be used to deal with any complaint from an eligible complainant, whether this is an individual or a business.

The procedure operated by ITAL therefore takes into account, amongst other things:

- the time limits for dealing with complaints; and
- a customer's ultimate right to refer any unresolved dispute to London TravelWatch or Transport Focus as appropriate.

ITAL Group Limited will also:

- supply details of the Customer Complaints Handling Procedure if asked to do so by an eligible complainant or, where appropriate; automatically supply details of this procedure summary when acknowledging a complaint
- ensure that all relevant employees are aware of, and follow, the complaints handling procedure;
- ensure management controls are in place to enable the business to handle complaints fairly, consistently and promptly – resolving them at the earliest opportunity;
- ensure the process is accessible to customers with specific needs, for example, those who are visually impaired;

- investigate recurring complaints, analysing the causes and taking remedial action where possible;
- when a complaint is upheld, make an appropriate offer of redress which will be honoured if the offer is accepted.

Aims and Time Limits

Meeting, and ultimately exceeding our customer requirements and expectations is what we strive to achieve. Therefore, establishing policy and procedure for addressing concerns arising from activities with passengers enables us to provide guidance to our staff as customer concerns arise whilst ultimately ensuring that these concerns are recognised and resolved satisfactorily without delay.

The rules require ITAL to resolve complaints as quickly as possible. ITAL has up to 20 working days in which to do this. Only complaints that have failed to be resolved within this time should be referred to London TravelWatch or Transport Focus.

Responsibility – Managing the Process

Each business area has a Supervisor or Manager appointed who has responsibility for ensuring that their area of the business delivers a quality service for customers and, in addition, has the added responsibility of working with the Corporate Affairs Director to resolve customer concerns, regardless of whether raised directly, or through receipt of representations made by third parties, such as MP's, London TravelWatch, Transport Focus, Citizens Advice Bureau or similar.

If the Customer Service Supervisor or Manager believes it necessary or, if so requested by the complainant, cases may ultimately be escalated to the Corporate Affairs Director for investigation and review.

To make a complaint regarding any business area please, in the first instance contact ITAL Customer Services in writing. The easiest way to do this is via our IRCAS website (www.ircas.co.uk) or by writing or emailing as follows:

Customer Service Supervisor
ITAL Group Limited
Unit 2/3
Ridgeway Office Park
Bedford Road
Petersfield GU32 3QF

Email: customer.services@ital-uk.com

Receipt of Complaint

1. If a complaint cannot be resolved verbally and/or is deemed to necessitate formal investigation it is escalated by the Customer Service Supervisor to the Customer Service Manager and ultimately to the Corporate Affairs Director.
2. ITAL must issue a prompt written acknowledgment within 10 working days of receipt of any complaint, if unable to resolve the complaint on the spot, or within 3 working days.
3. Details of the ITAL complaints-handling summary may be included in an acknowledgment if appropriate, or if so requested by the complainant.
4. Where escalated, the Corporate Affairs Director will, based on the estimated severity level of the concern raised, decide the date a response is due.
5. Customer complaints response information is also logged onto the IRCAS database and the appropriate passenger record updated.
6. Complaint final responses will be issued at the earliest opportunity and, in line with ITAL policy, not later than 20 working days from the date of complaint receipt.
7. If a further/ongoing complaint is received from a passenger who remains dissatisfied with the outcome or the handling of their complaint the case will be escalated to the Corporate Affairs Director.
8. The Corporate Affairs Director shall thoroughly review escalated cases, ensuring that an appropriate investigation and action has taken place.
9. After escalated review, if original response is deemed as satisfactory this will be confirmed to the complainant.
10. Information in respect of referral to London TravelWatch or Transport Focus will be provided to the complainant as appropriate.

Final Responses

A final response must set out ITAL's end view on the issues raised in the complaint, confirming whether it:

- accepts the complaint and offers redress where appropriate; or
- offers redress without accepting the complaint; or
- rejects the complaint fully

If ITAL reject the complaint, the final response must clearly give the reasons why.

The final response must also tell the customer that, if they remain dissatisfied with the response, they may refer the complaint to one of the passenger watchdog organisations (London TravelWatch/Transport Focus) as appropriate.

ITAL may enclose details of either London TravelWatch or Transport Focus as appropriate in each final response it issues.

Extended Final Responses

ITAL will normally be expected to resolve a complaint, or to have sent a final response, within the 20 working days time limit. If exceptional circumstances mean that this is not possible, then ITAL will send the customer a response in which it:

- explains why it is not yet able to send a final response;
- tells the customer they can refer their complaint to London TravelWatch or Transport Focus as appropriate if they are dissatisfied with the delay; and
- includes contact details for London TravelWatch / Transport Focus as appropriate.

Under the rules ITAL must provide London TravelWatch / Transport Focus details as appropriate:

- when it sends a final response to the complaint; or,
- if time runs out and after 20 working days ITAL is still not in a position to send out a final response.

Making Appropriate Redress

Where a complaint is upheld the business must decide whether to make an offer of redress, providing a fair amount for any acts of omissions for which it is responsible.

Appropriate redress need not always include financial redress. However, in some cases, it might be an offer to put something right – for example, to correct the customer records or simply to apologise.

Management Review

ITAL, through its Customer Service function undertakes to liaise and work closely with all customers ensuring that concerns are recognised, investigated and that corrective and preventative measures are taken.

The Customer Services function will be responsible for advising on overall status of customer complaints, as well as any trends that may develop. ITAL's Management team will regularly review customer complaints.

Summary

When handling complaints, ITAL Group will

- send the customer a prompt written acknowledgement by post or email if it has not been able to resolve the complaint on the spot or within 3 working days;
- ensure it keeps the customer reasonably informed about the progress of their complaint;
- send the customer a final response no later than eight weeks after the complaint was received where possible;
- offer additional advice or referral information as appropriate.