



Consumers and Markets Group

Guidance to Industry – 9 September 2026

The CAA understands the significant difficulties many consumers have experienced, and continue to experience, due to flight delays and cancellations resulting from the technical issue on 8 September that impacted National Air Traffic Services' (NATS) flight planning system. The technical issue led to delays and the cancellation of hundreds of UK arriving and departing flights on 8 September.

The knock-on effect of so many delays and cancellations, and the operational challenges these have caused, means that flights continue to be disrupted. Given the scale of the issue, this has impacted on many airlines' operations with some airlines and airports more affected than others.

The CAA considers that delays and cancellations on 8 September that were caused by the NATS technical issue are likely to be "extraordinary circumstances". We consider that delays and cancellations directly caused by the knock-on effects of the issue are also likely to be "extraordinary circumstances". As a result, passengers are unlikely to be entitled to compensation for cancellations and delays in these circumstances.

The CAA would like to ensure that the overall disruption to passengers is minimised. We remind airlines of the importance of looking after passengers. Airlines can reduce the overall impact of the delays and cancellations by doing all they can to keep passengers informed. Airlines should also ensure they advise passengers of their rights.

Airlines are obliged to offer passengers whose flights have been cancelled the choice of a refund, re-routing at the earliest opportunity or re-routing at a later date. We understand that re-routing passengers is challenging during periods of major disruption and recognise that the meaning of 're-routing at the earliest opportunity' will depend on the facts of each case. Although airlines are taking steps to work through the operational challenges, unfortunately some passengers will still be unable to get to their destination, or return to the UK, as quickly as we or their airlines would like.

Airlines must also look after passengers while they are delayed and provide them with meals, refreshments and hotel accommodation proportionate to the length of the delay. Particular attention should also be given to those who require more practical assistance. In cases where airlines are unable to proactively offer care, or offer suitable replacement flights, we expect airlines to promptly reimburse passengers for the reasonable costs they incur making their own arrangements.

Notes: The CAA's interpretation of extraordinary circumstances is illustrative and for guidance only, rather than determinative of our view in any specific case that may arise. Each case will be context

and fact specific. This does not mean that a passenger or group of passengers cannot try and claim compensation, including through the courts, if they disagree with the CAA's interpretation.

The above relates to [Assimilated Regulation 261/2004](#) which applies to all flights departing from the UK, and flights arriving into the UK on UK and EU carriers. Different rights may apply to passengers arriving on flights to the UK operated by non-EU carriers such as flights from the USA on US carriers.