

# Re-routing in accordance with Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 261/2004 as retained (and amended in UK domestic law) under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and the CAA's view on compliance

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Civil Aviation Authority  
Aviation House  
Beehive Ring Road  
Crawley  
West Sussex  
RH6 0YR

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Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to:  
[consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk](mailto:consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk)

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## Chapter 1

# Introduction

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- 1.1 This document sets out the law in relation to the right to reimbursement or re-routing following a cancellation of a flight. It includes extracts from Regulation (EU) 261/2004 as retained (and amended in UK domestic law) under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018<sup>1</sup> (“UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004”) and relevant case law. It also includes extracts from the interpretative guidelines<sup>2</sup> published by the European Commission in June 2016. The Commission has explained that the guidelines do not cover all the provisions in UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004 and that they are not exhaustive. Their aim is to provide clarity and to help ensure greater consistency across the EU. The CAA supports the guidelines and considers them to set the minimum compliance standard in several areas.
- 1.2 This document also sets out the CAA’s view on compliance with Article 8 of UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004 in a number of areas and this is clearly set out below. In addition, we have set out the factors that the CAA will take into account in considering whether to take action against a particular airline for non-compliance with UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004, including formal enforcement action.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights, and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 295/91 (Text with EEA relevance) (Retained EU Legislation)

<sup>2</sup> [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0615\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016XC0615(01)&from=EN)

## Chapter 2

# Legal framework

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## Regulation EC261/2004 (retained EU legislation)

2.1 The following extracts from UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004 set out the relevant text from the Recitals and Articles that relate to the re-routing obligations.

### Recital 10

*“Passengers denied boarding against their will should be able either to cancel their flights, with reimbursement of their tickets, or to continue them under satisfactory conditions, and should be adequately cared for while awaiting a later flight.”*

### Recital 12

*“The trouble and inconvenience to passengers caused by cancellation of flights should also be reduced. This should be achieved by inducing carriers to inform passengers of cancellations before the scheduled time of departure and in addition to offer them reasonable re-routing, so that the passengers can make other arrangements. Air carriers should compensate passengers if they fail to do this, except when the cancellation occurs in extraordinary circumstances which could not have been avoided even if all reasonable measures had been taken.”*

### Recital 13

*“Passengers whose flights are cancelled should be able either to obtain reimbursement of their tickets or to obtain re-routing under satisfactory conditions, and should be adequately cared for while awaiting a later flight.”*

### Article 4 – Denied boarding

1. .... Volunteers shall be assisted in accordance with Article 8, such assistance being additional to the benefits mentioned in this paragraph.
2. ...
3. ... and assist them in accordance with Articles 8 and 9.”

### Article 5 – Cancellation

T “1. In case of cancellation of a flight, the passengers concerned shall:

- (a) be offered assistance by the operating air carrier in accordance with Article 8; and
- (b) ...
- (c) ...

2. *When passengers are informed of the cancellation, an explanation shall be given concerning possible alternative transport.*
3. ....
4. *The burden of proof concerning the questions as to whether and when the passenger has been informed of the cancellation of the flight shall rest with the operating air carrier.”*

#### **Article 8 – Right to reimbursement or re-routing**

*“1. Where reference is made to this Article, passengers shall be offered the choice between:*

*(a) — reimbursement within seven days, by the means provided for in Article 7(3), of the full cost of the ticket at the price at which it was bought, for the part or parts of the journey not made, and for the part or parts already made if the flight is no longer serving any purpose in relation to the passenger’s original travel plan, together with, when relevant,*

*— a return flight to the first point of departure, at the earliest opportunity;*

*(b) re-routing, under comparable transport conditions, to their final destination at the earliest opportunity; or*

*(c) re-routing, under comparable transport conditions, to their final destination at a later date at the passenger’s convenience, subject to availability of seats.*

*2. Paragraph 1(a) shall also apply to passengers whose flights form part of a package, except for the right to reimbursement where such right arises under Directive 90/314/EEC.*

*3. When, in the case where a town, city or region is served by several airports, an operating air carrier offers a passenger a flight to an airport alternative to that for which the booking was made, the operating air carrier shall bear the cost of transferring the passenger from that alternative airport either to that for which the booking was made, or to another close-by destination agreed with the passenger.”*

#### **Article 11 – Persons with reduced mobility or special needs**

*“1. Operating air carriers shall give priority to carrying persons with reduced mobility and any persons or certified service dogs accompanying them, as well as unaccompanied children.”*

#### **Article 15 – Exclusion of waiver**

*“1. Obligations vis-à-vis passengers pursuant to this Regulation may not be limited or waived, notably by a derogation or restrictive clause in the contract of carriage.*

*If, nevertheless, such a derogation or restrictive clause is applied in respect of a passenger, or if the passenger is not correctly informed of his rights and for that reason has accepted compensation which is inferior to that provided for in this*

*Regulation, the passenger shall still be entitled to take the necessary proceedings before the competent courts or bodies in order to obtain additional compensation.”*

- 2.2 The following extract also sets out the ability to reduce the level of compensation if re-routing is made within certain time frames which lead to less inconvenience for passengers.

### **Article 7 – Right to compensation**

*“1. ...*

*2. When passengers are offered re-routing to their final destination on an alternative flight pursuant to Article 8, the arrival time of which does not exceed the scheduled arrival time of the flight originally booked*

*(a) by two hours, in respect of all flights of 1500 kilometres or less; or*

*(b) by three hours, in respect of all intra-Community flights of more than 1500 kilometres and for all other flights between 1500 and 3500 kilometres; or*

*(c) by four hours, in respect of all flights not falling under (a) or (b),*

*the operating air carrier may reduce the compensation provided for in paragraph 1 by 50 %.”*

## **European case law**

### **C-12/11 Denise McDonagh v Ryanair Ltd**

- 2.3 The case of McDonagh v Ryanair Ltd<sup>3</sup> confirms that if an airline fails to provide care and assistance, a passenger can claim a refund of the expenses they incurred in purchasing their own meals, hotel accommodation etc.

*“Consequently, the answer to the fourth and fifth questions is that Articles 5(1)(b) and 9 of Regulation No 261/2004 must be interpreted as meaning that, in the event of cancellation of a flight due to ‘extraordinary circumstances’ of a duration such as that in the main proceedings, the obligation to provide care to air passengers laid down in those provisions must be complied with, and the validity of those provisions is not affected*

*However, an air passenger may only obtain, by way of compensation for the failure of the air carrier to comply with its obligation referred to in Articles 5(1)(b) and 9 of Regulation No 261/2004 to provide care, reimbursement of the amounts which, in the light of the specific circumstances of each case, proved necessary, appropriate and*

<sup>3</sup>

<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?jsessionid=6429AFD509A9A2678DDDAF269076D34D?text=&docid=133245&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4430644>

*reasonable to make up for the shortcomings of the air carrier in the provision of care to that passenger, a matter which is for the national court to assess.”*

### **C-354/18 Rusu v SC Blue Air — Airline Management Solutions SRL**

2.4 The case of *Rusu v SC Blue Air*<sup>4</sup> confirms that Article 8 requires airlines to offer passengers the option of reimbursement or re-routing. It also states that airlines must provide comprehensive information to passengers about the re-routing options, including flights on other airlines, to allow them to make an informed choice. The Court also found that there was no obligation on the passenger to do their own research to find information on alternative flights. In addition, the Court found that airlines were responsible for offering and organising re-routing and had the burden of proving that the re-routing offered was at the earliest opportunity.

#### **“The sixth and eighth questions**

48. *By its sixth and eighth questions, which should be examined together, the referring court asks, in essence, whether Article 4(3) of Regulation No 261/2004, read in conjunction with Article 8(1) of that regulation, is to be interpreted as requiring the operating air carrier to present the passengers concerned with comprehensive information regarding all the options set out in the second of those provisions, or whether that provision also obliges the passengers in question to contribute actively to seeking information to that end.*
- 49 *In that regard, first of all, Article 4(3) of Regulation No 261/2004 provides inter alia that, if the operating air carrier denies boarding to passengers against their will, it is to assist them in accordance with Article 8 of that regulation.*
- 50 *Next, Article 8 of Regulation No 261/2004, entitled ‘Right to reimbursement or re-routing’, states, in paragraph 1 thereof, that passengers are to be offered the choice between three options which are specified therein, in essence: (i) reimbursement of the ticket cost and, when relevant, a return flight to the first point of departure, at the earliest opportunity; (ii) re-routing, under comparable transport conditions, to their final destination at the earliest opportunity; and (iii) re-routing, under comparable transport conditions, to that destination at a later date at the passenger’s convenience, subject to availability of seats.*

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<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=216542&pageIndex=0&doclang=en&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=4433748>



- 51 *Furthermore, recital 10 of Regulation No 261/2004 summarises the essential elements of that choice, stating that passengers denied boarding against their will should be able either to cancel their flights, with reimbursement of their tickets, or to continue their carriage by air under satisfactory conditions.*
- 52 *Finally, it is apparent from recital 20 of Regulation No 261/2004, inter alia, that passengers denied boarding should be fully informed of their rights so that they can effectively exercise those rights.*
- 53 *It follows from a combined reading of all those provisions and recitals of Regulation No 261/2004, in the first place, that it is for the air carrier which denied boarding to passengers to assist those passengers, in particular by offering them a choice, subject to the conditions laid down, respectively, in points (a), (b) and (c) of Article 8(1) of that regulation.*
- 54 *It thus follows, in the second place, that such an offer must provide the passengers denied boarding with the information needed to enable them to make an effective choice, and in so doing either to cancel their flight and be reimbursed for the cost of their ticket, or to continue their transport to their final destination, under comparable transport conditions, at the earliest opportunity or at a later date.*
- 55 *It thus follows, in the third place, that in the case of a passenger denied boarding who is entitled to assistance from the air carrier concerned, including the right to be given the information needed to enable him to make an effective and informed choice, the enjoyment of such a right cannot entail any obligation whatsoever on his part to contribute actively to seeking the information which the offer from that carrier must contain.*
- 56 *In the light of the foregoing, the answer to the sixth and eighth questions is that Article 4(3) of Regulation No 261/2004, read in conjunction with Article 8(1) of that regulation, must be interpreted as requiring the operating air carrier to present the passengers concerned with comprehensive information on all the options set out in the second of those provisions, with the passengers in question being under no obligation to contribute actively to seeking information to that end.*

#### The seventh question

- 57 *By its seventh question, the referring court asks, in essence, whether Article 8(1)(b) of Regulation No 261/2004 must be interpreted as meaning that, for the purposes of that provision, the burden of proving that passengers were re-routed at the earliest opportunity rests with the operating air carrier, or whether it must be interpreted as meaning that that burden rests with the passengers concerned.*

- 58 *As is apparent from paragraphs 53 and 54 of this judgment, an air carrier which has denied boarding to passengers is obliged to assist those passengers in order to enable them to make an effective and informed choice between the various options laid down, respectively, in points (a), (b) and (c) of Article 8(1) of that regulation.*
- 59 *It therefore also falls to the operating air carrier to offer the passengers concerned the option of being re-routed to their final destination, under comparable transport conditions and at the earliest opportunity, pursuant to Article 8(1)(b) of Regulation No 261/2004.*
- 60 *In making a specific offer, the operating air carrier must take into account and combine several relevant factors which determine that offer, in particular the arrival time at the final destination following the re-routing envisaged, the conditions subject to which the re-routing envisaged may take place and whether the re-routing at issue is practicable through its own good offices or requires the assistance of another air carrier, as the case may be depending on the latter's availability.*
- 61 *In addition, the responsibility of offering and organising re-routing under Article 8(1)(b) of Regulation No 261/2004, a responsibility borne by the air carrier concerned, entails the burden of proving that the re-routing thus organised was performed at the earliest opportunity.*
- 62 *In the light of the foregoing, the answer to the seventh question is that Article 8(1)(b) of Regulation No 261/2004 must be interpreted as meaning that, for the purposes of that provision, the burden of proving that the re-routing was performed at the earliest opportunity rests with the operating air carrier."*

### **C--832/18 A and Others v Finnair Oyj**

- 2.5 The case of A and Others v Finnair Oyj<sup>5</sup> confirms that if a consumer suffers a delay on a re-routed flight, that flight will also be eligible for compensation (subject to extraordinary circumstances).

#### **"The first question**

- 20 *By its first question, the referring court asks, in essence, whether Regulation No 261/2004, and in particular Article 7(1) thereof, must be interpreted as meaning that an air passenger who has received compensation for the cancellation of a flight and has accepted the re-routing flight offered to him is entitled to compensation for the delay of the re-routing flight, where that delay*

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<sup>5</sup> [CURIA - List of results \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/curia/doclist/curia.do?method=docsList)

*is such as to give rise to entitlement to compensation and the air carrier of the re-routing flight is the same as that of the cancelled flight.*

- 21 *In that regard, it should be recalled that, pursuant to Article 5(1)(a) of Regulation No 261/2004, read in conjunction with Article 8(1) of that regulation, in the event of cancellation of a flight, the passengers concerned are offered three different forms of assistance by the operating air carrier, namely either reimbursement of the ticket and, where appropriate, a return flight to the first point of departure, or re-routing to their final destination at the earliest opportunity, or such re-routing at a later date at their convenience, subject to availability of seats.*
- 22 *In the main proceedings, following the cancellation of the flight booked by the passengers in question, Finnair paid them compensation under Article 7 of Regulation No 261/2004 and offered them re-routing, under Article 8(1) of that regulation, which they accepted. Due to a technical failure of the aircraft on the re-routing flight, however, they arrived at their final destination with a delay of more than six hours after the arrival time specified in the offer they had accepted.*
- 23 *The Court ruled that passengers whose flights have been delayed must be regarded as having a right to compensation under Article 5(1)(c) of Regulation No 261/2004, read in conjunction with Article 7(1) thereof, when they reach their final destination three hours or more after the arrival time originally scheduled by the air carrier (see, to that effect, judgments of 19 November 2009, *Sturgeon and Others*, C-402/07 and C-432/07, EU:C:2009:716, paragraph 61, and of 23 October 2012, *Nelson and Others*, C-581/10 and C-629/10, EU:C:2012:657, paragraph 38).*
- 24 *In a case such as that in the main proceedings, the question therefore arises whether the right to compensation enjoyed by passengers on delayed flights, referred to in the previous paragraph, can also be relied on by passengers who, following the cancellation of their flight, for which they have received compensation, have accepted a re-routing flight offered by the air carrier, pursuant to Article 8(1) of Regulation 261/2004, and have reached their final destination three hours or more after the arrival time scheduled by the air carrier for that re-routing flight.*
- 25 *In that regard, it should be noted that Article 3 of Regulation No 261/2004, which determines the scope of that regulation, states, in paragraph 2 thereof, that that regulation applies provided that passengers have a confirmed reservation on the flight concerned or have been transferred by the air carrier or tour operator from the flight for which they held a reservation to another flight, irrespective of the reason.*
- 26 *It follows from that provision that Regulation No 261/2004 applies in particular to a situation in which an air passenger has been transferred by the air carrier, following the cancellation of his booked flight, on a re-routing flight to his final destination.*

- 27 *It must be noted that Regulation No 261/2004 does not contain any provision intended to limit the rights of passengers who find themselves in a situation of re-routing, such as that at issue in the main proceedings, including a possible limitation of their right to compensation.*
- 28 *It follows that, under the case-law cited in paragraph 23 of the present judgment, an air passenger who, having accepted the re-routing flight offered by the air carrier following the cancellation of his flight, reaches his final destination three hours or more after the arrival time originally scheduled by that air carrier for the re-routing flight, is entitled to compensation.*
- 29 *That interpretation is supported, in particular, by two other considerations.*
- 30 *On the one hand, it is apparent from recital 2 of Regulation No 261/2004 that the purpose of that regulation is to address the serious trouble and inconvenience caused by denied boarding, cancellation or long delay of flights.*
- 31 *Passengers who have been exposed to cancellations or long delays, such as those at issue in the main proceedings, have suffered that inconvenience, both in relation to the cancellation of their initially booked flight and subsequently as a result of the long delay of their re-routing flight. Therefore, it is in line with the objective of addressing that serious inconvenience to grant those passengers a right to compensation for each of those successive inconveniences.*
- 32 *On the other hand, in such a situation, if the air carrier were not subject to the obligation to compensate the passengers concerned, under the conditions laid down, failure to comply with its obligation to provide assistance imposed under Article 8(1) of Regulation No 261/2004 would be of no consequence. In so far as the obligation to compensate undoubtedly has incentive effects on that carrier as regards the effective implementation of such assistance, the absence of such consequences would have the effect that respect for the right to re-routing of passengers would be undermined, which would be contrary to the objective of ensuring a high level of protection set out in recital 1 of that Regulation.*
- 33 *In the light of the above considerations, the answer to the first question is that Regulation No 261/2004, and in particular Article 7(1) thereof, must be interpreted as meaning that an air passenger, who has received compensation for the cancellation of a flight and has accepted the re-routing flight offered to him, is entitled to compensation for the delay of the re-routing flight where that delay is such as to give rise to entitlement to compensation and the air carrier of the re-routing flight is the same as that of the cancelled flight.”*

## **European Commission Interpretative Guidelines**

*“4.2 Right to reimbursement, re-routing or rebooking in the event of denied boarding or cancellation*

*Article 8(1) of the Regulation imposes on air carriers the obligation to offer passengers a triple choice, between (i) reimbursement of the ticket price (36) and, in the case of*

connections, a return flight to the airport of departure at the earliest opportunity, (ii) re-routing to their final destination either at the earliest opportunity or, (iii) re-routing at a later date at the passenger's convenience under comparable transport conditions, subject to availability of seats. As a general principle, when the passenger is informed about the cancellation of the flight and is correctly informed on the available choices, the choice offered to passengers under Article 8(1) is to be made once. In such cases, as soon as the passenger has chosen one of the three options under Article 8(1)(a), (b) or (c), the air carrier no longer has any obligation linked to the other two options. Nonetheless, the obligation to compensation may still apply according to Article 5(1)(c) in connection with Article 7.

The air carrier should simultaneously offer the choice between reimbursement and re-routing. In the case of connecting flights, the air carrier should simultaneously offer the choice between reimbursement and a return flight to the airport of departure and re-routing. The air carrier has to bear the costs for re-routing or a return flight, and must reimburse the costs for the flight borne by the passenger where the air carrier does not comply with its obligation to offer re-routing or return under comparable transport conditions at the earliest opportunity. Where the air carrier does not offer the choice between reimbursement and re-routing and, in the case of connecting flights, reimbursement and a return flight to the airport of departure and re-routing, but decides unilaterally to reimburse the passenger, he or she is entitled to a further reimbursement of the price difference with the new ticket under comparable transport conditions.

However, where an air carrier can demonstrate that when the passenger has accepted to give his or her personal contact details, it has contacted a passenger and sought to provide the assistance required by Article 8, but the passenger has nonetheless made his or her own assistance or re-routing arrangements, then the air carrier may conclude that it is not responsible for any additional costs the passenger has incurred and may decide not to reimburse them.

When passengers are offered the option of continuation or re-routing of a journey, this must be 'under comparable transport conditions'. Whether transport conditions are comparable can depend on a number of factors and must be decided on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the circumstances, the following good practices are recommended:

- if possible, passengers should not be downgraded to transport facilities of a lower class compared with the one on the reservation (in the event of downgrading, the compensation provided for in Article 10 applies),
- re-routing should be offered at no additional cost to the passenger, even where passengers are re-routed with another air carrier or on a different transport mode or in a higher class or at a higher fare than the one paid for the original service,
- reasonable efforts are to be made to avoid additional connections,
- when using another air carrier or an alternative mode of transport for the part of the journey not completed as planned, the total travel time should, if possible, be as

*reasonably close as possible to the scheduled travel time of the original journey in the same or higher class of carriage if necessary,*

- *if several flights are available with comparable timings, passengers having the right to re-routing should accept the offer of re-routing made by the carrier, including on those air carriers cooperating with the operating carrier,*
- *if assistance for people with disabilities or reduced mobility was booked for the original journey, such assistance should equally be available on the alternative route.*

*If a passenger has booked an outbound flight and a return flight separately with different air carriers and the outbound flight is cancelled, reimbursement is due for this flight only. However, in the case of two flights which are part of the same contract but still operated by different air carriers, in addition to their right to compensation from the operating air carrier, passengers should be offered two options in the event of cancellation of the outbound flight: i) to be reimbursed for the whole ticket (i.e. both flights) or ii) to be re-routed on another flight for the outbound flight.”*

*“4.4.8. Compensation for late arrival when a passenger accepts a flight to an airport alternative to that for which the booking was made.*

*Compensation is due in such a case. The time of arrival to be used for calculating the delay is the actual time of arrival at the airport for which the booking was originally made or another close-by destination agreed with the passenger in accordance with Article 8(3) of the Regulation. Costs incurred for the transport between the alternative airport and the airport for which the booking was originally made or another close-by destination agreed with the passenger should be borne by the operating air carrier.”*

## Chapter 3

## The CAA's view on compliance with Article 8

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- 3.1 This chapter and the following chapters are primarily concerned with the CAA's view on the acceptable means of compliance for airlines in relation to their obligations under Article 8 of UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004. The CAA has developed this view in the context of its role as the body in the UK responsible for the enforcement of UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004. It is intended to provide clarity for airlines over the circumstances in which the CAA would be likely to consider enforcement action for breaches of Article 8 which harm the collective interests of consumers<sup>6</sup>.
- 3.2 The CAA's view on the acceptable means of compliance is not intended to limit or modify the rights of individual passengers under UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004. Ultimately, it is the role of the courts to interpret and apply the provisions of UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004. The CAA's view on the acceptable means of compliance should not be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice as to the view that a court would be likely to take
- 3.3 It is important, therefore, to distinguish between the CAA's view on the acceptable means of compliance and any views it might have on how the courts might interpret the legal obligations in Article 8. In relation to the latter, the CAA's view is that, taking the specific wording of Article 8(1)(b) literally, the obligation to provide passengers with "*re-routing under comparable transport conditions, to their final destination at the earliest opportunity*" means that passengers choosing the option of re-routing under Article 8(1)(b) are entitled to be re-routed on the next available flight to their final destination, in the same class of cabin, regardless of which airline is operating the flight.
- 3.4 The CAA recognises that a literal interpretation of Article 8(1)(b), as outlined in the previous paragraph, could, in some scenarios, lead to outcomes where the benefit to consumers of being re-routed on the next available flight is significantly outweighed by the cost incurred by the airline<sup>7</sup> in re-routing them. This is especially the case where, at late notice (e.g. an on-the-day cancellation), the airline is obliged to purchase tickets on another airline (or other transport mode) even though the affected passengers would arrive at their destination only slightly earlier than if the airline re-routed the passengers on its own services. In addition, when taking into account passengers' individual circumstances<sup>8</sup>, as well

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<sup>6</sup> Further information on how the CAA prioritises its work can be found in its Prioritisation Principles, which are published here: [www.caa.co.uk/cap1233](http://www.caa.co.uk/cap1233).

<sup>7</sup> Costs which are ultimately passed through to aviation consumers.

<sup>8</sup> That is, the need to attend a specific event at a specific time.

as the potential re-routing options<sup>9</sup> available at any one time, an airline that cancels a flight is likely to find itself faced with a variety of scenarios in which it needs to identify re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b).

- 3.5 For these reasons, the CAA considers that it is necessary to provide airlines with its views on how they should interpret their legal obligations under Article 8 in order to achieve compliance with UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004. In the CAA's view, it is not possible from a practical perspective for it to prescribe detailed rules covering every possible scenario against which it will assess airlines' compliance. Instead, in Chapter 4, the CAA has provided guidance on the acceptable means of compliance when identifying re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b). The CAA is aware of a small number of practical scenarios in which the acceptable means of compliance set out here could lead to adverse consequences. In light of this, in Chapter 5, we have set out further guidance on how airlines should interpret the acceptable means of compliance in these scenarios. In Chapter 6 we have set out additional guidance on a number of specific issues relating to the re-routing obligations under Article 8. And finally, in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, we have set our expectations on, respectively, what airlines should do to demonstrate compliance to the CAA and on handling passenger complaints.

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<sup>9</sup> Relevant considerations are the time of day of the original flight as compared to the time of day of the re-routed flight, the frequency of flights on the route (both of the airline that cancelled the flight as well as other airlines operating the route), the availability of indirect flights, the availability of flights from nearby airports, and the total journey time as compared to the original flight.



## Chapter 4

## Guidance on identifying re-routing options, including on other airlines

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- 4.1 When identifying re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b), airlines will often be able to identify a number of potential re-routing options. The CAA's view is that, in such cases, in order to avoid further disruption to the journey plans of affected passengers, when offering the choice between the three options<sup>10</sup> under Article 8(1)(a), (b) and (c), airlines should always seek to offer the affected passengers the re-routing option under Article 8(1)(b) which re-routes the passengers on the same day as their original flight and via the same route<sup>11</sup>. If this is impossible<sup>12</sup>, airlines should seek to identify alternative re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b) which minimise the disruption to the journey plans of affected passengers.
- 4.2 The CAA accepts that, when offering the choice between the three options under Article 8(1)(a), (b) and (c), airlines will normally prefer to offer affected passengers a re-routing option on their own services or, where applicable, those of their partner airlines. In many cases, this will also be the best outcome for affected passengers. However, in circumstances where there is no re-routing option under Article 8(1)(b) on its own services or, where applicable, on the services of its partner airlines, on the same day as the original flight and via the same route, the CAA's view is that the airline should next seek to identify re-routing options on the services of alternative airlines on the same day as the original flight and via the same route. If such a re-routing option is available, affected passengers should be offered the choice of this option at the same time as they are offered the choice between the options set out in Article 8(1)(a), (b) and (c).
- 4.3 In circumstances where there are no re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b) on its own services, or those of an alternative airline, on the same day as the original flight and via the same route, the CAA's view is that the airline should next identify re-routing options available on the same day as the original flight but involving (a) the use of alternative airports located in close proximity to the original departure and/or arrival airports on both its own services and those of

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<sup>10</sup> As set out in the European Commission Interpretative Guidelines, as a general principle, when the passenger is informed about the cancellation of the flight and is correctly informed on the available choices, the choice offered to passengers under Article 8(1) is to be made once.

<sup>11</sup> That is, for direct flights, the same departure and arrival airport.

<sup>12</sup> Because the airline does not operate any such flights itself or because there are no such flights with other airlines operating on that day.

alternative airlines; (b) the use of alternative indirect flight routes<sup>13</sup> on both its own services and those of alternative airlines; and (c) the use of alternative modes of transport. Given that such re-routing options are likely to lead to additional disruption<sup>14</sup> to the journey plans of the affected passengers, airlines should seek to identify re-routing options which minimise this disruption. In cases where more than one such re-routing option is available, airlines may wish to allow affected passengers to choose between these re-routing options at the same time as they are offered the choice between the options set out in Article 8(1)(a), (b) and (c).

4.4 In circumstances where there are no re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b) on the same day as the original flight, the CAA's view is that the airline should identify re-routing options both before and after the day of the original flight, both on its own services and those of other airlines and transport modes, and via the same route as the original flight as well as alternative routes. Given that such re-routing options are likely to lead to additional disruption<sup>15</sup> to the journey plans of the affected passengers, airlines should seek to identify re-routing options which minimise this disruption. In cases where more than one such re-routing option is available, airlines may wish to allow affected passengers to choose between the re-routing options at the same time as they are offered the choice between the options set out in Article 8(1)(a), (b) and (c).

4.5 For the avoidance of doubt, the CAA does not consider that airlines are obliged to take manifestly unreasonable steps to re-route affected passengers, such as by offering transportation by private jet or private international taxi for long distance journeys.

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<sup>13</sup> That is, a connecting flight involving the same original departure and final arrival airport but via an intermediate connecting airport(s).

<sup>14</sup> Note that, in respect of the use of alternative airlines and other modes of transport, the European Commission Interpretative Guidelines state that "[...] for the part of the journey not completed as planned, the total travel time should, if possible, be as reasonably close as possible to the scheduled travel time of the original journey in the same or higher class of carriage if necessary".

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 10.

## Chapter 5

# Further guidance on specific re-routing scenarios

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## Late night cancellations

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- 5.1 There may be circumstances in which, due to the original flight being cancelled late in the evening, the airline is unable to identify any re-routing options under Article 8(1)(b) on its own services, or those of an alternative airline, on the same day as the original flight. In such cases, although the option of using an alternative mode of transport might be available to the airline, depending on the nature of the journey this could lead to additional disruption and discomfort for the passengers concerned (for example if the only option to re-route passengers on the same day was to transport them a long distance, overnight, by coach).
- 5.2 The CAA's view is the steps for identifying and offering re-routing to affected passengers outlined in Chapter 4 should be followed in all cases, giving consideration to identifying re-routing options which minimise the disruption for passengers. Consistent with this, in cases of late night cancellations where the airline is unable to identify any re-routing options on its own services or those of an alternative airline on the same day, the CAA's view is the airlines should then identify re-routing options on its own services, or those of an alternative airline, scheduled to depart the following morning (or later the following day if flights are not available), ensuring that passengers are cared for in accordance with Article 5(1)(b) of the Regulation.

## Major disruption

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- 5.3 There are a variety of scenarios in which airlines might find themselves needing to arrange re-routing under Article 8(1)(b). Some of these scenarios will be relatively straightforward in that, because of the availability of flights and seats, the airline will be able to re-route affected passengers on its own services on the same day as the original flight. However, other scenarios will be more difficult to deal with, for example where a large number of passengers need to be re-routed because the airline has cancelled a route (as opposed to just a single flight) or where the airline has had to cancel a large number of flights due to industrial action (either of its own staff or those of third parties). In addition, the cancellation may take place at a particularly busy time of year when the availability of seats is less than it otherwise would be.
- 5.4 Although the CAA acknowledges that there will be scenarios where re-routing passengers will pose a substantial practical challenge for airlines, and indeed

may expose airlines to material costs where re-routing is required on alternative airlines, the CAA does not consider that this should be a reason for passengers to accept inferior re-routing options. The CAA's view is that the steps for identifying and offering re-routing to affected passengers described in Chapter 4 should be followed in all cases.

- 5.5 For the avoidance of doubt, in circumstances where an airline decides to cancel a large number of flights, for example because they decide to cancel all or part of the flying on a particular route, the airline is still bound by the obligation to offer a refund or re-route under Article 8(1). The CAA does not consider it is acceptable to automatically refund passengers in these circumstances and re-routing options must be identified and offered on the basis set out in Chapter 4. Indeed, in cases of 'commercial' cancellations, where multiple flights are cancelled because they are uneconomic to operate, the CAA considers that there should be sufficient time for airlines to identify suitable re-routing options in advance of announcing the cancellations, and also to ensure that sufficient staff and other resources are available to rebook passengers on alternative flights.
- 5.6 We note that there are some rare cases where airlines may be the only operator on a route (e.g. on some island routes), and in these cases the options for re-routing may be limited to the use of indirect services, alternative airports, or alternative modes of transport. We also note that extreme weather conditions or industrial action by third parties (e.g. air traffic controllers) may severely limit options on other airlines and may make it impossible to organise re-routing on the same day. In the latter case, we expect airlines to do their best to identify re-routing options which minimise the disruption for affected passengers.

## 'Pay and claim'

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- 5.7 During periods of mass disruption there may be times when implementing a 'pay and claim' system (whereby passengers are empowered to organise, and pay for, their own re-routing, and to claim re-imbursment of the cost back from the airline) provides a quicker and more effective solution for the majority of affected passengers. If an airline offers this option, it must make the process for reclaiming out-of-pocket expenses clear and simple for affected passengers. Further, any upper limits or restrictions set by the airline on what passengers may spend for their re-routed flight should be realistic so that consumers can purchase reasonable alternatives. Guidance on upper limits and restrictions should be made available to the consumer at the time of the disruption. Not all affected passengers will be willing or able to rebook their own re-routed flight, and indeed the legal obligation is clearly on the airline to arrange re-routing. Airlines should take account of this in considering whether to implement 'pay and claim' and under what circumstances, and ensure that the needs of vulnerable passengers, or those who could become vulnerable, are taken into account during this process.

- 5.8 While the obligation remains with airlines to organise re-routing, in considering whether an airline has complied with its obligations under Article 8 of UK (EU) Reg No 261/2004 the CAA will take account of situations where the airlines has implemented a 'pay and claim' system and how well this has worked for affected passengers in practice.

## Chapter 6

# Guidance on related issues

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- 6.1 This chapter considers a range of issues in relation to re-routing and provides further guidance. It should be read in conjunction with the information set out in Chapter 4.

### **Prioritisation**

- 6.2 We expect airlines to give priority to re-routing persons with reduced mobility and any persons or recognised assistance dogs accompanying them as well as unaccompanied children. We also expect that, when organising re-routing, airlines will not split up families. If airlines intend to use alternative airports they should take account of the needs of unaccompanied children and passengers with reduced mobility.

### **Re-routing agreements with other carriers**

- 6.3 We are aware that some airlines have agreements in place with other airlines that facilitate re-routing and allow passengers to be easily transferred onto other airlines. Such arrangements are welcome in that they can minimise both the cost to airlines of re-routing passengers and the inconvenience experienced by passengers in being re-routed. However, where airlines do not have such arrangements in place, we do not accept that this should be a barrier to re-routing passengers on other airlines.

### **Re-routing in a different class of cabin**

- 6.4 The European Commission Interpretative Guidelines adequately cover the issue of re-routing passengers in a different class of cabin. For the avoidance of doubt, the CAA does not consider that the different service levels offered by different airlines according to their business model (e.g. low-cost airlines versus full service airlines) constitute different classes of cabin.

### **Suitability of re-routing options**

- 6.5 In some cases, due to the specific circumstances of the passenger, for example if they need to arrive at their final destination on a certain date and by a certain time, the re-routing option identified by the airline may not be suitable for the passenger. Alternatively, the passenger may feel that the airline has not sufficiently explored the range of re-routing options in order to find the most suitable option for them. In such circumstances, the passenger may choose to re-route themselves and seek to claim back the expense from the airline. A dispute between the passenger and the airline may then arise.

- 6.6 The CAA's view is that, if airlines follow the steps for identifying and offering re-routing to affected passengers described in Chapter 4, in the vast majority of cases airlines will be able to offer a reasonable re-route to affected passengers. Passengers, for their part, should give the airline a reasonable opportunity to identify and offer a re-routing option. In the CAA's view, it should therefore rarely be reasonable for affected passengers to make their own arrangements to re-route themselves.
- 6.7 As described previously, and as clarified in *Rusu v S C Blue*, it is the CAA's view that it is the responsibility of the airline to be proactive in identifying suitable re-routing options and contacting affected passengers to expressly offer them the choice of options required by Article 8(1). In circumstances where the airline has failed to contact affected passengers in a reasonable period of time, these passengers may then be justified in making their own arrangements and seeking reimbursement for the cost of doing so, so long as, consistent with the principles set out in *McDonagh v Ryanair Ltd*, the expenses incurred by the passenger were necessary, appropriate and reasonable to make up for the shortcomings of the airline in offering the passenger a suitable re-routing option.

### Re-routing via alternative airports

- 6.8 Where airlines offer to re-route passengers to / from a different airport than the original flight, the airline should organise the transport to / from that airport. The CAA does not expect airlines to fail in this obligation. However, where such a failure occurs, the airline should provide prompt re-imbusement of any expenses incurred by affected passengers in travelling to / from the alternative airport and should inform the affected passenger directly, for example by email, about how to make a claim.

### Reimbursement of care and assistance expenses

- 6.9 In the case of a flight cancellation, airlines are required to provide the care and assistance to passengers set out in Article 5(1)(b). Again, the CAA does not expect airlines to fail in this obligation. However, where such a failure occurs, the case of *McDonagh v Ryanair Ltd* has confirmed that passengers can claim a refund from the airline of the expenses incurred in purchasing their own meals, hotel accommodation, etc, so long as the expenses were necessary, appropriate and reasonable to make up for the shortcomings of the air carrier in the provision of care to that passenger. Airlines should provide prompt re-imbusement of any such expenses.

### Passenger information

- 6.10 In order for consumers to be properly informed of their rights and options in the event of a flight cancellation, airlines should inform consumers of their policies on rerouting, making clear that they will offer re-routing on other airlines and, where necessary, other transport modes. This information should be provided on

airlines' websites and it should be prominently included in the information sent to consumers regarding the cancellation of their flight. Airlines should also make it easy for consumers to contact them to explore alternative re-routing options if the re-route offered to them is not suitable. In addition, airlines should inform consumers of how to make a complaint or a claim for expenses in cases where a dispute arises between the airline and the passenger.



## Chapter 7

## Demonstrating compliance

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- 7.1 Airlines should ensure that they have the systems and processes in place to be able to re-route passengers on cancelled flights to their final destination at the earliest opportunity, under comparable transport conditions, and in accordance with the acceptable means of compliance set out in this chapter. Airlines that are unable to systematically demonstrate that they have the appropriate systems and processes in place will be more likely to be considered for enforcement action by the CAA, the [CAA's Prioritisation Principles](#) are always considered when deciding whether an issue is serious enough to warrant enforcement action.
- 7.2 Airlines should also ensure that they have the systems and processes in place to record the re-routing options identified under Article 8(1)(b) and the choices that they offered affected passengers under Article 8(1)(a), (b) and (c). This should include when and how the offer of a re-routed flight was made, and the rerouting options offered. Again, airlines that are unable to systematically demonstrate that they have the appropriate systems and processes in place to capture and report on this information may be more likely to be considered for enforcement action by the CAA.
- 7.3 In assessing the compliance of an airline in any particular case, including individual passenger complaints, the CAA will look to the airline to demonstrate that it followed the steps for identifying and offering re-routing to affected passengers described in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 8

## Passenger complaints

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- 8.1 In some situations disputes will arise between passengers and their airlines over the suitability of the re-routing options being offered. The case of *Rusu v SC Blue Air* emphasises that airlines must provide comprehensive information to passengers about the re-routing options, including flights on other airlines, and that the burden of proof is on airlines to show that the re-routing offered was at the earliest opportunity. As set out earlier in Chapter 7, we expect airlines to keep records of the re-routing options identified and offered to passengers on cancelled flights. In handling any complaints and/or claims arising over the suitability of the rerouting options, we would expect airlines to make this information available to the passenger concerned (as well as, where relevant, the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) body or the CAA's Passenger Advice and Complaints Team (PACT)).
- 8.2 In circumstances where the availability of re-routing options is very limited, for example because the airline may be the only operator on a route (e.g. on some island routes), or because extreme weather conditions have severely limited the options on other airlines, we expect airlines to provide detailed information to any passengers that make a complaint (as well as, where relevant, the ADR body or the CAA's PACT) about the conditions or restrictions (e.g. the weather) that limited the re-routing options, the time period affected by the conditions or restrictions, and the steps taken to organise re-routing. We expect airlines to provide official documents (e.g. NOTAMs) which detail the operational restrictions.
- 8.3 Passengers that are unable to secure a satisfactory resolution to their complaint or claim can escalate it to the PACT or, if the airline participates in ADR, the relevant ADR provider or, as appropriate, to the Consumer Council (CCNI) for flights operating to and from Northern Ireland. As in the previous paragraphs, in handling any such complaints or claims, we would expect airlines to make information on the re-routing options identified and offered to the affected passenger available to either PACT, CCNI or the relevant ADR provider. Failure to supply this information is likely to result in the complaint or claim being upheld in favour of the consumer.
- 8.4 This position does not of course affect a consumer's right to take their own individual cases through the court system for consideration of their own particular circumstances.