

School trip cancellations – remember your rights

Organisers of school trips which have been cancelled have been reminded that consumer rights remain unchanged and travel firms must follow the legislation.

Concerns about families not receiving refunds have been raised in The Scottish Parliament.

Scotland's national consumer advice service, consumeradvice.scot, has received queries about children's group bookings for travel which have been cancelled by the provider, with the offer of vouchers being made or a rescheduled trip at a later date.

The bookings include football and other sporting tournaments.

A total of 42 per cent of all queries to consumeradvice.scot since April 1 have been about travel, with around a quarter of these highlighting issues seeking recourse from airlines, travel providers and travel agents where trips are cancelled.

If seeking a refund, in the first instance the organiser of the trip should be identified. Travel companies usually require a named person to arrange travel bookings, and this will often be a teacher or other school employee.

Communication with the travel company should be handled by this person who has the option to seek refunds on behalf of families.

There are then three steps for organisers to take if a school trip has been cancelled:

- Request a refund – The first step is to request a refund from the travel provider and allow them adequate time to process the refund. Under normal circumstances, this would be within 14 days, however due to demand this may take slightly longer.
- Make a complaint to the travel provider – If a refund request has been denied or ignored, then the organiser of the booking can make a complaint directly to the travel company.
- Escalate the complaint – If the travel provider does not come back within eight weeks of the complaint being received with a satisfactory response, then the next stage is to escalate this through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).



Colin Mathieson

Colin Mathieson, knowledge coordinator with consumeradvice.scot, said: "The most common issue being raised

by Scots consumers is travel disruption during the coronavirus crisis, including a large number of concerns about seeking recourse when trips have been cancelled.

“Some of these queries relate to children’s group bookings for travel which have been cancelled by the provider, with the offer of vouchers being made or a rescheduled trip at a later date – rather than a refund.

“Regardless of the current climate with COVID-19, organisers of school trips should remember that consumer rights are maintained and the legislation has to be adhered to by travel providers.

“There are a number of practical steps that organisers can take, and our advisers are on hand to discuss specific cases.”

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