

CMA launches action against British Airways and Ryanair over refunds

Press release

The CMA is investigating whether British Airways and Ryanair have broken consumer law by failing to offer refunds for flights customers could not legally take.



The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has today opened enforcement cases into both firms and written to them detailing its concerns. The move comes after the CMA opened an investigation into the airlines sector in December 2020 following reports that consumers were being denied refunds for flights that they could not legally take.

During periods of lockdown across the UK, British Airways and Ryanair refused to give refunds to people that were lawfully unable to fly, with British Airways offering vouchers or rebooking and Ryanair providing the option to rebook.

The CMA is concerned that, by failing to offer people their money back, both firms may have breached consumer law and left people unfairly out of pocket. It is now seeking to resolve these concerns with the companies, which may include seeking refunds, or other redress, for affected customers.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

While we understand that airlines have had a tough time during the pandemic, people should not be left unfairly out of pocket for following the law.

Customers booked these flights in good faith and were legally unable to take them due to circumstances entirely outside of their control. We believe these people should have been offered their money back.

British Airways and Ryanair now have the opportunity to respond to the CMA's detailed concerns.

For more information, visit the [COVID-19: lockdown flight refunds page](#).

Notes to editors

1. The firms included in the CMA's enforcement action are British Airways PLC, BA CityFlyer Ltd, and Ryanair DAC.
2. It should not be assumed at this stage that any of the airlines have breached the law. Ultimately, only a court can decide whether a breach has occurred.
3. Ryanair told us that they repaid a small number of people having reviewed the specifics of their cases.
4. The scope of the CMA's investigation relates to periods when it was unlawful in one or more parts of the UK for people to travel for non-essential reasons. It covers flights that were not cancelled, and does not cover any other situations.
5. While the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) leads on consumer protection in the airline sector, the CMA has undertaken extensive action in connection with cancellations and refunds during the pandemic and is well placed to support the CAA on these issues. The CMA and the CAA also share the same enforcement powers to tackle breaches of consumer protection law.
6. As an enforcer under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002, the CMA cannot levy administrative fines, but it can enforce consumer protection legislation through the courts, and where appropriate, require additional measures to improve consumer choice, drive better compliance with the law, or secure redress for consumers.
7. The CMA is unable to comment on individual circumstances, nor help resolve individual complaints.
8. All information available in relation to this case is on the [COVID-19: lockdown flight refunds page](#).
9. For media queries, contact the CMA press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.

Published 9 June 2021