# British Airways faces scrutiny after mass flight cancellations at Heathrow



British Airways experienced significant disruptions during the shutdown of London Heathrow on 21 March, with over half of the approximately 1,400 cancelled flights attributed to the airline, affecting about 125,000 passengers. The scale of the cancellation has drawn substantial scrutiny, particularly concerning the airline’s handling of rebooking and passenger rights.

Among those impacted were Joan Keevil and her husband Paul, who were in India on a holiday arranged by Cox & Kings. While preparing for their flight BA256 from Delhi to Heathrow, they encountered the cancellation, which instantiated a series of challenges regarding their return flight. Keevil reported that British Airways improperly informed them that they would have to wait nine days for a flight home, despite existing passenger rights regulations that obligate airlines to find alternative flights on any available carrier.

In communications with British Airways’ support, Keevil expressed concerns about urgent work and family commitments and the urgent need for essential medications. The airline's representative responded to her situation with limited options, citing a lack of available flights and suggesting that she check with her travel agency for possible rebooking. Keevil's insistence on escalating the issue to a supervisor was met with the information that no supervisor was available at that time.

Despite the apparent urgency of their situation and British Airways’ responsibilities under air passengers’ rights rules, the agent pointed to a "policy" that appeared to restrict their ability to facilitate earlier travel. The agent further indicated that alternative routing through Mumbai could not be accepted due to geographical regulations, which left the Keevils in a challenging position.

Ultimately, Keevil opted to purchase replacement flights on Emirates two days after the Heathrow closure, under the expectation that British Airways would reimburse this cost, as mandated by the airline's obligations under passenger rights laws. This incident highlights the crucial responsibilities airlines hold in the context of cancellations and the subsequent support they are required to provide to affected passengers.

In response to the situation, a spokesperson for British Airways stated that the airline had offered passengers nonstop flights with Virgin Atlantic for 25 March, four days after the original departure. The spokesperson indicated that the airline was actively working to resolve the matter with the affected customers.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/british-airways-customer-service-live-chat-heathrow-fire-cancellations-b2727301.html> - This article details British Airways' handling of flight cancellations during the Heathrow shutdown, specifically highlighting the challenges faced by Joan Keevil and her husband. It emphasizes the airline's obligations under passenger rights laws and its response to affected passengers.
* <https://fortune.com/2025/03/22/heathrow-airport-fully-operational-blackout-shutdown-airline-flight-delays/> - This report provides context on the widespread flight cancellations at Heathrow due to a blackout, noting over 1,300 flights were affected. It supports the scale of disruptions British Airways faced.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although not accessible, this source is mentioned as the origin of the information about British Airways' disruptions and their handling of passenger rebooking. It would be expected to corroborate the details provided.
* <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/passenger-rights/en/file/1129> - This link typically provides information on passenger rights in the EU, which would support the obligations British Airways has under these laws, including finding alternative flights for passengers.
* <https://www.caa.co.uk/news/airline-licensing-and-consumer-issues/passenger-rights/flight-delays-and-cancellations/> - This webpage from the UK's Civil Aviation Authority outlines passenger rights during flight cancellations, reinforcing British Airways' responsibilities to passengers like the Keevils.