Your Bus Matters
A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

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Bus Users

Bus Users is a not-for-profit organisation which champions the rights of bus and coach users throughout the UK. We run a complaints appeal service for all areas (with the exception of London and Northern Ireland) and we’re a partner in the Bus Appeals Body.

Set up around 30 years ago by Dr Caroline Cahm MBE, Bus Users brings together bus passengers and bus operators to improve services. At the heart of this are our Your Bus Matters events run in association with local bus companies and local authorities.

These events are a great way for bus operators to meet their customers and find out exactly how they feel about local services. They also provide a unique opportunity for passengers to ask questions and raise concerns directly with the people responsible for their bus services.

The role of Bus Users at these events is to make sure that everyone gets a chance to have their say and that follow-up steps are taken on the issues raised.

This guide explains how we go about organising a Your Bus Matters event, what’s involved and what’s expected of bus service suppliers.
Your Bus Matters – our aims

We run Your Bus Matters events for two reasons.

The first is to bring passengers face-to-face with the people who run their local bus services, with the assurance that their views will be taken seriously.

The second is to pave the way for open and honest consultation to improve bus services for everyone.

We invest a great deal of time and energy ensuring that every Your Bus Matters event achieves these aims.
Before the Your Bus Matters event

Venue
Ideally, Your Bus Matters events should be held on board a bus. Obviously this isn’t always possible and a public building may be more suitable. If more than one operator is involved in an event we’ll agree in advance which operator will provide the bus.

Each event should be held in a busy, central location - shopping centres are ideal. Where a location is restricted we may need support from the operator to secure permission from the local authority.

Staff
It’s essential to have senior staff present at these events, even if more junior staff are attending.

Choose staff who know the local network well and have good communication skills – particularly people who can listen.

Make sure you have enough staff present to deal with potentially high numbers: people will lose interest and leave if they have to wait too long. The Bus Users’ team will try to capture comments from anyone not able to stay.
Local authorities should always field transport officers: Councillors are welcome to attend but comments and questions should be handled by operational staff.

It’s not always necessary for small operators to be present in person. If they have only one or two services in an area, or their services are under contract to the local authority, then the local authority should be able to represent them on the day.

*Everyone involved* must be fully briefed about what’s required of them and the need for good record keeping – the follow-up work we do is as important as the event itself.
Equipment / Materials
All staff must have name badges.

Bus Users will supply the forms needed to capture the names, comments and contact details of visitors on the day.

Display stands, folding tables and banners can be really effective when the weather is good, so please feel free to bring them along. If there are any local authority restrictions on using these items we’ll let you know in advance.

Make sure you have a good supply of your most recent local publicity available.

Survey questionnaires shouldn’t be used at these events unless specifically agreed beforehand. Our aim is to let bus passengers have their say so it’s important that they decide which issues are covered.
Publicity
Bus Users will supply a poster for operators to print and display on local buses in the two weeks leading up to an event. Posters should be at least A3 in size.

Libraries and travel offices are great places to display large posters. We’re very happy to organise this although we might need some help when making the initial contact.

Bus Users will issue a press release ahead of the Your Bus Matters event. Please talk to your Bus Users’ contact about this.

The bus
These events are an excellent opportunity to showcase public transport, so operators should provide the best bus they can – ideally one that’s not scheduled for service on the morning of the event.
On the day

The bus
Make sure the bus is clean inside and out and ensure it’s in place a good half hour before start time.

If the bus is to be parked in a restricted area like a pedestrian precinct, bear in mind that your driver may need extra time to gain access. Make sure he/she has the necessary paperwork for parking.

The doors of the bus should be kept closed until we’re ready to start. Please make sure that a driver is available throughout the event in case the bus needs to be moved or there are any issues with the vehicle. Where necessary, please have someone available to act as banksman to ensure the vehicle is moved safely before and after the event, especially if it’s in a pedestrianised area.

Arrival
On arrival, set up your displays and make sure there is plenty of information for visitors to take away.
**Role of staff**
All staff should be clearly identifiable and have the right equipment to take notes and complete forms.

Visitors should be asked for their name and address (including postcode) or email address if a written response is required. Their signature is also needed for Data Protection purposes.

The issues and concerns raised by visitors should be listened to carefully and time should be allocated as fairly as possible: everyone should have an opportunity to have their say.

Assurances should be given to each visitor that their comments will be taken seriously and that the issues they raise will be followed up. It’s important, however, not to raise expectations about possible outcomes.

Notes should be taken of all comments made.

**Bus Users**
Our aim is to ensure that everyone gets the most out of a Your Bus Matters event.

We’re there to get people on board and to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.

We’ll direct each visitor to the member of staff best suited to deal with their enquiry. If a visitor is unable to wait then we’ll take their details and pass their comment on to the relevant person.

Bus Users’ staff are not there to answer questions.
After the event

Follow up
The follow up to a Your Bus Matters event is as important as the event itself.

A thank you letter should be sent to all visitors who leave their contact details. It should be highly personalised and contain a detailed response to any issues not addressed on the day.

Response to Bus Users
To make sure we know what issues have been raised at a Your Bus Matters event, we’ll collect and make a copy of all completed forms.

You’ll receive a copy of any form relevant to your organisation within a few days of the event.

Summing up
The Your Bus Matters programme is an extremely effective customer service tool. To make sure your organisation gets the most out of each event it’s essential that these procedures are followed closely, in particular that information is recorded accurately and all follow-up undertaken. Bus passengers should be made to feel they’ve been part of a genuine consultation process and that their voice has been heard.
Checklist

1 Two weeks before: Posters about the Your Bus Matters event posted on buses and in information offices

2 Parking permissions obtained if needed

3 Staff selected and briefed

4 On the day: Bus cleaned and well-presented

5 Bus loaded with timetables/publicity material

6 All staff issued with name badges and clipboards

7 Bus in place at least half an hour before the start

8 Notices about the Your Bus Matters event prominently displayed on bus

9 Name and address of each visitor recorded

10 Copies of all information gathered at the Your Bus Matters event passed on to Bus Users

Thank you for being part of Your Bus Matters.