
Accessibility and Inclusion

Review 2020

Introduction

Lothian endeavours to provide an inclusive service for bus travel in Edinburgh and the Lothians that is accessible to all.

Why focus on accessibility?

Our customers...

- 1 in 7 people are over 65
- 1 in 14 people have a physical disability
- 1 in 14 people have a hearing impairment
- 1 in 50 people have a visual impairment
- 1 in 50 people have a learning disability
- 1 in 75 people have dementia
- 1 in 97 people have epilepsy
- 1 in 99 people have autism

Approximately 5000 babies are born every year in Edinburgh alone, which means there are parents across Edinburgh with as many as 25,000 children under the age of 5.

All of these groups can struggle with travelling on public transport if we are unable to make the appropriate adaptations and reasonable adjustments. For many, public transport is the only option. Failure to create an accessible and inclusive environment in which disabled individuals feel confident and safe to travel will contribute to levels of isolation and loneliness in Edinburgh and its surrounding areas.

Accessibility and Inclusion Goals

We will...

- explore the barriers to travel in Edinburgh, what can we improve or influence, what is beyond our control and we excel at
- aim to improve our standards as an inclusive employer of choice – ensuring managers have the training that they require to support their colleagues, ensuring that all colleagues have access to the support that they need and know where to find it
- openly communicate throughout the business – training customer facing colleagues, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and best practice experiences so that everyone is '*on the same page*'
- openly communicate with our customers – encourage personal engagement through social media, host and attend events, involve colleagues and customers in awareness days and make improvements to the signposting on our website and in our TravelHubs

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- promote advocacy – form solid and honest relationships with local organisations and charities based on mutual appreciation and being a voice for those who are unable to speak up for themselves
 - empower our customers – host and attend forums, coffee mornings and events. Ask for advice and publicise changes made on the back of feedback received from customers
 - enhance Lothian's reputation as a business that cares about its colleagues and its customers and contributes significantly to making Edinburgh and the city region an accessible and inclusive place to be
 - set high standards and lead by example

Review

Strategic focus

The review focused on two key pillars, customer engagement and creating a culture of inclusion.

All future actions taken will be based around one or both of these key areas.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

- we will engage with customers and stakeholder groups to better understand the accessibility and inclusivity of our services
- we will create a dedicated accessibility channel through which our customers can access additional support and share their own personal experiences
- when looking to make changes we will actively engage with our customers
- we will use our media output to support local organisations and raise awareness of a variety of disabilities throughout the year by using our own colleagues and customers as positive role models

CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

- we will ensure our online services are up to date and easily accessible to everyone
- we will review the information that is available for our customers and how it is formatted
- we will review the physical accessibility of our buildings where practical and relevant
- we will invest in training for our colleagues so that they are better equipped to recognise and assist customers with additional needs
- we will commit publicly to working towards a better understanding of disability and encourage our customers to be considerate of one another's needs when travelling with us
- we will highlight the prevalence of hidden disabilities by publicly adopting the Sunflower Lanyard and further promoting use of the Thistle Assistance Card
- we will promote the use of consistent language throughout our business

Action Plan

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT | CREATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Year 1 – 2020

- The recruitment and induction of a dedicated Accessibility and Inclusion Officer. Build internal and external networks, nurture and establish new partnerships 
- Review the physical and digital accessibility of the business and take steps towards making initial improvements 
- Customer facing colleagues attend CPC training and benefit from Disability Awareness Training 
- Develop and have ready to launch a 'Return to Public Transport' campaign for post-pandemic Edinburgh in order to regain trust and instil confidence in disabled and vulnerable service users. (This will be delivered in line with political support at the appropriate time.) 

Year 2 – 2021

- Use internal and external communications to launch a Hidden Disabilities campaign culminating in the adoption of the Sunflower Lanyard at a time appropriate for the business
- Create a survey to distribute to service users and key stakeholders via external network established in Year 1
- Review the responses from the Accessibility Survey and produce a report outlining and discussing the findings to highlight areas of the business that may require action
- Trial an Accessibility Travel Forum, inviting individuals with a range of access needs, sharing travel experiences and discussing how we can make improvements to our service
- Agree and publish equality statements:

Ethnicity and Public Transport Statement

Gender and Public Transport Statement

Year 3 – 2022

- Gain recognition as a Dementia Friendly, Epilepsy Friendly and Autism Friendly company.
- Explore diversity and inclusion face-to-face or e-learning training

Measuring KPIs

MEASURE	CURRENT	TARGET
Number of customer facing colleagues that have completed Disability Awareness Training	Complete	All customer facing colleagues to have attended one day training by Dec 20
Complaints and commendations received through Customer Services	Data held not detailed enough	Aim to gather data about the nature of communication with a view to reducing the number of complaints received around accessibility by Dec 21
Survey customers with additional access needs	None currently	Create and distribute a survey to external organisations and plan to reassess in 2022
Awards	None currently	Aim to achieve Epilepsy Friendly, Autism Friendly and Dementia Friendly Business status by Dec 22

Our progress

Get to know people and places internally

- ✓ Customer Services team
 - ✓ Communications team
 - ✓ Operations team
 - ✓ Driver training academy
 - ✓ Bus design and engineering team
 - ✓ People services and HR
 - ✓ TravelHubs – Shandwick and Waverley
 - ✓ Garages – Longstone and Central
 - ✓ Park and Rides
 - ✓ Airport
 - ✓ Police Liaison Officer
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Get to know the business from the grassroots

- ✓ Understand previous and current bus design
 - ✓ Explore the manufacturing process and collaborate with ADL
 - ✓ Attend CPC and Driver Training School
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Get to know people and places externally – organisations and charities

- ✓ Hearing Link
 - ✓ RNIB Scotland
 - ✓ Alzheimers Scotland
 - ✓ Headway
 - ✓ Lothian Autistic Society
 - ✓ MS Society
 - ✓ Epilepsy Scotland
 - ✓ Age Uk
 - ✓ Autism Initiatives
 - ✓ ECAS
 - ✓ Capability Scotland
 - ✓ Euan's Guide
 - ✓ Police Scotland
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Get to know external associates

- ✓ Airport Accessibility and Inclusion Team
 - ✓ LNDR Accessibility and Inclusion Team
 - ✓ British Transport Police
 - ✓ Women in Transport
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Audit of digital assets

- ✓ Look into potential changes for website (for visual and hearing impaired individuals)
 - ✓ Collaborate with the marketing team
 - ✓ Extend '*families*' area and explore partnerships to strengthen our messaging
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Review bus design and signage

- ✓ Draft new signage and research appropriate pictograms
 - ✓ Work collaboratively with engineering and communication to audit on bus signage
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Review accessibility and signage in TravelHubs

- ✓ Higher backed chairs in Shandwick
 - ✓ Explore the possibility of customer seating at Waverley
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Review driver and customer service adviser training ready for Sept 2021

- ✓ Attend CPC training with each trainer
 - ✓ Attend Epilepsy Awareness Training
 - ✓ Design and plan new training for 20/21
 - ✓ Consider how CPC training can be developed in the future to include elements of diversity and inclusion training and further soft skills
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Explore training for Senior Managers with a view to being an Inclusive Employer

- ✓ Mental Health First Aid
 - ✓ Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - ✓ Dementia and Alzheimers
 - ✓ Learning Disabilities
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Encourage and support a return to using public transport post-pandemic

- ✓ Reconnect with organisation contacts on return from furlough
 - ✓ Discuss the impacts that the pandemic has had on user groups
 - ✓ Explore ideas centred around improving the confidence of disabled and vulnerable individuals in the steps Lothian have put into place to keep them safe
 - ✓ Explore the use of accessible space availability and seat capacity on our Lothian app to provide our customers with more information to plan their journeys
 - ✓ Utilise the accessibility database to proactively communicate information about our service changes, travel guidelines and transition back to 'normal'
 - ✓ Ensure information to all organisations in our newly developed network can be communicated to those service users that may not have access to our social media channels or other platforms
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Action Plan – year 2

This plan takes into consideration the strategic vision of the City of Edinburgh Councils' City Plan 2030 and City Mobility Plan 2021-2030 which places particular emphasis on the creation of places based around people rather than cars. Lothian will be a primary source of travel for the majority of people moving into and around the city and wider regions.

From communication and operational delivery through to aspects of future vehicle design, Lothian recognise its responsibility as a public transport operator to be as accessible as possible for all lifestyles and cultures. Lothian will be a key contributor to the City of Edinburgh's aim of a greener, more economically viable and less socially isolated city.

Conditions of Carriage and Mobility Scooter Review

In 2015, Lothian reviewed the access of mobility scooters on buses by trialling a Class 2 mobility scooter on a number of differently designed vehicles across our fleet. It was found that the scooter could not get on and off the bus safely in every bus design. Therefore, Class 2 mobility scooters can only be allowed onto buses if folded and placed in the wheelchair space as luggage.

The operations team are currently updating our Conditions of Carriage, including a re-write of all aspects of accessibility. We organised and performed another trial of Class 2 mobility scooters on a range of bus types and have produced a 2020 review that has been used to make alterations to our Conditions of Carriage.

We also wish to address previous concerns amongst new parents and buggy users that Lothian are not always accessible to young families. We will explore new ways to reach out to prospective parents and encourage them to consider purchasing lightweight and foldable buggies which are easy and safe to use on public transport. We will develop partnerships with local retailers to ensure people have access to helpful information.

Hidden Disability Awareness Launch

The Sunflower Lanyard was designed to discreetly indicate that the wearer may need additional support due to a hidden disability. It was launched in 2016 and has been adopted globally by the NHS, major airports, railway and coach stations, supermarkets, emergency services and an increasing number of large and small businesses.

Lothian has always been committed to providing an accessible and inclusive service and our drivers and customer service team have taken part in disability awareness training. Lothian propose to take that a step further by publicly recognising the issues associated with Hidden Disabilities and adopting the Sunflower Lanyard. The hope is, by doing so, we instil confidence in disabled customers that they will be able to travel with us safely and without judgement. By publicly adopting the scheme we promise to educate our customer facing colleagues about the prevalence of hidden disabilities thereby fostering a culture of greater understanding kindness and patience.

Summary of actions:

- plan an appropriately timed official public '*launch*' day where Lothian advertise our adoption of the Sunflower Lanyard and recognition of hidden disabilities
 - Lothian will join the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme as a company, investing in products and making lanyards available at TravelHubs and Park and Ride facilities.
 - encourage discussions in driver and customer service training about hidden disabilities and understand that some customers have additional needs, making colleagues aware of the meaning behind the Sunflower Lanyard – (this started to happen in 2020) then provide badges/ wristbands as a statement of solidarity
 - work with the communications team and local charities to produce an on-brand set of marketing based around hidden disabilities and the Sunflower Lanyard
 - leverage our own assets to promote key messages
 - work with local charities to produce '*Customer Spotlights*' on social media with a view to highlighting examples of Hidden Disabilities, their additional needs and how the bus is a safe and vital means of travel
 - create a '*Try a bus*' calendar with the driver training school where organisations can book a time to introduce their service users to the bus in a safe setting
 - re-word signage in priority space of buses – (introduced on 2020 buses)
 - rewrite and launch new accessibility travel page for Lothian digital platforms
 - add a family section to the accessibility page on the website and openly converse with local parent groups to ensure messaging is appropriate, helpful and welcoming. Explore partnerships with pram centres, John Lewis PLC and the Parent and Pregnancy Centre to mirror our messaging and signpost expectant families
 - explore the use of language when talking about disability with service users and disability activists to ensure we use the most appropriate and up-to-date terminology
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Accessibility Survey

Create a survey which can be distributed amongst the disability organisations with whom Lothian have created relationships, we will be seen to ask and listen to customers and make efforts to address concerns. The idea behind this survey is that although Lothian do a lot for accessibility, many of our service users are not aware of the work that has been done. An accessibility survey will highlight the areas in which Lothian is excelling and give us an idea of the groups that currently use our services and indicate which areas require more resources.

Summary of actions:

- draft questions for the accessibility survey
 - create an appropriately worded on-brand survey in all forms necessary to ensure it is accessible to all disabilities
 - distribution of survey to local charities and organisations
 - collection and analysis of data to be included in a full accessibility review paper
 - positives and improvements to be highlighted, plans formed and changes suggested across the business where required
 - inform customers of the points highlighted and any changes made *'You said, We did'*
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Accessibility Report

Creation of an Accessibility Report using research carried out in 2020/21 with an aim to:

- review the current accessibility of Lothian services
- consider broader evidence from the public transport industry to identify and prioritise areas for improvement
- compare current accessibility against the review produced in 2012
- engage with stakeholders and service users to share positive and negative public transport experiences
- promote the improvements made by Lothian in terms of Accessibility and Inclusion

The research to be reviewed in this report will include:

- a comparison of how Lothian measure up against PSVAR and other industry legislation
 - collation of wider research on accessibility issues faced by the public transport industry
 - the 2012 Lothian accessibility report
 - identifying and engaging with key stakeholders
 - the most recent customer survey responses relevant to accessibility
 - a new survey assessing accessibility across our services
 - an up-to-date mobility scooter review
 - mobility scooter reviews carried out in 2015 and 2020
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Accessibility Travel Forum

Trial of a forum for discussion amongst a variety of groups across Edinburgh and the Lothians. The attendees should be a mixture of disabled people, those who work with disabled people and families with babies and young children. Contributors should all either use Lothian or have an interest in using Lothian in the future.

The aim of this forum will be to:

- discuss current problems around travel in Edinburgh that may need to be considered for action by the business
- highlight positive experiences around travelling in Edinburgh that can be harnessed as best practice and replicated where possible
- encourage a culture of inclusion in Edinburgh as groups with different access needs can share experiences and discuss their personal requirements
- explore events and campaigns that we can take part in to improve accessibility and inclusion in our community

If successful, this is potentially something that we would propose to run quarterly.

Use this network to explore how we can further improve and promote our Tour Buses in an accessible way.

Consider options such as creating material for those travelling with hearing impairments, visual impairments, cognitive impairments and mobility impairments including wheelchair users. This could include a partnership working with some of the main attractions on routes and providing information about their level of accessibility for these user groups.

Explore how these individuals can record and share their journey experiences with Lothian so that we avoid overlooking any positive or negative experiences e.g. bus experience diary, mystery customer organisation etc.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

2020 – 2022

KEY DELIVERABLES

A regular and well attended Accessibility Travel Forum (quarterly, biannually or annually).

A demonstrable increase in positive feedback about all customer facing aspects of the business, both through our social media and customer services channels and through an Accessibility Travel Forum and follow-up survey.

A decrease in negative feedback and complaints from customers with additional access requirements.

An increased number of people using our services with additional accessibility requirements, including disabled customers, people with health conditions and those with young families.

Reports of reduced isolation from the charities and organisations in our network, with more of their service users having the confidence and ability to access the local community.

An increased awareness, confidence and competence throughout our workforce when it comes to helping customers with additional access requirements.

Growth of a network of knowledgeable individuals (including disabled customers and buggy users) to advise and support decisions made throughout the business.

Recognition as a business from national organisations including the labels 'Dementia Friendly', 'Autism Friendly' and 'Epilepsy Friendly'.

