



## A quick guide to setting up a customer panel

Local people can be a force for good when it comes finding creative and innovative solutions to their transport needs. Customer Panels are an effective way for local authorities and operators to engage with their communities in order to explore all the opportunities for change.

### The benefits

Customer Panels can bring focus and clarity to the views and concerns of local people.

They can identify improvements to services, address potentially difficult issues around cuts to services and concessionary travel, and help to engage and inform.

Run effectively, Customer Panels can demonstrate a genuine regard for the interests of local people, promoting passenger confidence and encouraging more people on board.

### Planning

Research is crucial, and any operator or local authority thinking of setting up a Customer Panel should consider the following points:

- Does a forum already exist that could support the aims of your Panel?
- Is there enough demand in the local community to make a Panel worthwhile?
- What local issues and concerns might encourage people to participate?
- Are there any local passenger or transport groups that could be involved?
- Who will be responsible for running and organising the Panel?

### Next steps

To ensure the Panel is effective and meets its aims, the following steps need to be taken:

- Develop a code of conduct to be agreed and signed by everyone involved, so that participants understand their roles and the objectives of the Panel
- Appoint a chair capable of managing Panel meetings and ensuring good conduct
- Identify individuals to sit on the Panel – Customer Panels should have a maximum of 12 people, representing users and non-bus users from a range of diverse backgrounds. It should also include any interested parties such as local councillors and MPs, as well as other operators. Potential Panel members can be identified through your complaints procedure and social media, as well as being recommended by people already working with you
- Recruit Panel members – Send potential members an invitation to a Panel meeting, explaining the aims and benefits of the Panel and include your code of conduct so they have a clear understanding of their role
- Formalise a process for recruiting new members
- Actively promote the Panel to demonstrate its value and a commitment to its purpose

This can be done through local radio stations and newspapers, social media and through local schools, colleges and transport or passenger groups

- Draft a programme of meetings and adhere to a focused agenda
- Make available summaries of the meetings and any action points in writing or electronically
- Ensure the meetings offer genuine value to everyone involved and that they continue to meet the overall objectives of the Panel.

Once the Panel is established, actively communicate its work and successes to demonstrate its impact and encourage more people to contribute.

### **About Bus Users**

Bus Users is a charity that campaigns for inclusive, accessible transport. We are the only approved Alternative Dispute Resolution Body for the bus and coach industry and the designated body for handling complaints under the Passenger Rights in Bus and Coach Legislation. We are also part of a Sustainable Transport Alliance, a group working to promote the benefits of public, shared and active travel.

Alongside our complaints work we investigate and monitor services and work with operators and transport providers to improve services for everyone. We run events, carry out research, respond to consultations, speak at government select committees and take part in industry events to make sure the voice of the passenger is heard.

Bus Users UK Charitable Trust Ltd is a registered charity (1178677 and SC049144) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (04635458).

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