

OXFORDSHIRE BUS PASSENGER CHARTER

Introduction

This Bus Passenger Charter applies to bus services across Oxfordshire that are covered as part of the Oxfordshire Enhanced Bus Partnership. This charter sets out what you can expect from your local bus operator and local council, how operators and Oxfordshire County Council (the County Council) will put things right when things go wrong, and your rights as a passenger. It also sets out how you can make the most of riding buses across Oxfordshire.

Both the County Council and local bus operators work in partnership to make buses better for you. But each have their own distinct responsibilities in doing so. As a general rule, anything to do with infrastructure (e.g. bus stops) is a matter dealt with by the County Council, and anything to do with the buses and bus services themselves is dealt with by the operator of that bus service.

This Bus Passenger Charter is intended as a *minimum standard* for bus services in Oxfordshire. Individual bus operators and the County Council may have their own passenger or customer service charters that go above and beyond these minimum standards. Both the County Council and local bus operators commit to exceeding these minimum standards where feasible to do so.

What you as a passenger can expect from bus operators

Local bus operators are the companies that run local bus services themselves, either commercially or under a contract. On all services, you can expect the following.

Buses will be safe, clean, and comfortable

All local bus operators commit to providing the highest standard of service every day. Buses will be cleaned every day before starting service, and where possible will be cleaned during the day.

All buses are maintained by skilled staff to ensure that they provide a comfortable journey, including checking heating, cooling, and lighting. Drivers also receive training to ensure that they provide you with a safe and comfortable journey, and make you feel welcome when getting on board.

Should you feel unsafe or have an emergency, you should contact the driver when it is safe to do so. All our bus companies work with the Police and other safety agencies to ensure that your journey is safe.

Many buses are fitted with CCTV for your safety, with recordings of people on buses kept in line with best practice guidance from the Information Commissioners Office. There should be signs on board the bus indicating if the bus has CCTV or not.

All bus operator staff are trained to ensure that your safety and comfort come first. Every bus company wants to ensure you enjoy travelling with them, and to make

your journey a pleasant experience. All drivers receive training in addition to the statutory minimum requirements to improve their customer service.

We aim to ensure that the service is reliable, and keep you informed during times of disruption

Sometimes buses do get delayed, and for a variety of reasons. The most common cause of delays is traffic. The County Council is the local highway authority for Oxfordshire and has a statutory duty to ensure that traffic moves freely on the local highway network.

Both the County Council and local bus operators will work together to identify areas of the County where traffic congestion is making buses unreliable. They will then work together to make improvements to roads that will make buses more reliable. The County Council will then look to make highway improvements in those areas that improve the reliability of buses. In all of its highway improvements, the Council will ensure that improving the reliability of buses is considered as a high priority. In making those improvements, the County Council will consult with bus passengers as part of statutory consultations as a minimum.

Local bus operators will do their utmost to keep to the timetables advertised. You should expect that no bus service should run any more than one minute early, or five minutes late. The reliability of bus services is regularly monitored, and issues reported to the Area Traffic Commissioner.

In the event of delays occurring, both the County Council and bus operators will endeavour to keep you informed, and to help you on your journey. In the first instance, we will attempt to inform you before your journey starts. Such disruption will be communicated by either bus operators or the County Council to local media, the local real time information system, Traveline, and to other organisations. Information on such disruption will also be posted on social media through the accounts of operators and Oxfordshire County Council.

Many buses also report disruption in real time through a live data feed. This means that you may be able to check delays to services through an online journey planner, such as Traveline or Google Maps. Local bus operators and the County Council will do everything possible to ensure that this data is accurate and up-to-date.

At some of the busier bus stops, real time running screens may be provided that will provide details of any delays to service. The County Council will ensure that the screens are well maintained, are visible, meet the highest standards of accessibility, and contain up-to-date information on any delays to services. The County Council will also seek to increase the number of bus stops that have real time screens at them.

If disruption happens when you are on the bus, your driver will do what they can to keep you informed about the delays. This is subject to it being safe for them to do so while driving.

Sometimes, delays can be predicted, for example through planned road closures. Both the County Council and local bus operators will advertise the planned disruption

as far in advance as possible, including details of proposed diversions. Where bus stops will be closed or routes diverted, the County Council will ensure that this is advertised at the affected stops in advance.

We will make it easy for you to find out how to travel by bus

Both the County Council and local bus operators want to make it easy for you to find out when buses run, where to, and how much they cost.

Both bus operators and the County Council will publish timetable, fares, and real time running information online in compliance with the requirements of the Bus Services Act 2017. Information on services and fares will also be provided on the websites of local bus operators and the County Council.

Each bus stop will contain up-to-date timetable information and route maps for services serving that stop. At stops where real time screens are provided, the information will be up-to-date and based on real time running of buses serving that stop. Where real time running by a service (for example there may be issues with the data feed from the bus), the timetabled departure time will be shown on the real time screen.

Each bus will have the ultimate destination and service number on the front of the bus, and the service number will be displayed on the rear of the bus as well. The service number and destination may also be shown on the side of the bus.

Local bus operators and the County Council will also publish timetables on their respective websites, and route maps. Both will also endeavour to ensure that these are also provided at local travel information points, bus stations, and railway stations.

Local bus information may also be provided through other parties, such as online journey planners. Both the County Council and local bus operators will work with these providers to ensure that information provided to them is up-to-date. However, the accuracy of any information given to you by these parties is their responsibility.

You can also get service information through Traveline: telephone 0871 200 2233, text 82468 from bus stops showing a text code or online at www.traveline.info.

Notification of service changes will be available at least 21 days in advance and information will be supplied to customers, on request, by post. Notices will also be available on buses.

We will help you travel with confidence

Both the County Council and the local bus operators want to make using the bus available to the widest possible range of people. Everybody should be able to use their local bus service.

All people should be able to easily board buses at their local bus stop and access information in an accessible way. All bus stops on major routes have raised kerbs that allow for level boarding. When the County Council upgrades bus stops, it will

ensure that level boarding is provided at those stops. All bus information at the stop will be clear and legible.

Bus companies are required to run accessible buses, and give accessibility training to all staff. Local buses will provide accessible seating near the entrance to the bus which prioritises disabled and elderly customers. All bus operators will make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of individual customers, as per the requirements of the Equalities Act.

All bus operators will give training to staff in helping people with disabilities to travel on buses. This training will be kept up to date and be regularly undertaken.

Both the County Council and local bus operators will provide dedicated helplines and support for people with disabilities. Local timetable and fare information will be provided in accessible format on request, for example in large print or Braille.

What happens when things go wrong

Occasionally things will go wrong, despite our best efforts. We will do what we can to put things right for you when they do go wrong, and here we set out how we plan to do this.

If there is a problem with the infrastructure, you should contact the County Council

Infrastructure such as bus stops and roads can get damaged and fall into disrepair. Should a bus stop be damaged in any way, it should be reported to the County Council's Highways Team. This can be done online through <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/contactus/contact-highways-team>. You can also write to the County Council at County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND.

If there is a problem with the bus service, you should contact the bus operator

All local bus operators must provide you with their contact information on request. Each local bus operator must make available to you details of their complaints and customer service process, and be easy for you to contact them. They should tell you clearly how your issue should be dealt with.

If you are seeking a refund on your fare, the bus operator must make this process clear to you.

What you can do if your matter is not dealt with in a way that is to your satisfaction

If your issue is to do with bus stops or infrastructure and has not been dealt with in a way that is to your satisfaction, the County Council has a formal complaint procedure. You should report your complaint via the County Council website in the first instance at <https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/generalcomplaintform>. Once you contact the County Council it will respond to you within three days, to find out more about your complaint and let you know how the County Council will work with you to resolve it.

Should your complaint to the County Council not be resolved to your satisfaction, you may be able to appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman. To find out more and to take your issue further, look at their website at www.lgo.org.uk, and their telephone number is 0300 061 0614.

If your issue is to do with the bus service or bus, and the operator has not dealt with the matter to your satisfaction, you have the option of approaching Bus Users UK, who will try to resolve the issue for you. Their website is www.bususers.org, and their telephone number is 0300 111 0001.

Bus Users UK may refer your complaint to the Bus Appeals Body, whose website is www.busappealsbody.co.uk. Local bus companies are expected to act on the Bus Appeals Body's recommendations.

Your legal rights

When travelling on local buses, you have several legal rights that we would like to make you aware of.

All passengers on local buses have the right to:

- Non-discrimination with respect to tariffs and contract conditions based, directly or indirectly, on nationality;
- Non-discrimination of anyone with a disability or restricted mobility as well as financial compensation for loss or damage of their mobility equipment in case of accident;
- Adequate information throughout your trip;
- Minimum rules on travel information before and during your journey as well as general information about your rights in terminals and online;
- A complaint handling mechanism by operators made available to you;
- Contact details of an Enforcement Body, responsible for enforcing passenger rights regulations and, where appropriate, imposing penalties.

If you are elderly and of the State Pensionable Age:

- You can apply for a bus pass. If you meet the criteria, the County Council must issue you a pass. Information on how to apply for a bus pass can be found on the County Council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/older-persons-bus-pass.
- Local buses must accept the bus pass and allow you to travel for free with this pass so long as you are eligible for it, and you travel on a weekday after 9:30am and anytime on a Saturday, Sunday, or Public Holiday. Some bus operators may extend this free travel period to include weekdays before 9:30am, but this is entirely at their own discretion.

If you have a disability:

- Buses designed to carry over 22 passengers on local and scheduled routes must comply with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR);

- Drivers of buses must provide disabled passengers with certain types of assistance for example deploy boarding ramps and lifts when required, provide wheelchair users with assistance to board or alight the vehicle etc.
- For infrastructure, the County Council is subject to the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and has a duty to make reasonable adjustments;
- The Equality Act 2010 also outlines that transport operators must make reasonable adjustments for disabled passengers;
- If you are eligible for a statutory bus pass and you meet the criteria, then the County Council must provide you with it. Information on how to apply for a bus pass can be found on the County Council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/disabled-persons-bus-pass.
- If you cannot travel on your own, you may be eligible for a companion bus pass, which allows them to travel with you for free and must be accepted by bus operators, although your companion cannot travel on their own. Information on how to apply for a companion pass can be found on the County Council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-passes/companion-bus-pass.
- Local buses must accept the bus pass and allow you to travel for free with this pass so long as you are eligible for it, and you travel on a weekday after 9:00am and anytime on a Saturday, Sunday, or Public Holiday. Some bus operators may extend this free travel period to include weekdays before 9:00am, but this is entirely at their own discretion.