
Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy 2025

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Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy 2025

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

Introduction

Lothian Buses has always been a fundamental presence in the transport history of Edinburgh and the Lothians and continues to be a reliable and sustainable public bus service for the people living and working in our communities.

With an expanding network of services and the increasing demand this puts on our capacity and resources, Lothian is actively recruiting operational colleagues. As one of the largest employers in Edinburgh, and currently operating with an aging workforce, we acknowledge the importance of actively planning for the future of our business by prioritising engagement with young people in our communities.

Strategic aims

- ✓ Showcase Lothian colleagues as community champions and positive role models.
- ✓ Promote Lothian Buses as an inclusive employer with a vast range of career opportunities and employee benefits.
- ✓ Reduce instances of antisocial behaviour and crime on board and targeting our services.
 - Improve customer confidence, comfort, and safety.
 - Improve colleague safety and staff retention.
 - Protect company reputation and revenue.
- ✓ Explore best practice with other transport operators.
- ✓ Demonstrate our proactive preventative efforts to our operational colleagues for their reassurance and support.
- ✓ Assess impact by gathering and analysing quantitative and qualitative data.

Strategic focus

The actions outlined in the Action Plan that sit alongside the Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy will revolve around two key strategic pillars – Engage and Educate.

We intend to **engage** with the young people in our communities and create positive relationships based around mutual respect and understanding. We will use such engagements to showcase our colleagues as community champions and positive role models as well as demonstrating the behaviour that we expect from our customers when they use our services.

We also intend to **educate** young people about the impact that antisocial behaviour can have on our colleagues and customers, and the repercussions that may impact their own lives and futures. We will use opportunities in schools, colleges and universities to present our services as a sustainable, affordable and an inclusive way to travel. We will also provide training and information to our operational colleagues about our robust reporting procedures and the support that is available to them.

Antisocial Behaviour and Crime

Public transport operators across the UK find that their services are regularly affected by antisocial behaviour (ASB) and hate crime (HC), and Lothian Buses is no different.

Analysis of incident records confirms that ASB is not confined to any single demographic group. Between January 2023 and March 2025, approximately 41% of incidents were attributable to adult passengers, with the remaining 59% of incidents associated with children and teenagers (see Graph 2).

Evidence gathered from both independent surveys and our own witness accounts demonstrates that young people are also disproportionately affected by ASB on public transport. Notably, 51% of respondents to the *Truth About Youth* survey, conducted by Young Scot, identified public transport as a setting in which they had felt particularly unsafe within the past year.

It is important to note, however, that both anecdotal testimony and police data indicate that a significant proportion of ASB incidents are perpetrated by a relatively small minority of young people from within local communities.

Lothian appreciates that the introduction of the U22s free bus travel scheme in 2022 has created incredible opportunities for young people to access their local communities in an affordable and sustainable manner. Since its introduction we have a substantially higher number of young people using our services, but this comes with an increase in incidents of antisocial behaviour and crime by young people and these incidents are no longer confined to smaller areas of the city.

As one of the largest and most influential companies operating in Edinburgh and the Lothians, we recognise our responsibility to do all that we can to reduce the instances and the impact of antisocial behaviour on our services, for the safety and comfort of our colleagues and our customers.

Strategic pillars

ENGAGE

School services

- Lothian will continue to provide school services in partnership with local councils and, in doing so, will continue to create a positive relationship with school-aged children by demonstrating the benefits of sustainable and affordable public transport, highlighting expected behaviours and our conditions of carriage.

Partnership work

- Lothian will create meaningful partnerships with organisations within our communities that support young people through educational and vocational activities. Lothian will explore how we can support these organisations through sustainable transport provision programme and/or colleague engagement.

Events

- Lothian will attend and support events for young people within our communities to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable and affordable public transport and to create a positive relationship between our driving colleagues and attendees.
- We will explore how we may further engage with young people through our own events.
- We will continue to engage with school-aged children with disabilities through Try a Bus events at schools and organisations. Through these events, we can discuss travel training, expected behaviours and our conditions of carriage, and how young people can access support if they witness/are victims of ASB or HC. These events will continue to be key in breaking down communication barriers between young people and our driving colleagues, therefore promoting respect, and reducing conflict.

School, College, and University Engagement

- Lothian will explore how we can develop and expand our school engagement programme to promote our services as a sustainable, affordable, and inclusive way to travel. We will also promote careers in transport to young people from across our communities, making positive role models of our colleagues from departments across the business.

EDUCATE

Customer Education

- Lothian will continue to partner with Police Scotland in the delivery of an educational programme in schools across our communities, focussing on conversations around safe and inclusive travel and the impacts of antisocial behaviour. We will explore how we can develop and expand this programme to ensure it has the impact and reach required to make a substantial difference in our communities.
- We will continue to run apprenticeship schemes across the business and explore ways in which we can further expand and improve this offering.
- We will work with our Communications Team to explore the possibility of using marketing to demonstrate the behaviours that we expect from our customers when using our services with an

aim to create a culture of respect on board our services and a more positive travel experience for all.

- We will work with our Communications Team to explore how we can use our enrolment in the Hate Crime Charter to encourage customers to report instances of antisocial behaviour and crime through the official channels.

Colleague Education

- Lothian will explore how we use Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) and New Driver Training to create engaging content about ASB and the Hate Crime Charter. Driving colleagues will be provided with information about how to support victims of ASB, the internal support that is available to our colleagues, and how to report instances using our robust internal reporting procedures.

Current Provision

School Services

- East Coast Buses and Eve Coaches, in partnership with East Lothian Council, currently provide school transport to 14 schools and colleges in East Lothian.

Partnership Work

- In 2024, our control team attended two engagement events organised by Places for People, based in the Niddrie area, including the Places for People Christmas Lights Switch on where we took along our 'Christmas Bus' to spread festive cheer to the local children ahead of the big day.
- In 2024, Lothian became the transport partner for the World Orienteering Championships, promoting the sport to a wider audience via our social channels and on-bus screens.
- In 2024, we continued as the International Children's Festival's official transport partner, promoting innovative family-friendly theatre and dance to young audiences.
- In 2023, Lothian provided an updated Lothian bus to The Risk Factory, which is now used to help children, young people, and those with special needs learn how to deal with or avoid everyday risks. The double decker bus was redesigned in-house and fitted with brand new messaging (in the form of creative vinyls and an animation which could be shown on the bus's digital screens).

Events

- Student Fairs - Every year, we engage with students from colleges and universities in Edinburgh and the Lothians to promote our services as the safest, most reliable way to and from their place of education as well as promote Lothian to students who have recently moved to Edinburgh.
- Doors Open Day - Our Doors Open Day is always a huge event for our younger customers and there are always a variety of activities aimed at children. We will explore how we can better engage with young people aged 13-18 through activities at this event.
- Young Drivers 2024 - Lothian took part in the Young Drivers event at the 02 Academy, promoting safe driving and road awareness to sixth year pupils. The pupils visited our bus to discover more about bus drivers' blind spots and ask questions about sharing road space with smaller vehicles.
- Emergency Services Day 2024 – We attended alongside representatives from Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, Military Police along with various local agencies. Lothian had various “freebies” to give away and our stall was amongst the busiest there.
- Midlothian Community Alcohol Partnership event - This was designed to coincide with the launch of their Bonfire Night and Halloween campaign to reduce the amount of antisocial behaviour. This event was held at the McDonald's at Hardengreen in Dalkeith where there have been several issues with antisocial behaviour over a sustained period of time. This event was attended by our control team and was supported by police, fire and ambulance services as well as local youth clubs, Midlothian Council and the Scottish Government. Local retailers were also involved in the campaign.

Schools Programme

- St. Augustine's High School – In 2024, we welcomed a group of female pupils to Central Garage to promote the role of Women in Engineering. The group learned more about Lothian's

apprenticeship scheme and heard about the real-life experiences of three of Lothian's female engineers.

- James Gillespie's High School and Drummond High School – This year a group of pupils visited Central Garage to discover more about the roles of our young workforce, including Engineering Apprenticeships and bus driving itself.
- James Gillespie High School and Liberton High School - This year there was a visit by Lothian's Sales Manager for an industry talk on tourism, specifically Edinburgh Bus Tours and how our tours play a major role in the offering for visitors to our city.
- James Gillespie High School – This year, Business Management pupils visited Central to learn more about Lothian's Customer Services function. Following presentations from our Communications Director and our Retail Team Leads, the pupils were given a tour of the depot and offered the chance to ask any questions about Lothian's approach to customer complaints and commendations.
- James Young High School - Our Lothian Country garage management team visited a local school to meet two pupils with lots of questions about the bus industry. The pupils were working on their Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network Roadwise Short Course, supporting young people with additional support needs.

Apprenticeships

- In 2024, our first-year apprentices took part in a pioneering workplace skills development programme, Powering Futures, working on their skills in innovation, networking and collaboration to provide a solution to a sustainability challenge set by Lothian.
- To mark Scottish Apprenticeship Week, we highlighted our apprentices and celebrated their achievements at Lothian and the impact they have on our workplace.
- Lothian advertised four new modern apprenticeship roles, offering young people the opportunity to learn and develop their skills in different departments at Lothian. We now have a Fleet Administrator Apprentice working in Engineering, an HR Apprentice, a Commercial Assistant Apprentice, and a Data Analyst Apprentice working with our operations teams.

Customer Education

- School presentations, in partnership with Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, historically take place in the run up to Halloween and Bonfire Night. The schools that benefitted from this offering in 2024 were Craigmount High School, St Augustine's High School, Craig Royston High School, Dalkeith High School, Penicuik High School, Newbattle High School, and St Thomas of Aquin's High School.
- School patrols - Lothian visited St Augustine's High School (supervisors and the Longstone garage management team along with Police Scotland) due to feedback from driving colleagues, teachers and the police about antisocial behaviour. The team were there to supervise the loading of pupils onto our buses and run engagement sessions within the school to explain the potential results of their behaviour.
- ASB Patrols – In partnership with Midlothian Council's Youth Team and Police Scotland, there were various antisocial behaviour patrols conducted throughout our network in 2024. These took place in evenings and on weekends, and covered 'problem' areas included Niddrie, Craigmillar,

Moredun, Gilmerton, Portobello, city centre, Leith, Oxfords, Wester Hailes, Sighthill, Muirhouse, Drylaw and Clermiston. as well as flagged areas in Midlothian, East Lothian and West Lothian.

Colleague Education

- New Driver Training
 - Colleagues learn about the Under 22 Travel Scheme and their role and responsibility in facilitating travel for young people including the rules and regulations of the U22 bus pass.
 - Training covers the fundamentals of Customer Service and communication.
 - Drivers are taught about Lothian's robust internal reporting procedure and advised about when they should call control vs emergency services for support including ASB and crime.
 - Disability Awareness Training gives our colleagues the understanding that they need to support all customers including those with Autism or Learning Disabilities which may affect their behaviour and communication when using our services.
- Annual CPC
 - CPC 2025 includes a myth busting section which makes reference to misunderstood information about the U22 bus pass.

Next Steps

ENGAGE

- Partnerships - We will work collaboratively with Police Scotland and Places for People, and continue to explore additional partnership opportunities with other charities, organisations and events that support young people within our communities. This may be through sponsorship of awards, transport provision for educational and vocational opportunities and by attending or organising engagement events.
- School Service provision – Lothian will continue to work together with local authorities to provide school transport services in East Lothian, Dunbar, and North Berwick. These services allow us to foster a positive relationship with school-aged children and for many children, this is their first introduction to public bus services. In this way, we can demonstrate the benefits of sustainable and affordable public transport and set out our expectations around behaviour and conditions of carriage.
- School, Colleges, and Universities Visits – Visits to colleges and universities will promote bus travel as an inclusive affordable and sustainable travel solution. As one of the largest employers in the region, we will also continue to explore the development of careers information that can be delivered to young people within our communities. Sessions can focus on anything from engineering/sustainable travel, business, and marketing and a generalised 'careers in the transport industry' presentation covering all roles including driving and therefore bringing in colleagues from across the business.
- Events - We will explore how we may further engage with young people in our own events, and these events will continue to be key in breaking down communication barriers between young people and our driving colleagues, therefore promoting respect and reducing the potential for conflict .

EDUCATE

- Customer Education – We will continue to work collaboratively with Police Scotland to review and update the presentation that is currently used within schools to address the topic of ASB.
- Customer Education - We will explore how we can educate and encourage our customers to report instances of ASB and crime to the police so that we can support official investigations and reduce the risk of conflict for our driving colleagues.
- Colleague Education - We will explore how we can demonstrate how vital inclusive bus travel is to young people. to be used within driver training/garages. This training will outline our robust reporting process and provide information about support that is available for our colleagues that have witnessed or been victim to ASB or crime.

Measuring Impact

It is vital that we make efforts to assess the impact of our youth engagement work by gathering data from the service users that benefit from its implementation.

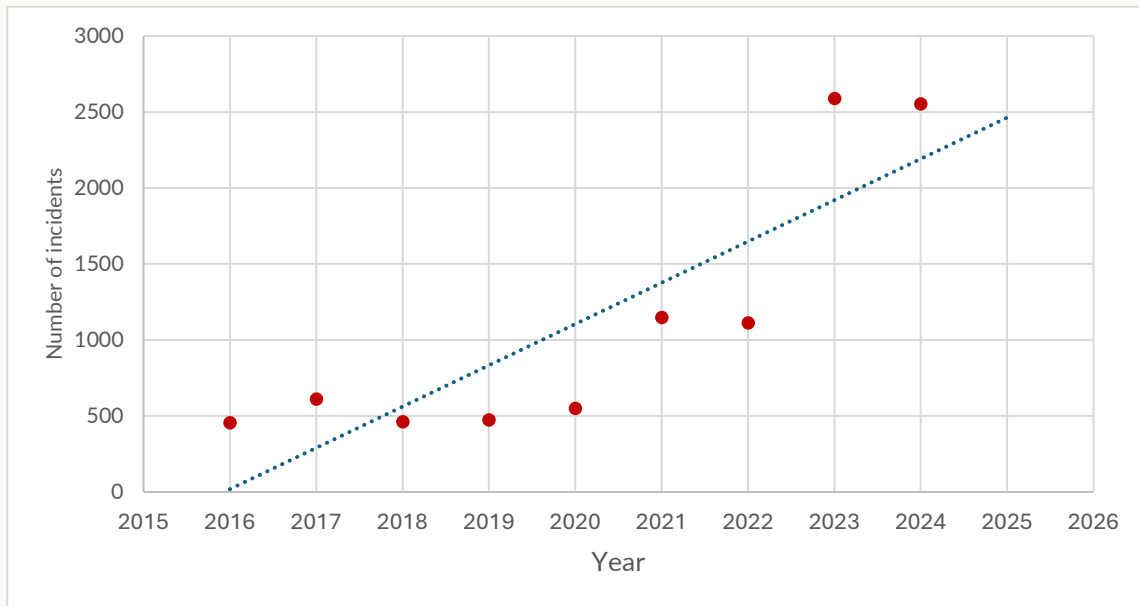
We will gather qualitative and quantitative feedback from the young people attending the Police Scotland and Lothian Buses Schools Programme sessions, customer events and any other outreach work that we organise or support and present this in a review at year end. We intend to use data obtained from Power BI around incidents and locations of youth-lead ASB to compare targeted customer engagement and education with changes to the number of incidents.

This will inform a 2025 Youth Engagement Strategy Review which will outline events, partnerships, sponsorships, training, and career opportunities delivered throughout the year and present the data from feedback, attendance and Power BI at year's end.

In this way we can evidence and evaluate best practice, highlight programmes and events that have been most effective in targeting young people in our communities and use this information to advise our long-term plans with a focus on Youth Engagement.

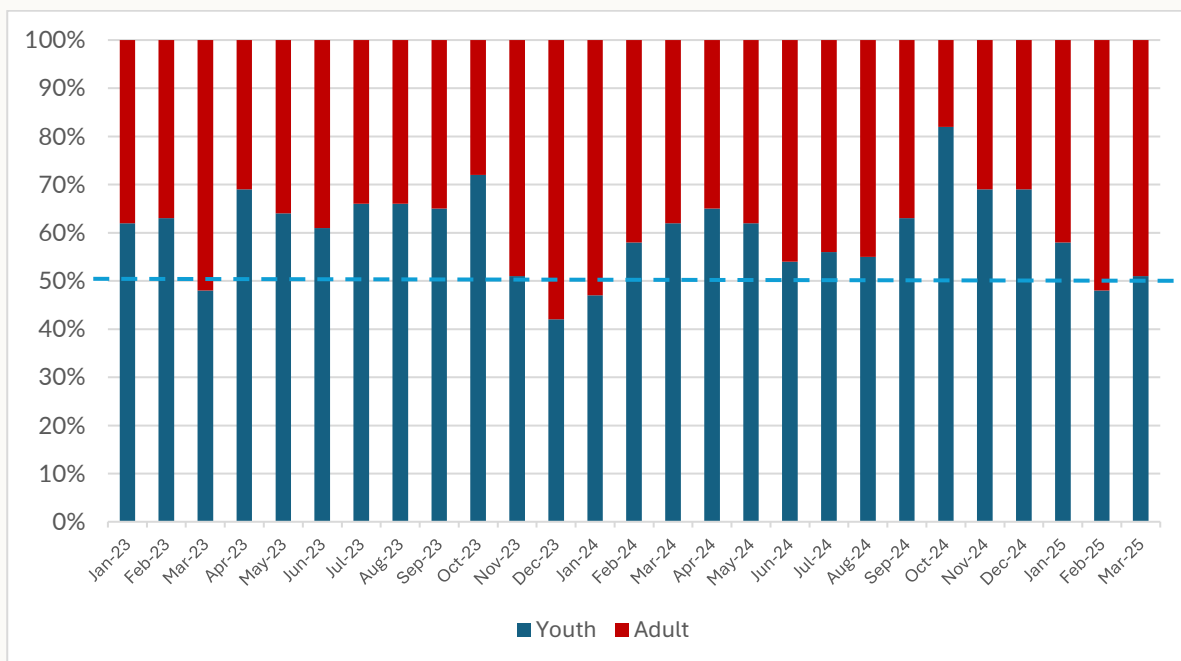
Evidence

Graph 1



Graph 1 shows the number of incidents of ASB in a year-by-year comparison, with a trend line highlighting a general increase. NB. This data shows all recorded incidents and is not specific to age of perpetrators.

Graph 2



Graph 2 compares the percentage of youth vs. adult perpetrators of ASB with a dashed line positioned at 50%. This graph shows that a significant number of incidents are carried out by young people.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2025

	DEPARTMENT	ACTION
Jan	Accessibility and Inclusion	Create Youth Engagement Strategy
	East Coast Buses	School Service recommence after Christmas Holidays
	Lothian Country	Livingstone United FC sponsorship
Feb	Accessibility and Inclusion	Work with PS to update Schools Presentation
	Operations	SQA Qualification for Trainee Driver's launch
	East Coast Buses	Community Champions Sponsorship
Mar	Marketing and Communications	Scottish Apprenticeship Week promotion
	Engineering and People Management	Lothian Apprenticeship Programme Applications open
	Operations and Control	School Presentations in partnership with PS – Gracemount
Apr	East Coast Buses	School Service recommence after Easter Holidays
	Operations and Control	School Presentation in partnership with PS – Gracemount
	Accessibility and Inclusion	Youth Mentors Pilot launch
May	Marketing and Communications	International Children's Festival
	Operations and Control	School Presentations in partnership with PS – Liberton
	Lothian Country	Xcite Mini Rocks sponsorship
June / July	Operations	Heavy Sound summer holiday activity - transport provision
Aug	Marketing and Communications	Edinburgh Fringe Festival
		Supporting PS and STV with comms for Operation Crackle/Operation Moonbeam
		Official Transport partner for Assembly Festival
		Special Service provision for events at Murrayfield and Summer Sessions
		Partnership launch with LAYC and internal comms appeal for support
Sept	Recruitment and Sales	Freshers Fair at all Universities and Edinburgh College
	East Coast Buses	School Service recommence after Summer Holidays
	M+C, A+I, Operations	Doors Open Day YES launch
	M+C, Operations	Internal YES launch
	Recruitment and Operations	Youth Summit at Corn Exchange
		Young Drivers Event 2025
Oct	Marketing and Communications	Scottish International Storytelling Festival
	Operations and Control	Schools Presentations with Police Scotland (Fireworks)
		Multi-agency launch of Operation Moonbeam
Nov	Operations	Fawkes Festival Special Services
	M+C	Supporting Post Bonfire Night Press Conference (PS + STV)
Dec	Marketing and Communications	Edinburgh Christmas Market
	Operations and Control	Santa Bus / Christmas Light Switch on

