
Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy

REVIEW 2025

Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy Review 2025

Introduction

In Q1 2025, Lothian Buses developed its first Youth Engagement Strategy (YES), setting out our commitment to **engaging** and **educating** young people (under 22) across the communities that we serve. The strategy is designed to promote sustainable and affordable travel, encourage responsible behaviour on board our vehicles, and inspire the next generation to consider rewarding career opportunities within the transport sector.

This review outlines the progress made against the strategic aims of YES during the year to date. It highlights key activities and initiatives delivered, including participation in school engagement programmes, sponsorships, marketing campaigns and community events. Together, these actions demonstrate our ongoing effort to connect meaningfully with young people and to support their role in shaping a sustainable future for public transport.

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 Anti-social 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 practise** 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 pillars

ENGAGE

School services
Partnership work
Sponsorships
School, College and University Engagement
Events

EDUCATE

Customer Education
Colleague Education

Impact Summary

School transport provision for **10 schools** in East Lothian benefitting approximately **400 young people**

The organisation has provided sponsorships for events and youth support initiatives totalling more than **£8700**

Transport partnership provision to large events at Murrayfield and the Royal Ingliston Showground, and discounted transport provision for groups of young people attending events further afield, delivered by our driving colleagues

7 school presentations delivered to **over 300 young people**, by our operations team in partnership with Police Scotland

Attendance at **16** Careers and Recruitment events and **6** College and University Freshers Fairs by teams from across the business including driving colleagues, control and supervision team, the driver training team and retail team travel advisers

Input at 'Igniting Change: Youth Summit' – an event for young people specifically tackling the issues of anti-social behaviour and crime around Bonfire Night – the first of its kind

Recorded engagement with over **20,000 young people** under the age of 18

Incidents of Youth on and off bus Anti-Social Behaviour, including broken windows, **almost halved** over the Halloween and Bonfire Night period in comparison to 2024.

An **overall reduction** in Youth on and off bus Anti-Social Behaviour across the whole year, compared to 2024

Impact Review on Youth Engagement within our communities

Based on attendance and engagement data from events specifically targeted at school-aged young people across our communities in 2025, we know that **more than 20,000** young people have directly engaged with our colleagues and services, by taking part in events and activities organised by, or involving Lothian Buses this year. In addition, there are many other events where it hasn't been possible to gather meaningful data on attendees under 18. This means the true number of young people who have engaged positively with our colleagues, or with us as a business, in 2025 is likely to be significantly higher.

Month	Event	Team	Number of young people	Age Range
all year	School Service Primary	East Coast	100	10-12
all year	School Service Secondary	East Coast	300	13-15
all year	Risk Factory schools	Marketing + Comms	4060	10-12
		Marketing + Comms (with PS and Eves)		
all year	Sky Academy		1300	13-15
all year	Youth Mentors	Accessibility + Inclusion	27	13-15
Jan	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	100	10-12
Jan	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	100	13-15
Feb	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	25	10-12
Feb	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	25	13-15
Feb	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	50	10-12
Feb	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	55	10-12
Mar	Schools Presentation	Police Scotland (+ Ops)	50	10-12
Sept	Youth Summit	Ops (+ Comms)	150	13-15
Sept	Uni of Edinburgh	Sales, Retail and Ops	4000	16-18
Sept	Edinburgh Napier	Sales, Retail and Ops	3500	16-18
Sept	Heriott-Watt	Sales, Retail and Ops	1000	16-18
Sept	QMU	Sales, Retail and Ops	1000	16-18
Sept	Scottish Rural College	Sales, Retail and Ops	300	16-18
Sept	Edinburgh College	Sales, Retail and Ops	800	16-18
Sept	Young Drivers Event	Ops	3000	16-18
Dec	Love My Bus Event	Ops + A+IO	60	under 10
Dec	Love My Bus Event	Ops + A+IO	120	10-12
TOTAL			20,122	

Table 1. Table lists the Engagement Events throughout the year where we were able to gather information about approximate number of attendees, listed by age

Table 1 outlines engagement covering a range of activities such as school transport provision, engagement sessions designed to highlight the benefits of bus travel for both individuals and the planet, and sessions aimed specifically at educating young people about the impacts of antisocial behaviour and crime.

School engagement sessions were targeted predominantly at young people aged 13–15, as Operational colleagues and Police Scotland report high levels of on-board and off-board antisocial behaviour within this age group.

Additional sessions covering broader topics, such as public transport use, the benefits of active travel, and basic travel skill; were delivered to primary school pupils ahead of their transition to secondary education.

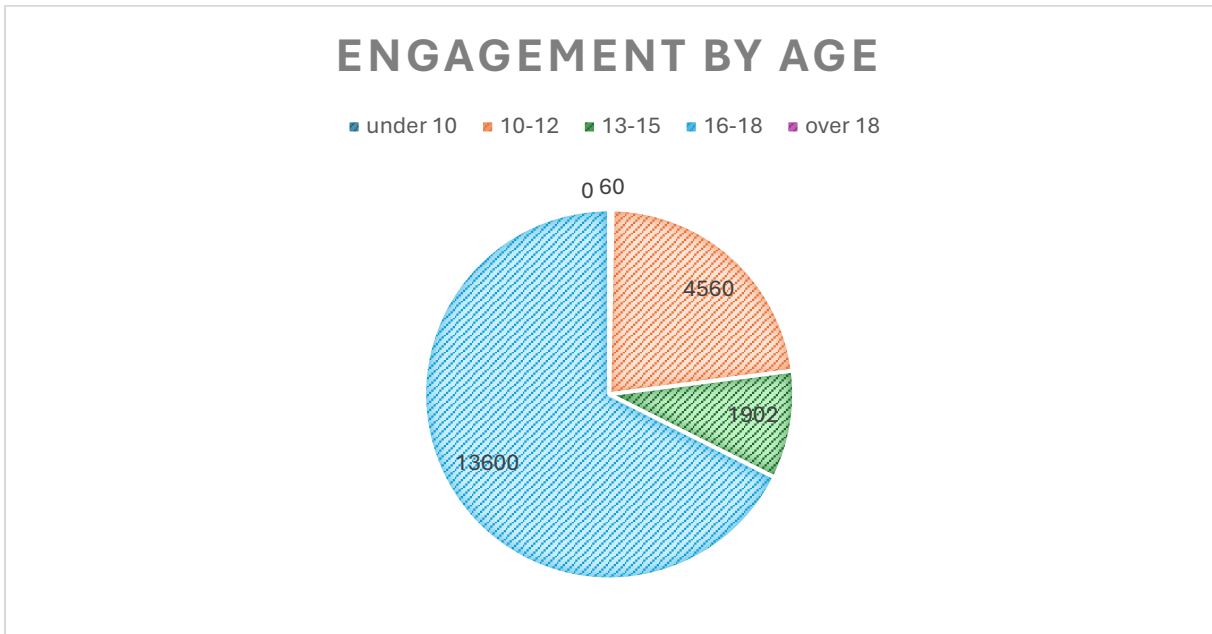
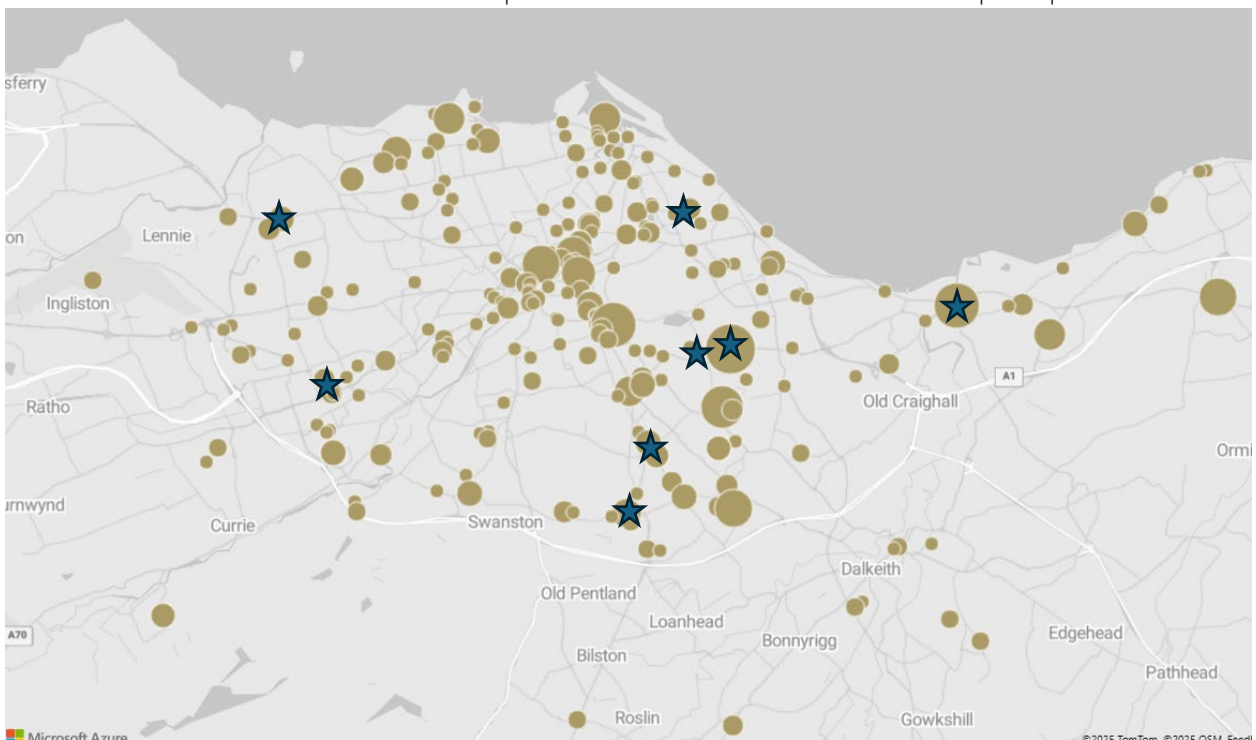


Chart 1. Pie chart illustrating the number of young people involved in direct engagement, by age group

School presentations delivered by Police Scotland and Love My Bus, supported by Lothian, were held in key areas identified by Operations as communities experiencing particularly high levels of youth-related antisocial behaviour (ASB) both on and off buses. Police Scotland’s ability to provide sessions in some areas was limited where schools did not respond to outreach efforts or chose not to participate.



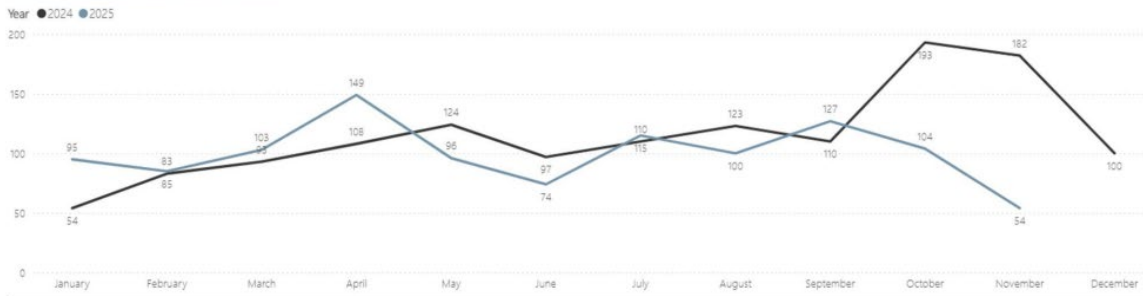
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Map 1. Map illustrating youth on bus and off bus antisocial behaviour levels in 2024 (Gold circles) and in-school targeted delivery by Police Scotland in 2025 (Blue stars)

Impact Review on levels of Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime

Year on Year Comparison

Youth Antisocial Behaviour Trends



Graph 2. Line graph showing a direct comparison of youth on and off bus ASB between 2024 and 2025. The Graph shows an overall reduction in Youth ASB from May – November 2025, with a much lower level of ASB in October and December 2025, compared to 2024.

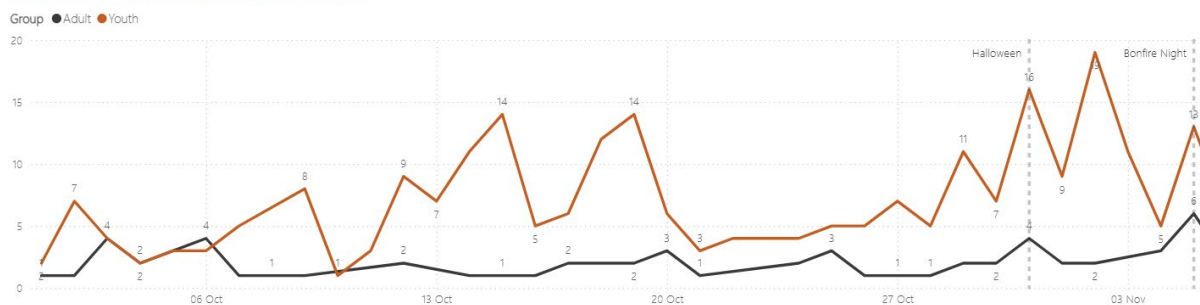
Halloween and Bonfire Night

Data and findings taken from 'Halloween and Bonfire Night 2024 vs 2025' (Maia Hiram, Data Analyst, Lothian Buses)

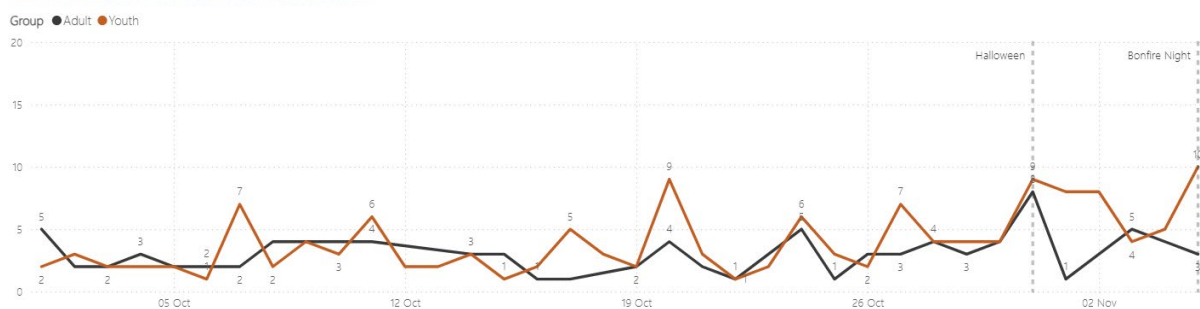
Both Halloween and Bonfire Night are recognised as challenging times due to a historic rise in ASB and crime across the Lothian Buses network in this period. Ahead of these dates, school visits, and patrols with and without Police Scotland are undertaken with the aim of preventing or deterring antisocial behaviour.

- In 2024 this included 25 patrol shifts with police, as well as 24 patrols without. 7 days of school visits took place.
- In 2025, there were 11 patrols with police and 33 patrols without, as well as 4 school visit days.

Adult and Youth Antisocial Behaviour 2024



Adult and Youth Antisocial Behaviour 2025



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Graph 3 and 4. Line graphs showing a direct comparison of youth and adults ASB in 2024 and 2025 with dotted lines to highlight Halloween and bonfire Night. The Graphs show a reduction in youth ASB on these nights in 2025 compared to 2024, and overall lower levels of youth ASB across much of the year

A Year on Year comparison of incidents in Youth on and off bus ASB during October and the beginning of November (covering Halloween and Bonfire Night) shows a significant decrease in the number and severity of incidents.

- On Halloween of 2024, there were 16 youth incidents. There were also 16 broken windows.
- On Halloween of 2025, there were 9 youth incidents (a 44% reduction in youth incidents). No windows were broken on Halloween this year.
- On Bonfire Night of 2024 there were 13 youth incidents and 4 broken windows.
- On Bonfire Night of 2025, there were 10 youth incidents (a 23% reduction) and only 2 broken windows (a 50% reduction).

Discussion

Lothian Buses is proud to be active within the communities we serve, and many of the events, transport provision and other involvement highlighted in this strategy review reflect long-standing partnerships and sponsorships that we have been honoured to support for several years.

In 2025, we introduced several new forms of youth engagement, including:

- Partnership work with Police Scotland CAPs, Places for People, and Sky Academy, providing transport to exciting new opportunities benefitting approximately 1,300 young people in key areas of the city where antisocial behaviour (ASB) has been seen in previous years.
- Travel sponsorship of the Youth Mentors as part of a pilot at Castlebrae High School, delivered in partnership with Police Scotland, Heavy Sound and the school, benefitting 27 young people.
- Attendance and session delivery at the 'Igniting Change' Youth Summit, supporting 150 young people from schools from across our communities.
- A developing partnership with LAYC and other support groups to strengthen youth engagement opportunities across our communities.

The increase in targeted youth engagement, coupled with a marked reduction in incidents of antisocial behaviour (particularly during Halloween and Bonfire Night) clearly demonstrates the positive impact of our collective efforts throughout 2025.

Lothian Buses, and other partners including Police Scotland, utilised social media and internal communications to deliver positive and reassuring messaging to colleagues and the people in our communities, before during and after Bonfire Night 2025. These communications allowed us to demonstrate our proactive preventative efforts to our operational colleagues for their reassurance and support as well as restoring the confidence of our passengers from across our communities. The social media posts by Police Scotland (and shared by Lothian Buses) were received well, with overwhelmingly positive feedback, and contributed to enhancing customer confidence and ensuring the protection of our reputation and revenue.

The levels of engagement, demonstrated by attendance at college and university fairs and careers events, support our strategic aim of promoting Lothian Buses as both a preferred method of transport and an inclusive employer offering a wide range of career opportunities.

These events also provided valuable opportunities to showcase our colleagues within their communities and reinforce our reputation among new and existing customers.

2025 Action Plan of Engagement

ENGAGE

School services

- East Coast Buses and Eves Coaches, in partnership with East Lothian Council, continue to provide school transport to 14 schools and colleges in East Lothian

Partnership work

- Police Scotland
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Risk Factory
- Lothians Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC)
- Edinburgh South Community Football Club

Sponsorships

- Youth Mentor Programme pilot
- Livingston United FC
- East Lothian Community Champions Awards
- Xcite Mini Rocks Event

Events

- Royal Highland Show
- Terminal V Festival and Terminal V Halloween
- Assembly Festival
- Hidden Door Festival
- Fringe by the Sea
- Murrayfield and RHC concerts
- Igniting Change - Youth Summit
- Community Justice and Pathways to Positive Outcomes
- Lothian Bus Open Doors Day
- Young Drivers Event
- Scottish Rugby Partnership – Quilters Nations Series
- Craigmillar Family Fun Day
- Partnership Youth Engagement Event at Newbattle High School
- Fawkes Festival
- Edinburgh Christmas Market and Events
- Santa Bus and Christmas Lights

School, College and University Engagement

- School Presentations
 - The Royal Edinburgh High School

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- Gracemount High School
- Liberton High School
- Carrick Knowe Primary School
- Davidson Mains Primary School
- Gylemuir Primary School
- Love My Bus at Royal High Primary
- Freshers Fairs
 - University of Edinburgh
 - Edinburgh Napier University
 - Heriot-Watt University
 - Queen Margaret University
 - Scottish Rural College at King's Buildings
 - Edinburgh College Midlothian, Sighthill, Milton Road and Granton Campus

EDUCATE

Customer Education

- Police Scotland Schools Presentations
- Igniting Change - Youth Summit
- Community Justice and Pathways to Positive Outcomes
- Young Drivers Event

Colleague Education

- Powering Futures Programme
- CPC 25

Outline of Engagement and Educational Input

School services

Between East Coast Buses and Eves, we delivered regular and reliable school services to 10 schools in East Lothian. This meant that our driving colleagues were in contact with approximately 400 young people daily, acting as positive role models in their local community, demonstrating the many benefits to using public transport and setting a high standard of expected behaviour.

Garage	Route No.	School	Age Group	Approx. No.
East Coast Buses	125	North Berwick HS	Secondary	30
	126			30 90
	127			30
	128	Preston Lodge HS	Secondary	30 30
Eves Coaches	109	Innerwick PS	Primary	20 40
	110			20
	116	West Barns PS	Primary	20 20
	151	Dunbar Grammar	Secondary	20
	152			20 60
	154			20
	157	Knox Academy	Secondary	20 20
	161	North Berwick HS	Secondary	20 40
	162			20
	161	North Berwick Law PS	Primary	20 40
162	20			
163	Preston Lodge HS	Secondary	20 20	
164	Ross HS	Secondary	20 40	
165			20	

Information on East Lothian Council website as follows:

Conduct and behaviour

All children and young people using home to school transport are expected to demonstrate their school values and behave as they would were they in school.

This includes:

- *behave respectfully to drivers, fellow passengers and staff*
- *wear a seatbelt if there is one*
- *have consideration for the vehicle - don't litter or vandalise it*
- *stay in your seat when the vehicle is moving*
- *do what the driver and staff ask you to do*

Unacceptable conduct on school transport will be reported to Transport Services who will liaise with schools. Schools will involve parents in the process at an early stage, and warnings and/or sanctions will be based on the severity of the incident.

Partnership work

Police Scotland Partnership

Following evidence of a significant rise in underage drinking and antisocial behaviour in some of our local communities, Police Scotland (PS) partnered with Places for People (PfP) to secure funding for their Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) initiative. This programme aims to educate young people about the dangers of alcohol misuse, and the impact and consequences of subsequent misbehaviour.

As part of the initiative, PS approached Lothian Buses to explore opportunities for collaboration, including providing dedicated transport for young people to attend Sky Up Academy Studios in Livingston. Here, participants would have access to state-of-the-art broadcasting equipment and the chance to engage with digital artists and create media on important topics such as underage drinking and antisocial behaviour. By engaging with young people in a fun and innovative manner; giving them the opportunity to try something new and exciting whilst providing information and education about challenging topics; the project hoped to see a reduction in negative behaviours from these young people after taking part.

Ten schools across Edinburgh were invited to take part, with almost 13,000 young people benefiting from this unique learning experience. See appendix for Press Release 1



City of Edinburgh Council

In late 2024, Lothian Buses were approached by the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) to discuss existing Travel Training products. CEC was particularly interested in reviewing school transport provision for young people with additional support needs, with a focus on identifying pupils who could benefit from training to develop the skills and confidence required to use public transport independently.

As a result, a new and innovative Independent Travel Coordinator role has been created within Lothian Buses, jointly supported by CEC. This dedicated post will deliver travel training within schools, working with both groups and individuals to build confidence in using public transport.

There is also potential for the role to support our wider Travel Training products, including Supported Journeys. This approach will release resource within our Accessibility & Inclusion

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(A+I) function, enabling the team to focus more strategically on innovation and service development across the wider business.

Risk Factory

In 2023, Lothian donated a double-decker Enviro400XLB to the Risk Factory, to replace the outdated single decker that has been a feature at the venue in previous years. The bus was redesigned and converted by our engineering colleagues to serve as an educational feature at the venue. It is fitted with creative vinyl and digital screens sharing key messages about the dangers of antisocial behaviour and the benefits of using public transport.

In May 2025, we were invited to visit the Risk Factory to tour the facilities and learn more about the impact of the training delivered there. During the visit, the team shared data on the number of young people benefiting from the programme, while we provided further guidance and insights to support ongoing improvements to the training experience.

	Schools	Pupils	Staff / Adult Helpers	Other Groups	Group Participants	Staff / Adult Helpers	Other Group Notes	Total Visitors
January	13	571	68	1	6	6	The Action Group (Young Adults)	651
February	10	492	49	3	34	20	Shared Lives (adults with additional needs); Pathhead Youth Project & West Lothian College (Childcare Students)	595
March	19	876	108	0	0	0		984
October	12	523	60	1	23	6		612
November	18	733	81	0	0	0		814
December	7	367	37	0	0	0		404
Total	79	3562	403	5	63	32		4060

Lothian Association of Youth Clubs (LAYC)

LAYC is a charity supporting community-based youth and children's work in Edinburgh and the Lothians. They support a network of over 130 youth and children's organisations, with nearly 4000 staff and volunteers engaging over 34,000 children and young people.

In the latter part of 2025, Lothian committed to taking part in several events across Edinburgh and the Lothians in partnership with local youth groups and organisations.

Lothian supported several Youth Clubs by providing complimentary travel during the Halloween and Bonfire period, helping to ensure young people could travel safely at what is typically a particularly busy time of year. Building on this initiative, in Q1 2026 we are in the early stages of discussions around P7 transition safe travel planning and exploring additional opportunities to work collaboratively with them throughout the year.

Edinburgh South Community Football Club - £3,500

From Summer 2025, Lothian provided funding to Edinburgh South Community Football Club for high school community programmes in 3 high schools (Castle Brae HS, Gracemount HS and Holy Rood HS) delivering over 800 funded places across 30 sessions to senior pupils.

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In January 2026, Lothian worked with ESCFC to launch Twilight Football Drop-in sessions aimed at young people in S1–S3. The sessions take place on Friday evenings from 5pm–6pm at the Gracemount High School astro pitches and are delivered by a coach supported by two club volunteers. The pilot began on 23rd January and, across the first two sessions, has welcomed over 20 young people from the local area, with 14 signing up to attend on a weekly basis. Those attending are pupils from Gracemount High School and Liberton High School. Discussions during the sessions have been very engaging, with anti-social behaviour (ASB) already emerging as a topic of conversation.

The remaining session dates are schedule across February and March and we have plans to run a further block through to the summer in a similar format. In addition, we are exploring the opportunity to work with the club to deliver a “how to travel by bus” programme as part of P7 transition week. This would be delivered through football and offered to four or five local primary schools in the area.

Sponsorships

Youth Mentor Programme pilot £1400

Heavy Sound is an organisation that functions as an alternative learning environment, providing safe, sustained relationships, nurture, Scottish National and bespoke qualifications, therapies, and further education and training for young people and adults in communities and prisons.

They work with some of the most vulnerable individuals in our communities, helping them to be included, find safety, and build relationships and skills while discovering their potential. By identifying each person's strengths and interests, Heavy Sound supports them in preparing to navigate life. Activities include music, mountain biking, sports, creative arts, education, and mentoring.

In early 2025, Scott Kennedy, Police Scotland's Project Lead for the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU), contacted Lothian Buses to share news of two new roles being created in partnership with Heavy Sound, Police Scotland and Castlebrae Community Campus.

The role of these Youth Mentors was to work with young people identified by social work, teaching staff or parents, as requiring extra support due to behavioural challenges. Lothian Buses were keen to back the initiative and agreed to sponsor their travel by providing each mentor with a Ridacard for the year, enabling them to travel freely across our network alongside the young people they support.

In addition, Lothian Buses were pleased to offer heavily discounted private hire options for group activities during the summer holidays, ensuring these student groups have every opportunity to try new experiences as part of their journey with Heavy Sound

The project has had a significant positive impact on young people, school engagement, and relationships within the Castlebrae community.

- Building trust and promoting open dialogue

Youth Mentors have developed strong, trusting relationships with young people, allowing for open conversations around alcohol and drug use, antisocial behaviour, and criminal justice issues. By adopting a harm-reduction approach, mentors have been able to guide young people toward safer decision-making and increased awareness of their rights.

- Improved school attendance and engagement

Since the introduction of Youth Mentors, several pupils have shown improved attendance, renewed engagement in key meetings, and better relationships with teaching staff. Young people who were previously absent for extended periods are now attending more regularly—some weekly for the first time in months.

- Support during exclusions

Youth Mentors have maintained continuity of support for excluded pupils by meeting them in community spaces (e.g., local libraries). This approach ensured that relationships and learning continued beyond school grounds, providing structure, emotional support, and access to positive activities such as the bike-building project at Heavy Sound HQ.

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- Improved participation and communication

School staff have reported that young people are now more confident in expressing themselves during meetings. Mentors have helped pupils articulate emotions and triggers, allowing staff to develop more effective behaviour support plans.

- Rebuilding relationships through shared activities

Youth-led cooking sessions have created safe, informal opportunities for young people to reconnect with staff and peers. These sessions have been powerful in restoring trust—including moments where young people offered apologies and gestures of reconciliation, fostering pride, confidence, and a renewed sense of belonging within the school community.

Livingston United FC £600

February 2024, Lothian Country proudly sponsored the unveiling of Livingston FC's new away strip.

Lothian Country's involvement with Livingston FC extends beyond the kit, with ongoing support through match and ball sponsorships. Over time, they have built a strong relationship with the club and are committed to strengthening it further.

Their dedication to the local community is also evident in their sponsorship of Livingston United. This partnership is especially fitting, as the Service 73 bus conveniently stops right outside the club's grounds, providing easy access for players and supporters alike.

Livingston FC has noted that data shows a growing number of supporters are choosing to travel via Lothian Country's services — a clear sign of the sponsorship's positive impact on both the club and the business.

We've been proud sponsors of the club for the past couple of years, and we were delighted to confirm that our sponsorship was renewed for the 2025/2026 season.



East Lothian Courier Community Champion Awards 2025 £3000

The awards, held in association with East Coast Buses, aimed to shine a light on the courage, dedication, and selfless acts of individuals and groups making a real difference in communities across East Lothian.

We were proud to sponsor two categories: Community Champion of the Year, awarded to the chairman of Gifford's Community Council, and Little Champion of the Year, celebrating

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children who have made a big impact in their communities – with all three finalists taking home a trophy.



Xcite Mini Rocks Event £200

Families across West Lothian made history on Sunday 18 May 2025 as Scotland's first-ever family functional fitness event – Xcite Mini Rocks – launched at Xcite Bathgate, encouraging families to keep fit and have fun together.

Designed specifically for children aged 8–11 and their grown-ups, Xcite Mini Rocks put families through their paces across eight interactive fitness stations. The event was both a challenge and a celebration for families who take part in Family Fitness classes at Xcite venues – an idea originally suggested by 10-year-old Harris Wernham, a member of Xcite.

This innovative approach reflects the growing enthusiasm for fitness among young people. In 2023/24, West Lothian Leisure reported a 52% uplift in teen gym sessions, a rise undoubtedly supported by the introduction of the U22 bus pass.

With over 50 participants, Xcite Mini Rocks – which took place at the end of Mental Health Awareness Week – marked a major step forward for community-led, inclusive fitness experiences. Keeping the event accessible was a key priority, with tickets kept affordable thanks to sponsorship from local businesses, including Lothian Country.

Lorraine Pollock summed up the impact: *“This is what social impact looks like in real time. Families came together, kids got inspired, and our whole community showed what can happen when we think differently about fitness.”*



Events

Royal Highland Show

Lothian was proud to be the official transport partner for the Royal Highland Show, operating special shuttle services on Routes 97 and 98 to connect visitors directly to the event. We also engaged with customers by running a competition for event tickets. An extensive social media campaign promoted the event and the special services in the lead-up and during the show. Organisers and attendees praised Lothian Buses for the seamless running of services.



Lothian colleagues supported the event by running street support before and after events, to ensure customers were able to navigate the city and make their journeys safely.

Terminal V Festival and Terminal V Halloween

As the official transport partner for the Terminal V festival, located at The Royal Highland Showground, Lothian operated dedicated shuttle services on Route 98. A targeted and well-received social media campaign supported both events in April and November, and both organisers and attendees commended the smooth, reliable transport provided.

Hidden Door Festival

Lothian delivered additional services to provide late-night travel connections after the event, taking place at The Paper Factory in Maybury, ensuring attendees could travel home easily and safely.

Assembly Festival

As the official transport partner for the Assembly Festival, Lothian engaged with customers by running a competition for event tickets, helping to build excitement and increase accessibility to the shows.

Fringe By The Sea

To support the Fringe By The Sea festival in North Berwick, Lothian Buses operated additional late-evening services on East Coast routes 120, 121, and 124. These services became essential on Saturday 3rd August when ScotRail services were cancelled due to a fatality on the line, and organisers and attendees praised East Coast Buses for ensuring people could still travel back into the city.

Murrayfield & Royal Highland Centre Concerts

Ahead of major concerts at Murrayfield Stadium and the Royal Highland Centre – featuring international acts including Robbie Williams, Oasis, Chappell Roan, and Sam Fender – Lothian delivered marketing campaigns providing customers with clear, timely information about road closures, diversions, and available bus services. Lothian colleagues were on hand in the city centre to support these events by providing street support before and after events, ensuring customers were able to navigate the city and make their journeys safely.

Igniting Change - Youth Summit

We were proud to support the Igniting Change Youth Summit at Edinburgh’s Corn Exchange as part of our commitment to engaging with young people and ensuring safe, welcoming, and connected communities across our city.

The summit brought young people together from secondary schools across Edinburgh to share their ideas, experiences, and concerns regarding fireworks related disorder. These insights are vital in helping us and our partners better understand the challenges that fireworks-related disorder can create, not only for public safety but also for the wider community and transport networks.

As one of the partners involved, we created and delivered an ‘on-bus’ workshop outlining the risks and consequences of anti-social behaviour and firework related disorder, for our business, our colleagues and customers. Our session, and those delivered by other partners including Police Scotland and Fearless, gave young people the chance to explore the real impact of anti-social behaviour and to consider how collective responsibility can make a difference on our streets and on our buses.



The day also featured a wide range of engaging activities, from learning about fire prevention with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, to understanding animal welfare with Edinburgh Zoo, and exploring health impacts with the Scottish Ambulance Service and Medics Against Violence. Alongside this, young people had the chance to get creative through a DJ workshop with Turn The Tables and by leaving their mark on an interactive graffiti wall.

Fearless will now use the energy, creativity, and ideas from the event to shape a youth-led social media campaign, launching on 27th October across Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram.

Community Justice and Pathways to Positive Outcomes

Midlothian Community Justice Partnership recently hosted an event in Dalkeith, bringing together individuals and organisations from across the community to explore how we can work collaboratively to support those affected by the justice system while helping communities to thrive. Lothian Buses was represented on the day by colleagues from our Operations team.

Lothian Bus Open Doors Day

Lothian's annual Doors Open Day event took place on Saturday 27 September at the Marine Depot, from 11:00 to 15:00. The event delivered a varied and well-attended programme of family-oriented activities, attracting approximately 5,000 visitors, the majority of whom were families with children and young people with a passion for bus travel.



As well as providing information about our vehicles and services, and a retail stall selling products for all the family, we were pleased to be joined by partners from a wide range of organisations including...

- Vintage bus display, provided by the Lothian Bus Consortium Trust
- Edinburgh Zoo
- Police Scotland
- Bus Users Scotland
- ZF Services UK (provider of vehicle products and systems)
- Armed Forces
- Andy's Man Club

Families also enjoyed a variety of activities available for young attendees, including face painting, bouncy castles and inflatable obstacle courses.

The event once again proved to be a valuable opportunity for the community to learn more about transport, public services, and local organisations, while enjoying a day of informative and family-friendly activities. We have received fantastic feedback about the event, which was enjoyed by both members of the public and our volunteers.

Comic Con Scotland

Comic Con Scotland returned to The Royal Highland Showground in October and Lothian Buses operated dedicated shuttle services on Route 98, as well as an informative social media campaign outlining other services that can be used to travel to the event.



Young Drivers Event

Lothian recently took part in the Edinburgh Young Drivers event, held at the O2 Academy (Corn Exchange). The annual initiative, aimed at senior secondary school pupils, focuses on promoting safe driving, road awareness, and the responsibilities of becoming a new driver.

The event brings together pupils from across Edinburgh and the Lothians, along with key partners including Police Scotland, who delivered impactful presentations highlighting the consequences of dangerous driving. Over the four-day event, more than 3,000 attendees explored various aspects of road safety, including vehicle, pedestrian, and passenger safety, the laws of the road, first aid, and how to travel by and interact safely with public transport.

Lothian has proudly supported this event for several years, reinforcing our commitment to road safety and community engagement. This year, our Training School team and central driver Naomi Dunn, along with driving instructors and members of the training team, delivered two interactive workshops designed to give pupils a hands-on understanding of what it's like to operate a large vehicle:

- On-Bus Workshop (Blind Spot Awareness):
Pupils experienced first-hand the challenges our bus drivers face daily, including identifying blind spots and understanding how these can affect driver visibility and safety. This session helped attendees appreciate the complexities of driving a bus and the importance of staying alert around large vehicles.
- Bus Simulator Experience:
Inside the main hall, pupils were able to try our bus simulator, which was extremely popular throughout the week. The simulator provided a safe and engaging way to demonstrate stopping distances, the impact of harsh braking, and the challenges drivers face when reacting to other road users' behaviour.



Feedback from both our colleagues and attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Pupils showed great enthusiasm and curiosity, engaging positively with our team and gaining a deeper appreciation for the skill and awareness required of professional bus drivers.

However, our team also identified opportunities for future improvement and expansion:

- Broader Discussions: Introducing a larger group presentation focused on blind spots, cycling, e-bikes, and how road user behaviour can distract or endanger bus drivers.
- Enhanced Engagement: Exploring ways to reach more pupils at once, as individual interaction was limited due to high attendance and time constraints.
- Expanded Demonstrations: Including insights into Lothian's wider safety operations – such as CCTV systems, control room functions, and anti-social behaviour management – to provide a fuller picture of the company's safety-first approach.

Scottish Rugby Partnership – Quilters Nations Series

In partnership with Scottish Rugby, Lothian were excited to bring our customers the chance to win tickets to this year's Quilter Nations Series fixtures at Scottish Gas Murrayfield in November, the chance to enjoy a 'money can't buy' Young Mascot experience for two young rugby fans. This competition was advertised to customers via our social media, website and on board media screens.

Craigmillar Family Fun Day

The event was held at the Jack Kane Centre in Niddrie and was attended by a large number of younger children, young people and families. Lothian Buses were in attendance with a driving simulator and bus, with attendees having the opportunity to engage with driving colleagues and ask questions.

There was a high level of positive responses to the Lothian uses input of the driving simulator and also the chance to have a photo taken in the cab of the bus that was at the event. Colleagues attending the event included members of the Driver Training Team, Control Team and Bus Drivers.

Interaction with the other stakeholders as well as the organisers (Craigmillar Police station) was also well received and they were grateful for our attendance and input. There were a number of networking opportunities available and these were taken, in advance of the regular meetings that are held with the external partners in the Craigmillar and Niddrie areas throughout the year.

Overall, the event has been very well received by our partners, employees and the wider community with praise for the event from all involved.

Fawkes Festival

Lothian Buses provided transport for the annual Fawkes Festival, taking place at the Royal Highland Centre. This was well attended by people of all ages, with family friendly activities including fairground rides, food and drinks, a bonfire and fireworks display as well as live performances from street theatre, LED drummers and the Red Hot Chilli Pipers.

School, College and University Engagement

School Presentations from Police Scotland in partnership with Lothian Buses

- The Royal High School – ~200 students
- Carrick Knowe Primary School – Junior Cop, Good Citizen – ~50 students
- Davidson Mains Primary School – Junior Cop, Good Citizen – ~50 students
- Gylemuir Primary School – Junior Cop, Good Citizen – ~50 students
- Gracemount
- Liberton

These presentations, delivered by our Transport Liaison Officer PC Karen McKenzie and members of our Operations supervision team and driving colleagues, were well received by both students and teaching staff. The presentation utilises real life data and contains photos of the results of ASB, delivering key messages around the impact and consequence of ASB and crime. The young people also had the opportunity to watch a hard-hitting video of one of our driving colleagues, who has been personally affected by a projectile hitting their vehicle, resulting in life changing injury.

College and University Engagement

Our Retail and Operational colleagues recently attended College and University Open Days and Fresher's Fairs to provide information and advice on using public transport across our communities.

Approximate Engagement Numbers

- University of Edinburgh – ~4,000 students
- Edinburgh Napier University – ~3,500 students
- Heriot-Watt University – ~1,000 students
- Queen Margaret University – ~1,000 students
- Scottish Rural College (King's Buildings) – ~200 students
- Edinburgh College (Midlothian, Sighthill, Milton Road, Granton Campuses) – ~200-300 students per campus

Students were able to ask questions about TapTapCap and Student Ridacard options, as well as routes, journey planning, and the use of Young Scot cards. Engagement was further encouraged through a popular 'Spin the Wheel' prize activity, which proved highly successful in attracting students to our stand.



Feedback from the events was extremely positive, both from students and from colleagues representing Lothian Buses. These events are a key opportunity to promote Lothian Buses as a business, and encourage active travel

Several universities also hosted a 'Quiet Hour' at the start of their events, designed for students who prefer smaller crowds or who have sensory processing needs. Our colleagues were able to support these sessions confidently, drawing on their experience and knowledge to ensure inclusivity.

Careers and Recruitment Events

Our Recruitment team, often supported by Driving Colleagues or members of the Driver Training Team, attended a large number of recruitment events over the course of the year. Many of these events were targeted at younger adults and recent school leavers, and are a good opportunity to showcase the various exciting roles available within transport and promote the Lothian Buses as an inclusive employer.

- DWP Event – Livingston
- DYW Event – Holyrood Hight School
- CCP Event - Valley Park Community Centre
- Try A Bus Day – Longstone
- Edinburgh Careers Fair – Assembly Rooms
- CTP Event – Murrayfield
- DWP Event – Edinburgh Zoo
- DWP Event – Musselburgh
- DWP Event – Alloa Town Hall
- DWP Event – Musselburgh
- Local Council Event – Portobello Town Hall
- Midlothian Council Event – Dalkeith
- Smart Works Scotland Event – Greyfriars Kirk
- Access to Employment – Howden Park Centre
- Edinburgh Careers Fair – Assembly Rooms
- CCP Event – Leith Community Centre

Colleague Education

Engineering Apprenticeship Programme

Lothian is proud of its long-standing apprenticeship programme, with more than 130 apprentices having successfully passed through the garage doors in the last decade.

Open to those aged 16 and over – with no upper age limit – the Apprentice Technician programme provides participants with four years of hands-on training to acquire either an SCQF Level 7 in Heavy Goods and Public Service Vehicle Maintenance and Repair, or a SCQF Level 6 in Vehicle Body Repair and Alignment upon successful completion.

Working in partnership with Glasgow Training Group (GTG), apprentices are given fantastic opportunities to develop their skill set in a modern, purpose-built centre, while still benefiting from practical experience within Lothian's garages alongside knowledgeable and experienced colleagues.

The apprenticeship programme is open to anyone with an interest in starting a career and gaining a recognised qualification in the motor industry.

Through the modern apprenticeship, participants have the opportunity to train in all aspects of bus and coach repair and maintenance including vehicle servicing, MOT preparation, removal, replacement and overhaul of major components and electrical fault diagnostics.

Lothian's apprenticeship programme serves as a spring-board to many opportunities within the engineering industry and beyond. Previous Lothian apprentices have gone on to enjoy long, successful careers within the business, with many taking on supervisory and managerial roles.

This year, Lothian welcomed 8 new apprentice engineers, 5 of whom were aged between 16-18.



Modern Apprentices

In 2024, Lothian introduced four modern apprentices to the business, each of them training in a different function within the company, and all aged 16-18.

Building on the success of the company's Engineering Apprenticeship scheme, Lothian hired apprentices in HR, Commercial, Data Analytics and Engineering Administration.

Lothian's HR team worked with each department across the business to gauge whether they would benefit from the addition of an apprentice employee. Once the four areas of the

business were identified, work began on ensuring that the training would be beneficial to both Lothian and the apprentice themselves.

Since their introduction to the business, the Modern Apprentices have made a positive impact on the business. It's been hugely beneficial for the apprentices, too – they have been given a platform to develop their skills at a reputable organisation and earn a wage while doing so.

They also benefit from the vast experience of Lothian's workforce. Each of our new apprentices are surrounded by colleagues who have enjoyed long, successful careers at the company and will help them to think critically and logically about their tasks.

Powering Futures

Of the 12 apprentices at Lothian in 2025, 9 were in the 16-18 bracket. 5 of these were Engineering apprentices, and 4 were in our Modern apprenticeship programme

As a member of Powering Futures, an educational programme designed to help the young workforce develop their critical skills, Lothian's apprentices have the opportunity to take part in the Powering Futures Challenge Programme. This programme presents a real life sustainability challenge set by sponsoring businesses. Teams then work through the challenge to develop a solution and then present this back to a panel of industry judges.

By being part of Powering Futures, and offering both an Engineering Apprenticeship Programme and a Modern Apprenticeship Programme, Lothian are able to demonstrate their commitment to supporting, developing and employing the young workforce.

Details of this year's challenge are detailed in a Case Study by Powering Futures.

Lothian Buses engaged us to create a hybrid approach to the programme. Working on real-life sustainability problems through online and in-person sessions, we were able to bring the apprentices together at the Central Bus Depot where we could deliver directly to them.

Some of the team's inventive solutions to their set problems included:

- *Setting up a localised combined heat and power generator.*
- *Exploring the potential to use biogas as a power source.*

Because of the hybrid nature of this programme, the apprentices were able to develop their working relationships in person through engaging and active sessions.

This challenge improved the apprentices' approaches to solving problems. They were able to move towards finding a solution while understanding the necessity of modifications, presenting data and costs and acknowledging shortcomings.

CHALLENGES

- *Understanding business operations.*
- *Finding sustainable approaches and solutions.*
- *Engaging in productive collaboration.*

BENEFITS

- *Increased awareness of sustainable solutions.*
- *Improved understanding of company and individual roles within it.*
- *Development of crucial workplace skills.*

CPC 2026

CPC 2026 will encourage driving colleagues to reflect on their personal driving styles and consider how they approach dynamic risk assessment and error mitigation. Lothian's Commercial Department has worked closely with the Driver Training Team to co-produce a session focused on the National Entitlement Card—its terms and conditions, a driver's obligations in upholding these, and the wider responsibility drivers have for customer safety, particularly when supporting young or potentially vulnerable passengers.

The training will also create space for colleagues to discuss their own experiences of antisocial behaviour, allowing Operations to highlight and reinforce best practice. By enabling open discussion and debate, CPC training gives colleagues the opportunity to challenge their own responses to complex and nuanced situations, ultimately supporting safer decision-making and higher professional standards.

APPENDIX

Press Releases

PRESS REALEASE 1 <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/places-for-people-scotland-supports-innovative-underage-drinking-awareness-project>

Places for People Scotland supports innovative underage drinking awareness project

14 May 2025

Up to 1,3000 young people from across ten Edinburgh schools are taking part in an initiative to educate them on the dangers of alcohol misuse and underage drinking.

In recent years, there has been a significant rise in anti-social behaviour within communities across Edinburgh - in the South West of the city alone, 75% of calls to Police Scotland are youth-related.

To engage with young people on this issue, partners in Edinburgh, including Places for People Scotland, have teamed up with Sky's Sky Up Academy, an immersive learning experience open to students, aged 8 to 18. Since 2012, the programme has reached around 350,000 young people across the UK.

Sky's group head of youth and social impact, Nishy Lall, said: "We're really excited about this partnership and want to make a real difference to the local community. We'll be working with young people and teaching them about key issues in innovative ways. For example, they'll have full access to our state-of-the-art broadcasting equipment to produce videos and news reports on subjects like underage drinking and antisocial behaviour. It's all about creative thinking, teamwork and storytelling."

The videos produced by the students will go on to be used in schools, community centres, and social media campaigns, helping to spread powerful messages even further. The sessions began at the end of April and will continue throughout May.

This has been made possible through partnership working with Community Alcohol Partnership and Police Scotland, along with Places for People Scotland and Lothian Buses, who have both provided significant funding and travel for young people.

Kelly Brown, director for Places for People Scotland, said: "Underage drinking remains a critical issue affecting young people, their families, and our communities. Tackling this problem requires innovative approaches that educate, engage, and empower young people to make informed decisions about alcohol.

"At Places for People, we go Beyond Homes and proudly work with not just our customers, but with whole communities, to provide support where it is most needed. As a housing provider, with over 5,000 homes in Edinburgh, we care deeply about our young people and will continue to do all we can to support them and the rest of our communities."

Community Policing Sergeant Mark Barry said: "We're pleased to support this initiative which allows young people to learn about the dangers of alcohol abuse in an interactive, engaging setting.

"It's a unique opportunity for school children to produce and present messaging about topics which could affect them in an immersive experience.

"We know the negative effects alcohol can have on our communities and engaging in prevention plays a vital role in warning over the dangers to health and associated criminality.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2025

“By continuing to work with our partner agencies, we hope to offer this opportunity to more pupils in the area going forward.”

Kate Winstanley, director of CAP, said: “This partnership is a fantastic example of how working together can create tangible opportunities for young people. By providing access to initiatives like the Sky Academy we are offering them new and creative pathways for their development and engagement and educating them about the risks of underage drinking and related anti-social behaviour. We’re very grateful to all the partners and to Sky for giving young people this opportunity.”

Gaynor Marshall, communications director for Eve Coaches, added: “Eve Coaches is delighted to work in partnership with Police Scotland, Places for People and Community Alcohol Partnership in the provision of private hire travel to the Sky Up Academy Studios.

“We are wholly supportive of youth engagement initiatives and are delighted that our role as official transport partner supports such opportunity in the communities we serve.”



PRESS RELEASE 2 - Lothian launches Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy

October 13, 2025



Lothian's Operations Director, Willie Hamilton, with representatives from Edinburgh South Football Club, Police Scotland and Young Scot.

Lothian has launched a youth engagement and inclusion strategy designed to strengthen positive interactions on our network and highlight the role of our colleagues as community champions.

Built on two strategic pillars – engage and educate – the strategy aims to foster constructive relationships between Lothian and young people in our communities, grounded in mutual respect and understanding.

Gaynor Marshall, Communications Director for Lothian, said:

“We are thrilled to announce the launch of our Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy.

“The introduction of the Young Persons (Under 22s) Free Bus Travel Scheme has been hugely beneficial for young people by increasing their access to education, employment and training while strengthening travel confidence and independence.

“We aim to use this opportunity to strengthen the connection between our young customers and our team, promoting mutual respect and a deeper appreciation of the important role our business plays in the lives of residents and visitors alike. At the same time, we want to empower young people to work with us in addressing any issues that also affect them.

“This initiative marks an exciting step forward in strengthening our community connections and enhancing opportunities for young people in the areas we serve.”

Lothian will expand existing youth-focused initiatives, such as school presentations and ‘Try a Bus’ events that promote travel confidence, by developing community partnerships across our

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2025

operational network, offering opportunities for Lothian staff to participate in volunteer activities within the community.

Lothian has also worked with Young Scot – Scotland’s national youth information platform – to inform the strategy, ensuring that young people are at the heart of these plans.



Edinburgh South Football Club recently established a partnership with Lothian which will see the introduction of Twilight Football sessions and the community funding places.

Reid Aiton, Director (External Relations & Be Informed Services) of Young Scot, said:

“Lothian Buses’ Youth Strategy places young people at the heart of its vision for inclusive, safe, and accessible public transport – ensuring that young people are actively engaged, listened to and supported in shaping and using the services that impact their lives and communities.

“This strategy reflects a shared commitment to empowering young people and contributes to their wellbeing, independence and future opportunities.”

Edinburgh South – who attended the launch event at Lothian’s Central Depot – is part of a recently established partnership with Lothian, working with the business to introduce Twilight Football sessions and community funded places.

Lothian will also continue their strong partnership with Police Scotland under this strategy to continue to engage and education with young people in schools and across the companies wider network.

Lothian’s Youth Engagement and Inclusion Strategy can be found on our website.

