



COMPLAINTS HANDLING POLICY

HANDLING COMPLAINTS WELL

Metrobus is committed to providing a quality service that meets the needs and expectations of its customers.

Managing complaints well when things go wrong is central to improving our services and the image of Metrobus in the customers' eyes. How we deal with our customers and their complaints, and how we learn from their experiences says a lot about our organisation.

The proper handling of complaints is not one person's responsibility. Everyone in the organisation needs to contribute to:

- Handling complaints effectively
- Learning the lessons from them
- Improving performance

For the customer there are three things that matter if there is a problem or if something goes wrong:

- Where do I complain?
- How do I complain?
- How seriously will my complaint be taken and dealt with?

This policy outlines Metrobus' commitment to managing complaints well through a complaints system which is:

- Easy to access
- Speedy
- Confidential
- Informative

- Simple
- Fair
- Effective
- Monitored and audited

This system is supported by detailed procedures and trained staff.

What is a complaint?

- A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction.
- If the person contacting us thinks it is a complaint then it is, whatever we may think.
- Someone may also make a comment about part of our service that we could improve and not call it a complaint. This comment is equally important and will be listened to, recorded and used, where possible, to improve service quality.
- A complaint or comment may be about service delivery or policy. We must tell customers who want to complain about services and/or policy how to go about it.

Why get complaints handling right?

- Information from complainants is free feedback about our services.
- Handling complaints properly shows how important customer care is to Metrobus. It shows that we:
 - actively listen to our customers
 - learn from our mistakes
 - are continually trying to improve our services

THE COMPLAINTS POLICY

Making it easy

Our complaints system must be easy to access and well advertised. There is little point in having a system if no one knows what it is or how to use it. People need to know how to complain and to feel it is worthwhile.

People will only complain if they feel that we listen to their complaints and act on them. Metrobus' policy is to tell customers clearly that:

- We welcome complaints
- We will investigate all complaints thoroughly and fairly
- Wherever possible, we will find an appropriate solution
- We will use information from complaints to improve our services

To achieve these:

We tell customers how to complain

We aim to tell all customers and potential customers how to complain by giving names and contact details of who to contact with any complaint.

We tell customers what they need to know

Customers need to know the standards they can expect from Metrobus services. If people do not understand what our service offers, they will not complain.

We tell customers what results to expect

We will explain to customers how their problem will be sorted out. Whenever possible, this solution will be based on what the complainant wants.

Making it accessible

Our complaints system welcomes complaints from people with physical, sensory or learning disabilities and from anyone whose first language is not English or from people who have a reading difficulty or cannot read at all.

Our complaints procedures take into account our responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), which deals with disabled peoples access to goods, facilities and services.

Removing barriers to complaining

Users of buses may not feel confident about making a complaint without some support from us. We will ensure that we provide this support where necessary and inform

people of help they can get from outside Metrobus (e.g. local councillors, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Age Concern, etc).

We will tell people that they can ask a friend or relative to help them with a complaint, or even make it for them, and that this will not affect the way we deal with their complaint.

People may also not complain if they fear the organisation or staff will discriminate against them in future. We will make clear to customers that they will not suffer as a result of any complaint and ensure monitoring procedures are in place which guarantee that discrimination does not take place.

Speedy

Metrobus' complaints policy emphasises the need to deal with complaints quickly and within timescales defined in the standards. It is important, therefore, that customers are informed about the different stages of the complaints process and what they can do if they are still not satisfied with the reply.

The four main stages of this complaints process are:

- An on-the-spot reply ('informal')
- Referral, investigation and reply
- Internal review
- External review

It is important to keep customers informed of what is happening to their complaint. To keep them fully informed they will receive:

- Confirmation that the complaint has been received
- A full reply to their complaint within seven days of receipt
- Updates if a full reply cannot be given on time

Confidential

Metrobus' Complaints Policy ensures confidentiality so that:

- Customers are not discouraged from making complaints
- Accusations against staff are known only by those staff and others investigating the complaint

Managers, however, will not use the need for confidentiality to avoid drawing up and publishing information about complaints. Similarly, we will be positive in responding to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act.

Informative and simple

Metrobus Policy in replying to complainants, is that replies will:

- Aim to answer all points of concern
- Be factually correct
- Avoid jargon
- Contain full contact details
- Tell the person what to do next if they are still not satisfied
- Be signed by the person who will address any further queries raised by the same customer on the particular area.

Fair

We will ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly. The policy is that the procedures for investigating complaints are:

- Open, advertised and understood by all those involved in the complaint
- Fair, not biased towards anyone involved
- Thorough, involving finding out the relevant facts, talking to everyone involved, and checking details where possible
- Consistent, treating people in similar circumstances in similar ways. Everyone involved should be equally informed of the decisions reached

This policy also ensures that staff are treated fairly if a complaint is made against them.

Within this context, however, the complaints procedures are separate from any disciplinary procedures. There may be times when a complaint does lead to disciplinary action but, as a general rule, complaints will be handled under their own procedures.

Effective

There are two main reasons for having a complaints policy. These are a) to provide guidelines for remedies for customers and b) to improve services.

To provide remedies for customers we will:

- Give customers the information they need to identify services that are below standard
- Offer a suitable remedy
- Ensure that staff are aware of the options for remedies
- Try to make sure the remedy is, where possible, what people want
- Recognise that most people want to prevent the same thing happening to themselves again and to others
- Both staff and customers will be informed of what actions are available for finding a satisfactory outcome to a complaint. These options include, at least:
 - An explanation
 - An assurance that the same thing won't happen again (if practical)
 - Details on what actions will be taken if relevant
 - Appropriate redress (e.g. an apology, a refund, a goodwill gesture, etc.)

To ensure that the complaints procedures are effective in improving our services these are designed to:

- Provide a clear picture of customers' views of the service and the improvements they want
- Record complaints consistently and in detail and provide data for analysis of results
- Channel the information to those who can take action to prevent problems happening again
- Give feedback to customers who complain, other potential users and staff on what action has been taken

To be effective, staff will be trained in having the right attitudes to handling complaints. This involves:

- Actively listening to people who have a complaint
- Recognising that handling complaints is an important part of customer care and of each member of staff's job
- Understanding the benefits of handling complaints well and the results of handling them badly
- Welcoming complaints as an opportunity to put things right for customers and to improve services

This complaints policy and its procedures are supported by Metrobus' senior management who regularly review complaints information and ensure that complaints handling is built into the corporate and strategic plans, and covered in annual reports.

Monitored and audited

To achieve the required effectiveness of this complaints policy, systems have been established to record complaints information in a form that is:

- Consistent and detailed, covering all formal complaints and as many as possible of the complaints handled informally
- Simple and practical
- Useful, allowing Metrobus to monitor and respond to complaints, and highlighting areas where services appear to be failing

Monitoring the service quality provided by Customer Services is carried out continuously by managers and results are fed back to staff.

It is our policy for this information to be passed regularly to senior managers and policy makers.

- Our handling of complaints is in line with the principle of answering to our customers
- Our customers know about our performance against standards
- And to demonstrate that:
- We take complaints seriously and that it is worth making a complaint
- We have made improvements as a result of complaints

REDRESS

As part of valuing customers and customer feedback, we will seek to provide appropriate redress when things go wrong.

ESCALATION

Our operating procedures will provide for escalation of matters that are unresolved or where the nature of the feedback requires it.

THIRD PARTIES

We will work to ensure that all those contracted to deliver services on our behalf apply the principles of this policy in dealing with customers.

CONTACTS

London Buses Customer Services

can be contacted on:

Tel: 0845 300 7000

(08.30-20.00, Mon-Fri)

Text Phone:020 7918 4435

Fax:020 7918 4532

E Mail: customerservices@tfl-buses.co.uk

Web Site: www.tfl.gov.uk

Surface Transport Customer Services

Floor 4, Palestra

197 Blackfriars Road

London SE1 8NJ

Metrobus Non-TfL Operations Customer Services

can be contacted on:

Tel: 01293 449191

(08.30-17.30, Mon-Fri)

(08.30-16.30, Sat)

E Mail: complaints@metrobus.co.uk

Web Site: www.metrobus.co.uk

Wheatstone Close

Crawley RH10 9UA