

**Reducing conflict in
the wheelchair space**

Research debrief

Project Number 11090

April 2012



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Background



- Transport for London (TfL) have identified issues with the use of the dedicated wheelchair space on London Buses as different customers try to appropriate the space for their own use (eg wheelchairs, buggies, luggage, shopping).
- Customer complaints to TfL and feedback from the Accessibility Mystery Travelling Survey have both indicated a need to understand the tensions more fully and identify approaches to communications and future strategies that will help reduce and resolve conflicts in future
- Research was required to feed into developing a recommended solution

Research objectives

- *To understand the key issues for buggy users, wheelchair users and bus drivers in reducing conflict in the wheelchair space*
- *To understand and identify the right messages to communicate to each of the three groups in helping to avoid/reduce conflict*
- *To understand what clear messages will work in any future educational campaign aimed at highlighting the wheelchair space usage*

Methodology and sample

- 5 x 1.5 hour exploratory discussion groups with key audiences to understand key issues from each perspective, including a pre-task to detail personal experiences of tension

Group	Audience	Life stage	Location	SEG
1	Bus drivers	Mixed	Inner	N/A
2	Bus drivers	Mixed	Outer	N/A
3	Buggy users	Family	Mixed	ABC1
4	Buggy users	Family	Mixed	C2DE
5	Wheelchair users	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed

- A selection of participants from the five group discussions reconvened the following week for a **2 hour mixed audience workshop** to further explore opportunities and collaborate to develop strategies for reducing conflict in the space
- Fieldwork conducted between 21st and 28th March 2012 by 2CV Research

**Executive summary:
Headlines from the
research**

Headlines from the research

- Buggy users, wheelchair users and bus drivers experience logistical and interpersonal challenges around the wheelchair space; 'conflict' is often indirect as tensions begin before passengers get on the bus
- Three challenges are shared across audiences – anxieties, practical challenges and regarding passenger 'rights' – although how these play out varies due to significant audience differences
- Inconsistent and unpredictable experiences are the major source of tension and stress:
 - Cooperation between passengers often gives way to competition at times of high passenger volume
 - Bus drivers have inconsistent attitudes and approaches towards managing the space
- A lack of clarity over 'the rules' underpins inconsistent experiences around the space and conflict:
 - Concerning what 'priority' means in practice (especially for wheelchair users)
 - Concerning the number of buggies allowed, folding down and boarding the middle doors for buggy users
- There are three opportunity areas for reducing conflict:
 1. Clarifying and communicating 'the rules' - for drivers and passengers
 2. Ensuring consistent application of the rules; the bus driver playing a critical role in this
 3. Using customer communications to engender greater cooperation between all passengers and the driver

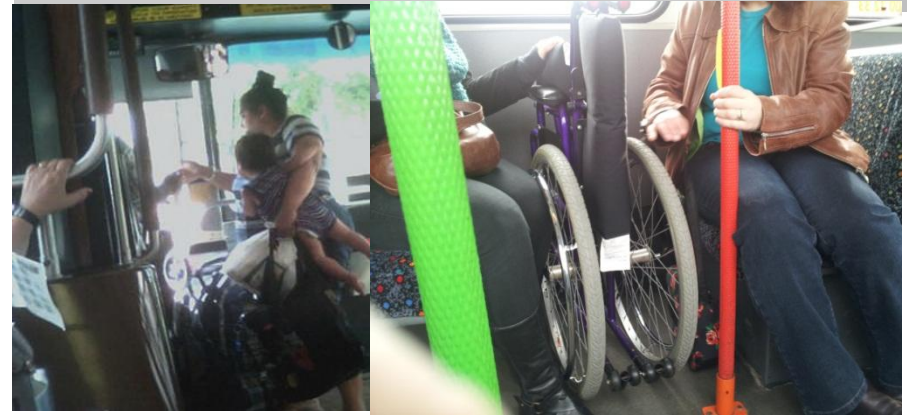
Issues concerning the wheelchair space

The bus is associated with logistical and interpersonal challenges

Getting on and off the bus



Negotiations within/around the space



Source: travel on a central Manchester bus
www.latentexistence.me.uk

- *Interactions with other passengers*
- *Interactions with drivers*

Tensions start before passengers even get to the space

Users of the space (and drivers) share and experience different anxieties at these two points

Getting on and off the bus

Will the ramp work properly? Wheelchair user

Will he pull in close enough to the curb? Wheelchair user

Is everyone looking? Wheelchair user

*Is it safe for me to let them on?
Driver*

Why won't he open the middle doors? Buggy user

Negotiations within/around the space

Why won't other passengers move upstairs? All audiences

Will they both fit? Driver

Will the driver help or is it down to me? Wheelchair, buggy users

*Will they fold their buggies down?
Wheelchair, buggy users*

Will the driver wait for me/give me time to get into the space and park? Wheelchair user

Will the other passengers/buggies move out of the way? Wheelchair, buggy users

There is apprehension for all around what can be a tense experience

Experiences on the bus: wheelchair user diary scans

My experiences of using London Buses

Please tell us your thoughts and feelings about travelling on the Bus in general. Please provide as much detail and examples where you can to help us understand what affects your journey experience. Please also tell us how having a good or bad journey makes you feel.

A bad journey is one where...

A baby buggy is in the wheelchair space and I cannot position myself safely.

The bus is very crowded & I am surrounded by bodies - seats very large & the bus gets hot.

A "stoppy" mother who won't "look you in the eye" & refuses to move her shopping or pram, sometimes just a little bit so that you can share the space.

It makes me feel...

very insecure and unsafe, wished I had gone by cab, despite the extra expense.

A bad journey is one where...

The bus driver either ignores me at the bus stop or ignores when I want to get off the bus, no matter how many times I press the bell, or my carer alerts the driver and he/she still doesn't put out the ramp. When passengers with buggies won't make room. When other passengers use my wheelchair to lean on. When I'm the last passenger to be allowed on and then have to negotiate around other passengers and/or buggies.

It makes me feel...

Like a spectacle. I'd rather be anywhere else than on the bus. Like giving up and going home.

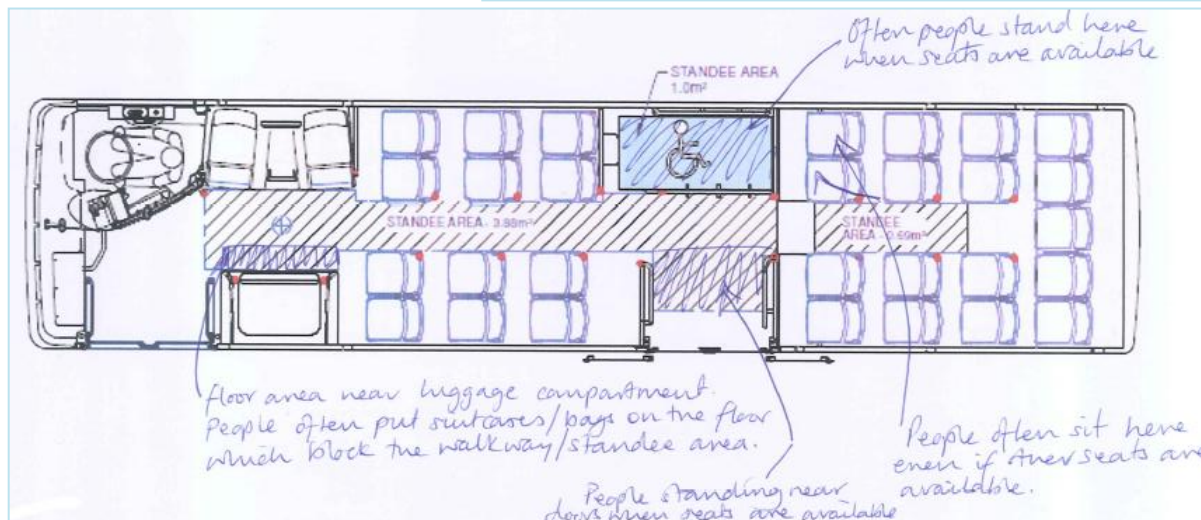
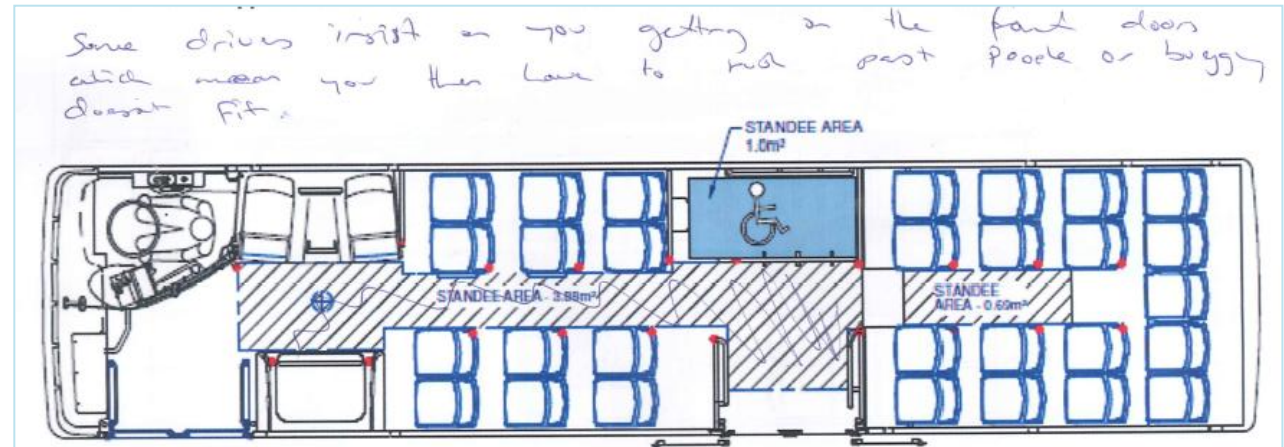
A bad journey is one where...

- A) I'm refused entry (discriminated)
- B) Other users are abusive
- C) Driver is having Attitude problem

It makes me feel...

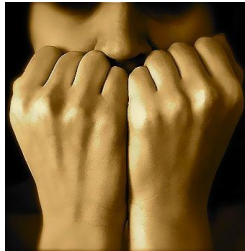
Bitter and moody (drained)

Problems areas on the bus: buggy users



Some challenges are shared across the three audiences

Anxieties



Practical challenges



Rights



- *All can experience social anxiety – heightened in a more pressured, competitive environment*
- *All have practical support needs*
- *All feel like a minority and isolated which can result in a need to 'defend' their rights/the rules*

But these challenges play out differently based on the unique experiences of each audience....



Buggy users: experiences on the Bus (*being a buggy user*)

Anxieties

- Protecting child in a potentially 'unsafe' environment (ie moving vehicle, antisocial behaviour [ASB] could occur)
- Feel stigmatised and judged
 - Feel others make inaccurate assumptions about them/their lifestyle
 - Other passengers tutting, frowning

I'm not a single Mum on benefits – I'm on the way to nursery then work!

Practical challenges

- Folding down the buggy can be challenging
 - With baby/young toddler
 - If bus already congested
- Transition between folding down and seating a child is challenging
- Other passengers not always accommodating/helpful
 - eg moving down the bus

I can't fold down when I've got two [kids] and people won't get out the way

Rights

- Don't believe should 'have' to fold down
- Apply a '1st come, 1st served' attitude (amongst themselves and in the event of a wheelchair [WC])
- View the space as 'theirs' – 'you never see a WC'
- Question why the middle doors not *always* opened for them
 - Inconsistent experiences with drivers

If one driver let me on then it's obviously allowed – why don't they all?

Buggy users feel a need to defend the safe space for children





Buggy users: what it feels like (*being a parent*)

- The landscape of parenthood has changed over the years...
 - More concerns over safety and security – heightened by media coverage
 - A less community-focused society resulting in less trust in others for support
 - Greater financial pressures for many resulting in the need to balance work and home life
 - Increased marketing and products aimed at children playing into parents' social anxieties regarding 'providing' for their children
 - Including bigger, better buggies and all their accompanying paraphernalia!

Someone stole my wallet out of my bag while I was attending to my child on the bus
Buggy user

Anxieties around the need to 'protect' their child in public



Buggy users: what it feels like (*being a parent*)

- For new parents, becoming (and being) a parent represents a recent shift in their identity and day-to-day reality
 - Can feel vulnerable and unsure as they try to navigate a new world and learn new skills
 - Can often feel (or actually be) quite isolated
 - Facing a range of new challenges for the first time, including coping (often by themselves) on public transport
- Parents with more than one child are juggling multiple commitments and practical challenges
 - Logistics of 'managing' several children and all their needs
 - As a result, they are often time-poor and quite stressed!

It's hard at first cos you're not sure if you're doing it right and you feel like everyone else is judging you

You sometimes get support from other mums but no one really looks out for you on the bus

Important that any potential comms do not exacerbate anxieties or sensitivities



Wheelchair users: experience on the Bus (*being a wheelchair user*)

Anxieties

- Feel invisible/not acknowledged
- Also very exposed - a spotlight on them
- Experience embarrassment – their own and other passengers
- Pitied but also a nuisance
- Stressful having to ‘orchestrate’ interactions in and around the space

It's so embarrassing the noise the ramp makes – everybody looks

Practical challenges

- Ability to board in first instance (bus already congested/busy)
- Ramp working correctly
- Manoeuvring into the space – parking safely
- Getting off – will people move out the way?

It's actually very hard to get into and then park in the space

Rights

- Believe this is *their* space – buggy users need to clear it
- Ability to board and travel safely, eg driver should kneel the bus at the curb
- Should not have to fight for/manage the space – see this as the driver's role

I don't have a choice – I can't fold down!

Uncertainty over the entire experience raising doubts about whether bus travel is even a feasible option for them: chances of them having a negative experience are high



Practical challenges around manoeuvring into space and parking safely: diary scan

Please tell us about the things you do to cope in the problem areas you identified on the Bus floor plans above

Problems do not occur on all buses, however I've noticed that the number 12 for instance does not seem to have the same amount of room as buses such as the 148 or 10, the wheelchair space on the 12 seems to be much less, which means being able to turn, in order to back into the correct travelling position, is extremely difficult. The handles on my wheelchair have become stuck in the seat frame of seats when there has not been enough turning room. On a couple of occasions I've not been able to back into the correct position and therefore not been securely positioned when the bus is in motion (on one occasion this was due to another passenger not wanting to put down their buggy).



Wheelchair users: what it feels like (*being a wheelchair user*)

- The issues faced by wheelchair users are of a fundamental nature...
 - Physically constrained/limited
 - Disability affects everything – independence is a constant challenge; can feel at the mercy of others
 - Less likely to be a transient state of being (than buggy users) - an intrinsic and often permanent part of their identity and daily reality
 - Specific needs are often not well-understood or overlooked by able-bodied who struggle/fail to empathise
- Transport disability has a major impact on the lives and life choices of many wheelchair users. Transport is essential to access education, employment, health. A lack of accessible means of independent travel creates social exclusion for many disabled people (*B Hesier, The Nature and Cause of Transport Disability in Britain, and How to Remove it 1995; Rahaf Alsnih and David A. Hensher, The mobility and accessibility expectations of seniors in an aging population 2003; Social Exclusion Unit, Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion 2003*).

Issues during journey experiences are sensitive and need to be handled accordingly; essential for drivers to enforce rules consistently without 'putting a spotlight on' wheelchair users





Wheelchair users: what it feels like – quotes from the workshop and groups

I've been in a wheelchair most of my life – it's still a challenge on a daily basis in terms of just trying to lead an independent life

Wheelchair user

Working out the logistics of travel is really hard – if I have someone with me then it's do-able, otherwise I just have to call a taxi/dial-a-ride

Wheelchair user

I cannot physically get on a bus where I live because it's a busy shopping area full of buggies. What's the point of a wheelchair ramp if we can never get on?

Wheelchair user

I know a lot of wheelchair users who won't go out of the house because of London transport

Wheelchair user

On the bus you do tend to have the [public's] sympathy, but I don't want to be pitied – this is who I am

Wheelchair user

I've been in a wheelchair for 6 months, it's had an enormous impact on everything – getting about is just the tip of the iceberg

Wheelchair user

'Preplanning is substantially more complex; practically and emotionally - eg thinking about all possibilities before a journey.... Unexpected disruptions exacerbate the magnitude of barriers; waiting for the bus is especially unnerving.'
(Understanding the commuting journey experiences of young people with disabilities. TfL/2CV, August, 2010)





Bus drivers: experiences with wheelchairs and buggy users

Anxieties

- Concerns over ability to mediate/manage conflict
- Lack of co-operation from other passengers (eg not moving upstairs)
- Uncertainty over 'the right thing to do'
- Altercations with difficult passengers (esp. buggy users unwilling to fold down)

What am I supposed to do if they won't fold their buggy down?

Practical challenges

- Need for guidance and support – what is permissible
- Inability to see the space when bus is busy – 'cocooned' environment limits ability to manage space
- Unable to ask buggy user to get off if they refuse to fold down (already paid)

Once they're there [in space] I can't see them so I don't know if they've folded down

Rights (and 'rules')

- Believe/claim they are not allowed to get out of the cab
- Believe that either WC no longer has priority or that they have priority in theory but not in practice
- Apply 'the rules' re numbers allowed in space differently
- But assume passengers have a clear understanding of 'the rules' (as they see them)

I can't get out of my cab

In the absence of clear communication, bus drivers mostly defaulting to self-defined 'rules of thumb'



Bus drivers: what it feels like (*being a bus driver*)

- Drivers face multiple pressures and challenges on a daily basis, of which managing the wheelchair space/reducing conflict in the space is just one:
 - Health & Safety issues/guidelines
 - Job performance – need to achieve targets/regulate service
 - Fare evasion and ASB
 - Juggling all passengers needs (ie time constraints, space requirements)
- Have different strategies and styles, eg different passenger communication preferences/comfort levels – iBus, eye contact, tannoy, getting out cab
- Have to use their discretion dependent on the situation – mixed levels of confidence managing customer relations/varying mediation skills
 - Some call out for greater support/guidance around managing difficult situations

If I'm not on time I get fined!

Personally I get out the cab but I know most drivers wouldn't

Conflicts in the wheelchair space are one of multiple challenges facing bus drivers

Looking at the experience from another's perspective....

- When prompted to consider another audience, most can start to imagine the other's experience fairly accurately*
- However, the reality in-mode is that none are thinking in this way
 - Me-centric and destination-led
 - Have their own priorities to deal with

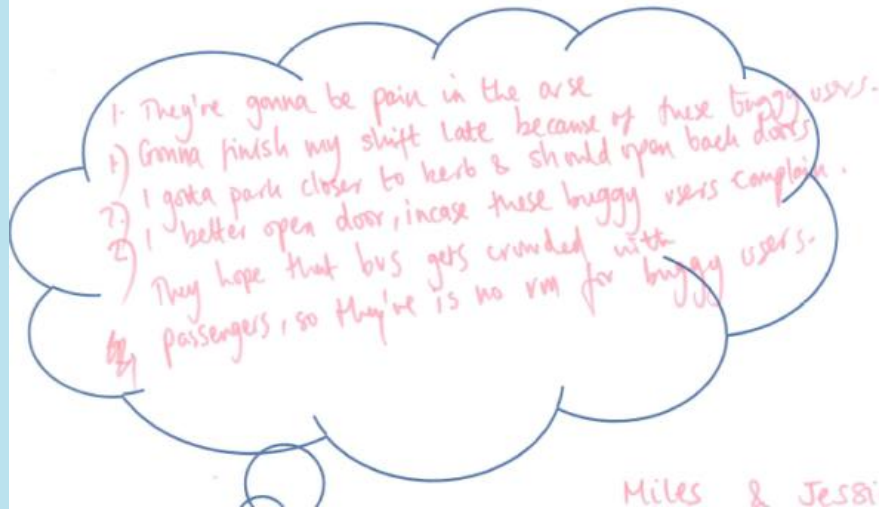


An opportunity for comms to prompt greater consideration of other audiences?

Looking at a buggy user's experience from other perspectives: projectives during the groups

Please write down....

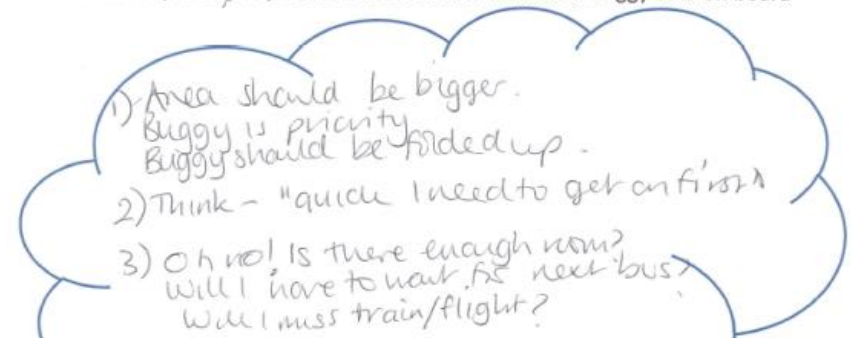
1. What a bus driver thinks of buggy users on buses
2. What they think when they see a buggy user about to board a crowded bus



Miles & Jessica

Bus Driver: what they think of buggy users

1. What a passenger with luggage thinks of buggy users on buses
2. What they think when they see a buggy user about to board a crowded bus
3. What they think they board a crowded bus and see a buggy user on board

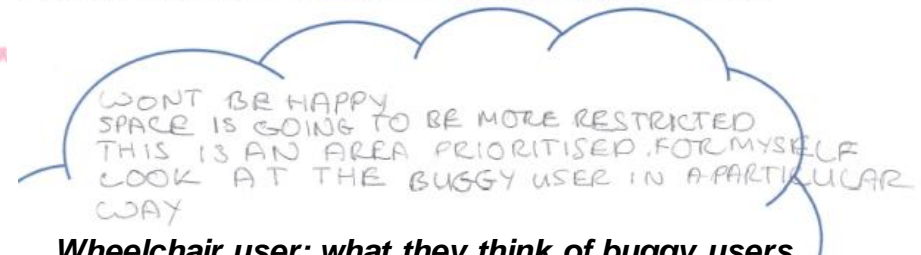


Passenger with luggage: what they think of buggy users

Please write down....

EMRAN AND MUDDASSIR

1. What a wheelchair user thinks of buggy users on buses
2. What they think when they see a buggy user about to board a crowded bus
3. What they think they board a crowded bus and see a buggy user on board



Wheelchair user: what they think of buggy users

Imagining a day in the life of a wheelchair user: projective during the (mixed audience) workshop

TfL need to be clearer about the priority of that space
Buggy user, Driver

It must be so frustrating if the ramp doesn't even work properly
Buggy user, Driver

They must feel really self-conscious and even vulnerable
Buggy user, Driver

Dealing with other people's attitudes must be hard – they don't want people to feel sorry for them, do they
Buggy user, Driver

They will have issues all day around access – even in their own homes
Buggy user, Driver

Having to rely on other people must be really frustrating
Buggy user, Driver

Imagining a day in the life of a bus driver: projectives during the (mixed audience) workshop

They've got a stressful job – dealing with difficult people all day and driving a bus!
Buggy user, Wheelchair user

They've got to deal with lots of different passengers transporting different things – luggage, buggies etc
Buggy user, Wheelchair user

Lippy school-kids, fare dodgers, stropky people on the way to work – I wouldn't do it!
Buggy user

If somebody won't fold their buggy down – what can they actually do?
Wheelchair user, Buggy user

They will have issues all day around access – even in their own homes
Buggy user, Driver

Co-operation and competition hang in a balance

Co-operation and consideration



- ✓ Middle of the day
- ✓ Quieter routes – residential areas
- ✓ Fewer people on the bus
- ✓ More relaxed mindset of bus users

Competition and selfishness



- X Rush hour/the 'golden hour' after school
- X Busy routes – commuter, shopping areas
- X Space is at a premium
- X Bus users are me-centric and destination-led
- X Low-level ASB (tutting, pushing)
- X Consciously selfish behaviour/aggression - when there isn't a clear case for who deserves to have space
- X Unconsciously selfish behaviour – when people are in 'shut down' mode

Competition and selfishness prevail at times of high customer volume

Co-operation and competition hang in a balance

Co-operation and consideration



Competition and selfishness



It's totally different in the middle of the day – people smile, help you out..

Buggy user

It's not nearly as stressful when the bus is virtually empty

Wheelchair user

I've had people being really helpful – moving out the way without being asked...

Buggy user

When I go in the mornings, there are always people in the space, I can't get my buggy into it

Buggy user

People just push and trample over one another – they're like animals!

Driver

It's a nightmare – there are multiple points of major stress

Wheelchair user

Experiences can vary from very positive to extremely stressful and unpleasant



Inconsistent experiences are a key cause of tension and anxiety for buggy users and wheelchair users

- Uncertainty over the journey experience is a major cause of stress for wheelchair users and buggy users:
 - Lack of consistency in attitude and approach of bus drivers in particular causes frustration and anxiety

It's a gamble. You might be really lucky and have no one in the space but other times you get people with luggage, mums that don't want to share, and people that just don't want to budge!

Buggy user

Some drivers don't want the hassle of it, shake their heads, won't open the doors, not give enough time to park/brake before they drive off

Wheelchair user

Drivers are so inconsistent— sometimes they don't even stop or won't pull into the kerb

Wheelchair user

Some of them let you on the middle doors so it must be allowed

Buggy user

Some drivers are great; they'll get out of the cab and help to make sure everyone's where they should be....

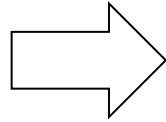
Wheelchair user

It honestly would be better if they just never let you on the middle doors. It winds me up when one day they will then another day they won't.

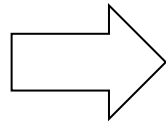
Buggy user

Users of the space call for greater consistency across bus drivers

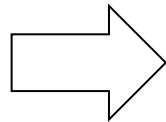
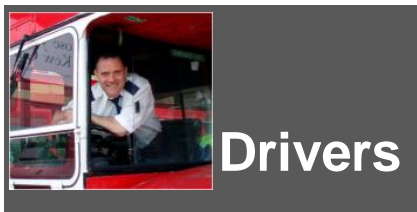
Across all audiences, a lack of clarity around ‘the rules’ governing the space



‘It’s a shared space – it’s first come, first served’



‘This space is ours – it’s for wheelchair users’



‘Wheelchairs have priority in theory but not in practice’
OR
‘Wheelchairs no longer have priority – the rules changed a few years ago!’

It is easier for all users to justify focusing on their own needs in the face of lack of clarity

A range of factors are contributing to the lack of clarity

Signage

- Recessive and easy to ignore – small, non-visual, type-heavy
- Hierarchy of info can confuse (eg buggy user shown at the top)

Bus Driver behaviour

- Inconsistent approaches to managing the space, including:
 - Number of buggies in space
 - Access via the middle doors
 - Getting out of the cab to help

Customer communications

- No joined-up campaign concerning this issue/the space
 - (No awareness or recall of existing communications)

Audio announcements

- iBus inconsistently used by drivers
 - Few customers recall hearing any iBus announcements *around this issue*
- Limited use or recall of tannoy

A number of opportunities to address lack of clarity as the first step towards tackling challenges concerning the space

Summary of insights



There is a lack of clarity and frustration around the rules governing the space; the priority audience, the amount of buggies permitted, unfolded and/or folded



There is inconsistency in terms of attitudes and behaviours concerning use of the space; especially across Bus drivers



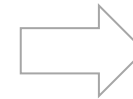
There is a lack of consideration for different audiences as each focuses on their own needs and priorities

Opportunities for improving passenger dynamics

Summary of insights



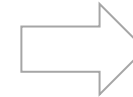
There is a lack of clarity around the rules



**A need to clarify
and communicate
'the rules'**



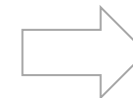
Inconsistent experiences (esp. from drivers)



**A call for greater
consistency in
experience**



A lack of consideration in a competitive environment



**A need for comms
to engage**



Opinions differ around the 'ideal scenario'

Wheelchair users

- Priority in practice
- Buggy in space never to prevent access to Bus

All of them should be folded down all the time

Buggy users

- Equal priority with the wheelchair users
 - A multi-purpose area
- First come first served: not required to fold down or move elsewhere if they are there first

Everyone needs to get on the Bus

Drivers

- Buggies folded down without resistance (as required/all the time)
- Not needing to intervene/mediate

Sometimes they just won't fold them down

Driver to manage orchestration of the space/mediate if required

Other passengers to move upstairs/make way

Different audiences are unlikely to reach a full consensus on their own



A number of 'trade offs' around priority access: for wheelchair users



Scenario 1: Wheelchair priority all the time

- ✓ Guarantee they can travel/board
- ✓ Significantly reduces anxiety around the bus experience
- ✓ Potential to reduce stress around having to orchestrate other passengers
- × May experience animosity/embarrassment as buggy users 'forced' to move

Scenario 2: Buggies and wheelchairs equal priority

- × Backlash from wheelchair users and advocacy groups re: potential to significantly limit ability to travel
- × An inconsistent (uncertain) travel experience
- × Buggy users may be even less accommodating/helpful re. folding down

It's the not knowing that often makes it so frustrating – if I knew I could get on at least that would take that away
Wheelchair user

This would still leave me in the dark about when (and if) I'm getting on the bus
Wheelchair user



A number of 'trade offs' around priority access: for buggy users



Scenario 1: Wheelchair priority all the time

- ✓ Clarity over the rules and a template for the 'right' behaviour
 - × Although likely to be unpopular especially at first as in contrast to current behavioural norms
- × Potential to make bus travel more challenging re. folding down
 - × And in particular the transition from child in/out buggy to seat
- × Increased anxiety over child's safety
- × Increased anxiety over other passengers' reactions ie low-level ASB

Sometimes it's just impractical to get your kids out the buggies into a seat – you can't even stand next to them
Buggy user

Scenario 2: Buggies and wheelchairs equal priority

- ✓ Removes many of the major practical concerns/challenges and thereby reduces anxiety and stress
- ✓ Buggy users happy to wait their turn if a wheelchair or buggy are already occupying the space

This is more fair, it's 1st come 1st served and sharing the space
Buggy user



All audiences will require clarification over what priority means in practice

Bus Driver and Passengers

- Clearly defined rules over:
 1. Priority audience
 2. Numbers of wheelchairs and buggies permitted

Bus Drivers

- Clearly defined rules re permission to get out of cab
- Training in customer care/mediation to aid enforcement of the rules
- Support tools to aid rule enforcement
 - On-bus signage; iBus/tannoy; Customer comms (on bus, bus stops, stations, Metro)



Source: www.nxbus.co.uk

Passengers

- Clearly defined expectations re what they the driver can/can't do
- A range of comms to re-educate, prompt cooperation/support driver
 - On-bus signage; iBus/tannoy; Customer comms (on bus, bus stops, stations, Metro)

There needs to be an agreement over a common set of business rules **Wheelchair user**

Consistency across all areas is key to delivering clarification



Bus drivers have a critical role in reducing conflict around the wheelchair space

- Wheelchair and buggy users want the driver to be the authority (helpfully managing situations)
- Drivers have a key role to play in communicating what passengers should do, eg getting other passengers to move down the bus/upstairs; communicating that buggies have to/may have to fold down or move out of the space
- The way the driver communicates the rules (TOV and manner) can make all the difference:
 - Eye contact, smiling and patience all go a long way
- Overall, consistency across bus drivers is essential for shifting norms and reducing anxiety of all passengers in the longer term

The bus driver is the judge – he has to be, but it's inconsistent at the moment
Wheelchair user

There does need to be authority, but with a small 'a'
Wheelchair user

Driver consistency has a critical role to play in helping to clarify and enforce 'the rules'

They need to keep repeating customer care training, not just as a one-off Buggy user



Drivers need further guidance and support to enforce rules in a way that reduces conflict



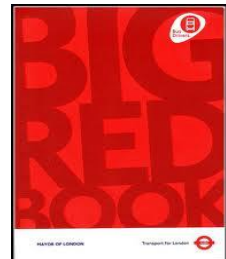
Training and practical support

- A need for training to specifically help manage difficult situations and multiple priorities
 - Driver mediation skills, tone of voice etc
- Suggestion of a camera in the space to help them manage situation better



iBus announcements/tannoy

- Low reported use/recall of iBus for managing space but support for using this more to communicate the rules/how passengers need to behave around the space
- An opportunity to encourage greater use of tannoy to help manage the space



Written communications

- Written comms are insufficient for helping drivers to action the rules without additional training and practical support (Big Red Book mostly used for looking up routes)*
- A desire for driver information to be communicated in the same way to passengers

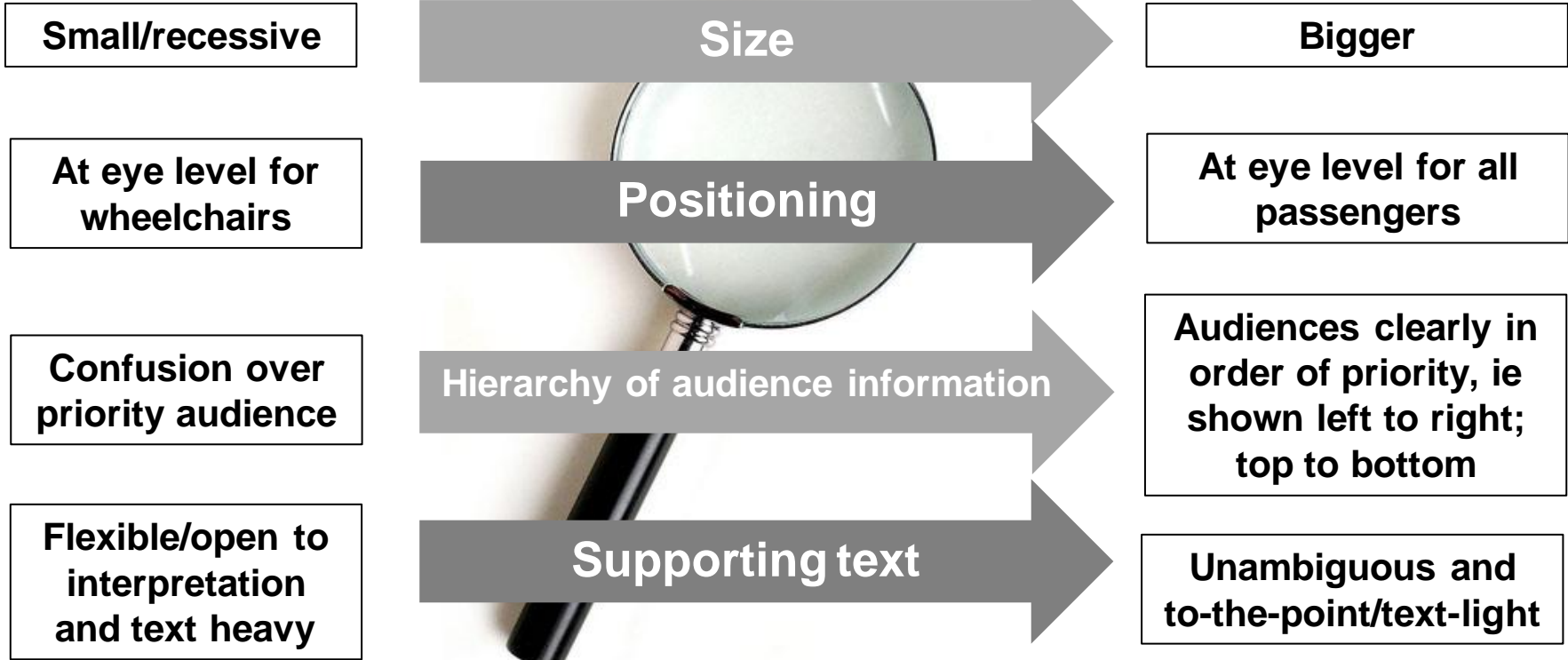
* **Big Red Book not always providing workable solutions for drivers** (*Bus Diversions Research, 2CV/TfL, July, 2011*)

- ✓ An easy to read basis to driver's responsibilities; referred to now and again for advice about driving
- ✗ Some of protocol outlined not always feasible in practice - BRB therefore loses credibility
- ✗ Advice about using PA not encouraging use - more support and a more prescribed approach needed

A lot of support required to help drivers change and better support passengers



An opportunity to clarify existing signage to support the driver





Responses and development points for signage

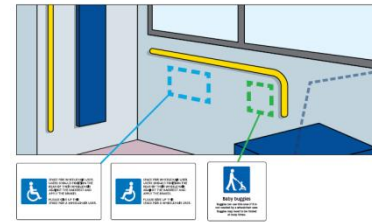
Size



Bigger signs would help. The current ones aren't obvious enough at all. Surely they can make them bigger
Buggy user

Positioning

Wheelchair / Buggy Space



They're at a great height if you're in a wheelchair but not in the eye line of standing passengers
Wheelchair user

Hierarchy of audience information



This says to me that mums with buggies have priority over wheelchair users cos they're at the top
Buggy user

Supporting text



You're not going to bother reading all that!
Wheelchair user





An opportunity to consider additional visual cues to facilitate how the space is used

- Spontaneously suggest using floor markings to clearly demark space for buggies/wheelchairs – ie making it look more like a designated parking space
- Looking for ways to remind/prompt passengers to move out of space for wheelchair/buggies:
 - Reducing tensions between passengers/need for interaction, asking them to move over etc
 - Reducing anxiety for wheelchair user in particular as the ‘choreographer’ of other passengers as they try to get into the space
- Looking for visual cues to demonstrate how wheelchair/buggies should be positioned in the space and set parameters for how many can safely park there



*The area needs to be much more clearly highlighted
Buggy user*



Potential for comms (beyond driver announcements; signage) to clarify the rules and reduce conflict

There needs to be agreement that there's a common set of rules. All London buses are signed up, everyone's agreed to. At the moment there's so much inconsistency. I've been keeping an eye out [since stage 1 of fieldwork] and there's so much

Wheelchair user

There's no consistency with bus drivers. No one seems to know the rules. Sometimes I can get the buggy on via the back doors. Sometimes I'm not allowed to. It be great to know what I'm meant to do

Buggy user

Some drivers let me and my (wheelchair user) friend on. Sometimes they don't. The rules seem to change according to the day of the week!

Wheelchair user



Four principles for developing customer comms

- 1. Clearly and consistently explain the rules across channels**
 - *Important to avoid any potential for ambiguity and misinterpretation*
- 2. Embed/integrate audience-specific messages in a campaign aimed at ALL customers**
 - *Singling out one group can amplify existing sensitivities/lack of empathy between audiences*
- 3. Use engaging visuals to get attention**
 - *A need to disrupt entrenched attitudes and behaviours surrounding the space*
- 4. Tone of voice (TOV) needs to be positive but matter-of-fact to engage**
 - *Important to engender cooperation and greater consideration for one another*



1. Rules need to be explained simply and unambiguously to not be rejected/challenged

- Essential to clarify rules and definition of priority to provide a rationale for directions/instructions – explains why they need to do ‘x’
- Needs to convey what passengers need to do: clearly communicate an instruction that logically follows on from the rules governing the space
- Leave no wiggle room for misinterpretation/ambiguity

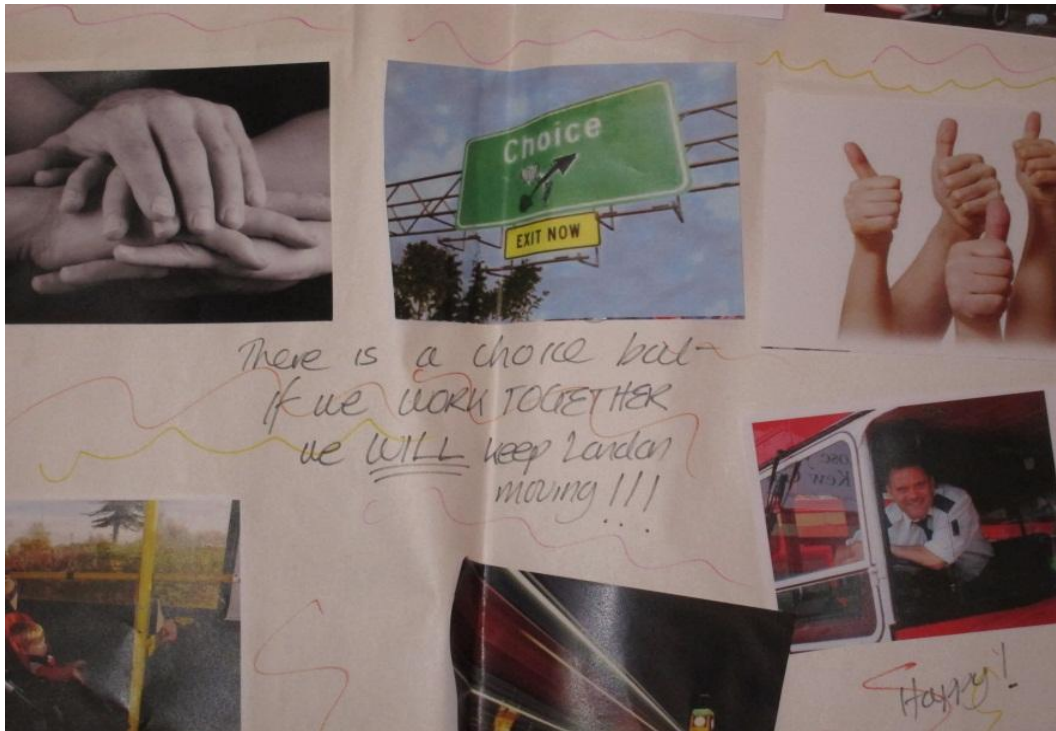
Eg

- ✓ ‘Single buggies should be wheeled through the front doors and into the wheelchair area. If a single buggy is too wide to fit through the doors and down the aisle, it must be folded’ (*source: TfL website – buggy users extract*)
- ✓ **Letting the wheelchair user on/off the bus** (section of the Red Book)*
 - ✓ ‘Use the same procedure to let a wheelchair user off the bus...’

Language needs to clearly outline the rules in a way that is not open to misinterpretation



2. Not singling out one audience is important for encouraging greater empathy: workshop task



It's not just aimed at buggies, it's for everyone.
Buggy user

Focusing on particular types of people means, you're going to be discriminating against someone
Wheelchair user

Respondents were asked to develop a poster for customer comms designed to alleviate conflicts in the wheelchair space



2. Audience specific comms need to clarify the rules or risk exacerbating defensiveness

- There is also a need to clarify who has priority/the rules before ‘telling’ buggy users to fold down
 - Comes into conflict with norms of behaviour so the message also requires explanation


- Buggy users reject the Fold It Down poster for the following reasons:
 - Singles them out
 - Amplifies pre-existing sensitivities – does not empathise with them
 - Concerns that it will exacerbate a lack of empathy/support from others
 - ‘Challenging’ tone of voice – can feel heavy-handed and authoritarian

Boarding a bus with a buggy?

Be prepared to
FOLD IT DOWN

When:

- the wheelchair space is occupied by a person with a wheelchair or by other buggies
- the bus is busy
- the buggy is too wide to get on board

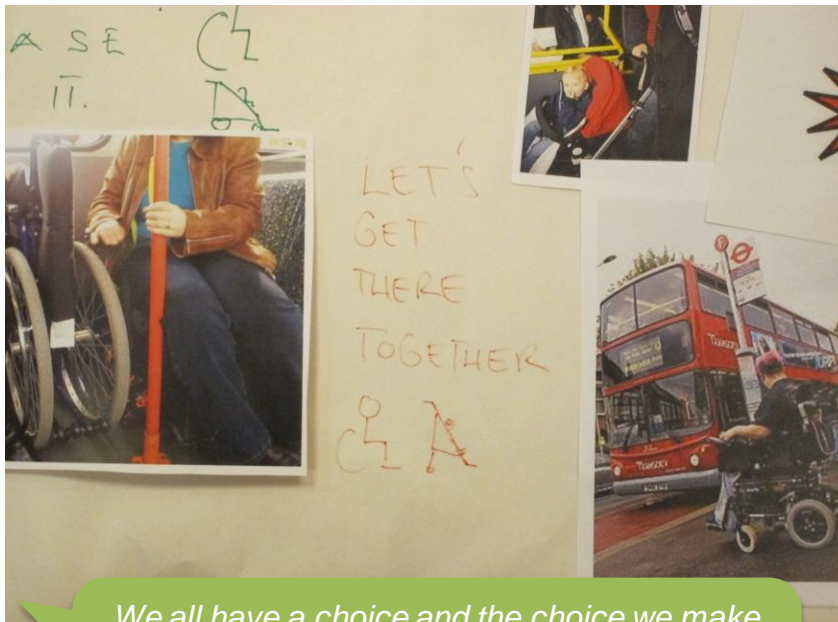
MAYOR OF LONDON Transport for London 





3 & 4. Visuals and tone of voice can work together to communicate a positively framed message

- Respondents call for an inclusive campaign that speaks to all audiences and does not appear forceful*:



We all have a choice and the choice we make will help us in our journeys. We need to make the choice of working together.

Buggy user

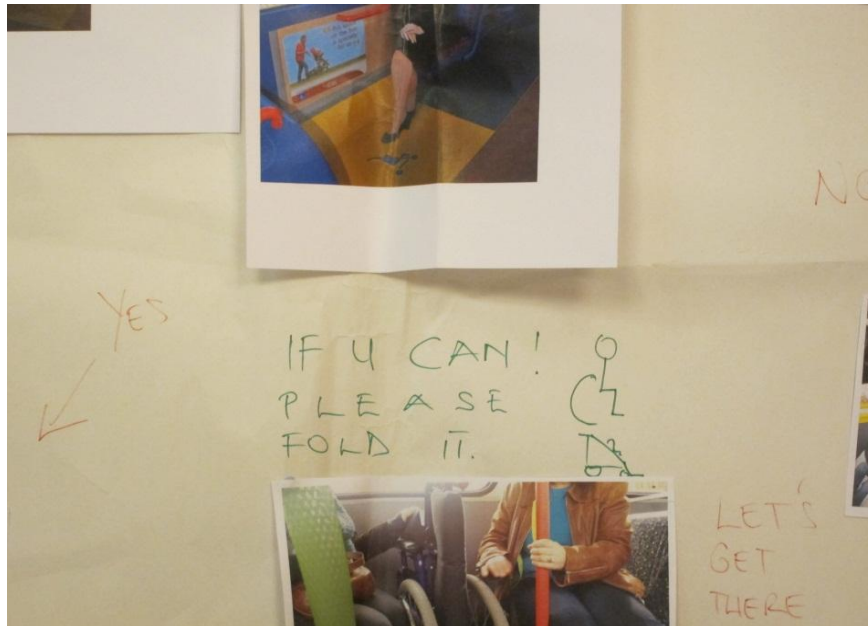


It's meant to feel happy, positive not too aggressive or forceful

Wheelchair user



3 & 4. Visuals and tone of voice can work together to communicate a positively framed message



The general feeling is that we've got to start communicating with each other and cooperating
Driver



We don't want to get negative or have any agro
 We want happy – different types; wheelchair users, buggy users
Wheelchair user

Summary of opportunities to reduce conflict

Signage

- Increase size and prominence
- Position at eye-level for standing and seated passengers
- Ensure hierarchy of information reflects 'priority' audience
- Ensure text is unambiguous and to-the-point

Customer communications

- Clearly and consistently explain the rules
- Embed audience-specific messages in broader customer campaign
- Use visuals to engage
- Ensure a positive but matter-of-fact TOV

Bus Driver behaviour

- Provide training to help manage and mediate
- Encourage greater use of tannoy and iBus
- Align driver and customer written and visual comms

Audio announcements

- Consider moving wheelchair space iBus announcements up the order on the driver's visual display
- Ensure audio and signage complement and reinforce each other, to support the bus driver

A combination of mutually reinforcing and supporting communications are required, including: training, infrastructure and messaging

Additional areas for consideration



Recommended 'buggies for buses' by TfL/manufacturers has traction

- The idea of advice from manufacturers/TfL/parent groups regarding 'best pushchairs/buggies' for public transport is welcomed:
 - Practical guidance that helps parents prepare (even at pregnancy stage) for the challenges of bus travel is appreciated
 - TfL is seen as a credible source for this type of information
 - Buggy users suggest comms for parents to check if their buggy is compatible with bus use when you are buying eg
 - In Bounty packs
 - In-store (eg Mothercare)

Couldn't TfL and buggy manufacturers work together to advise mums about suitable buggies for buses?

Buggy users

Commuting and the right buggy for it are not in your head before when you're pregnant. Be good if they included this in the Bounty packs

Buggy user

There is a role for advice that helps overcome practical challenges and alleviates parental anxieties



Re-design of buses are believed to deliver practical solutions

- Unprompted calls for bus re-design to create a solution are common
- All audiences are emphatic that re-design will alleviate tensions and overcome some practical challenges. Suggestions include:
 - Remove/convert to theatre seats the four chairs adjacent to the wheelchair space for more room
 - Remove the pole situated between the wheelchair space and the rear doors to allow greater manoeuvrability
 - Camera trained on the space to allow drivers to see what is happening → facilitate better management of the space
 - Intercom between cab and wheelchair space to allow driver and wheelchair users to communicate more easily

Can't they take down the four seats on the left as you get on?
Driver

If we could speak with wheelchair users from our cabs, that'd be great
Driver

That pole is so stupid! I know why it's there but it really gets in the way
Buggy user

Appendix

Issues with existing guidance

- All respondents were shown the following...



Extracts from Drivers Guide Book



Disabled passengers

Letting the wheelchair user on the bus

1. Pull in close to the kerb and acknowledge the wheelchair user if it is safe to do so
2. Most importantly, on dual door buses, keep the front doors closed so the wheelchair user can board in safety
3. Let passengers off then close centre doors and deploy the ramp. You will need to close the centre doors to do this
4. Open the centre doors and let the wheelchair user on. You will need to make sure that they have their back to the backrest and their brakes are applied
5. Ask the wheelchair user where they're going. So you know where you will need to deploy the ramp
6. Open the front doors to let your passengers on

Letting the wheelchair user off the bus

Use the same procedure to let a wheelchair user off the bus. The most important things to remember are to pull into the kerb as best you can and to keep the front doors closed. This ensures the wheelchair user can leave the bus in safety and comfort.

The screenshot shows the Transport for London website. The 'Buses' section is highlighted in the navigation menu. The main content area is titled 'Buses' and contains the following text:

Buses
All buses are low-floor vehicles (excluding Heritage buses on routes 9 and 15), which means that they are lowered to street level when the bus stops and the doors open.

Buses
Floor-level buses enable all customers, including wheelchair users*, people with buggies, people with assistance dogs and people with other mobility impairments to get on and off easily.

* The wheelchair space on buses cannot take a wheelchair bigger than 70cm in width and 100cm in length.

Free travel
Wheelchair users are entitled to free travel on buses and do not need to show any ticket or pass but anyone accompanying them must hold a valid ticket or pay the appropriate fare.

Children and young people under the age of 16 in full-time education and those holding Freedom Passes are also entitled to free travel on buses.

Wheelchairs
On all buses, there is room for one wheelchair user and each bus has a retractable ramp which makes access easier. Most wheelchairs, including reinforced types, will fit onto buses, but motorised scooters with handbars can't be carried onto buses.

Getting Around London Guide to Accessibility – Tfl Website

Buggies

Wheelchair users have priority over everyone else for use of the wheelchair space. If someone in a wheelchair wishes to board, and the wheelchair space is occupied by standing passengers or buggies, standing passengers will be asked by the driver to make room if possible, buggy owners will be asked to fold them and put them in the luggage space or keep them by their side.

- No customers had seen these before and when shown responses were mixed...



Issues with existing guidance: wheelchair users

Extracts from Drivers Guide Book



Disabled passengers

Letting the wheelchair user on the bus

1. Pull in close to the kerb and acknowledge the wheelchair user if it is safe to do so *NOT ALWAYS DONE*
2. Most importantly, on dual door buses, keep the front doors closed so the wheelchair user can board in safety *AGAIN NOT OFTEN DONE*
3. Let passengers off then close centre doors and deploy the ramp. You will need to close the centre doors to do this ✓
4. Open the centre doors and let the wheelchair user on. You will need to make sure *THEY* that they have their back to the backrest and their brakes *NEVER CHECK THIS* are applied
5. Ask the wheelchair user where they're going. So you know where you will need to deploy the ramp *NEVER DO THAT*
6. Open the front doors to let your passengers on

Wheelchair users experience is that drivers don't follow the guidance

Issues with existing guidance: buggy users



Getting Around London Guide to Accessibility – TfL Website

Buggies

Low-floor buses are designed to allow buggies to remain unfolded in the wheelchair space, since this is the only place in which they can travel safely. If someone in a wheelchair wishes to board, and the wheelchair space is occupied by standing passengers or buggies, standing passengers will be asked to make room.

Please make sure that buggies are safely positioned within the designated area. Unfolded buggies cannot travel in the gangway.

Buggies

Wheelchair users have priority over everyone else for use of the wheelchair space. If someone in a wheelchair wishes to board, and the wheelchair space is occupied by standing passengers or buggies, standing passengers will be asked by the driver to make room if possible, buggy owners will be asked to fold them and put them in the luggage space or (keep them by their side.)

A need to clarify and join-up different information sources

Some useful guidance, but not always consistently applied by the driver

- ✓ **Single buggies should be wheeled through the front doors and into the wheelchair area. If a single buggy is too wide to fit through the doors and down the aisle, it must be folded**
 - ✓ Clear, does not allow for ambiguity or misinterpretation
 - × Although not always popular with buggy users as inconsistent
- ✓ **Letting the wheelchair user on/off the bus** (section in the book)
 - ✓ Offers useful and clear guidance
 - × But is not consistently applied by drivers
- × **Wheelchair users have priority over everyone else for use of the wheelchair space**
 - × Challenged by buggy users as not consistently enforced by drivers
- × **Unfolded buggies cannot travel in the gangway**
 - × Challenged by buggy users as does not explain why
 - × Not always consistently 'enforced' by drivers

Good information but not consistently applied
Wheelchair user

They sometimes let you on the back doors, so why can't they always?
Buggy user

Some good guidance but not all drivers follow it
Wheelchair user

Important to not leave any room for ambiguity

TfL website information does not sufficiently clarify the rules governing use of the space for users of it

- If language used is ambiguous it can be challenged or counter-argued by users eg
..in the driver's opinion (re: permission to board)
 - × Does not clarify the rules but leaves it up to the driver
- ***You will only be refused entry when absolutely necessary***
 - × Does not give rationale/define what this means, nor outline when this may happen or who decides
- ***If the wheelchair space is occupied by standing passengers or buggies, standing passengers will be asked to make room***
 - × Does not clarify or convey what buggy users expected to do in this scenario

That's open to the driver's bad judgement
Wheelchair user

*What does that mean?
 And who's making that decision*
Buggy user

It's a shared space – if I'm there first, why should I move?
Buggy user

A need for clear direction to ensure that rules are consistently applied and do not appear arbitrary

Detailed sample criteria

Group	Audience	Life stage	Location	SEG
1	Bus drivers	Mixed	Inner	N/A
2	Bus drivers	Mixed	Outer	N/A
3	Buggy users	Family	Mixed	ABC1
4	Buggy users	Family	Mixed	C2DE
5	Wheelchair users	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed

Wheelchair users

- A mix of Inner and Outer London in groups, including a range of London boroughs
- Natural fall-out of SEG
- A mix of gender
- Representative of BME (natural fall-out)
- All to have used London buses at least once in the last 6 months
- A mix of frequent and infrequent wheelchair users
- A range of wheelchair types
- A mix of wheelchair users with and without carers
- None to have a specialist interest in transport/links with transport advocacy groups

Buggy users

- A mix of Inner and Outer London in groups, including a range of London boroughs
- A spread of SEG
- All family
- A range of ages of child
- A mix of number of children travelling with parents on the bus
- Representative of BME (natural fall-out)
- A mix of frequency of bus use – all to use the bus at least once a week
- A mix of times of day travelling – peak vs. off peak
- A range of buggies & buggy brands used on the bus (single, double, Bugaboo, Phil & Teds, Maclaren, Maxi-Cosi, Mamas & Papas)
- A mix of number of children travelling with buggy user on the bus
- A range of attitudes and behaviours around buggy use and towards other bus users

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