

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Title	Reducing conflict in the wheelchair space.		
Objective	To understand key issues for buggy users, wheelchair users and bus drivers in reducing conflict in the wheelchair space; and to identify opportunities for communications to minimise conflict.		
Date	20/04/2012	Agency	2CV
Methodology	Five one and a half hour exploratory group discussions; two with buggy users, two with bus drivers and one with wheelchair users; and one mixed audience workshop with a selection of participants reconvened from the exploratory group discussions.		

Abstract

Customer complaints to TfL and feedback from the Accessibility Mystery Travelling Survey have indicated a need to better understand conflicts around the dedicated wheelchair space from a range of perspectives. Inconsistent experiences surrounding the space and driver approaches are the major cause of stress for buggy users and wheelchair users. There is need to clarify 'the rules' for all customers and drivers - including what priority means in practice, folding down of buggies and buggies boarding via the middle doors - and then to support drivers to apply the rules more consistently. Customer communications have potential to engender greater cooperation between customers and the driver, thereby reducing tension.

Key findings

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Buggy users, wheelchair users and bus drivers experience logistical and interpersonal challenges when using the Bus. All experience anxieties, practical challenges and challenges regarding their 'rights'/'the rules;' however, challenges play out differently according to significant audience differences.

Inconsistent and unpredictable experiences are the major source of tension and stress:

bus drivers have inconsistent attitudes and approaches towards managing the space; and cooperation between customers often gives way to competition at times of high passenger volume. 'Conflicts' around the wheelchair space are

often indirect as tensions begin before passengers get on the bus. A lack of clarity over 'the rules' underpins inconsistent experiences around the space and conflict, particularly regarding what 'priority' means in practice (especially for wheelchair users), and concerning the number of buggies allowed on board, folding down and boarding via the middle doors (especially for buggy users).

There are three main 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

Job number:11090