

# **SHEFFIELD AREA VPA CUSTOMER SERVICE PLAN**

## **Introduction**

In order to ensure the Sheffield Area VPA is a customer focussed and customer responsive service we need to involve customers in developing the services by a range of methods including encouraging, analysing, and, responding to customer feedback.

Customer feedback is a key element in understanding customer view. It allows a basis upon which to build customer focussed services and so encourages high customer satisfaction and advocacy so building patronage from recommendations.

The customer viewing the partnership as a single face will be a challenge to deliver as commercial concerns dictate individual corporate branding and processes. This plan accepts these challenges yet looks to deliver a consistent partnership “face” to our customers. This allows for the combined experience and expertise to be utilised but under a single partnership face for the customer.

The Customer Service Plan looks to deliver this through a partnership Customer Charter and the supporting process behind it delivered in a consistent way by all partners.

## **The Customer Charter**

All parties agree to promote and support a Customer Charter of shared promises. This Charter is to align the offer to the customer and stands along with parties' corporate charter (when relevant). The Customer Charter includes:

- Safety and bus standard assurances.
- Service standards re timekeeping, last bus etc.
- Commitment to publicise performance and any actions to address under performance.
- Customer experience promises including being welcoming, friendly, helpful etc.
- Equality of treatment and respect for all customers.
- Encouragement to customers to provide feedback including contact channels.
- Commitments to investigate, respond and address feedback.
- Compensation arrangements when service standards are not met
- Provision of accurate, timely information by a variety of channels.
- Consultation on future service changes.

A copy of the Customer Charter is attached as Appendix 1.

## **Safety and bus standard assurances**

To ensure customers can travel safely and in a clean environment.

## **Service standards re timekeeping, last bus etc.**

To align with performance standards in other schedules.

**Commitment to publicise performance and any actions to address under performance**

Parties agree to publicise relevant performance information on partnership and individual external communications channels in an open and transparent way including actions to and timescales to address.

**Customer experience promises including being welcoming, friendly, helpful etc**

Parties agree to provide staff training and support to enable their staff services to be welcoming, friendly, and helpful and put in place measures to address underperformance.

**Equality of treatment and respect for all customers**

Parties agree to provide staff training to ensure that all customers regardless of ability, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief are treated equality.

**Encouragement to customers to provide feedback including contact channels**

Parties agree to actively promote and encourage customer feedback arrangements and to widely publicise in a positive manner the importance of customer feedback.

**Commitments to investigate, respond, and, address feedback**

Parties agree to a common response standard of guaranteeing a response within 5 working days of receipt to all feedback. For simple queries this will comprise of a full response whilst for more complicated feedback requiring investigation then an acknowledgement will be sent including a timescale for full resolution.

Parties also to agree a common standard of recording, tracking, and, resolving customer feedback in order to present a unified face to the customer. In the longer term a shared system of recording feedback will be investigated and a business case developed to deliver a shared customer feedback system.

Parties will work together to develop a voice, tone of response, and, generic phraseology to be used when responding to customer feedback to ensure that confusion is not caused to customers by different parties responding in providing different information to similar feedback.

**Compensation arrangements when service standards are not met**

Compensation arrangements where services fail to reach promised standards due to parties' service falling should be fairly compensated. This is proposed to be a minimum of relevant day ticket in compensation for each day's service failure. Insurance or legal compensation claims will continue to be dealt with by way of each party's internal legal and insurance processes.

**Provision of accurate, timely information by a variety of channels**

This is provided within the Information Products Strategy contained within WP4.

**Consultation on future service changes**

This is provided within the Service Change Protocol within WP1.

### **Points of Customer Contact**

SYPTE will provide a range of customer contact channels to enable customer feedback to be given. The Parties may wish to utilise these channels and/or provide to extend the contact touch points by providing additional direct customer service contact points within their own organisations. These contact points are expected to conform to the response times and standards of response as earlier stated.

### **Comments received by one Party but pertaining to another Party**

Comments received by one Party but which pertain to another will be responded to by either:

- a) Responded to by the receiving Party on behalf of the other Party in line with pre agreed arrangements.
- b) Passed urgently onto the second Party to respond and the customer informed of this action.

### **Appeals**

Each Party will provide details of an appeals process customers can avail upon if not satisfied with the initial response. This appeals process will include a level of appeal to an independent external organisation dependent upon the Party's relevant governance arrangements. Parties agree to abide by the decision made by the appeals processes.

Details of the appeals process will be published on partners and partnership web sites.

### **Sharing information**

All Parties agree to conform to the Data Sharing Agreements when sharing customer's information in order to respond to feedback.

Non-personal information including disruption information etc. will be widely shared throughout the Sheffield Area VPA in order to mitigate delays or disruptions caused to services and so to customers. Parties will provide such known disruption or delays information to the SYPTE Contact Centre who will review and update electronic information systems as soon as practicable. Information regarding the ending of such disruptions will similarly be provided in order to return to business as usual state.

### **Business Intelligence**

In order to learn from customer feedback SYPTE will provide to the Parties a monthly review of feedback received and, when available, details of the resolution and improvements delivered. In order to maximise this intelligence Parties agree to provide sufficient detail of feedback received directly by them, and responses/actions to add to this holistic analysis.

### **Last Bus guarantee**

Partners will continue to work together to ensure that no customers are left without transport by the failure of the last journey opportunity which may be the last bus of the day or the last bus on a part of a route where no later one is available.

### **Customer Service Training**

The Parties agree to provide Customer Service training to all customer contact staff to ensure both awareness of expectations, and ability to deliver, the Customer Service Plan. The Parties agree to train all customer contact staff to a level of customer care training of at least NVQ level 2 or Driver CPC. Should customer service issues be regularly identified then partners agree to reconsider and address any training gaps identified.

### **Summary**

This Customer Service Plan seeks to ensure the Sheffield Area VPA can deliver a high level of customer service and be a learning organisation who considers positively customer feedback as an importance source of business development intelligence. This plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose.

# Sheffield Area VPA Customer Charter - our promises and commitments to you

## We are Sheffield Area Bus Partnership

We are South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE), the bus service operators in Sheffield, and, Sheffield City Council all working in partnership to make travelling in Sheffield by bus an attractive choice, good value and as easy as possible.

## Putting the customer at the heart of what we do

We put our customers at the heart of everything we do. We actively listen and take positive action from what you say so we can review our services to better meet your needs. We are always looking for ways to improve our services for you, so when you feel that things could be better let us know and we will work to put things right whenever we can.

## Why have a Customer Charter?

Our Customer Charter lets you know what we do, why we do it, and how you can make a difference. We want to be easy to deal with and we want to know and understand your opinions about the services we offer to allow us to better meet your needs. The Customer Charter lets you know what we promise to you, how important your feedback is and what you can expect from us when you give us any feedback.

## Our promises and commitment to you

We promise:

- our staff will be welcoming, friendly, helpful and polite to you,
- we will train all our staff to have customer service skills so they treat all customers fairly and with respect,
- our vehicles and facilities will be safe, regularly serviced and clean,
- we will let you know the standards to expect and openly share both how we perform and how we'll address shortfalls,
- we will provide information about our services and ensure it is clear, free of jargon, up to date, and accurate,
- we will make contacting us easy by offering a range of ways for you to contact us,
- we will listen to what you say, fully investigate, and try our best to answer all your queries and concerns,
- we will make sure your feedback is reported to the Partnership Management Board,
- we will learn from your feedback and tell you what we've done as a result,
- we will regularly review this Charter to make sure it meets your needs.

## Your invitation to 'Tell us what you think'

We'd really like to hear your thoughts and suggestions about travel in the Sheffield Bus Partnership area. By giving us your feedback we will know what is working well for you, and what is not, so that we can keep reviewing and improving our services.

Whether your feedback is about our staff, services, your positive experience, or you want to highlight areas for improvement, you can tell us what you think by contacting us in any of the following ways:

- Visit [travelsouthyorkshire.com](http://travelsouthyorkshire.com) and complete an online form by clicking onto 'contact us' on the menu banner
- Email [traveline@sypte.co.uk](mailto:traveline@sypte.co.uk)
- Call Traveline on 01709 51 51 51
- Pick up a form by visiting a Travel South Yorkshire Information Centre, or use an interactive kiosk

You can also contact the larger bus service operators directly at:

First Customer Services  
Midland Road Garage  
Midland Road  
Rotherham  
S61 1TF

Stagecoach Yorkshire  
Unit 4 Eldon Arcade  
Barnsley  
S70 2JP

☎ 01709 566 000

☎ 01226 202555

🌐 [firstgroup.com](http://firstgroup.com)

✉ [yorkshire.enquiries@stagecoachbus.com](mailto:yorkshire.enquiries@stagecoachbus.com)

🌐 [stagecoachbus.com/customerservice](http://stagecoachbus.com/customerservice)

We aim to respond to your feedback as quickly as possible, and will get back to you within seven days of receipt. Often we'll reply on the same day that we hear from you.

If we need to pass your feedback onto to another organisation we will let you know who it has been passed to, why, and what response you can expect.

### **Our response to customer feedback**

We are committed to making changes and improvements to our products and services as a result of customer feedback. To let you know about the actions we have taken, we will display information about your feedback in our interchanges, at bus stops, on all parties' websites and through other communication channels.

### **Consultation groups**

Because it is important that we know what you think about our services and the type of information or products you need, we hold regular customer focus groups and carry out public consultation to discuss your thoughts on public transport. If you are interested in taking part in this please let us know.

### **Removing barriers**

If you have hearing difficulties and would like to contact us, you can phone us on 01709 515151 using a Tynetalk service or visit [travelsouthyorkshire.com](http://travelsouthyorkshire.com) and use the Browsealoud facility.

Stagecoach Sheffield have a dedicated contact number for anyone with a disability. The disability helpdesk can be reached by calling 0845 266 6606 or by email [Yorkshire.Disabilityhelpdesk@Stagecoachbus.com](mailto:Yorkshire.Disabilityhelpdesk@Stagecoachbus.com)

If you have difficulties with your sight, we will send you upon request information in a format you are able to use. If we need to write to you we can do so in large print, Braille, or we can record the letter in an audio format.

If English is not your first language then when you phone our contact centre on 01709 515151 we will arrange for a translator over the telephone. If you write to us in the language you speak, we will try to answer in the same language.

## Appeals process

### South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive

If you contact us and are not satisfied with our response, you can contact the Business Development Manager, using the details below, who will review your concern:

Business Development Manager's Office  
11 Broad Street West  
Sheffield  
S1 2BQ

Email: [alan.nicholson.office@sypte.co.uk](mailto:alan.nicholson.office@sypte.co.uk)

When we receive your letter or email we will reply within five working days. If we can't give you a full reply, we will write to you explaining why and when you can expect this.

If you are still not satisfied after this you can write to the [Integrated Passenger Transport Authority](#), the governing body which oversees public transport in South Yorkshire.

You can write to them at:

The Joint Secretariat  
18 Regent Street  
Barnsley  
S70 2PQ

They will respond to you within 20 working days. If they can't give you a full reply, they will write to you explaining why and when you can expect this.

The [Local Government Ombudsman](#) can also consider some complaints about SYPTE or Sheffield City Council's activities. Their details are on the Ombudsman website [lgo.org.uk](http://lgo.org.uk) or you can call 0300 061 0614 or text 0762 480 4999

### First and Stagecoach appeal arrangements

If after contacting us you are dissatisfied with our response there is an independent organisation that can review your complaint. You can contact them by writing to:

BAB, c/o Bus Users UK  
PO Box 119  
Shepperton  
TW17 8UX