

Weekly Poll – Improving Traveline Services

Each week Disability Equality Scotland send out a poll question to our members on a topical issue. For the week beginning 26 April 2021, we asked a question about journey planning and improving Traveline services.

Results

Question 1. Do you think there is enough information and resources available to assist with planning an accessible journey?

- YES – 12% (10 respondents)
- NO – 88% (71 respondents)

Question 2. Can Traveline Scotland improve the quality of travel planning information to meet your accessibility requirements?

- YES – 96% (78 respondents)
- NO – 4% (3 respondents)

Comments

We provide verbatim comments where appropriate to illustrate strength of feeling or personal experience.

Journey Planning

Information on journey planning can help disabled people to feel more confident and safer to travel independently. This information must be accurate, complete, timely and available in a variety of accessible formats. The majority of respondents (96%) believed that Traveline Scotland can

improve the quality of travel planning information to meet the accessibility requirements of disabled people. Respondents reflected on their experiences of journey planning and the challenges encountered due to a lack of information about the accessibility of the route, including the mode of transport, bus stops and train stations.

“With help I could plan a journey using Traveline. However, it doesn't tell me if the services are accessible.”

“I can't use the Traveline app as it does not tell me enough about the accessibility of bus stops, route from one stop to another and which buses are accessible (low floor/ramp).”

“Traveline can severely improve their service, their information and their attitude to the complex needs of disabled people.”

“On the app there is no easily available information on the accessibility of train station and bus stops.”

Wheelchair Users

Specific concerns were raised by wheelchair users regarding their experiences of using Traveline Scotland, along with broader concerns about the availability of designated wheelchair spaces.

“A couple of years ago my wife and I planned to go to Glasgow for the craft fair at the Scottish Event Campus (SEC) and decided to do part of the journey by car and the remainder by train. We called Traveline to book tickets and explained the need for wheelchair access, but they seemed unsure of which stations would be accessible for the journey there and the return, so we decided to book from a major station instead.”

“I tried journey planning on Traveline Scotland a few times as a wheelchair user and found it Impossible! Blatant discrimination.”

“It is a lot of trouble trying to link everything up with a wheelchair. Some parts would be ok others no help at all.”

“It is hard to plan ahead as times can change at a moment's notice without any form of warning. Availability of wheelchair spaces for disabled people on public transport is shockingly low. What space is there makes you feel like you must battle for it with prams/strollers, pregnant people and the elderly. So, if you can't get a space, you then need to wait and if there have been delays, you need to figure out when you can come back to try again.”

One wheelchair user praised Traveline Scotland for providing more detailed information about each step of the journey, which in their experience was not provided when attempting to plan the journey through bus operator websites.

“My experience of Traveline Scotland as a wheelchair user has generally been very good and is easier for me to arrange travel than through other sites, e.g., bus website. This is because Traveline Scotland not only updates each step of the journey with the times but shows most if not all the bus stops in between. This information is not available through bus sites and is very important for me as a wheelchair user travelling to an unknown or less familiar area because I can't see what's coming when I'm facing backwards in the wheelchair space. The collation of different public transport options for the same journey is also very useful.”

Connections

A proportion of respondents highlighted the importance of receiving accurate and timely information about connections between services and

different modes of transport. It was noted that journey planning services must take into consideration the extra time that is required for some people to make a connection due to the nature of their disability.

“Where a journey requires a change (for example, Glasgow to London via Edinburgh) it would be useful to know how long it will take to change platforms. This information is available on an indicative basis, but it assumes an able-bodied passenger. A disabled person who either walks with difficulty or requires to use a lift needs to know how long it takes so as to make a connection. Some stations are a maze (for example, Glasgow Central) so to get from a low-level platform to platform 1 (for London) may take some time.”

“It would be useful to know what platform you will arrive at and what platform connection will leave from and how far apart the two platforms are.”

“The app is clearly established in mind of the majority of people, the able bodied, who can get from one service provider to another in sufficient time to make a connection.”

“I have been in a situation where no lift was operational when I arrived at a lower platform on the train. Another problem that I encountered was a change of platform at the last minute which left me struggling to get to the new platform.”

Assisted Travel

When planning a journey, some disabled people will book passenger assistance, a service provided by various transport operators to support disabled people when travelling on public transport. For example, when travelling by rail, staff can help passengers boarding and exiting from the

train, provide assistance when on the train and when moving around a staffed station. Some respondents believed that improvements can be made to assisted travel, including integration with Traveline Scotland.

“On numerous occasions, I have booked assistance on the rail network only for there to be a failure to communicate that to the people at the start of my journey, when changing trains or at the end of the journey - sometimes several of these for the same journey. This has led to me missing appointments, missing connecting trains or being stranded because my prearranged lift/transport was no longer available for me when I finally reached my destination. On one occasion I was left on the train beyond my destination because a ramp was not available to get me off the train. All in all, it's a very hit or miss service at best or a complete shambles at worst.”

“Having to book assistance up to a week in advance is ridiculous. We should be able to just turn up and be able to get assistance and also get on transport whenever we want. The longest I have had to wait was six hours before I was able to get on a train. I have also had occasions where the assistance that I booked wasn't there and I had to struggle. In one instance I had to press the emergency stop button because they forgot that I needed help off the train.”

“What I would like to see is some sort of guarantee about what you book or require when travelling being delivered. On top of this having more information such as numbers to call when there is a problem you could phone for advice”.

Communication

A number of respondents believed that journey planning services, such as Traveline Scotland, must do more to provide information in a variety of accessible formats and communication channels.

“As it has been proved, a lot of disabled people, and non-disabled people do not have access to the internet or even sometimes a phone, so there should be all the different ways on how to access the service, via in person, phone or internet. The information should also state, how much assistance is or can be available for the person in order to actually use the services.”

“I think there needs to be much more information provided in a variety of accessible formats, along with regular, specific promotion of the service. More people using it will provide better feedback.”

“The main problem is being unable to get fast replies to emails. As with most helplines, it relies on people being able to use telephones. What is needed is an urgent response service for those who cannot use telephones because they are deaf and who cannot use mobiles because there is no signal in their location. This problem will persist until we get 100% mobile coverage in Scotland. At present I cannot even phone for a taxi.”

“It would be useful if i could speak my destination into a voice recognition program and it could speak back directions as if stressed I can’t read but can speak.”

Engage with Disabled People

To ensure appropriate changes are made to travel planning information and associated services delivered by Traveline Scotland, it is important to have meaningful and ongoing engagement with disabled people.

“Listen to the issues disabled people have with the app. It doesn’t work for most and there needs to be changes instead of accepting that it doesn’t work as the norm.”

“Design it with a group of disabled people with various needs and see the problems with the current app first-hand.”

Conclusion

An overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) believe that Traveline Scotland can do more to improve the quality of travel planning information to meet the accessibility requirements for disabled people. Respondents reflected on their own personal experiences of using Traveline Scotland, which highlights the need for timely and accurate information about the accessibility of the route, as well as connections between platforms and different modes of transport. Specific concerns were raised by wheelchair users about the availability of designated wheelchair spaces. Some respondents reflected on their experiences of booking passenger assistance and whether the process can be integrated with journey planning services. In addition, it is vital that information provided by Traveline Scotland is available in a variety of accessible formats. To assist with improving the quality of travel planning information, it is essential to engage directly with disabled people.

Disability Equality Scotland, May 2021

About Disability Equality Scotland

We are a national charity working to make life more accessible, equal and inclusive for disabled people in Scotland.

We promote access in its widest sense, including access to the built and natural environment and access to the same opportunities as are enjoyed by others in our communities thus promoting a life of dignity, respect, choice and independence. This extends beyond physical access to include access to information, access to inclusive communication and inclusion in decision-making, whether with planners over inclusive design or transport providers about accessible travel.

We represent the views of individuals with any type of impairment, as well as disability organisations and groups who share Disability Equality Scotland's values.

We are also the umbrella organisation for all disability Access Panels in Scotland and the principal provider of support and guidance to the Access Panels presently representing disabled persons at a local level throughout Scotland. Access Panels are committed to improving access and equality in its widest form, which means access to the physical environment, Education, Housing, Health, Transport, Leisure & Recreation and Social Justice amongst other areas.

We are membership led. If you are an individual or an organisation, you can [join our membership](#) for FREE and help to further our aims. We work to influence the policies of the Scottish Government, which affect how disabled people live and we work to encourage others to be inclusive and informed in their attitudes towards disabled people.