

Late running tolerated, but complaints ignored



David Sidebottom, acting chief executive of Passenger Focus.

BUS passengers are tolerant of some late running of services but feel that their complaints will be ignored when there is a problem, according to the latest research by Passenger Focus.

David Sidebottom, acting chief executive of Passenger Focus, says: "Our bus passenger survey shows punctuality is one of the main reasons for people to be unhappy with their bus service. We wanted to explore this, and find out what people actually want from published timetables.

"We'll now take the results of this and our other work on punctuality round to local authorities and bus operators as a way of bringing to life what makes a good service for passengers."

The research found that most passengers are quite forgiving about buses turning up late, feeling that there is little bus drivers can do to avoid the traffic. They see timetables as a guide rather than a promise, spontaneously mentioning that giving them five minutes leeway feels about right.

Overall, passengers would prefer a timetable that is accurate and harder to remember than one that is easy to remember but less accurate. Passenger Focus notes that this challenges some conventional thinking on timetabling and may warrant further exploration.

Most passengers feel there is no point complaining to the operator either because they do not generally regard it as important enough to complain or because, when they have done so, they have not received a reply.