

Insight Report

Getting there: Bus access and patient care

Understanding the role of public transport in accessing health services

August 2025



Background

In 2022, bus operator Arriva changed the route of the number 15 bus through Ibstock high street in North West Leicestershire. Previously, the bus had stopped on Ibstock high street, connecting residents from the north of the village, and from the village of Heather to the GP surgery, dentist, pharmacies, post office and other local shops.

Arriva stated that a sharp corner on the high street posed a health and safety risk, prompting the route change.

As a result:

- The bus no longer stops on Ibstock high street.
- Residents in the north of Ibstock face an uphill walk to reach services.
- Heather is no longer served by this route.
- Regular connections to Hinckley have been lost, and services to Coalville are now less frequent.

The Ibstock GP surgery has introduced a minibus service operating two days per week to help residents attend appointments.

What we did

In March 2025, local people in Ibstock and Heather were given the opportunity to complete a paper or online survey on the impact of the bus route changes on their access to services during March 2025. In addition, four events in Ibstock and Heather allowed people to be interviewed in person.



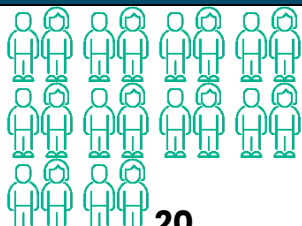
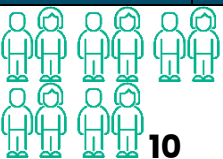


49 Responses

We had **49** responses to this survey.

We asked people living in Ibstock and Heather if the **changes to the bus services had affected their access to the GP or pharmacies?**

YES		30
NO		19








From those that answered yes, we asked how changes had affected their travel?
Of the 30 who said yes, here are the services they now find harder to reach:

GP	PHARMACY	DENTIST	LIFESTYLE	TOTAL
 20	 10	 6	 5	41

The data suggest that residents in Ibstock and Heather felt that their access to primary care services have been impacted by the changes to bus routes. They are unable to access services when they need to.

Some people told us about alternative methods of transport they have been using to reach services:

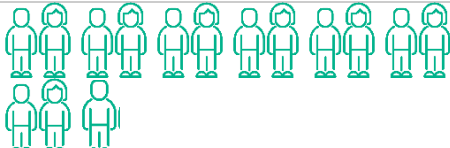






Alternative to buses – responses

Unable to access		8
Taxis		6
Walking		5
Lifts from family, friends or neighbours		5
Walking with a struggle		3
GP minibus		2
Home visits		2
Total		31

(**Note:** Some individual respondents told us about multiple alternative methods).

This further indicates that access to primary care services have been impacted. Many people are not just having difficulties accessing services but are unable to access them at all following the bus route changes. Additionally, with some individuals using taxis, lifts and walking with a struggle, it suggests that many alternative methods of transportation may not be sustainable or ideal in the long run.

We asked people who said they were affected by the changes to the bus services what knock-on effects the changes have had:

Impact - responses		
Delay/ avoid making appointments		15
Travel costs		5
Can't use shops, hairdressers and other services		3
Continues to visit		1
Unable to travel to nearest town		1
Telephone appointments only		1
Travel further for GP appointments		1
Total		27

Additionally, some residents in Ibstock and Heather told us that it was impacting their physical and mental health, especially older adults and those with limited mobility.

Feedback on local health services

We asked all respondents about their experiences with health services in Ibstock and Heather.

What's working well

- Ibstock GP surgery and staff received praise for their kindness and care.
- People appreciated personal service at local pharmacies.
- Most of the positive feedback focussed on the individuals working within the healthcare system, suggesting that the care people receive is good.

"I prefer to walk to the GPs to keep mobile."

"I use the GP's minibus. If I book an appointment I ask to book the minibus. It has a ramp."

"Things have improved greatly at the Ibstock GP surgery over the last year, especially in getting face-to-face appointments."

"There have been a lot of positive changes recently and I was very satisfied with the care they've given me with my hip replacement."

"The staff at Listers chemist are really lovely and helpful."

"I have been very happy with the treatment I have received from Ibstock surgery. The staff are all very kind and helpful."

"We have no complaints and are grateful for the attention from the surgery and the pharmacies."



What could be improved

- Booking GP appointments, especially face-to-face.
- Transport and accessibility.
- Some concerns with hospital delays and specialist care.

"I'm certainly more likely to put off an appointment now and did so recently. I'm 100 next year and need regular appointments."

"I cannot get to the hairdresser or social club on the high street. My mental health is affected, I am becoming more reclusive."

"If I need an appointment now, I get a home visit if I can't get a lift. With a bus service to the high street, I could get there independently."

"It has definitely made accessing GP and pharmacies more difficult. I am no longer steady on my feet so unless I get a lift, I can't access the services."

"There is no service from where I live to town. There are bus stops but no service. I have to rely on family or an expensive taxi."

"Since they changed the bus route I can't walk up the big hill."

"I can't drive any more. They have a minibus at the GP surgery, so this has been useful. You might have to wait a week to coincide the minibus with an appointment."

Summary of findings

- **Access to GP services** is the most impacted area. With many residents already finding it difficult to book appointments, the changes to the bus route have worsened the problem.
- **Alternative methods of transportation are working for some**, but these methods are not always available or sustainable, and for others there are no alternatives.
- The barriers to healthcare influence people's **physical and mental health**.
- Though barriers to access healthcare exist, once people reach services, **care is generally rated as good**.

The change in bus route has had a negative impact on access to health services for vulnerable groups in Ibstock and Heather. The availability of a GP minibus has helped connect residents to the surgery; however, this does not always coincide with when people need appointments. Bus route changes have had an impact on some people's independence and their opportunities to socialise and support the local economy.

Recommendations

We recommend that the local council and transport authorities work with residents to explore solutions, such as:

- Reintroducing a safe, direct bus service through Ibstock high street.
- Providing a regular community shuttle.
- Offering transport subsidies for vulnerable residents.

These steps will help reduce health inequalities and support the independence and wellbeing of residents in Ibstock and Heather.

Update

A new on-demand bus service launched in July 2025.

The new FoxConnect on-demand bus service links Heather and Ibstock to Coalville and offers connections to towns in Hinckley and Bosworth. It can be booked by phone or on the app. It runs Monday to Saturday 6am – 7.30pm.

Find out more - www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/leicestershire-foxconnect/north-west-leicestershire-foxconnect





Healthwatch Leicester
Healthwatch Leicestershire

9 Newarke Street
Leicester
LE1 5SN

www.healthwatchll.com

☎ 0116 257 4999

✉ enquiries@healthwatchll.com

✂ @HealthwatchLeic

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