

Minutes BAAF Meeting 06th February 2020

Attendees			
Name	Company	Name	Company
Andy Wright	Chair, BAAF	Deane Arnold	Terminal Operations Manager, BHX
Ed Kibblewhite	Accessibility Manager, BHX	Sasha Drake	Terminal Support Co-ordinator, BHX
Dan Farrow	JDRF	Giles Baldwin	Terminal Project Co-ordinator, BHX
Abi Clarke	JDRF	David Ball	Trainer, OCS
Alexandra Jones	Guide Dogs for the Blind	Sarah Lilly	Cerebral Palsy Midlands
Paul Rhodes	Spinal Injuries Association	Daniel Sturley	Autism West Midlands
Janice Le Tellier	Alzheimer's Society	Joe Carroll	Spinal Injuries Association
Milton Rae	Action On Hearing Loss	Clare Jones	Tryb4ufly
Ahmed Hassan	Guest – CP Midlands		
Apologies			
Libby Herbert	Colostomy UK	Bradley Beaumont	Whizz-kidz
Vidar Hjordeng	Independent	Sarah Rennie	Independent

Opening of meeting and welcome to new attendees

Andy opened the meeting welcoming the new attendees, sharing apologies and summarised the agenda for the day.

Update on action points from previous meetings

Sunflower Room (a quiet space)

Ed & Giles shared the expected opening date for this new facility (3rd March) and talked the group through the design of the facility, giving examples of how the group's previous feedback has helped shape the aesthetic look for the room. **Ed** explained that the demand for the room was not really known. However, many passengers have been starting to ask about this type of facility more and more which was the catalyst to create this area. **Daniel S** raised a concern that it could become too crowded and offered the suggestion that some simple partitioning could be made available in the room. **Janice** asked the airport to ensure the seating furniture provided is a good contrast against the flooring. This was reconfirmed post forum with the contractor and the airport is satisfied that there will be good contrast. **Daniel S** asked how the room was to be secured or monitored. **Ed** explained the limitations of having a coded lock on the facility and described CCTV coverage in the area. **Lee** offered support in monitoring this room through use of the OCS managers on shift. **Ed** also explained that due to the facilities location, and intentional avoidance of the word 'Quiet' on wayfinding signage, only passengers who have a genuine need for this space should end up using it.

Assistance Animal Airside Relief Area

Ed updated the group on the progress of this project which Sasha is leading. He advised that this is still in concept stage at the moment and has not been fully approved for delivery yet. **Ed** described earlier engagement with a visit from Guide Dogs for the Blind to select their preferred location. This is an external location, accessible from the departures lounge that is covered and well lit. **Ed** explained that there doesn't appear to be any other external, airside, dedicated assistance animal relief areas at UK airports and it was important to Birmingham Airport to lead this initiative. The group was updated with design considerations that must ensure airfield safety is maintained, by removing the risk of loose assistance dogs and debris. Another objective is to exceed the minimum standards for a relief area as described in Guide Dogs for the

Minutes BAAF Meeting 06th February 2020

Blind guidance material. **Alexandra** asked for clarity on signage in the terminal and how users would be expected to find the facility. **Ed** confirmed that due to the location, users will always have to be under escort by an Assisted Travel employee removing the need for directional passenger signage. The only signage required would be to promote the facility and inform passengers on how to contact a member of staff. **Giles** talked through some commercial ideas to have the area sponsored. **Alexandra** asked if she could be involved with this as she has experience of some companies having unsuitable branding for visual impairments or corporate policies that do not support people with guide dogs.

Sensory Pod

The group was shown a visual concept for a 'plug & play' sensory pod that is due to be installed within a few months and be located next to the existing SkyZone play area on the international pier. The group welcomed the initiative. **Daniel S** explained that some people with autism may feel that it is their own space when using it which may create some challenges. The airport will monitor this aspect when the space is open.

Help Point Replacement Project

Ed gave an update to the group about progress with the Help Point replacement programme that started in summer 2018 and is now expected to be completed by August 2020. The group was shown some examples of the graphical user interface that will form part of the bespoke, screen-based solution for non-language speakers or people with hearing impairments. **Ed** described user testing trials that took place with a test system and talked through some of the features of the new help points that have been a priority e.g. volume, braille description, illumination of call button, font size etc. The group was then shown images of the Premium Set Down car park to show the existing help point location and the proposed new location as part of this project. The new help point location will be adjacent to the disabled parking bays, with a dedicated shelter and seating – neither of which currently exist. During the discussion about the shelter, **Alexandra** talked about a situation whereby a visually impaired person using a white cane walked into a similar shelter because there was a gap between the glass side and the ground, enabling the cane to pass through as if there was no obstruction. The airport will ensure this is part of the design consideration for this new shelter and **Alexandra** offered to send some guidance material.

Improvements and Innovations

Toilet Branding

The group was shown 'before and after' photographs of new toilet branding which is starting to be phased in across the site, that includes both non-disabled and accessible toilets. **Ed** advised that the final design of the accessible toilets took onboard feedback from a previous forum airport tour, whereby some of the participants highlighted limited visibility of accessible toilets. The new designs now include extra-large icons and wording, with stronger contrast for both on the door itself. **Sarah** enquired about the Changing Places toilet and **Ed** confirmed that this will have a similar, bespoke design with an extra-large Changing Places icon and wording.

Car Park Review

The airport shared details of an ongoing car park review following customer feedback in 2019, challenging the amount of disabled parking spaces available. Since November, actual space usage has been recorded on random days to better understand the demand and capacity needs for each car park. **Ed** explained the airport's justification for the current percentage provision (around 2% - based on the airport's assistance data which shows 1.5% of all airport passengers require assistance) but did acknowledge that the data collection was indicating a need for additional spaces. **Ed** explained that there are now internal discussions involving the airport's commercial department to start addressing this. **Joe, Paul** and **Andy** all had difficulty in finding

Minutes BAAF Meeting 06th February 2020

available spaces to attend the forum and there was a discussion about signage. **Joe** asked why the disabled spaces needed to be split over two floors of car park 1. **Ed** advised this was to limit the horizontal distance as much as possible between the spaces and the pedestrian atrium which is served by a set of 3 large lifts. During the discussion, the group enquired as to the possibility of creating digital availability signage for these spaces, an action that the airport will explore. **Andy** asked the group how people with hidden disabilities obtain blue badges and **Daniel S** explained it was a similar application process. **Daniel S** also shared that he did not feel he needed a blue badge, but there would be others with hidden disabilities who did. The airport will also consider this in the disabled bay review process.

Core Service – ECAC Standard Performance

Ed provided an overview of the airport's ECAC performance since August 2019 and discussed the context behind the engagement standard results.

The airport explained to the group the measures and minimum standards required within the regulatory framework in order to maintain the airport's current 'Good' rating in the CAA's annual accessibility report. The airport described the challenges faced in the first 3 months of the year following the introduction of a new operational platform. The group felt that with all of the continued improvements made by the airport to become more inclusive and accessible, and in consideration of evidenced service improvement throughout the year, it would be surprising if the airport did not maintain its 'Good' rating. Both **Dan F** and **Abi** highlighted the limited negative feedback they receive at Birmingham Airport in comparison to other airports. **Milton** said that the performance results were good in his opinion, having had sight of similar regulatory measures at other airports.

Customer Feedback

The airport shared the latest Customer Satisfaction results from disabled travellers who'd completed the Assisted Travel survey, with an average score of 4.2 / 5.0 for the period April 2019 – January 2020, up by 0.8 from the previous year. **Sarah** said some of her clients found it difficult to know where to complain to, particularly if there had been damage to a wheelchair. Especially as the airline, handling agent and airport are all involved at some point. **Ed** advised that if anyone is unsure, it's best to contact the airport in the first instance and they can help direct the feedback to the most relevant company. The airport will also review the feedback section information on the website to try and clarify the most appropriate routes for common types of feedback.

As part of this section, **Ahmed** shared a personal experience he'd had whilst travelling from another airport. His own wheelchair was mislaid, and then the replacement wheelchair was mislaid too, removing his independence for nearly the entirety of his holiday. **Sarah** and **Paul** explained that a damaged or missing wheelchair was by far the biggest fear for their clients and could be dissuading some to even attempt travelling by air. **Ed** acknowledged how dissuasive this would be but suggested any fears like this could be balanced by offering context as to how many personal mobility aids travel in aircraft without damage. The airport will look to create some statistical information around this and publish on the website.

Andy asked the group for suggestions on how the return rate of these surveys could be increased, as even with a significant increase this year, the overall number of returns is a small percentage of total customers using the Assisted Travel service. **Janice** suggested more promotion of how feedback has been used to actually make changes (You Said, We Did) would encourage greater involvement. **Alexandra** suggested increasing the accessibility of the format e.g. phone number, large print survey and will send the airport some guidance around this. **Daniel S** suggested a charity donation scheme per completed survey and the group agreed this was more practical than a competition type incentive which could start to skew feedback if a customer deemed that favourable feedback was more likely to win. A suggestion was made that the passenger could vote for a charity as part of the survey response. **Abi** said that surveys needed to be

Minutes BAAF Meeting 06th February 2020

convenient and gave an example of a simple text / SMS she'd received recently. The airport will review all these ideas ahead of the next forum.

Terminal Infrastructure Projects Presentation

In the afternoon session, two project managers from Birmingham Airport gave a presentation to the group about two upcoming infrastructure development projects; TE18 (terminal expansion) and development of a central area of the terminal. During this session, the group actively shared their feedback about key design elements and the project managers explained design choices, including removal of a floor that was not originally accessible without using stairs. Some of the group raised concern over the use of clear glass panelling, the level of contrast between furniture and flooring and signage. It was confirmed to the group that many of the images were early concepts and their key concerns should be addressed in the final build. **Sarah** and **Alexandra** asked that, with all of the focus seemingly on the building itself, the airport ensures that outside spaces remain a focus too and accessible design is included. The group talked about modern accessibility wayfinding solution that should be considered including Microsoft Soundscape and braille / tactile maps. **Alexandra** highlighted that any temporary or permanent changes to the building infrastructure should be communicated to the public as many visually impaired people navigate by memory.

Any Other Business

Daniel S made the airport aware that the 2022 Commonwealth games will have the 'para' games feature as part of the event, not after as with the Olympic games. The airport will consider this as part of the preparations and capacity planning.

Sarah confirmed that the next CP Midlands Summer Sizzler event, which the airport and OCS attended in 2019, will take place on 17th August 2020 and invited other forum participants to display at the event.

Daniel S highlighted the upcoming Silly Sock Day on 3rd April 2020.

Janice thanked the airport for continuing to listen to the group's feedback and for building the Sunflower Room.

Abi and Dan felt that the Medical Device Awareness card scheme was working well at passenger security areas.

Alexandra told the group that feedback from their users about airports was generally okay, most of the challenges relate to rail stations.

Andy thanked everybody for their attendance and contribution and set a date for the next meeting.

Next meeting - Tuesday 25th August 2020