

# **Birmingham Airport Accessibility Roundup**

**March 2020**

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## **1. Introduction**

Birmingham Airport is fully committed to the ongoing development of our assistance service and facilities in order that air travel remains accessible and so that we can offer an infrastructure that accommodates everyone's needs.

We regularly engage with disability groups and charities and use their feedback to improve our services and improve training content for airport staff.

## **2. Accessibility improvements**

Last year, we launched an e-learning General Disability Awareness course for all direct Birmingham Airport employees, developed in collaboration with our Accessibility Forum. The course content satisfies the training standards guidance within ECAC Document 30 and this includes a test at the end with a minimum pass mark of 80%. At the time of writing, over 90% of Birmingham Airport staff have completed the training including passenger security staff, terminal customer service staff, bus drivers, as well as all Directors and our CEO, Nick Barton. In 2020, our intention is to extend this to all third parties working at the airport and make it a mandatory part of their induction process.

In the summer of 2019, we invited some of our Accessibility Forum members to complete a retail accessibility audit within our terminal to help us build a standard for our commercial partners to refer to. The audit proved invaluable in identifying some simple changes to further improve accessibility. The auditors also commented on how accessible the terminal retail outlets were in comparison to the high street and they were particularly impressed with the fully accessible changing room in our Next store as well as the spacing of tables within most of our food outlets.

The last 12 months has seen an unprecedented increase in people making use of the Sunflower Lanyard scheme with at least 30 lanyards being issued per day in the peak season, compared to just 30 per week in 2018. We've had some great feedback about things we do well and things we need to do better and this, along with the growth in demand, has served as a catalyst for further improvements to



support this scheme. We have extended our Sunflower icon / wayfinding to indicate express routes through arrivals / immigration.

More recently, we were delighted to open our dedicated quieter space which we've named the 'Sunflower Room'. This room is open for anyone needing to take a break from the airport environment and is located just a short distance from the main departure lounge.

We've also listened to your feedback about the visibility of our accessible toilets. At the start of January, we redesigned our accessible toilets to introduce a consistent design that has larger icons and a better contrast of colours.

*Before*



*After*



Our Help Point replacement project is underway and this involves the modernisation of 11 existing help points. Outside help points will have the latest audio technology to improve the volume, clarity and reliability of calls. We've also customised the hardware to include an illuminated button surround and custom braille text. Inside the terminal, we've worked with the manufacturer to design a unique, touchscreen solution that offers both the traditional audio connection and a graphical interface so that non-language speakers or people with hearing impairments can also request assistance.

### 3. Recognitions and awards



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Making Accessible Travel Better



### 4. Engagement

Over the past 12 months we've hosted two more Accessibility forums, you can find the minutes of these meetings on our website. We're very proud of this forum, it's proving to be an invaluable way to consult with subject matter experts and our users. We'd like to extend thanks to all our members who continue to support us at these meetings and who engage so constructively with us.

Two of our security officers who have direct experience of stomas continue to carry out talks at stoma support groups around the region to give advice on airport security processes and how people can better prepare for this part of the airport journey.

In May 2019, Birmingham Airport attended an event organised by the Spinal Injuries Association to explain the airport journey to people who had not travelled by air at all or not since their injury. This was an extremely rewarding session, both to give people the reassurance and confidence to consider travelling by air and also listen to feedback from individuals and families who had used the airport recently.

In August 2019, Birmingham Airport attended a 'Summer Sizzler' event hosted by Cerebral Palsy Midlands and provided information and advice to individuals and families wanting to know more about travelling by air.

In the past 12 months, we've also improved our feedback systems so we become better connected to the voices of our disabled customers. In June 2019, we rebranded our Assisted Travel feedback survey, resulting in a significant increase in the response rate. We also created a dedicated 'Sunflower Survey' to better understand the experiences of people using the Sunflower lanyards.

## **5. Assisted Travel improvements**

The past year has seen continued investment in our Assisted Travel service, starting with the introduction of a cutting-edge operational system that uses beacon technology to ensure performance data is accurate and truly reflective of the service. There were some teething problems with the initial data which limited our opportunity to address service inconsistency at the start of the year but we now have a very clear understanding of the Assisted Travel operation. Since August, we have consistently achieved regulatory engagement standards and we are confident that the supporting data is accurate.

In 2019, we replaced the existing two passenger transport ‘buggies’ with four newer vehicles which helps our Assisted Travel team maintain service, even on flights with high volumes of disabled passengers needing assistance.

We also replaced two of our older ‘Ambulift’ vehicles in 2019 with much newer models and we introduced a bespoke ‘powered aisle chair’ for use with the Aviramp Lite equipment to improve the journey experience of people needing full-carry assistance to their seat on flights using an Aviramp.

## **6. Summary**

We’ve had another busy year improving accessibility at our airport and every effort has been made to ensure travellers have the best possible experience within this very dynamic environment. At the time of writing, the UK is experiencing an unprecedented health epidemic which is severely impacting aviation as well as countless other industries across the world. Whilst the future shape and size of air travel is uncertain, we remain fully committed to continue building a leading assistance service for our disabled passengers in 2020 and beyond.