

## Accessibility Forum Minutes – 10 May 2022, 10am

### On Teams and in person

#### Attendees

Name	Organisation
Sarah Rennie	Independent (Chair)
Ed Kibblewhite	Accessibility Manager, BHX
Vidar Hjordeng	Independent
Deane Arnold	Terminal Operations Manager, BHX
Stuart Twomlow	Terminal Operations Coordinator, BHX
Abigail Guest	Forecasting Support Assistant, BHX
Chris Bright	JDRF
Janine Le Tellier	Alzheimer's Society
Libby Herbert	Colostomy UK
Bradley Beaumont	Independent
Joe Carroll	Independent

#### Welcome and introductions

Sarah opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Attendees introduced themselves.

#### Action Tracker

- Replacement of all help points. They are around 15 years old and quite unreliable. June 6<sup>th</sup> 2022 will see 11 new help points.
- Quiet room launched in March 2020. Well used and received positive feedback. In the future, review demand of it and possibly look to create another space. There was a discussion around inclusion of sensory equipment but agreed 'calm rooms' and 'sensory rooms' have different functions. Janice observed that signage to Sunflower Room is minimal and difficult to find. Ed explained the need to balance this against it being mis-used by other business passengers for work. Sarah suggested targeted signage could be placed in accessible WCs and Changing Places to raise awareness.
- Audit of blue badge parking in car parks 1, 2, and 3. Talked to NCP about providing more, but demand dropped off in pandemic. Ed to continue to monitor. Car park 1 is a priority pick up point and BHX will aim to facilitate more space as demand grows.

#### Border Force / Commonwealth Games

Paul Harper from Border Force joined the meeting. Paul explained that ahead of the Commonwealth Games coming to Birmingham, there was some concern about facilities. The diversity and inclusion team from Border Force attended, did a walk through of the site/routes and proposed some improvements.

- Portable hearing loops have been procured for use at Customs Area and use in private rooms. Paul confirmed they will always have backups and be regularly tested.

Sarah asked if expert advice had been procured to ensure this is the right kit for the needs, eg rooms could have room loops. Paul wasn't sure but would check.

- Diversity & Inclusion team developed new design of Immigration points, which should allow lowered point to pass passports which is better for passengers and staff. Bradley asked if we could see the designs by email, and when available visit in person. This was agreed.
- Making sure mental health awareness training is up to date.
- Airport and terminal signage is compliant to industry standards.
- Immigration team recently did a test of the airport to make sure it is accessible in time for Commonwealth Games for any athletes using the airport.

Paul left the meeting.

## **Post-pandemic outlook**

### Passenger Forecast

- Not far off pre-pandemic levels.
- Passenger numbers increased by 1 million in the last month.
- CAA would not publish airport performance ratings for 2021/22.
- Arrivals satisfaction in 2021 was 97.92% for booked assistance. Target was 97%.
- For 2022, since April - 84% on booked assistance passenger figures, 93% not booked. Ed advised there had been a similar drop in KPIs across all airport areas. Reasoning is down to staff shortages.

### Staff Shortage

- General recruitment market is difficult as there are many jobs available; 60-70% of recruit no shows for interviews and shifts.
- Asked contractor to tap into 2 more recruitment agencies.
- Double pay rates for those agreeing to work overtime.
- Incentive bonus of £100 at end of month for staff who turn up to all their rostered shifts.
- Ambulift drivers needed for airlines with no air bridges – 12 active drivers, but need 20. Ed advised it takes 3-6 months to make them fully competent drivers.

### Missed Flights

- Recent story in the press of a passenger who was left at the gate and missed flight. Ed explained that Ryanair closed the gate, knowing she needed to board – other airlines would usually have held the flight. On day of incident, airport had 55% notifications of passengers needing assistance.
- There was discussion around mitigation measures when disabled passengers have missed a flight
  - Airport will cover costs/expenses of passengers who turn up to airport in reasonable time and still miss their flight.
  - They are taken to customer experience team.

- Sarah suggested a resource would be helpful with useful numbers eg local hotels with hoists. Chris suggested pharmacies if passenger running low on prescriptions including insulin or stoma bags.
- Passenger with booked/unbooked assistance get the same treatment. Airlines could do more, including not waiting until last minute to notify airport of passengers needing assistance (they tend to do it in infrequent blocks – possibly to minimise number of communications as each message is charged to airline). Airport basing projections on preceding week figures, but sometimes no correlation.
- Libby to raise the issue with James at CAA.
- Agreed that airline contact centres are so busy that passengers struggling to get through to book assistance.

### Training

- Chris raised the issue of passengers with health/accessibility needs may be nervous and apprehensive. Suggested that mixed with high turnover of staff, it's important to assess training needs. For example, awareness of cards. Chris shared the following useful resources:
  - Medical device awareness card: [https://www.caa.co.uk/media/4f1pswv0/caa\\_aoa\\_medicaldeviceawarenesscard.pdf](https://www.caa.co.uk/media/4f1pswv0/caa_aoa_medicaldeviceawarenesscard.pdf)
  - JDRF's awareness campaign for airports: <https://jdrf.org.uk/information-support/living-with-type-1-diabetes/everyday-life/making-airport-security-easier-for-people-living-with-type-1-diabetes/>
- Ed to check with security team what is included in their training re medical devices/cards. Janice asked if dementia awareness training is covered in Disability Awareness training. Dementia training can be revisited. There was a discussion around the breadth of 'disabilities' covered in the training. Sarah advised not to focus on specific conditions (no point if 80% of impairments are non-visible), but more valuable to focus on the skills/outcomes needed to assist. Themes could include 'how to offer help', etiquette, 'patience and time' etc. Ed to consider this and look into areas that may have the most complaints e.g. passengers with stomas not feeling comfortable travelling.

### Face coverings

- Cohort of people still nervous about travelling including people who needed to shield. A concern from the community is use of face coverings.
- Ed confirmed that assistance staff are not asked to wear face coverings routinely, but passenger can ask that staff who help them will wear a mask.

Libby left the meeting. Joe joined the meeting.

### **Projects & Initiatives**

- Arrivals Handover Point

Passengers needing assistance in arrivals, need escorting from Baggage Reclaim through to exiting the terminal. Staff going back through need to be screened, which is time consuming and challenging given staff shortages. Currently the doors automatically close and has caused injuries. Now, security guard is at door.

Ed shared BHX's proposal that agents in baggage reclaim hall can handover passengers to another agent out of secure area to avoid agent needing to be screened. There was a discussion about the passenger's experience, for example passenger getting inconsistent support, fatigue after flight re-explaining needs, feeling unvalued or passed around. Vidar supported this concern from a visually impaired passenger's perspective. However, it was agreed that the passenger's experience would not be damaged provided that agents clearly to a verbal handover and passenger understands what is happening and why. Ed suggested that agents have the discretion to not handover/continue supporting someone if they feel handover would be risky/upsetting. The group were happy with the proposed approach.

- Third Party Portal

This is the operations platform which agents receive their tasks on. Third parties struggling to get through to coordinators by phone due to high demand. Emirates, TUI, Jet2 will use third party portal to look at passengers' assistance status and what stage they are at. This also provides an audit trail for airport in the event of complaints/incidents. Vidar felt any joined up working is beneficial for all.

- Scheduled Visits

Currently still difficult to plan for scheduled visits/familisation tours eg children with autism to become comfortable with airport environment. However, Ed proposing a calendar of events throughout the year, first come first served to enable this opportunity. Forum asked Ed to share this with them as members can help spread the word.

## **High-level Future Plans and Initiatives**

### **Passenger Security Area**

Ed explained that the airport needs a new generation of X-ray scanners – all UK airports much achieve this by 2023. There are currently two proposed routes to achieving this – new lanes, longer or moving whole security area to different part of building. The plans will be brought to the forum for advice at the earliest opportunity. There will be opportunities to create wider gates so that wheelchair users can get through automated boarding pass gate to security and better floor colourings for visually impaired passengers. Bradley offered to assist and look at plans, Ed welcomed Forum's help.

### **Equality monitoring – forum composition**

Sarah shared the survey results she recently shared – exploring member's characteristics, experience and perspectives. There were 8 responses. Key observations were a need to improve representation from Deaf community and younger people. It was noted many previous attendees of forum had left their roles over last few years. Vidar suggested staff

assisting regular travellers tell them about the forum. Forum agreed to review survey feedback and consider gaps in our representation.

#### Format of meetings

Teams does not provide a dial-in function which is a challenge for people unable to access web-access. Ed to approach business to upgrade functionality on Teams. Sarah suggested Zoom is used if this cannot be done.

#### Any other business

- Janice advised that Dementia Action Week runs 16-20 May 2022.
- Janice advised that Diabetes Awareness Week runs 13-19 June 2022.

Ed thanked everyone for attending and Sarah closed the meeting.

The date of the next meeting has not yet been confirmed.

#### Actions

Consider targeted awareness raising notices for Sunflower Room	Ed
Check hearing loop solutions have been approved by technical expert	Paul
Share designs for immigration points with forum	Ed/Paul
Consider resource for customer experience team when passenger misses flight and has specialist needs	Ed lead – forum advise on content
Review training / refresher needs	Ed
Consider clearer signage at assistance point advising passengers to ask if they need staff to wear a face covering	Ed
Share scheduled visits calendar with forum	Ed
Share new xray scanners plans with forum	Ed
Review member survey results and reflect who missing	All
Secure dial-in capability for Teams	Ed