

Manchester Airport Accessibility Forum - Meeting Minutes

Date	Wednesday 27th November 2019		
Time	10:00		
Location	Olympic House Manchester Airport		
Attendees			
	Name	Company	
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Andy Wright	Chair	Brad Miller	Chief Operating Officer, MAG
Lee Wasnidge	C.S. Director, MAG	Michelle Foster	Head Special Assistance, MAG
Ashley Horsfall	Special Assistance, MAG	Matt Austin	Special Assistance, MAG
Chris Hughes	Customer Insight, MAG	Caroline McWhirter	Technical Trainer, MAG
John Peet	Regional Manager, ABM	Michelle Baxter	General Manager, ABM MAN
Gary Dawson	Spinal Injuries Association	David Lodder	MS Society
Libby Herbert	Colostomy UK	Carrie-Ann Lightly	AccessAble
Jude Hughes	JDRF	Emma Roberts	National Autistic Society
Esmail Patel	Interpreting Solutions	Zoe Foster	Guide Dogs for the Blind
GUEST - David Brierly	Traveller		
Apologies			
Chris Carberry	Regular traveller	Susan Clarke	Alzheimers Society
John Doherty	Alzheimers Society	Melanie Worthington	MND Association
Phil Downs	Regular traveller	Kieran McMahon	Disability Stockport

1 – Welcome

Andy opened the first part of the meeting, welcoming Gary, David and Libby to discuss the airport's operational performance during the previous period. Michelle F started by highlighting the targets set by the CAA in order for the airport to receive a *Good* rating. She explained that there had been considerable cultural and operational challenges for the business as a result of the transition from OCS to ABM during the first three months of the contract.

She said ABM had mainly struggled with staffing numbers following the TUPE transfer process, which resulted in 47 members of staff being loaned to ABM by MAN during the transitional period. This considerable increase to the headcount had resulted in a dramatic improvement with performance. Which has now resulted in monthly targets being achieved on a regular basis.

David asked what the ratio of agents to guests was normally for an arriving aircraft. Michelle F advised generally it was 1:3, supported by Michelle B who further explained it would also depend on pre-notification levels, as well as how busy the airport was at that time.

Gary asked whether staff were assigned according to the allocated PRM assistance category. In other words, is the most suitable agent/s dispatched according to passenger requirement. Gary advised that he regularly has issues where he is pre-notified as a WCHC, but is often recorded as a WCHR. Consequently only 1 agent is sent to assist him. Michelle B advised that for a WCHC passenger 2 agents would always be assigned.

Michelle F then shared feedback from a recent CAA audit. Feedback was mostly positive, with particular praise paid to the Help Points and the fact that clear information about them was listed on the airport's website. However, it was suggested that there could be an improvement to wayfinding and signage within the airport, especially T1 and T3.

Andy said he would like to see a brand or consistent colour adopted for Special Assistance, similar to East Midlands or Stansted. Ashley advised that MAN does feature yellow across PRM equipment, signage, uniforms etc. So, Andy said yellow would therefore be the most logical colour to associate with all aspects related to PRMs at the airport, including signage and wayfinding.

Libby said it would be good if the CAA chose a colour and made it consistent across all airports for PRMs.

The possibility of opening up the duty-free bypass corridor in T1 as a 'Sunflower Corridor' was discussed. However, Brad advised that there had been complications due to a pre-existing agreement with World Duty Free, requiring that all passengers should be encouraged to travel through this area. Further discussions are scheduled to take place.

Action: schedule a series of terminal walkabouts to focus on airport wayfinding and signage from different passenger perspectives e.g. mobility impaired, sensory impaired and those with a hidden disability. With a view to identifying current weaknesses with design and location and agree upon new format.

2 – Actions Update

At this point the rest of the forum members joined the meeting and Ash then provided an update on the previous meetings actions and improvements that had been made since the last meeting, as detailed below :

- Update on providing Security trays with the hidden disability logo
- Update on improved website accessibility
- Update on Security training from Colostomy UK

Michelle F then provided an update on what external engagement had taken place during the last quarter. Which included a stand at the Kidz to Adultz disability show in Manchester. As well as AccessAble supporting Purple Tuesday in November - the U.K.'s Accessible shopping day - by conducting an airport audit to update the airport accessibility guides. Andy asked how often AccessAble update the guides. Because he was aware of the considerable amount of infrastructure changes currently taking place. Ash advised that it was normally annually, but it was envisaged that more days would have to be scheduled soon due to the number of forthcoming changes.

3 – Voice of the Customer

Chris then presented the Voice of the Customer update. Much of which focused on the methods of capturing passenger feedback and the results from the surveys.

Gary advised that he had never been asked for his email address in order to complete the survey. Esmail also said he had travelled in September and wasn't asked either. Michelle B said that she would investigate this with her Duty Managers.

Libby suggested that the different organisations in the forum should advise their service users due to fly from Manchester, to complete the survey themselves.

Esmail asked why the airport didn't ask for passengers' mobile numbers instead of email addresses, so that a questionnaire could be texted for example. Michelle advised that the CAA specify the requirements of the survey and insist that it is emailed directly to passengers.

Andy queried why the number of email addresses collected was fewer in September, given that it had been a busier month. Esmail also requested to see a copy of the survey to determine whether it was recent deaf friendly.

Andy also asked whether the recent reception point refurbishment may have resulted in lower feedback scores at that time. But Chris advised thankfully that there was no additional negative feedback at that time.

Libby asked whether the concierges were explaining the value of the survey to guests. Michelle advised that the next project would be to enhance concierge training, so that the importance of survey completion could be emphasised at that time.

Esmail asked how elderly passengers would be able to complete the survey if they didn't have access to email. It was agreed that different groups would assist with lobbying the CAA to allow passengers to use different methods.

Andy asked Jude and Libby if they had seen an improvement in passenger feedback since the additional Security training have been offered by the respective charities. Jude advised that feedback was getting more positive. However, lots of people were still not aware of what they needed to do before moving through Security, i.e. putting insulin in a plastic bag. So they could still take offence when asked to do so by staff members.

Libby advised the forum that she had been working with Caroline and Marc the day before, helping to create an advice sheet for travellers with a colostomy travelling through Security. Libby advised that she would share this information with Jude once completed.

Esmail advised that he has seen lots of complaints from travellers with cochlear implants passing through Security at Manchester Airport. Caroline and Chris were surprised as they hadn't seen anything directly relating to this. So Esmail advised that he felt the deaf community was often overlooked, in his opinion.

Michelle F asked Esmail to ensure that he passes all complaints directly through to her, as the airport can't correct issues or make changes if she is not aware of the problems.

Jude suggested sharing the feedback link with all forum members, so that they can direct their service users to the feedback page. Which is...<https://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/help/feedback-form/>

Andy asked the forum whether the *Voice of the Customer* presentation had provided sufficient detail, or would anybody like to delve further into a specific complaints.

Libby queried why Security had dropped in terms of passenger satisfaction scores. And Esmail said he thought that the survey would be quite difficult for deaf people and asked if there would be the option to provide feedback via a sign language video.

David asked what representation/consultation the CAA has with disabled people. Andy advised that the CAA does have an Access To Air Travel Working Group (AATWG), which comprises of representatives from charities and disability organisations. But did point out that there is currently no representation from any organisations representing deaf people.

Andy advised that he does report back to James with the feedback from forums and we also send him the minutes.

Action: discuss with the CAA other possible formats for providing passenger feedback and invite a representative to attend a future Manchester forum.

4 – David Brierly Manchester Airport experience

David was invited to join the forum as a guest so that he could relay a summary of his travelling experiences from Manchester airport with the forum members.

David had originally made contact with the airport following a disappointing holiday experience, as he was keen for Assistance staff to learn from the errors that were made when support was provided to him. These ranged from the worst examples he had encountered such as being asked to sit in a wheelchair, just because he had sight loss. Through to his experiences with airport Security, which were noisy, chaotic and had caused him to become very anxious. David does have some vision but cannot see if areas are poorly lit.

He reported that when at Security on one occasion, his white cane was taken away from him and Security staff were shouting instructions and pointing even though he couldn't see them. When going through the body scanner he was told to stand on designated markings on the floor, which of course he couldn't see.

David felt humiliated by his experience, which was stressful and ruined the first part of his holiday.

David's travel through Manchester in 2018 was marginally better, because he had a member of the Assistance staff to accompany him. This made his airport experience easier, but he still encountered some issues and felt the staff member would have benefited from further training.

2019 was a much better experience, and David complemented the assistance team, despite having his cane taken from him at one point. David advised that when travelling through Palma, Majorca, which is also a very large airport, he would describe the Assistance service as 'Gold standard', and one that all airports should aim for. He was picked up in a buggy and taken through to a dedicated Security area, with its own specific team. He found this much calmer and less rushed, providing a stress-free experience.

David advised that it was far better when using the lanyard this year, as he didn't feel rushed and staff appeared more attentive. However, he did say that the ceilings were very low in Security which did make the environment feel very claustrophobic and intensified the noise.

Zoe advised that David having his cane taken from him at Security was not an isolated case, as she had received numerous complaints in the past about this. Some of which Ash has assisted her with.

David concluded that over the years his travelling experience through Manchester airport had got better. But there were still areas that required improvement, for which he was more than happy to offer his support in improving, if required.

5 – Security Update

Caroline and Shaun provided a progress report to the forum on the work that had been carried out as a result of previous feedback from forum members.

Esmail felt from his experience, and feedback from others, that often Security staff don't communicate well with each other, forcing you to explain your condition to numerous members of staff. Zoe suggested separating vision loss awareness and hearing loss into separate staff training modules, in order to improve awareness.

Action: Andy and Ash to further review staff training modules, and post training mentoring and guidance procedures for new and inexperienced staff.

6 – Jet 2 Airways presentation

Marc Burns and Amanda Harris joined the meeting to present information on flying with a disability on Jet2.

Along with information about the airline's history, fleet type and range of destinations, Marc informed the group about the airlines prenotification policy for PRMs, seating policy and how power chairs and scooters are loaded and secured in the aircraft.

He also provided additional information about the airline's customer service policy and their staff training. There was then an opportunity for forum members to ask further questions.

7 – AOB/Close

There were no further points raised. So, Andy thanked everyone for their attendance and input, and the Forum was closed.

Schedule of Forum engagement for 2020

25 th February 2020	Mobility Impaired Group (By invitation)
24 th March 2020	Sensory Group (By invitation)
21 st April 2020	Hidden Disability Group (By invitation)
16 th June 2020	Bi-Annual Forum Meeting (All members)
25 th November 2020	Bi- Annual Forum Meeting (All members)