



**Report on Special Assistance at City of Derry Airport**

**March 2019**

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report details the findings of a meeting in March 2019 of the City of Derry Airport's Accessibility Forum which involved a tour of the airport building. This was the first meeting of the Accessibility Forum, which is made up of a range of organisations which represent consumers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- 1.2 European Regulation (EC) 1107/2006 provides rights for passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility when travelling by air. All airports and airlines in the European Union are required to provide assistance to passengers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- 1.3 In 2014 the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) issued guidance requiring airports to consult with passengers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- 1.4 The Forum was positive about the airport's facilities and the special assistance services that are provided to passengers. There were a number of suggestions made by participants regarding entering the car park, flight display boards and toilet access.
- 1.5 The findings of the visit will be shared with the airport. An update on the progress made against the suggestions will be reported by the airport to the Accessibility Forum at its next meeting.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 In 2006 European Regulations<sup>1</sup> came into place that require all airports and airlines in the European Union to assist passengers with a disability or with a reduced mobility (PRM)<sup>2</sup> when travelling. Airlines licensed in the EU, operating flights from a non-EU country into the EU must also assist passengers.
- 2.2 The Consumer Council is the recognised complaints handling body for these EU Regulations<sup>3</sup> relating to an airport in Northern Ireland or a flight departing from a Northern Ireland airport. The Consumer Council works alongside the Northern Ireland airports to ensure that these services continue to meet passengers' needs.
- 2.3 In 2014 the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) issued guidance requiring airports to consult with passengers with a disability or reduced mobility. This *'should, as much as possible, include practical inspections of airport services (generally using 'walk throughs')*. *Airports should also consider convening regular forums containing representatives of disability groups and individuals'*

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<sup>1</sup> EC Regulation No 1107/2006

<sup>2</sup> People of Restricted Mobility (PRM)

<sup>3</sup> Civil Aviation (Access to Air Travel for Disabled Persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/1895)

- 2.4 In 2019, The Consumer Council worked with City of Derry Airport to establish an Accessibility Forum at the airport. Membership of the Accessibility Forum consists of a range of organisations that represent consumers with a disability or reduced mobility<sup>4</sup>. The aim is to provide a forum for users of the Airport's Special Assistance services or their representatives to share their knowledge and experiences of services at the airport.
- 2.5 The first meeting of the Accessibility Forum took place on 19 March 2019 and involved a tour of the airport facilities. The purpose of the visit was for Forum members to provide feedback on the current facilities and services and to identify possible changes that could further assist air passengers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- 2.6 The intended outcome of this visit is for the Forum to work with the airport to implement the suggestions made by forum members. The airport will provide feedback on actions taken from the guidance and suggestions made at the next forum meeting.
- 2.7 The City of Derry Airport and The Consumer Council would like to thank those participants who took part on the day.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 The Forum met at the airport on 9 February 2019. There were six participants on the day from a range of organisations that represent consumers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- 3.2 The Forum began with an introduction from The Consumer Council and airport including a discussion on airport car parking. The Consumer Council and airport staff then guided the group through the airport, beginning at the check-in area and finishing in the arrivals areas. A brief round-up discussion with the whole Forum was held at the end of the tour.
- 3.3 Staff from The Consumer Council took notes at the visit and recorded the suggestions that were made by the group.

### **4. FINDINGS**

- 4.1 The following section provides a summary of the key discussion points that were recorded with corresponding suggestions. The findings are set out in the order of the various stages of moving through the airport.

#### Arriving at the airport

- 4.2 Participants noted that an intercom button was available at the car park ticket barrier to request assistance if required. However, one participant stated that they pressed the button on entry and no one responded. The airport subsequently tested the button and found it to

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<sup>4</sup> IMTAC, Alzheimer's Society, North West Forum of People with Disabilities, RNIB, and Action on Hearing Loss

be working. A participant queried what process was in place if a deaf passenger or passenger with no speech arrived at the barrier. The airport explained that customer service staff can see the ticket barrier and if a passenger does not respond after pressing the intercom button a member of staff will go out to assist the passenger.

- 4.3 A participant highlighted that there was no car park price information available before the car park ticket barrier meaning passengers cannot see the prices before entering.
- 4.4 The group commented that the signage on entry to the terminal building was clear allowing them to easily identify the special assistance desk.

#### **Suggestions**

- The intercom between the car park barrier and customer service desk should be put on a daily test schedule; and
- Consider moving signage with car parking price information in front of the car park barrier.

#### Check-in and the Special Assistance Desk

- 4.5 Participants were easily able to locate the toilets due to the clear signage in the check-in area. However, it was commented that when exiting the ladies toilets it would be beneficial to have an exit sign on the wall outside.
- 4.6 At the special assistance desk a participant asked if a hearing loop system was available. The airport explained that the loop system was operational, signage was present on the desk to advise passengers of it and that the system is checked on a daily basis to ensure that it is working.
- 4.7 The group discussed the flight information boards and some participants stated that they were difficult to see due to the height at which they were positioned and the small font size. A participant explained that other airports have a kiosk screen at eye level with flight information making it easier to view.
- 4.8 While not directly related to special assistance services, a participant noted that the recycling bins in the café area were colour coded but there was no description of what waste should go in which bin. It was felt that passengers then would be confused when using these meaning that the waste would be mixed.

#### **Suggestions**

- Consider installing an exit sign on the wall outside the toilets;
- Investigate the possibility of a flight information screen at eye level; and
- Label the recycling bins with a description of what type of waste goes into each bin.

#### Departure Area

- 4.9 Participants passed through the security area and were satisfied with the process on the day. When entering the departure lounge it was explained that there was a dedicated special

priority seating area to the left or, if the passenger prefers, they can be seated at the gate. The priority seating area is identified by signage on the wall and there is also signage for a reserved wheelchair space. Participants stated that it would be clearer for passengers if the two wall signs were swapped around.

#### **Suggestion**

- Swap the position of the two signs at the special assistance seating area.

#### Café

- 4.10 There is a café area available for passengers in the departure lounge which is managed by an outside caterer. Participants commented that the font size on the menu may be too small for some passengers. The airport explained that the menus are currently being redeveloped to include pictures of the food and agreed to share this feedback with the caterer. It was also suggested that the menu should be placed on the airport's website so passengers can access it in advance of travelling. Table service in the café is available to passengers who require it.

#### **Suggestions**

- Consider large print on the café menu; and
- Upload the café menu onto the airport's website.

#### Toilets

- 4.11 Participants viewed the entrance to the toilets when standing in the café area. It was commented that it was difficult to see the sign due to the glare from the sun via an adjacent window.
- 4.12 Passengers have to make their way through the table seating area in the café to access the toilets. The area was empty at the time of the visit but participants commented that the pathway was narrow and if there were other passengers using the facilities it could be difficult for wheelchair users or assistance dog users to have clear access to the toilets.
- 4.13 It was noted that there was no traditional clock in the departure lounge area. Participants explained that some passengers may find it easier to use a traditional style clock i.e. a clock with hands.

#### **Suggestions**

- Consider changing the toilet signage to a matt finish to eliminate glare from the sun;
- Investigate the possibility of widening the access route through the table and chairs to the toilet area; and
- Consider installing a traditional clock in the departure lounge.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 Participants were positive about the City of Derry Airport and the special assistance services available at the airport. Participants were able to ask questions and make suggestions based

on their experiences and knowledge of some of the barriers that passengers may face. Suggestions were made regarding entering the car park, flight display boards and toilet access.

## **6. NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 The comments made by participants will be presented to the airport. The Consumer Council will work with the airport as it implements the changes to ensure that services continue to meet passengers' needs. An update on the progress made against the suggestions will be shared with the Airport's Accessibility Forum at its next meeting.



Floor 3  
Seatem House  
28-32 Alfred Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8EN

Freephone: 0800 121 6022  
Switchboard: 028 9025 1600  
Fax: 028 9025 1663