

PRM Services at UK Airports

What this paper is about

The paper provides a Stansted ACC perspective of a number of PRM related issues and seeks to inform discussion about the CAA presentation. The paper also provides information about the CAA's current consultation affecting PRM passengers.

Points for Discussion

- Delegates are asked to comment on any PRM issues raised at their airports

Possible Action

Dependent upon discussion

PRM services at UK airports

1. In recent months, the Stansted ACC has become aware of a number of issues adversely affecting Persons with Restricted Mobility using the airport. The Committee would be interested to know whether other ACCs have similar experiences.
2. The provision of PRM assistance involves to varying degrees three interested parties - the airport operator, the airline and the PRM service provider. In the list of issues below, these three are together described as 'the companies'. Although information for PRM customers is regularly available on the airport's website, the ACC believes this is not always matched in practice with good service performance. It is also not clear how these services are monitored and to what extent performance service levels are met.
3. Having examined the issue in some depth, the Stansted ACC considers that there are a number of key issues that might usefully be addressed :
 - a. To what extent is the airline passenger customer of primary importance to the companies the functions of which obviously impact upon the journey experience of such customers? In other words, is the operator's primary customer simply the airline(s)?
 - b. In the context of 1 above, to what extent and/or in what ways are PRM passenger customers regarded - apart from their disability - differently from non PRM passengers by the companies? For example, in what ways do they appear to be treated less equally? Another example might be the lack of fairness. There is an ongoing issue as to the handling of PRM passengers at the arrival gate. It appears that on occasions the practice is one of first come first served regardless of whether the passenger has pre booked assistance or not.
 - c. What action is taken by each company regularly to promote a culture of respect, understanding and assistance towards PRMs?
 - d. Which of the companies decides a) what disembarkation equipment for PRMs should be used and b) which door of the aircraft is to be used?
How are such decisions reached?
What considerations of cost to the companies and of convenience and preference by PRM users are taken into account?
 - e. To what extent do the dictates of aircraft turn round times impact upon the interests of PRMs?
 - f. Which national and local organisations representing the interests PRMs have been regularly consulted about disembarkation (and embarkation) considerations in general and the kind of equipment in particular which are preferred by the PRM customer as opposed to the preference of any one or more of the companies?
 - What the companies believe is 'reasonable' to provide is not necessarily what the PRM passenger believes should be 'acceptable'.
 - Which of the companies determine what levels of service and what equipment are reasonable to provide?
 - What factors do those companies weigh in reaching their decision?
 - g. Which body or bodies determine the quality and/or standards for services to PRMS? Is this nationally through the CAA or somehow more locally? There is a perception that these are decided by one or more of the companies.
 - h. Are there SLAs between the different companies which touch on these matters? To what extent does an airport's SLA with the service provider touch

on such matters which either specifically relate to the interests of PRMs or might reasonably be inferred to relate to them?

i Between the airport and the airlines are there either contracts or understandings (written or oral) the contents of which in part touch on PRM interests and the levels of service quality (or such like) to be provided to PRMs?

j. To what extent may the CAA prescribe or advise upon the service level quality provided to PRMs and which should be respected in SLAs, contracts or other understanding as between one or more of the companies?

4. As regards enforcement, the Stansted ACC understands that the CAA has no powers directly to enforce the International and European Guidance which would have a direct bearing on helping to resolve the above issues. Apparently it falls to the Department of Transport to develop the Guidance into enforceable Regulations.

5. Similarly, it is understood that the airport operator is responsible for monitoring performance. It is not clear what sanctions exist in response to poor performance. If it is the airline and not the airline passenger which is the primary customer of the airport operator, there might arguably be a conflict of interest. It is noted that that some countries (e.g the USA) require airlines and airports to report PRM related complaints to their administrations

CAA guidance for airports on providing assistance to people with hidden disabilities CAP 1411

6. The CAA has recently issued the above consultation on guidance for airports. The consultation runs from 20 May until 15 July.

7. The purpose of the guidance is to help clarify the requirements of the PRM Regulation (in light of the relevant guidance from the CAA, the European Commission and ECAC) in relation to providing assistance to PRMs with hidden disabilities, setting appropriate quality standards for this assistance, and providing information to this group of passengers.

8. The proposed guidance is welcome in helping to provide some consistency across airports and the recognition of the needs of PRMs with hidden disabilities. However it should be noted that the term "hidden disabilities" is not defined in statute nor under statutory legislation. Hidden disabilities will cover intellectual disabilities, but also issues such as heart problems, breathing problems and arthritis which are not obvious to the casual observer.

9. It should also be noted that the Guidance does not address the embarkation and disembarkation issues where PRM passengers have experienced particular problems. It would appear that as guidance, there is no statutory force to ensure compliance. It is also not clear how the CAA plan to monitor airports' performance in assisting PRM passengers

10. Members are invited to consider the above points and to offer comments about PRM issues at their airports.

**Frank Evans
Secretary and Technical Adviser
Stansted Airport Consultative Committee**

The CAA's website provides the following information about passenger rights in the EU

["Your rights in the EU](#)

If you're a passenger with a disability or reduced mobility you are legally entitled to support, commonly known as 'Special Assistance', when travelling by air.

This means airports and airlines must provide help and assistance, which is free of charge, and helps ensure you have a stress-free journey.

Special assistance is available to passengers who may need help to travel such as the elderly, those people with a physical disability, such as wheelchair users, and those who have difficulty with social interaction and communication, such as those with autism or ADHD.

Your right to special assistance is stipulated in EU law and applies when:

- You fly on any airline from an EU airport
- You fly on an EU registered airline to an EU airport

Passengers who want special assistance should give their airline 48 hours notice of the help they require.

Help is available from the moment you arrive at an airport and can cover:

- your journey through your departure airport
- boarding the aircraft and during the flight
- disembarking the aircraft
- transferring between flights
- and
- travelling through your destination airport.

[Our special assistance web directory](#)

Details of special assistance services provided by all airlines and UK airports.

[Outside the EU](#)

Similar passenger rights apply in other countries including the United States. However, there are many parts of the world where similar rights are not available. Assistance may require a fee or not be available at all.

[The CAA's role](#)

We want to make sure everyone has fair access to air travel and the opportunity to have an enjoyable experience. We work with industry to make this happen by promoting special assistance and improving the consistency of the service available.