

Making Air Travel More Accessible for Passengers with Hidden Disabilities

What this paper is about

The paper sets out the key requirements of the CAA's recent guidance for airports in providing assistance to people with hidden disabilities and seeks feedback from member ACCs on how the new requirements are being implemented at their airports.

Points for discussion

- Delegates are asked to share how they are monitoring implementation of the new requirements of the guidance at their airport.
- Are there any issues of concern about the requirements of the guidance?
- Are there new initiatives that can be highlighted as best practice?
- Are there any matters that need to be brought to the attention of the CAA?

Points for possible action

Dependent on the discussion and feedback given at the meeting.

Background

1. Following a wide-ranging consultation with airports, disability organisations and other key stakeholders, the CAA published its guidance for airports on providing assistance to people with hidden disabilities (CAP 1411)¹ on 8 December 2016. The guidance sets out how UK airports should support people with hidden disabilities, to help improve journeys for those with conditions including dementia, autism, mental health problems, hearing loss and visual impairment and advice on what information should be provided ahead of travel, as well as advice on the need to enhance training for airport and security staff.

2. The CAA has asked the UK's 30 largest airports to make the necessary improvements to their special assistance service and will publish a report on the changes made during 2017.

3. This paper sets out the key guidelines for airports. Delegates are asked to share details of the work being undertaken at their airports to implement the guidance, areas of best practice and issues of concern.

The Legislation

4. The aim of Regulation EC1107/20061 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air is to ensure that disabled people have the same opportunities for air travel as non-disabled people, in particular that they have the same rights to free movement, freedom of choice and non-discrimination. A disabled person and person with reduced mobility is defined in the Regulation as "any person whose mobility when using air transport is reduced due to any physical disability (sensory or locomotor, permanent or temporary), intellectual disability or impairment, or any other cause of disability, or age". It is the CAA's view, based on engagement with disability organisations, that 'hidden disabilities' should be considered to include, but not be limited to, dementia, autism, learning disabilities, anxiety issues, mental health conditions, visual impairments and hearing loss.

5. In addition, under the Regulation, airports are required to set appropriate quality standards (set in cooperation with airport users and disability organisations) for this assistance to ensure that it is delivered to an acceptable standard and to publish performance data against these standards. Airports are also required to communicate information in accessible formats. It is the CAA's view that this incorporates information provided both prior to travel and at the airport.

The Key Guidelines to Airports

6. The CAA has set out a number of key guidelines:

- Airport staff, including security staff, should have hidden disability awareness training, as well as training to cover communication techniques.
- Ahead of travel, airports should provide clear and detailed information for people with hidden disabilities. This will help with overall familiarisation of the airport environment and help ease anxiety and stress. Communication should include a combination of accessible videos, photos and pictures of airport processes.
- People with hidden disabilities should have the option of wearing a lanyard, bracelet or other suitably designed aid provided by the airport to ensure they are easily identified by staff and can get the assistance they need.
- Airports should provide a quiet area to wait for flights and quiet routes through the airport, for example bypassing the retail area. This will make travelling through the airport less stressful and disorientating and will benefit those with sensory impairments in particular.
- Clear images and audio messages should be available throughout the airport to help passengers find essential points such as toilets, quiet areas and assistance points.
- People with hidden disabilities must **never** be separated from a parent/friend/accompanying person during a security search, and security staff must explain prior to the search what screening will take place and make any necessary adjustments.

¹ <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201411%20DEC16.pdf>

- Airports should consider facilitating 'familiarisation visits' or open days for passengers prior to travel to help them experience the airport and aircraft environment.

7. As highlighted in the paper on the CAA's Strategic Plan 2016-2021, the CAA aims to be particularly alert to passengers with disabilities or special needs to ensure the service performance across UK airports is maintained and appropriate. The guidance is therefore part of the CAA's ongoing drive to promote the assistance available to passengers with disabilities.

8. UK airports have generally welcomed the guidance, which clarifies their legal obligations in providing 'special assistance' to any person with a disability or reduced mobility or with hidden disabilities. However it is accepted that the obligations placed on airport operators, particularly at smaller airports, may have posed challenges in terms of resourcing as the some of the requirements are resource intensive which may have impacted other service standards at the airport.

9. Delegates are asked to report on how their ACC is monitoring the implementation of the new requirements at their airports and to highlight any issues of concern. Delegates are also asked to share examples of how their airport is meeting the requirements and to identify areas which could be promoted as best practice, including the approach taken to staff training and resourcing.

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