

***Passengers with Disabilities***

**What this paper is about**

The paper prepared by the Secretariat discusses:

- the outcome of the CAA's Annual Monitoring 2017/2018 of disability service standards at UK airports;
- the CAA's report on assisting passengers with hidden disabilities and;
- considers the requirements of the CAA's recently issued revision to CAP1228: Guidance on quality standards under Regulation EC 1107/2006.

**Points for discussion**

Delegates are invited to share best practice experiences at their airports and to highlight issues of concern which have impacted on service provision and performance at their airports.

**Possible Action**

Depending on discussion at the meeting.

## Background

1. The UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)'s annual report on the accessibility services<sup>1</sup> provided by the top 30 UK airports in 2017/18 reported the following:

- there were more than three million requests for assistance at UK airports annually - a rise of almost 80 per cent since 2010.
- Satisfaction levels remain high, with 83 per cent of people requesting assistance stating that they are 'satisfied', with 54 per cent of those being 'very satisfied'.
- 16 UK airports have been rated 'very good', up from six airports in last year's review. This includes Edinburgh Airport which was rated 'poor' two years ago.
- Good progress has also been made by Heathrow Airport, which has this year been classified as 'good' following its 'poor' rating last year.
- Three airports, Birmingham, Gatwick and Stansted have not met the CAA's expectations and have been told that they must improve.
- Manchester Airport received a 'poor' rating for the second year in a row; the only airport to receive this rating twice. By monitoring the airport's performance, the CAA identified issues in relation to long waiting times for assistance and issues with the recording and reporting of performance data.

2. The CAA's framework, the first of its kind in the world, was introduced to drive improvements in performance and help deliver a consistent, high-quality service for disabled passengers across UK airports. The Civil Aviation Authority assesses airports against a number of measures to establish how well they are performing for disabled passengers, including asking those passengers using the assistance service how it performed for them.

3. The 2018/19 report is awaited but it is understood that those airports that were classified as poor or needing improvement have responded positively and this will be reflected in the forthcoming report.

4. During the year the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) also published a new report, highlighting the progress made by UK airports to help passengers whose disabilities are hidden, such as autism, dementia and hearing loss and many other conditions that are not immediately obvious. This followed the CAA issuing new guidance for airports in December 2016 on how to improve the assistance they offer.

5. The report highlighted the advances made and identifies areas where further work is needed. This comes against a background of record numbers of people with all types of disability flying. Possible forms of assistance include:

- Giving passengers the option to wear a lanyard or wristband (or other discreet identifier) to help make staff aware that they might need extra help at the security search area or elsewhere in the airport
- Providing enhanced disability awareness training packages for key customer facing staff, including those at security search areas, as well as those who provide direct assistance to disabled people
- Introducing family or assistance security lanes, which passengers with hidden disabilities can use, which provide a less stressful and rushed experience

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<sup>1</sup> <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/20180711%20CAP1679%20FINAL.pdf>

- Publishing a wide range of accessible information for people with hidden disabilities, including pictorial guides, videos and other online guides on what to expect at the airport, especially at the security search stage
- Consulting with disability organisations, including those representing people with hidden disabilities, on how the design of the assistance service can best meet the needs of this group. and how it can best meet the needs of this group of passengers

6. However, the CAA recognise that further work needs to be done to ensure all UK airports continue to provide consistent and high quality assistance services to disabled people, including people with hidden disabilities, in line with their guidance. The CAA plan to continue to work with airports so that the enhancements and improvements that airports have made are genuinely helping people with hidden disabilities access air travel, as well as working with airports and disability groups to broaden airports' focus in terms of the types of hidden disabilities that their assistance services caters for.

7. Earlier this year the CAA conducted a limited consultation on their proposed guidance on quality standards under Regulation EC 1107/2006 (Guidance is known as CAP1228<sup>2</sup>). The Secretariat consulted ACCs and submitted a response to the CAA. The main points included in the response were:

- the Guidance gave the impression that it was process driven and applying undue focus to the ECAC metrics. Whilst these statistics were important in demonstrating a working operation, ACCs did not however believe there was any evidence that 97% was “good”, but 96% was bad and 99% was “very good” and it was unclear what the rationale was for tightening the standard. Putting too much emphasis on this metric meant that CAA might be attributing too little importance to direct indicators of passenger satisfaction e.g. through survey scores.
- The key emphasis of the Guidance should be on the quality of a seamless service for passengers requiring special assistance. In particular emphasis should be placed on investigating and avoiding long waits (whether on arrivals or departures) and support the initiative to investigate waits beyond 45 minutes. Survey scores should have a more prominent role in the framework. In particular in differentiating between good and very good airports.
- The value of the proposal to require airports to establish disability fora was questioned. (NB One ACC subsequently took a different view and supported the establishment of fora – the CAA was subsequently of this this difference in view). It was generally felt that the proposal confused consultation with providing advice on issues. If fora were required then they should include the active participation of the ACC and not duplicate the important work of ACCs in monitoring, protecting and enhancing facilities and services for all passengers. A number of airports had existing specialised groups looking at accessibility issues. These groups already carried out a number of the functions proposed for the fora. It was also important that any new arrangements did not undermine the work of ACCs on behalf of all passengers/users of airports.
- UKACCs also noted that it was proposed that the fora meet on a twice yearly basis. It was important that the resource implications of the proposal in terms of cost and added administration were fully taken into account. UKACCs did not believe that all airports should be mandated to establish disability fora. A number of member airports have received positive assessments for PRM services and been rated as “good” by the CAA. To require these airports to establish fora would seem unnecessary. UKACCs suggested that there might be value in restricting the requirement for fora to those airports assessed as “poor”

8. The CAA subsequently published their response to the consultation which largely indicated they would be proceeding according to their proposed guidance including the requirement for airports to establish disability fora. They did however recognise there was a need to focus on

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<sup>2</sup> <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/modalapplication.aspx?appid=11&catid=1&id=6487&mode=detail&pagetype=65>

quality standards as well as metrics and would be engaging with the airlines on this issue. The final guidance also includes the requirement for airports to establish an accessibility forum. In its decision the CAA stated "We acknowledge the concerns of the consultative committees. However, there is no impediment to closer co-operation between consultative committees and a group that would represent the interests of disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility at an airport. For many airports, it may be an appropriate structure to have a sub group of the consultative committee carrying out this function. However, it is important that the majority of representatives in this group are either disabled, have close links to a family member or friend that is disabled or represent a disability organisation."

### **Accessibility Forums**

9. As a minimum, the CAA's expectation is that accessibility forums should meet twice a year and be involved in discussions about:

- setting quality standards
- reviews of performance against the quality standards
- reviews of performance-monitoring systems
- awarding contracts to service providers (although not necessarily issues that are commercially confidential)
- providing advice on the accessibility of planned new terminals or refurbishment of old terminal buildings
- providing advice on the accessibility of facilities, equipment and services
- training programmes
- designating points of arrival and departure
- practical inspections of airport services (generally using 'walk-throughs').

10. Delegates are therefore invited to share best practice experiences, to highlight issues of concern which have impacted on service provision and performance at their and how they are engaging with their airport on the establishment of a disability forum.

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