



Report on Special Assistance at City of Derry Airport

November 2022

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 European Regulation (EC) 1107/2006 (the Regulation) provides rights for passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility when travelling by air. This has been retained in UK law following the United Kingdom's (UK) exit from the European Union (EU).
- 1.2 The Regulation requires all airports and airlines in the United Kingdom and European Union to provide assistance to passengers with a disability or reduced mobility. The Consumer Council has been designated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to be the complaints handling body for the Regulation.
- 1.3 In 2014 the CAA issued guidance requiring airports to consult with passengers with a disability or reduced mobility. This report details the findings of a meeting on 15 November 2022 of the City of Derry Airport's Accessibility Forum which involved a tour of the airport building. The Forum is made up of a range of organisations which represent consumers with a disability or reduced mobility.
- 1.4 The Forum was very positive about the airport's facilities and, in particular the implementation of recommendations made from the previous visit in November 2021.¹ Significant work had gone into upgrading signage, car park call points, flight display boards and hand sanitisers. The group noted the progress on the implementation of a "changing places" type facility. This demonstrated a real commitment to making the airport accessible for all and was commended by all forum members.
- 1.5 A small number of further recommendations was made by participants. These focussed on signage, toilet access and positioning of bins in the drop off area.
- 1.6 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 Regulations² came into place that require all airports and airlines in the EU to assist passengers with a disability or with a reduced mobility (PRM)³ when travelling. These have been retained and written in UK law since its exit from the EU⁴. Airlines licensed in the EU, operating flights from a non-EU country into the EU must also assist passengers.
- 2.2 The Consumer Council has been designated by the CAA as the complaints handling body for the Regulation⁵ 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 their services continue to meet passengers' needs.

¹ [CODA Accessibility Audit - November 2021](#)

² European Regulation (EC) 1107/2006

³ People of Restricted Mobility (PRM)

⁴ Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 (as amended by The Air Passenger Rights and Air Travel Organisers' Licencing (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019)

⁵ Civil Aviation (Access to Air Travel for Disabled Persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007/1895)

- 2.3 In 2014 the 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'
- 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.⁶ 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 intended outcome of this visit is for the Forum to continue to work with the airport in looking specifically at the special assistance to help gain a better understanding of the issues faced by passengers using this service. In particular, it is intended to identify areas where it works well, and to implement suggestions made by forum members to help make travel more convenient for those passengers. The airport will provide feedback on actions taken from the guidance and suggestions made at the next forum meeting.
- 2.6 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 15 November 2022. 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 staff, before proceeding outside for 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.

Arrival at the airport/parking area

- 4.2 Participants were impressed with the implementation of recommendations from the last site visit in this area. These included:

⁶ IMTAC, Alzheimer's Society, The Cedar Foundation, North West Forum of People with Disabilities, Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID), Guide Dogs for the Blind Association

- Call point signs have been changed from a white background to yellow background colour with black lettering to make them more visible.
- All signage has been upgraded so they can be clearly identified from a distance.
- Notice with the telephone number has a contrasting background to facilitate visibility.
- Additional signage in car park showing “Deaf or hard of hearing? Press the button then please wait and a staff member will come out to assist shortly”
- Additional signage listing a phone number that people can phone for assistance, if they are not able to use the intercom button.
- A new intercom has been fitted to replace a defective intercom. This has been tested and is fully operational.
- Signage at the bus stop had been updated to include information on special assistance available.

4.3 The group noted placement of a bin and advertising signage in the car parking area which could pose accessibility issues for wheelchair users or those with vision impairments (Figure 1). There was also a possibility that taxis could drop off in this space although there was a designated area further down.



Figure 1: Bin/signage in parking area

Recommendations:

- Reposition bin/advertising signage.
- Install additional signage for taxis to ensure they drop off directly before the zebra crossing.

Entrance to the airport

- 4.4 The group again praised how recommendations made previously had been implemented to good effect in this area. This included clearly marking the automatic doors into the main airport terminal with “Entrance” signs and providing additional hand sanitising stations at a lower height at airport entrance locations.
- 4.5 Participants noted that passengers can also enter and exit the airport through the side door (Figure 2) and discussed whether this could be made clearer.



Figure 2: Side entrance/exit to airport

Recommendation:

- Consider clearly marking the side door with “Entrance/Exit” signs.

4.6 The group also noted that the first information screens on arrival, which they felt were too small on the visit last year, had been replaced with larger screens and font size.

Check-in area

4.7 Since the previous visit a number of measures had again been taken to implement the recommendations made:

- Airport check-in and departure signage has been replaced to enable clarity. The lettering is now black on a contrasting white background.
- The toilet sign has been replaced. Paint used is a matt finish to make it easier for passengers to locate.
- Additional signage has been provided to indicate where to queue for check-in.

Participants discussed whether the signage towards the toilet could be in contrasting colours to make it stand out even more, and whether some of the toilets/sinks could be lowered to improve accessibility.

Recommendations:

- Consider changing toilet sign to a yellow background.
- Lower one of the toilets/sinks in both the ladies’ and men’s toilets to improve accessibility for children.

- 4.8 Although not a specific recommendation, the group agreed it was important to ensure the signage for the hearing loop system at the Customer Services desk was visible at all times and not hidden behind other information.

Security

- 4.9 Similar to the previous visit, participants complimented passing through security as a smooth process and noted that there a separate packing area for passengers requiring assistance.

Departure area (after security)

- 4.10 Participants discussed participation in the JAM Card scheme as airport staff were in discussions with its suppliers. The card allows people with a hidden disability or communication barrier to tell others that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way. The group felt that this would complement the Sunflower lanyard.

Recommendation:

- Continue discussions with a view to accepting the JAM Card at the airport.

- 4.11 Participants noted that the area was still quite “busy” with advertising signage as it is above every seat and on the dividers put in place for COVID-19 (Figure 3). Airport staff explained that COVID-19 measures were to be reviewed again soon and that these would remain until then.

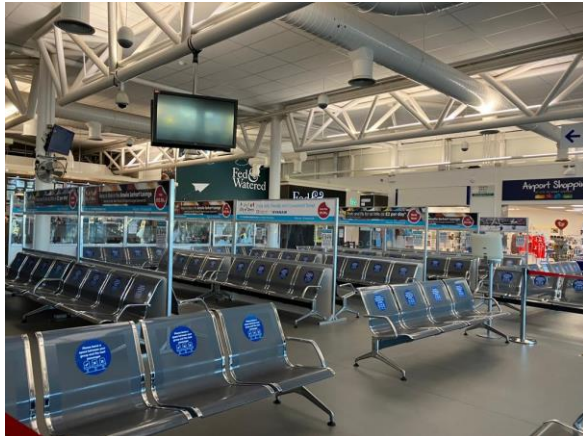


Figure 3: Advertising signage in departures lounge

- 4.12 The group noted that the Amelia Earhart lounge has been designated a quiet area that passengers requiring assistance can book free of charge. However it was noted that the area can be booked by other passengers for a charge; in this case there was another room upstairs which passengers could use. This can either be booked in advance to guarantee access or requested on arrival.
- 4.13 Participants praised progress on a “Changing Places” facility which was nearing completion. Following a recommendation in the previous report, the airport had met with Forum Member Dermot Devlin and engaged the company “Accessaloo” to refurbish and enhance current facilities. Whilst the current layout of the airport does not make it possible to meet the exact size requirements of a specific Changing Places toilet, the new facility will contain

all the necessary equipment such as a hoist and bed, and meet the specifications as far as possible. It is hoped that a full facility will be built into any future refurbishment works.

The group agreed that this was a significant development and paid tribute to airport staff for their work in making this possible. The airport agreed to keep Forum members updated as to when the facility would be complete.

- 4.14 In response to a question about a spending area for assistance dogs, staff noted that there was an allocated area at the front of the airport and that staff were happy to accompany the dogs. Bowls and water were also available.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Participants welcomed the opportunity to tour the airport and expressed satisfaction throughout at the processes and the number and extent of changes that had been implemented, since their visit in 2021, to improve the experience for passengers requiring special assistance. A small number of further suggestions were made around signage, toilet access and positioning of bins in the drop off area.

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.

Annex 1 Summary of Recommendations

	Signage
1	Reposition bin/advertising signage in parking area.
2	Install additional signage for taxis to ensure they drop off directly before the zebra crossing.
3	Consider clearly marking the side door with "Entrance/Exit" signs.
	Toilets
4	Lower one of the toilets/sinks in both the ladies' and men's toilets to improve accessibility for children.
	JAM Card
5	Continue discussions with a view to accepting the JAM Card at the airport.



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