

**AccessABZ**

**Wednesday 14th September 2016**

**Attendees**

Sam Reid Deaf Action

Shona Owen Service User

Andrea Barclay North East Sensory Services

Sandra Howard Aberdeen City Council

Kelly Johnson Aberdeen City Council

Katrina Michie Shopmobility Aberdeen

Kevin Douglas Aberdeen International Airport

Fraser Bain (FB) Aberdeen International Airport

Margaret Mackenzie Aberdeen International Airport

Alison Conn Aberdeen International Airport

Phionna Mcinnes-Pirie Me Too Magazine

Vic Baxter Service User

**Apologies**

Judith Forbes NHS

Diane King Grampian Opportunities

Sarah Geoghegan Alzheimer Scotland – Action on Dementia

Stan Flett Bon Accord Access Panel

Alistair Williamson Bon Accord Access Panel

Xandra Shearer Orkney Health and Care Partnership Board

**Notes from Meeting**

Introductions

FB welcomed everyone to the Forum including many new members attending for the first time. Each member provided an introduction. FB explained that he believed there is real benefit in getting input from a wide range of organisations in order to continue to make improvements to the service we provide for passengers. FB thanked everyone for their attendance today and offered the apologies of those who could not make it. FB also mentioned that he would still welcome the input from other organisations who represent passengers with assistance requirements, in particular, those with a ‘hidden disability’.

The need for larger print documents (minutes of the meeting) was highlighted and an action taken to look to provide these in future. Also FB made a note that invitations to future forum meetings will seek clarification over assistance requirements for Forum members.

*(\*The presentation provided by FB has been circulated to Forum members separately and will also be made available on the Airport website)*

1. Airport Operational Update

FB provided an operational update for the Airport covering the period between January and July 2016. This included a review and analysis of the total number of Passengers with Reduced Mobility (PRM’s) that had been requested and received assistance as well as the number of pre-notified passengers and ‘no-shows’. A breakdown was provided of the type of assistance requested by passengers during this period using the International Air Transport Association (IATA) categories - a handout was provided separately with a definition of each.

A summary of complaints, compliments and enquiries was presented and a discussion took place regarding the nature of these and the action taken in response.

FB next took the opportunity to update the group regarding progress that had been made since the last forum on the Terminal Facilities.

FB informed the group about how the Terminal Transformation project is coming along and reported that the first phase of this project is on schedule to be completed in summer 2017.

2. Hidden Disabilities

FB explained that many passengers with ‘hidden disabilities’ lack the confidence to travel and encounter problems travelling through an airport for various different reasons. FB explained that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), as the regulating body, have recently focused on how airports are set up to assist passengers with additional support needs and have proposed guidance on this matter. The forum held a discussion on this subject and FB explained the plans the airport have to improve the assistance for these passengers.

3. CAA Quality Standards Framework

FB presented on the subject of the CAA performance framework that has been set up and discussed the first report that was published in August of this year. A discussion was held regarding ABZ’s performance and the plans that are in place to improve future performance.

4. Members Update

Members were given the opportunity to raise any further items at the end of the meeting.

Items raised and discussed during the course of the meeting

**Assistance Area**

FB explained that the intention is still to have this area manned on a full time basis but that this, to date, has not been possible. A help phone connects directly to the assistance provider. The question was raised on how a deaf person uses the phone? It was also enquired whether the assistance provider would be aware of which phone (there are other assistance phones located in the car parks, forecourt and Gate 10) the call was coming from?

The help phone in the assistance area is a Big Button phone which has an inductive coupler for use with a hearing aid, however it is acknowledged that it will not be suitable for all people. We depend on assistance staff and airport team members to check that people waiting in the assistance area are being looked after. It was confirmed that the current telephone system does not provide information about where phone calls are coming from but that the phone system is due for review.

It was highlighted that Aberdeen City and Shire Voluntary Organisation (ACVO) may be an avenue to pursue with regards to providing a person in the assistance area. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) would be able to assist in terms of producing an advert for a position. Action for Aberdeen International Airport (AIA) to follow up.

**Hearing Aids**

A check of the induction loops was carried out with the help of Sam Reid from Deaf Action following the previous forum meeting and inconsistencies were found in the performance of these. Work still on-going to ensure that all induction hearing loops are working as intended. The point was made that many people now use a digital hearing aid and an action was taken to investigate how this impacts on hearing loops. Action taken by AIA.

**Transiting Security**

Several members explained that Security is the biggest source of anxiety when passing through the airport. The point was made that the service provided going through Security is not consistent and the guiding of passengers in particular was not very good with many officers unsure how to handle this. It was also highlighted that anxiety in passengers is greatly heightened when they are split up. FB explained that training is required and is planned to take place by the end of the year – see Training.

**Accessibility Guides**

FB mentioned that he had held an initial conversation with Disabled Go following the suggestion at the last Forum meeting that they could provide a detailed audit of the airport facilities which would then feature on their website. It is a website used by many disabled travellers to understand what facilities a particular venue provides etc. The suggestion was made to also look up Ewan’s Guides which provides access information in a ‘trip advisor’ style. Action taken by AIA.

**Airport Website Information**

FB explained that more visual content will shortly be added to the Special Assistance section of the website to give people a better understanding of what they will encounter on a journey through the airport. The hope is still to have short videos produced of ‘the journey’ but that unforeseen problems had emerged when pursuing a previous option. A reminder was made that the videos should also have British Sign Language, subtitles and audio. A contact was provided for a person who may be able to produce the videos and AIA will follow this up. Also AIA to look further into the organisation Station House Media Unit (SHMU) to understand if they could help in this regard.

AIA has taken the action to look at improving the website in terms of accessible formats.

AIA will dedicate a separate section of the website for Additional Support Needs. Familiarisation visits which already take place for any families wishing to walk through the journey prior to their date of departure will be promoted more widely.

**Challenges placed on service by increasing numbers of passengers requiring assistance**

A discussion was held by the group following a suggestion that a requirement for passengers to prove the need for assistance may help in terms of ensuring that the assistance service was limited to only those who genuinely required it. Many reasons were provided to suggest that this would not work including the reason that many persons who needed assistance would be put off in travelling in the first place.

**Distance from Aircraft to Terminal for Orkney/Shetland passengers**

The point was raised that the MP and MSP for the Orkney and Shetland islands had highlighted their concern with the distance passengers have to walk from the aircraft stands that are used for these flights. A further point was made that the relocation of these flights to aircraft stands on the main apron would offer significant savings in time for the assistance provider and help them in terms of performance. It was explained that unfortunately due to the infrastructure of the airport that the main apron stands are larger in size and are the only stands that can accommodate the larger aircraft that are in use at ABZ.

It was suggested that the provision of Power chairs may be of benefit to passengers arriving from Orkney and Shetland. AIA to look further into this matter.

**Training**

A general discussion was held about the training of operational staff at AIA on disability awareness. It was confirmed that AIA are working with their colleagues in Glasgow (GLA) on producing a general training programme for their teams. It was suggested that ‘train the trainer’ is often used but may be less effective in ensuring that the key messages are delivered. It was also mentioned that there is no substitute for training being delivered by persons who have experience in the subject area.

Various training providers and courses were suggested;

* My guide service from Guide Dogs for the Blind
* North East Sensory Services – Sensory Awareness Training to produce Sensory Champions
* Mental Health awareness training as mentioned by ACC
* Deaf Action – see/hear strategy
* Autism Awareness
* Just in time learning was suggested on youtube channels including videos on guiding, using loop systems and dual/vision loss.

It was confirmed that a Dementia Awareness workshop had been held at the airport in August and that training sessions hosted by Alzheimer Scotland were scheduled for October.

**Airport Plans**

FB explained that AIA is planning to compile a calendar of awareness events for 2017 which will provide a structure throughout the year for training and awareness activities. ACC have recently produced something similar and an action has been taken to contact ACC regarding this matter. It was mentioned that greater mention of the activities taking place could be made through social media channels and the airport’s Upbeat publication.

FB mentioned that lanyards or bracelets will be introduced in the near future and will be available for any passengers with additional support needs wishing to highlight to staff that they may need some help passing through the airport.

FB to look to produce a social story of a journey through the airport and for this to be available on the airport website. Manchester Airport cited as a good example of what they have in place for passengers with additional support needs.

FB to explore links with Shopmobility through for example the airport website for the benefit of assistance passengers.

FB confirmed that AIA will continue to host 2 Access Forums in 2017 (likely to be in March and September) and will also look to hold an Assistance Open day at some stage.

Close of Meeting.

**Airport Tour**

A tour of the Terminal was provided by AIA following the meeting for those members of the Forum who wished to see the facilities on offer. Several items were highlighted by those present and a separate list of actions has been compiled.