



AccessABZ

Thursday 19th March 2015

Attendees

Sam Reid	Deaf Action
Sandra Bruce	Disability Advisory Group
Shona Owen	Grampian Opportunities
Alan Kirby	G4S
Judith Forbes	NHS
Andrea Barclay	North East sensory se4vrices
Moira Hurry	VSA
Kevin Douglas	Aberdeen International Airport
Kellie Heath	Aberdeen International Airport

Notes from Meeting

Introductions

KH welcomed group to first meeting of AccessABZ and explained the purpose of the Forum. It was highlighted that whilst the airport already has a robust passenger with reduced mobility (PRM) programme, the Forum was designed to initiate dialogue to find ways in which this might be improved moving forward and for any issues to be raised in a Forum representing a wide range of disability and behavioural groups.

KD explained that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have also recently issued guidelines on PRM activities in airports and the creation of this Forum brings together a number of activities the airport already undertakes and reinforces the airport's compliance with this new legislation.

KH highlighted the Terms of Reference for the meeting and asked whether the group were happy with its content. All members agreed.

The group were then asked to introduce themselves so all members could understand which organisations, and the interests they represent, are present at the Forum.

Sam Reid – Deaf Action is a deaf-led charity that has been working for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people. The organisation provides advice, support and equipment in and around the Aberdeenshire area.

Judith Forbes – Orkney and Shetland Discharge Nurse, representing medical passengers who travel through airport.

Andrea Barclay – North East Sensory Services promotes the needs of people with a sight or hearing loss, supporting people to overcome practical and emotional challenges and achieve independence across the north east.

Alan Kirby – G4S is the PRM handler at Aberdeen International Airport and oversees the day to day management of assistance for those passengers requiring additional assistance.

Moira Hurry – VSA, formerly Volunteer Service Aberdeen, provides a full range of support for carers of any age across the Region.

Shona Owen – Grampian Opportunities represents people with disabilities and mental health issues through support, advice and a range of other services across the region.

Sandra Bruce – works in the Local authority's Community Planning and Equalities Department and oversees the Disability Advisory Group which looks after the interests of a range of disability groups across the borough.

Airport Update

KD explained that the airport saw its busiest year last year with 3.76 million passengers across 2014. As a result, providing a continued level of customer experience was challenging during peak times and with many areas of the airport at full capacity, those challenges will continue into this year.

The airport is set to continue its terminal transformation project in 2015 which will see the terminal double in size and create new security, retail and departures area. During the construction, it's likely that hoarding will be in place and temporary changes to passenger routes changed. KD suggested that regular PRM passengers could be invited in once works pick up pace to understand the temporary routings and new layout. Focus moving forward will be the phasing plan to ensure the terminal remains operational throughout.

Other developments include:

- Last year also saw 4 new check-in desks, new entrance to the terminal, upgraded retail and a website upgrade, all of which were tweaked to improve the PRM offer.
- More recently, we have moved the location of the Red cross pick up area
- Introduced a £1 charge in the forecourt to reduce the rising levels of congestion in area. This change also saw an improvement to the blue badge offer with 30 minutes free in the short stay.
- Focus on new destinations including holiday charters.

MH raised the issue of 'funding for carer breaks' and providing short health and wellbeing breaks for those with disabilities and their full time carers. Also highlighted that some families may not know how they travel with wheelchairs etc. through the airport.

The group agreed that more messaging needs to be pushed out to make people aware of the facilities on offer and how travelling with passengers requiring extra assistance works within the airport.

KH/KD raised the idea of a series of short videos covering all aspects of travel through the airport for PRM passengers, available on the website for this purpose. Currently looking into this, with potential to work with the local university to produce such videos. KH to bring along briefing for videos to next meeting.

Members of the group raised the issue of anxiety for travellers not familiar with PRM facilities, especially during busy and noisy times in the terminal. A suggestion was made for potential sound proofing of the PRM assistance area to assist those with sensory impairments.

Passenger Feedback

KD explained that there was currently no feedback on PRM issues at the airport for this meeting but could bring along and relevant comments to the next meeting. Of course any suggestions from members of the Forum from their own contacts was very much welcomed to the Forum or to KD/KH on an ad hoc basis.

G4S Update

AK briefly explained what G4S' role was at the airport and its responsibility for PRM passenger handling for all flights. Explained that last year was an extremely busy year and a big learning curve for the company.

Over winter, they have had time for review and currently two thirds through recruitment and restructure for Summer 2015.

The airport is a challenging environment, with oversubscribed facilities and challenging airline operations such as very quick turnarounds of 30 minutes for example. On some occasions, it can take up to 40 minutes to assist a number of PRM passengers on one flight or passengers arrive at the airport early - on some occasions up to three hours early – and other passengers must be assisted first to ensure everyone catches flights on time.

There are also complications when passengers arrive who require additional assistance unannounced. Whilst this should be arranged by the airline, passengers can make contact directly to check.

AK assured Forum that they are well aware of the challenges that were faced last year and in a much better place this year to oversee numbers.

A question was raised by a member regarding the issuing of tips. AK confirmed that G4S staff were not allowed to accept tips. It was suggested that if passengers still wanted to provide a tip of some description, to place in the charity boxes across the terminal but G4S staff could not accept them.

Members Updates

It was explained that this part of the Forum is for any members wishing to raise issues or points of interest. This is to be a standard item on the agenda and so members were encouraged to raise any issues they might have.

Several members raised the issue of information available during delays. It was pointed out that PRM passengers are often left by gate whilst G4S attending to another passenger but during delays or disruptions, little information was passed to the PRM passenger. This can sometimes cause stress or anxiety for those less familiar with travelling. Examples such as requiring the toilet or wanting refreshment or just requiring additional information is sometimes hard to do during delays when there are no PRM handlers available.

AK admitted that during delays and busy periods there are often limited staff to update all PRM passengers but would feedback to staff. SR suggested additional hearing loops so some passengers could find out additional information and KD agreed this could be looked into.

KD also said there is potential for airport ambassadors to assist during these times and it would be an issue to be raised with his terminal team.

MH raised an issue relating to medical equipment and more specifically diabetic pumps which cause issues when processing through security. The group agreed more messaging was required to raise awareness on what can and cannot be taken through security and the options available to passengers, such as private searches.

AK highlighted that equipment such as walking aids do not fit through the gauges and are able to assist passengers with wheelchairs but independent passenger may not wish to be assisted with wheelchairs so there are some difficulties there in trying to assist passengers with varying requirements.

The issue of short awareness videos was raised again by KD. This is an idea that has been discussed for some time and given the new website in place, would fit within its improved PRM section. Whilst this may take some months to develop, the topic will be raised at the next meeting so it can be discussed in more depth.

There is also potential to provide content for organisations' newsletters should this be of interest to any members. KD is happy to provide tours for individual passengers or groups if this would prove useful. It was also suggested that should members want to, it could be arranged for an airport tour of facilities at the next meeting to see any changes and spot issues which could be worked on.

Meeting close

KH brought the meeting to a close and thanked members for their time and participation. The initial meeting was very much about meeting members and understanding how the Forum would work moving forward. KH and KD to work on topics raised in today's meeting and updates brought to next meeting.

It is proposed that the next meeting is to be held towards end of August/start of September and a proposed date to be confirmed shortly.