



## **AccessABZ**

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015**

### **Attendees**

Sam Reid	Deaf Action
Rosemary	Deaf Action
Shona Owen	Grampian Opportunities
Brian Newlands	G4S
Graeme Coutts	G4S
Judith Forbes	NHS
Xandra Shearer	Public Partnership Forum, Orkney
Kevin Douglas	Aberdeen International Airport
Kellie Heath	Aberdeen International Airport

### **Notes from Meeting**

#### Introductions

KD welcomed people to the Forum and introductions were made by each Forum member.

#### Airport Update

KD provided an operational update from the airport, slide show attached. Key messaging from the update included a summary of the number of passengers requesting additional assistance, the impact of PRM 'no-shows' which delay G4S operations on a regular basis and the continued focus of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA – UK aviation regulator) on all matters relating to PRM including a passenger survey.

It was confirmed that the PRM area within the terminal has now moved into a new area, opposite Joe's Café where the Rolling Luggage Retail unit used to be. KD confirmed this was still a work in progress and new display screens and fitting were still to be finalised.

The group discussed how patients can sometimes be left to wait within the area for several hours prior to their flight and as such, any ways in which the room can be made more comfortable, would be beneficial. Suggestions included a water dispenser and

sound proofing at the entrance. Discussions were also held around the area being manned at all times in order to greet passengers and offer a full service. G4S confirmed this was currently being reviewed in terms of manning levels. It was also suggested the phone could be configured so that it dials the correct number automatically as opposed to having to dial a number.

KD also presented on the planned terminal transformation project in order to highlight the proposed changes, layouts and potential disruption during the phasing of the project.

### Members Updates

Members were asked whether they had any feedback or issues they like to raise.

KD welcomed new member Xandra Shearer to the Forum and asked whether she had any feedback on the airport's PRM service when travelling to/from Orkney.

XS first raised the issue of a busy/noisy PRM area which can often be distressing for patients waiting for flights. It was also raised about having the area manned permanently, as it can also cause distress or worry to patients who might not be familiar with the process and can be extremely off-putting for people who may have had a bad experience once before, and reluctant to travel again.

KD and G4S agreed that this was currently being looked into and KD confirmed that signage was still to be reviewed and improved.

XS also raised that on occasion patients can be discharged, or required to attend hospital, at short notice and so there were often issues with pre-notifying only 24 hours before and assistance not being available.

XS did summarise by offering praise from users of the service overall and that on the whole, it does work well.

SR raised the issue of those hard of hearing and the phone being the only available way to notify G4S of your arrival. Also pointed out that there is potential to miss announcements being made so the whole experience can be quite daunting.

SR also highlighted that the CAA survey being available online only was an issue for a good number of people, including the older generation who are not familiar with computers of which Deaf Action work with a lot. It was agreed by the group to circulate details of the survey to their colleagues and group members but that more should be done by the CAA to make it accessible for everyone.

Other issues raised by the group is the benefits of having an acoustic panel by the PRM area entrance now that it is within a contained room in order to minimise noise and SO suggested a video phone for those hard of hearing.

There was a group discussion around familiarisation sessions within the terminal. These were held previously with great success and saw volunteers from across the PRM network to tour the airport facilities with G4S and airport staff to fully understand the challenges faced by passengers requiring additional assistance.

KD and KH fully agreed that this is something that should be looked into and run again.

A question was raised by XS regarding the policy for assisting with lifejackets on an aircraft in the event of an emergency. An example was given whereby passengers are told to double tie their lifejacket but people who may not have full use of their arms, for example, would have difficulty with this and crew would not be aware. KH said this would be a policy within each individual airline and would investigate.

SO highlighted that high backed wheelchairs may be useful for some patients. Emphasised that short films would need to be kept short and concise but they are a good idea.

SO also raised the issue of the new PRM area during and after the terminal transformation project – should be close to toilets for convenience and a water cooler for passenger comfort. A discussion was also held around the installation of disability toilets with a hoist and change table which would be of great use to some passengers.

SO also provided feedback on the term 'PRM' and suggested that it could be changed as it may give the wrong impression for people just requiring a little extra assistance. Provided example of Gatwick Airport which calls it 'Helping Hand' and the group agreed this was a much better term. KD to review.

### G4S Operational Update

BN provided an update on G4S' operations since the last meeting. Key messages included:

- Number of G4S staff and how this number has stayed the same whilst passenger numbers and those requiring assistance have risen over the past few years. These numbers are currently under review.
- Review of manpower levels at peak times is also currently under review to ensure there are enough people on at busy times.
- Looking to recruit more females into the organisation in order to offer a mix of both males and females.
- Reiterated KD's earlier point that 'no show' passengers are having a real impact on the operation and causing delays – as are passengers arriving without prior notification which is another challenge.
- A review is under way on new uniforms and name badges for all staff.

- Discussion currently being held regarding specialist training for staff such as sign language or foreign languages.

BN also highlighted that there has been investment in new equipment – all wheelchairs have been renewed but unfortunately not as robust as they used to be, so repairs are having to be made, and a new ambulift is due to be in place by year end.

BN is happy to take feedback from the group and their colleagues direct.

### AOB

KD confirmed that he was still reviewing the possibility of short films featuring the various services available to passengers requiring additional assistance and had been in touch with a local college to discuss ways in which they could work together. KD asked whether people knew of any volunteers for the films and he would be in touch at a later date once plans have been put into place. Members agreed that films should be no longer than 30 seconds each and kept concise.

KD raised that the yellow seats on forecourt are to be moved into glass shelter on forecourt. Highlighted that there is covered seating by pay machines in car park.

KH confirmed Moura Hurry of VSA has left the organisation and therefore looking for a replacement from VSA to join the Forum. Should anyone have any contacts, please do let KH know.

KD asked the group that if they knew of any other organisations which may like to join AccessABZ, to let him know.

### Meeting close

KD brought the meeting to a close and thanked members for their time and participation.

KH confirmed she will be leaving the airport and KD would be in touch to confirm the next date of the meeting.