



## **AccessABZ**

**Wednesday 16th March 2016**

### **Attendees:**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Graeme Coutts (GC)       | G4S                                    |
| Joan Allan (JA)          | G4S                                    |
| Diane King (DK)          | Grampian Opportunities                 |
| Shona Owen (SO)          | Service User                           |
| Xandra Shearer (XS)      | Public Partnership Forum, Orkney       |
| Maggie Gemmill (MG)      | Patient Focus & Shetland Health Board  |
| Judith Forbes (JF)       | Orkney & Shetland Discharge Nurse, NHS |
| Kevin Douglas (KD)       | Aberdeen International Airport         |
| Sandra Howard (SH)       | Aberdeen City Council                  |
| Ben Dempster (BD)        | Aberdeen International Airport         |
| Alistair Williamson (AW) | Bon Accord Access Panel                |
| Stan Flett (SF)          | Bon Accord Access Panel                |
| Fraser Bain (FB)         | Aberdeen International Airport         |

### **Apologies:**

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sam Reid          | Deaf Action                 |
| Rosemary Mitchell | Deaf Action                 |
| Andrea Barclay    | North East Sensory Services |

## **Notes from Meeting**

### Introductions

FB welcomed everyone to the Forum and introductions were made by each Forum member given that this was the first meeting for a few of the attendees.

FB commented that this was the third forum to be held, following the sessions in March and September 2015. The plan again this year is to hold a meeting in the autumn. In addition, given the changes that will be shortly taking place as part of the Terminal redevelopment, an invitation will be sent out to all members to attend a 'walk-through' of the Terminal facilities. This will likely be scheduled for June but further details will be provided in due course.

## Airport Update

FB provided an operational update from the airport (slide show attached).

## 2015 Assistance Statistics and Pre-Notification Levels

This included a summary of the number of Assistance movements in 2015 and of those, how many were pre-notified i.e. 48 hours' notice had been provided.

MG mentioned that 48 hours' notice would not always be possible as a result of flight delays and patients being rebooked for medical appointments, potentially the next day. KD and FB both acknowledged that there are circumstances whereby the recommended period of notice cannot be provided but the focus on increasing pre-notification rates is to reduce the number of passengers who just turn up and request assistance on the day.

A general discussion took place regarding the pre-notification process and how this should work if a passenger made a booking for example through a tour operator/travel agent. It was explained that the passenger would need to request assistance and that the message would need to be communicated through various parties before reaching the assistance provider. KD explained that the SITA TXT is the industry standard means of communication for airlines to pass on information about passengers and G4S as the assistance provider would receive notification for assistance through this channel. In addition, Flybe email G4S with a list of passengers requiring assistance for the following 2 days. GC added that some of the more experienced members within the G4S team are able to recognise passengers who have previously required assistance and are able to anticipate any future requests (even if no pre-notification has been made)

## 2015 Customer Service/Feedback

FB moved on to the next slide which provided a summary of Customer Feedback for 2015. Over the course of the year 16 formal complaints were received from passengers regarding their experience and 7 compliments were provided. Each feedback was fully investigated and a response provided. Some of the key learnings that have come out of the feedback received is the need to improve the communications between handling agents and the assistance provider and the airport will be organising awareness sessions this year in conjunction with G4S. Also, the value of basic customer service skills and benefits of pre-notification were also highlighted in the comments made by passengers.

## Terminal Facilities Update

### a) Landside Assistance Area

An update of the Terminal Facilities was then provided by FB in response to feedback provided by both passengers and members of the Forum at previous meetings. We are currently reviewing the landside assistance area to identify the best and most cost

effective ways of improving this environment for the passengers who use this area. This includes the provision of water, acoustic panelling, seating, information that is provided and communication with the assistance provider.

SO requested that the flight information screen in the assistance area was bigger to make it clearer to read.

SF wanted to enquire about the policy of minimal flight announcements and wondered whether this was a decision made locally or was common across other airports. FB explained that boarding announcements are made in the departure lounge but prior to security passengers will need to rely on flight information screens for updates – this practice is now common across most airports. FB acknowledged that passengers who have any form of sight impairment will therefore depend on the assistance of airport staff.

MG requested that information for passengers waiting in the assistance area was available for them to take away (i.e. leaflet). FB agreed that this would be something worth pursuing.

SH informed the group that Disabled Go is an organisation that Aberdeen Council work closely with (leaflets were distributed) and believed there may be some value and relevance for the airport. SH also mentioned that having a pen and paper handy on the assistance desk would be beneficial for passengers.

GC explained that they intend to locate the co-ordinator of the assistance service in the landside assistance area which would mean that there was someone on hand in the area as much as possible. At the busiest times, however, there may still be a requirement for all agents including the co-ordinator to be assisting with the movement of passengers.

#### **b) Gate 10 Departure Lounge**

FB mentioned that a suitable area within the Gate 10 departure lounge has also been identified for assistance passengers to be seated and again we are looking at improving communication links with the assistance provider in the event that flights are delayed and the agent has to attend to other passengers. SO welcomed this as she highlighted that previously passengers had been left beside a door that was constantly opening and closing.

#### **c) Short films about Assistance Process**

FB informed the group that he has recently met with a class of Film and Media students from Aberdeen College to discuss the idea of making a series of short films regarding the assistance process. The idea would be to display these films on the Airport website

to enlighten people on the process and hopefully to alleviate any fears. DK and SO both raised the point that these videos would be beneficial for carers and others involved in the process. SO recommended looking at the British Red Cross website for examples of short, effective video presentations. The point was reiterated that these videos should be kept short; for example 15-20 secs long.

**d) Visual information for handling agents at check in.**

FB advised that he is working on producing more visual information for the handling agents to use at check in to help passengers make more informed choices regarding the assistance they require. KD highlighted we are trying to stop members of staff 'telling' passengers the type of assistance they require as opposed to letting the passenger decide for themselves based on the information provided.

**e) CAA Survey**

As discussed in previous forums we are looking at making the CAA survey that was launched nationwide last year more accessible by producing this in a paper format and using our survey team to distribute. MG questioned whether the feedback provided would be in real time (captured at the airport) or measured time (i.e. when a passenger has had a chance to reflect on their experience). FB agreed that this was something to be considered.

**Hidden Disabilities**

DK wanted to highlight the issue of 'hidden disabilities' and the difficulty these passengers face in navigating the airport. These passengers do not naturally fall into an assistance category and therefore they often face extra challenges transiting the airport. KD advised that the airport is always willing to assist if we are made aware in advance and encouraged anyone to get in touch. BD highlighted that the airport has carried out several familiarisations for families and passengers previously and will always be willing to help in any way possible.

**Operational Update**

FB provided a brief Operational update including a summary of new flights that are starting in 2016 and a list of summer holiday charter destinations. Two new, remote aircraft stands are due to come into operation at the end of March and the proposed walk through of facilities in June will discuss the boarding/disembarkation process that will be established by this point, in more detail.

FB highlighted that the airport has experienced a decline in passenger numbers over recent months due to the continuing impact of the decline in Oil prices.

Lastly FB made mention of the fact that Easyjet recently celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> year of operations from the airport.

### **Terminal Transformation Update**

FB provided an update with regards to the £20 million Terminal Transformation project that will be commencing over the next few months. As part of this, temporary facilities will be in use including International Arrivals/Reclaim and Domestic Reclaim from May 2016 for a year to allow the first phase of construction of the new facilities which will include new international arrivals, reclaim areas and two new lounges for Swissport and British Airways passengers. The two remaining phases of the project will include a new Security Search area and improved retail offering and is estimated to be fully complete by 2019.

FB provided a slide show presentation but explained that the proposed walk through of the facilities in June 2016 will provide a better opportunity to review and comment on the facilities.

### **Members Update**

#### **G4S**

GC explained that G4S have gone through a recruitment phase over the past 12 months and are now getting to a place where they want to be. GC wanted to reiterate the importance of pre-notification of assistance in terms of being able to allocate resources adequately.

In terms of investigating any issues BD requested that as much detail as possible was provided including where possible the flight number, time of incident etc.

#### **Grampian Opportunities**

DK is keen to look further in to the issues faced by passengers with 'hidden disabilities' and is very keen to work with the airport in this regard. She will be flying through the airport this year on a frequent basis and KD encouraged her to make contact with him prior to this. The idea of familiarisation tours was discussed further.

#### **From a service user perspective**

SO wanted to raise the issue of patients leaving hospital after treatment and the scenario of falling ill at the airport (given the time they potentially have been in hospital with full time care) and has a concern that the process may not be fully joined up. SO suggested something such as a 'travel passport' could be introduced which would give people involved in their care on their journey home an indication of when they had last eaten, medical history etc. The financial cost and administration of this was highlighted as a potential issue as Health boards are struggling financially.

### Shetland Health Board etc.

MG suggested that an Information Guide would be useful as many of the passengers are not experienced travellers. MG discussed that in Shetland the discharge team have been working with patients on a 6 week programme which includes preparing the patient for leaving hospital and helping them get re-established once they are back home.

### Orkney & Shetland Discharge Service - NHS

JF brought up that the use of volunteers at the airport to assist the transit of patients had been considered previously by the NHS but that this did not get off the ground due to lack of people willing to commit. KD suggested that this was revisited and asked to be involved with this.

JF also advised that the NHS would be carrying out a survey of patients using the passenger transport service to Orkney and Shetland. A similar survey was carried out previously.

### Aberdeen City Council (ACC)

SH made the group aware that ACC will soon (May 2016) be advertising the role of a Disability Access Officer. The successful applicant will be responsible for providing advice and guidance to community groups as well as being involved in building access issues. A Disability Advisory Group will also be getting reinstated and the aim will be for it to be more representative than the previous group and attract a broad a range of people as possible. They have been delayed in getting this set up due to issues in accommodating BSL users. Other groups such as Autism group, Learning Disability group etc. will sit under this.

### Bon Accord Access Panel

SF/AW commented that improvements at Dyce railway station in terms of access were very much welcome and that in terms of integrated transport they would welcome improved links between the railway station and airport in the future.

### **AOB**

FB advised that an invitation to the Forum had been sent to the Grampian Autistic Society but that he had not received a reply. FB added that he was keen to have an autistic organisation represented at future forum meetings and asked the group for any relevant contact information. AW advised that he would be able to provide a contact following the meeting.

### **Closing of Meeting**

Following confirmation that there were no further questions/issues that anyone wanted to raise FB brought the meeting to a close by thanking everyone for their participation and reminded the group an invitation would be sent out regarding a 'walk-through' of the terminal facilities (likely to be in June) and the second Access Forum of 2016 would be held in September.