

# Minutes London Luton Airport Accessibility Forum (LLAAF)

## Tuesday 12 March 2024, Putteridge Bury House, 11:00 a.m.

Attendees	
<b>Andy Wright</b> - Committee Chair	<b>Denise Hobbs</b> - Accessibility Manager, LTN
<b>Andrew Heelis</b> - Station Manager, Wilson James	<b>Jimmy O'Koth</b> - Training Manager, Wilson James
<b>Lauren Cox</b> - Luton Council	<b>Mary Doyle</b> - Disability Etiquette trainer
<b>Nicole Gudgin</b> - Autism Bedfordshire	<b>Jo Joy</b> - Alzheimer's Society
<b>Samantha Leftwich</b> - Thomas Pocklington Trust	<b>Phil Rutter &amp; Marion Burchell</b> - Thomas Pocklington Trust
<b>Daniel Churchman</b> - Disability Resource Centre	<b>Marie-Louise</b> - Dystonia UK
<b>Emily Kilby</b> - Civil Aviation Authority	
Apologies	
<b>Libby Herbert</b> - Colostomy UK	<b>Peta Barratt</b> - Spinal Injuries Association

Welcome and Introductions
<p><b>Andy</b> welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was hosted at Putteridge Bury House near the airport. Introductions were made and new attendees were introduced, with apologies for those unable to attend shared with the group. <b>Andy</b> then provided an overview of the Accessibility Forum, its aims, and ambitions, for the benefit of the new attendees. Before running through the main action points from the previous meeting and sharing the format and agenda for the forthcoming meeting.</p>
LLA Operational Overview
<p><b>Denise</b> with <b>Andy Heelis</b>, then gave a presentation which included an overview of the airport's recent performance for the passengers who had been assisted by the Assisted Travel Department (Special Assistance) during the last few months. Demonstrating how the time metrics that the Civil Aviation Authority assess and audit the airport by, had improved considerably. With all results being close to 99% and above which met the CAA's 'Very good' criteria. Similarly, the number of completed surveys providing feedback from <i>assisted</i> passengers during that period had also seen a positive increase. Which the airport was very pleased with.</p> <p><b>Andy H</b> then summarised a number of positive changes that had taken place recently by Wilson James at the airport, which included increasing the numbers of staff and improvements being made to staff training, which were gratefully received by Forum members.</p> <p><b>Denise</b> went on to inform the Forum about a number of engagements and events that had taken place at the airport since the members last met. Which included a selection of Forum representatives attending an inspection of the soon to be fully installed, Next Generation Security equipment. Which should be completed by October 24 and is intended to help improve speed and efficiency, as well as passenger experience.</p> <p><b>Denise</b> also mentioned that <b>Nicole</b> from Autism Bedfordshire had taken part in an airport inspection visit. Which was followed by <b>Jo</b> from the Alzheimer's Society, who had accompanied a couple - one with dementia - to undertake a terminal familiarisation visit and had also been a great success.</p> <p><b>Denise</b> then advised how Wilson James were organising an Autism Reality Experience Day for up to 60 people in the weeks ahead. To help airport staff better understand some of the issues and anxieties experienced by guests with autism when travelling through an airport.</p> <p><b>Nicole</b> said she would like to attend the event.</p> <p><b>Jo</b> advised the Forum that the same organisation can also provide a Dementia Reality Experience if the airport was interested.</p>

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**Denise** concluded by providing feedback from the recent Accessibility Familiarisation Day that had taken place at the airport the previous week. Highlighting the success of the day which had been well attended and designed to encourage new guests, many of whom may have recently been diagnosed or lacking in confidence to fly. To learn more about the airport and the support services that can be provided if required. Some of the 33 attendees to the airport event, had been greatly empowered by the day. With many guests expressing interest in wanting to fly from the airport in the future.

**Marie-Louise**, who has a neurological condition called Dystonia, which affects approximately one hundred thousand people in the UK, was one of the attendees at the event. She then spent some time discussing the challenges of living with her condition and how she had benefited greatly by attending the familiarisation day. Where she learnt more about the services and support the airport can provide to her when she next travels abroad.

### Special Assistance vs Assisted Travel

**Denise** then explained how the airport was looking to rebrand the Assistance/Support service provided at the airport, to appear more friendly and less compliance orientated. To this end Luton Airport was now looking to redefine the service provided as 'Assisted Travel' and **Denise** was keen to seek the opinions of the Forum members on the proposed name change.

**Andy** said he felt the term was certainly more appropriate, especially as the term '*Special*' is not greatly favoured within the community these days and he had seen more airports and transport providers now leaning towards the new phraseology.

Most Forum members agreed and felt the term 'Assisted Travel' was a more appropriate and better title.

**Denise** then went on to demonstrate a number of different logos that the airport was considering for this new brand. Details of which can be found in the accompanying presentation.

**Jo** felt that the sunflower displayed in example slide 1, needed to look more like a sunflower.

**Lauren** felt that the signs with the icons showing 'Assisted Travel', should also include the strap line.

**Marion** advised the designers to carefully consider the colour and tone choices as far as contrast is concerned. Suggesting possible alternatives such as yellow on dark grey, or dark grey on yellow.

**Mary** felt the tag line could say 'Special Assistance *however* you need it', rather than *whenever*.

### New Terminal Infrastructure

**Denise**, then went on to discuss the impacts on the airport and to guests, of the recent fire that consumed one of the airport's car parks (TCP2) and the ongoing clear up and reconstruction projects thereafter.

**Denise** followed by informing the Forum about the recent upgrade project to the Help Points at the airport, including a graphic of their new design. Advising that new mobile boosters had now been installed throughout the airport, which were currently being tested by four major mobile companies. EE and Vodafone had already completed their tests and O2 and Three were due to complete their tests by the end of the month. Following which a full survey will be conducted to determine the best places for all the new Help Points to be located throughout the airport. Confirming that it is hoped that this project will be completed by May/June 2024.

**Denise** then updated the Forum on progress with the new PRM Assistance Lounge, which will include a Changing Places facility and Sensory Area. Along with other specifications as stipulated by the Forum members in previous meetings and should be ready for opening by the end of the year.

**Denise** then confirmed 4 lanes of the new Next Generation Security facility were now open and operational, with lanes 5 and 6 due for completion by the end of May. Following feedback from the inspection visit last year, the antifatigue matting that was impeding some PRMs and wheelchair users at the time, had now been changed.

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## Staff Training

**Andy** then advised the Forum members that he wanted to have an open discussion about the level and detail of staff training that was currently being carried out at the airport, in accordance with the CAA's guidelines. As it was important for **Andy** and the airport, to ensure that Disability Awareness staff training was being delivered in a way that could be fully understood and absorbed by the staff. To help increase their awareness and understanding of the many issues and anxieties experienced by disabled travellers when they fly. And in order to achieve this objective, the knowledge and expertise of the Forum members, and their respective charities and disability organisations, was invaluable in this process.

To that end, **Andy** and **Denise** had already been in discussions with **Jimmy O'Koth**, Training Manager for Wilson James (WJ), to better understand more about the content of the WJ Disability Awareness training module and how it was delivered to their agents, who provide the *Assistance Service* to the Luton Airport PRM guests.

**Andy** was also keen to seek feedback from the Forum member on the airport's own in-house Disability Awareness training module titled 'How May I Best Assist You?', the link to which was shared with the Forum members prior to the meeting.

**Denise** had also commenced discussions with a number of Luton Airport's third-party companies, who were subcontracted by the airport to provide services to Luton Airport's guests. To gain a greater understanding of their own in-house Disability Awareness training modules, and to see whether they met the airport's standards.

**Andy** then introduced **Jimmy** to the Forum, who provided some background about himself, his training qualifications, his lived experience with disability within his family, and his style of delivery. Talking through a selection of slides that he often used in his staff training. As well as sharing a number of equality versus equity illustrations and videos he includes to accompany his classroom training.

Overall, the Forum members seemed impressed and were happy with Jimmy's presentation. A number of members did raise concerns as to the amount of time allotted for Disability Awareness training for staff at airports. Favouring more detail and ideally a longer period of time for training. But did understand many of the constraints and demands placed on the aviation industry, which did often impact the length of time and detail included in certain awareness modules.

Following his presentation, **Lauren** asked if Jimmy had any information on cultural intelligence so that she could share it with her colleagues.

**Andy** then asked Forum members for their feedback on the Luton Airport 'How May I Best Assist You?' e-learning training module, which had been shared prior to the meeting. Feedback from Forum members was overall positive. **Mary** expressed concerns about the format of the training module, saying that it was awkward to watch on a mobile phone for example.

**Denise** responded by saying that all staff members who undertake the course, do so at work on a company laptop or PC, so the comment raised has not been an issue to date. But she would take note of it for the future.

**Denise** also advised that she had received some very positive feedback from staff who had already sat the course. Giving examples of comments received such as 'Denise it was so interesting and helpful thank you' and 'So insightful and well executed ... I definitely took a lot away'. **Denise** thanked the Forum members for the advice and guidance they had provided, which had greatly supported the creation of the training module.

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**Andy** then asked for views from the Forum as to what they would expect from a trainer in terms of official qualifications and 'lived experience of disability' when delivering disability awareness training courses to staff.

**Jo, Nicole, Sam, and Mary** collectively felt that all Disability Awareness training material should be created in a collaborative partnership between the airport, and its respective stakeholders, and disability organisations. However, didn't necessarily feel that the trainers themselves need to be certified trainers. Saying that when they deliver their own awareness training, be it on behalf of those with autism, dementia, sensory impairments etc. They do not call themselves qualified *trainers*, but persons either with *lived experience* or associated with *lived experience*, who spread awareness of the challenges experienced by people living with a particular condition or disability.

The discussion then led into the subject of in-person training versus online training.

**Sam** felt that online training was preferable, as the trainer could reach a wider audience and at different times of the day i.e. not just within office hours. Which she felt would no doubt be appropriate for a busy 24/7 airport operation. Saying that the Thomas Pocklington Trust was currently working to create their own e-learning training for this reason.

**Mary** added that only 20% of her own training courses were actually delivered face-2-face, due to varying shifts and logistical issues within many of the commercial organisations she dealt with.

**Andy** concluded this discussion by saying he would talk further with the CAA. Using the feedback from the Forum members, to continue looking at ways to effectively spread and increase quality Disability Awareness training to all appropriate airport staff, given their varying roles and hours of operation.

## AOB

There were no further points raised or questions asked by Forum members.

**Andy** and **Denise** thanked the members for their attendance and contributions to what had been a very thorough and beneficial discussion, especially about staff training. Saying that all the comments and feedback would be taken on board and shared with the CAA.

## Actions

**Denise** to contact **Nicole, Jo, and Sam** independently, in order to discuss next steps on how to enhance levels of Autism, Dementia, and Visual Impairment staff training within the airport.

To provide Forum members with an update on staff training progress and future initiatives.

To provide Forum members with an update on ongoing Terminal Infrastructure progress with completion dates.

To provide Forum members with an update on finalised *Assisted Travel* branding and signage.