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**Minutes of the Leeds Bradford Airport® Accessibility Group Forum held at**
**Britannia Hotel, Leeds Road, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9JJ.**
**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025, 10:00-13:00 hours.**


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**Attendees**

Kay Atkin	Chairperson	KA
Dan King	PRM Manager, LBA®	DK
Rachel Athorn	Customer Experience Operations Manager, LBA®	RA
Nicky Bartholomew Esders	Customer Experience, LBA®	NBE
Andy Leat	Transition and development , LBA®	AL
Ann-Marie Pearson	Customer Experience Development Manager, LBA®	AMP
Joselyn Rankin	Head of Corporate Affairs, LBA®	JR
Pete Hughes	Leeds Autism Services	PH
Catherine Greenwood	Social Worker, Action for older people	CG
Sally Warr	Ehler-Danlos UK	SW
Bairbre McKendrick	Leeds City Council	BM
Miriam Watson-Pratt	Little Hiccups	MW
Erica West-Padgett	Therapy Dogs	EW
Rachel Hirst	OT, William Merrit Centre	RH
Aniqa Mirza	Travel Health Coordinator, William Merrit Centre	AM
Tia Sehra	Customer Service, LBA®	CA
Andrew Simister	Trustee, Disability Action Yorkshire	AS
Robert Kernaghan	Trustee, Disability Action Yorkshire	RK
Nigel Thompson	Disability Action, Yorkshire	NT
Tanya Simpson	Vision Support, Harrogate District	TS
Christine Pearce	AVSED	CP
Zoe Cole	Spina Bifida Hydrocephalus Ireland	ZC
Linsay Medica	Little Hiccups	LM

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Noel Davis Attack

Little Hiccups

NDA

**Apologies**

Kim O'Connor

Leeds Diocese pilgrimage to Lourdes

Liesje Dusauzay

Sparkles, Sheffield

Chris Bright

Diabetes Charity

Lyn Morgan

Stoma Support

**1. Introduction, Welcome & Apologies**

The meeting was opened by DK and KA. KA welcomed everyone and nice to see increased numbers attending. New members were welcomed to the group and each member in attendance was asked to introduce themselves and provided information regarding the organisation represented or background for participation in the forum. Also asked if any members would like to receive information in alternative formats.

**2. Previous Minutes review**

Previous minutes were sent out and available at the meeting, no issues raised.

**3. Customer Experience Update**

Aviramps due to be delivered this week. These will allow step free access to the planes. It is likely three to four gates will have the aviramps in use.

The aviramp would require a transfer to an aisle chair before going onto the ramp, therefore the ambulift would still be used for passengers requiring their own wheelchair to as near to the aircraft as possible and full transfer due to the restriction in space.

Ambulifts were due to arrive December 2025 but now are expected in September. The small ambulift has been refurbished and due to be back in service in July. So much increased capacity which should assist with the assisted travel service.

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Feedback around a customer assistance guide which is being produced. This will also have a one-page quick security guide as the main document is about 20 pages. This will be available on the website and can be sent out to customers. The plan is to do some videos once the building work is further along, currently everything is changing too much.

There was security training on neurodiversity last autumn to try and improve the experience of those passengers.

#### **4. X25 Works**

Photos shown of current outside and inside of new build. Also, time-lapse video of build, CGI walkthrough of the inside, and a drone view in January 2025.

A lot of building work currently underway, the opening date has been pushed back by two-three weeks.

The main change has happened this last week where you walk into the entrance of the airport. The assisted travel desk has now been removed so we have temporary assisted travel points in both check in areas. This is likely to be the case for around 18 months. We will have staff at these points ready for as passengers arrive. There is still a lot of passengers coming through so working on delivering best service we can. AL new role is to liaise with business and airline partners to ensure that assistance passengers can move through security and into the new extension.

With the meet and greet parking, that has also moved and has a temporary check in within the porta cabin. This will be for this summer and assisted travel staff will be available from the porta cabin for those who need.

It was clarified that new signage is in place, so it is clear where to go.

One upcoming challenge is the toilets which are going to be outside the terminal. There will still be accessible and changing places toilets, but they are in a different location. Signage is a key feature plus the staff awareness of the changes. AL role will be troubleshooting and trying to ensure the transition works for all passengers.

It hasn't been feasible to get the group onto the site due to the amount of active construction currently. Once the building is safe and accessible then tours will be arranged so can get different feedback.

Was asked if will be quiet spaces in new terminal. There is going to be a space but not sure exactly on location, it is believed to be after security. It was raised that there is a difference between a sensory room and quiet room, they both have different purposes.

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## **5. CAA AGF Guidance**

KA updated the group regarding attending the CAA chairperson meeting, DK updated following his attendance at the airport meeting with the CAA. Discussed the plan to develop terms of reference, an annual report and review how the group meetings run.

KA reported that the general feedback appeared positive in regard to our attendance variety, and structure but there is some additional elements we can look to formalise within the planning including airport visits and subcommittees for specific projects.

Another area we are looking to implement is the option of hybrid meetings to the option to join remotely, hopefully this will increase the accessibility of attending.

### **Term of reference**

DK explained we need a term of reference for the group. This will be published on the website and should ensure we are getting the best out of these meetings. An example of the terms of reference for Stansted airport has been shared out for attendees to read. Feedback for things that should or shouldn't be included was requested from the group.

- Ensure compatibility of document with accessibility software
- Consider the language used, the Stansted document talks about those who require additional assistance. We need to ensure that it's also enabling independent travel for some disabled people, but also consider older people who may not identify as disabled but have mobility or assistance needs.
- Avoid use of abbreviations
- Potentially easy read versions as well as a standard version

DK advised would get a terms or reference put together and then email around the group for feedback before publishing.

### **Annual Report**

Another requirement that has been introduced is that an annual report is produced and shared on the website.

This would include the aims of the forum, any items raised and the outcomes from the past year.

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Requested feedback from the group to what else they felt should be included as currently there is no specific guidance

- The make up of group members, in terms of disability types, organisations etc represented
- Reporting on the work around trying to engage with any gaps identified around attendance, so shows trying to ensure a full view of as many accessibility needs as possible

### **Frequency of Meetings**

The group agreed that twice a year works well with enough time for progress to be made between.

It was agreed sub groups around specific issues raised would be beneficial. This may be where specific people are selected due to the nature of the project, or it put out to the group who wants to participate.

### **Airport Visit**

A suggestion of the CAA is to have an annual walk through of the airport to review the current process and customer journey. We haven't considered if this would be done as small groups, or if we work through specific sub groups linked to projects but this is something we will look to implement.

One area this will occur in is once we can access the new terminal. We need to get some of you into the new terminal to walk through and provide feedback.

KA summarised that the group will form part of the CAA ratings, so how the group is utilised and feedback responded to will eventually be taken into consideration when rating the airport.

## **6. Medical Devices**

DK raised that they had been asked to get some feedback from the group around experiences of those travelling with medical devices.

There has been some feedback around medical devices not been treated with the respect it deserves, such as when opening suitcases during security processes.

We don't have anyone from security present but will be feedback back into the team.

- Medications – the group highlighted can be difficult travelling through security, especially when multiple or large quantities required.

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- Vagus nerve stimulator, requires a magnet to activate the device. When travelling have to provide all manufacturing details of device and magnet. Always have to have a lot of information available.
- Security at times dismiss medical letters or medical ID cards
- Feedback around both extremes at security, of either what feels like over the top processes, or not doing any checks.
- Security need to be aware passengers may not be travelling with people they want to know about their condition, so need to be discreet and respectful in how they deal with people.
- Communication and explaining why they are doing things, but also listening to the passenger not dismissing everything they say.
- Members shared spending extensive time in security due to increased checks, especially when travelling with devices or medications.
- A recent poor experience at LBA was shared with the group where security dismissed the passenger and their medical letter. The passenger was asked to remove clothing to prove the existence of a catheter. Despite having medical evidence with them security refused to look at the letter. This passenger has been left feeling like they can't fly again following this experience. Although the need for security is understood, it needs to be carried out in a respectful humane manner.

May be useful for a leaflet or information to explain what the different security checks are and why these may occur.

The group felt additional training may be required for security and maybe having designated staff with a higher level of communication and disability awareness that can assist with specific situations.

The group felt that security may be a sub-group to develop to look at this area further. It was also felt getting some involvement from security would be needed in order to progress.

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## **7. Quality Standards and Performance Review**

The CAA request that the results from the past 12 months are reviewed. DK advised would send these out to members as the slides are difficult to read.

Comparing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024-31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 we have increased the number of passengers we assist from the previous year 71927 to 24/25 92748.

There were 9 passengers who did not reach their flights, we discussed those in length at the last meeting. Since last meeting all passengers have made their flights.

On arrivals we didn't meet the target in May, June, September and October. Over the whole year we hit 97%. As a percentage we are doing well but we want to ensure we get a good service to all passengers.

The biggest challenge is the flight scheduling and if any delays hit. Things like fog, or air traffic control strikes elsewhere which alter the schedule can cause a lot of disruption. The hope is the air ramps and new ambulifts are going to provide more flexibility and assist with the service moving forwards.

We had predicted a 10% increase but it was a 30.01% increase in assisted travel numbers. It exceeded our planning and expectations but overall, we retained a good service.

Highest month was September 2024 with 11955 requests for assistance.

Busiest day was 470 customers in one day, generally we see 200-300.

We are using data more, with power bi platforms to help plan and predict what is happening to help us plan and adapt.

Feedback team fed back to the group around the complaints and feedback process. All customers that raise an issue are responded to; an investigation occurs and then they are fed back to on the outcome.

It was raised to if a subgroup could possibly be created around complaints and feedback to review from an accessibility focus.

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**8. Open Forum**

- Discussed looking to include older passengers within future projects, especially capital projects to consider their customer journeys.
- It was raised that greater engagement is needed prior to projects, rather than once they have started. There has been lots of updates regarding the refurbishment and build but it has been more about telling people you're doing it rather than consultation and engagement sessions.
- SignLab – BSL boards in transport hubs. Looking at how this could be implemented at the airport.
- Communication Matters – free training offered, it's a charity who support those with speech issues. When people have speech difficulties, people make assumptions that they maybe have a learning disability or that they're drunk. There's all sorts of prejudice and there's people that use assistive and augmented alternative speech and that's a whole charity that deals with that community and the needs of that community and tries to advocate for them. DK noted will take a look at the training.
- Pets4Therapy – LBA has been registered after last meeting but there hasn't been any contact over the winter period. With staffing change and the building work it hasn't been followed up. The group feel it is important to look at getting these scheme restarted as the benefits can be seen. There is a challenge currently due to the building works and changing environment so it is more likely to be picked up again once the building works are further on.

Meeting was closed by KA

**Meeting Actions:**

- Terms of reference to be produced and shared for feedback
- Annual report to be completed for 2024-2025 year.
- Subgroups format
- Investigate Communication Matters Training
- Pets4Therapy Implementation timeline
- Airport visit planning