

Minutes Bristol airport Inclusion Committee (B.I.C) Forum

Tuesday 26 October 2021 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:	
Andy Wright - Chair	Richard Thomasson - Head of Customer Operations, BRS
Martyn Collings - Operational Support Manager, BRS	Leigh-Anne Borkar - General Manager OCS, BRS
Libby Herbert - Colostomy UK	Josh Wintersgill - Able Move Ltd
Gordon Richardson - Bristol Disability Equality Forum	Simon Laken - Stroke Association
Bianca Rossetti - Age UK	Chris Hunt - Bristol Dementia Action Alliance
Apologies:	
Kinny Chinangwa - WECIL	Mark Williams - Bristol Reclaim Independent Living
Tony Hall - Bristol Dementia Action Alliance	Adam Mitchallat-Cox - Bristol Dementia Action Alliance
Geoff & Mandy Palmer - Guide Dogs for the Blind	

Welcome and introductions followed by actions from previous meeting

Andy welcomed and introduced the B.I.C. members before running through the agenda for the day. Items discussed included the following:

Mystery shopper - **Martyn** explained the original plan to work with a cross section of disabled service users to capture and report their findings from actual flights to and from Bristol had been deferred because of the pandemic and the inevitable reduction in passenger numbers. However in the interim, Bristol airport had made a concerted effort to expand the existing customer feedback system, which now includes the introduction of QR codes, in order to improve data collection and data analysis.

Room Mate - again due to the pandemic, this trial had not been initiated as yet. But **Josh** did point out to the forum that unfortunately Helen, who was the principal contact at Room Mate, had sadly passed away recently. So, **Josh** was happy to approach the company directly to determine who is now the best person to liaise with when the trial can be rescheduled.

Companion Cane trial - **Mandy** and **Geoff** had kindly undertaken a trial of this product within Bristol airport recently, in order to provide a blind service users perspective. It was concluded that the cane was difficult to use, especially in a busy environment where navigation of escalators and lifts is required. It was therefore concluded that the Companion Cane would not be appropriate for use at Bristol airport. **Leigh-Anne** did however point out that an alternative product, the Ramble Tag - assistant tool for the blind and visually impaired community - was effective and available for those who would like to use it.

Website accessibility - **Mandy** advised **Andy** in advance of the meeting that she had undertaken the test of Bristol airports website to ensure that it could be utilised by using her Screen Reader, and she was comfortable that the website was fully accessible.

General business overview and Customer Relations Update

Richard and **Martyn** then provided an overview of the recent activities that had taken place at the airport, as well as summarising a number of existing challenges the airport is currently facing.

- **Richard** discussed the airport's steady increase in passenger numbers since restrictions were lifted, as highlighted below, with a significant upturn since July.

Total Passenger Numbers Per Month 2021

Mar 21	Apr 21	May 21	Jun 21	Jul 21	Aug 21	Sep 21	Oct 21
6,097	12,890	40,821	85,327	178,000	328,000	362,000	438,000

- **Richard** informed the forum that Bristol airport had obviously faced many challenges in recent months, including staff recruitment and retaining quality staff. So, the airport had been consciously working closely with Business Partners to ensure resource levels were increased in line with passenger growth. In addition, the airport's policy has been to retain staff during the winter months where possible, and increase pay in order to support activity designed to attract new recruits to the airport. However, Catering and Retail facilities are only partially open currently and still face recruitment challenges before all facilities can fully reopen.
- **Richard** then went on to describe the Car Park development work that has been taking place, especially to the Silver Zone Car Park. Which when reopened will be a fully automated key drop off facility. In addition, the airport bus fleet has been installed with on demand technology to make the service more efficient and sustainable.
- **Josh** raised how difficult it can be for some disabled passengers to reach the assistance button when entering the Long-stay car park, without having to get out of their vehicle, and it would therefore be good to have an assistance telephone number made available in such circumstances.
- **Martyn** advised of the relaunch of Customer Service training for all airport staff, with a strong focus on #oneteamonefamily, which focuses on how everyone can make a difference along the customer journey.

OCS Service Performance - Leigh-Anne

Leigh-Anne confirmed that OCS's overall performance in recent months had been good despite the inevitable staff challenges and the recent increase in passenger numbers.

Martyn advised that recent passenger feedback had been positive and praised the OCS Special Assistance team for their excellent performance during such demanding times. Highlighting the airport had received 24 compliments praising the PRM service, compared to only 7 alleged complaints during the airport's busiest month of the year.

Josh then advised the forum that he had flown to Belfast at the beginning of September and had been very impressed by the service he received. He also had recently flown to the Canary Islands and said whilst he was waiting in the Special Assistance area there was another party of 5 passengers travelling together. But when they tried to enter the assistance area, were told only two of them could wait there as it was particularly busy at that time. There was clearly some confusion with high numbers of passengers requiring assistance at the time, but **Leigh-Anne** said she would investigate this as OCS would never intentionally wish to separate parties travelling together. **Josh** also mentioned that there had been a problem boarding his powerchair onto the aircraft, which he had managed to video on his phone once seated. As he was aware that this incident would probably cause the aircraft to be delayed. The situation was also made worse with an announcement from the captain informing the other passengers that the delay was due to the difficulty in loading his chair into the hold of the aircraft. Which understandably made him feel very self-conscious.

His video has now been shared with the airport's management team and it was suggested that procedures and language used when boarding power chairs onto aircraft may need to be reviewed.

Gordon also mentioned that seating requests for PRMs were not always being met as requested, such as window and rows without the lifting arm rests, which had caused him some issues in the past. **Martyn** said that this point has been raised at previous airline meetings, but he will endeavour to mention it again at the next meeting.

Customer Journey Innovation - Richard

Richard then advised that the airport's Continuous Improvement Group was looking at ways to further improve and innovate the customer journey. One option being considered was the WelcoME App by Neatebox, which allows passengers to build their own profile and better communicate their specific needs to the airport directly in advance of their flight. The App also provides staff with easy reference training information and the potential for passengers to order food and duty-free shopping that can then be brought directly to the Special Assistance lounge, if required.

Further information about the WelcoME App is attached.

PRM Security Trials - Richard

Richard informed the forum that an Aviation Security tender was currently being undertaken, which included a specific section on customer service and passengers with reduced mobility. So as to ensure that general awareness and appropriate disability awareness training are very much part of the new company's brief.

In addition, **Richard** also said that the airport was looking at a number of new initiatives, one of which included a specific PRM/family friendly lane within Security.

Further details about the security tender will be shared with the forum at the next meeting.

A.O.B

Chris offered the forum for anyone who would like a Dementia Friends session for themselves or their service users, to contact office@bdaa.org.uk Sessions, which will teach staff what dementia is, how to identify it, and how best to support people once you have identified it, last an hour and are free of charge.

In addition, two documents are attached with further information:

1. A jogger for customer facing people.
2. The process document which BDAA are giving to people with dementia and their carers.

Leigh-Anne said that the OCS trainers had undertaken Dementia Championship training, and it now is rolled out to new staff and refreshed for existing staff.

Bianca then highlighted 2 websites that may be of use to Bristol airport or other organisations represented at the forum. The first being a workshop to promote how to become an age friendly business. Further details can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/170296305835>

The second website being GROW - Good Recruitment for Older Workers - to encourage the employment of older people, which can be found at <https://ageing-better.org.uk/good-recruitment-older-workers-grow>

Andy reconfirmed that with all new employee training due to take place at the airport, forum members with their wealth of knowledge and experience on a variety of different types of disability and conditions, should be considered with the design and development of any new training courses and materials.

Dates for the next B.I.C. Forums will be shared once scheduled for next year.