

# **Bournemouth Airport Assistance Consultative Group13 February 2023**

 **Airport representatives:**

* D Beard (Senior Passenger Assistance Agent) (DB)
* E Lowe (Duty Terminal Manager) (EL)
* J Connell (Terminal Duty Officer) (JC)

**Attendees:**

* L Herbert & E Crowley (Colostomy UK) (LH) and (EC)
* P Tarrant (Bournemouth Blind Society) (PT)
* C Causley (Autism Unlimited) (CC)

**Apologies:**

* E Hotchkiss (RNID) (EH)
* L Kerr (People First) (LK)
* D Wearn (Autism Unlimited) (DW)

**Commenced at 13:30:**

 **DB** - introduced all guests to the Bournemouth Airport Team and thanked them for taking the time to meet.

DB also mentioned that the main purpose of the meeting was to
re-establish ties as (due to Covid) the last meeting was held on 06/11/2019.
There had also been a relatively high turnover of staff - so this ‘get together’ was an ideal opportunity to reconnect, and for the Bournemouth Airport team to reiterate their commitment to providing an outstanding service to any special assistance passenger.

**DB** - explained that he would be taking the guests on a tour (both landside and airside) to re-enact’ the typical route a special assistance passenger would follow when flying from Bournemouth Airport.
To ensure every special assistance passenger had the most positive, memorable, and stress-free experience, he encouraged guests to point out anything that they could see that may enhance the passenger experience at the airport .

**LB** – from Colostomy UK mentioned that having worked with many airports, she found that people living with stomas had concerns when going through airport security.

**EL** - acknowledged the above, and mentioned that unfortunately due to Covid, there had been a high turnover of staff - and for that specific reason, training in all departments at Bournemouth Airport was ongoing. EL enquired about training that Colostomy UK provided in the hope that this could be undertaken by both the special assistance and security team at Bournemouth Airport.

**CC** - from Autism Unlimited said that their organisation had not received any negative feedback from any passenger travelling from Bournemouth Airport. CC however reiterated how frightening the experience of travel *could* be for someone dealing with this challenging spectrum condition.

**DB** - acknowledged what CC said and mentioned how privileged Bournemouth Airport were to have such a patient and empathetic special assistance team.
To make anxious passengers, or any passengers requiring special assistance feel more at ease, DB mentioned that the airport provides free pre- flight familiarization tours which are available in the winter months, for any passenger wanting to make use of the service. The Airport are also in the process of putting together a 360-video tour which will enable any passenger the opportunity to have a ‘walk through’ of the airport. (Now in Place) Both of these options provide passengers with a wonderful opportunity to get a real life experience of their ‘day of travel’ before they fly, and in turn allow them to feel a little more at ease.

**PT** - from Bournemouth Blind Society said he had received a noticeable amount of positive feedback from visually impaired passengers travelling from Bournemouth Airport. PT reminded everyone how important it was to remember that a passenger’s eyes may be open …. but they may still not be able to see anything.
He also reiterated the importance of new and existing staff being trained.

**EL** – asked PT to send information on training that the Bournemouth Blind Society provide.

**LB** – mentioned that some people who have stomas don’t always need assistance. It’s a personal preference.

**DB** - explained how, as a qualified trauma councillor he has worked with members of the community who have both visible and hidden disabilities. He stressed how important it was to the entire Bournemouth Airport team that any passenger facing any type of challenge be treated with the utmost dignity and respect. They should feel at ease, be comfortable and most of all always feel safe.
He mentioned that even if a passenger arrives at the airport and requires special assistance but has none booked - the team would always go out of their way and do everything in their power to assist that passenger.

**Tour of Bournemouth Airport (landside and airside)**
 **DB** – highlighted the changes at the airport since 2019.

* New, very clear and visible Special Assistance signage in the main terminal building and in the departures and arrivals hall.
* A new, dedicated Special Assistance desk.
* Special Assistance telephones at 6 points around the airport (including one in the parking area)
Passengers simply lift the receiver and are automatically connected with a member of the special assistance team.
* The Special Assistance team now wear new high vis waistcoats with ‘Special Assistance’ printed on the back.
* Sunflower lanyards are available to any passenger requiring one.
* A dedicated ‘Quiet route’ from Security into the departure’s hall. This is clearly visible on leaving the security area.
* Clearly visible and demarcated ‘Special Assistance’ seating areas in the main terminal building, departures, and arrivals hall.

These areas also serve as quiet areas.

* **LB** – mentioned that perhaps the signage saying, ‘Passengers with Reduced Mobility’ could be changed as people with stomas do not have reduced mobility
**Action**: Noted. All signage is currently being changed and the wording ‘Passengers with Reduced Mobility’ will be changed to ‘Passengers requiring Special Assistance’.
* **CC & PT** – said that some signage displayed too much wording – especially for visually impaired and autistic passengers.
**Action**: Noted. Signage is currently being replaced and wording reduced where possible.
* **PT** - white writing on a pink background can be difficult to read for someone who is visually impaired. A yellow font on a black background is best.
**Action**: Noted. EL – mentioned that additional signage in yellow and black could be looked at.
Currently - all Special Assistance and demarcated areas display pink signage as well as pink seating. Special Assistance employees also wear pink high vis waistcoats. This is to ensure Special Assistance staff ‘stand out’ from other employees should a passenger requiring assistance, need help.
* **LB** - disabled toilets ideally need drop down shelf and lowered hooks on the back of the door. Sanitary bins would be hugely helpful in the men’s toilets for gentlemen with stomas.
**Action**: Noted. All the above will be investigated but in the immediate future, at least one sanitary bin would be placed in one of the male cubicles.
* **EW**- said that arrows on the floor could further help passengers guide themselves through the airport.
* **Action**: EL – with Covid and markings on the floor reminding passengers to keep 2 feet apart – this is something that could be investigated.

**DB** – once again thanked everyone for their time and their guidance.

When it comes time to travel - by having these meetings and striving to continually improve, Bournemouth Airport can make a significant difference in the life of any passenger in our community who may be facing a challenge of any sort.

Next meeting planned for November 2023.