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Bournemouth Airport Second Special Assistance Consultative Forum for 2024

**27 November 2024**

**Bournemouth Airport Representatives:**

* C H (Customer Service Director)
* E N (Duty Operations Manager)
* E W (Duty Operations Manager)
* D B (Special Assistance Supervisor)
* N S (Special Assistance Agent)
* C A (Special Assistance Agent)

**Attendees:**

* P B (Guide Dogs Association)
* L K (Guide Dogs Association)
* T B (Passenger)
* H B (Passenger)
* P C (Diverse Abilities)
* K T (Diverse Abilities)
* H S (Diabetes Support Group)
* N V (Diabetes Support Group)
* N C (Autism Unlimited)
* R M (Cranfield University)

**Apologies:**

* C W - Chairman (PINNT)
* P T (Blind Society)
* A W (Guide Dogs Association)
* A B (Passenger)

**Meeting commenced at 10h00**

**DB** - Welcomed all guests, especially those attending the forum for the first time. These forums are held twice a year, the aim being to strengthen ties between Bournemouth Airport and various charitable and community associations, discuss topics and share ideas and in the process, strive to ensure any passenger requiring any form of special assistance, arriving or departing from Bournemouth Airport, travels as comfortably, and with as little stress as possible.   
  
**DB** mentioned that it had been a very busy and productive summer with Special Assistance passenger numbers having increased dramatically. The Bournemouth Airport team had also successfully completed various training courses:

* 19 of the 22 Special Assistance Agents successfully completed Emergency First Aid at Work.
* After seeing an increase in hearing impaired passengers, 20 employees from 3 different departments in the airport successfully completed a ’signalong’ sign language course.
* 6 Special Assistance agents successfully completed an ‘Introduction to Neurodiversity’ course.
* 19 of the 22 Special Assistance Agents had successfully completed their airside driving course enabling them to make use of airside vehicles and equipment specifically designed to board fully confined passengers both comfortably and with dignity.
* 5 Special Assistance Agents recently hosted the Guide dog association.

**DB** introduced **CH**, Customer Service Director - Bournemouth airport.  
  
**CH** welcomed all guests and extended a special welcome to   
**RM** - Associate Professor of Airport Management and former Course Director at Cranfield University.  
**CH** also apologised that **CW** who was to be the external chairman for the meeting had been admitted to hospital at the last minute and was unable to attend the forum.

**CH** shared upgrade and development plans for Bournemouth Airport and highlighted the following:

* Jet2 starting flights (initially with 2 aircraft) from Bournemouth Airport in early February 2025.
* Bournemouth Airport had recently welcomed its one millionth passenger as the airport celebrated a bumper year and were looking forward to an even bigger growth in 2025.
* The exciting expansion plan meant larger buildings, state of the art security equipment, self-service check in kiosks and 7 new check in desks.
* Plans include extending the immigration and baggage reclaim areas of the Terminal and moving the cargo operation to the north side of the airport site.
* The airport has a new Ambulift vehicle and 3 avi-ramps.  
  Jet2 will be using their own electrically charged steps. All equipment positively contributing to the passenger experience at Bournemouth Airport.

**FEEDBACK ON POINTS RAISED AT THE FEBRUARY 2024 FORUM**

* Possibility of more signage on Parley Lane and around the airport.  
  **Action taken**: **CH** - Whilst signage on Parley Lane is the responsibility of the Highways Agency, additional signage had been placed along the road into the airport.
* A suggestion was made to paint the Special Assistance phone box in the disabled area of the car park in a very bright colour, as the current dark blue was difficult to see (especially for visually impaired passengers) **Action taken**: **DB** - The phone box has been painted bright pink.   
  This ties in with all the other Special Assistance signage at the airport and makes it much more visible.
* There was no designated walkway from Parley Lane along the road and into the airport.  
  **Action taken**: **CH** - Although there is a narrow path that passengers make use of, it is strongly discouraged as it can be dangerous to those passengers who arrive on foot.
* Suggestion to create more awareness by means of social media posts to highlight all the positive experiences Bournemouth Airport offers its passengers.

**Action taken**: **CH** - Regular content was posted daily across various social media platforms and this would be constantly reviewed.

* Possibility of another Special Assistance phone in the drop off area of the car park as some passengers in wheelchairs were dropped in taxi’s and were unable to get to the phone in the disabled area of the car park.  
  **Action taken**: **CH** - This has been looked at and there were plans in place to action this in expansion plans of the airport.
* Enquiry about parking times for passengers who have booked assistance - as the 30 minutes may not be enough to unload wheelchairs, luggage etc   
  **Action taken: CH** - the airport offers dedicated pick up and drop off spaces for Blue Badge holders in Premium Car Park 1 where time allowed is up to 4 hours for the current 30-minute rate of £5.

**QUESTIONS**  
  
**NC** – Is there a designated quiet area for special need passengers?  
**EN** – There is a quiet area near gate 1 where passengers can wait but there are also plans to look at a new and dedicated area.  
**DB** – There is also a ‘quiet route’ which by passes the duty free area. This is especially helpful for any passenger who has sensory challenges.

**PB** – Is there an area where guide dogs can spend before boarding their flight.  
**DB** - Due to the Bournemouth Airport’s flight profile being effectively short haul (max 4/5 hour flights) if we did need to facilitate, the owner and dog would re-locate landside and on completion would be “Fast Tracked” back through Security.  
There is also an area that passengers and guide dogs can be escorted to alongside the arrivals building (airside) for both departing and arriving passengers.

**RM** - Familiarisation tours, what is included.  
**DB** - A ‘walk through’ of the actual route a passenger would take on the day of travel. Passengers would be shown what would take place at check in, security and then at the boarding gates. These familiarisation tours are especially effective for passengers facing any Neurological challenge (Autism / anxiety etc) as it’s an opportunity to have a ‘trial run’ of their upcoming airport experience.  
  
**TB** - Worries about parts of their Electric Mobility Scooter going missing. The headrest often comes apart from the main part of the Electric Mobility Aid.  
**EN** – Suggested minimizing risk by placing the headrest in a large bag with a label reading ’EMA HEADREST’ which would allow baggage handlers to identify that this wasn’t ‘regular’ baggage.  
  
**LK** – Will it be possible to facilitate a large group of people on a familiarisation tour.   
**DB** – No problem at all. Suggestion to email a date and number of people wanting to attend so plans could be made to accommodate the visit. With large groups, it’s always advisable to split them.

**NC** – Possibility of an updated 360 ‘walk through’ video. Many passengers suffering from anxiety and autism found this video particularly useful.  
**CH** – Perhaps this was something **RM** could assist with.  
  
**HS** – Has challenges at security as she has diabetic sensors and cannot go through scanners. **HS** did however mention that her experience at Bournemouth Airport had been extremely smooth.  
**EN** explained how equipment could go through the scanners separately and then swabbed. If anything required checking, passengers could always she taken to a private room to uphold their dignity.

**SUGGESTIONS**:  
  
**PB** – An ‘audio system’ for passengers who are visually challenged which he’d experienced at some train stations.  
This system warned visually impaired people about objects Infront / to the side of them.  
**CH** – thanked him for his suggestion and agreed to investigate it.

**CH** – Asked if anyone wanted to share any thoughts / discuss any ideas which could then be addressed at the next forum.  
  
**POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED AT THE NEXT FORUM IN FEBRUARY 2025**

**TB** – Asked about the possibility of a shelf in one of the bathrooms. **HB** often required changing before a flight and not having an ‘adult changing shelf’ was a challenge.

**TB** – Asked about the possibility of having a paediatric wheelchair for her daughter.

**CH and DB** – thanked everyone for being at the forum and reiterated that Bournemouth Airport will always strive to make travel for Special Assistance passengers as comfortable and as stress free as possible.  
  
  
Next meeting planned for **February 2025**