

Customer Audit Report



In conjunction with Cornwall Airport Newquay and Disability Cornwall, a consumer audit took place on Saturday 18th March 2017.

The purpose of the audit was to invite a range of disability organisations to review the Airport's facilities with the key message: "Air travel is accessible for all users from Cornwall Airport Newquay."

Attendees had a range of disabilities including visual impairment, hearing loss, autism, learning disabilities, down syndrome and wheelchair users (including electric mobility aids).

A total of 44 people attended the Airport open day providing an invaluable platform to provide feedback from different user perspectives.

To ensure consistency in terms of consumer audit feedback, all attendees completed the standard questionnaire broken down in to ten different areas of the Airport experience included under Appendix A.

Executive Summary:

Overwhelming positive feedback on the efforts being made by Cornwall Airport Newquay and its staff in promoting how accessible air travel is for all users from Cornwall Airport Newquay.

"We just wanted to say what a fascinating few hours we had at the Airport. I know that the weather spoilt things a bit, but the whole process was so interesting and so well done by the Airport staff. Until very recently we have been frequent fliers and have always found Newquay a good Airport to fly from, but the additional information that we gathered, and the thought that must have gone into it, was incredible. It really was worthwhile and thanks to all of you who were involved."

Most common theme on area of improvement was Airport signage.

"Signage massively needs to be improved and with symbols/pictures particularly highlighted by the Deaf community who were unaware where to go and what to

remove passing through security but also useful for people with learning difficulty or disability.”

All feedback is included under Appendix A.

Next steps:

Further discussions will continue between Cornwall Airport Newquay and Disability Cornwall working through the feedback received and the action plan generated over the coming months based on this and feedback already received from the Alzheimer’s Society, who have also reviewed the Airport’s facilities in October 2016.

Appendix A: Feedback

1. Car Parking

Positives

- Fine overall, the ‘footsteps’ diagram on the floor is great but could be more noticeable.
- The help button near departures was useful.
- Parking is on the level with the entrance so no need to use lifts etc.
- There seemed to be plenty of disabled bays.
- Well signposted.

Improvement required

- There was no T sign for people with hearing loss to indicate whether a hearing loop was available at the car park barrier, so if the person was using hearing aids, they would not be able to use the help system.
- The ticket machine would have been tricky to use without a PA/Carer (could not have reached out for the ticket if travelling alone).
- I didn’t notice the assistance button on the entrance barrier so maybe it’s not noticeable enough?
- The parking was quite a distance from the departures lounge.
- Having a BSL interpreter present helped the whole process but what happens on the regular trip, would the same be provided?
- As I am deaf I had great difficulty when I collected a member of my family from ‘Arrivals’ once. The barrier failed to open and I couldn’t use the

intercom system. I had to get all the people behind me to reverse so I could get out and was then sent back to Departures to get another ticket to get out. The intercom should be labelled/set up to let people know that if they pressed an assistance button and don't speak, a member of staff will come out to assist.

- As a mum with 3 children, I need to be able to drop the kids off (including 1 wheelchair user) with luggage and then go and park the car.

2. Check-in

Positives (we didn't actually check in as planned, but these were observations of that area)

- A staff member noticed a lady was having difficulties so brought her a chair and checked she was OK.
- The area is clean and tidy.
- WiFi was available for children and young people to amuse themselves on tablets etc. This is very important for children with autism as it enables them to focus and distract them from things which might cause distress, such as noise.

Improvement required

- Noise, lighting and smells could prompt sensory overload for some children/adults with learning difficulties and/or autism.
- The information desk didn't appear to have a hearing induction loop?
- The accessible toilet was not well signed so it wasn't obvious where it was.
- There were no clear, big, bold instructions/symbols indicating what to do or where to go (for deaf people/learning disabilities).
- There was a clear barrier, therefore a risk of driving a wheelchair into it. A child height sign would be useful (there was a sign higher).
- There should be a low level check in area and at the information desk for wheelchair users.

3. Security

Positives

- It all went well from the perspective of a person with mobility impairment.

- I always set off the alarms but it was all explained to me which was great.
- Having assistance staff through security to explain what is happening is vital, for example we were able to explain that touching could cause problems for some people (autism).
- The staff seemed really friendly and approachable and were very informative, I felt like they really knew what they were talking about.
- The staff were very supportive.
- The staff were all really happy to take the time to explain the security procedures and restrictions.
- It's good to know the security procedures also apply to all of the staff, regardless of their position.
- Passing through security quickly is vital as my son needs his tablet to keep him occupied as he won't manage if deprived of it for long (he has a learning disability/autism). (*This parent expected her child to become so distressed at the removal of his tablet & headphones, particularly at the same time the metal detector was beeping, that it could lead to him wetting himself during this process. However, searching him in a private area may present a challenge also as he does not like to be touched.*)

Improvement required

- Better signage/warning information should be available to advise if you have to surrender any of your equipment/independent living aids.
- There were no clear signs saying what to do (for deaf and learning disability) so we didn't know what we had to remove/place in the trays.
- Better signage is needed for people to know what exactly needs to be removed, such as pictures of coats and phones with crosses through them – this is especially useful for deaf people. It's also helpful to have a sign indicating the impact of hearing aids/cochlear implants so people know what to do i.e. Remove hearing aids or ask can they bypass the metal detectors but be checked separately?
- My son wouldn't cope well out of his wheelchair and wouldn't cope being 'patted down'.
- Waiting around can be very difficult for a person with autism.
- Sensory overload could be a problem (autism), the only way to counteract this is to arrange a fast track through security.
- The noise from the alarm is quite distressing for some children, particularly with autism.
- For people who are deaf, the metal detector might cause confusion as they

could not hear the alarm and I couldn't see the lights until they were pointed out.

- More seating and tables are needed to wait and sort belongings out before and after passing through.
- It was a big rush to collect belongings before the next person came through which added pressure, a number of people felt this could be improved. (People particularly with mobility difficulties would need more time and support during this process).
- It is intimidating to have to go into another room to be searched because my chair/scooter sets off the alarms. I'd prefer to go alongside the walk through metal detector.
- Removing shoes/boots if mobility impaired is very difficult.
- A friend has been asked to get out of her mobility scooter before which caused her discomfort and distress.
- A deaf lady using a walking stick set the security alarm off, a staff member then started talking to her which caused confusion as she couldn't understand them – some airports apparently offer rubber walking sticks for people to use which don't set off the alarms, so their own walking stick goes through security with their other belongings and they get it back after security.

4. Departure lounge

Positives

- There was a good amount of space between the rows of chairs.
- The staff were friendly.
- There is a nice number of seats.
- The future option for people with dementia or autism to sit in the business lounge/quiet area was positive/welcomed.
- There were opportunities to ask for lanyard/wristband along the route.

Improvement required

- Food smells can be a serious problem for people with sensory issues (autism) so staff should be aware of this.
- The door leading to the autism friendly room should be further away from the café/food area to stop food smells coming in or add a porch area so there is a second door.

- Having a separate quiet lounge would be great (away from smells/noise).
- The announcements regarding alternative transport due to flight delays cannot be heard by deaf people – there needs to be a TV monitor next to the main screen for people with any additional detail such as this on it. Even better would be an interpreter/signer on the corner of the screen signing this extra information as some people who are deaf are also illiterate.
- This area is sensory overload for autism specifically, however lower level/softer lighting would be a suggestion to improve this area.
- The autism friendly waiting room should have plenty of plug sockets for tablets/ipads etc.
- No obvious fire alarm system for deaf people – this should be one that flashes in the event a fire alarm goes off.
- Too bright.
- Too echoey.
- Too drafty.
- No TV – would be a good distraction when waiting.
- No signs or symbols to explain anything (deaf/learning disability).
- Signage could be improved e.g. to the toilets.
- Some participants were hesitant to ask for assistance - preferred staff to realise assistance was needed.
- When the Airport put a quiet/sensory room in, it would be great if it had books/fidget type stuff for children, sensory board on the wall maybe? The bead type tables you see in GP surgeries. Also, to be aware if a family are travelling together then the space should be available for them all to stay together with other children too (a former suggestion of converting a first aid room would not be sufficient for this quiet room).

5. Boarding the aircraft

Positives (we didn't board an aircraft but this is feedback from that area & Avi Ramp)

- The Avi ramp seemed ideal for wheelchair/scooter users. It was great to be able to use it.
- There was a good grip on the ramp.
- The distances were manageable, although there were plenty of options if support was needed – wheelchairs, coach etc.
- Assistance can be available at both ends of travel if pre-arranged.

Improvement required

- Children with autism may be frightened when boarding a plane and it's important for them to keep their dignity so it should be discussed which is best for them, whether to board first or last, with assistance from trained staff who have autism awareness.
- The noise when boarding could be a problem for some people.
- At the point of leaving the departure lounge to go out to the plane this can create a massive sensory overload for a person with autism such as with the weather/wind/rain, the noise from the aircraft, going from indoors to outdoors etc. It is very important then that:
 1. Notice/signage is provided to make people aware of this.
 2. That staff are trained in the event this may happen to provide support.
 3. The person is able to board quickly with no unnecessary delays.

6. Toilets (This feedback covers the toilets both in the check in area and in the Departure Lounge)

Positives

- In the departure lounge the accessible toilet is overall pretty accessible!

Improvement required

- The toilet door has outdated signage and not at the correct height for wheelchair users.
- The sink is too far from the toilet to allow the one single transfer. This is recommended for hygiene and potential infection control.
- The disabled toilet is small for the usual accessible toilet size. A wheelchair user would struggle to park alongside the toilet to transfer and the bin is in the wrong place obstructing available room.
- In the departure lounge you could have a wall mounted radiator or heater, and the hand dryer moved alongside the paper towel dispenser, and a different/slimmer type of bin.
- The room is very difficult to turn around in and you have to reverse out.
- Having a horizontal blue bar as well as a vertical metal one for the outside of the toilet door would be helpful. If this door closed more slowly this would also be helpful.
- The blue handles on either side of the toilet should be of equal height because they are not at present and make transfer back to your wheelchair

very difficult.

- Deaf people need a flashing fire alarm – including in the toilets.
- A Changing Place is needed for some people or else they will be unable to use the toilet. If a member of your family needs a hoist to safely use the toilet (or a bench to be changed on) it means the entire family will have to fly from elsewhere. Disabled people often need to limit their travel time so being able to fly locally is more convenient. The nearest airport with a Changing Place is in Bristol, meaning many people can't fly at all as it's too far to travel!
- I am unable to change my child in the airport toilets as I require a hoist, otherwise it is dangerous for me to lift them out of and back into their chair without injuring myself or risking dropping her. I certainly wouldn't lie her on a dirty toilet floor to change her either.

A suggestion here in the short term until the airport is able to improve the toilets, would be to provide a lock on the outside door, which would at least give people more room once inside the toilet area if they were able to get out of their chair.

- The furniture within (2 bins especially) made turning and transferring difficult.

7. Arrivals

General comments

- Inadequate seating.

8. Signage

General comments

- Signage can always be improved but please take advice first so whatever you do is following expert recommendations – the bigger and clearer the better and with use of symbols/pictures.
- I appreciate you should book your required assistance beforehand but if not, could there be a sign in departures to tell you to ask staff if you may need assistance?
- A visual timetable would be great for people who have a learning disability/autism. A sign on the wall in each area could show you what's coming next (with pictures alongside). Also,
 1. Provide an autism friendly guide for people which can be collected from the information desk in departures
 2. Or is downloadable from the Airport website

3. Make a video people can watch of the process of going through the airport prior to arrival – available from the website.
- A visual handout (which can be collected from the information desk) would be useful for people to keep with them to take them from the car park right through to boarding the plane.

9. Other

General comments

- The gentleman who is blind found the airport assistance staff great. The staff member asked him how he would like to be assisted very respectfully and he said he wouldn't have got through without it.
- Clarity is needed whether airport assistance needs to be pre-booked.
- I haven't looked on your website but it's very important the accessible info is easy to find and not too text heavy – the simpler the better.
- Make sure all staff are trained in disability awareness and with specific conditions. Often staff such as café staff and cleaners aren't included in the training and its important all staff, irrespective of their role are suitably trained.
- Awareness training should be regular and all new staff should receive it as part of their induction.
- With children with autism it's often helpful to visit somewhere in advance so there are no surprises when you make the real trip. Is it possible this can be arranged if required?
- Share information about accessibility and improvements made and when you improve access, put a link out on Facebook to your access page to highlight it and get people visiting it.
- Any new improvements should be announced on your Facebook page so it can be shared amongst disability communities. It's great that the Airport have some really great stuff in place to support disabled people but how are we supposed to know about it?
- Can airport assistance be booked by text? Not everyone has the internet or can use the telephone – no good for deaf people.
- Is it possible to arrive earlier so the staff can get you through first? I'm very aware I may be holding people up, especially as I have a hidden disability.
- Are your staff trained in autism awareness – would they recognise an autism awareness wristband for example? I appreciate not everyone would like this as it can be perceived as drawing attention to one's impairment but for us, it's great as it makes life easier. Staff realise we need fast

tracking and it saves us explaining ourselves to several different staff at different times throughout the airport and the possible behavioural reactions of our children from airport sensory overload.

- Be aware wristbands may not be worn by the disabled person themselves, due to their condition (autism) but the parent/family member may wear it or even attach to a buggy.

10. Feedback from people who were unable to attend but wanted their feedback noted:

- Disabled parking in the East Car Park is near the hire car pick up. It looks a little scary for loading/unloading the car due to the passing cars.
- It's quite hard to reach the car park ticket dispensing machine if using hand controls, and not able to get out the car and you are on your own.
- There is now a ramp onto the plane, used at the rear door, and seems to be used much more routinely. I guess wheelchair and restricted mobility passengers would be seated near the back, but I think the loo is at the front. Not sure if it is accessible...but do they carry an inflight transit chair in case for non-walkers? If they do it's a bit of an embarrassing push to go up to the toilet.
- I am not sure how they care for a passengers own wheelchairs from gate to landing.
- As a business we see several squashed chairs each month... I think this happens on the plane rather than on conveyor belts as originally suspected, but it might be worth offering a chat to the baggage handlers (happily from me on another date) so that they are aware of what happens...and the massive impact of damaging a wheelchair or losing a bit.
- Boarding the Skybus aircraft for people with impaired mobility: the airline tells us that CAA regulations for our small planes (no cabin crew) require passengers to be able to board, and therefore alight or evacuate in an emergency, without assistance. This precludes use of ground equipment such as a ramp or steps with handrails, or a scissor lift. I've no reason to believe that's not the case. However, provision of ground equipment is the

responsibility of the airport and it would be helpful to get the independent view of Newquay Airport on assisted boarding.

- Skybus provide a stretcher plane service for people who cannot board the planes, and there is a protocol (drawn up by Skybus) concerning transfer, to ensure a smooth handover, and privacy and dignity for the individual. Most transfers are arranged via Lands End Airport but weather conditions may sometimes mean transfers happen via Newquay Airport. It would be useful to know that suitable arrangements are in place i.e. access by ambulance to the aircraft, and timely transfers which take place away from public view.
- A small number of passengers will be on a 'medical' trip, although most medical flights are booked via Lands End. Some of these passengers may be quite poorly, and it would be good to know what facilities are available to them i.e. a sick bay or quiet room, and assistance if required. If flights are delayed or cancelled, would airport staff know who to contact in the case of a passenger who may require assistance overnight? (The answer is the Patient Transport Service at Treliske, but sometime patients don't know this either.)
- Parent of a child who is a full time wheelchair user, has epilepsy and fed via a gastronomy tube:

'I have given the Newquay Airport session some thought and as there is currently no Changing Place we cannot attend. We have never flown from Newquay Airport due to the difficulties we would face and even attending a session on trying to tell the airport those difficulties is impossible as well.

Please can it be noted that we couldn't even attend the session because they don't have a Changing Place and there isn't even one in Newquay itself or even anywhere near there. I definitely want our absence to be noted and the reason.'

Please note: the nearest airport with a changing place facility is Bristol.

- Another member has severe epilepsy and a hearing impairment:
'Due to health problems I can't attend and I don't want to have seizures that far away from home. The lights feel flickery to me & the crowds upset my health also.'
- Another member: 'It's better to be loaded onto the plane first and off last. I need loads of leg room and to board as far as possible in my own chair. It's vital to provide assistance training to ensure those lifting and handling are capable and confident.'

- Staff also need to understand that a fulltime wheelchair user is not going to be able to get out of their chair. Assistance staff should understand that skin integrity and pressure are vital.



Photo: The Audit Team pictured at the Airport.