

INAUGURAL PRM & DISABILITY FORUM MEETING

Wednesday 4 September 2019
at 18:00 Porthkerry Room

Present: Deb Bowen Rees (CEO CWL), Angela Summers (CWL Terminal Operations Manager), Ian Dolan (CWL Senior Duty Manager), Alan Winning-Wyatt (Vale Fibrofighters), Natalie Jones (Respond), Matthew Burnett (Ategi), Lynda Montgomery, Damian Bridgeman, Tafsila Khan, Lizzie Johnson & Gail Evans (Access Wales), Sash Robbins (Cardiff Social Services), Natalie Gardner (Disability Advice Project), Dr Vicky Richards (Cardiff Metropolitan Uni), Alan Thomas (Ataxia & Me Charity), Nerys & Tim Jefferson, Richard Haselgrove, Dr Andrew Woodhead, Bernard Wright,

Apologies: Milton Rae – Action on Hearing Loss
Susan Kingman – Hijinx
Ffion Miles

Welcome & Introduction

Angela Summers (Terminal Operations Manager) and Deb Barber (CEO) thanked all for attending, especially given the evening's bad weather. The objectives of the evening were explained.

Overview of Cardiff Airport & Business Update

Deb Bowen Rees gave a full insight of Cardiff Airport outlining our structure and our values, vision and purpose. This was followed by a business update, our passenger figures, continuous growth this year of 7% on last year and the Airport's masterplan.

PRM Service

Cardiff Airport is obligated to offer assistance to our Passengers with restricted mobility (PRM). Our aim is to provide a positive experience for our PRM passengers with ease and comfort as they use Cardiff Airport. We hope that by establishing a PRM Forum that we will understand the needs of our passengers, we have already set up a customer satisfaction survey that we will use to gain a form of feedback and to identify training needs consistently. We offer familiarisation visits – these tend to run during the quieter winter months.

Deb Bowen Rees explained that accessibility through the Airport is bad and that by listening to and using the knowledge from the forum that the Airport would identify and prioritise DDA compliance throughout the passenger experience.

During May, June, September and October demand for assistance is high. The PRM service continues to grow. During September 2019 we forecast that in excess of 4,000 passengers will use the service at Cardiff Airport.

The Airport employs a core Team of 4x Team Leaders and 10x operatives to provide the PRM service. They cover the operation 24 / 7, 365 days of the year. They are a dedicated and passionate team and proud of their roles which enables them to build a rapport with returning passengers who once they have used the service return to do so when they next travel. The team receive excellent feedback, including social media tweets etc.

Angela Summers advised the forum that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) are the governing body and that 31 Airports handled 3.7 Million passengers requiring assistance between April 2018 – March 2019. There has been a 49 % increase in passengers seeking assistance since 2014. The CAA regulate and monitor Airports performance and monitor PRM Operations in line with EC1107 2006 regulations which includes waiting times & user satisfaction . Cardiff Airport additionally has its own feedback survey for PRM passengers. One of our aims is to establish effective communication with groups.

Cardiff Airport was ranked good in the CAA Airport Accessibility report 2018/19 .Cardiff Airports aim is to be rated as Very Good in 2019/2020.

Aims of the Forum

Some aims of the forum where outlined as below:

- Review performance against the quality standards
- Review performance monitoring systems
- Advice on accessibility of planned changes to infrastructure – e.g. We are undertaking toilet refurbishment it would be good to take guidance from the forum.
- Advice on accessibility facilities, equipment and services
- Training programmes – e.g. We have previously undertaken hidden disability training with Hijinx theatre company in providing practical and authentic training
- Practical inspections of Airport Services
- Setting best practices through the forum by listening to members experiences

Forum Structure

Deb Bowen Rees suggested some core structure to the forum by:

1. Appointing an Independent Chairperson to work closely with the Airport Team and share experiences. An independent neutral voice to lead and steer future meetings
2. Appointment of a Vice Chairperson – to support and assist the chairperson in carrying out their responsibilities.

3. Appointment of a secretary to take minutes and disseminate, coordinating future meetings
4. The forum should meet every quarter to begin with then when established move to biannual meetings.
5. Future agenda items

People who are interested in any of the above positions were requested to provide a short biography of their organisation and experience upon which a vote would be conducted to appoint these positions.

Deb Bowen Rees explained that it was vital to share experiences and that it is a new forum with little experience.

Open Discussion

Forum attendees spoke with great detail in already highlighting some issues that could be improved upon, including the door to the changing places facility which is in the wrong location and that backgrounds painted white were not good for visually impaired customers. Deb Bowen Rees explained that it is important for Cardiff Airport to understand such issues and to highlight what is priority and really important.

Dr Andrew Woodward shared his experience when arriving into another UK airport from Alicante and a negative experience when making his way through passport control. Dr Woodward is an ambassador for the Alzheimer's society.

Lizzie Johnston and colleague from Access Wales explained that they have many awareness cards for people with hidden disabilities including visually impaired, hearing, mobility and that they are cascading training to companies free of charge. The training is hands on and the vision is to make Wales the first disabled friendly country.

Angela Summers mentioned that she has been looking at introducing the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme which has been well received at other UK Airports and is becoming a national scheme with some major retailers adopting the initiative too for their Customers. Deb Bowen-Rees concurred and shared her niece's own personal experience when travelling recently. It may be best to identify two or three schemes so the team can keep up with initiatives and the training.

Question from the forum asked how far the training does go. Angela Summers replied that it will go to all customer facing staff employed in the touchpoint areas of the Airport. Deb Bowen Rees also advised that it will go to third parties as well - including Swissport who play an important role as ground handlers at Cardiff Airport. A member of the forum mentioned his negative experience when dealing with Swissport around the hidden disability of deafness for his girlfriend.

A comment from the forum expressed their own experience of using Cardiff Airport and that the PRM staff talk to you individually which is good. Deb Bowen Rees explained that a real challenge for us is to make the building work. It is difficult for people with mobility or hidden disability issues. We want to show the forum the building so we can make it work better.

Dr Woodward mentioned that giving people choice is key. Lizzie Johnston said that simplicity is something that is good – make life simpler, her own personal experience is that when you have a disability you are vulnerable.

Angela Summers conveyed thanks to all and that it has been really good to hear from so many this evening. Dr Woodward suggested that the tenure of chairperson be restricted to a year in the event of illness or deterioration as time goes by.

Damian Bridgeman asked if the Chairperson position fed into the Executive Board of Cardiff Airport. Deb Bowen Rees replied that it was something that could be looked into and a really fantastic idea. There is a Board meeting scheduled in the next two weeks and she will take this up with them.

Member of the forum advised that she would not be able to make the next meeting but would like to feedback her experience when flying both ways with her wheelchair with Flybe. The wheelchair was dismantled despite sending the airline details in advance the measurements and dimensions.

Damian Bridgeman additionally commented that had the wheelchair been damaged, Cardiff Airport would be liable and suggested organising training amongst the teams with expertise provided by champions, in all customer facing roles, including cabin crew. Deb Bowen Rees explained that a lot of our customer facing team are not based at Cardiff - e.g. the airline Vueling are based in Barcelona. We can though try and press but cannot put pressure on them to do so. The Forum will link into the CAA baseline that should be standard – the CAA are not bashful at naming and shaming.

Next Meeting

The Forum were reminded those who were interested in the roles previously discussed, that they should send an expression of interest to Angela Summers. All other attendees were also advised that they should send a short biography of their experience and organisation if applicable, which will allow the Forum to identify what representation we have and expertise.

The next meeting was agreed for **Wednesday the 4th December at 1800**, Porthkerry Room, Cardiff Airport.