

London Southend Airport (LSA)

Meeting Notes from PRM Committee Meeting

29 March 2023 at 9am

Invited

LSA		
Security	Siobhan Walters	Attended
Community	Jo Marchetti	Attended
Surface Access	Joe Carpenter	Attended
Admin	Lin Hull	Attended
PRM representatives		
Blind/Impaired sight	Jill Allen-King OBE	Apologies
Hearing Loss	Emma Hotchkiss	
Age Concern	Lin Boulter	
Dementia	Jessica St John - DAA	
Dementia (early onset)	Charlotte Curran – Peaceful Place	Apologies
Autism/ADHD (children)	Mikaela Clements – Little Heroes ASD Support	Attended
Autism (adult)	Dawn Avery – parent/author Keith Avery - parent Aston Avery – adult with autism	Attended Attended Attended
Anxiety	Anxiety Society	
Mental Health	Catherine Weir – SECE Mind	Apologies
Guide Dogs	Jo Thorn – puppy training	Apologies
Essex Therapy Dogs	Tina Jullings	Attended
Sunflower – Hidden Disabilities	Ruth Rabet	Attended
Passenger – wheelchair user	Zec Richardson Donna Richardson	Attended Attended
Whizz-Kidz – young wheelchair users	Andrew Granger	
Airport Consultative Committee	Les Sawyer	Attended

Jo Marchetti welcomed everyone to the meeting, ensuring all parties were formally introduced and explained the purpose of the committee.

All attendees were met at the Ticket Desk and shown the process provided for PRM passengers that have pre-booked assistance. Joe Carpenter explained how to book assistance to/from surface access areas such as the rail station and car parks.

Siobhan explained how LSA colleagues are trained to recognise both the LSA blue band scheme and the sunflower logo, and how various types of visual and hidden disability passengers are assisted throughout their journey through the airport.

Many of the airport colleagues have personal experience of living with hidden disabilities or looking after relatives with hidden disabilities which has helped create a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the challenges passengers may face when travelling.

Jo Marchetti informed the committee that LSA had recently taken two families with autistic children on familiarisation tours and explained how LSA colleagues can assist anxious passengers. Tina from

Essex Therapy Dogs added that therapy dogs are available for most flights and are available for familiarisation tours if requested. It was agreed that going through security with an autistic passenger can be overwhelming for the parents/carers and Siobhan explained that there is a process available to blue band/sunflower wearers to be searched privately away from the busy security lanes.

All PRM committee members were taken on a tour of the passenger terminal, through security and into the departures area. At security, Siobhan explained the CiTX lane where electronics and liquids can be left in bags whilst screening.

Refreshments were provided in the departures area. PRM members shared their experiences at other airports, and all agreed that Southend had a very spacious and calm environment. Aston and his family had previously travelled through Southend Airport and stated that they had had a very good experience and recommended as a great airport to travel through if you have autism and/or any other disability. Points highlighted:

- The LSA Skylife lounge provides a calm quiet space. This will re-open when passenger numbers increase. Until then there is plenty of space in the terminal for PRM passengers to find a quiet place to relax. A quiet room will also be re-introduced when passenger numbers increase.
- Ruth suggested (and members agreed) that it would be helpful for passengers using colostomy bags to have a shelf fitted in the disabled toilets so they have somewhere safe and clean to put their new bags when changing.
- Sanitary bins should also be made available in the disabled and men's toilets for the disposal of used colostomy bags. Members said pedal bins are not suitable for some PRM passengers. LSA bins have both pedal and lift top options.
- It would be helpful to have adult changing facilities for arriving passengers. A hoist would be great, but a quick fix could be a clean plastic mattress that could be put down on the floor to provide a safe, clean and comfortable changing area. Other option could be a cushioned folding table. All members agreed the shower room facility in the landside area (after arrivals) was an ideal place as the room was very spacious.
- It was noted on inspection of the disabled toilets that the emergency cords had been tied up. Members agreed this was common practice in many places. Action for LSA to ensure cleaners are reminded to check the emergency cords to ensure they are freely hanging at all times.
- LSA to ensure that tannoy announcements are clear and easy to understand.
- Zec advised that there was an App called Snowball where passengers could share their experiences (good and bad) of airport PRM services.
- Aston said it would be good to have a video walk through of the airport so that passengers can familiarise themselves with the airport before arriving. Jo Marchetti said there was a video on the website, but it was not specifically aimed at PRM passengers. LSA intend to make a separate video for PRM passengers soon. Zec offered to be involved in the video and give a perspective from a wheelchair user. Members discussed how helpful it would be to have a 'home to holiday' video showing the whole journey. Mikaela added that some autistic children had recently done a video using VR. All agreed the video should be done when the airport was busy to give a true experience.
- Members discussed challenges around their onward journeys once they boarded the aircraft. e.g., damage to wheelchairs, being diverted/delayed at other airports, without access to personal wheelchairs. Zec was nervous about flying for fear of having his personal

fitted wheelchair damaged. Ruth stated that there were now many airlines and airports joined up on the sunflower scheme. Members discussed how service levels vary between airlines and countries. Some medications are banned in some countries, so passengers need to plan well before travelling.

- Siobhan confirmed that hearing loops were available around the airport.
- Members agreed that the LSA website, special assistance' page was very good.

Tour of the terminal facilities continued through customs and the arrivals hall.

Meeting ended at 11:00am.