

Independent Gatwick Accessibility Panel (IGAP)

Meeting 19th December 2019

Epsom Room, Hilton Gatwick

Attendees:

IGAP members:

Ann Frye (chair)
Ann Bates
Ross Hovey
Sue Sharp
Kamran Mallick
Geraldine Lundy
Neil Betteridge
Daniel Cadey
Sophia Warner
Charlotte McMillan

Gatwick and third parties:

Nikki Barton (GAL)
David Swain (GAL)
Jack Bigglestone-Silk (GAL)
Andrew Pule (GAL)
Ruth Rabét (Wilson James)
Nick Gallé (Wilson James)
Celine McGuigan (easyJet)
Jo Taylor-Holland (British Airways)
Jamie Hobbs (British Airways)
Samantha Williams (Gatwick
Passenger Advisory Group)

Session 1 – IGAP only

1. The IGAP members met for a group introduction and to discuss their remit.

Session 2 – IGAP and GAL

2. Members of the Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) team welcomed the group and explained the origin, purpose and vision of the group from their perspective. Key points were:
 - Gatwick's aim to be the UK's most accessible airport.
 - IGAP was created to support this aim.
 - Improving Accessibility is the right thing to do
 - Gatwick supports this aim at an executive level.
3. It was noted that IGAP would support Gatwick's Accessibility aims at a strategic level, but that the knowledge and insight of the group would need to be underpinned by expertise on the ground through the PAG PRM group. It was stressed that there needed to be grass roots personal and professional experience of disability in that

group to ensure that airport infrastructure and services were meeting legal and best practice standards.

4. Gatwick's Passenger Advisory Group (PAG) was mentioned, with specific reference to the PRM sub-group, and that the different forums are intended to complement one another. It was suggested that the PAG chair be invited to attend the open sessions of IGAP meetings on an ongoing basis, to remain informed and avoid duplication between groups.
5. It was noted that the Gatwick presentation of the different forums had an incorrect description for the IGAP members.

Action: GAL to ensure that the presentation explaining the different forums has the correct description for IGAP, that the wording would reflect the individuals' expertise rather than "representing disability groups"

6. The group discussed Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and Gatwick's measures around current performance. The meaning of NPS and advocacy was explained as well as the extent of GAL's current surveying of passenger experience.
7. There was a discussion about whether any airport was currently perceived as the UK's best for accessibility – GAL said that they are aiming for a CAA "Very Good" score and that this score is currently achieved by some smaller UK airports. The group also discussed collaboration across the industry and working with other airports to raise standards more widely and encourage travel on a wider scale. It was noted that as GAL is now part of the Vinci group of airports there was scope for benchmarking worldwide with other Vinci airports as well as with other airports in Europe.
8. IGAP members stressed the importance of seeing the journey from the passenger perspective as a series of links in a chain which included the journey from home to the airport (by whatever means) as well as the time spent at the airport and on board the aircraft. For example, if there were problems with the train service, that should not be left just to Network Rail or the train companies. GAL should ensure that arriving and departing passengers were informed and supported in any way necessary.
9. There was a discussion about what success would look like from GAL's point of view. The traditional perception that more PRMs flying from Gatwick could be equated with success was challenged. Instead it was suggested that actually fewer requests for assistance could mean that more PRMs felt able to travel through the airport without assistance. Of course, there would need to be careful analysis of and confidence in the reasons for this trend.
10. It was noted that a number of IGAP members with disabilities travelled regularly without seeking assistance either at all or until the point of boarding. The choice to be independent was important.
11. In other words, relying on booked PRM numbers alone was not indicative of success. It was suggested that a request for assistance to access the airport and its facilities was, in a way, a failure, as the airport environment had not solved the issues by intuitive and inclusive design which would enable independence.

12. GAL agreed that the airport environment should not be the disabling factor and that a focus on enabling independent travel formed part of the aim as the airport's growth plans develop.
13. There was further discussion around barriers to travel, motivation and awareness, as well as the increase in non-disabled passengers using the Special Assistance service as a meet and assist type service to overcome other issues such as a language barrier and this was raised as a point for future discussion.

Session 3 – IGAP, GAL, Wilson James (WJ) and airline representatives

14. It was noted that the current performance measurement for success set by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) was based on standards set by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) . It was agreed that qualitative data was also essential to understand more about individual experiences.
15. This led on to discussion on how success might be further measured by contacting individuals who were not booking assistance and seeking out those who were choosing not to travel via Gatwick, or indeed were choosing not to travel by air.
16. It was suggested that a survey be drawn up by the group seeking information on these issues which could then be distributed through the various networks to which IGAP members had access.
17. The group discussed ways in which passengers would feed back after a bad experience, and if this is different across different age groups, as well as the use of social media as a complaints tool. Later it was mentioned that given the fragmented ownership of the journey (third parties, airlines, handling agents etc.), complaints could often lead to “finger pointing” and the passing of blame between companies. This highlighted the importance of demarcation of ownership of parts of the journey, to encourage passenger feedback; although a shared high standard by all parties would eliminate the issue of ownership. It was also noted that a single point of contact through which all complaints were channelled would be easier for the passenger.
18. The group discussed the Hidden Disability lanyard and the importance of ensuring staff are receptive to needs even when a passenger has opted not to wear a lanyard. Passengers with autism were indicated as a group who would not be captured in PRM figures and an example of data outside of the Special Assistance bookings. It was also suggested that anecdotally, Gatwick is perceived as the preferred airport for Passengers on the autistic spectrum due to the airport's progress in this area.
19. The group discussed airport stakeholders and any commitments that are required to operate on site; the importance of collaboration; and a single point of contact was stressed. This was also raised later when it was asked if Gatwick seeks to work with Disability Friendly suppliers and third parties.
20. The role of technology was discussed, including apps and the importance of real time data.
21. It was noted that no single source of accessibility data is used and that there would be value in pulling all data streams together into a single source.

22. The example of airport disruption was also raised, and how Gatwick might best support passengers with access needs in times of disruption to ensure passengers get the help they need and are not disadvantaged. easyJet outlined some recent steps they have taken to ensure that PRMs are given priority for rebooking flights, finding accommodation etc.
23. The group discussed walking distances, whether these comply with an industry standard, and whether time or distance is the better measure. It was also noted that making information on distances and other key factors about an airport more widely available, for example, through airlines and wider travel industry websites, would be helpful to many people unfamiliar with the size or complexity of the airport.

Session 4 – IGAP only

24. The group continued the prior discussion on walking distances; that if these could be standardised across the travel industry it would benefit passengers. It was noted that this data may be key in passengers deciding if they want to book assistance or not, so accuracy is vital.
25. The group then reflected on the points raised in the prior session, and how to move forward. It was established that it was important to identify the measure for “UK’s most accessible airport” and concluded that reducing PRM bookings for assistance in the airport itself would be an indicator of success.
26. This led to discussion that there was too much focus on booked PRMs specifically and that the conversation needed to be broader to take in to account disabled people as customers more widely, such as those not using assistance or those coming to the airport to meet people.
27. The group discussed measures of success in more detail; namely that the CAA focus on ECAC timings was not enough in itself to indicate quality of service. It was also noted that PRM growth may not be linked to the airport and could be a result of wider societal influences. It was suggested that results and measures needed to be quality driven rather than based on numbers.
28. The group noted that those passengers who don’t book assistance aren’t being captured in surveys, and that these survey figures could be skewed by passengers booking the service who did not require it for an accessibility need. This led to discussion of solutions, including universal accessible design allowing passengers to travel without needing a meet and assist service.
29. The group discussed the pre-notification process, including the IATA codes, and that these do not indicate a detailed level of a passenger’s assistance needs and do not encourage independence. It was said that some airlines do not proactively ask about assistance when taking bookings by phone, leaving the passenger to request help.
30. The process for passengers travelling with their own electric mobility aids (EMA) was discussed, and that a single “passport” format would enhance the journey to enable passengers to convey the specifics of their EMA with ease.
31. The group then discussed how they might find out the views of those people who are not flying, so that barriers to travel might be better understood. This would likely be wider than Gatwick-specific and could help the wider industry understand

concerns of the public. It was identified that members of the group could distribute a survey through their respective networks.

Action: Survey content to be established to identify the barriers to travel for those who do not currently use air travel.

32. It was suggested that the group members might benefit from tours of the Gatwick campus in order to better familiarise with layout, services and facilities.

Action: GAL to arrange tours for IGAP members in 2020, with the aim of the first tour coinciding with the next meeting.

33. Final points discussed included the mechanism for tracking outputs of the group, ways of feeding back to Gatwick, a refresh of the Gatwick structure and the potential to meet quarterly, at least initially, in order to build momentum for the group.

Action: GAL to share the structure of their team and further info on those third parties present, i.e. Wilson James and airlines.

Action: Poll to group members to identify next meeting date (and possibly subsequent dates for 2020).