

## Newcastle International Airport Assistance Forum March 2023

On 15/03/23 Newcastle International Airport hosted the first of their bi-annual disability forums, allowing disability representatives of the North East to see the Airports' accessibility initiatives as well as provide feedback.

### Attendees:

- Jennie Berry - Disability Advocate & Social Media Influencer
- Alison Blackburn - Chair of Newcastle Disability Forum (NDF)
- Janice Croft - Administrator at NDF
- Tara Hurst – Customer Operations Officer, Newcastle International Airport
- Donnie Baxter – Training Compliance Officer, Newcastle International Airport
- Aaron Buckingham – Passenger Services Duty Manager, Newcastle International Airport
- Solomon Rose – Marketing Assistant, Newcastle International Airport

After a brief introduction, the members of the forum were taken on a 'passenger journey walk around' of the Airport, showing the accessibility features for passengers with disabilities. This included:

- The accessible toilet facilities
- The passenger sensory area
- The dedicated passenger service gate
- The Ambilift

Feedback from the disability representatives was recorded, to discuss and inform future improvements.

After the passenger journey walk through, the team at Newcastle International Airport presented insights into the Airport's performance against CAA assistance regulations and statistics, current processes, vehicles and equipment, as well as future apparatus that the airport is looking to introduce.

Work completed to support passengers with hidden disabilities was also discussed, before a feedback session commenced.

Although the visitors were impressed with the facilities and services provided currently for disabled passengers, the highlighted points for improvement collected via the forum were:

- Transfer options for accessible toilets – for passengers whose disability inhibits a particular side of their body (possibly sign on door to indicate which side of the toilet is accessible)
- Paddle levers on all accessible toilets

- Braille on the door of accessible toilets – however a digital feature may be more efficient
- Large utensils in food & drink outlets
- Mugs offered as replacements to cups in food & drink outlets
- Pull cords to be longer in accessible toilets – with regular checks
- Mirror above the sink in accessible toilets
- Hand rails on pier corridor and possible seating at intervals
- A smoother transition on flooring at the doors leading to the Ambilift on the platform at the assistance gate
- A bigger door to improve access leading to the Ambilift platform at the assistance gate
- Information on what to expect and how to avoid potential issues when travelling with an electric wheelchair to be made available to passengers

The team at Newcastle International Airport would like to extend gratitude to the participants of this forum and the insights they have shared to help improve accessibility at the Airport.