

Ms Paula Street
Assistant Secretary
Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee (GATCOM)
East Wing, First Floor, County Hall
Chichester
West Sussex PO19 1RQ

29 March 2011

Dear Paula

Passengers with Reduced Mobility

I refer to our conversation regarding London Luton Airport Consultative Committee's 25 February letter to the AUC which you shared with the travel industry contingent on GATCOM.

The travel industry recognizes that pre-notification, or rather lack of, is an issue. To this end, ABTA and the CAA have been leading an industry group involving the major stakeholders – airlines (scheduled, no frills, charter), operators, agents, airports, PRM service providers, disabled bodies, DfT, EHRC, etc. We are working on best practice guidance for all concerned.

With regard to the LLACC suggestion that a tick box be used to require the booking either did or did not require PRM assistance. We acknowledge that not all airline, operator and agent websites are as good as they might be on PRMs but are working to improve this and encourage more prominent and more frequent mention of assistance from the time of booking up to 48 hours before departure (as required under the PRM Regulation 1107).

As ABTA, we recommend to our travel agent and tour operator members that assistance is automatically offered at the time of booking and provide various tools (guidance notes, booking checklist, training) to assist members.

However, it must be said that the responsibility lies with the PRM to advise in the first place that they require assistance. In spite of prompting at the time of booking, there are frequently good reasons for this not to happen including:

- The person making the booking may not be aware that someone in their party needs assistance

- Elderly passengers are proud and don't like to admit they need assistance. They might not realise how big some airports are until they are physically there; they are effectively disabled by the environment in which they find themselves.
- PRMs have good days and bad days - some might not assistance all the time i.e. a lung condition.

Further, it's not unusual for passengers to see PRMs being transported by buggies and wheelchairs and being fast-tracked at an airport. They might then decide in-flight that they'd like that too thus possibly depriving somebody of the service who might have pre-notified.

It would be easy for the airlines to single out the service providers and point the finger to the fact that they do not prioritise those that have pre-notified, as opposed to just taking, say, the first six that present themselves where they were expecting six PRMs upon arrival. This provides no incentive to those who had pre-notified who could then get poor service.

The industry has suggested that priority be given to PRMs who have pre-notified and will be pushing for this with the government authorities involved in the regulation. To this end, we are working on a leaflet to be given to those who don't pre-notify, suggesting that next time they fly, they do so, so as to receive a better service. It would make the PRM service provider's life easier as they would be able to properly plan and use their resources.

We've also worked hard to ensure that the pre-notification requests are properly transmitted between the agent, operator, airline and airport. However, some of this currently has to be done manually, pending the introduction of new IT platforms with automated generation of PRM messages. This can only improve.

Once, the best practice guidance is finalized, we'll let you have a copy to circulate to the UKACCs members.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely



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