



## **Commission for Aviation Regulation/Passenger Advisory Group**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday 27 June 2019 @10am**

**The Fitzwilliam Hotel**

#### **Present**

Passenger Advisory Group: Hellen Rochford-Brennan and Laura O’Philbin (Alzheimer’s Ireland), Leona Murphy (Chambers Ireland), Juan Bueso (European Consumer Centre), Aoife O’Donovan (IBEC), Aisling Soden (IDA), Tara Matthews (Irish Society for Autism), Fiona Kelty (National Council for the Blind), and Vivienne Storan (Failte Ireland).

Commission: Deborah Maguire and Sarah Fisher (Air Passenger Rights), Cathy Mannion (Commissioner), Maria Baquero (Economic Regulation).

Guest Speakers: Liz Kavanagh (Dublin Airport), Jean Pigott (Dublin Airport), Derek Murphy (OCS Ireland), Gareth Daniel (OCS Ireland).

#### **Apologies**

Passenger Advisory Group: Corona Joyce (Age Action), Dermott Jewell (Consumers Association of Ireland), Michael McCabe (Disability Stakeholders Group), James Doorley (National Youth Council of Ireland).

#### **Summary**

At the fifth meeting, Maria Baquero summarised the survey results about the journey experience at Dublin Airport of passengers with Alzheimer’s, autism and visual impairments. Sarah Fischer presented the Regulation 1107/2006 and the work plan of the Air Passenger Rights section of the Commission. Liz Kavanagh presented the work of Dublin Airport and OCS in relation to the assistance of passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility. The following topics were discussed:

## **1. Surveys about Passenger Experience at Dublin Airport**

As a high-level summary, most respondents with Alzheimer's, autism or visual impairments find the disability/mobility assistance useful and the staff helpful. Survey respondents highlighted the importance of standard staff training. The surveys found that passengers do not always inform the airline of their condition or needs.

## **2. Regulation 1107/2006**

Sarah Fisher explained the scope of the Regulation, and the rights it conveyed to passengers. Passengers were advised:

- that disability/mobility assistance is guaranteed for those who pre-notify the airline (or airport) at least 48 hours before their flight;
- to ensure that they communicate any specific needs because there are different types of assistance available to cater appropriately for the needs of individuals and;
- to contact the airport manager or the Commission if the pre-notified assistance does not meet their needs, make specific complaints and provide as much detail as possible.

## **3. Dublin Airport**

Dublin Airport confirmed that there are 11 types of assistance available to passengers according to different needs. Among these, there are 4 types of assistance using a wheelchair and 5 types of assistance for various hidden disabilities. Passengers may avail of the assistance that better suits their needs.

## **4. Comments from the Advisory Group**

It was mentioned that airline booking systems do not present those requesting assistance with the full range of options available, instead offering only a small number of choices which may put some passengers off selecting assistance as they feel they do not fit the categories on offer. Accessibility of websites was also raised, and the CAR explained that it does not fall within the scope of the regulations. The point was made that a person with a disability could take a company to the Equality Tribunal for failing to ensure that their website was accessible, for example, to screen readers.

Training of all airport staff should include awareness of OCS and provision of phone numbers for OCS to all staff. If a lanyard is introduced displaying it should be voluntary and not a requirement, as it is in some airports outside Ireland.

## **5. Action Points**

The Commission will:

- (1) Circulate contact details of the relevant section of Dublin Airport to facilitate discussion on issues concerning the passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility.
- (2) Advise the group when the service level agreement, between Dublin Airport and OCS, effective from 2019 has been published by the Airport.
- (3) Schedule a next meeting later in 2019 to discuss progress on our work programme.
- (4) Circulate our approach to involving passenger representatives in airport inspections for comment and discussion.
- (5) Circulate a note on how we can better highlight passenger rights for comment and discussion.
- (6) Work with Dublin Airport to consider whether and how to monitor the satisfaction of passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility who choose to travel without assistance.