



PRESS RELEASE

Issued: Monday 19th June 2017

Disability groups work closely with LBA to help deliver best possible service

Leeds Bradford Airport is working closely with a range of support organisations across Yorkshire to ensure the airport is as accessible as possible for people with disabilities.

For around a year, team members at LBA have worked closely with several organisations and the people they support to hear their views of passenger assistance requirements and to lead behind the scenes tours.

This has given organisations and their members the chance to experience first-hand the assistance they would receive when travelling through LBA; as well as give them the opportunity to pass on their feedback as to what improvements could be made.

In addition, the airport has worked closely with on-site passenger assistance company OCS and has delivered training to operational team members about how best to support people with disabilities and 'hidden' disabilities, such as autism, travelling through the airport.

Organisations working closely with LBA include Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Leeds Autism Services, William Merritt Centre, Little Hiccups, Aspire and AVSED.

Helen Pearce, Head of Passenger Services at LBA, said:

"Customer service is incredibly important to us and we are continually looking at ways to improve the passenger journey for all customers. We have learnt a huge amount from all of the organisations we have worked with over the last year and their time has been invaluable. I'd like to say a big thanks to all involved in the Disability Awareness work undertaken so far.

"Our aim is to make the passenger experience as smooth as possible for everyone and that very much includes people with all disabilities requiring assistance when travelling through the airport. We have listened to all feedback and have implemented everything possible in order to reduce anxieties around travelling, which can seem daunting to those who have a disability, especially when that disability may be 'hidden'. We are the start and end point for passengers and we want to ensure they have a great journey from start to finish."

A range of information tools are available at www.leedsbradfordairport.co.uk/at-the-airport/special-assistance for passengers who may require further information ahead of travelling, including:

- Autism awareness guide.
- Assistance dog information.
- Details on the Changing Places room in the departure lounge.
- Information on all the work undertaken so far.



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Debbie Linford, Engagement Officer for Guide Dogs for the Blind, said:

“I have been working with LBA for around a year and it’s great to work together. These familiarisation visits are valuable for both the owners and their dogs; getting everybody used to the airport environment. This helps to take away some of the unknown. Just because somebody has lost their sight, it doesn’t mean they have to lose their holidays and this partnership really does help people feel at ease.”

Elizabeth White, of Baildon, visited the airport with her guide dog, Mary, and they will soon both fly for the first time together. She said:

“It’s just been such a great opportunity to experience everything in the airport that we will come across; it’s put us at ease. It’s been good to chat with the staff at LBA about everything – they have given us so much time to walk us around everything and explain processes.”

Katherine Rowley, of Cookridge, visited the airport with her guide dog Domino. She said:

“I have flown before but not with a guide dog, so it’s been good to come with him and check he will be okay with the airport. It has been really good to visit and we will travel together around Christmas.”

Pete Hughes, of Leeds Autism Services, said:

“Leeds Autism Services were invited by Leeds Bradford Airport and OCS to help make the airport friendlier to people on the autism spectrum. We were honoured to be asked and hope that the work we are undertaking helps to enable people to fly who would not otherwise have felt comfortable doing so.

“People with autism related conditions may find new or unusual situations anxiety inducing. A big step to overcoming these anxieties is to furnish people with clear accurate information on what to expect, and this is what we have initially focused on. Leeds Autism Services are looking forward to working with Leeds Bradford Airport and OCS in future to continue trying to ensure a positive flying experience for those on the autism spectrum.”

Ella Baxter, Activity Support Worker at AVSED, said:

“AVSED became involved with Leeds Bradford Airports work around Disability Awareness. A group of AVSED Members and Volunteers visited the Airport to experience the support that is available.

“Throughout the visit, members had the chance to discuss their concerns about travel - especially using airports/planes and look at the support that is available to travellers who may have a disability, including accessible facilities, accessible parking, providing wheelchairs and individual support etc.

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“Throughout the tour we were able to look at some of the changes that have already been put in place and hear about future plans. Our members and volunteers had a wonderful time whilst at the airport and found it to be a very positive experience. We are looking forward to continued work alongside Leeds Bradford Airport and supporting the Disability Awareness Project.”

Sophie Pinney, Occupational Therapist at the William Merritt Centre, said:

“The William Merritt Centre has been working closely with Leeds Bradford Airport over the past year to provide practical assessments and advice on flying with a disability. The William Merritt Centre has a ‘Try b4 u Fly’ service where visitors are provided with advice about flying and can try out supportive specialised seating, harnesses and positioning systems in a plane fuselage. The Centre is looking forward to future work with Leeds Bradford Airport and OCS to engage with more people with disabilities and raise awareness of flying with additional needs.”

Vanessa Butcher, Area Manager at Aspire CBS, said:

“We are a charity that supports adults with learning disabilities and we have been working with Leeds Bradford Airport for around six months. LBA staff engaged with the people we support in a variety of ways; they experienced the full airport, from check-in to security.”

“The people we support gave feedback via a questionnaire and the experience has given many people the confidence to book the assistance service before they fly and indeed overcome the fear of flying. We look forward to more work with Leeds Bradford Airport.”

Image

Members of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association with LBA and OCS staff after a behind-the-scenes tour.





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