

# Airport accessibility report 2018/19

CAP 1821



**Published by the Civil Aviation Authority, 2019**

Civil Aviation Authority  
Aviation House  
Gatwick Airport South  
West Sussex  
RH6 0YR

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First published July 2019

Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to: [consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk](mailto:consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk)

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## Executive summary

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A record 3.7 million passengers were assisted at 31 UK airports between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. Since 2014 the number of passengers assisted increased by 49% while overall passenger numbers increased by 25%<sup>1</sup>. The latest [UK Aviation Consumer Survey](#) found 47% of passengers who requested assistance for their last flight were doing so for the first time and 23% of passengers who said they had a disability thought they would fly more often in the next year. An increasing number of people know support is available, feel confident enough to use it and, as a result, more disabled and less mobile people than ever are travelling by air. Satisfaction is also high. CAA and airport surveys<sup>2</sup> of assistance service users found 3 out of 4 rated the service as good or very good. Further, the UK Aviation Consumer Survey found 79% of users who had requested assistance were satisfied with the service they received.

But there is room for improvement. The Consumer Survey suggests nearly a quarter of respondents who requested assistance said they did so because the airport environment was becoming more difficult to navigate. It also suggests a small, but important minority<sup>3</sup> of passengers who requested assistance were not confident they would receive all the assistance they needed, or they would be treated with dignity and respect. Further, of those who describe themselves as having a disability or health condition that limits their day-to-day activity, over half said they find travelling by air difficult. Comments received from respondents to CAA and airport surveys of assistance service users continue to mention on occasion poor customer service, long waiting times and a lack of awareness of people's needs. The CAA takes this feedback very seriously and it demonstrates the importance of the CAA's continuing oversight of how well airports assist their passengers.

This year we have classified 14 airports as "very good", down from 16 airports in the 2017/18 report ([CAP1679](#)), 16 airports as "good" and one as "needs improvement". We are pleased

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<sup>1</sup> Data submitted to the CAA from 31 airports.

<sup>2</sup> 8006 Survey responses from CAA survey plus responses from Cornwall Newquay, East Midlands, London Gatwick, London Heathrow, London Stansted, Manchester and Norwich's own surveys.

<sup>3</sup> Around 1 in 15 passengers who requested assistance.

to be able to report for the first time since we began publishing these reports in 2016 we have classified no airport as “poor”.

Glasgow is the only airport to improve from good in the 2017/18 performance report to very good in this report. Both Glasgow and Edinburgh are the only airports with more than 9 million passengers a year to achieve a very good rating. Both airports continue to perform well, with significant investment and good management oversight driving their everyday performance.

Of the other major UK airports, we have classified London Stansted, London Luton, London Heathrow and London Gatwick as good. London Stansted and London Luton have improved the experience for disabled and less mobile passengers by speeding up the journey time through the airport on arrival from inbound flights. For London Heathrow and London Gatwick waiting times for assistance for passengers on arriving flights, particularly during busy periods, could be improved further, although we note London Gatwick has performed consistently well in this respect for the second half of the year.

Manchester has been classified as needs improvement. We were pleased with the response from senior management to the poor rating the airport received in last year’s report and we have seen progress in the second half of the reporting year (October to March), with the airport providing speedier assistance to passengers arriving on inbound flights. But overall, the performance for the year reflected a needs improvement rating.

Although it is outside the reporting year, recent events have stalled the progress that was made in the second half of the year. When the airport switched to a new service provider in April 2019, the transition did not go as well as planned, despite the CAA receiving assurances from both ABM, its new service provider, and the airport that preparations were thorough and well thought out. We have told senior management we expect immediate and effective action to be taken to reverse this recent decline in performance.

# Introduction

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This is the fourth annual review of accessibility at UK airports, covering airports which handled over 150,000 passengers during the period 1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019. These 31 airports assisted over 3.7 million passengers during the 12-month reporting period.

This is the final performance report assessing airports against the current criteria. As with previous reports, there are three criteria we assess airports against: performance against waiting times, user satisfaction, and effectiveness of consultation with their local disability community.

In April 2019 a revised version of [CAP1228](#) was published and included more demanding performance standards. This update came into effect partly from April 2019 and will do so fully from April 2020. It was published after consultation with industry and the disability community. From the 2019/20 reporting year, airports will be assessed using stricter waiting time targets for assistance and the number of handovers allowed between staff and equipment will be reduced, so passengers experience a more seamless journey. In addition, there are stricter customer satisfaction targets and extra requirements on airports in regard to consultation with the disability community. The CAA is committed to continually seeking to improve the services provided by airports to those in the community who require extra assistance when travelling.

## Review of the year

### Rankings

	<b>Belfast International</b>		
	<b>Birmingham</b>		
<b>Aberdeen</b>	<b>Bournemouth</b>		
<b>Belfast City</b>	<b>Bristol</b>		
<b>City of Derry</b>	<b>Cardiff</b>		
<b>Cornwall Newquay</b>	<b>East Midlands</b>		
<b>Doncaster Sheffield</b>	<b>Inverness</b>		
<b>Edinburgh</b>	<b>Leeds Bradford</b>		
<b>Exeter</b>	<b>Liverpool</b>		
<b>Glasgow</b>	<b>London City</b>		
<b>Glasgow Prestwick</b>	<b>London Gatwick</b>		
<b>Humberside</b>	<b>London Heathrow</b>		
<b>Kirkwall</b>	<b>London Luton</b>		
<b>Norwich</b>	<b>London Southend</b>		
<b>Southampton</b>	<b>London Stansted</b>		
<b>Sumburgh</b>	<b>Newcastle</b>	<b>Manchester</b>	
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Poor</b>

### Very good

We have classified 14 airports as very good, including **Glasgow**, working with their contracted service provider OCS, and **Edinburgh**, working with ABM. Both airports have invested significantly in staffing, facilities and equipment and have provided a high quality service over the year. Glasgow has met the CAA's waiting time standard for 99.9% of arriving disabled and less mobile passengers over the year and 85% of respondents rated Glasgow's assistance service as good or excellent. Edinburgh met the standard for 99.7% of passengers and 80% of respondents rated its service as good or excellent.

Also in Scotland, **Kirkwall** and **Sumburgh** provide vital links for their communities to visit hospitals on the mainland. The small aircraft which serve these routes create challenges for providing the assistance service, particularly with boarding. Both airports have overcome these challenges with co-operation from their airlines and with input from local disability

groups. In particular, Sumburgh has consulted effectively with a variety of groups from Shetland, the NHS and national Scottish groups to gain feedback on their service.

Smaller airports are also investing in new technology and IT solutions including **Doncaster Sheffield** and **Belfast City** who have new mobile applications. When we inspected both airports during the year, we noted how staff can now efficiently log their movements and be automatically allocated tasks using handheld devices. This type of technology has been used by larger airports for many years and we are pleased more airports are moving away from relying on manual paper or radio-based systems. Alongside this, Doncaster Sheffield has a thorough audit process to ensure its data is accurate and robust.

We have also classified **Aberdeen, Glasgow Prestwick, Humberside, Norwich, City of Derry, Cornwall Newquay, Exeter** and **Southampton** as very good. As with the other airports in this category, they have provided a high quality service and shown commitment to ongoing consultation with the disability community. We noted in particular the positive engagement Aberdeen has had with a range of disability groups through its forum, AccessABZ, and the excellent feedback Cornwall Newquay received through its own survey of assistance users, with nearly all its disabled and less mobile passengers rating its assistance as excellent. We continue to encourage airports to host their own survey rather than use the CAA survey. We note airports who use this method receive a higher response rate. They also have the advantage of receiving the feedback directly and regularly.

## **Good**

A further 16 airports earned a good rating. **Birmingham, London Gatwick** and **London Stansted** received a needs improvement rating in the 2017/18 performance report and since then have taken positive steps to decrease waiting times and improve the robustness of their data recording. These airports have introduced GPS tracking for data recording which automatically logs agents when they reach touchpoints when providing support to passengers and removes the risk of manual data input as well as allowing airports to track where and when delays are occurring.

During the year we carried out an inspection of Birmingham and found some issues regarding accessibility of infrastructure and training of security staff. The airport has been quick to act to rectify the issues identified. London Gatwick encountered issues at the start of the reporting year after they changed the assistance service provider from OCS to Wilson

James, when a significant proportion of arriving passengers were waiting longer than 20 minutes before receiving assistance. We discussed this issue with senior management and we were pleased this was quickly addressed and the second half of the year showed a significant improvement. This year (from April 2019) performance has improved further. In addition, London Gatwick in co-operation with their largest airline, easyJet, recently changed their processes for embarking and disembarking passengers with all flights now using an air bridge as well as stairs, rather than two sets of stairs. This is in our view a much better experience for passengers, but particularly those with accessibility needs. easyJet is extending this to Glasgow, Edinburgh and London Stansted. We also conducted a largely positive accessibility inspection of both terminals at London Gatwick, noting several examples of best practice in the facilities available for people with visible and and hidden disabilities.

**London Luton** has also received a good rating. It and London Stansted have improved the experience for arriving passengers using the assistance service by removing waiting areas in the arrivals journey, making it a more seamless journey and greatly improving journey times through the airports.

**Bristol** and **Newcastle** generally provided a good service to disabled and less mobile passengers, but in busier months the waiting time targets were missed by substantial margins, greatly inconveniencing some passengers. These airports need to ensure they provide a high-quality service all year round. **Leeds Bradford** and **London City** had longer waiting times for arriving passengers in the first half of the year and as a result, narrowly achieved a good standard for the whole year. We will make clear to these four airports that they need to improve their performance to achieve the required standard under our revised performance standards which are in effect from this year. The new standards were devised to ensure airports who fail to maintain consistency of service in future will not receive a good rating. The data we receive from airports suggests airports in general do not appear to increase staffing numbers sufficiently at peak times, the knock-on effect being increased delays for passengers.

However, we noted some positive signs of progress from Newcastle and London City. Both airports have invested in new equipment to make embarking and disembarking a better experience for passengers. Newcastle has taken delivery of a new generation high lift and London City have purchased their first high lift which will provide a much more dignified

experience than the equipment previously used. In addition, following our inspection of the airport where we identified some issues with designated points and signage, London City have been quick to put into place new signage to make it easier to request assistance.

**East Midlands, Belfast International, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Inverness, Liverpool and London Southend** provided a good service with short waiting times for passengers and high quality service from staff, but they lacked the range and regularity of their consultation with disability groups to gain a very good rating. These airports and London Luton had previously engaged well with their local disability community and it was disappointing this good work was not built on during the 2018/19 reporting year. It is not acceptable to rely on previous activity – airports should maintain regular contact with the network of disability groups they have established. Effective consultation will help an airport to ensure accessibility is at the heart of future airport planning.

In particular we expect more from London Luton, London Southend, Cardiff and Inverness next year in this regard. The revised guidance will require airports to hold regular disability forums and airports who do not have these in place may receive a poor rating in future reports. It is positive that Cardiff and Liverpool have already renewed their focus in this area and have formed independently chaired advisory groups. London Southend also advised us they also plan to set up such a group in the near future.

**London Heathrow** had a disappointing second half to their year. In the second six months of the year there was a dip in performance levels in regard to assisting arriving passengers. We will be closely monitoring the airport over the year and expect to see improvements, with staffing levels increased. If this level of performance remains, there is a risk London Heathrow will not meet the standard for a good rating next year. Otherwise, we recognise the good work the airport, in co-operation with the Heathrow Access Advisory Group, has done in improving the accessibility of infrastructure and instigating other design projects, as well as promoting accessibility on a wider scale. This was demonstrated through the largely positive accessibility inspection we carried out over all four terminals in late 2018 and early 2019.

### **Needs improvement**

**Manchester** was rated poor in the 2017/18 performance report. In general, passengers using the assistance service enjoyed shorter waiting times at the airport than they did in 2017/18 and there was improvement as the year progressed. 12 out of 24 of the waiting

time targets were missed during the first half of the reporting year but from November to March all targets were met. Satisfaction scores were generally acceptable and the airport also continued to consult effectively with a wide range of disability groups, especially regarding its infrastructure changes and new terminal developments. Therefore, based on the reporting year (April 2018 to March 2019), a needs improvement classification is appropriate.

In April, Manchester changed their contracted assistance service provider from OCS to ABM. With a new provider in place, and benefits from the Manchester Airport Transformation Programme starting to show through, we expected progress to continue. Despite receiving assurances from both companies that preparations for the transition were thorough and they anticipated a seamless transition, this did not materialise. Data from April, May and June 2019 has shown performance was poor, with high numbers of passengers waiting for unacceptable lengths of time to receive assistance when arriving on inbound flights. The assistance service is fundamentally based on the availability of staff to assist passengers and at Manchester this is more acute due to infrastructure challenges causing most areas to be unsuitable for buggies. The airport must do more to meet these challenges head on. It is important the airport and airlines work harder to overcome the unique challenges of this airport. If a good rating is not achieved in the performance year 2019/20, it will be the fourth time the airport has failed to meet the required standard. Last year the airport committed to the CAA to reduce waiting times for users of the assistance service, so they can meet (or better) the waiting time performance standards set out in CAP1228. The airport has still not met these commitments and our view is that this puts in doubt its ability to meet its obligations under Regulation EC1107/2006. Airport senior management are aware that we expect these commitments to be met in full before we will be satisfied that they are meeting their legal obligations.

## Background

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Regulation EC 1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility (referred to hereafter as ‘the Regulation’) provides a set of rights that apply when departing from, and returning to, UK airports and on board all flights from the UK and, if a European airline, to the UK. The aim of the Regulation is to ensure that such people have the same opportunities for air travel as those of others, in particular that they have the same rights to free movement, freedom of choice and non-discrimination.

In relation to airports, the requirements of the Regulation deal mostly with the assistance that airports are required to provide to disabled people and people with reduced mobility to help them move around the airport and embark and disembark the aircraft (usually through a contracted service provider). The Regulation also obliges airports to set quality standards for the assistance provided to disabled people and those with mobility restrictions.

To ensure that disabled people and people with reduced mobility are confident that they can travel and their assistance needs will be met, it is important that the assistance provided to them is of a consistently high quality. It is therefore imperative airports set appropriate quality standards for this assistance to ensure that it is delivered to a high standard.

The CAA is responsible for enforcing the Regulation in the UK. We have put in place a performance framework for airports to set, monitor and publish a range of quality standards relating to the assistance service. Guidance (CAP1228) for airports on the obligations under this framework was published in October 2014 and updated in April 2019. In addition to ‘hard’ metrics relating to the amount of time that people have to wait to receive assistance both on departure and arrival, we have also incorporated a number of ‘soft’ metrics: first, that airports consult with disability groups and charities in the setting of the quality standards, enabling others with a close interest in disability issues to hold airports to account; and second, through surveying users of the service, that passengers with a disability or reduced mobility are satisfied with the different aspects of the service that they receive, enabling issues such as staff attitudes to be measured and reported on.

Airports are required to make public their performance against these metrics and with whom they have consulted and the outcomes of this consultation.

This report reviews the performance of 31 airports<sup>4</sup> over the financial year 2018/19 and is based on performance data recorded and published by airports on their websites, data submitted to the CAA directly by airports, and data collected by the CAA itself. (More information on this can be found in CAP1228.) The information taken into account by the CAA includes:

- Monthly performance against 'waiting time' standards for the periods 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- Levels of satisfaction with the quality of the assistance service at each airport, gathered through a CAA survey or an airport's own survey. (Surveys asks users of the assistance service to rate the quality of the service provided at the airport on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is extremely poor and 5 is excellent.)
- Information on the consultation undertaken with disability organisations, including the methods used for consultation, actions decided, and any follow up action taken.

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<sup>4</sup> Under Regulation EC 1107/2006 only airports with more than 150,000 passengers per year must set quality standards.

## Definition of rankings

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### Good

This means the following:

- The airport publishes on its website monthly information on its performance (by a specified time and in the correct format). Submission to the CAA of the same data.
- The airport has robust processes in place for overseeing how it measures its performance; or, where relevant, the airport has committed to strengthen this oversight.
- The airport consistently meets, or is close to meeting, monthly waiting time performance targets.
- The airport pro-actively promotes the satisfaction survey of users of the service.
- The airport scores a rating of acceptable or better in the satisfaction survey of users.
- The airport engages with disability organisations.

### Very good

In addition to those set out for good, this means:

- The airport consistently exceeds, meets, or is very close to meeting, monthly waiting time performance targets.
- The airport scores a rating of good or better in the satisfaction survey of users.
- The airport engages very effectively with disability groups.

### Needs improvement

- Over the course of the reporting year the airport has failed to meet the criteria for a good performance standard. Further, the airport has not taken the necessary steps during the year to address in a timely way the failings and to improve its performance.

or

- Over the course of the reporting year the airport has failed to provide the CAA with the required information on its performance.

## **Poor**

- Over the course of the reporting year the airport has failed to substantively meet the criteria for a good performance standard. Further, the airport has not taken the necessary steps during the year to address in a timely way the failings and to improve its performance.