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| **Date** | **Wednesday 17th February 2021** | | | |
| **Time** | **10:00** | | | |
| **Location** | **Virtual forum via Microsoft Teams** | | | |
| **Attendees** | | | | |
| **Name** | | **Company** | **Name** | **Company** |
| **Andy Wright** | | **Chair** | **Ashley Horsfall** | **Special Assistance, MAG** |
| **Gary Dawson** | | **Spinal Injuries Association** | **David Lodder** | **MS Society** |
| **Libby Herbert** | | **Colostomy UK** | **Carrie-Ann Lightly** | **AccessAble** |
| **Nick Wilkinson** | | **RNID** | **Susan Clarke** | **Alzheimer’s Society** |
| **Jude Hughes** | | **JDRF** | **Emma Roberts** | **National Autistic Society** |
| **Zoe Foster** | | **Guide Dogs for the Blind** | **Phil Bennett** | **MND Association** |
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| **Apologies** | | | | |
| **John Doherty** | | **Alzheimer’s Society** | **Helen Gillan** | **NHS Southport** |
| **Kieran McMahon** | | **Disability Stockport** |  |  |

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| 1 – Welcome & Operational Update |
| **Andy** opened the meeting and welcomed the guests.  **Ashley** then provided an update to the group on the landscape of the current operation and the impact of Covid-19 on recent guest numbers travelling through the airport.  **Andy** asked whether Manchester airport was currently operating the hotel quarantine scheme.  **Ashley** advised that this scheme was not currently being offered in MAN and therefore guests from ‘red’ countries are being routed elsewhere. He continued by saying that throughout the pandemic MAN had seen significant traffic both direct and via middle east airports onward to Pakistan, and this is continuing.  **Ashley** then provided an overview of operational performance, which is currently aligned to achieve a CAA ‘Very Good’ rating if standards are maintained.  Similarly, guest feedback is trending within the ‘Very Good’ target area with overall satisfaction currently at 4.67 -5. During the period, the airport has seen a reduction in survey responders, which can be attributed to the pandemic, a shift in colleague deployment and is consistent with the airport`s other surveying programmes. |
| 2 – Covid impact on colleagues |
| **Andy** enquired as to how the workforce is fairing through the pandemic.  **Ashley** acknowledged the significant contribution made by colleagues throughout the pandemic and the challenges they had been presented with and had managed to overcome.  More recently the operation has started to see an upturn in sickness, however most of which was not Covid related. This was being managed through the usual sickness management process and would continue to be monitored to ensure it did not have an impact on the day-to-day operation. |
| 3 – CAA annual UK Airport Accessibility report |
| **Ashley** acknowledged MAN’s `Good` rating with the forum and passed on thanks for the support provided by the members in helping to secure this rating.  The report referenced the improvements realised through the transformation programme, much of which was as a direct result of engagement with the forum and also made reference to MAN’s involvement in the Thomas Cook repatriation programme. |
| 4 – Attitudes about future travelling post pandemic |
| **Andy** asked the group about their personal attitudes on flying following Covid.  **Gary** expressed his excitement to get travelling and hoped to take part in the Cycle Italy Tuscan loop in September. He expressed his concern as to whether or not colleagues would be vaccinated and will vaccines be required for travel. Creating a lot of uncertainty for travel going forward.  **David** commented on the challenge of understanding requirements for where you would want to travel and the differences at each destination. Lockdown policies in each country could impact the return of travel to these destinations, as well as the countries respective vaccination programmes.  **Phil** informed the forum about the impact Covid has had on those with Motor Neurone Disease, particularly with its effect on the lungs. Having spoken with service users he advised it is a real mixed bag in the sense some are keen to travel and fulfil their ‘bucket list’, whilst others are more cautious.  **Sue** advised how a number of service users have shared their concerns with her about even having to leave the house. So, the prospect of air travel is even more daunting for those individuals with Dementia who may have serious concerns about contracting Covid.  **Emma** expressed the high anxiety levels amongst the autism community when a return to ‘norm’ policy is announced following Covid. This will likely be a key factor for individuals looking to return to travel.  **Nick** advised that hearing loss in isolation doesn’t always create a significant impact. However, when paired with other disabilities and anxieties the prospect of travelling can become more daunting. The wearing of a mask continues to present communication challenges. Yet **Nick** wasn’t aware of any perfect solution to this problem in the marketplace right now. RNID continue to work with their service users in an attempt to understand how they can best support them.  **Zoe** advised that a lot of her service users are simply not going out because of struggles with social distancing and the day-to-day logistics of regular activities - such as visiting the supermarket. Guide Dogs have not been able to complete their normal dog training routines because of the pandemic. Which currently is so far from the norm, that it would not prepare the dog appropriately for regular assistance requirements. The changes to travel guidelines for assistance animals, as a result of Brexit, are also creating anxiety to travel. |
| 5 – Building Back Better |
| **Andy** set the scene for Building Back Better as we emerge from the pandemic, with a focus on how information transmission could ideally be improved, perhaps with the introduction of dedicated assistance Apps. Andy asked the forum members if such a tailored assistance app could be designed, what features would service users like to see included:  **Gary** compared what he would want to see with current home-delivery tracking information e.g., your wheelchair will be arriving at this location at this time. He would also like to see detail of nearby facilities, what equipment the service provider is bringing and their estimated time of arrival. This would help manage expectations rather than the unknown of the current system.  **Nick** was keen that anything put in place would empower the user rather than pushing any onus back on them to seek the information.  **Emma** advised that an App can be a powerful tool for somebody with autism as if there is a communication barrier, they can access information themselves. Emma advised the group that some people use AAC devices as an alternative to speaking.  **Andy** put the question to **Nick** regarding sign language apps. **Nick** advised that there are not any apps out there providing a perfect solution when it comes to sign language. Often speech to text apps are a good alternative.  **Libby’s** view was that whilst technology is great, training is the better option to build back better. Libby expressed her desire to again support with training following the success of her work with the security training team.  **Ashley** acknowledged that Libby’s support prior to the pandemic had been gratefully received and very beneficial and he was therefore keen for that to continue, as and when airport staff were no longer furloughed and returned to the workplace.  **David** expressed his concern where multiple apps are often involved, that any future development should quickly identify, and then focus on, a single App. So as to maximise the effectiveness of resources and avoid unnecessary duplication, as well as confusion.  **Andy** shared details of a recent presentation he had attended, demonstrating a similar App had been provided for the rail industry, where 20+ operators had bought into one single solution. Andy acknowledged however this is simpler than the context of a multi nation business like aviation. With the initial feedback from the four members, **Andy** said that he would invite the rail app organisation to present to **Ashley** to determine whether this was a product that could be adapted for aviation. |
| **Meeting Closed at 11:27 AM.**  **Date for the next meeting will be confirmed and circulated shortly.** |