East Midlands Airport Accessibility Forum Notes

13th November 2025

PRESENT

Meeting Chair – Christiane Link, Ortegalink (CL)*

Emily Kilby - Consumer Policy & Enforcement Advisor, CAA (EK)*
Guide Dogs - Jessica Luke (JL)*
Accessibility and Inclusion – Sarah Rennie (SREN)*
Spinal Injuries Association – Danny Byrne (DB)*
British Deaf Association – Mhairi Simpson (MS)

East Midlands Airport – Mike Grimes, Customer & Planning Director
East Midlands Airport – Adam Andrews, Commercial Director

East Midlands Airport – Chris Drury, Customer Services Manager (CD)
East Midlands Airport – Craig Holland, Customer Service Duty Manager (CH)
East Midlands Airport – Nikoleta Kiano, Customer Service Admin Officer (NK)

*Attended via Microsoft Teams

APOLOGIES

Independent Consultant – Martha Foulds (MF)
Derby City Council Equality Lead – Ann Webster (AW)

LOCATION

EMA Training Academy / Microsoft Teams (Online)

1. **Welcomes and Introductions**

CL opened the forum by thanking all members for attending.

CL guided members through individual introductions.

2. East Midlands Airport Update

CH took members through the agenda for the forum and then the Customer Service Department structure.

CH moves on to 'Colleague Updates' and begins by mentioning that the Customer Service department's yearly refresher training is currently underway.

3. CAA - Emily Kilby – Consumer Policy & Enforcement Advisor

EK starts off by stating that the only CAA update since the last forum for EMA is that the CAP1228 (Quality Standard Rating) recently took place for EMA, but the CAA want to make some bigger changes to it, they would like the report to follow a customer's full journey instead of three separate areas, this means that instead of the report coming out in April 2026 it will be April 2027.

4. East Midlands Airport General Updates

CH gave members the following general updates:

- Car Park bus stops – New seating installed at all EMA bus stops following the CAA's Airport Report
- Airside Quiet Room to be moved from the existing location and moved along the terminal near Gate 17 – This is a larger space, in a quieter area of the terminal
- BSL Welcome video to be displayed at the Assisted Travel Desk along with a Security Preparation BSL message on the new media screens within Security
- EMA Assisted Travel award win – The Travel for Every Body Award in the category of Accessible Travel Initiative. The judges comments stated, "East Midlands Airport were noted for their strong advisory group that actively influences improvements and are known for listening and implementing feedback quickly. Current features include a WhatsApp Live Chat for real-time assistance and a 'Try Before You Fly' walk-through programme for travellers with anxiety or assistance needs."

CL says that even though she appreciates the new quiet room location being in a quieter part of the airport, she asks if this location is easily accessible, because in most airports the quiet room is at the very end of the terminal and not as easy to be located by passengers that need them.

CD assured CL and the forum that the location is only three gates further down to its current location and still in the central part of the departures hall. CD adds that there has been an additional payment put forward for additional soundproofing in the new location as well as ensuring that there will be efficient way finding, so passengers can easily locate the Quiet Room.

CH expands on the BSL video update by stating this came up following the BDA tour that took place. BDA colleagues felt as though a 'Welcome' video in BSL would support in making the community feel welcomed into the airport. CH confirms that the recording of that video has now taken place but also a Security preparation message too.
CL asks who recorded the video and who did the BSL interpreting for it. CD responds by explaining that this was done in-house by one of the Customer Service Duty Managers who is fluent in BSL. CL asks if the video can be signed off before it goes live. MS agrees with CL that a Deaf Native BSL User clarifies that the information on the video is correct. Ordinarily, it should be a Deaf Trained BSL Translator, to have the correct standard of translation. CD states that as soon as the editing is complete, they will share it with the forum and the BDA for confirmation.

CH followed by giving members a few more general updates:

- The fleet of Electronic Mobility Scooters is expected to be increased by a further 6, taking the total number to 12
- New Sensory POD to be installed near the new Quiet Room location
- Security preparation area to be updated to include accessible space
- New wayfinding to be installed in the immigration hall
- The East Midlands Airport website has been refreshed and updated, including the Assisted Travel pages
- Little Flyer activity centre coming to the terminal. Little Flyer branding to be extended throughout the Terminal and Security Hall
- In October, East Midlands Airport welcomed its 100,000th Assisted Travel passenger. This is a growth of approximately 25% over 2024.

MS asks if there is a rough number available of deaf passengers travelling through in the figures given above. CD confirms that data can be pulled out of the system and will be shared alongside this forum's notes. MS says she is intrigued to find out if the deaf passenger numbers have changed following the information that the BDA shared out to the community following their tour.

**Please see Appendix 1 for requested data*

CD thanks all members for their support and guidance on all completed and on-going projects that are taking place at East Midlands Airport.

5. **Directors Update:**
   Mike Grimes – Customer & Planning Director & Adam Andrews – Commercial Director

CD introduces to the forum Mike Grimes and Adam Andrews.

MG is pleased to see everyone again.

MG started the conversation by thanking all members of the forum for their support and guidance, as it has helped shape East Midland Airport's Assisted Travel service, allowing us to provide 'Effortless Travel' for our customers.

MG expresses that summer has been incredibly busy, but from a customer perspective incredibly successful. MG confirms that EMA has delivered the highest customer satisfaction scores across the Manchester Airport Group, in both Landside and Terminal Operations, and of course Assisted Travel plays a part in that positive customer feedback.

AA shares his visions on East Midland Airport's commercial offering and Assisted Travel is right there in the middle of it all.

AA updates members on Shops and Food & Beverage changes within the Terminal.

CL thanks AA for all the updates, and comments on how inaccessible high table and high seating is. CL emphasis that when updates are taking place accessible seating should always be available and possibly place clear signage for these seats to please be given up for those who really need it or wheelchair users.

CL continues by expressing that retail colleague training, Accessibility Equality Training, is also very important in creating a more positive passenger experience.

CL gave advise around ordering food and drink through a QR Code or an app, as an additional offer of service making the process of ordering more accessible. CL would also ask that consideration is made that the app supports screen reader and voice over software on the phone, so that blind and visually impaired people who are using the app, can access it. MG asks CL if she knows any systems that work well? CL responds that she is unaware of one at the minute, but she can find out and report back to the forum. DB supports this as it cuts out so much, and it could possibly eliminate queues, which makes it even more accessible for wheelchair users to navigate their way through.

JS wanted to echo what the rest of the forum member comments on accessible seating options, with a guide or assistance dog, high bar tables is not a good option as they usually have legs that go down the middle, which leaves no room for the dog. The other thing is lighting, sight loss is a spectrum so couldn't advise for every single condition, but personally good, consistent levels of lighting is very important.

MS emphasis that retail colleague training is very important but making sure they have deaf awareness training as well. The app process for ordering is a great idea and would benefit deaf passengers too.

AA shares that joining the forum today has triggered a lot of ideas, and thanks the forum for all the feedback.

MG rounds up his visit by thanking all forum members again for their much-appreciated feedback.

6. Accessibility Forum Members Discussion

CH asks members if they have any points they would like to raise.

CL starts by discussing the 'Terms of Reference' for this forum. The forum member feedback received was for the forum attendance payment to be increased. CD states that discussions have been taking place for some time now and is pleased to confirm that as of April 2026 (the new financial year), there will be additional budget in place, so we will be able to pay double the current attendance fee to forum members. CD then confirmed that after receiving the most recent financial report yesterday, he can also confirm that we are able to implement this from today's forum.

CL continues by asking the forum one last time if they are happy with the final draft of the terms of reference. All members approve and agree on all reference points.

CL then confirms with the CAA (Emily Kilby), that the 'Terms of Reference' for this forum is now in place and live.

CH thanks members and moves on by asking MS if she would like to take an opportunity to give feedback on the DBA tour.

MS says overall it was very positive when first arriving at the Assisted Travel desk, there was a SignLive poster, but the service had recently moved over to using InterpretersLive, so that just needed to be updated. MS continued around the experience whilst going through Security. The staff's communication came across as impatient and it was clear that there was no deaf awareness training.

CD thanks MS for such valuable feedback and thanks all the BDA for their visit.

CL asks how Disability Quality and Deaf awareness training is going in regard to rolling it in to the Security department. CD responds by explaining that the Disability Equality training that SR developed and adapted it for Security purposes. It was the first time that was rolled out to the Security population at the very beginning of this year, so this summer was the test to see what effect that had. There is more to do and training will continue

CD thanks all members for their contributions.

7. Closing Remarks & AOB

CD mentions that a whole group airside visit, of the customer journey tour, is still on offer, if forum members would still like for this to take place. This to possibly take place for the next forum or the one after, depending on operational requirements.

DB supports this as it has been a while since the last visit.

JL asks for possibly on the next forum that an update is shared on tactile footprints for the Security body scanners and flight announcements being shared more frequently.

CL showed her appreciation and thanked all members of the forum for their attendance and praised the great work being completed by all.

Meeting Closed.

Appendix 1.

Count of SSR Code Column Labels			
Row Labels	Complete	No Show	Grand Total
Jan	7	1	8
Feb	10	2	12
Mar	28	2	30
Apr	21	1	22
May	42	4	46
Jun	38	12	50
Jul	33	10	43
Aug	35	9	44
Sep	51	9	60
Oct	31	11	42
Grand Total	296	61	357

