



1 March 2010

Consumer Council easing the journey for disabled and reduced mobility air passengers

The Consumer Council has been recognised for its “proactive approach” in representing and promoting the rights of air passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility. The recognition came during the Civil Aviation Authority’s (CAA) launch today of “Accessible Air Travel¹” - a review on the first year of European regulation² aimed at improving the rights of passengers with a disability or reduced mobility.

Aodhan O’Donnell, Head of Transport at the Consumer Council said: “This report shows how the travel industry has raised awareness amongst disabled and reduced mobility passengers and improved the service they can expect from airlines and airports. Whilst the report recognises progress has been made, it does identify areas for improvement such as the need for airlines to be more consistent in the types and level of assistance they provide. The passenger experience is being hindered by variations in how airlines accept requests for assistance, the allocation of seats and the carriage of medical and mobility equipment.

“As the statutory air passenger representative, the Consumer Council contributed to the completion of this report. We brought together passengers, disability groups and the airports to examine the extent to which the airports are meeting the legislation and identify areas for improvement. Working together has proved the most effective way of ensuring airports meet passengers’ needs. We will continue this joined up approach with the next forum scheduled for later this month. We work hard to bring about changes that benefit air passengers here and in working closely with the CAA have secured real improvements in how

¹ <http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/Accessible-Air-Travel.pdf>

² Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 ‘Access to Air Travel for Disabled Persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility’.

airlines and airports respond to the needs of passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility^{III}.

“The Consumer Council is committed to working with the CAA, the airlines and the airports in implementing the recommendations of this review and building on this successful foundation. The Consumer Council has produced a guide, ‘Access to Air Travel’ which explains this regulation and what you can expect from airlines and airports. For a FREE copy contact us on 0800 121 6022 or download it from www.consumercouncil.org.uk.”

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1. Consumer Council media contact: Gráinne Duffy, telephone, 028 9067 4813 or 079 2018 7308 or e-mail, gduffy@consumercouncil.org.uk
2. The Consumer Council is an independent consumer organisation, working to bring about change to benefit Northern Ireland’s consumers. The Council campaigns for high standards of service and protection and a fair deal for all. It also carries out research, gives advice and publishes reports and other publications. It deals with individual complaints about buses, trains, planes, ferries, natural gas, electricity, coal and water.
3. For more information, visit our website at www.consumercouncil.org.uk

^{III} 1. As a result of the Consumer Council handling a complaint on behalf of an air passenger, a UK airport has carried out further staff training on dealing with passengers with visual impairments. 2. As a result of a Consumer Council referral to the CAA an airline acknowledged that it had incorrectly charged a passenger to carry a piece of medical equipment. The airline has since apologised and offered to refund the charge as well as making changes to its policy in this area and making management aware of the incident to prevent it happening again.