

Airport Accessibility Performance Report

2024/2025

CAP 3117

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Executive Summary

The UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is responsible for the enforcement of Assimilated Regulation (EU) No. 1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled and less mobile persons when travelling by air (“UK Regulation (EU) No. 1107/2006”). This legislation is intended to ensure that disabled and less mobile passengers have the same opportunities for air travel as others, in particular that they have the same rights to free movement, freedom of choice and non-discrimination.

This is the CAA’s eighth annual Airport Accessibility Report, covering the performance of UK airports in providing assistance services to disabled and less mobile passengers.

The CAA assessed twenty-eight airports against the Quality Standards Framework (as set out in CAP1228¹ and CAP1228A²) and covers performance over the year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. Ratings for the twenty-eight airports break down into the following categories:

- Eleven airports are ‘very good’.
- Fourteen airports are ‘good’.
- Three airports are ‘needs improvement’.

Many UK airports are demonstrating strong performance, with eleven airports excelling in meeting the needs of individuals who request assistance services. In last year’s report, we rated Cardiff and Gatwick as ‘needs improvement’ and it is positive that both airports have worked hard to invest in and enhance their assistance performance, and that they are now rated as ‘very good’.

While the majority of airports are rated positively, three airports – London Heathrow, Edinburgh, and Glasgow Prestwick – are rated as ‘needs improvement’. During our in-person monitoring at Heathrow Terminal 3, there were discrepancies between the data logged and the experiences of passengers we observed, with some passengers not being assisted on arrival in a timely manner and sometimes waiting more than 45 minutes for

¹ <https://www.caa.co.uk/publication/download/14995>

² [Guidance on data collection under CAP1228](#)

assistance from the time the aircraft arrived at the gate. In addition, we found that London Heathrow did not always have robust processes in place for overseeing how it measures its performance at Terminal 3, which meant we did not receive assurances about the quality of assistance at this terminal. Edinburgh did not meet the standards for the provision of assistance in a timely manner, primarily due to operational issues caused by a change of the contractor providing its services earlier in the year, which now appears to be resolved. Glasgow Prestwick failed to meet its obligation to consult with disabled groups and individuals and has now committed to putting in place an Access Forum.

For the second time, alongside the publication of this annual report, we are also publishing the results of our deep dive accessibility assessments of airports undertaken throughout the reporting year³. This year we assessed East Midlands, Cornwall Newquay, and London City airports. We also publish updates on our deep dive reports from last year⁴. All three airports assessed last year – London Heathrow, London Luton, and London Stansted – have made significant progress regarding the issues identified by us. They have enhanced their training capabilities, improved website information and improved infrastructure such as signage, seating, and the designated points, where assistance is requested by disabled and less mobile passengers. Heathrow has taken action to improve the accessibility of its security channels by installing a priority channel for disabled and less mobile passengers in Terminals 2, 3 and 5 and having plans to do this in Terminal 4.

³ www.caa.co.uk/CAP3117

⁴ www.caa.co.uk/CAP3117

Chapter 1

Introduction and background

Background

- 1.1 Assimilated Regulation (EU) No. 1107/2006 ('the Regulation') concerning the rights of disabled and less mobile persons when travelling by air provides for a set of rights that apply when departing from and returning to UK airports and on board all flights from the UK and, if on a UK or EU airline, to the UK. The aim of the Regulation is to ensure that disabled and less mobile passengers have the same opportunities for air travel as others, in particular that they have the same rights to freedom of movement, choice and non-discrimination.
- 1.2 With respect to airports, the requirements of the Regulation relate primarily to the assistance that airports must provide to disabled and less mobile passengers to help them move around the airport and board and disembark from the aircraft (usually through using a contracted service provider). The Regulation also requires airports to establish quality standards for assistance provided to disabled and less mobile passengers. To ensure that disabled and less mobile passengers can be confident that they will be able to travel and that their assistance needs will be met, it is important that the assistance provided to them is of consistently high quality. It is therefore essential that airports set appropriate quality standards for this assistance to ensure that it is provided to a high standard.
- 1.3 The CAA is responsible for enforcing the Regulation in the UK. We have established an Airport Accessibility Performance Framework for airports to set, monitor and publish a set of quality standards relating to the assistance provided. Guidance ("CAP 1228") for airports on obligations under this framework was published in October 2014, updated in April 2019, and additional guidance supporting CAP 1228 was published in 2022 ("CAP 1228A"). In addition to the quantitative metrics, which relate to the time passengers have to wait to receive assistance on both departure and arrival, we have also included a number of qualitative metrics: first, that airports consult with disability groups and charities when setting quality standards, so that others with a strong interest in disability issues can hold airports accountable; and second, that passengers with a

disability or reduced mobility are satisfied with the various aspects of the service they receive by being surveyed so that issues such as staff attitudes can be measured and reported on.

Current context

- 1.4 We recognise that we are now seeing higher demand for accessibility services than we have ever seen in the UK before, with the rate of growth of demand for accessibility services exceeding the overall growth in air travel which has also been experienced across the UK aviation network. In 2024, 5.5 million passengers requested assistance at UK airports, approximately 1.9% of total passengers. This has increased from 0.94% in 2010, 1.35% in 2019 and 1.69% in 2023 when 4.6 million passengers requested assistance.
- 1.5 In January 2025, the CAA hosted an industry workshop to address the growing challenge of increased demand for airport assistance services. There is clearly a need for continued investment and innovation to ensure assistance can continue to be provided in a way that meets individual passenger needs. The event brought together key stakeholders from across the aviation sector, including representatives from airlines, airports, and other industry stakeholders. Although we reaffirmed our expectations regarding airports and airlines meeting their legal obligations to provide timely and effective assistance, we also wanted to support industry in meeting the challenges of increasing requests for a service which, by its very nature, requires significant amounts of resourcing – both in terms of staffing and equipment. Industry representatives advised us that the increased use of assistance services at airports can be attributed to multiple factors. Many of these were discussed in the workshop and include: an ageing population, higher awareness of the assistance service, improved societal attitudes towards disability and inclusion, increased leisure travel post-COVID, and misuse of the service by some.
- 1.6 We do not consider that a good customer experience and more targeted provision of services are exclusive. Indeed, providing a more tailored service that grants some passengers more independence to use facilities provided at an airport, such as shops and restaurants, whilst ensuring disabled and less mobile passengers are still able to reach their flight on time or are not waiting long on

arrival, is achievable. Our observations are that many airports are yet to fully facilitate independent journeys, partly due to a fear of 'doing the wrong thing' and partly because operational concerns mean airports are reluctant for those passengers who need assistance not to be in close proximity to assistance staff at all times. However, we believe that to ensure sufficient resources are provided to those who might have a greater reliance on assistance services, airports will need to adapt and target their assistance to better meet an individual's needs. As set out below we will be reviewing the Quality Standards Framework and will consider how our guidance, and the targets we set, can help airports to design their assistance service to achieve this going forwards.

1.7 The CAA's Aviation Consumer Survey 2024⁵ provides valuable insights into whether the increasing demand for assistance services is having an impact on the satisfaction of disabled passengers when travelling by air. Encouragingly, despite this continued increase in demand, we noted that:

- 82% of disabled passengers reported being satisfied with their most recent flight, compared to 84% of all passengers.
- The gap in satisfaction between disabled and non-disabled passengers has narrowed since 2023 for most recent flight experiences. (In 2023, 74% of disabled passengers were satisfied with their most recent flight, and 81% of all passengers were satisfied.)

Future review of airport accessibility framework

1.8 In the coming year we plan to review the framework that forms the basis of this annual report and our Quality Standards Framework, to ensure it continues to protect consumers. We will also take into account the increasing challenge airports face in providing a high-quality service amid ever-growing demand for assistance services. The review is likely to include the following:

⁵ [CAA Aviation Consumer Survey - October 2024 \(Wave 13\)](#)

- a review of the survey methods used by airports, as regular passenger surveys are crucial, enabling airports to directly capture the experiences, needs and satisfaction levels of the passengers they serve;
- additional guidance for airports on auditing their data collection obligations;
- additional guidance on consultation with disabled individuals and organisations through Airport Access Forums, using information gathered through our observation of forum meetings over the last year across a range of airports, and a review carried out with Airport Access Forum Chairs and airports. The guidance is intended to support airports to ensure the effectiveness of their forums and that minimum standards are being met consistently. This guidance will focus on strengthening the content and administration of meetings, but most importantly representation, as it is important to have pan-disability representation at forum meetings. Diverse lived experience and expertise enable groups to better challenge, advise and support airport accessibility.

Review methodology

1.9 The CAA undertakes its oversight work of airports under two main work streams:

- **Quality Standards Framework (CAP1228 and CAP1228A):** a standardised method of assessing UK airports in the provision of assistance to those with accessibility needs. The CAA reports annually against the Framework.
- **Periodic “Deep Dive” accessibility assessments of individual airports across the UK:** These assessments review all aspects of the airports provision of assistance to disabled and less mobile passengers against their obligations set out under UK Regulation (EU) No. 1107/2006 and all key guidance associated with this. To ensure transparency and promote good practice, the CAA publishes all airport assessment reports on an annual basis alongside the annual assessment against the Quality Standards Framework. Over the 2024/25 reporting year the CAA has conducted assessments of London City, East Midlands, and Cornwall Newquay.

- 1.10 This report is the annual assessment of airports for the 2024/25 reporting year against the Quality Standards Framework. Details of the assessment criteria and more information on the three areas can be found at Annex 1.
- 1.11 Airports are assessed against the Quality Standards Framework in three areas:
- **Waiting Time Standards:** Performance against waiting time targets for arriving and departing passengers. This includes accuracy and robustness of data collection.
 - **Satisfaction Survey:** Surveys of users of the assistance service.
 - Consultation with disabled individuals and organisations, through **Access Forums**⁶.
- 1.12 To support our assessment CAA staff have carried out the following activities over the year:
- Collected and analysed monthly data against 'waiting time' standards for the top 16 airports (by numbers of all passengers).⁷
 - Collected and analysed data every six months from other airports on 'waiting time' standards.
 - For London Heathrow and London Stansted, collected and analysed data on 'waiting times' at handover points.
 - Collected and analysed monthly data of top 16 airports' audits of data submitted to CAA.
 - Audited the accuracy of data collection at 805 flights across 7 airports.
 - Collected and analysed satisfaction survey data from all airports every six months.
 - Observed 27 Access Forum meetings of 16 airports.

⁶ Access Forums are groups of disabled people and representatives of disabled people who meet with airport management regularly to discuss accessibility matters.

⁷ The CAA provides a template for airports to complete.

- Carried out in-depth analysis of 'waiting time' standards data at four airports.⁸

⁸ These were airports where onsite monitoring identified issues.

Chapter 2

Review of the year

2.1 The rankings for the 2024/25 reporting year are outlined below. Definitions of the rankings are provided in Annex 1, and a screen reader accessible version of the table is available in Annex 2.

Needs Improvement	Good	Very Good
Edinburgh	Birmingham	Aberdeen
Glasgow Prestwick	Bristol	Belfast City
London Heathrow	City of Derry	Belfast International
	Glasgow	Bournemouth
	Inverness	Cardiff
	Leeds Bradford	East Midlands
	Liverpool	Exeter
	London City	London Gatwick
	London Southend	London Luton
	London Stansted	Newcastle
	Manchester	Teesside
	Cornwall Newquay	
	Norwich	
	Southampton	

Very good

2.2 We have classified **Aberdeen, Belfast City, Belfast International, Bournemouth, Cardiff, East Midlands, Exeter, London Gatwick, London Luton, Newcastle, and Teesside** as 'very good'.

2.3 All airports in this category provide a high-quality service and closely adhere to our guidance. All these airports have met the 'very good' standard for the waiting time metrics. In addition, they have generated high response rates to their accessibility surveys and have met the 'very good' standard for survey responses. They also have independent chairs for their Access Forums and a

good range of representation of people with variety of lived experience. London Luton has scored well across all our criteria, providing a timely service and very good customer service. We have been impressed by the attention their management has given to seeking to involve disabled individuals and disability organisations in shaping not only the current service, but also in ensuring the airport places accessibility at the forefront of the airport's plans in the coming years.

- 2.4 Cardiff and London Gatwick, which were categorised as 'needs improvement' in the previous annual report because of issues regarding data collection, have significantly enhanced their data recording capabilities. Both are rated 'very good' in this year's report.
- 2.5 We are pleased by the progress made by Gatwick, the UK's second largest airport. It has shown how size is not an impediment to good accessibility, both in terms of overcoming challenging infrastructure and assisting high numbers of passengers. We note that Gatwick has invested in its assistance service through the recruitment of additional staff and refreshed its management team, with additional staff to oversee the function. This refreshed management team has put in place multiple levels of data assurance processes, exceeding the CAA's audit requirements, and providing enhanced assurance in the data robustness. Gatwick's Access Forum has demonstrated best practice by holding six meetings, ensuring forum members are involved during key project phases, and next year it will hold monthly online sessions with quarterly in-person meetings. It has also conducted a formal skills audit of the panel to assess diversity across disability types and expertise, identifying areas where they may need to seek further external input.

Good

- 2.6 We have classified **Birmingham, Bristol, City of Derry, Glasgow, Inverness, Leeds Bradford, Liverpool, London City, London Southend, London Stansted, Manchester, Cornwall Newquay, Norwich, and Southampton** as 'good'.
- 2.7 Manchester, London Stansted, and London City received a 'good' rating. Some issues were identified with the way auditing by the relevant airport management

was carried out, with this not always being in line with standard audit practice. Further, these airports have not audited as many flights as recommended in CAP1228a. While this raised some data assurance concerns, these were partly mitigated by the CAA's own monitoring, which did not identify issues with data robustness at these airports. All three airports need to improve this aspect of their performance next year to provide greater assurances that robust processes are in place for overseeing how performance is measured.

- 2.8 In addition, London Stansted needs to do more to improve the passenger experience once passengers have disembarked the aircraft. At this airport, many passengers wait in a waiting area after transferring from an ambulift to a wheelchair upon arrival. We require the airport to carry out monitoring of this area. Although the results of this monitoring show that the majority of passengers wait in this area for less than the 10 minutes recommended time in CAP1228a, some passengers wait here for unacceptably long periods. More investment in staffing at this point in the arrival journey is needed to ensure the experience of disabled and less mobile passengers is more seamless through the airport.
- 2.9 At Manchester, we have noted that there has been continued investment and our own monitoring of the service observed high quality, timely assistance provided by staff who were friendly and efficient. We also noted how the airport enhances the passenger experience by encouraging independence, with disabled and less mobile passengers often being assisted through the airport by friends and family. The airport has also undergone significant construction work this year and we have been particularly impressed by how the airport has overcome these challenges to maintain a good quality service. We have rated the airport as 'good' rather than 'very good' due to the audit concerns mentioned above.
- 2.10 London City has made significant improvements to its Access Forum and has appointed an independent chair. We have rated the airport as 'good' rather than 'very good' also due to audit concerns.
- 2.11 We identified some process issues at Glasgow with how management measured performance against waiting time metrics, which is why we have rated the airport as 'good' rather than 'very good'. We, together with relevant staff from the airport and its service provider, carried out significant analysis of the mechanisms used

to assess performance. We were impressed by the seriousness with which management at the airport took the matter as soon as issues were raised, recognising that being able to evidence what they believe to be a high-quality service is critical. The management has now put in place new processes, and these are working well. We also monitored several flights at the airport in October and identified no performance issues.

- 2.12 Bristol, Birmingham, and Leeds Bradford also had some performance issues earlier in the peak period in May and June but, with our support, addressed the issues swiftly and for the majority of the year performed well – providing a timely service, with high customer satisfaction scores. Bristol was rated as ‘needs improvement’ in last year’s report as it did not meet the waiting time targets for a ‘good’ rating. We are pleased that the airport has taken action to improve its service, including changing its assistance service provider with effect from March 2024 and adding more resources – staff and equipment – to its operation. The performance in the May and June peak months, when it did not reach our standards, was disappointing, but the impact of the investment made at the airport means that across the remainder of the year performance improved significantly and, on average, across the year the waiting time standard was achieved.
- 2.13 Last year, we rated Liverpool as ‘needs improvement’ because the airport received an unacceptably low number of responses (in proportion to the number of passengers requesting assistance) to their satisfaction survey, despite meeting ‘very good’ levels of service and other aspects of performance. We are pleased that Liverpool has increased the response rate. However, it has not carried out audits consistently throughout the year, with four months having no audits. As a result, it is rated as ‘good’.
- 2.14 Inverness, Norwich, and London Southend, which has re-entered the Quality Standards Framework for the first time since 2019, provided a ‘very good’ level of service but they continue to operate forums chaired by airport personnel. These airports are restricted to ‘good’ as a result. CAP1228 strongly recommends that external and independent disabled individuals chair forums. Last year, the CAA outlined its expectation that all airports should move towards

appointing independent chairs, either from a disability group or an individual with lived experience of disability.

- 2.15 Southampton's assistance service also performed well, with a 'very good' level of service but last year we reported that Access Forums needed to have adequate representation. As no improvement has been observed at the airport, the rating has been restricted to 'good'.
- 2.16 Cornwall Newquay and City of Derry are rated as 'good' because, although the performance against waiting time standards was 'very good', both airports did not generate sufficient survey responses for us to make a judgement that would support a 'very good' standard for customer satisfaction.

Needs improvement

- 2.17 We have classified **Edinburgh, London Heathrow, and Glasgow Prestwick** as 'needs improvement'.
- 2.18 Edinburgh has been rated as 'needs improvement'. Edinburgh was below the performance standard for the arriving passengers waiting time standard as set out in CAP 1228. Following a change of contract to a new service provider in December 2023, there were some operational issues up until June. These included significant attrition of its assistance service workforce, which required time to recruit replacement staff, and issues with managerial oversight at the contracted service provider. The airport has invested significantly in both facilities and staffing to address increasing demand for the service, a 30% increase from the previous year, instructing the service provider to refresh its local management whilst also implementing recovery measures. This had an immediate effect, leading to improved performance throughout the rest of the year. It is now routinely meeting a 'very good' standard. As a result, we consider that 'needs improvement' rather than 'poor' is an appropriate rating.
- 2.19 London Heathrow is rated as 'needs improvement'. This rating reflects significant concerns over whether the data provided to the CAA on waiting time standards at Terminal 3 is an accurate reflection of the provision of service. It is important to note that our finding is localised at Terminal 3. For Terminals 2, 4 and 5 we have

noted no issues with data collection and the service is high-quality, routinely meeting a 'very good' standard.

- 2.20 Discrepancies were identified between waiting time data provided to the CAA and that observed through audit processes undertaken both by the CAA and the airport's own internal audits. Given these concerns, we cannot be assured that the waiting time standards were met at Terminal 3, and we do not consider that Heathrow is meeting the requirement for an airport to have 'robust processes in place for overseeing how it measures its performance', as set out in CAP1228. During our in-person monitoring at Terminal 3 we noted that while passengers were generally disembarked from an aircraft quickly, some passengers then waited for the equipment needed to provide assistance, such as buggies or wheelchairs, with some arriving passengers being left for unacceptable periods of time without access to toilets or other facilities. In addition, and as set out in our 2023/24 report, some passengers, once assisted off aircraft in Terminal 3, wait for a further period in an area in the arrivals corridor at a handover point in order to be assisted from one piece of equipment to another.
- 2.21 Heathrow has advised us that it has now put in place measures at Terminal 3 to rectify the data issues in future. In relation to service levels, we acknowledge that there are infrastructure challenges at Terminal 3 that limit the use of some equipment, and that the increase in demand for assistance across the airport had created significant challenges for the airport. Heathrow has been responsive to these challenges through the development of its Accessibility Strategy and we encourage the airport management to adapt the service to meet these challenges. As we have said earlier in this report, passengers' assistance needs could be met through a range of different service offerings, many of which would enhance the passenger experience and grant passengers more independence.
- 2.22 Glasgow Prestwick failed to convene any Access Forum meetings during the reporting year. Glasgow Prestwick wanted to refresh its Forum to ensure membership had a good representation of disabled people and representatives from pan-disability organisations but encountered difficulties in attracting external participants to attend or chair meetings. Glasgow Prestwick has advised us that a new independent chair has been appointed, together with three other

members. The chair and members have lived experience of a range of disabilities or disabled organisations. It has also scheduled its first meeting for September 2025.

Poor

2.23 We have classified no airport as 'poor'.

Annex 1

Definition of rankings

Good

This means the following:

Departing passengers

- Over the whole year, 99% of all departing notified disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility are provided with assistance within 30 minutes of making themselves known at a designated point.
- Over the whole year, 99% of all departing non-notified disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility are provided with assistance within 45 minutes of making themselves known at a designated point.
- The airport scores an average rating of 3.5 (where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent) or better in the satisfaction survey of users.

Arriving passengers

- Over the whole year, for at least 97% of arriving pre-notified disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility, assistance is available for each passenger within 20 minutes from 'on chocks' arrival.
- Over the whole year, for at least 97% of arriving non-notified disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility, assistance is available for each passenger within 45 minutes from 'on chocks' arrival.
- The airport consistently meets any "continuous journey" standards for arriving passengers individually agreed with the CAA.
- The airport scores an average rating of 3.5 (where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent) or better in the satisfaction survey of users.

Oversight and engagement

- The airport publishes on its website, and submits to the CAA, information as set out in paragraphs 37 and 38 of CAP 1228.

- The airport has robust processes in place for overseeing how it measures its performance; or, where relevant, the CAA has accepted commitments from the airport to strengthen this oversight.
- The airport routinely collects email addresses and sends satisfaction surveys to users of the service, with both physical and 'hidden' disabilities.
- The airport engages effectively with disability organisations through an 'Accessibility Forum'.

Very good

This means the following:

Departing passengers

- Over the whole year, 99% of all departing notified disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility are provided with assistance within 30 minutes of making themselves known at a designated point.
- Over the whole year, 99% of all departing non-notified disabled passengers and passengers with reduced mobility are provided with assistance within 45 minutes of making themselves known at a designated point.
- The airport scores a rating of 4 or better in the satisfaction survey of users (where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent).

Arriving passengers

- Over the whole year, for at least 98% of arriving pre-notified disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility, assistance is available within 20 minutes from 'on chocks' arrival.
- Over the whole year, for at least 98% of arriving non-notified disabled passengers and those with reduced mobility, assistance is available for each passenger within 45 minutes from 'on chocks' arrival.
- The airport consistently meets any 'continuous journey' standards for arriving passengers individually agreed with the CAA.
- The airport scores a rating of 4 or better in the satisfaction survey of users (where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent).

Oversight and engagement

- The airport publishes on its website, and submits to the CAA, information as set out in paragraphs 37 and 38 of CAP 1228.
- The airport has robust processes in place for overseeing how it measures its performance; or, where relevant, the CAA has accepted commitments from the airport to strengthen this oversight.
- The airport routinely collects email addresses and sends satisfaction surveys to users of the service, with both physical and 'hidden' disabilities.
- The airport engages effectively with disability organisations through an 'Accessibility Forum'.

Needs improvement

This means the following:

- Over the course of the reporting year the airport has failed to meet all the criteria for a 'good' performance standard. However, the airport has taken the necessary steps during the year to identify the issues with its assistance service and to agree a plan with the CAA 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

This means the following:

- Over the course of the reporting year the airport has failed to meet all the criteria for a 'good' performance standard. Further, the airport has not taken the necessary steps during the year to identify the issues with its assistance service and to agree a plan with the CAA to improve its performance.

Annex 2

Airport ratings – accessible for screen readers

Eleven airports received a ‘very good’ rating for the reporting year:

- Aberdeen
- Belfast City
- Belfast International
- Bournemouth
- Cardiff
- East Midlands
- Exeter
- London Gatwick
- London Luton
- Newcastle
- Teesside

Fourteen airports received a ‘good’ rating for the reporting year:

- Birmingham
- Bristol
- City of Derry
- Glasgow
- Inverness
- Leeds Bradford
- Liverpool
- London City
- London Southend
- London Stansted
- Manchester
- Cornwall Newquay
- Norwich

- Southampton

Three airports received a 'needs improvement' rating for the reporting year:

- Edinburgh
- London Heathrow
- Glasgow Prestwick

No airport received a 'poor' rating for the reporting year.