

CAA Consumer Panel

Work Programme:

April 2020 – March 2022



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About the CAA Consumer Panel

Who we are

The CAA Consumer Panel is a group of eight independent experts, who bring together deep consumer expertise and experience along with strategic thinking, applying these in a practical way to improve the experience for commercial air passengers. The Panel member's biographies can be found at the end of this document.

What we do

The Panel acts as a non-statutory critical friend, giving expert advice to the CAA as policy is being developed, and making sure the consumer interest is central. The Panel's objective is to champion the interest of consumers.

The key activities of the Panel are to:

- Help the CAA to understand fully, and take account of, the interests of consumers in its policy development and decisions.
- Use existing CAA research, request the CAA undertakes new targeted research, and to gather intelligence, to understand the aviation consumer experience.
- Provide the CAA with feedback from a consumer perspective on the effectiveness of its policies and practices.

Our remit

The Panel focuses on the interests of current and potential aviation consumers. Citizen or community issues, such as noise from flightpaths, do not fall under our remit.

Chair's Foreword

This is the Consumer Panel's second workplan since I took over as Chair in 2018 and covers two years from 2020 to 2022. We are proud of the work that we have carried out over the last two years, which we believe has contributed to better outcomes for consumers in aviation. We have made contributions in a number of areas of importance to consumers and reported on progress in our annual reports.

This workplan is focused on three strands of work: building the evidence base, driving better outcomes for consumers, and influencing future frameworks. We will continue our work focusing on the needs of vulnerable consumers, building on the work we initiated in 2018-19. We will also build on the work we have carried out on information provision, expanding into the availability of environmental information for consumers, looking at what consumers want and how it can best be provided. We will contribute to ongoing work by the CAA and Government looking at consumer protection when airlines face insolvency, both looking at the role of insolvency legislation and, in light of recent experience with the insolvency of Thomas Cook, protection provided to passengers by ATOL.

As a Panel, we aim to challenge constructively the CAA and make helpful recommendations to ensure the CAA keeps consumers at the heart of all it does to the benefit of those who currently fly and those who do not. We want to see air travel accessible to all those who want to fly, ensuring passengers receive a good quality of service from those with whom they interact, and the information they need.

This work plan lays out the detail of our proposed work over the next 2 years. A number of elements of our workplan depend on external factors, so we will keep our programme flexible so that if events change we have the ability to reprioritise our work. We aim to be responsive and flexible in order best to represent the needs of consumers in aviation. This includes, where appropriate, reacting to external events that impact on aviation consumers such as the current Covid-19 pandemic.

We will continue to report annually on the progress we make, as well as exploring new ways to publicise our work, including publishing articles and reporting to the Board of the CAA on issues that we see as a priority.



Jenny Willott

CAA Consumer Panel Chair

Chapter 1

The Panel's vision

What we want to see for aviation consumers

The Panel is here to make sure that the consumer interest is placed at the heart of the CAA's work. We want to see markets and regulation that have the clear interests of existing and future aviation consumers at their heart and that work effectively to ensure effective airline competition on price and service quality. Airports should provide an affordable, good quality and consumer focused service, while empowered consumers are able to make informed decisions about which companies to use. Airline services and airport environments should be designed and delivered to ensure accessibility to everyone, and people who may need extra help should be supported to make sure they can effectively access the market. And when things go wrong, consumers should have quick, fair and easy access to redress. This will in turn help the CAA to deliver its strategic objective of empowering consumers.

How we prioritise our work

The Panel is a small, specialist policy resource for the CAA and delivers high quality, evidence-based advice in a way which is designed to maximise its impact. The Panel therefore prioritises its work carefully, asking four key questions before embarking on any given project:

- Is the issue important for aviation consumers?
- Does it fall within the Panel's remit?
- Is it an area where the CAA is best placed to effect change?
- Is it (or should it be) a priority for the CAA?

The Panel will also prioritise the interests of consumers it considers to be at greater risk of vulnerability throughout its work.

Chapter 2

Assessing the evidence

The Aviation Consumer Survey

Our primary evidence base is the CAA's Aviation Consumer Survey, a biannual nationally representative survey of 3,500 UK consumers, which measures attitudes and behaviour towards flying over time.

The survey aims to:

- Increase understanding of flying behaviours and attitudes towards flying, including barriers for non-flyers, as well as priorities for choosing future flights;
- Increase understanding of perceptions of the aviation industry in the areas of levels of safety, choice, value and fair treatment, environmental performance and security;
- Measure satisfaction with the flying experience; and
- Increase understanding of attitudes towards experiences of disruption when flying and the handling of any subsequent complaints.

The Consumer Panel was instrumental in introducing and developing the survey, which is a significant strategic tool for measuring consumer satisfaction with the aviation experience.

Key findings

The Aviation Consumer Survey shows that overall satisfaction with the travel experience is high, with 84% of respondents saying they were satisfied. This is good news for consumers, since the survey had showed a steady decline since March 2016, which has now levelled off.

Satisfaction with deciding which flight to book and the process of booking flights have both risen since the last wave of the survey. The proportion who say they were satisfied with the experience when deciding which flight to book has risen to 85% from 82%.

The environmental consciousness of passengers is the headline measure that has increased the most. More than a third of respondents now say that they would think about the environmental impact of flying (35%) or would pay more to reduce this impact (34%). This suggests that consumers may desire more or better information in this area to help them make informed choices.

When thinking about their most recent flight consumers are least likely to have been satisfied with the amount of choice between airlines or between UK departure airports.

Levels of satisfaction with passport control / immigration (81%) and with shops, restaurants and services provided at UK airports (75%) have seen a small increase compared to the previous wave of research. This indicates an improvement in the airport industry, although a similar pattern was demonstrated in previous months, which was then followed by a drop in satisfaction, suggesting efforts should be consistently made to improve.

The survey found relatively high awareness of some typical airline terms and conditions such as those around baggage allowances. However, less than half of respondents said they were familiar with others, including fees for correcting simple mistakes and rights if a flight was delayed. As the UK leaves the EU the time may therefore be right for consideration not only of how well aware aviation consumers are of their rights, but how those could start to change over time if the UK decides to move away from following EU regulations in this area.

In terms of assistance provision, 83% of respondents were aware of assistance, although there was less knowledge of what detailed provisions might be. Satisfaction with assistance provided were also high at over 80%. Changing demographics mean many people are becoming aware of assistance as developing or changing health conditions mean they are more likely to need help, and this is an area the Panel will continue to focus on throughout its work.

Finally, satisfaction with complaints handling remains poor, in line with low scores since the survey began in 2016. There has been an increase in satisfaction from 56% in April 2019 to 63% in this wave but this remains a key area of concern.

Chapter 3

Work plans 2020 - 2022

In light of the evidence set out above, the Panel intends to deliver the following commitments between April 2020 and March 2022. We do note the dynamic environment in which we are working and we are mindful of the current Covid-19 pandemic's impact on air travel. We will therefore remain flexible and if other issues arise will use our criteria to check and if necessary reprioritise.

Building the evidence base

The Aviation Consumer Survey continues to be the primary source of evidence on the consumer experience. The Panel will continue to input to the design of the survey, provide advice on new questions and areas to explore, and offer insights and analysis of the results for each wave.

In addition, in the context of recent high profile aviation accidents, the Panel has been asked to work with the CAA to explore how passengers may feel about safety related information, including how much awareness passengers have and want to have.

Driving better outcomes for consumers

The Panel will continue to give input to the CAA, and more widely, to help improve the experience of aviation consumers. As part of our 'business as usual' and in addition to the CAA, we work with other regulators, Government, aviation businesses, consumer representatives, accessibility groups and others to maximise our impact. We will continue to do this. And building on the previous plan where we focused on the consumer principles of access, redress and service quality, in this plan we will continue to focus this work programme on redress and also on information, safety, representation and fairness. We will:

- Set out our views on the potential and limitations of information as a remedy, and how it can be used to support decision making.
- Work with the CAA to explore consumer views on environmental information in more detail, including what consumers want to use environmental information for and how this could best be delivered.
- Input to the design of new messaging to consumers regarding allowing liquids and gels on aircraft where advanced screening technology is in place.

- The Panel continues to prioritise the needs of vulnerable consumers throughout its work. We will continue to provide input via specialist accessibility groups to enhance fairness for consumers at risk of vulnerability. We will also support the CAA's work on vulnerability, which was initiated by the Consumer Panel.
- Continue to press for improvements in protection, redress and how consumer complaints are dealt with by airlines and airports. This will include being cognisant of the work to reform the airline insolvency framework and considering the implications for consumers following the failure of Thomas Cook.

Influencing future frameworks

We remain cognisant of changes both outside the Panel and outside the CAA. As our new Government moves forward with its legislative programme we will remain alert to new issues and stand ready to provide support and input where needed. We will:

- Input to the CAA's broader strategic thinking on consumer matters, and ensuring the CAA's approach to economic regulation, including the expansion of Heathrow, takes into account the interests of consumers, and alongside the work of the Heathrow Consumer Challenge Board.
- Input to wider Government initiatives such as next steps following the consumer green paper, and potential work on a passenger charter.
- Stand ready to influence post-Brexit regulatory frameworks where these impact on aviation consumers.

Chapter 4

Who we are

Chair

Rt Hon Jenny Willott OBE, Chair

Jenny was appointed to the Panel in January 2018. Jenny was Member of Parliament for Cardiff Central for ten years, serving as Consumer Affairs Minister, with responsibilities including consumer policy, competition policy and employment law, Women and Equalities Minister and as a Government Whip. She is now the Director of Enterprise and Innovation at St Mary's University, Twickenham, and a Non-Executive Director for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. Prior to entering Parliament she worked in the voluntary sector, including as Chief Executive of Victim Support South Wales and Head of Advocacy for UNICEF UK.

Members

Carol Brennan

Carol is an Honorary Reader in Consumer Policy and former Director of the Consumer Dispute Resolution Centre at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. Carol's research interests include consumer policy, complaint management, dispute resolution, consumer empowerment and customer experience. Carol is a member of the Office of Rail and Road Consumer Expert Panel. She is also Chair of the Qualifications and Awards Board for the Chartered Trading Standards Institute. Between 2015 and 2019, Carol was Chair of the Scottish Legal Complaints Commission Consumer Panel. She is currently chairing a team of experts on consumer education for the European Commission. Carol conducts research for consumer policy and dispute resolution organisations, and publishes regularly in academic journals. Carol draws on her research to influence new developments in strategy, policy and practice. She has produced reports on consumer representation, the outcome of complaints and using complaints to transform services.

Helen Dolphin MBE

Helen is a committed campaigner on improving transport for disabled people. After becoming disabled in her early twenties Helen trained as a journalist and worked for ITV Anglia News as a news reporter. She followed this by taking up the role of Director of Policy and Campaigns for a national disabled charity. Helen now works as an independent mobility specialist advising government, public, commercial and professional bodies on how to improve accessibility. Helen is a member of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), Joint Chair of the Heathrow Access Advisory Group, a

Member of the British Science Associations Equality and Diversity group and Chair of her local mobility assessment centre East Anglia Driveability (EAD).

Trisha McAuley OBE

Trisha is an independent consumer expert and an experienced Non-Executive Director. For over twenty years she was a senior executive in UK and Scottish consumer organisations and is the former Scottish Director of Consumer Futures. She was awarded an OBE for services to consumer affairs in 2015. Trisha is currently the Independent Chair of National Grid's RII02 Gas and Electricity Transmission User Groups. She is also Independent Chair of two Electricity Code Governance Panels: the Grid Code Review Panel and the Connections and Use of Systems (CUSC) Panel. She is a, a Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Scotland Discipline Board, a Member of the Ofgem Gas Network Innovation Competition Panel, a Member of the Office of Rail and Road Consumer Expert Panel, and a Member of the Heathrow Consumer Challenge Board. Trisha is also a Board Member of Energy Action Scotland and a Member of the Scottish Government Energy Networks Strategic Leadership Group.

Walter Merricks CBE

Walter's career over the past 20 years has involved work with ombudsman and complaint services, competition and consumer protection systems and regulatory bodies in the retail financial services, gambling, surveying and legal services, press, telecoms, energy, copyright licensing and ATOL protection sectors. He was the inaugural Financial Ombudsman and worked with the Financial Services Consumer Panel between 1999 and 2009. He recently served for six years on the board of the Gambling Commission, and now chairs the boards of IMPRESS (the Independent Monitor for the Press), and of JUSTICE, the law reform charity.

Jacqueline Minor

Following a short period lecturing in law at the University of Leicester, Jacqueline Minor joined the European civil service, first at the Court of Justice and subsequently at the European Commission. After more than 20 years' working on Internal Market issues, including a period as Director responsible for Consumer Policy, she served as Head of the Commission's Representation in the UK from 2013 until retirement in 2017. She is a member of the Board of Governors of the University of Brighton, an Honorary Senior Fellow of Regent's University, London and a Governor of the National Institute for Economic and Social Research.

David Thomas

David is a chartered accountant and an economist. He was appointed a specialist panel member at the Competition and Markets Authority in 2017 and since 2016 has run his own consulting practice focusing on economics, regulation and disputes in the communications sector. David was a director of competition and regulatory finance at Ofcom where he had responsibility for, among other things, price controls. After leaving Ofcom he established and led KPMG's global economics and regulation practice.

Claire Whyley

Claire is a professional researcher and policy analyst, focusing on consumer behaviour and decision-making, consumer protection and consumer-focused regulation. She specialises in user-led, evidence-based and impact-focused policy development, across a range of markets, with a particular interest in vulnerable and excluded consumers. She has delivered a number of research projects focussing especially on people with low or unstable incomes and customers in arrears. Claire is also a member of a number of other Boards and Consumer Panels, including the Advertising Advisory Committee, the Finance and Leasing Association Lending Code Board, and is a Trustee of the Money Advice Trust. Claire previously completed two terms as a member of the Financial Services Consumer Panel and was Deputy Director of Policy at the National Consumer Council.