

# Minutes

## Passenger Contact Group

**Date:** 17 March 2014  
**Location:** Hilton DoubleTree, Manchester  
**Time:** 1230 - 1400

### Present

|                  |    |                             |
|------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| Paul Salveson    | PS | Board Member (Chairman)     |
| Stephen Locke    | SL | Board Member                |
| Marian Lauder    | ML | Board Member                |
| David Sidebottom | DS | Acting Chief Executive      |
| Linda McCord     | LM | Senior Passenger Manager    |
| Katie Armstrong  | KA | Passenger Team Manager      |
| Martin Clarke    | MC | Business Services Executive |

### 1. Welcome

PS welcomed everyone to the meeting, including LM who joined by conference call. There were no apologies for absences.

### 2. Key achievements to date

DS reported that passenger satisfaction with Passenger Focus had stabilised at a high level, with very few complaints against the organisation. There was a more proactive response to comments made by passengers than had been previously.

- The volume of cases was currently manageable
- Staffing in the team had stabilised at a sustainable level
- The relationship with Ventrica was good and was well embedded into the functioning of the team. The meeting agreed that it was good that they were able to take part in the Away Day
- There was a lot of interest in the team's work from stakeholders wanting to learn or share best practice
- Lessons learnt from the team's contact with passengers were increasingly feeding into other teams' work – for example the Passenger Issues Team looking into some of the issues that cause complaints
- The case study published in each month's Passenger Voice was proving popular with readers
- The relationships with some operators were still difficult and need developing further, with some specific sticking points requiring resolution. PS said that the group offered its full support to the team in tackling these issues
- KA said it was important to work closely with London TravelWatch to provide a seamless contact service to passengers.

KA reported that there hadn't yet been a notable increase in caseload following the winter storms, but that there was generally a three-month lag between an event and it having an effect on the volume of cases. The team had, however, noticed an increase in the TOCs' response time to comments from passengers. KA said that the team was regularly talking to the TOCs about their caseloads and what steps they are taking to manage them.

### 3. Review of team KPIs

KA presented the KPI reporting framework.

- The group felt that more detailed analysis was needed to understand PAS3 – “Calls to Ventrica are answered within 20 seconds”, with a target of 85%. The team was to meet Ventrica the following week to discuss this further
- PAS4 – “Appeals acknowledged within five working days” – this had not been at all good in the previous year, but had since significantly improved
- PAS5 – “Appeals closed within 35 working days” – the target of 75% was achieved for the first time in the previous month. As the backlog of cases reduces, this becomes easier. There was no single issue in causing this to be a difficult target to reach, rather a range of factors each having a small, negative effect. SL said that the 35 day time period for straight-forward cases was long, and that there was a risk this could generate slackness from the team. KA was aware of the risk. There was discussion about how to mitigate this, and KA would look at options.
- PAS7 – “Upheld complaints” – the wording of this KPI was thought to be misleading and should be revised.

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| PCG 001 | 17/03/14 | Passenger Team KPIs | Update the wording to the PAS7 key performance indicator to 'Complaints about Passenger Focus' | KA | Sep 14 |  |
|---------|----------|---------------------|--|----|--------|--|

SL raised the issue of awareness/visibility of Passenger Focus among passengers. Some TOCs gave little, no or misleading information about our role. There was thought to be potential for Passenger Focus/London TravelWatch to work together to solve this.

**The group recommends to the Board that further action is needed on this issue.**

### 4. Update on TOC complaints audit programme

LM reported on the TOC complaints audit programme. The reaction to our reviews had been particularly positive from First Great Western and East Coast, though there were mixed results elsewhere. Operators generally showed a willingness to engage. Whilst the programme was only able to look at a small sample for each operator, it gave a good insight into the quality and culture of the TOCs' processes. The intention was to produce a best practice guide for autumn 2014.

## 5. DfT audit findings

The audit had reported substantial assurance, with just a couple of low-priority actions. The group congratulated the team on the result.

SL said that there was a risk that non-completion of surveys could mask dissatisfaction, and that a target response rate of 20% was too lenient. The group agreed that the target should better reflect ambition, and we should constantly strive to get a better response rate.

There was a mistake in the specification whereby "Quality assurance processes" was both in and out of audit scope. It was in scope.

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| <b>PCG 002</b> | 17/03/14 | DfT audit specification | Amend the Audit terms of reference to ensure that "Quality assurance processes" is in scope   | KA | Sep 14 |  |
| <b>PCG 003</b> | 17/03/14 | Quality monitoring      | Discuss quality monitoring with LTW – with a view to comparing how we do it, plus the possibility of quality monitoring each other as a benchmarking exercise | KA | Sep 14 |  |

ML queried the quality of the audit, and asked whether there was anything significant that hadn't been covered. KA suggested that the auditor could have been better briefed beforehand. ML reported that the senior DfT auditor suggested that such audits are not long or rigorous enough. There was a need to ensure that we get value for money from these audits. If the audit was not as thorough as perhaps it could have been, there was seen to be a risk that the "substantial assurance" finding could generate complacency.

The group recommended to the Audit Committee that across the organisation, audits should be more focussed on where there is most risk. There should be fewer audits overall, but they should be more rigorous.

SL suggested that it would instead be useful to seek opinion/scrutiny from outside the team or organisation. It was agreed that we would return to this issue at the next meeting, ahead of making any recommendations to the Board.

# Minutes

## 6. Quarterly Board updates – data and information provided

DS presented the existing Board reporting framework for the team. The group found it to be useful, but that a six-monthly report might be more worthwhile than reporting at every Board meeting.

## 7. Terms of reference

PS asked the group whether the terms of reference as agreed in September 2013 were still acceptable. SL queried item 2.2 “Conduct an annual quality assessment exercise on a sample of complaint cases”, and asked when it might happen. DS suggested this be driven by the need of the team. PS stressed that the group was here to help rather than be burdensome, so any such activity would need to add value. The group agreed to review this point again at the next meeting.

PS asked how the group could engage more closely with Ventrica. SL suggest we arrange to visit their office in Southend.

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| PCG 004 | 17/03/14 | Ventrica | Arrange a PCG visit to Ventrica's office in Southend | KA/M<br>C | Sep 14 |  |
|---------|----------|----------|--|-----------|--------|--|

## Any other business

- KA reported on a couple of items of current work:
  - Improving the quality of the information on the website in order to better provide useful guidance to passengers
  - Create an internal knowledge base for colleagues, rather than simply relying on individuals.

The meeting **closed** at **14.00** hrs.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

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Paul Salveson  
Passenger Contact Group Chairman

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Date

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## Freedom of Information Act 2000 Section 22

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Proposed publication date       | 17 September 2014                         |
| Publication issues              | Certain sections may need to be redacted. |
| Diary entry to be made by       | Martin Clarke                             |
| Publication to be authorised by | Jon Carter                                |

DRAFT