



## The UK Aviation Industry Code of Practice on Disruptive Passengers

### Introduction

The UK has one of the largest, most vibrant and competitive aviation markets in the world. More than 251 million passengers passed through UK airports in 2015 and there were over 2.1 million flights. The vast majority of passengers reach their destination having had a safe and enjoyable journey. However, a small minority of passengers behave in a disruptive manner, causing problems at the airport and on-board aircraft.

While disruptive behaviour remains rare, when it does happen the impact can be significant – for fellow passengers, employees working at the airport and in the air, as well as for the disruptive passengers themselves. The results can be nuisance and annoyance at one end of the scale, to threats to passengers, crew and aircraft safety at the other. These incidents can be costly and cause delays.

Disruptive incidents occur for different reasons and take different forms. Internal airline data suggests that excessive and uncontrolled alcohol consumption is a common factor, but it is not the only factor. Whatever the cause, disruptive behaviour on-board an aircraft is illegal and the worst cases can result in fines, travel bans and custodial sentences.

In the summer of 2015, airlines, airports, the police, the CAA, government officials and a major airport retailer met to consider the problem. It was clear from the discussion that there are many examples of good practice – both within individual businesses and across the sector at certain locations – but there is not a co-ordinated national approach to the issue. This means that passengers do not receive consistent messaging and good practice is not widely shared.

This voluntary code of practice has been developed by members of Airlines UK, the Airport Operators Association, the Airport Police Commanders Group, the Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers and the UK Travel Retail Forum. The purpose of the Code is to create a common, consistent approach that co-ordinates and enhances existing efforts to prevent and minimise disruptive passenger behaviour.

Signatories to the Code participate voluntarily because they are committed to ensuring passengers have a consistently safe and enjoyable experience when flying for work or leisure, and to providing a safe and pleasant work environment for their employees. The Code will be kept under review and updated periodically to ensure it remains relevant, proportionate and effective. The Code does not alter any existing legal obligations on any signatories.

## **Our principles**

There are some clear principles that underpin this Code.

- All passengers are responsible and accountable for their own behaviour.
- Disruptive behaviour cannot and will not be tolerated.
- Reducing disruptive behaviour is a shared responsibility of all partners on the ground and in the air.

## **Our commitments**

Signatories to this Code commit to working together to prevent and minimise the number of disruptive passenger incidents. These commitments cover:

1. our approach to disruptive behaviour;
2. supporting employees;
3. the sale and consumption of alcohol; and
4. educating and communicating with passengers.

## **The Code**

### **1) Our approach to disruptive behaviour**

Signatories to this Code take a zero-tolerance approach to disruptive behaviour.

- All signatories seek to pre-empt disruptive behaviour so that potential incidents are avoided.
- All signatories will communicate incidents of disruptive behaviour in the airport to relevant partners where it may help to prevent or manage further disruptive behaviour.
- Airlines, airports, bars, restaurants and retailers will report incidents of disruptive behaviour to the police and support any resulting police action.
- The police will support airlines, airports, bars, restaurants and retailers to improve the reporting of incidents.
- The police will investigate all reported incidents, including those flights where foreign police forces have refused to deal with or have not been made aware of an outbound disruptive passenger.
- The police will take action that is appropriate to the incident, including seeking prosecutions or pushing for compensation orders on behalf of the airline for diversions, damage to aircraft, and delays.
- Airlines will deny boarding where necessary to protect fellow passengers and crew from disruptive behaviour.
- Airlines will seek to hold passengers who are disruptive to account for their behaviour. This will include recouping from passengers the costs resulting from their disruptive behaviour, including for diversions, damage to aircraft, and delays, and implementing bans on future travel.
- Airlines will work with their trade associations and regulators to ensure the reporting and data collection of incidents is consistent so that progress in reducing incidents can be measured.
- Airports shall discuss disruptive passenger issues in airport forums, including, for example, with airports, airlines, retailers, bars and restaurants and the Police and other relevant parties, to seek to ensure that the spirit of the code of conduct is upheld and issues addressed.
- Airports will seek to prevent the consumption of any alcohol that is brought into the airport, alcohol that is purchased at off-sales premises within the terminal and alcohol that is purchased at duty free shops.

## **2) Supporting employees**

Signatories to this Code will train, empower and support their staff to identify, pre-empt, de-escalate and manage disruptive passenger behaviour.

- All signatories will provide the necessary procedures, guidance, tools, training and post-incident support for their employees.
- All signatories will provide input into the training provided by each signatory if requested.
- The police will respond to requests for assistance from airline, airport, bar, restaurant and retailer employees dealing with a disruptive passenger incident.

## **3) The sale and consumption of alcohol**

Signatories to this Code will practice the responsible and controlled selling or supplying of alcohol and encourage the responsible consumption of alcohol by passengers.

- Airlines, bars, lounges, restaurants and retailers will train their staff to practice the responsible selling of alcohol, including limiting or stopping the sale/supply of alcohol to prevent or manage disruptive behaviour.
- Airports will seek to ensure that their bars, lounges and restaurants follow best practice when selling or supplying alcohol, and will encourage parties to sign up to the code. Alongside other partners and operators, this could include the establishment or continuation of a Best Bar None scheme or equivalent scheme. Airports will encourage their bars, lounges and restaurants to gain accreditation.
- Airlines, bars, lounges, restaurants and retailers will not sell or supply alcohol to a person who they believe to be intoxicated or encourage excessive alcohol consumption.
- Retailers will advise passengers not to open and consume alcohol before or during their flight.
- Airlines will advise passengers that they may limit or stop the sale or serving of alcohol, and that only alcohol sold or served on-board the aircraft should be consumed.
- Airlines will take steps to prevent the consumption of alcohol not sold or served on-board. This could include pre-boarding and on-board announcements, storing duty free purchases in a separate location during the flight, and the use of sealed tamper proof bags.
- Airlines, bars, lounges, restaurants and retailers will ensure that their staff co-operate with the police:
  - when requiring written statements of evidence in relation to an investigation; and
  - when requiring entry to the premises in order to conduct a routine visit.
- Bars, lounges and restaurants will have a Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) responsible for selling or supplying alcohol. The DPS should be in day-to-day control of the establishment and if not contactable, a nominated senior member of staff will be responsible on each shift. The DPS will also represent the retailer at the airport's disruptive passenger forum.
- Bars, lounges and restaurants will maintain a record of their DPS and nominated persons, disruptive incidents and refused sales or service and staff training records that is available for inspection on visits to premises by the police.

## **4) Educating and communicating with passengers**

Signatories to this Code will individually and collectively:

- promote responsible and considerate behaviour among air passengers;
- communicate to passengers what disruptive behaviour is and why it is unacceptable;
- educate passengers about the specific law around behaviour on-board aircraft and the negative implications and penalties that can result from disruptive behaviour; and
- educate passengers about the industry standards around the consumption of alcohol on-board aircraft.