

BRITISH AIRWAYS LAUNCHES A DEDICATED SUPPORT TEAM FOR CUSTOMERS WITH ADDITIONAL ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS AS PART OF ITS £6.5BN INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

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- Airline announces next phase of multi-million pounds investment for customers requiring additional assistance with introduction of 20-strong team of accessibility experts
- Team will assist more than half a million customers with disabilities who fly each year – their enquiries were formerly handled by airline’s general customer service team
- New direct phone line now connects customers straight to specialist team

Part of British Airways' £6.5bn investment for customers and follows the launch earlier this year of airline's new staff training programme to improve assistance for customers with hidden and visible disabilities.

In the latest phase of its £6.5bn investment for customers, British Airways has launched a dedicated customer care team for travellers who require additional assistance to ensure every journey they take with the airline is as straightforward and stress-free as possible.

The hand-picked team of customer service professionals received specialist training* to enable them to answer any questions customers have when they get in touch via phone or email and will help them understand what to expect during their journey.

They will also be able to help:

- Make new flight, hotel and car hire bookings
- Arrange bespoke assistance for customers
- Pre-book seating
- Inform airport staff and cabin crew about specific requirements
- Provide information and support to empower more customers to have the confidence to fly

Caroline Martinoli, British Airways' Director of Brand and Customer Experience said: "I am really excited about the possibilities the new team will open up for the 50,000 customers requiring additional assistance who travel with us each month. Every member of the team is incredibly passionate about helping our customers and enabling them to relax and enjoy British Airways' unique service."

In April, British Airways became the first and only airline to be awarded the renowned Autism Friendly Award by the National Autistic Society and has now become the first airline to produce a Visual Guide to Flying to help customers prepare for their flight. The guide, which can be found on the airline's website ba.com, is endorsed by the National Autistic Society and explains the sights, sounds, smells and experiences customers may encounter during their journey**.

Accessibility training programme

Earlier this year British Airways began its largest ever accessibility staff training programme for almost 30,000 customer-facing colleagues. Since the introduction of the Beyond Accessibility Programme in January, the carrier has seen a significant increase in customer satisfaction from travellers who require additional assistance.

Aiming to become the airline of choice for customers with both hidden and visible disabilities, British Airways has worked with disability specialists to produce materials for the new programme. They include a new library of short videos*** providing information about different types of hidden disabilities and practical advice on how to support customers at each stage of their journey, and a new training video to help staff support and confidently interact with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Victoria Williams, Founder of *terptree*, which produced the video said: "We are delighted to have worked with British Airways to help its employees understand how to support their deaf customers. This has included collaborating with a team of professional deaf filmmakers who produced, directed and shot a training film to teach staff simple British Sign Language."

Ends

Notes to editors

*Each member of the newly-formed customer care team have passed an intensive specialist training course, which included sessions with expert accessibility consultants and charity groups such as the Queen Elizabeth Foundation, Guide Dogs UK and Open Doors.

**British Airways' new Hidden Disabilities Visual Guide has been produced in partnership with Learning Rose, a specialist consultancy experienced in designing support material for people with autism. Customers can find the guide here: www.ba.com/visual-guide.

***The digital video library has been produced by disability specialists Ethos Farm.

- More information on the range of services offered by British Airways for customers with additional accessibility needs can be found [here](#).
- The British Airways Accessibility Team can be contacted via UK freephone number 0800 408 1100 from Monday to Saturday, 09:00 to 17:00. Outside of this time, customers can leave a message and the team will respond or send the team an email [here](#).
- British Airways is investing £6.5 billion for its customers over five years, taking delivery of 73 new aircraft including A350 and 787s, refurbishing its long-haul fleet with new cabins so they look and feel new, introducing new, redesigned lounges, new dining across all cabins, new bedding and amenity kits for First, Club World and World Traveller Plus, best quality onboard WiFi to every aircraft and providing access to power at every aircraft seat. The airline recently introduced its Club Suite, a new business class seat with direct aisle access on its A350 aircraft, which will be rolled out across the British Airways' long-haul fleet over the next few years.

Contact Details:

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