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 292 million passengers passed through UK airports in 2018[1] and there were over 2.2 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 passenger, 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. Excessive and uncontrolled alcohol consumption is often a contributing factor, but it is not the only one. Whatever the cause, disruptive behaviour on-board an aircraft is illegal, and the worst cases can result in fines, travel bans and custodial sentences.

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. It was agreed that the Code would be kept under review and updated periodically to ensure it remains relevant, proportionate and effective. This version of the code, 2.0, is reflective of that iterative process and highlights some of the most recent actions taken by signatories working under the Code's principles. The Code does not alter any existing legal obligations on any signatories.

Our Principles

At the highest-level signatories to the Code agree that:
- All air transport passengers are responsible and accountable for their own behaviour.
- Disruptive behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Reducing disruptive behaviour is the shared responsibility of all signatories.

There are some practical principles that signatories to the Code agree are the best avenues for tackling the issue of disruptive passenger behaviour. These principles inform the commitments, outlined further in the Code, made by the signatories at each stage of the passenger journey. The principles of the Code are:

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[1] https://www.caa.co.uk/uploadedFiles/CAA/Content/Standard_Content/Data_and_analysis/Datasets/Airport_stats/Airport_data_2018_annual/Table_01_Size_of_UK_Airports.pdf

1. **Communication with passengers** is vital to furthering the understanding of disruptive behaviour and why it is unacceptable.
2. **Empowering employees to take the correct action and taking direct action as companies**, identifying, de-escalating and managing disruptive behaviour, is a crucial element of implementing the Code of Practice.
3. **Working with all partners**, across the aviation eco-system is necessary in order to comprehensively tackle the issue of disruptive passengers.
4. **Controlling the sale of alcohol,** allowing passengers to enjoy drinking in a responsible way, while reducing the prevalence of "binge-drinking culture".

Our Commitments

Signatories to this Code commit to working together to prevent and minimise the number of disruptive passenger incidents at UK airports and on-board aircraft. The Code follows the passenger journey, outlining signatories' commitments at each stage and highlighting the range of measures which meet these commitments.

Prior to arrival → At the airport → Onboard aircraft → Post-incident action

1) <u>Prior to arrival at the airport</u>

Signatories to the Code recognise the importance of pre-arrival communication to passengers and training of staff. Signatories commit to the following:

- **Promote responsible and considerate passenger behaviour**
    - Reminding passengers of the zero-tolerance approach taken by the industry towards disruptive behaviour through social media campaigns such as 'One Too Many'[2].
    - Using company social media channels and consumer-facing communications to reiterate this message to passengers.
    - Companies publishing the Code of Practice on their websites.
    - Airports communicating the detail and significance of the Code of Practice to all retail partners

- **Educate passengers on the specific law around behaviour onboard aircraft and at airports**
    - Proactively contact, via text or email, passengers booked to travel on routes where sustained disruptive passenger behaviour has been recorded.
    - Airports publishing their byelaws on their websites, highlighting where disruptive passenger provisions have been included.
    - Airports changing their airport byelaws to better empower police and airport staff to prevent disruptive passenger behaviour and take action where it does occur.

- **Improve staff training to ensure they can identify, pre-empt, de-escalate and manage incidents**

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[2] http://onetoomany.co.uk/

- Airlines, bars, lounges, restaurants and retailers training their staff to practice the responsible selling of alcohol, including limiting or stopping the sale/supply of alcohol to prevent or manage disruptive behaviour.
- Training Duty-Free retailing staff, on induction, regarding their responsibilities towards alcohol purchases and disruptive passengers.
- Briefing staff at regular intervals (e.g. every three months) to refresh their initial training and share the latest policies and insights.
- Training crew to a high standard, including de-escalation training to help manage situations and perception training to look for the warning signs of a disruptive incident.
- Training airport staff to deal with disruptive behaviour, including conflict-management training.
- Training all staff to detect and support passengers with hidden disabilities, as not all disruptive behaviour incidents are alcohol-related.
- Reviewing training practices, incorporating best practice from airlines, airports, handling agents, police and retailers.
- Signatories feeding into the training provided by other parties.

- **Prepare for potential disruptive behaviour as best as possible**
  - Local police, airlines and the airport operator working proactively, together, to identify high-risk flights that require closer attention. This allows heightened communication and coordination with all parties with respect to these flights.

2) At the airport

A passenger's journey through the airport brings them into contact with a wide range of actors who all must play a role in helping to mitigate disruptive passenger incidents. Signatories commit to the following:

- **Promote responsible and considerate passenger behaviour**
  - Airports displaying physical 'One Too Many' signage, airside and landside, as well as table-top signs in airport bars and restaurants.
  - Airports distributing warning 'One Too Many' leaflets to bars, restaurants and duty-free retailers throughout the airport campus.

- **Educate passengers on the specific law around behaviour onboard aircraft and at airports**
  - Airports display posters, where appropriate, the latest airport byelaws highlighting provisions on disruptive behaviour.
  - Duty-Free retailers including messaging on shelves, till receipts, and carrier bags, reminding passengers not to open liquor purchases until final arrival.
  - Duty-Free retail staff verbally reminding passengers of their obligation not to consume the alcohol bought in-flight.

- **Change sales practices to reduce the permeation of a "binge drinking" culture airside**
  - Duty-Free retailers placing alcohol purchases into sealed, labelled plastic bags to deter on-board consumption.
  - Duty-Free retailers stamping boarding cards for those individuals on troublesome routes who have purchased alcohol; enabling airlines to decide to place these purchases into the hold of the aircraft.
  - Airports banning certain drinks types and promotions to discourage binge drinking:
    - Banning Double-Pint measures
    - Banning shots
    - Banning sale of miniature measures of spirit at Duty-Free retailers

- **Manage disruptive behaviour with professionalism and a zero-tolerance approach**
  - Bars, lounges, restaurants and retailers cease selling alcohol to a person who they believe to be intoxicated.
  - Operating a scheme for warning passengers who are observed to be borderline or boisterous. Where the passenger gets a warning, the message is relayed to the handling agents and other food and drink outlets in the airport.
  - Airport staff and/or police patrolling the drop-off area, terminal concourse and visiting boarding gates ahead of potentially problematic flights.
  - Airport security and/or police making themselves known to large, potentially problematic groups, arriving at the airport.
  - Airline crew and ground handlers refusing to board intoxicated and disruptive passengers. Airlines firmly support ground crew if they take that decision at the gate, even where this has impacts on an on-time departure.

- **Normalise the reporting of disruptive behaviour to empower employees**
  - Encouraging all employees on the airport campus to report the details of any potential or ongoing disruptive individual, group or incident to a central control room or digital forum (e.g. an airport WhatsApp group set-up for that specific purpose).
  - Airports and airlines placing senior staff on duty for certain problematic flights, enabling other staff to report upwards to an experienced individual.

- **Ensure that all actors on the airport campus are aware of disruptive incidents**
  - Airlines making police and airport security aware of any large group bookings on problematic flights.
  - Airports ensuring that all stakeholder are aware of those individuals and/or groups that are reported as disruptive.

3) Onboard aircraft

Signatories to this Code understand that the most dangerous disruptive passenger incidents take place in-flight, actions to mitigate and prevent disruptive behaviour at this stage is critical. Signatories commit to the following:

- **Promote responsible and considerate passenger behaviour**
  - Airlines ensuring that their in-flight menus and duty-free sales material includes "One Too Many" information and branding.
  - Airlines making tailor-made PA announcements before and during the flight, reminding passengers of the zero-tolerance approach taken to disruptive passenger behaviour.
  - On problematic routes, the captain making the announcement directly to the passengers.

- **Manage disruptive behaviour with professionalism and a zero-tolerance approach**
  - Airline crew cease selling alcohol to a person who they believe to be intoxicated or stop the service of alcohol altogether.
  - Airlines rostering additional crew on problematic flights to allow for greater observation and preventative action.
  - Airline crew issuing warning cards, in multiple languages, to passengers exhibiting signs that their behaviour may become disruptive. These cards warn that such behaviour may result in a diversion and their arrest/detention; they also warn of the costs involved in making a diversion.

- **Change sales practices to reduce the permeation of a "binge drinking" culture onboard**
  - Airlines applying a dry-flight policy on problematic routes which are statistically more susceptible to disruptive passenger events.
  - Airlines stop selling alcohol at a certain point within the flight, for example only making one run through the cabin with a drinks trolley.

4) Post-incident action

Learning and refining mitigation strategies for disruptive passenger behaviour is an important aspect of the Code and of tackling the issue more broadly. Signatories to the Code commit to the following:

- **Educate passengers on the specific law around behaviour onboard aircraft and at airports**
  - All signatories pressing for prosecution, supporting criminal proceedings and pursuing civil proceedings against disruptive passengers.

- **Effectively manage the relationship with the disruptive passenger after the incident**
  - Airlines issuing passengers with additional terms of carriage for return flights or banning them entirely from flying with the airline.
  - Airlines banning passengers from booking again with the company. These bans can be time-limited or last for the lifetime.
  - Airlines seeking to recover the costs of any diversions required or damage caused to aircraft.
  - Police investigating all reported disruptive passenger incidents, taking action appropriate to the incidents and seeking prosecution where necessary.
  - Airlines, bars, lounges, restaurants and retailers ensuring their staff co-operate with the police: when they require written statements of evidence in relation to an investigation and when requiring entry to the premises in order to conduct a routine visit.
  - Airport police ensuring a simplified reporting mechanism is introduced to reduce time crew have to spend detailing an incident and issuing this promptly to crew following arrest

- **Ensure that all actors on the airport campus are aware of disruptive incidents**
  - UK-registered airlines notifying UK airport police of any disruptive passenger-related arrests on arrival at the destination airport. Therefore, UK criminal proceedings can be initiated under the Air Navigation Order on those arrests that did not result in local enforcement action.

- **Work with all other signatories to review incidents and evolve best practice**
  - All signatories, where they can, recording and analysing data on disruptive passenger incidents to allow for more targeted prevention techniques.
  - All signatories sharing data with their partners to better identify how and why certain disruptive incidents have occurred.
  - Airports establishing regular disruptive passenger forums for incidents to be discussed with all parties. This includes follow-up and learnings from each incident.
  - Airports requiring retailers to sign up to accredited schemes such as 'Best Bar None'.

- **Change sales practices to reduce the permeation of a "binge drinking" culture onboard**
  - Airports requesting police to conduct covert test purchasing to ensure retail compliance with policies such as 'Challenge 25'.

Background

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 meant that passengers did not receive consistent messaging and good practice was not widely shared.

In response, a voluntary code of practice was drafted by by members of the then British Air Transport Association (now Airlines UK), the Airport Operators Association, the Airport Police Commanders Group, the then Association of Licensed Multiple Retailers (now UKHospitality) and the UK Travel Retail Forum. The purpose of the Code was to create a common, consistent approach that co-ordinates and enhances existing efforts to prevent and minimise disruptive passenger behaviour.

Signatories to the Code are proud of the progress made since 2015. Airports and airlines have shared their experiences and adopted processes that proved successful from others. The industry is particularly proud of the 'One Too Many' communications campaign, which has seen advertising warning passengers of the consequences of disruptive behaviour displayed in airports and on social media.

Signatories to The UK Aviation Industry Code of Practice on Disruptive Passengers