

## Travelport Launches Campaign To Support Passengers With Intellectual Disabilities

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Travelport has launched a global campaign to improve awareness and use of the DPNA Special Service Request (SSR) code, which can be used by travel agents, among others, to alert airlines when a passenger has intellectual or developmental disability and needs assistance.

The campaign was initiated after Travelport found evidence of exceptionally low use of the code on bookings made through its global distribution system (GDS). Despite registering more than 250 million flight bookings through its GDS globally in 2018, and an estimated 200 million people worldwide having an intellectual disability<sup>2</sup> (2.6 per cent of the global population), the code was used just 4,309 times (approximately 0.0015 per cent of total flight bookings). A poll of 136 of travel agents, conducted by Travelport, revealed just 24 per cent know the code exists. Travelport's six-month long campaign will reach more than 100,000 travel agents in over 30 countries

Gordon Wilson, President and Chief Executive Officer of Travelport, said: "Travel can be a particularly challenging time for people who require special assistance, so once we discovered such low use of the DPNA SSR code, we decided to take action. Our point of sale, Travelport Smartpoint, with all of its graphical and prompted capabilities offers the perfect channel to reach and remind travel agents across the world of the existence of this facility, enabling them to work in better partnership with our airline customers in the service of these travelers. We hope this campaign will not only make a

difference in the travel industry but act as a catalyst for other organizations to investigate how their industry or the industry they serve can better support people with intellectual disabilities and make improvements where needed.”

SSR codes are used in the airline industry to communicate traveler preferences or needs, such as requests for wheelchair assistance, to airlines. They are delivered through standardized four-letter codes defined by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The DPNA code needs to be accompanied by additional descriptive free text, so the airline understands the support required. Once an IATA member airline has received the code, a response acknowledging the request is mandatory.

Linda Ristagno, External Affairs Manager at IATA, said: “We introduced the DPNA SSR code to assist persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are delighted that Travelport has launched this awareness campaign and encourage all our member airlines and travel agents to properly use this and all the other IATA disability codes to ensure that the appropriate support to our valued passengers is provided.”

Emma Hawkins, Director of Education at Jigsaw Trust, a registered charity based in the United Kingdom that provides facilities, services and resources to educate and support people with autism, has a stepson with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). “Not all intellectually disabled people need to get on a flight first with noisy or crying children, and not all need to get on last,” said Emma. “In my stepson’s case, once he’s with an established group, he wants the group to stay together. We are a big family and can often arrive at the airport in a group of six or eight. If that’s the case, he wants us all to stay together. So, when the airline says my stepson plus one can get on the plane, can go through security and passport control without queueing, that is no good to us,” Hawkins said.

Linda Celestino, Vice President, Guest Service and Delivery, Etihad Airways, said: “As the official airline partner of the Special Olympics World Summer Games 2019, we are proud to support the use of the DPNA Special Service Request to enhance visibility for our Airport and Cabin Crew teams when assisting People of Determination. In preparation for Special Olympics team travel across the Etihad network, our teams have received additional training on how to best support guests with intellectual disabilities.”