**Over 16,000,000 passengers travelled with easyJet between 26 June and 5 September with 98,500 requiring some form of assistance**

easyJet, Europe’s leading airline, welcomed over 16,000,000 passengers on its flights this summer (26 June – 5 September) and of those  98,500 required some form of assistance during their travels.

easyJet carries more than 400,000 passengers who need special assistance every year which is a growing number however many passengers requiring special assistance are still deterred from flying through a concern of how well they will be looked after.

easyJet has a range of measures for passengers who require special assistance including a customer contact centre team who are fully-trained in special assistance issues as well as on-board wheelchairs on all aircraft. Additionally, easyJet crew and its ground agents are trained on special assistance, including how to identify and support passengers with ‘hidden disabilities’.

The customer satisfaction amongst easyJet passengers with reduced mobility was 87.4% in the 2015 financial year, which was higher than for customers in general.

As societies across Europe age it is very likely that more people will need some form of assistance when travelling in the future and easyJet has a range of assistance options available to support passengers with disabilities and those facing challenges which means that they require additional support.

In 2012 easyJet established a committee of European experts (ESAAG – the easyJet Special Assistance Advisory Group) to provide guidance and advice to the airline on the services it provides to passengers who require special assistance. The group is chaired by Lord David Blunkett and is made up of experts in disability issues and accessible travel. It meets regularly with easyJet managers to discuss the company’s proposals, best practice and emerging issues.

**Speaking about the summer travel period Lord Blunkett commented;** “This summer a record number of passengers travelled with easyJet to a range of destinations across Europe including passengers who required some form of assistance and this number continues to grow.

“The services offered by airlines and airports for travellers requiring special assistance have greatly improved. ESAAG has been able to provide feedback and guidance to easyJet on the services it provides to passengers who require special assistance. Through this we have delivered real improvements for passengers which is borne out by customer research which shows satisfaction to those provided with special assistance is very high.

“Passengers who need some extra help should feel confident to travel, as there is a range of assistance available. It is important to remember to contact the airline on-line or by phone the airline prior to departure so they can be fully prepared for your arrival and provide the best support possible to ensure your holiday or business trip gets off to a flying start.

“However, there are still major challenges, not least the interface between the airline and airports here and on the European continent, including the responsibility of airports to provide assistance before boarding the flight and baggage handling have often critical equipment. We are still working on this. ”

**A CAA spokesman said:** “The legal rights of air passengers with a disability or reduced mobility, mean they are entitled to free special assistance when passing through an airport and on board an aircraft.

“These rights have opened up air travel to thousands of people who otherwise might not have had the confidence to fly and have enriched lives and provided new experiences as a result.

“This year we expect more than two and a half million passengers with a disability or reduced mobility will take flights in and out of the UK and these should be completed as smoothly as possible.

“In order to get best use of special assistance, passengers should provide airports and airlines at least 48-hour notice, ahead of their departure.”

easyJet has reviewed all stages in its passengers’ journey to ensure that it is as easy as possible and the airline has invested significantly in providing assistance for all needs and in the training of its crew and ground operations staff who provide special assistance to our passengers. Details on assistance available can be viewed at <http://www.easyjet.com/en/help/preparing-to-fly/special-assistance>

ESAAG is seeking to improve the whole journey, in the airport and on the aircraft, for passengers who need special assistance. As a proof of a lasting commitment, the ESAAG launched in April 2015 its Pan-European Charter on Meeting the Needs of Disabled Air Travellers at a roundtable in the European Parliament and it has since been discussed at a UK aviation industry session jointly hosted by ESAAG and the UK CAA. The Charter recommends best practice for all aspects of aviation special assistance.

ESAAG has also helped easyJet to introduce on-board wheelchairs across its fleet and has been involved in changes to cabin layout, which includes a newly designed accessible toilet. ESAAG has also had a role in wider easyJet projects, such as the consolidation of easyJet operations at London Gatwick into the North Terminal and digital developments such as improved information and advice, the on-going reconfiguration of the easyJet website and apps for use in navigating airports.

**Ends**

**For further information, please contact the easyJet Press Office on 01582 525252, log onto** [**www.easyjet.com**](http://www.easyjet.com) **or follow @easyJet\_Press**

**Notes to Editors**

The Civil Aviation (Access to Air Travel for Disabled Persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility) Regulations 2014, was laid before parliament October 27 2014, and came into effect on Dec 1. The statutory instrument can be found here.

The CAA is the UK's specialist aviation regulator. Its activities include: making sure that the aviation industry meets the highest technical and operational safety standards; preventing holidaymakers from being stranded abroad or losing money because of tour operator insolvency; planning and regulating all UK airspace; and regulating airports, air traffic services and airlines and providing advice on aviation policy.

The below may also be useful as additional info/notes to editors.

**Passenger Information**

Under EU regulations all disabled air passengers, who are departing from an EU airport or flying with an EU airline anywhere in the world, are legally entitled to this support, commonly known as special assistance.

Special assistance can cover:your journey through your departure airport, boarding the aircraft and during the flight, disembarking the aircraft, transferring between flights and travelling through your destination airport.

In order to get best use of this special assistance, passengers should provide airports and airlines at least 48-hour notice, ahead of their departure.

Some common examples of special assistance might be:

* I am a wheelchair user and will need some assistance from the drop off point, through to checking in and boarding/disembarking the aircraft.
* I am blind and use a guide dog. I would like to book an aisle seat, which is near the exit. I will also need assistance checking in, finding my way around the airport and boarding.
* I am elderly and frail and will be travelling with my carer. I will need to use an airport wheelchair from the drop off point, and will need assistance boarding and disembarking the aircraft. I also need to be sat next to my carer on board the aircraft.
* I am a parent and my son is autistic and he finds the busy airport environment stressful. In order to reduce stress I would like a fast track service and be provided with some and reading materials about the airport/airline for my son, which he can see in advance.

For more information about your legal rights and special assistance go to the Passenger with a Reduced Mobility page on the CAA website.

**About easyJet:**

easyJet is Europe’s leading airline offering a unique and winning combination of the best route network connecting Europe's primary airports, with great value fares and friendly service.

easyJet flies on more of Europe’s most popular routes than any other airline. easyJet carries over 70 million passengers annually, of which more than 12 million are travelling on business. easyJet flies over 240 aircraft on more than 800 routes to over 130 airports across 31 countries. More than 300 million Europeans live within one hour's drive of an easyJet airport.

easyJet aims to be a good corporate citizen, employing people on local contracts in seven countries across Europe in full compliance with national laws and recognising their trade unions. The airline supports a number of local charities and also has a corporate partnership with UNICEF which has raised over £6m for the most vulnerable children since it was established in 2012.

The airline takes sustainability seriously. easyJet invests in the latest technology, operates efficiently and fills most of its seats which means that an easyJet passenger's carbon footprint is 22% less than a passenger on a traditional airline, flying the same aircraft on the same route.

Innovation is in easyJet’s DNA – from our launch almost 20 years ago when we changed the way people fly to the present day where we lead the industry in digital, web, engineering and operational innovations to make travel more easy and affordable for our passengers.

**The airline takes sustainability seriously. easyJet invests in the latest technology, operates efficiently and fills most of its seats which means that an easyJet passenger's carbon footprint is 22% less than a passenger on a traditional airline, flying the same aircraft on the same route.**

**easyJet operates Europe's No. 1 air transport network with a leading presence on Europe's top 100 routes and at Europe's 50 largest airports.**

**easyJet flies on more than 600 routes between over 130 airports in over 30 countries. More than 300 million Europeans live within one hour's drive of an easyJet airport, more than any other airline.**