

Supporting Shell's diverse business traveller needs



One of Shell's business travel goals is to embed inclusivity into tools, booking processes and culture. With a long-standing commitment to accessibility and meeting the needs of its employees, Shell wanted to overcome the barriers and challenges that some corporations and travel management companies (TMCs) often face when supporting individuals with diverse needs, including those with neurological, mental, physical, or chronic conditions.

Following fact-finding discussions with people with disability, other companies and consultation within FCM, together FCM Travel and Shell's corporate travel department embarked on establishing an accessibility travel desk for Shell's employees.

Identifying key moments...and one big consideration

It was a review of the entire traveller journey and conducting in-depth interviews across different business lines that kickstarted the ideas. The team identified 12 'moments that matter' in journeys, from information gathering to returning home.

"We clearly needed to enhance some elements and small touch points for those with a disability or neurodiverse requirements," said Kyra van Egmond, Travel Manager EMEA at Shell. "And we learnt quickly that travellers with the same requirements e.g. wheelchair users, don't necessarily want the same kind of service...so you can't standardise."

One big consideration? Privacy. Health conditions can't be requested or added to travel profiles.

What was launched for travellers

To overcome privacy restrictions, the team leant towards asking for preferences instead. A mix of solutions including self-serve fact-finding, and consultant support was launched.

“We don’t need to understand why a request came in; it’s about providing a safe space for people to share what they’d require and it’s trust-based,” said Kyra. “It enables an agent to find the right set of services and to have the right kind of conversation with a supplier to see if it’s available and fits the person’s needs.”

Here’s what was introduced to Shell’s travellers:

Knowledge base	Accessibility desk	Consultant training and information
Travellers can access information on suppliers and destinations whenever they like. This helps them make decisions about whether to go on a trip.	Launched globally, the desk works on a trust basis, with any traveller able to contact the team whenever needed. The desk supports people with physical disability, neurodiversity, mental health, and temporary and chronic conditions.	FCM consultants were trained by Maiden Voyage on disability awareness and managing travel requests with accessibility requirements. Various resources and meetings have been put in place to maintain standards and information sharing.

How it’s helped travellers so far

While the accessibility desk is in its infancy, these are some of the examples of information and situations the team have been able to help with.

Temporary wheelchair user	Rooms of requirement	Eurostar
One of Shell’s leaders had a foot injury travelling to the USA and needed a wheelchair organised for them at the airport.	The knowledge base stores details on rooms that travellers may need, such as quiet rooms, sensory rooms, or appropriate facilities for breastfeeding mothers.	If a wheelchair user can’t get out of their wheelchair to sit in a seat, there’s a section in Eurostar’s First Class where a chair can be securely strapped in. Bonus: it’s heavily discounted!





An internal shift at FCM

FCM has always shown great care towards any traveller, but this project amplified the need. “We’ve been dealing with these requests unknowingly, and as with any booking, that has preferences. These bookings can’t be transactional,” said Lauren Watkins, FCM Customer Service Delivery Leader – Europe.

“Communication and respect are key,” adds Lauren. “We want travellers to feel they’re in a comfort bubble, so their request will be managed by the same two people. We aren’t always able to accommodate everything, but we can do our due diligence and keep the traveller updated, even down to how long it might take to hear from a supplier.”

FCM ambassadors with experience working with different people were introduced. One was UK-based Team Manager Kat Wilson, who has a background in medical repatriation and healthcare. “Not all conditions are physical and some are not permanent. It’s less experienced travellers or ones who have temporary needs that are more reliant in those stages,” she said.

With the ambassadors help, support was rolled out including:

Information gathering	Training and on-going learnings	Documentation and data
FCM feeds into Shell’s knowledge database and has access, so it’s the same across travel services.	Consultants not only received additional training, but continue to learn from each other and share their knowledge with other teams.	Processes, FAQs and learnings are all documented for FCM employees to reference. Data is managed carefully.

A positive ripple effect

Kyra said, “Feedback has been super positive. It’s been promoted in different communities and brought to the attention of local general manager and senior leadership. People love that they’ve got that database, but they have that team there for them too.”

Kat added that it has had a ripple effect across FCM teams.

“You can tell there’s even more thought in approach now, even with transient travel or when someone is relocating. It’s all adding to how we can make journeys more comfortable.”