

Going to the airport

A Guide for Travellers with Autism and Parents/Carers of Children with Autism



INTRODUCTION

We recognise that airports can be stressful environments. This is especially the case for people with Autism.

We want to make sure that all passengers feel as comfortable as possible during their time in the airport. We have created a guide that can also be used as a tool to help you prepare the child or person you are travelling with for their journey to and through Belfast International Airport.

If you are travelling with someone with Autism we can support you during your time at the airport. You must book assistance through your airline or tour operator.

Please contact your airline/tour operator at least 48 hours before departure or arrival at Belfast International Airport and when booking please book DPNA (disabled person needing assistance) assistance. If there is an option to give further information regarding the assistance you need please type the word 'Autism'. This will then enable us to give you the appropriate help.

This guide provides top tips for travellers with Autism and parents and carers of persons with Autism. It can be used alongside our Guide for Children with Autism booklet which can be found on our website: **www.belfastairport.com/special-assistance/Autism-awareness**

If you have any further questions, please contact **autism@bfs.aero**

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1 GETTING TO THE AIRPORT

- Give yourself plenty of time to get to the airport
- Plan your journey carefully
- Consider whether to do a practice journey to the airport so that you or the person you are caring for can understand what to expect



2 INSIDE THE AIRPORT TERMINAL

- Do you or the person you are caring for find loud noises difficult to deal with? Consider taking some headphones or ear defenders to help block out loud announcements or music.
- Do you or the person you are caring for find bright lights or lots of colour difficult to deal with? Consider taking some sunglasses to block out bright lights or bright colours.
- Consider whether it may be useful to take a sensory toy or an item that could help you or the person you are caring for feel less anxious.



3 OCS & CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Book assistance through your airline or tour operator – information about how to do this is in the introduction section of this guide (Please book at least 48 hours in advance).
- Consider visiting the airport before travelling and finding the location of the special assistance help desk so if something happens on the day of your flight you know where you can go for help.



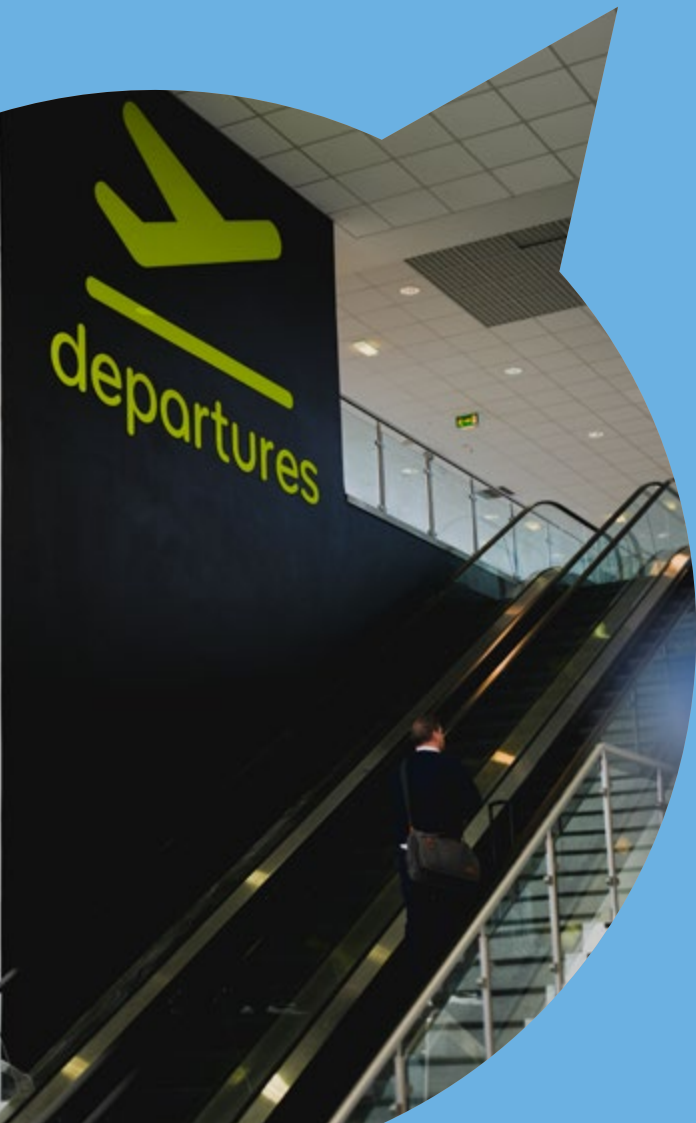
4 CHECK IN

- Aim to get to your check-in desk when it opens to give yourself the maximum time available to get through the airport.
- Make sure all of your luggage is the right size and weight to avoid spending extra time sorting things out at check-in.
- Have your passports and documents easily accessible.



5 SECURITY SCREENING

- Consider practicing going through a security check at home so you or the person you are caring for knows what to expect. You could choose the outfit that you or the person you are caring for will wear to the airport on the day.
- You could identify what you or the person you are caring for will be carrying when going through security.
- You could show the person you are caring for what they will need to put into a tray before going through the scanners.
- Consider practicing a security body search at home so that you or the person you are caring for knows what to expect.
- If the alarm does sound remember to tell the person you are caring for not to be afraid. Ask them to stand still with their arms out to the side while the Security Officer gently checks them. Reassure them that this will not take long.





6 WAITING TO BOARD

- You may have a few hours to wait before boarding your aircraft so consider making a plan for what to do in this time. You could even turn it into a fun activity plan. Download our guide for children with Autism booklet from our website: www.belfastairport.com/special-assistance/Autism-awareness
- You can research online on the Belfast Airport website which shops and restaurants are available to visit in the Departure Lounge to help your planning.
- Let the person you are caring for know when it is time to get on the aircraft. Remind the person you are caring for to stay close so they do not get lost.





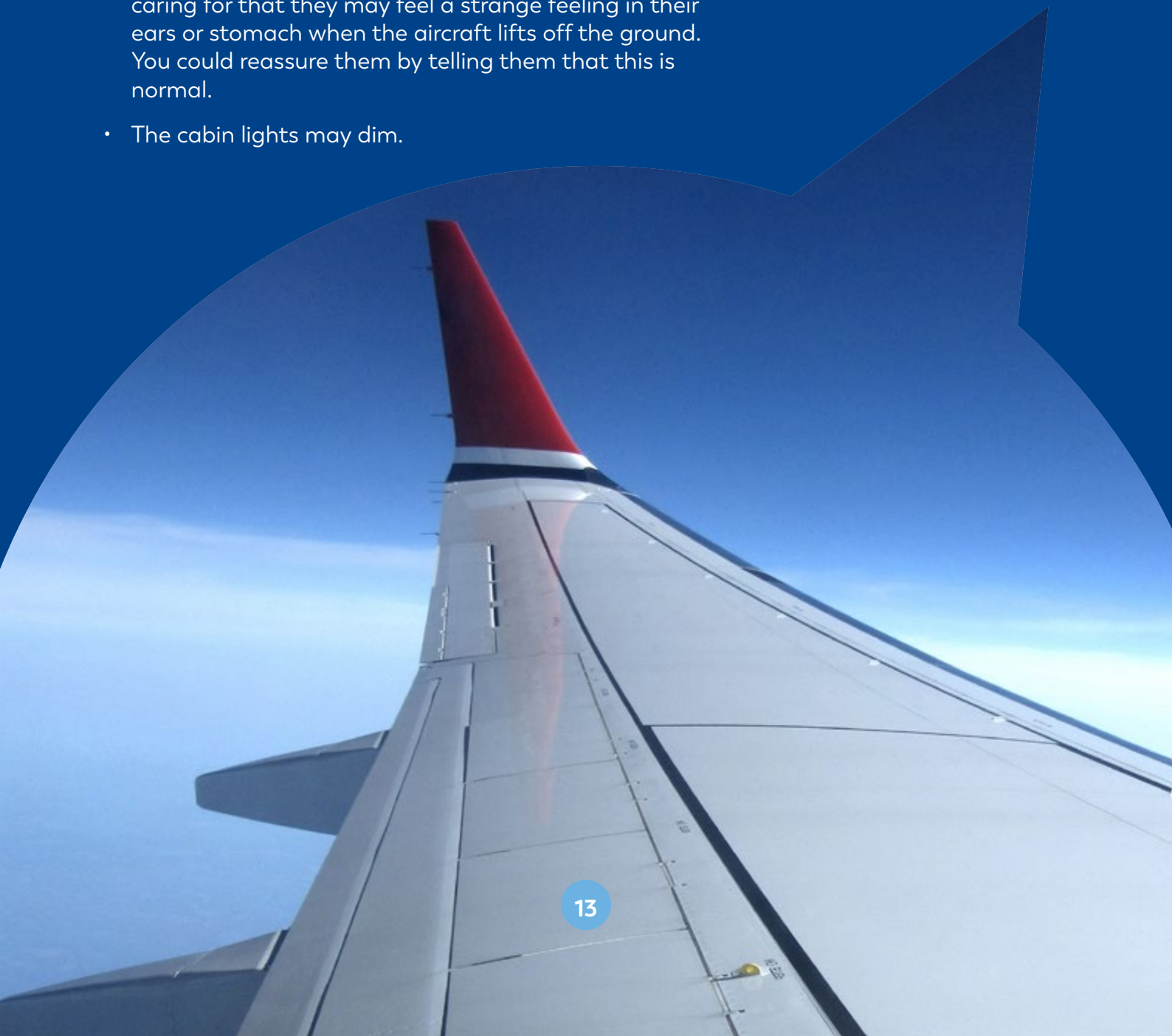
7 BOARDING THE AIRCRAFT

- Consider asking the boarding gate staff whether you will be walking straight onto the aircraft through a tunnel or whether you will be taking a bus to the aircraft so you can explain this to the child or person you are with.
- Consider putting yourselves at the back of the queue so you can take your time.
- It might be a good idea to explain to the person you are caring for that you may either walk through a tunnel or catch a bus and walk up the stairs to get to the aircraft.
- Remember there may be a loud announcement prior to take-off.



8 TAKING OFF

- Before it takes off the aircraft is pushed backwards so that the aircraft is in the right direction to taxi to the runway.
- Consider taking toys or activities for yourself or the person you are caring for so they have something to focus on during take-off.
- There might be a loud noise after the aircraft takes off, this is the wheels going inside the aircraft.
- Consider taking ear defenders if you or the person you are caring for is sensitive to sound and some sweets to prevent ears 'popping'.
- It might be helpful to explain to the person you are caring for that they may feel a strange feeling in their ears or stomach when the aircraft lifts off the ground. You could reassure them by telling them that this is normal.
- The cabin lights may dim.



9 COMING HOME

- Queues can be very long at passport control. Consider taking ear defenders and sunglasses as well as an activity or toy for you or the person you are caring for to focus on whilst waiting in the queue in this crowded area.
- Have your passports and documents easily accessible to save time.
- Make sure to tell the person travelling with you that they may have to wait for their baggage to be taken off the aircraft and collected from the baggage reclaim area before they can leave the airport.



We hope you have found this guide useful and we hope you enjoy your time at Belfast International Airport.

Remember to look out for the OCS team if you need any help during your visit!

We would also love to hear about your visit to the airport. You can tell us about it by emailing us at **feedback@bfs.aero**.

Alternatively Belfast International Airport encourages customers to participate in our Passenger Survey on the quality of assistance provided to passengers with reduced mobility at BIA. You can complete this survey at **bit.ly/CAApassengersurvey**