



Accessible Businesses: Top Tips

South West Regional Development Agency
South West Tourism
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Why Bother? The business case for widening your market

We are living in a society which has an ageing population who although may not be as active as they were, still want to enjoy themselves and have money to spend. The number of people over 65 in Europe almost doubled from 1960 – 2001. Changes that you make in order to become more accessible will make your offer to this aging population much more favourable.



Around 20% of UK's adult population has some form of disability. Furthermore nearly half of these people are over state pension age, this means that they are not tied to school holidays or weekends to take their breaks. By making realistic adjustments to become accessible to this market, businesses can go some way to reducing seasonality. Research has shown that one of the most important things for disabled people is that accommodation and attraction providers supply information, which is accurate and up to date on their websites and brochures.

Having a positive and helpful attitude and providing excellent customer service can go a long way. Businesses can help staff gain confidence in dealing with people with disabilities by encouraging them to attend a course, such as Welcome All ([click here](#))¹ or by joining Tourism for All ([click here](#))² and using their on-line training, 'Happy Tourist'. Disability awareness is the key here for you and your staff. Visitors have different motivations and priorities, and need services delivered in different ways.

The Visitor Journey – Top Tips on Accessibility

The visitor journey can be seen as having six steps. On the following pages, we have featured some top tips that you may find useful when thinking about access for the visitor journey.



Planning:

- People will be encouraged to visit an area if your business can provide information to guests about local mobility schemes and local transport such as bus or rail links.
- Review your website and brochure – check that the information you are providing is accurate, up to date, and accessible.

¹ <http://www.swtourism.org.uk/business-support/training-courses/>

² www.tourismforall.org.uk

- Make low cost changes such as using larger font, clear background to font contrast, and clearer text in your written communication. (The recommended font size is 12 using font types such as Arial, Verdana and Tahoma.)
- Use plain English, both spoken and written.
- Download important written information onto an MP3 player or audiocassette, or consider downloading information as a Podcast onto your website.
- Make sure you include your Access Statement on your website. For more information on how to create an Access Statement, [click here](#)³
- If you are an accommodation provider consider joining a scheme such as the National Accessible Scheme, [click here](#)⁴
- Invite visitors to call if they have any questions.
- Ensure your staff is fully aware of all the services you can offer – it's no good providing a vibrating fire alarm for deaf guests if your staff aren't aware of it or don't know where to find it.
- Get to know your local area. Work with other local businesses to gather accurate and useful information that you can send to prospective guests – this will enhance their perception before they even leave home.



Booking:

- Ensure your pricing is clear and easy to find on your website.
- Don't charge for services or facilities that could be considered as discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act and be clear about what prices include and exclude. For more information. Click [here](#)⁵
- Review your cancellations policy to see if it can be made more flexible for those who may need to cancel due to illness, including their carers.
- Provide a range of methods by which to book.
- Ask about specific requirements at the time of booking and send confirmation detailing any special requests.

³ www.tourismtrade.org.uk/quality/assessmentstandards/NationalAccessibleScheme/Access/accessstatements.asp

⁴ www.visitbritain.com/accommodation/national-accessibility-scheme/index.aspx

⁵ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

Travel:

- Provide clear directions and advice on travel options.
- Develop a travel section on your website. Include information such as:
 - full postcode
 - train and bus information and links
 - clear instructions on where to park when arriving by car
 - details of disabled and blue badge parking in the surrounding area
 - local taxi number and whether or not they can provide accessible transport facilities.
- Let visitors know what to expect when they arrive. Do you offer assistance on arrival?
Can luggage be dropped off early?

At the destination:

- Ensure your entrance is clearly marked and all walkways are kept clear.
- Ensure staff are available to assist during check-in and check-out times.
- Display your quality ratings logo clearly.
- If possible make your reception area or ticket office accessible. Provide seating and a lower counter or desk.
- Provide a notepad on the reception desk so that guests can write down their requests if they are having difficulty being understood.
- Ensure staff are well presented and fully trained to deal with visitor requests.
- Review your physical access. There are some easy changes that can be made such as using pictogram signs, and contrasting colours for door frames and edges of steps.
- Ensure that disabled access to the premises is as appealing as other entrances. Don't send visitors round the back and through the car park to the disabled entrance.
- Join with other local businesses to purchase more expensive equipment that could then be shared, such as an induction loop or vibrating alarm. Alternatively, specialist equipment for guests can sometimes be hired from Social Services, the Red Cross or Disability Information Advice Line.
- In guest rooms use contrasting colours for towels – white towels in a white bathroom are hard for people with visual impairments to identify.
- Provide large button phones and blocks with which to safely raise beds or tables.

- Have the facilities to provide guide dogs with water and ensure staff can direct the owner to a suitable toilet area.
- Provide alert signs over door handles for guests with hearing impairments. These can be placed on the outside of the door at night and identify that the person staying in that room is hard of hearing and would need assistance in the event of a fire.
- Consider a wireless solution for communicating the sounding of the fire alarm to deaf and hard of hearing people. www.deafgard.com or www.easylinkuk.co.uk
- Provide interpretation in different formats and ample seating areas in tourist attractions.
- Provide clear signage to toilets that state whether the toilet is accessible. If it is, ensure that there is a clear route to it.
- If disabled toilets are kept locked ensure that all staff have access to the key. Ensure once visitors are let into the toilet, they are able to get out again or able to alert someone to let them out.
- Improve seating in eating areas with contrasting table settings and that areas are well-lit.
- Ensure menus are also available in large print or on audiocassette or MP3 players.
- If you have a bar area, consider having a lowered section or ensure staff are trained to come to the table to take a drinks order from customers who may not be able to get to the bar themselves.



Getting home:

- Offer flexible check-out arrangements.
- Have travel information to hand.
- Encourage staff to ask customers for feedback. Provide them with website addresses such as www.tripadvisor.com and www.disabledgo.info
- Keep details of customers' specific requirements on a database so that you have information to hand for repeat bookings.
- Let customers know how they can make repeat bookings, offer incentives and discounts.

Recollection of the experience:

- Keep in touch with visitors throughout the year.
- Keep communications accessible.
- Occasionally undertake more in-depth research covering a range of visitors.
- Regularly test your equipment and take the time to look at your business from a visitors' point of view.
- Create an action plan on improvements.
- Keep visitors informed of any changes or plans for improvements.
- Keep your Access Statement up to date.

This document was produced by South West Tourism and the South West Regional Development Agency.

Useful Contacts:

- Royal National Institute for the Blind: www.rnib.org.uk
- Blue Badge Guide:
www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/MotoringAndTransport/index.htm?cids=Google_PP_C&cre=DPAC_Franchise
- Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com
- Allergy UK: www.allergyuk.org
- South West Trains:
www.southwesttrains.co.uk/SWTrains/TravellInformation/Passengersrequiringassistance
- Tourism For All: www.tourismforall.org.uk/Easy-access-tips.html
- VisitBritain 'Easy Does It' Guide:
www.tourismtrade.org.uk/quality/assessmentstandards/NationalAccessibleScheme/Access/New_accessibility_guide.asp



South West Tourism is the official regional tourist board, working with partners to stimulate and manage the development of tourism in; Bath, Bristol, Bournemouth/Poole, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Cotswolds & Forest of Dean and Wiltshire, in line with the regional tourism strategy.

South West Tourism is an independent body for tourism in the region with a board of directors drawn from predominately the private sector and partners, and is funded by the South West RDA and European commission funds.



South West Tourism, Woodwater Park, Exeter EX2 5WT

www.swtourism.org.uk
info@swtourism.org.uk



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