



Making your hospitality business accessible

Thank you for considering making your hospitality business accessible.

The value of tourism, travel and leisure to our physical and mental health is well recognised and this is just as true for disabled people – and those with access needs like families and older people – as it is for non-disabled people. Making your hospitality business accessible will not only benefit disabled tourists and travellers, by giving them more choice – it could benefit your business too, because customers with access needs tend to be happy to travel outside peak periods, to spend more and to come back.

Types and levels of impairment

If you are planning to make your hospitality business accessible – whether you are building new, converting or expanding existing facilities or simply looking to improve the welcome you give to disabled customers and those with access needs – it is really important to remember that the term ‘accessible’ will have a different meaning for every disabled person. Even people with the same condition or impairment may be affected by it in different ways and to different degrees – and what is accessible to one person may not be accessible to another.

Broadly speaking, we can think in terms of 4 main categories of disability or impairment:

- **Visual impairment** can affect individuals in different ways and to different degrees, from having difficulty reading small print through to being totally blind.
- **Hearing impairment** can affect individuals in different ways and to different degrees, from having difficulty making out some words through to being totally deaf.
- **Mobility impairment** can affect individuals in different ways and to different degrees, from having difficulty with steps and stairs through to being a full time wheelchair user.
- **Hidden impairment.** Not all impairments are obvious - or even detectable - just by looking at a person, but they can have just as big an effect on a person's ability to carry out day to day activities as impairments which are more visible. Examples of these “hidden” impairments include conditions like epilepsy and mental health issues and **cognitive impairments** such as learning difficulties, autism and dementia.

Basic steps toward accessibility

We all have to accept that, no matter what developments, changes or improvements you make, **your hospitality business will not be accessible for everybody**, with every type and level of access need.

If you are in a position to be planning to build new or to convert, redevelop, expand or refurbish existing facilities, you may have the opportunity to incorporate features and services at a structural level which will make your hospitality business more accessible to customers with the broadest range of types and levels of access need (see ‘Useful links and more information’ below).

But all hospitality businesses, however, can and should take 3 relatively simple (and low cost) steps to improve their accessibility to all customers with access needs.

1. Ensure that managers and staff are trained

Our research has shown that, for most tourists and travellers with access needs, the welcome and the service they receive are just as important as the facilities that are provided. It is really important to ensure that you and your staff feel confident and empowered to welcome disabled customers – and the way to do that is to provide everyone with formal training.

Tourism for All offers a range of [online customer service training courses](#), accredited by the Institute of Hospitality and aimed at different job roles, which will give you and your staff the skills and confidence to give great service to customers with access needs. Training all your staff will cost from only £150 per year.

N.B. training courses in disability awareness, both online and classroom based, are also available from other organisations.

2. Be aware of low cost (or no cost) changes you can make to your business and service to improve accessibility

- i) The British Beer & Pub Association (BBPA) has produced a [guide to accessibility for pubs](#) which is applicable to all hospitality businesses and which includes useful hints and tips.
- ii) The [‘Easy Does It’](#) guide from VisitBritain and VisitEngland suggests a number of low cost, easy changes that will make your hospitality business more accessible and welcoming to customers with access needs.

3. Produce an Accessibility Guide

Your Accessibility Guide, which you can feature on your website, will give disabled tourists and travellers the information they need to help them decide whether your accommodation business will be suitable for their needs. Visit England and VisitScotland have jointly created an [Accessibility Guide toolkit](#), which will assist you in assessing your accessibility and in planning and creating an Accessibility Guide.

Useful links and more information

- A wealth of [further information](#) on making your business more accessible, including advice, hints and tips, is available from VisitBritain and VisitEngland.
- [Approved Document M of the Building Regulations](#) is a minimum standard for new build and conversion and is available free to download.
- [British Standard BS8300:2018 + Parts 1 and 2](#) are recommended for anyone wishing to go beyond the current Building Regulations. These are likely to be adopted into future editions of the Building Regulations in due course. If you have access to an architect, the planning department at your local council, or an access advisor, they may have these documents already.