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Business Support Guides

Easy does it

Simple, low-cost changes to improve your accessibility

Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 6 Stage one:
Attracting customers in the first place
- 8 Stage two:
Making your booking enquiry/processes easier
- 9 Stage three:
Taking the stress out of travel
- 10 Stage four:
Making the arrival process easier
- 14 Stage five:
Leaving a lasting impression
- 15 Stage six:
Keep reviewing
- 17 Where to get more help

Introduction

Tourism businesses with improved accessibility appeal to a wider range of customers. It's not just disabled customers who benefit; it's families, older people and practically all of your customers in one way or another.

There are enough ideas about access improvements to fill an encyclopaedia. This guide concentrates on suggestions that can be achieved at little or no cost and it's often these smaller changes that have the biggest impact.

Some businesses find disability a bit scary and are daunted by what they think they have to do. But most people, if they stop and think about it, know plenty of disabled people – a gran who has hearing loss, a child with reading difficulties, someone who walks with a stick, or someone who wears glasses. Very few would actually call themselves disabled though. So our understanding of disability tends to leap to extremes and whilst they are important and shouldn't be ignored, it's easy to stereotype. Only around 9% of disabled people use a wheelchair, so it's not always about door widths, ramps and lifts. Far more people are partially sighted than blind. Far more people have hearing loss than are deaf.

We want the tourism industry to be more relaxed about accessibility and to see disabled people simply as members of the community – and potential customers.

Why should you bother? Because there's an ageing population. The baby boomers are getting older. They still want a good time, they've got money to spend and you ignore them at your peril!

“I want a smile, a warm welcome and a vibrating alarm...”



Hidden disabilities



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Remember the majority of health conditions and impairments are hidden e.g. asthma, diabetes and allergies. When you list some of the invisible impairments, it really gets you thinking...

...diabetic people need to plan meal times carefully to control their blood sugar levels, asthmatic people may require hypo-allergenic bedding rather than feathers, people who have hearing loss require vibrating alarms...these are all areas where it's easy and inexpensive to respond.

It's good business

- 21% of the British population has an impairment, the most common of which is a long-term illness (Family Resource Survey, 2018/19)
- The total expenditure generated by those with health conditions and impairments and their travelling companions is estimated to be £15.3 billion (VisitEngland, 2019)
- People with health conditions and impairments tend to take longer holiday breaks than average and therefore tend to spend more money per trip
- Impairments and disability increase substantially after the age of 45
- Over 1 in 3 (35%) domestic overnight trips are made by those aged 55 plus (VisitEngland, 2019)
- 430,000 British adults with an impairment did not take a domestic trip between April 2017 and March 2018 due to the lack of accessibility provision (VisitEngland, 2018)

“21% of the British population has an impairment...”



It's a legal requirement

Embrace the spirit of the Equality Act 2010 and don't fight it.

The Equality Act 2010 does not seek to put people out of business. It seeks to help everyone enjoy the same services. Treated positively, it provides an opportunity for business development, ensuring that your service is accessible to a wider audience.

Many tourism businesses worry that this means vast expense, when the reality is that common sense is often the only requirement needed to break down existing barriers.

The Equality Act 2010 means tourism businesses have to make reasonable adjustments. This guide takes you through the customer journey and offers helpful tips for making them.

The Equality Act 2010 consolidated and strengthened all anti-discrimination legislation, and as a result replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. You can't treat anyone who is disabled, is thought to be disabled or is associated with someone who is disabled less favourably than other customers.

Detailed information on the Equality Act 2010 is available as part of the Pink Book Online at [visitengland.org/pinkbookonline](https://www.visitengland.org/pinkbookonline)

The customer journey

Making a decision to go on a trip is part one of the six-stage customer journey, which lasts through to returning home and remembering the visit. For some parts of the journey your customers are invisible to you, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't consider how they spend this time. Make your information easily accessible and customers will be more likely to find it and book with you.

Help customers with travel arrangements and you add value to the service you provide and their overall enjoyment. Using the customer journey process improves the quality of the service you offer, increasing the likelihood of repeat bookings and favourable recommendations. Families, older and disabled customers are particularly loyal to those businesses that meet their needs and they will tell others!



Stage one: Attracting customers in the first place

You don't see customers at this stage, but the information you provide and the way you provide it determines whether or not you win their business.



Clear information – simple changes

- For clear print use a minimum type size of 12 point, but 14 is best. For large print use a minimum type size of 16 point, but 18 is best
- Use clear, sans serif typefaces e.g. Arial, Trebuchet or Verdana
- Ensure good contrast between text and background
- Avoid justifying text as large gaps can be confusing – it should be left-aligned
- Don't use italics, underlining or capitals for large blocks of text
- Use pictograms and symbols to help users navigate text
- Use images with a diverse range of customers
- Structure content in a logical order
- Use plain English and avoid long sentences
- When you commission a new website or upgrade, make sure your designers are familiar with [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) to enable all users to navigate around your website

Improve your marketing information

All customers want easy to understand and up to date information that is quick to find. Review your website and other marketing channels using the information in this section.

Provide information in a range of formats, e.g. large print, braille, photographs, video, virtual tours and audio description on websites.





Check information held by third parties

Is your information up to date and consistent across different sources? Check the description of your accessible facilities on websites and booking channels. Provide your local tourist information centre with a list of your accessible facilities and remember to update them as things change.

Update your website

Important details you can include on your website are:

- Prominent email address, especially for those who have difficulty using a telephone
- Address and travel information
- An Accessibility Guide
- Assurance of accessibility through an official scheme e.g. National Accessible Scheme ratings for accommodation businesses

- Clear photos and details of rooms and facilities
- Floor plans and measurements

Prepare an Accessibility Guide

Producing an Accessibility Guide may sound like hard work, but it doesn't have to be. It is a clear and honest description of the facilities and services you offer that is available on your website and in hard copy (on request). Look at examples from other businesses and you'll find they vary in detail. You don't have to gather every detail all at once. Get started with the basics and add to it.

VisitEngland provides a free Accessibility Guides tool to help you create your guide by completing an online questionnaire at accessibilityguides.org.

Get to know your local area

Think about other businesses that customers will come into contact with. The local pub, the local taxi firm or nearby attractions. For example, find out how accessible your local pub is. Do they have any steps at the front or internally, wider parking spaces, room to move between tables, or large print menus? How many accessible cars does the taxi firm have? What are the opening hours of the town's Shopmobility scheme? While you're doing this research, don't forget to promote your facilities to other local businesses to get referrals. You can also add information on the accessibility of local businesses to your website.

Stage two: Making your booking/enquiry processes easier

Provide different booking methods

Provide as many different ways of booking as you can manage (phone, text phone, online, email, third party websites). Every customer will have their own preference.

Find out about the Next Generation Text Service used by people with hearing loss at ngts.org.uk.

Regularly mystery shop your reception/information/ticketing desk to ensure staff are as aware as you are about the available facilities and how to use them. Provide ongoing training for staff so they are prepared and professional when meeting the needs of disabled customers.

Reassure and build excitement

All customers need to feel confident that their booking has been made and their details are correct. Disabled people in particular need reassurance that any specific requests have been acknowledged and can be delivered. How do you currently handle this? Your follow-up communication could include:

- Directions and instructions for arrival
- Specific facilities or services you might offer e.g. shopping service to buy in items for customers' arrival
- Information about the surrounding area, nearby attractions and upcoming events, depending on the reason for their visit



Transparent pricing simple changes



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- Make sure prices are easy to locate on your website (within two or three clicks)
- Be clear about what is included and excluded
- Don't charge extra for accessible facilities and services, as this could be considered as discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. For example, you can't charge for a braille menu or a premium rate to stay in an accessible room.
- Consider flexible family tickets that allow for different numbers of adults and children, including grandparents
- Promote any free personal assistant policies and concessions for disabled customers
- Review cancellation charges. Are they flexible for disabled people who may need to change arrangements at the last minute due to illness?

Stage three: Taking the stress out of travel

As an accommodation or attraction business you might think you have no control over this stage. But you can help. Travelling can be stressful, especially for those with children, for disabled customers and even for those with lots of luggage.

Many disabled people have to plan travel well in advance. For train travel, passenger assistance must be booked a minimum of 24 hours before travel to be guaranteed.

Help with information

Use your local knowledge to give advice on travel options and clear directions. Your website could have a prominent 'Travel' page and you could also send an email with more tailored instructions.

Make the arrival easy

Let customers know what to expect on arrival. For example:

- Is parking on- or off-street?
- Are accessible car parking spaces easy to locate and within easy reach of the entrance, and have you reserved one?
- The length of route from the car to the entrance and type of path (e.g. gravel, tarmac, level, slight incline)
- Any arrangements for customers to drop off luggage early.



Stress-free travel – information to provide

- Full address and prominent postcode for Sat Nav and online route planners
- Clear instructions of how to find you when travelling by car or taxi
- Distance and directions from the nearest rail and bus stations
- Links to rail, coach and bus routes with timetables and relevant access information
- Railcard information e.g. Disabled Person's Railcard
- Accessible taxi company numbers, with estimated costs from key stations
- Average driving times and mileage from key cities, towns and motorways
- Convenient refreshment stops and things to see and do en route. Have you done your homework to find out how accessible these are too?
- Real time traffic information e.g. [trafficengland.com](https://www.trafficengland.com)
- If you don't have easily accessible parking, locate your nearest Blue Badge parking and the cost.

Stage four: Making the arrival process easier

They're here! This may be the first time you see them – it's time to deliver on your promises.

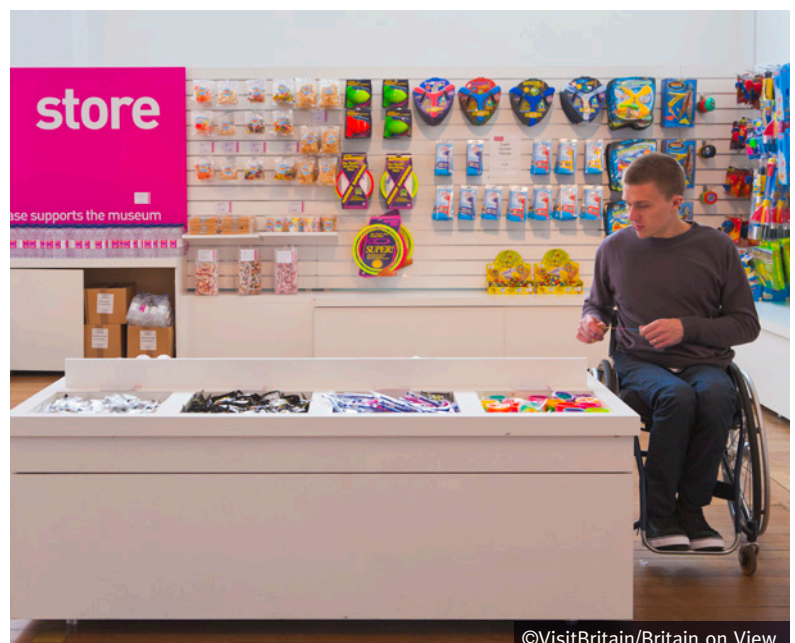
Review the environment

- Make sure the entrance and reception/ticket office are well lit
- Provide seating close to the reception area/ticket office
- Consider fast-tracking for those who can't stand for a period of time
- Be prepared to write down information for customers with hearing loss
- Be ready to complete forms on behalf of guests
- Consider buying an induction loop (around £130 for a portable loop system for counters and desks) at louderthanwords.org.uk/hearing-loops. If you are a small business, can you join together with local businesses or associations and buy a few pieces of equipment to share?
- In accommodation where you can't lower the reception desk/table, offer to check in guests in a lounge or bedroom for those who can't use higher levels e.g. wheelchair users



First impressions – simple changes

- Is your entrance clearly marked?
- Are paths free of weeds and trip hazards?
- If you have steps to the entrance, do you have hand rails to help those unsteady on their feet?
- Is the door easy to open and are the door mats flush with the floor surface?
- Can customers call ahead for assistance and is someone always on hand to meet, greet and show around?





Provide a consistent level of service

- Make sure that all staff are equally familiar with your facilities, information and any known barriers
- Give all staff a copy of your Accessibility Guide so they can see at a glance the facilities and services available. Better still, ask them to help prepare it
- Ask staff to research local transport, places to eat and attractions and find out which are the most accessible
- Arrange visits to nearby attractions/ accommodation so they can talk about them knowledgeably.

Remove any barriers

Not all improvements require major refurbishment or expense. Simple things you can provide include:

- Pictogram signs e.g. knife and fork and a clock face showing meal times to help those with learning disabilities, dyslexia and where English is not their first language
- Written signs in a large, clear typeface
- Contrasting colours for door frames, skirting boards, door handles and edges of steps
- Good lighting throughout, especially in eating areas and toilets
- Safety markings on large glazed areas.

Improve access in eating areas

- Read menus aloud or consider downloading into an audio format for customers to listen to
- Provide adequate space to move in between areas
- Have the flexibility to move tables around
- Provide well-lit tables for those with visual impairments
- Offer guests a choice of seating location and have the ability to reserve particular tables
- Use table blocks to increase the height of tables e.g. to accommodate a wheelchair user
- Provide a selection of seats with and without arms
- Ensure crockery contrasts with the table linen or surface e.g. avoid using white crockery, white linen and clear glasses all together on a table setting
- Provide quiet areas away from music or noise for guests with hearing loss or autistic people
- Provide for different dietary requirements e.g. dairy-free, gluten-free, lactose-free, nut-free.



Make access easy in your accommodation

- Provide room information in different formats
- Consider the flexibility of furniture when purchasing/updating. Zip and link beds offer more combinations for disabled people/partners/carers. Freestanding furniture also offers the flexibility to be removed if required
- Use blocks to raise beds
- Provide towels that contrast in colour to the walls and floor to assist visually impaired guests
- Provide phones with large buttons
- Provide portable vibrating alarms for customers not able to hear an audible fire alarm
- Have vibrating alarm clocks with flashing lights available (around £30-40 at hearinglossconnevans.co.uk). Remember, you can share resources with others locally
- Have a magnifying glass/magnifying sheet handy
- Enable subtitles on TVs in public areas
- Provide bowls of water for assistance dogs and a toilet area, ideally within the grounds of the property or nearby
- Provide a selection of bathroom equipment such as a support rail by the shower attachments, bath seat, toilet seat height raiser and shower chair
- Provide quieter areas with no background noise for those with hearing loss
- Have lever taps in bathrooms/kitchens

Look at your rooms as a customer does. Is there space to manoeuvre? Is it easy to draw curtains or to open a window? Can taps in bathrooms be easily turned on and off? Is it obvious which is the hot tap?

Download a National Accessible Scheme information pack from visitenglandassessmentservices.com. At the very least complete a self-assessment, which will help identify any barriers and highlight improvements you can make. The pack also contains information on how to apply for an official rating.

Make access easy in your attraction

- Provide good signage throughout. Consider large print, contrasting and tactile signs
- Make sure interpretation displays can be viewed by all e.g. children and wheelchair users
- Provide interpretation in different formats
- Consider large print and tactile interpretation
- Fast track those unable to stand in a queue for long periods of time
- Provide a quiet space available for autistic people, people with dementia and others
- Install seating, especially on steep inclines, long routes or near to children's play areas so that parents or grandparents can supervise easily.

Stage five: Leaving a lasting impression

If all has gone well your customers will feel content that they've had a great time and be sad to be leaving. But for those who find travel difficult, the stress might be building.

Offer flexible arrangements for check out

- If customers want to leave early, can you offer a morning alarm call, flexible breakfast arrangements, or a pre-booked taxi?
- If later, can you consider a flexible check out time or offer a secure storage area for luggage?

Help with the journey

- Find out where they are going next - have timetables and travel information ready
- Remember that most public transport services request at least 24 hours notice to arrange assistance for disabled travellers
- Be ready to advise on stop-off points
- Can you offer refreshments for the journey?

Secure feedback

When thanking customers for their custom, ask for their feedback. This is the best opportunity to learn more about your customers and their thoughts on how accessible your business really is. They visit lots of places and may pass on some useful tips picked up elsewhere.



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- Review feedback forms and questionnaires – do you ask what could have made their visit more enjoyable?
- Encourage guests to add a review of their stay on websites such as euansguide.com
- Encourage staff to ask customers about their visit and to write down what they say
- Ask if you can keep a record of any customer preferences/specific requirements for future visits and if you can stay in touch
- Let customers know about any changes you've made as a result of their feedback.

Stage six: Keep reviewing

From time to time, undertake more in-depth research with customers to help inform future plans and test out new ideas. Research doesn't have to be expensive.

Can you ask a local school or college to undertake the research and analyse the results for you?

When you undertake research consider:

- Including a range of people – families, older and disabled people. Approach local access groups and organisations run by disabled people
- Using a range of mechanisms to allow the widest range of people to participate e.g. email, telephone, face-to-face
- Regularly test any accessible equipment you've purchased and keep training topped up.



Develop an action plan of simple changes

Take one new idea from each stage of the journey each month and if you have other people working for you, involve them. Your action plan for this month could look something like this:

Customer journey	Action	When	Who
Stage one	Develop an Accessibility Guide using VisitEngland's online tool		
Stage two	Start asking guests at time of booking if they have any accessibility requirements		
Stage three	Research local public transport accessibility and add to your Accessibility Guide		
Stage four	Train all staff in disability awareness and ensure they are familiar with accessible facilities, services and equipment available		
Stage five	See if you have received any reviews on Euan's Guide. If you haven't, secure your first review		
Stage six	Approach local access groups to visit your business and give feedback		

Where to get more help

The VisitEngland Business Advice Hub includes a dedicated section on making your business accessible at visitengland.org/access

- Discover the value of the Purple Pound and untapped demand
- Follow the Top 10 tips on inclusive tourism
- Use the free online tool to create and publish an Accessibility Guide
- Find practical tips on how to welcome customers with hearing loss, dementia and autism in our range of guides
- Review the accessibility of your accommodation using the National Accessible Scheme information pack and apply for an official rating
- Find online and classroom-style training programmes, free staff training slides and an Accessibility Champion brief
- Learn from other businesses with a range of case studies
- Understand what you need to do to conform to the Equality Act 2010
- Get guidance on marketing to people with accessibility requirements, providing a Changing Places toilet, planning an accessible event and much more.

Welcome to VisitBritain/VisitEngland's corporate website for UK tourism industry [Holiday](#) [Corporate](#) [Trade](#) [Media](#) [Business Events](#)

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Business advice > Make your business accessible

Make your business accessible

Do you want to extend your season, obtain loyal customers and gain a share of a £15.3 billion market? Find guidance, tools and resources to help you provide access for all.

One in five people in the UK have an impairment, which may affect where they choose to stay or visit. Improving your accessibility benefits all customers and does not always require major or expensive changes – simply providing a free Accessibility Guide for your venue can help you be more inclusive for people with a wide range of visible and hidden impairments.

Top Resources

- PDF, 2.6MB [How to welcome people with dementia](#)
Learn how to create a stress-free visit for people living with dementia, from signage to being a Dementia Friend.
- PDF, 0.5MB [Easy changes to improve your accessibility](#)
An accessible business can make more money. Learn some quick, cheap and easy ways to make life easier for your disabled customers.
- [Operating during COVID-19](#)
Find guidance on how to stay open safely and welcome disabled customers during COVID-19 on our Business Advice Hub.

Accessible tourism: the business case

There is a compelling business case for making tourism venues and experiences inclusive. People with health conditions & impairments and their travelling companions spend around £15.3 billion on trips in England each year.

People from this market are more likely to take longer trips and are anecdotally very loyal to places that meet their requirements.

- PDF, 2.6MB [What the accessible tourism market is worth](#)
The value of the purple pound - how much disabled tourists spend. Includes volume of trips and breakdown by trip type and visitor impairment.
- PDF, 0.7MB [Untapped demand](#)
Discover how many people didn't take a trip in the previous 12 months due to a lack of accessibility and the amount of lost revenue for businesses.
- PDF, 2.7MB [Existing provision for disabled people](#)
Report on accessibility provision by serviced accommodation in Britain, including accessible stock and the issues faced by businesses.

Your legal obligations

The Equality Act

What you need to do to conform to the Equality Act 2010 and avoid disability discrimination.