

# Easy does it

Simple, low-cost changes to benefit you and your visitors



VisitEngland™

# I want a smile, a warm welcome and a vibrating alarm...



## If building your business matters, take 60 seconds to read a section of the visitor journey in this booklet.

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

There are enough ideas about access improvements to fill an encyclopedia. This leaflet 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's hard of hearing, a child with reading difficulties, someone who walks with a stick, 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 8% 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 a hearing impairment than are deaf.

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

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!



Remember not all disabilities are obvious e.g. asthma, diabetes and allergies – when you list some of the invisible disabilities it really gets you thinking...

...diabetics need to plan meal times carefully to control their blood sugar levels, asthmatics require hypo-allergenic bedding not feathers, people who are hard of hearing require vibrating alarms ...these are all areas where it's easy and inexpensive to respond.

## It's good business

- The over 50s buy 40% more holidays than the under 30s, averaging five or six breaks per year  
*Professor Richard Scase, 2005, Global Remix*
- There is correlation between ageing and disability. Impairments and disability increase substantially after the age of 45.  
[www.employers-forum.co.uk](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk)
- Consumer spending among the UK's 50-69 year-olds currently runs at £300bn a year  
*Mintel research quoted in the Guardian*
- The spending power of disabled people in the UK alone is estimated to be worth £80 billion  
[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)
- More than five million over 55s visited Britain from overseas, representing one in six of our 30 million inbound visitors. This upward trend is set to continue.  
*VisitBritain*
- The UK market is ageing. It is estimated that by 2025 more than a third of the UK's population will be over 55. People are living longer and staying active until much later in life.  
*VisitBritain*
- The singles market is the fastest growth sector, particularly women, and they are more likely to be 'older' travellers, in the 45-74 age group  
*Professor Richard Scase, 2005, Global Remix*

## It's a legal requirement

Embrace the spirit of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)\* and don't fight it.

The DDA does not seek to put people out of business. It seeks to help all citizens to enjoy the same services that others take for granted. Treated positively, it provides an opportunity for business development ensuring that your service is accessible to a wider audience.

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

The DDA expects tourism businesses to make reasonable adjustments. This leaflet takes you through the visitor journey and offers helpful tips for making reasonable adjustments (see back cover for information about the DDA).

\*Replaced by the Equality Act 2010, see [www.visitengland.org/access](http://www.visitengland.org/access)

Making a decision to go on a trip is part one of the six-stage visitor journey which lasts through to returning home and remembering the visit. For some parts of the visitor 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 visitors will be more likely to find it and book with you. Help visitors with travel arrangements and you add value to the service you provide and their overall enjoyment. Using the visitor journey process improves the quality of the service you offer, increasing the likelihood of repeat bookings and favourable recommendations. Families, older and disabled visitors are particularly loyal to those businesses that meet their needs and they will tell others!

## Stage one Attracting visitors in the first place – what to consider?

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

### Improve your marketing information

All visitors want easy-to-understand and up-to-date information that is quick to find. Review your brochure and website using the information in this section.

### Provide information in alternative formats

Braille is essential for some blind people, but two out of three visually-impaired people can read clear or large print. *RNIB 2008*

### Clear information – simple changes

- Use large text. 12 point is the minimum. Large print should be at least 14, but 16 is best.
- Use clear typefaces such as sans serif typefaces e.g. Arial, Univers or Verdana
- Ensure contrast between text and background. Avoid using red text.
- Avoid justifying text as large gaps can be confusing
- Don't use italics or capitals for large blocks of text
- Use pictograms and symbols to help users navigate text
- Use images with a diverse range of visitors
- 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 WAI's web accessibility guidelines (see back cover for details)

### 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 tourist board websites. Provide your local tourist information centre with a list of your accessible facilities and remember to update them as things change.

Other important details you can include on your website and in your brochure:

- Clear email address and fax number, especially for those who have difficulty using a telephone
- Address and travel information
- An access statement (see above right)
- Assurance of quality and accessibility through an official rating i.e. a star rating or National Accessible Scheme rating
- Clear pictures and details of rooms and facilities
- Floor plans and measurements

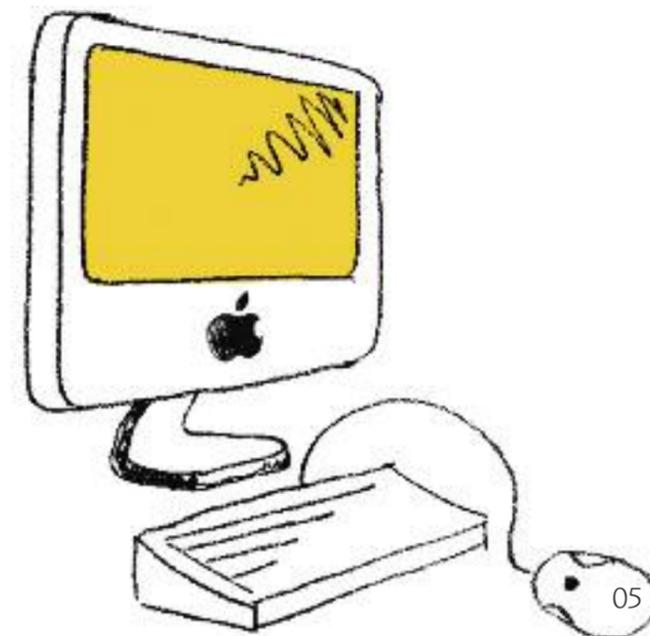
### Prepare an access statement

Producing an access statement sounds like hard work, but it doesn't have to be. It is a clear and honest description of the facilities and services you offer which is available on your website and/or in hard copy. 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 (see back cover for details).

### Get to know your local area

Think about other businesses that visitors 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, 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.



## Stage two

### Making your booking/enquiry processes easier – what to consider?

#### Transparent pricing – simple changes

- Make sure prices are easy to locate on your website (within two or three clicks) and are consistent with your brochure
- Be clear about what is included and excluded
- Don't charge extra for facilities and services that could be considered as discrimination under the DDA. 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 and carers. In some attractions and accommodation, carers go free.
- Review cancellation charges. Are they flexible for disabled people who may need to change arrangements at the last minute due to illness? Can you be flexible for carers too?



#### Provide different booking methods

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

#### Check your reception staff's knowledge of your product

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 visitors.

#### Reassure and build excitement

All visitors 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 visitors' arrival
- Information about the surrounding area, nearby attractions and upcoming events, depending on the reason for their visit

## Stage three

### Taking the stress out of travel – what to consider?

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 visitors and even for those with lots of luggage.

Many disabled people have to plan travel well in advance. Most public transport operators require a minimum of 24 hours notice for guaranteed assistance.

#### 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.

#### Stress-free travel – simple changes

- 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 nearest rail and bus stations
- Links to rail, coach and bus routes and timetables with 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. [www.keepmoving.co.uk](http://www.keepmoving.co.uk)
- If you don't have easily accessible parking, locate your nearest Blue Badge parking and the cost (see back cover for details)

#### Make the arrival easy

Let visitors 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)
- Arrangements for visitors to drop off luggage early



## Stage four

### They're here – what to consider?

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

#### 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 (from young toddlers to those with arthritis)?
- Is the door easy to open and are the door mats flush with the floor surface?
- Can visitors call ahead for assistance and is someone always on hand to meet, greet and show around?

#### 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 visitors with hearing impairments
- 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 [www.rnid.org.uk/shop/](http://www.rnid.org.uk/shop/)). 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 the bedroom for those who can't use higher levels e.g. wheelchair users

#### Review your information

- Remind and reassure visitors of any specific arrangements they made at the time of booking
- Provide information on key facilities and emergency procedures
- Ask all visitors if they have any specific needs or anything you can help them with

#### 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 access statement 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.

- Pictogram signs e.g. knife and fork and clock face showing meal times to help those with learning disabilities, dyslexia and where English is not the 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 onto an audio player e.g. MP3, CD, tape
- Provide adequate space to move in between areas
- Have the flexibility to move tables around



- Provide well-lit tables for those with visual impairments
- Have the ability to reserve particular tables
- Use table blocks to increase height of tables
- Provide a selection of seats with and without arms
- Contrast colours e.g. avoid using white crockery, white linen and clear glasses all together on a table setting
- Provide areas away from music or noise for hearing-impaired guests

#### Make access easy in your accommodation

- Provide room information in different formats
- Consider 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
- Place coloured towels within a white bathroom to provide a visual contrast
- Provide phones with large buttons
- Provide portable vibrating alarms for visitors not able to hear an audible fire alarm
- Have vibrating alarm clocks with flashing lights available (vibrating alarm clock around £17, vibrating pillow alarm clock around £34 [www.rnid.org.uk/shop/](http://www.rnid.org.uk/shop/)). Remember, you can share resources with others locally.
- Have a magnifying glass/magnifying sheet handy
- Enable Teletext and subtitles on TVs
- Provide bowls of water for assistance dogs
- Make chair and floor throws available for service dogs to assist with housekeeping
- Provide quieter areas with no background noise for those with hearing impairments
- Have lever taps in bathrooms/kitchens

Look at your rooms as a visitor 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?

#### Make access easy in your attraction

- Provide good signage throughout. Consider large print, contrasting and tactile signs.
- Make sure interpretation 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
- Install seating, especially on steep inclines, long routes or near to children's play areas so that parents or grandparents can supervise easily

Send for a National Accessible Scheme pack from VisitEngland. At the very least you should complete the self assessment form, which will help identify any barriers and highlight improvements you can make. The pack also contains information on how to apply for a rating (see back cover for details).



## Stage five

### Time to go home – what to consider?

If all has gone well your visitors 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 visitors want to leave early, can you offer a morning alarm call, flexible breakfast arrangements, 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 need 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 visitors for their custom, ask for their feedback. This is the best opportunity to learn more about your visitors and their thoughts on how accessible your accommodation/attraction really is. They visit lots of places and may pass on some useful tips picked up elsewhere.

- Review evaluation forms – do you ask what could have made their visit more enjoyable?
- Consider more creative/quick ways of asking for feedback e.g. post-it notes, post cards
- Encourage staff to ask customers about their visit and to write down what they say
- Make a record of any visitor preferences/specific requirements and ask to keep their details on record so that you can keep in touch
- Let visitors know about any changes you've made as a result of their feedback. The *Sunday Times* in 2007 reported that 90% of businesses seek feedback, 50% act on it, yet only 5% tell customers what they've done – tell them!



## Stage six

### Sweet dreams, memories and keeping in touch – what to consider?

Your customer is back at home. If all has gone well they should be feeling content, happy and nostalgic as they reminisce to friends, colleagues and family.

#### Keep reviewing

From time to time, undertake more in-depth research with visitors 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.

#### Do one thing today - 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...

Visitor journey	Action	When	Who
Stage 1	Develop access statement using VisitEngland Online Tool		
Stage 2	Develop crib sheet with key measurements, facilities and services offered		
Stage 3	Add travel distances from transport hubs onto website		
Stage 4	Review policy for checking in guests who need additional help		
Stage 5	Understand more about advance booking of services for disabled passengers		
Stage 6	Approach local access groups to be involved in future research		

## Where to get more help

- *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), Website Accessibility Initiative (WAI)* - the definitive and internationally accepted guidelines  
[www.w3.org/WAI](http://www.w3.org/WAI)
- *See it Right*, RNIB Guidance - a practical and achievable mixture of most of WCAG checkpoints  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)
- *A guide to commissioning accessible websites - PAS 78*  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)
- *How to be a web-savvy accommodation business*, Includes a helpful chapter on making sites accessible  
[www.visitengland.org](http://www.visitengland.org)
- The National Accessible Scheme (NAS), operated by VisitEngland, awards ratings to accommodation establishments based on the level of access. The NAS information pack is free of charge.  
[www.visitengland.com/NAS](http://www.visitengland.com/NAS)
- Access statement guidance and Online Tool  
[www.visitengland.com/accessstatements](http://www.visitengland.com/accessstatements)
- Blue Badge parking  
[www.bluebadge.direct.gov.uk](http://www.bluebadge.direct.gov.uk)
- The Equality Act 2010  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)
- Information provider to help disabled and older people to travel  
[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)

Published by VisitEngland  
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VisitEngland incorporated under the Development of Tourism Act 1969 as the British Tourist Authority

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Printed in England



SGS-COC-003257



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