Speak Up!

A guide to marketing your accessibility
As the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, VisitBritain/VisitEngland plays a unique role in building England's tourism product, raising Britain's profile worldwide, increasing the volume and value of tourism exports and developing England and Britain’s visitor economy. Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, our mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop world-class English tourism product to support our growth aspirations.

VisitEngland’s strategic priorities include: developing English tourism product through the delivery of the £40m Discover England Fund; supporting Business Visits and Events in England, and providing additional business facing and supporting activities, including statutory research.

VisitEngland, Sanctuary Buildings,  
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visitengland.org/businessadvice
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“

The Speak Up! guide is very thorough and informative, with lots of ideas that I'm eager to try out. So nice to receive a publication that feels like a supportive friend.”

Karen Venn, Norburton Hall, Dorset
In this country 1 in 5 people have a disability (Department for Work and Pensions). Many of your existing customers are likely to be in that group but you may not realise this. Impairments such as hearing loss, arthritis, epilepsy and autism are invisible and people won’t typically tell you about them when they are booking.

More importantly, your customer base is getting older and with age comes the increasing chance of impairments such as poorer eyesight, back problems or other disabilities. In mid-2014, the average age in the UK exceeded 40 for the first time. By 2040, nearly one in seven people is projected to be aged over 75 (Office for National Statistics).

In total, UK residents with a health condition or impairment and their travelling party spent £3.2billion on domestic overnight trips and £8.5billion on day trips in England in 2015.

Another market with some of the access needs of disabled travellers is the multi-generational travel segment of grandparents, parents and children.

This guide will bring long term business benefits, by helping you to better understand your current market and profit from new ones. Disabled travellers tend to be loyal as, with so few companies reaching out to them, they often return to places that meet their needs.

The accessible tourism market in England is worth around £12billion. The good news for businesses wanting to target this market is that demand for accessible accommodation and activities outstrips the current supply.

This guide looks at how prospective customers access information, what communication channels they value and what prompts them to book. It will help to demystify the process of reaching out to disabled people and to turn your business into one that talks confidently to this potential market.
Case Study:
Scandic Hotels

“When we take over a hotel, we implement our accessibility programme within three months and after just one year we tend to notice more bookings from private guests and from companies and organisations.

We don’t separate access from our mainstream marketing. We refer to it in every channel so whether we are promoting a business offer or a sporting event, there will always be a reference to access. This gives us a clear competitive advantage as well as showing our commitment to social responsibility.”

Magnus Berglund
Disability Co-ordinator
www.scandichotels.com/Always-at-Scandic/Special-needs/

Case Study:
Wheeldon Trees Farm, self catering cottages in the Peak District

“Opening a self catering business was a complete life change for us after running a business in London for years. We totally renovated the seven existing cottages and created two new additional units, including one (Sheldon Cottage) which is fully wheelchair accessible.

We started our accessibility marketing quite tentatively, becoming listed with Premier Cottages. Gradually our confidence has built as we have welcomed more and more disabled guests.

Although the facilities are important, we think that the reassurance we offer when we have initial contact with potential guests has truly helped to develop our business. And their feedback helps us to constantly improve.”

Deborah and Martin Hofman
www.wheeldontreesfarm.co.uk
Section 1. Starting out?

“I don’t understand disability”

Disabled people do not make up a neat segment that can be marketed to in exactly the same way. They feature in every social and cultural group and have diverse interests and passions both on holiday and at home. They are a rich mix of potential customers, travelling with friends and family, who are all looking for what everyone wants on holiday – a good time.

That said, most disabled people do have some requirements when travelling therefore some specialist marketing and promotion knowledge will help you. But there is no need to become an expert in disability. Approach this market as you would any other: research your customers and then adjust your product and promotional channels to attract them.

“I am concerned about getting it wrong”

The term ‘disabled’ puts a lot of business owners off. Some worry that promoting accessible facilities will deter other visitors. Some are worried about using the wrong language and causing offence.

But these fears are nearly always unfounded in reality. Disabled people are just customers with specific accessibility requirements. As in any social situation, making an effort and giving a warm smile can count for more than trying to be politically correct.

Although it is important not to use offensive language, don’t worry about using common everyday phrases. It is fine to say to a person who is blind ‘see you later’ and people who use wheelchairs do ‘go for a walk’.

Good communication is about being confident enough to ask what help people need. Take your lead from the customer themselves, remembering that not all disabilities are visible or obvious.

It helps to think of your business as being ‘accessible’ rather than ‘disability friendly’ and offering ‘accessible holidays’ rather than ‘disabled holidays’. This helps you to open up your business to all those who have access needs, rather than only those who recognise themselves as being disabled.

Here is an example of how the award-winning Mortons House Hotel in Dorset promotes accessibility as part of its mainstream provision: Mortons House Hotel.
There is a common perception that you need to spend lots of money on door-widening and ramps to become accessible, but only around 8% of disabled people are wheelchair users. Think of accessibility in its broadest sense. With some small changes, you could welcome many more people.

If you have a generally older clientele then you are probably already making minor adjustments e.g. providing hand rails or information in large print. Perhaps you offer gluten-free options in the restaurant, adjoining rooms for those that are travelling in extended family groups or orthopaedic beds?

- Step-free access properties, especially those with wide doorways and a lot of open space, are particularly popular with non-disabled families with toddlers.

- Do you have accessible downstairs toilets? The extended family with a grandparent may now feel more comfortable about visiting you.

- You may have installed a simple hearing loop. Suddenly you are welcoming to those with hearing loss who don’t travel because they are concerned about communication.

Walk around and undertake a DIY audit of your business. By thinking ‘access’, you will notice many small barriers that can be easily removed.

There is a useful checklist of all the things that you could consider when doing your audit in VisitEngland’s booklet ‘One step ahead’. Although designed for the accommodation sector, the checklist will be useful to most tourism businesses. [www.visitengland.org/access](http://www.visitengland.org/access)

As a business you are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that disabled people can access your premises and services. These might include simple changes to layout, improved signage and information and staff training. It might be something as simple as changing check out times. You do NOT have to make changes that are impractical or beyond your means. [Read more information on reasonable adjustments.](http://www.visitengland.org/access)

Case Study: Sandcastle Waterpark, Blackpool

Sandcastle Waterpark installed induction loops at each of its counters to help guests who use a hearing aid. The park, which attracts around 350,000 visitors a year, includes information about this in all of its promotional material and within their Accessibility Guide. It has also produced a video (with subtitles) which covers all aspects of access on site, including its induction loop facilities.
Section 2. Marketing to disabled people

Information, information, information

To be effective, all your marketing communications should:

1. Create attention in your audience
2. Generate interest
3. Develop desire
4. Turn into action and a booking.

Disabled people, like any other market segment, will make booking decisions based on what they can find out about your business.

A common complaint among disabled travellers, their friends and their families is that they have a strong desire to travel, but they can’t find accurate and reliable information in order to take action and make a booking. The process of information gathering before a trip is crucial, especially for less experienced and first time travellers, so it is vital to communicate your accessibility to potential customers.

What sort of information are disabled people looking for?

1. A comprehensive picture of the environment they are coming to. They want to feel secure and safe, and know that their specific needs will be met. They want to know whether the staff will be welcoming and when the busy periods are, so if necessary they can avoid crowds.

2. Information about what to see and do in the area, for example which local tourist attractions have wheelchair or tramper (all-terrain wheelchair) hire on site. You can save potential travellers a lot of time by gathering this for them but make sure the activities, attractions, pubs and restaurants you list are accessible.

3. Accurate, reliable and up to date information on facilities. Measurements of door widths, for example, need to be exact. It can also be helpful to provide details of where specialist equipment such as mobility scooters or wheelchairs can be hired.

It is particularly important for people with access needs that the information is:

1. Easy to find in a specific ‘Access Information’ section as well as throughout the website
2. Accessible with information in a number of accessible formats
3. Reliable with an indication of who or what organisation is providing the information
4. Accurate so there are no nasty surprises on arrival
5. Up to date with a clear indication which season/year the data refers to and when the information was last updated
Feedback and testimonials

Ask for feedback from your guests. They will usually be happy to provide tips on what they want to see on websites and in your brochures.

‘Word of Mouth’ (advice and independent reviews from family, friends and online sources such as TripAdvisor) is now the single most valued source of information when booking a holiday. This information is particularly valued by disabled travellers.

Past customers are usually happy to provide testimonials which can then be used on your website, linked to your social media and put on your other marketing material.

When I go away I always read the testimonials. It’s always nice not feeling like a guinea pig, so if you can read about someone who has had a good experience then it gives you greater peace of mind and you can concentrate on enjoying yourself!”

Katy Etherington, from Berkhamsted, a wheelchair user who travels with her family and PA.

Case Study:
Elms Farm Cottages, Lincolnshire

Elms Farm Cottages have nine accessible self-catering holiday cottages in converted barns and stables on a family farm in Lincolnshire.

The Elms Farm Cottages website has a good section on what to do in the local area, including restaurants, day trips and a guide to nearby accessible attractions.

Owners Carol and John Emerson have visited the attractions over the years and recorded the accessibility details on the website.

The Accessibility Guide includes precise measurements of the rooms, heights of the beds and chairs and the gradients of slopes. It mentions all the extras such as shower wheelchairs and bed rails which guests can reserve when booking. Carol says ‘We do not charge for these items and they often make a big difference to guests. It is definitely something other establishments should consider.’ The accessibility of Elms Farm Cottages has received many plaudits on review sites such as TripAdvisor.

www.elmsfarmcottages.co.uk
Visuals

Use pictures of your disabled guests on your website. These can have even more impact than written testimonials as they clearly illustrate your facilities in use. If you need willing models for the pictures then approach a local disability group and ask for help. Such an approach could also set off a ‘talking chain’ among the disabled community locally about your property. Be sure to include the photos in your Accessibility Guide.

Provide a picture of yourself alongside your Contact Us details. This helps readers with learning disabilities, dyslexia and non-English speakers, as well as being welcoming. Videos can also illustrate your access. Simple handheld camera footage can be uploaded onto YouTube and the link embedded in your Accessibility Guide.

There are many commercial companies who will produce good promotional access videos for you, but check their credentials and experience. Ensure the film has subtitles so it can be read as well as listened too.

Winford Manor Hotel
near Bristol

This Winford Manor Hotel video illustrates the hotel’s accessibility and its passion for meeting guests’ needs. It is fronted by a disability awareness consultant who uses a wheelchair and who adds his recommendations as he goes.

Castlepoint Shopping Centre
Bournemouth

Local firm Access Dorset Video Productions uses local people to highlight the practicalities of visiting the shopping centre for disabled people. The film includes subtitles.

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

One of The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust six core goals is that its wetlands are accessible to everyone. It asked independent disability filmmakers and consultants Gilbey Films to create a Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust video to illustrate what the centres have to offer.

http://www.wwt.org.uk
Language

Make sure your terminology is welcoming. Avoid phrases such as: the disabled/the blind; handicapped/invalid; able-bodied; afflicted with/crippled by or wheelchair bound. Instead say disabled/blind people; wheelchair user; person with hearing loss or sign language user.

Think about your signage too:

- ‘We welcome wheelchairs’ (what about the people in them?)

- ‘Disabled Toilet’ or ‘Disabled Car Parking’ (why are the toilet and car park disabled?) Use phrases such as ‘accessible toilet’ and ‘step-free route to car park’.

A sign saying ‘No Dogs’ could be seen as discriminatory. Over 7,000 disabled people in the UK rely on assistance dogs. They are highly trained animals that allow people to travel independently. Replace it with a free welcome sticker from Assistance Dogs UK.

Not everyone speaks or understands English perfectly. Present material clearly and simply. Avoid words you would never use in everyday speech e.g. use ‘near’ instead of ‘in the vicinity of’. See ‘How to write in plain English’ guide.

Use images, pictograms and symbols to help users navigate text, for example a pictogram of a car or bus to indicate transport. See how the National Trust has used symbols in its regional guides.


It guides the potential visitor through a series of ‘Stories’ each tackling an aspect of the visit. Each story is accompanied by pictures.
Alternative formats

Visually impaired people and those with dyslexia often favour audio formats such as mp3 or CD Rom so, if possible, record your Accessibility Guide. You could also use audio as a promotional tool, for example a podcast on days out in the local area. Podcasts are audio or video files that people can download onto portable media players.

There are more than 11 million people in the UK with some form of hearing loss. They tend to be proficient users of the internet and often find SMS texting useful. Some deaf people who use British Sign Language (a visual language with its own grammar) identify themselves not as disabled, but as being part of a separate linguistic and cultural group called the Deaf community. An interpreter would not be expected but having a BSL signed DVD/podcast would be a resource that could be used again and again. It is often assumed that a Deaf person will travel with a family member or friend who will interpret on their behalf but this is not always the case.

You are not expected to translate all of your print materials into all formats – this would be an unreasonable expectation. For example, visually impaired people are benefitting from the explosion in screen reader apps, allowing quick access to printed materials. Braille is a hard language to learn and is only used by 3% of visually impaired people, so you only need to supply this format if requested.

Case Study:
The Houses of Parliament, London

The Houses of Parliament’s detailed 15 minute video can be viewed with subtitles or signed in British Sign Language. It takes visitors through every stage from arrival to departure.

Case Study:
The V&A Museum, London

“The V&A wants to be at the leading edge with assistive technology, introducing new ways to interpret the museum’s galleries and exhibitions. As a blind person, I have a keen interest in monitoring new screen reading apps, and developing Touch Tours with audio descriptions and screen reader software on computer terminals.

For visitors with a hearing loss we offer British Sign Language and subtitled talks, neck loops and radio receivers to use on tours. Our support services are on the website so that visitors know how we can help them well in advance.”

Barry Ginley is the V&A’s Equality & Access Advisor
More help on accessible formats

The Office for Disability Issues provides guidance on accessible communication formats including audio, braille, Moon, British Sign Language, Easyread, Makaton, accessible print publications, subtitling and telephone.

Telephone communications

Disabled people with very specific needs can require a great deal of reassurance and are often high users of the telephone.

So it’s important that all your staff are familiar with your accessible products and services. Are they trained to be patient with callers who may seem over-persistent about details? Do they know how to ask if callers have special requests or needs without causing offence?

Encourage your staff to ask questions and accurately record requests. Leave a copy of your Accessibility Guide by the phone.

Staff need to be confident in receiving calls via the Next Generation Text Service (NGT), which is a national text to voice service that allows people who can’t hear or speak to make telephone calls. [http://ngts.org.uk](http://ngts.org.uk)

Pricing incentives

Pricing can be a key marketing tool for this group, which often has the flexibility to travel out of season or during school term time.

Attractive incentives include a flexible cancellation policy, discounts for repeat and direct debit bookings, ability to book part of a week, discounted or free additional room for a carer and later checkout times.

Case Study:
Grindon Farm, Northumberland

“We find that offering part weeks helps attract repeat visitors and extends the season. For example, we have one guest who comes with a carer, out of season twice a year.

We try to maximize business through our own marketing, but during off peak we will use an online listing such as Good Access Guide or Disability Holidays Guide, even though we have to pay a commission.”

Jackie Armstrong
[www.grindonfarm.co.uk](http://www.grindonfarm.co.uk)
Providing reassurance

All types of visitor accommodation can join the National Accessible Scheme (NAS). Run by VisitEngland, this classification system rates your business on its suitability for mobility and/or hearing and/or visual impaired guests. Many businesses find that the NAS standards help them to improve their facilities and the ratings provide reassurance to guests.

The entry level standard is ‘One step ahead’, which covers the first stages in making a property or service accessible. The cost depends on the size of your business, and your membership and grading lasts for 3 years.

Even if your business has steps to the front door and no ground floor rooms, you can still achieve this standard. If a business is able to provide specific facilities for visually or hearing impaired people or wheelchair users then it can be graded at the next specialist level in the NAS: V1 (Visual Level One), H1 (Hearing Level One) and M1 (Mobility Level One).

Another certification programme is the Autism Friendly Award. This is a standard for autism friendly spaces, currently held by tourism venues such as the Roman Baths & Pump Room and Windsor Castle.

Case Study:
Hoe Grange Holidays, Derbyshire

“We use the National Accessible Scheme logos on our website, brochure and adverts. Some guests know the logos well and won’t book without them. They provide reassurance. Some guests are nervous, particularly if they have had a previous bad experience. NAS certification shows a certain standard has been achieved. It can also help when you are negotiating advertising rates in specialist magazines – it has sometimes helped reduce the rate!

Disabled people are very loyal guests. One guest and his wife have been 20 times in three or four years – and they pay by direct debit in advance.”

Felicity Brown

www.hoegrangeholidays.co.uk

As a frequent disabled traveller, I am heavily dependent on information being reliable and accurate. For example, if door measurements are incorrect and I cannot fit through the door, the margin for error is nil and my trip is pretty much ruined. The Access Statement for the Thistle Atlantic Tower in Liverpool is an example of good practice.”

Srin Madipalli
Oxford University student
Section 3. Key marketing tools

Your Accessibility Guide

An Accessibility Guide is produced by tourism operators to provide potential visitors with important accessibility information about a venue, property or service.

The guide enables individuals with accessibility requirements, their family and friends to make informed decisions as to where to stay and visit in view of their requirements. This includes not just wheelchair users but people with hearing loss, visual or mental impairment, older people, families with young children and more.

• Disabled people look at Accessibility Guides before deciding to book or visit.

• Operators often say that the process of preparing a guide helps them to better understand their accessibility provision and any gaps.

Remember that an Accessibility Guide is a summary of what is on offer and is not a judgement on your accessibility. The Guide should be accurate and factual. For example, never say ‘we are accessible’, as this means different things to different people. Simply audit your business and describe what you have.

Case Study: QHotels

QHotels is one of the largest hotel groups in the UK that has an Access Statement / Accessibility Guide for each of its properties.

“As a responsible company, we have adopted an inclusive approach to providing information to all our guests. It’s particularly important that any website or e-marketing campaign is supported with these guides, so guests with disabilities are aware of our facilities.”

Claire Rowland
Director of Marketing, QHotels

VisitEngland and VisitScotland provide a free to use website for the easy production and publication of Accessibility Guides. You can produce a guide by answering a series of questions on your venue’s accessibility, uploading useful photos and inputting any further information. You will be given a unique URL to promote your guide, which you can add to your website and also share across social media channels.

Go to www.visitengland.org/accessibilityguides
An accessible website

An accessible website makes sound business sense. Research shows that accessible websites are around 50% faster to navigate for all audiences, and accessible content is highly visible to search engines.

• Keep your web pages clear and uncluttered. Reading on screen is 25% slower than on page, so structure content in a logical order and use pictures, short snappy headlines and bulleted lists. Don’t use italics or CAPITALS for large blocks of text. Ensure the text contrasts with the background.

• Use simple formats without too many navigation bars and provide a text equivalent for graphical elements. Provide a pull down menu of access options, including changing the site to high contrast, zoom text or turn a style off. Avoid embedding multi-media technologies such as Flash. Audio and video content should not auto play unless the user knows this is going to happen.

• People who find it hard to use a mouse use a keyboard and the tab button. Blind people use screen readers (reading out entries and the set of commands associated to reach them - usually by braille keyboard). Keep internet pages simple and consistent, reduce tabs and provide access via keys.

• Disabled people tend to be big users of mobile communications, so try and make your website ‘mobile friendly’. 

• In VisitEngland’s 2012 survey of disabled travellers, 88% cited web downloads as very or quite useful when arranging travel. But be careful how many PDFs you use – not all screen readers can read them. Take care with booking forms too.

“We love a good break every year in the UK with my grandma. We want good food and lots of things to see and do in the area. Grandma’s wheelchair is light and she can walk short distances, so we can get into most places. She just wants a bedroom where the bathroom door is wide enough, but so few people bother to put that on the website.”

Anna Hawkins
University student
• Clearly signpost your Access Information section from your homepage. Make the information easy to find; do not bury it deep within the website or confusingly include it with the description of the website accessibility, often located in the footer.

• Once your website is accessible, produce guidance on ‘accessing this website’ at the foot of the home page.

There are international web accessibility standards called WAI guidelines. They are quite detailed but if you use a web designer, they should follow them.

If you manage your own website then the BBC website provides some plain English guidance. Also see the excellent BBC case studies on how disabled people use websites.

Accommodation managers and their web managers can find specific guidance on the Tourism for All website.

Improve interaction with your website

• Visually impaired people avoid internet browsers and opt for RSS, Google Alerts and mail alerts to keep them up to date, so set these up on your website. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and it’s a free piece of software which allows you to aggregate your news together in one place and allows your customers to receive alerts from you. It’s a useful tool for all your customers.

• Let your loyal customers bookmark, share and recommend you. If you use social media sites then highlight this on your home page. There are a number of book-marking ‘widgets’ such as Add This that make it easy - with one quick download - to share your information with social media. They are small, easy to install and some even offer analytics features, although users have to double click to get to the same page.

Case Study: Brighton Dome

Brighton Dome is an arts space, which presents and produces over 600 events each year. Starting life 200 years ago as the Prince Regent’s stables and riding house, it has some difficult spaces to open up to disabled people, but it has a clear commitment to do so.

A comprehensive Access Statement is provided on the website and is clearly signposted on the home page.

http://brightondome.org/access/

• Start a blog and link it to your website. A blog is a personalised way to tell people about new facilities or a special offer. Regular blog entries can also help to boost your search engine rankings.
Section 4. Promoting your business

Brochures and print

Printed marketing tools are still valued by some travellers, especially the older traveller or those who find computers hard to use. In VisitEngland’s 2012 survey of disabled travellers, 86% cited brochures and leaflets as very or quite useful when arranging travel.

How to make your basic print material more accessible

• Provide a strong contrast between the paper and the text. Backgrounds should be as pale as possible and printing ink as dark as possible. Black on yellow and black on white are the best. White type on a black or dark background can appear smaller. Don’t put text over images.

• Use 12 point type. 40% of the population cannot easily read print below 12 pt. Avoid highly stylised or ornate fonts. Sans serif fonts such as Arial, Gills Sans and Univers don’t have little ‘feet’ on the letters so can be easier to read. Avoid blocks of text in capitals and italics. For a large print brochure you would typically use 16 point minimum.

• Strive for uncluttered design and layout. Structure content in a logical order and use short snappy headlines and bulleted lists to break up copy. Use even word spacing and don’t over fill the page. Avoid fitting text around illustrations. If your print includes a fill-in form, leave generous space for details that have to be hand written. Use symbols where possible; these are good for non-English speaking visitors too.

• Avoid glossy paper as it causes glare. Very thin, semi-transparent papers can be difficult as text can show through from the reverse. They can also be hard to handle.

Content

• Use lots of pictures and testimonials. Add any grading or awards logos.

• People who cannot hear will write to you for more information so put your full address (and fax if you have one).

• Add information on accessible routes, parking availability, travel information and addresses for local tourist information.

• Consider using a QR code (Quick Response Code). This ‘bar code’ is unique to you. Add it to your print literature. Users can then scan your brochure/print with a mobile phone and bring up your website immediately. (The QR code shown here takes you to a QR help site).

Distribute print to your local Tourist Information Centre. Disabled travellers are big users of TICs in their search for holiday information and yet TICs say that few businesses think to send them information.
Public relations and specialist disability media

All media, especially local papers, TV and radio, are looking for timely stories that are of interest to their readers. Disability media will also run more specialist stories, for example if you have purchased a new shower hoist or are offering out of season discounts.

Write a press release and stress the human angle of the story, including a direct quote or testimonial and provide pictures. This could initiate a long term relationship too, as you become valuable to the editor as the ‘local expert’.

Most specialist magazines tend to concentrate on mobility-related disability but there are others, for example DeafLife, Connect (published by the RNIB) and Easy News, the newspaper designed for people with learning disabilities. All these magazines provide advertising and editorial opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able Magazine</td>
<td>Bi-monthly A4 full-colour subscription lifestyle publication (£15 per year) covering products, sport, travel, caring, employment and education. Website also contains a free digital edition and news. An annual travel edition takes adverts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Together Now</td>
<td>A lifestyle website and bi-monthly free magazine with some holiday and travel items. 110,000 copies distributed across north west England and North Wales. Readership circa half a million. Advertising rates are listed on their website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Horizons</td>
<td>An online lifestyle and campaigning magazine with sections on news, entertainment, politics, travel, employment and technology.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disabled Motoring UK</td>
<td>This membership organisation campaigns for motoring and travel related improvements for disabled people. The monthly magazine has news as well as travel-related features. You can request a free copy through the website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Review Magazine</td>
<td>An A4 full colour lifestyle and campaigning magazine. Regular features on holidays and hotels. Call for a rate card/media pack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enable</td>
<td>A bi-monthly subscription lifestyle magazine (£15 per year) with suggestions for holidays and days out, circulation 30,000. The website has news and special features on lifestyle and travel.es and adverts. 20,000 readers per month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspire</td>
<td>A bi-monthly online colour magazine promoting independent living with some leisure articles, and carrying adverts. 35,000 copies free to subscribers and independent living centres, Motability Road shows, selected supermarkets and Shopmobility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pos-ability</td>
<td>Bi-monthly subscription lifestyle magazine (£15 per year), circulation 31,000. The website has a holiday section and lists UK accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ucan2</td>
<td>Online magazine promoting products and services, including cars, to help independent living. There is a free print version four times a year and an annual holiday guide.</td>
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Social media

Disabled people are relatively large users of online social networks and blogs and value sharing information and testimonials first hand.

Engaging bloggers

Well-known bloggers can attract many thousands of readers. You could reach out to a disabled travel blogger and offer a ‘fam trip’ in return for authentic marketing to their (very specific) audience.

Examples of bloggers are Martyn Sibley (Disability Horizons), The Bimblers and Carrie-Ann Lightley from Tourism for All. Invite them to your property (although make sure - as with any disabled visitor - you ask what they need from you to make a good visit). Keep an eye on the top disability blogs to see whether you could provide information and advice (as long as you clearly identify yourself and your business as the source).

Social media DIY

You could start your own blog! Regular articles, photos and videos are great for engaging old and new customers.

While starting a blog is cheap and simple, maintaining it takes time, so many businesses use existing social media such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat and Pinterest.

• Disabled people use Twitter for travel research, peer reviews and to ask providers questions. It’s great to nurture customer relations, give relevant information and improve from feedback. Just make sure you’re using the relevant keywords and hashtags like #accessibletourism.

• Disabled people use Facebook also for travel research, peer reviews, and to ask questions. The best way to benefit from this is to set up a basic Facebook page. There are also many private groups you can join. Certain groups like the Tourism for All News Exchange are great for networking with fellow organisations.

The best overall strategy with social media is to:

• Tell your story - people like to connect with people and to follow your journey

• Build your community - content alone isn’t enough. You need to be ‘out there’ digitally responding to information requests and network with people, just like you would at offline events

• Make your call to action – but while bookings are your number one aim, a heavy sales pitch never works. You need to engage your community with other actions that lead to bookings.

“As a person with no sight, I use the internet regularly to research the place I am heading to. Twitter’s keyword searches provide instant tweets on say ‘accessible breaks’ or ‘inclusive tourism’. Any company participating in these Twitter streams is more likely to grab my attention and my custom.”

Paul Nichol
Founder of iCAN Experiences.
icanexperiences.co.uk
Hoe Grange Holidays in Derbyshire achieved a great deal of publicity around its new Boma 7 (all terrain wheelchair), including a radio interview with BBC Radio Derbyshire and a Tweet that went global.

“We had tweeted about our new Boma 7 and were selected as a #SBS (Small Business Sunday) winner by business guru Theo Paphitis. Theo selects six Tweets each week that catch his eye then re-Tweets them to his 300,000+ followers. As a result we have had a host of new followers on Twitter and lots of goodwill messages, particularly from the disabled sector – our target market!

But we don’t see Twitter as a bookings tool. In fact, we have only ever taken one booking from it directly. The power of Twitter is that it’s good for business to

Case Study:
Hoe Grange Holidays, Derbyshire

Hoe Grange Holidays

“I travel using a wheelchair and write a blog about my adventures. What I need from a business when I am researching where to go next is:

1) detailed accessibility information on the website,
2) a list of accessible places to visit nearby,
3) useful contacts for when I’m out and about and
4) how best to travel between sites by bus, train or taxi.

My trips are often coordinated with the Tourist Information Centre or local Destination Manager and I rely on their local knowledge to make my experience as smooth as possible!”

Carrie-Ann Lightley, Travel blogger, Cumbria
www.carrieannlightley.com

business support and lets people know you are knowledgeable. We share what we are doing and can ask others for help, for example, what they would do in certain situations. We also use it to find out what is going on in the area to tell guests.”

Felicity Brown
Hoe Grange Holidays
www.hoegrangeholidays.co.uk
Review sites and forums

There are a number of popular forums where disabled people exchange ideas on holidays and accommodation. The two largest in the UK are the TripAdvisor Disabled Travellers Forum and Guardian Readers Tips. They are worth keeping an eye on, if only so you get a feel for the things that disabled travellers need and, all too often, don't get.

User-led review sites to destinations round the world are springing up rapidly. One worth keeping an eye on, since it is largely focussed on the UK, is Euan’s Guide.

Set up a Google Alert account. This will send you an alert anytime your business appears on one of these sites so you can quickly check what people have written about you and respond if necessary.

Mobile media and apps

Disabled people tend to be enthusiastic mobile phone and app users. They are major contributors to mainstream crowd sourced apps that highlight restaurants, hotels, attractions and transport that make life easier when travelling, for example FourSquare and Google Maps.

Disabled people download apps for blogs, magazines and news sites, so if you can get yourself published or listed by the publishers of these sites then you will find yourself on their apps too.

The number of disability specific apps is slowly rising, for example Wheel Map, Access Earth, and Assist Mi are all recent innovations that rely on the community. It might be worth getting your business listed on these.

Visually impaired people have a growing range of new media apps to help them interpret traditional communications. These include the scanning app KNFB Reader which ‘reads’ printed materials, Blind Square which is GPS-based and describes the local environment and Magnificent Magnifier which turns mobile phones into a talking video magnifier.

Case Study:
Euan’s Guide

Euan’s Guide was created in 2013 by Euan MacDonald, who is a powerchair user, and his sister Kiki. They wanted to create an approachable and honest alternative to hours of web searching and phone calls for disabled people, their friends and families. The website and app now have thousands of disabled access reviews from all over the UK and beyond.

Euan’s Guide has extensive listings of accommodation and attractions. It is free and easy to upload your information and provides lots of advice to help you attract positive reviews. It can also promote any relevant events you are running, for example BSL-interpreted tours, relaxed performances or special open days.

Euan’s Guide founded and is the driving force behind Disabled Access Day, held in March biennially. Venues and organisations are encouraged to sign up to take part at www.disabledaccessday.com
Section 5. Using listings, agencies and operators

Guide books

There is one comprehensive guidebook to accessible holidays in Britain. The Rough Guide to Accessible Britain, produced by Motability, is available online or in hard copy and contains advice and guidance plus listings of attractions, days out, travel and accommodation. If you would like to be included in a future edition, email mail@roughguides.com outlining your accessible facilities and services (for all types of disability, including physical, mental, visual and hearing impairment etc). If accepted then one of the team of authors will visit you to make a more detailed assessment.

Online holiday listings

Many travellers with access needs, particularly when travelling with friends and relatives, are looking for mainstream accommodation and activities, and use mainstream websites. Accessibility searches are increasingly appearing on accommodation websites, for example Premier Cottages has ‘graded accessible’ and ‘ground floor facilities’ search functions. FarmStay UK has a search facility that includes all the National Accessible Scheme levels.

Listings such as HomeAway and LateRooms are beginning to add ‘disability’ or ‘accessibility’ buttons to their search engines.

However users still have to visit the owner websites for accurate information. These sites are not used hugely by disabled travellers.

On the next pages there is a list of online specialist listings and guides. They range widely in their scope and style but each of them list accessible holiday accommodation, attractions and activities in England and could be a useful marketing platform for you.

The majority of them offer you the chance to upload your own information for a fee and update with special offers as the season goes on, requiring you to ‘self-certify’ that you are accessible. Listing charges range from free to over £100 per year. Some charge a commission on bookings made.

Some websites only review or list personally chosen and audited venues so you would need to contact them and see if you can arrange for them to visit you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online holiday listings and guides</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Able Magazine Travel Holiday Guide  
[http://ablemagazine.co.uk](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Published by Able Magazine, this annual online guide includes travel advice, listings of accommodation recommended by readers and carries adverts. |
| ABLEize  
[www.ableize.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Directory of links to mobility, health, travel and accommodation websites in the UK and Europe. You can upload your link from £35 a year. |
| Access at Last  
[www.accessatlast.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk)  
[0177 281 4555](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | List of accessible accommodation with at least one room with a level access shower. You can list your business for membership at £75 per year. |
| Accomable  
[www.accomable.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | This search site lists over 1000 bookable accessible homes and accommodation (similar to AirBnB) in 60 countries, of which about 200 are in the UK. Properties are vetted by phone and must be step free and with at least one accessible bedroom. Bookings incur a 10% commission. |
| Blue Badge Style  
[www.bluebadgestyle.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Information site listing pre-approved and audited ‘stylish’ accessible venues, including hotels, bars and events. |
| DisabledGo  
[www.disabledgo.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk)  
[enquiries@disabledgo.com](mailto:enquiries@disabledgo.com)  
[0143 884 2710](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Detailed pan-disability access information on over 100,000 hotels, attractions and restaurants in England. To be listed you must be audited by a DisabledGo surveyor. The fee (in the range of £500 - £1000, depending on your size) buys you a detailed report and a link from the DisabledGo website. If your local authority commissions DisabledGo, then your business could be included and receive a free audit. Check with your local authority. |
| Disabled Holiday Information  
[www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Advice and listings on accessible holiday accommodation, attractions and activities in the North, Midlands and South West. Some of the accommodation is visited and marked as such. |
| Disability Holidays Guide  
[www.disabilityholidaysguide.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Information and links to accessible holidays in the UK and worldwide. You can promote your property on the website for a fee. |
| Disability World  
[www.disabilityworld.com](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | A news and advice site with holiday accommodation and leisure activities. Costs for an advert on the website start at £20 per year. |
| Good Access Guide  
[www.goodaccessguide.co.uk](http://ablemagazine.co.uk) | Listings of accommodation, attractions and ideas for days out. You can list your business for a fee from 50p per day. |
| **Open Britain**  
| **www.openbritain.net** | Online listing of accessible accommodation in the UK, supported by Tourism for All. All members of Tourism for All and the VisitEngland National Accessible Scheme are listed automatically. It is open to all other businesses (requiring you to complete a tick box form outlining your accessibility). Basic entry is free. Enhanced entries start at £60 and include Tourism for All membership and free entry level use of back office system GuestLink. |
| **Pantou**  
| **https://pantou.org** | A register of accessible tourism suppliers in Europe. Free listing to businesses who belong to a certified accessibility audit scheme or who complete a site access statement. Managed by ENAT (European Network for Accessible Tourism) and supported by the European Commission. |
| **Purple Hound**  
| **www.purplehound.co.uk** | This site devoted to the ‘Purple Pound community’ plans on a full launch in 2017 with holiday/accommodation and venue listings, a dedicated App, Private Members’ Area, and printed directory. |
Tour operators and booking agents

Specialist tour operators organise package holidays in England or act as agents for accessible accommodation in England. Some of these may accept an offer of a familiarisation visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Can Be Done Holidays</strong>&lt;br&gt;www.canbedone.co.uk&lt;br&gt;0208 907 2400</td>
<td>Specialist since 1985, offering wheelchair accessible holidays worldwide and in the UK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsible Travel</strong>&lt;br&gt;www.responsibletravel.com/holidays/disabled-travel</td>
<td>Large international operator with a focus on supporting local communities. Has some UK holidays and has recently branched out into disability travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessible Travel and Leisure</strong>&lt;br&gt;www.accessibletravel.co.uk&lt;br&gt;01452 729739</td>
<td>Specialises in overseas holidays but has some UK properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disabled Access Holidays</strong>&lt;br&gt;www.disabledaccessholidays.com</td>
<td>This specialist overseas travel agent also has a listing of accessible holiday accommodation in England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DisabledHolidays.com</strong> (previously the Disabled Holiday Directory)&lt;br&gt;www.disabledholidays.com</td>
<td>A specialist international tour operator and also lists over 1200 accommodation properties in the UK for whom it acts as a booking agent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limitless Travel</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://limitlesstravel.org">http://limitlesstravel.org</a></td>
<td>Agency and operator organising bespoke holidays in UK and Europe. Has a listing of about 500 personally verified accommodations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 6. Other marketing angles

Accessibility awards

A successful application can provide a useful source of publicity.

- VisitEngland Inclusive Tourism Award
- Cateys Accessibility Award
- Disabled Motoring UK (biennial)
- Jodi Awards (biennial)

Disability shows

The majority of exhibitors at these shows are disability equipment suppliers but they are also leisure, sports and holiday stands.

- The Mobility Roadshow, 20 years old and the UK's original hands-on consumer event, every June
- Naidex, the UK’s largest disability, homecare and rehabilitation event for trade and consumers
- Disability Awareness Day, Europe’s largest ‘not for profit’ voluntary-led disability exhibition, held annually near Warrington, has holiday and leisure exhibitors
- Kidz Exhibitions, dedicated to disabled children and young adults. Five a year held around the UK.
- Disability North (DNEX), the north’s largest annual independent living exhibition, held annually.

Tourism is for Everybody

Launched by Tourism for All in 2015, Tourism is for Everybody is a movement of individuals, businesses and policymakers acting together to improve the experience for disabled tourists and travellers in the UK.

You could join for free and display its campaign badge to show that you subscribe to its ethos. Its website also has a useful section on making your business accessible. The Tourism for All website also provides useful free information for businesses and an annual fee of £35 gives you access to its training courses.

www.tourismisforeverybody.org

Disabled Access Day

Launched in 2015 by Euan's Guide, this rapidly growing biennial campaign encourages disabled people and their friends and families to try something new.

Businesses can get involved by hosting a special event or offer which is then promoted on the website. The website also has a useful section on marketing your accessibility.

www.disabledaccessday.com
Case Study:
Wallop Wood Cottages, Hampshire

“Our marketing is quite low-cost. We have a presence on most of the listing websites, including Accomable. We host an ‘open morning’ for Disabled Access Day so people can see our cottages first hand. We also advertise, often with a free competition for a 3 night stay, with publications such as Enable and Euan’s Guide and renew adverts that seem to work. We always use our National Accessible Scheme grading logos on our adverts as we believe that those guests looking for suitable accommodation know what they mean, and a logo tells a thousand words.

Through our local Destination Management Partnership (Winchester) we are members of Tourism South East (TSE). It’s worth the time spent in entering awards. Our success in TSE’s Beautiful South Awards is raising our profile amongst the disabled community.

As predicted, we are now building a real core of happy returning guests, which reduces our marketing costs!”

Katherine and Andrew Graham
Wallop Wood Cottages
www.wallopwoodcottages.co.uk

Wallop Wood is assessed at NAS level M1, M2, M3, H1 and V1 and won Gold in the Tourism South East access categories in both 2015 and 2016.

Case Study:
Longdales House, University of Lincoln

We took part in the VisitEngland ‘Access For All’ marketing campaign in 2015 which really helped us to focus on achieving better accessibility. As part of the campaign we wrote a detailed Accessibility Guide and added photographs and helpful local links. We made our website accessible to all users and all our staff had disability awareness training.

The advice from VisitLincoln and VisitEngland was invaluable in helping us do this. And now we work closely with VisitLincoln promoting what we have to offer.

Jane Vincent, Team Manager Commercial, Longdales House Bed and Breakfast, University of Lincoln
Further help

For further guidance, tools and resources to help increase engagement with the valuable accessible tourism market, go to www.visitengland.org/access

Contact us
If you have any examples of marketing your accessibility that are not covered in this guide, please let us know: qad@visitengland.org

This guide was researched and written for VisitEngland by Access New Business www.accessnewbusiness.co.uk