



Speak Up!

A guide to marketing
your accessibility



VisitEngland™



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Speak Up! is brought to you by VisitEngland, the country's national tourist board, as part of a range of tools and resources to help you welcome people with access needs (www.visitengland.org/access).

VisitEngland works in partnership with others to lead the development of a thriving tourism industry. We support our partners operating at national and local level to achieve economic growth and increase investment and employment by encouraging the development of excellent visitor experiences and effective business practices. VisitEngland offers a wide range of support and opportunities to the different sectors involved in England's visitor economy. These include:

- **Business Support** - an extensive range of guidance, case studies and toolkits designed to improve welcome, accessibility, business sustainability and to assist operators keep up to date with legal requirements. Accreditation and Assessment schemes help businesses keep abreast with changing visitor expectations and demonstrate their commitment to service by displaying the internationally recognised Quality Rose Marque.
- **Research & Insights** - a wide range of market intelligence revealing latest market trends, including market volume and value measurement, business performance indicators, and information about consumer attitudes, motivations and visitor satisfaction. Sign up to the 'what's new' service via visitengland.org to receive the latest results.
- **Marketing & PR** - innovative marketing campaigns, social media channels and travel stories for national press. Tourism businesses can get involved by engaging with their local destination organisation and the monthly VisitEngland e-newsletter, which highlights key media opportunities.

For more information visit: www.visitengland.org

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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

Introduction

“None of our customers are disabled, so this guide isn’t for me”

“We’ve made our business more accessible and want to know how to communicate this to disabled people”

In this country 1 in 6 people have an ‘activity limiting’ health problem or disability (data from the 2011 Census). 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. By 2025 more than a third of the UK’s population will be over 55.

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 over £2billion. 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/



UK residents with a health condition or impairment and their travelling party spent almost £2billion on overnight trips in England in 2009. That means, on average, £5.5million is being spent in England each day by groups taking overnight trips with a disabled family member or friend.

Case Study:

The Fairbank Hotel, a small family run hotel in Cornwall.

“We had a family of three arrive, who had contacted us on several occasions about their dietary requirements - specifically vegan - and requested a first floor room but gave no reason for this. The lady arrived in a wheelchair and her husband and daughter aided her into the hotel and up to the room. We had luckily put the couple in our new room, which has a grab rail in the shower. Although we also provided an armchair at the dining table and a raised chair in the sitting room, their visit highlighted other areas we could address to make access easier.

Even though with first floor bedrooms we are not easily accessible to wheelchair users, we've added an Access Statement to the website saying exactly what we can offer and how ready we are to help!”

Elaine and Paul Redd

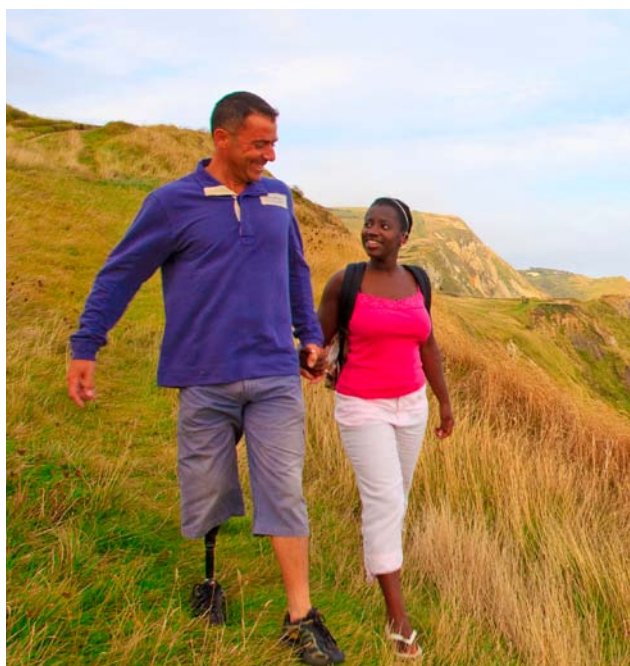
www.fairbankhotel.co.uk

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](#).

“I’m not accessible”

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 **able-bodied 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.com/onestepahead

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.](#)



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 **Access Statement**. 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 **A**ttention in your audience
2. Generate **I**nterest
3. Develop **D**esire
4. Turn into **A**ction 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 Trip Advisor) 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, fishing, 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 [Access Statement](#) 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 Trip Advisor.

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 Access Statement.

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 Access Statement.

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 to.

Winford Manor Hotel near Bristol

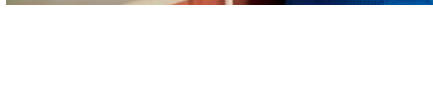
This [video](#) illustrates the hotel's accessibility and its passion for meeting guests' needs. It is fronted by a disability awareness consultant who uses a wheelchair and who adds his recommendations as he goes.

www.winfordmanor.co.uk

W Hotel London

This edgy film for the boutique W Hotel with Paralympian Ade Adepitan was produced by Gilbey Films, led by Andy Gilbert, studio director of Channel 4's evening show for the 2012 Paralympic Games.

www.gilbeyfilms.com



Language

Make sure your terminology is welcoming. Avoid phrases such as: the disabled/the blind; handicapped/invalid; 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. There are 6,500 assistance dogs in the UK and 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.



Alternative formats

Visually impaired people and those with dyslexia favour audio formats such as mp3 or CD Rom so, if possible, record your Access Statement. 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 10 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK. 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, Braille is a hard language to learn and is only used by 3% of visually impaired people. But it is recommended that you search out local suppliers so you could supply such formats if requested.



The RNIB provides an excellent guide to producing information in alternative formats called '[See it Right](#)'. [Action on Hearing Loss](#) (formerly RNID) provides excellent information on producing information and communicating with deaf people.

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 Access Statement by the phone.

Staff need to be confident in receiving calls via Text Relay, which is a national text to voice service that allows people with hearing loss or speech impairment to use a text phone to communicate with standard mobile and landline systems. www.textrelay.org

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:

Holiday Inn

Holiday Inn has many accessible properties and offers free adjoining rooms for carers, which it advertises on specialist websites such as the Good Access Guide. This fact is also well publicised by disabled people on forums.

“Holiday Inns usually give you a free room for your carer if you are travelling with a disabled person. Always worth asking when making a booking. They are a lovely hotel chain and so helpful to disabled people.”

Posted in April 2011 on
www.netbuddy.org.uk

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 also have our pricing up on the website for two years ahead. This market plans a long time in advance!

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



Providing reassurance

All types of visitor accommodation can join the [National Accessible Scheme](#). 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).



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

Hoe Grange self-catering log cabins in the Peak District. Gold winner in the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2011, ‘Access for All’ category.

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 Access Statement

An Access Statement is simply a list of all the features in and around your property that will be of importance to people who have an impairment or access need. It is probably the single most important marketing tool that you can develop for your business:

- It enables you to collate in one place all the information that a disabled traveller may need before deciding to book or visit.
- **Disabled people look at Access Statements before they book.**
- A number of online holiday directories require you to have an Access Statement before they will list you on their websites.

Businesses often say that the process of gathering information for their Access Statement helps them understand where there are gaps in provision and helps to engage staff.

Remember that an Access Statement is a summary of what is on offer and is not a judgement on your accessibility. The Statement 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:

Abbey Guest House, Abingdon

"Guests usually find our website through a Google search, so we optimise it for searches using key words such as 'Access'. Then the first thing people do is look at the Access Statement. We provide measurements as well as a floor plan and pictures. This is a very important part of my marketing."

Terry Boswell

Highly Commended in the VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2012, 'Access for All' category.
www.abbeyguest.com



VisitEngland provides a **free** and easy to use online Access Statement tool. It gives you a tailored form to gather your information and a template to upload your business details, providing a final document for you to download. You can save work in progress and go back into it whenever you have a moment.

To start off you could ask a disabled person to do it with you. When you have finished and uploaded it onto your website, ask your guests to comment.

www.visitengland.org/accesstatements

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.

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/>



If you manage your own website then the [BBC website](#) provides some plain English guidance. Also see the excellent [BBC case studies](#) on how people with disabilities 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.



RSS



Facebook



Twitter



Email



Pinterest

- 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.



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, and especially local papers, TV and radio, are looking for timely stories that are of interest to their readers. For example, you may have just welcomed a Paralympian and family on holiday, or launched an adapted attraction or self catering accommodation. 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. Give your mobile phone number to the editor so they can get in touch with you directly. 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, Vision (published by the RNIB) and Easy News, the newly launched newspaper

designed specifically for people with learning disabilities. All these magazines provide advertising as well as editorial opportunities. There are a number of specialist internet-based TV and radio programmes such as the BBC 'See Hear' programme but these tend to concentrate on lifestyle and political issues.



I look for something that will make the story stand out, for example if you have won an award, or why you have gone the extra mile to cater for disabled people.

I'd say that businesses are generally poor at self-promotion. I write regularly about disability and travel issues, but I can hardly remember anyone making contact with me about the subject over the past 15 years!"

Fred Mawer

Writer of the Crafty Traveller column for the Mail on Sunday and regular contributor to The Daily Telegraph.

Magazine	Details
Disability Now www.disabilitynow.org.uk	An online magazine including regular features on accessible holidays in Britain written by disabled people.
Able Magazine http://ablemagazine.co.uk 0141 419 0044	Bi-monthly A4 full-colour publication on issues that matter to physically disabled people, circulation 32,000. Website also contains a digital edition and news.
Enable http://enablemagazine.co.uk	Enable magazine is a lifestyle magazine with suggestions for holidays and days out.
Pos-ability http://posabilitymagazine.co.uk	Bi-monthly news magazine in print and online, with a focus on sports activities and a section on holidays.
Disability Horizons http://disabilityhorizons.com/	An online magazine with news, debates, plus profile pages and adverts. 20,000 readers per month

Social media

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

- Twitter is used by disabled travellers in two ways. One is to follow key tweeters (bloggers, magazines etc.) and obtain relevant information. The second way is to build up a following of likeminded people, share information, and when necessary ask a question from your community. If your business can participate in either of these then you will start to attract a following to your Twitter account.
- Facebook is often more closed and used between friends. However, many companies and organisations have a Facebook page, finding it a useful platform to receive customer feedback and promote their latest news.

Although many social media sites cannot be read by screen readers, a whole raft of new accessible applications have emerged in the last few years such as Easy Chirp to read tweets on Twitter.

Remember that social media outlets are valued for providing advice and help. You would quickly lose all trust if you just used them to promote your company.

- Start by telling your story – use news, articles, pictures and videos to share your journey and aims with your customer. People like human stories.
- Build your community – respond to requests for information and start to build trust with your target audience.

- Include a call to action – once people are engaged with you then you can announce your latest discount or new service.

There are many blogs written by disabled travellers, which could give you an opportunity to provide information and advice (as long as you clearly identify yourself and your business as the source). Here is an example of a blog written by a wheelchair user based in South East England who is interested in access to the countryside and seaside. It was used by VisitBrighton recently to promote accessible holidays: [@WheelTravelBlog](#)



“As a person with no sight, I use the internet regularly to research the place I am heading to. I specifically use Twitter to speak with others for advice and feedback on places. 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

Case Study: Hoe Grange Holidays, Derbyshire

Hoe Grange Holidays uses Twitter and 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 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

Many review sites and forums name check accessible accommodation and destinations and activities for disabled people. Here are a couple of the larger forums 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.

- [Trip Advisor Traveling with Disabilities Forum](#)
- [Guardian Readers Tips](#)

Set up a Google Alert account (free download from Google). This will send you an alert anytime you appear on the internet 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 users and while there are few disability specific apps as yet, disabled people are simply using many of the mainstream ones in an inclusive way.

For example, Foursquare is a geo satellite positioning app showing cafes, bars, restaurants, museums, hotels and attractions.

The user is able to 'check in' and share their visit with their social media following and users can leave a comment on the accessibility of a place. There is not an accessibility category as yet, but even without it the site is likely to become well used by disabled people.

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.

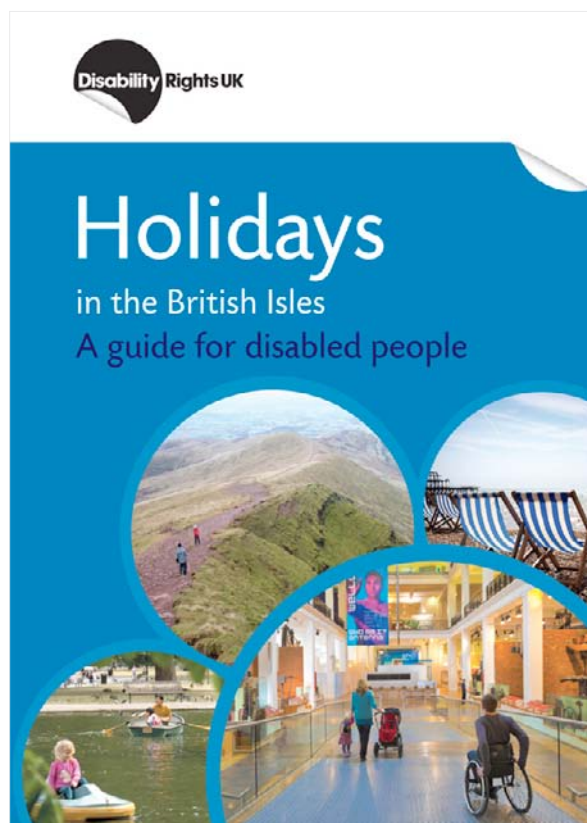


Section 5. Using listings, agencies and operators

Guide books

There are two reasonably comprehensive guidebooks to accessible holidays in Britain. They contain advice and guidance plus listings of attractions, days out, travel, and accommodation. Most of the companies listed have been assessed or accredited in some way. Both accept advertising.

- The [Rough Guide to Accessible Britain](#), produced by Motability, is available online or in hard copy. It covers the UK and runs offers for its readers online.
- Holidays in the British Isles is a guide to holidaymaking for disabled people published by [Disability Rights UK](#).



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 the few accessible properties on them are generally self-certified and users still have to visit the owner websites for accurate information. These sites are not used hugely by disabled travellers.

On the next page there is a list of online specialist directories. Most were founded by people who are wheelchair users, had problems finding information on accessible holidays and wanted to help others. They range widely in their scope and style. Listing charges range from free to over £100 per year. Some charge a commission on bookings made.

Most offer you the chance to upload your own information and update with special offers as the season goes on. Most of them also require a self-certification that you are accessible, but some do require an Access Statement, NAS rating or even a visit by the website owners.

Online holiday guides and directories	Details
Accessible Accommodation www.accessibleaccommodation.com	Listings of accessible accommodation in England, Ireland and overseas. Free basic listing, with enhanced advertising from £50 per year.
Accessible Living www.accessibleliving.co.uk 07794 548 077	New guide to UK accessible hotels, restaurants, pubs and visitor attractions in the UK.
Can Do Holidays www.candoholidays.com	Personally inspected UK holiday accommodation for people with disabilities. Free listing, commission on bookings made.
Caravanable www.caravanable.co.uk	Well established site listing facilities for the disabled on caravan sites.
Enjoy Bed & Breakfast www.enjoybedandbreakfast.com/england/disabled/	A collection of bed and breakfasts, B&B inns, guest houses and small hotels with some 'hand-picked' accessible places to stay. Small fee to advertise and a commission payable on booking.
Open Britain www.openbritain.net	Online search facility listing all members of the VisitEngland National Accessible Scheme, Tourism for All and DisabledGo: 6,000 places to stay and 1,300 places to visit. All businesses are quality assessed or self-certified. Basic entry is free. Enhanced entries start at £60 and include Tourism for All membership. The newly relaunched site also provides free entry level use of back office system GuestLink. App launching summer 2013.
Inclusive Britain and Inclusive London www.inclusivebritain.com www.inclusivelondon.com 01344 360101	Direct Enquiries' holiday and leisure site. Also available as a free iTunes app. Your listing also appears on www.directenquiries.com . The three combined sites receive 20 million hits a month. Basic information displayed free of charge. To raise your business higher up the search engine results you need to pay for an onsite access audit.
Disabled Go www.disabledgo.com www.myaccessbritain.com www.myaccesslondon.com	Listings of shops, restaurants, health and leisure venues by local authority area. Receives 1,000 unique users every day. If your local authority uses DisabledGo you may receive a free audit and listing on DisabledGo with a link through to your website. Adverts cost up to £750 a year for premier positioning on every page. Available as a free iTunes app.
Disabled Holiday Information www.disabledholidayinfo.org.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	Online travel directory offering information and links to accessible holidays in the UK and worldwide. About 15,000 site visits a year. You can promote your property on the website for a fee.
Disabled Holidays Directory www.disabledholidaydirectory.co.uk	International and UK accessible properties with about 600 properties (including log cabins and caravans) in England. Free listing with commission payable on transaction.
Able Magazine Travel Holiday Guide http://travelguide2010.co.uk	Published by Able Magazine, this guide includes travel advice plus listings of accommodation recommended by readers.

Accessibility lifestyle guides

These disability lifestyle guides also include leisure and holidays listings

Guide	Details
Good Access Guide www.goodaccessguide.co.uk 01502 566005	Offers listings of accommodation, attractions and ideas for days out. Commission on bookings made. Requires you to provide an Access Statement.
Tourism for All www.tourismforall.org.uk	This national charity website lists holiday ideas, attractions and audited accommodation that are TfA members. Small business membership costs £35 per year or £50 to include a listing in Open Britain.
Access At Last www.accessatlast.com 01772 814555	List of accessible hotels, adapted vehicles, equipment and holiday packages. Listing £75 per year. Requires you to complete your own Access Statement template before listing.
ABLEize www.ableize.com	Directory of links to disability, mobility and health websites in the UK and Europe, with some accommodation listings.
Disability World www.disabilityworld.net 0794 641 5312	Holiday accommodation and leisure activities. Cost for an advert on the website start at £20 per year.

Tour operators

Specialist tour operators and agents may accept an offer of a familiarisation visit.

Operator	Details
<p>Can Be Done Holidays http://www.canbedone.co.uk/ 020 8907 2400</p>	<p>Specialist since 1985, offering pioneering wheelchair accessible holidays worldwide and in the UK.</p>
<p>Responsible Travel www.responsibletravel.com/holidays/disabled-travel</p>	<p>International travel and tourism that helps to support local communities. Has some UK holidays and has recently branched out into disabled travel.</p>
<p>Accessible Travel and Leisure www.accessibletravel.co.uk 01452 729739</p>	<p>Specialises in overseas holidays but has some UK properties.</p>
<p>Disabled Access Holidays www.disabledaccessholidays.com</p>	<p>This specialist overseas travel agent also has a listing of accessible holiday accommodation in England.</p>

Section 6. Other marketing angles

Here are some low-cost ideas that could generate publicity.

Accessibility awards

A successful application can provide a useful source of publicity.

- [VisitEngland Access for All Award](#)
- [Cateys Accessibility Award](#)
- [Disabled Motoring UK](#)
- [Meetings and Incentive Travel Access Excellence Award](#)



Marketing partnerships

Local specialist retailers could provide an outlet for a listing or a special offer. You can find a list of specialist equipment retailers on the [British Healthcare Trades Association website](#). The Holidays in the British Isles guide by [Disability Rights UK](#), provides a comprehensive list of specialist leisure activities, travel organisers and providers around the country.

Care homes

Could you create links with your local residential care home? They tend to take their residents on short breaks in off peak periods. Be aware that they could have higher level needs for services and facilities than other disabled visitors.

Disability shows

The majority of exhibitors at these shows are disability equipment suppliers. The largest include hundreds of exhibitors with some leisure, sports and holiday stands.

- [The Mobility Roadshow](#) - 30 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, every May.
- [Disability Awareness Day](#) - Europe's largest 'not for profit' voluntary-led disability exhibition, held annually near Warrington, has holiday and leisure exhibitors.



We exhibit at the big shows. We meet potential holidaymakers as well as people like physiotherapists, suppliers and care providers who then recommend us to their clients. It's not expensive if you team up with others. We are part of a group of twelve holiday companies, called 'Holidays for All'. Altogether I only pay £750 a year to exhibit at all the major fairs and produce our joint brochure and website."

Tess Gilder

Manager, Park House Hotel,
Kings Lynn.
www.holidaysforall.org

Case Study:

Irton House Farm, Cumbria

The winner of the annual Disabled Motoring Awards UK 2012 was Irton House Farm, which provides wheelchair accessible holiday cottages on a working sheep farm in the Lake District. The Disabled Motoring UK member who nominated it praised the wonderful hospitality and described Irton House Farm as “a place where I feel safe, extremely comfortable, able to cope and enjoy a wonderful holiday, where being disabled makes no difference whatsoever”. Irton House uses the award prominently on its home page’.

“We were pleased to have this accolade because it helps to bring us to prominence. So many customers say “I wish we had found you sooner”. We advertise in various magazines targeting disabled people, such as The Stroke Magazine and Arthritis Now, and also in local newspapers. We have several guests who have come to us through Disabled Motoring UK and this Award hopefully will attract more.”

Joan Almond

Irton House Farm

www.irtonhousefarm.com



Section 7. Further help

Making your business accessible

VisitEngland provides guidance, case studies, videos and toolkits to help businesses improve accessibility at www.visitengland.org/access

- **At Your Service** outlines the market size and the business case for improving accessibility
- **Easy Does It** provides simple and low-cost changes to improve accessibility www.visitengland.com/easydoesit
- Online disability awareness training is a short online course from Disabled Go and VisitEngland with five free training spaces per business (subject to availability) www.disabledgo.com/tourismtraining
- **National Accessible Scheme (NAS)** and the entry level **One step ahead** helps accommodation providers improve and promote their accessibility www.visitengland.org/nas

At the back of the National Accessible Scheme standards booklet you will find contact details for a range of organisations including equipment suppliers such as British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) <http://www.bhta.net> Tel: 020 7702 2141.

Tourism for All provides comprehensive business advice and training www.tourismforall.org.uk

Welcome All and WorldHost disability awareness training <http://www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/training/customer-service-training/worldhost.aspx>

Improving your marketing communications

VisitEngland's Online Access Statement Tool provides guidance and templates to complete an Access Statement www.visitengland.org/accesstatements

Chartered Institute of Marketing provides guidance and some online free resources www.cim.co.uk

Tourism for All provides guidance on making communications accessible www.tourismforall.org.uk/Easy-access-tips.html

See it Right is a practical guide in CD Rom format from RNIB on making information accessible for people with sight problems www.rnib.org.uk, shop@rnib.org.uk or call 0303 123 9999. Order code PR12098CDR. Cost £15

Listen Up! booklet by VisitEngland and Action on Hearing Loss, provides tips and advice to welcoming customers with hearing loss www.visitengland.org/access

Sociability: Social media for people with a disability is an excellent guide from Australia on how to use social media to reach people with disabilities <http://www.mediaaccess.org.au/sites/default/files/files/MAA2657-%20Report-OnlineVersion.pdf>

The Government's Office for Disability Issues has a useful section on communicating to disabled people <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/inclusive-communications/index.php>

The **Sign Design Society** promotes excellence in signing and wayfinding www.signdesignsociety.co.uk

Makaton is a language programme using signs and symbols for people with communication and learning difficulties www.makaton.org

Website accessibility

BBC staff guidelines on making websites accessible www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/futuremedia/accessibility

Website Accessibility Initiative (WAI) provides definitive and internationally accepted guidelines for accessible web communications www.w3.org/WAI

RNIB information on making websites accessible http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/webaccessibility/designbuild/Pages/design_build.aspx

Becoming disability-aware

Ouch! is a BBC blog and internet talk show reflecting disability life in general as well as holidays and leisure http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/ouch/2012/07/disabled_people_doing_holidays.html

The **Trip Advisor Traveling with Disabilities Forum** hosts debates and reviews http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowForum-g1-i12336-Traveling_With_Disabilities.html

The **Guardian readers' travel tips** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2012/aug/24/readers-tips-accessible-holidays>

The **Business Disability Forum** is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes the inclusion of disabled people in the workplace and in society. Informative and comprehensive website covering employment practices <http://businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/>

Two government reports outline the scope and case for incorporating disabled people in day to day business activity:

- 'Fulfilling Potential: Building a deeper understanding of disability in the UK today' (February 2013) <http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/fulfilling-potential/index.php>
- '2012 legacy for disabled people: Inclusive and accessible business' (August 2010) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/31715/10-1126-2012-legacy-for-disabled-people-case-for-the-disabled-customer.pdf

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



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