

MUST ACCESSIBILITY BE EXPENSIVE?



Recognising the needs of people with disabilities is an essential part of setting up and running a business within the tourism industry. One in four people throughout the world has a disability. Their total spending power runs into billions of dollars a year. Giving extra thought to accessibility is not just the right thing to do, but it also makes economic and financial sense.

Whatever the size of a business, it has a legal duty to endeavour to remove all barriers to accessibility. Many tourism operators have an excellent awareness of the access issues which confront people with disabilities and have appreciated the increase in business which this awareness has brought about. It has been demonstrated that there is a proven increase in income to be gained by catering to the requirements of people with disabilities, the elderly and families with young children. All tourism operators are encouraged to harvest this increase in income by ensuring that their accommodation and/or venues are fully accessible.

Many tourism providers ask “How can I ensure that my business recognises the needs of people with disabilities, elderly travellers and families with young children, without the changes being excessively expensive?”

Have you thought about producing an Access Statement

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This is a statement of facts and issues produced for your own benefit and ultimately for the benefit of potential visitors, which shows a commitment to accessibility. The access statement should set out your aspirations to increase your accessibility, and will be a statement of intent based on any work identified as being required to be carried out.

The information from your access statement can be used in your marketing strategy. You may decide to include on your web site photographs of your accessible kitchen, bedroom and the shower/toilet areas, which would be a useful aid to your potential guests to assess its accessibility for themselves.

An access statement (not to be confused with that produced for building purposes), should be a clear, well presented document in the way of a website, brochure, conference packs etc, and should detail precisely and accurately what is provided that may assist a guest in identifying whether you offer their required level of accessibility. It is a way of highlighting to all, what you are currently able to

provide and any future plans you may have. It will enable a potential visitor to make a decision as to how your property meets their needs.

To aid guests, keep the statement in whatever format it is in, as concise as possible, with the use of bullets or numbers. Ensure the statement is updated regularly emphasising any developments which have been completed or are planned. Any misinformation on an access statement could make the difference between an enjoyable holiday/visit and a disastrous one, for your guests. Examples of items and information that you could put in your access statement are:

1. Public transport availability
2. Parking facilities and drop off points
3. Porterage service for luggage or cars
4. Ramp to entrance
5. Ground floor level throughout
6. Number of floors
7. Lift features e.g. talking, Braille and/or tactile buttons
8. Braille, tactile signage throughout
9. Facilities provided e.g. teletext, captioning on TV's
10. The accessibility of leisure facilities in house.

Remember that where a physical feature is a barrier to service, tourism providers should make every effort to find an alternative method of delivering that service.

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