

# Top 20 Tips for self-catering

1

Provide accessible ways for disabled customers to give feedback, acting and responding promptly to comments



2

Request information at the time of booking to establish specific requirements



3

Provide an 'Access for All' section on your website



4

Provide a detailed and accurate Accessibility Guide to promote your accessibility



5

Provide information on accessible places to visit and eat



6

Ensure your website meets accessibility standards and all written communication with customers is available in accessible formats



7

Provide sufficient accessible parking spaces and drop-off areas



9

Always welcome assistance dogs



10

Offer to show all guests with accessibility requirements to, and around, their unit



8

Provide a step-free entrance



# Top 20 Tips for self-catering





### 1 Provide accessible ways for disabled customers to give feedback, acting and responding promptly to comments

Gather the views of customers with accessibility requirements to help you provide inclusive tourism experiences, such as adding a question on accessibility to any customer surveys. You could also invite a [local access group](#) to visit or, for larger businesses, set up an Access Panel of people with different accessibility requirements. Pay them for their time and expertise.



### 5 Provide information on accessible places to visit and eat

Think about other local businesses that guests may visit and research their accessible facilities. This may include visitor attractions and places to eat. Add information on the accessibility of local businesses to your website, with a particular focus on those that have step free access and an accessible toilet.



### 2 Request information at the time of booking to establish specific requirements

Asking guests at the time of booking "do you, or those you are travelling with, have any accessibility requirements?" can help you make any necessary arrangements ahead of their arrival. It will also reassure the guest that you are keen to understand their individual requirements in order to provide a great experience.



### 6 Ensure your website meets accessibility standards and all written communication with customers is available in accessible formats

All customers should be able to use your website, regardless of their level of experience in using the web or the device/operating system they use. Make sure your designer follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Offer written communication in alternative formats, such as large print (at least 16 point font, ideally 18), audio or 'easy read'.



### 3 Provide an 'Access for All' section on your website

Accessibility information needs to be easy for people to find on websites. Clearly signpost to this section from the homepage; do not hide the link in footer. Remember not everyone with accessibility requirements identifies with the term 'disabled' so use terminology rooted in accessibility and inclusion and avoid disability-focused language e.g. use the term 'accessibility/customers with accessibility requirements' rather than 'disabled/disability/special needs'. Ensure a link to your Accessibility Guide is prominent in this section.



### 7 Provide sufficient accessible parking spaces and drop-off areas

These spaces should be at least 2.4 metres wide with 1.2 metres hatching either side, level, marked out or effectively sign-posted and close to the entrance or in the best possible location. Ensure these spaces are not occupied by staff vehicles or vehicles that are not displaying a Blue Badge. Provide at least one designated parking bay per accessible bedroom and for any staff member who may require it.



### 4 Provide a detailed and accurate Accessibility Guide to promote your accessibility

People with accessibility requirements require information on a venue's accessibility to help understand if it will meet their individual requirements. Many are put off visiting a venue if there is no access information on their website. This information can be provided in the form of an Accessibility Guide, a customer-facing marketing document that contains written and visual details of a venue's accessibility, including measurements and photos. The link to your guide should be prominent and easy to find on your website.



### 8 Provide a step-free entrance

Ensure the main entrance or an alternative signed entrance provides level access suitable for a wheelchair user (without steps or raised thresholds). Ramped access may be permanent or temporary. Where step-free access is provided by a temporary portable ramp, it is important to provide signage to inform customers that a ramp is available, with details of how to request deployment of the ramp e.g. a call bell. Ensure staff know how to use it safely and effectively.



### 9 Always welcome assistance dogs

Thousands of disabled people rely on an assistance dog for their independence and confidence. Promote the fact you welcome customers with assistance dogs and consider providing water bowls and a toilet area. It would be unlawful to refuse access to a disabled person accompanied by an assistance dog (even if you have a no dogs/pets policy) except in the most exceptional circumstances; find out more in the [Pink Book Online](#).



### 10 Offer to show all guests with accessibility requirements to, and around, their unit

An orientation tour and help with luggage may be particularly useful for guests with accessibility requirements, if feasible. For those guests identifying themselves as being visually impaired, this should include highlighting any potential hazards e.g. steps or uneven paths. There may also be additional accessibility equipment that can be demonstrated.



### 11 Provide a hearing loop and test it regularly

Customer-facing points such as information desks, ticket & retail counters and other service counters can be noisy environments, making verbal communication with customers who have hearing loss difficult. A hearing loop is a piece of equipment that allows people with hearing loss to hear more clearly over background noise. Ensure all staff are familiar with any loops provided, that they are regularly tested and signage is positioned where loops are effective.



### 12 Provide a choice of wet rooms and baths in accessible units

If there is only one accessible bathroom, provide an ensuite wet room bathroom with no thresholds. In larger units, ensure they appeal to the widest range of potential guests by providing some accessible bathrooms with an ensuite wet room and some with a bath. The technical guidance for the built environment provides all the information you need to plan the layout of accessible bathrooms.



### 13 Provide twin or zip and link beds in accessible units

The flexibility of beds is particularly useful for guests using accessible bedrooms. Disabled guests may be accompanied by a partner or a support worker and therefore require different bed configurations. Interconnecting rooms can also be useful.



### 14 Ensure colour contrast

Assist blind or partially sighted guests by ensuring that doors or door frames contrast in colour to the adjacent wall and floor and that door handles contrast in colour to the door. Ensure any support rails and towels contrast in colour to the wall and the toilet seat contrasts in colour to the toilet and floor.



### 15 Provide a ceiling track hoist in the bedroom and bathroom of at least one accessible unit or a portable hoist

In self-catering accommodation, a hoist can be used to transfer someone between wheelchair, armchair, bed, toilet and bathing/showering facilities. For some people a hoist is essential in order to stay away from home. A ceiling track hoist is preferable to a portable hoist as it can be safely used with just one assistant to the hoist user. The [use of hoists in guest accommodation guide](#) provides guidance, meaning and practical application in the design, use and management of hoist systems.



### 16 Provide a selection of accessibility equipment

Provide equipment such as a toilet seat height raiser, shower chair and Deafgard fire alarm (at no cost to the disabled customer). Rise and recline armchairs and profiling beds are particularly important for some people with accessibility requirements. Provide a list of equipment available, either as standard or on request, with your published accessibility information. Should guests need to hire specific accessibility equipment that you do not have, facilitate this by providing the details of reputable suppliers.



### 17 Provide accessible toilets and ideally a Changing Places facility

Accessible toilets should never be used as a storage space, the transfer space next to the toilet should be kept clear and the emergency pull-cord should hang to the floor. For people with sensory impairments, ensure the fire alarm has a strobe light and any support rails contrast in colour to the wall.

Standard accessible toilets do not meet the needs of all people with impairments. Where feasible, provide a [Changing Places toilet](#), which has extra equipment and space. If you don't have a Changing Places facility, find out where your nearest one is and include this information in your Accessibility Guide.



### 18 Include images of disabled people in your marketing

Ensure your photography represents the diversity of your customers. Use images of disabled people in general marketing, not just alongside accessibility information. This will inspire and raise confidence to visit and can also help illustrate your facilities in use. You could approach a local disability group or a specialist modelling agency and undertake a photoshoot. Always use disabled people, not people pretending to be disabled, and pay them for their time.



### 19 Train all staff in disability awareness and ensure they are familiar with accessible facilities, services, equipment and evacuation procedures

To be able to confidently serve customers with accessibility requirements, you and your staff need to be disability aware. This training should be provided for all staff on induction and refreshed (for at least those in customer-facing positions) at regular intervals. There are several online and classroom-style courses available specifically for those working in the tourism industry. It is important that staff are familiar with the use and operation of all accessibility equipment such as hearing loops, emergency pull cords in toilets and hoists. Make sure your specialist equipment is regularly tested, always in working order and in sufficient supply.



### 20 Appoint an Accessibility Champion and encourage accessibility ambassadors

Name a champion to lead on developing access for all throughout your business. This may be part of one person's role or split between two or more people – for example, a senior manager or director might be responsible for strategic planning and oversight of day-to-day tasks might fall to another member of staff/volunteer. Incorporate the key areas of focus from the Accessibility Champion Brief into the champion's job description. Then engage accessibility ambassadors across your business to help embed inclusive practices.

These tips were produced by England's Inclusive Tourism Action Group, comprising a range of leading accessible tourism stakeholders who share the vision for England to provide world-class accessible tourism experiences that every person with accessibility requirements can enjoy.