



Hospitality for everyone

**Adjusting to the needs
of disabled people in the
hospitality industry**

Adjusting for Better Business – Hospitality

Petasfield Cottages – real life story

Business: Holiday accommodation

Number of staff: 1

Disabled customers: A large number of disabled people use the cottages because they are so accessible. Most disabled guests have a mobility impairment and some others suffer from Parkinson’s Disease and Multiple Sclerosis.

Website: www.petasfieldcottages.co.uk/welcome

What adjustments has the business made?

- The website has been designed so that visitors can increase the size of the text even more if they need to.
- Plenty of level parking has been created next to the cottages.
- Two cottages are now fully accessible – one with a specially designed kitchen (by disabled designer Adam Thomas of Access Matters) featuring electric, height adjustable sink and hob. Shower rooms have non-slip floors, wheel-in shower and self-propelled shower chair.
- A wheelchair, hearing loop, walking frame and other specialist equipment are available on request.
- A shopping delivery service is offered for people who can’t get to shops.
- A wildflower and sensory garden has been created for guests with hearing or visual impairments with specially designed pathways allowing easy access.
- The easily accessible stable yard allows disabled guests to watch and feed the horses and carriage-driving trips are available in a specially adapted horse carriage.

What benefits have the adjustments brought to the business?

By making changes and adding value to all aspects of the service, such as shopping delivery, the owner is able to meet the needs of a much wider audience. Long-term investments including the specially designed kitchen and garden have also begun to pay off and demand for accommodation has increased to the extent that the two accessible cottages are often fully booked.

How did the business feel about making the adjustments?

Helen Clark, owner, says: “My mother was disabled and my father had Parkinson’s Disease. Having decided to diversify into holiday accommodation I wanted to make everyone welcome. From personal experience I realised that there was a huge gap in the market for accessible accommodation. After just 16 months the demand is so high that I regularly have to turn bookings down. I’ve just begun converting another six stables into two more cottages – accessible, of course!”

Business tips and benefits for the hospitality industry

Business tips: Useful ways to make your business more accessible to disabled people

- Are your reception facilities accessible? Why not consider lowering your counters at cash desks and service areas to 800mm or less?
- Are your bathrooms and toilet facilities accessible? Can they be used by as many disabled people as possible? It's worth consulting expert access auditors to make sure.
- Do you provide information on how to get to your venue by public transport? Perhaps you should think about including details about accessible public transport too.
- Are you unsure how to make an attraction or event more accessible? You could always ask a disabled person or disability organisation – and try to act on their advice.
- Hiring new employees? You could consider making application forms available in accessible formats such as large print, Braille and audio tape.
- Are your employees up to speed with the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act? It's worth remembering that the DDA covers a wide range of impairments so adapting your company's policies and attitudes towards serving disabled customers is just as important as adjusting your premises. If necessary, you could consider providing staff with disability awareness training.

Business benefits

There are a number of reasons why making reasonable adjustments makes good business sense:

- Treating a disabled person unfairly means you could have legal action taken against you.
- Carrying out a few easy and inexpensive adjustments could soon more than pay for itself.
- Making your services more accessible to disabled customers means they're far more likely to remain loyal, which could lead to increased profitability.
- Improving your overall level of customer service can really make a difference to disabled peoples' lives and it can help you stand out from your competitors.
- Looking after your disabled customers means they'll be more likely to recommend your business and services to others.
- Encouraging applications from disabled people widens your talent pool as well as increasing your chances of finding employees with the right skills and experience.

Contact details

For further advice and information on making adjustments please visit www.dwp.gov.uk/dda or email dda.feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk