



Tourism for everyone

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

Adjusting for Better Business – Tourism

Muncaster Castle – real life story

Business: Tourist attraction

Number of staff: 25 full time staff, supported by about 25 full and part-time additional staff.

The castle employs a number of disabled people with a range of impairments. It also employs people of all ages – the oldest employee is over 80. The company has adapted job descriptions to meet individuals' needs.

Disabled visitors: The castle receives a large number of disabled visitors every year.

Website: www.muncaster.co.uk

What adjustments has the business made?

- Car park near main site has been reserved for people with mobility impairments or walking difficulties.
- Ramp installed at front entrance and ground floor of the castle also made wheelchair accessible.
- Staff receive regular disability awareness training.
- Audio tours provided for those with a visual impairment with a transcript of the recording available. Induction loops installed for the hearing impaired. Virtual tours of the castle available online.
- Installed new accessible toilets.
- Special 'Drive Thru' evenings arranged for disabled people and older people with restricted mobility when the illuminated gardens and castle can be enjoyed from the comfort of a car.
- Wheelchair access created to World Owl Centre, Meadow Vole Maze and main garden areas.
- Manual wheelchairs and electric scooter made available.
- Accessible accommodation and lift installed in the Coachman's Quarters.
- Website provides list of main access features and advice on where disabled people can park.

What benefits have the adjustments brought to the business?

The castle has widened its customer base and events such as the 'Drive Thru' evenings allow them to tap into a niche market creating additional income, and a specific service for disabled visitors. The adjustments have also contributed towards winning Large Visitor Attraction of the Year Award 2006 at The Cumbria Excellence Awards.

How did the business feel about making the adjustments?

Peter Frost-Pennington, Managing Director, says: "The changes have significantly improved access for disabled visitors. Muncaster will never be an 'excellent' site for all disabled people – after all, medieval castles built on steep rocky hillsides were designed to keep people out! We have liaised very carefully with English Heritage and the local council to maximise access to all parts of the site within the constraints of our topography and responsibilities in caring for a Grade 1 listed castle and its associated buildings. Improved access means more disabled visitors are now coming to Muncaster to enjoy this wonderful award winning attraction."

Business tips and benefits for the tourism industry

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

- Do you provide information on how to get to your venue by public transport? It may be a good idea to include details about accessible public transport too.
- Can you provide parking for disabled customers? It would help if you can widen spaces closer to your venue. (You may need to work with your local council to arrange this if the parking is not on private property.)
- Are you unsure how to make your attraction or event more accessible? You could always ask a disabled person or organisation and try to act on their advice. Keep the info handy too, so that you can help customers with similar disabilities in future.
- Are your toilets accessible to disabled people? It may be worth consulting expert access auditors to make sure.
- Do you provide guidebooks, programmes and other information? You could consider making them available in accessible formats such as large print, Braille and audio tape.
- Do people with impaired hearing have access to your services? An induction loop could be invaluable. Keeping background noise to a minimum can help too.
- Do people have to queue for long periods or walk long distances? You might like to think about providing seating or back rests and a few wheelchairs that disabled customers can borrow.
- Are your employees up to speed with the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act? It's worth remembering that 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 tips and benefits for the tourism industry

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