



VisitEngland 

Winning More Visitors

A guide for destination
managers on providing
Access Information on
destination websites

Winning More Visitors

Providing good access information, as part of a wider strategy to improve accessibility for disabled people, can help make you a more competitive destination. It can also help local businesses, and the destination as a whole, to maximise market opportunities and improve the quality of the visitor experience for everyone.

Without good, easy to find access information many potential visitors could be just a few clicks away from choosing somewhere else to visit.

2 in 3 people (66%) looking for access information say they are much less likely to visit a destination if they can't find the information they need.

And when choosing a destination to visit, **3 in 4** (74%) say they would be 'a lot more likely to choose the destination offering the best information'.

The accessible market is an extremely loyal one. Repeat bookings and recommendations via word of mouth are commonplace - the best low cost marketing you could ask for.

This guidance offers some hints and tips, based on recent [visitor research](#), on providing the access information that many potential visitors need.

83% of people looking for access information to plan a trip use destination websites. But only 1 in 3 (33%) find it easy to find this information.

VisitEngland Access Information Research March 2012



94%

Almost everyone planning a trip, either for themselves, or on behalf of someone who has access needs, says access information is important to them and 81% say it is very important.

“ We want to know the best way to travel, and what's accessible when we get there, like restaurants, theatres and attractions.”

VisitEngland Access Information Research March 2012



Everyone can benefit

Some small changes on your website can help you reach out to a massive market of people who need a bit more information when planning a trip: disabled people, people with a temporary impairment due to an accident, older people (increasing due to an aging population) or extended family groups - the fastest growing travel segment in the country. All these people are likely to need reassurance that your destination will be accessible to them.

And of course, it's not just visitors who benefit from good access information; but also local residents who often take trips with visiting friends and relatives (VFR) - an important market that accounts for 1 in 4 visits to the UK.

'The single greatest barrier when people are planning a trip is piecing together all the information so that they can manage.'

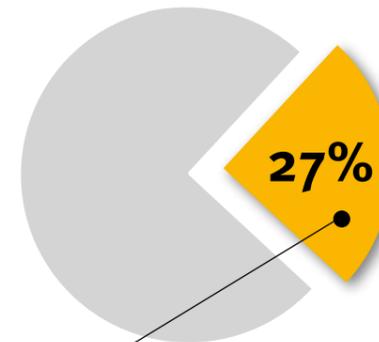
VisitEngland Access Information Research March 2012

£2 billion

Tourists who have a health condition or impairment, and their travelling companions, spend over £2 billion each year in England

VisitEngland

It's not just about wheelchair access



Over one quarter (27%) of the UK population have a long-standing health problem or disability

Department for Work and Pensions

Too often we tend to equate disability and accessibility with mobility impairments and those using wheelchairs. However, only 8% of disabled people use a wheelchair so, whilst they shouldn't be ignored, we should remember those with other types of impairments. Very few people who are partially sighted, have a hearing impairment and walk with a stick would describe themselves as disabled but they are likely to have accessibility needs. And don't forget, not all disabilities are visible and obvious such as diabetes, asthma, heart conditions, allergies and food intolerances.



What disabled people will be looking for on your website

It is said that people can spend twice as long researching a holiday or a short break as they do considering a mortgage! For older and less mobile visitors this process is even more in depth. Almost everyone (94% of people) planning a trip, either for themselves, or on behalf of someone who has access needs, says access information is important to them and 81% say it is very important. So what are they looking for?

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.

VisitEngland research shows that disabled people rely heavily on the internet to make their travel plans. Most do not pick up the phone to ask questions unless there is some access information featured on the website.

Take a look at your website. How easy is it to find access information? Use the following checklist to review the information you provide:

✓ Getting started

- Ensure your website is accessible**
Speak with your web manager and check that international [web accessibility guidelines](#) have been followed.

Also see [BBC guidelines](#).

All good websites should have a 'Website Accessibility' page in the footer that explains how people can access the website content. [\[Example\]](#)
- Provide a specific section for Access Information**
Don't list all access information on a page in the Accommodation section.
- 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's accessibility in the footer.

"When you go to a website it would be good if the accessibility information was in a prominent place instead of having to search for it" [\[Example\]](#)
- Offer a choice of routes into your Access Information**
Provide accessibility information throughout your website in different sections e.g. accommodation, attractions, eating out. Link this information to and from the specific Access section.

Top Tips

- Use one of the following terms: 'Accessible Chester', 'Access for All' or 'Access Information', or similar, for your specific section.

Avoid using 'disabled' in the title e.g. 'Disability access', 'Help for disabled visitors'.



Writing your Access Information section

Start with a warm welcome

Introduce your Access Information section with a warm welcome to all. After all, this is what every traveller wants. It also confirms your commitment to accessibility and can reassure disabled people that they are choosing exactly the right spot for their holiday.

Remember, people usually holiday in groups so if a person with access needs cannot find the information they require you could be missing out on the spend of their entire party!

Travel planning

You can help take the stress out of journey planning by providing links to transport information with relevant access information.

Use this checklist below - are there any you could add to your website?

✓ Getting there

- A Journey Planner** e.g. [TransportDirect](#)
- Trains** - travel assistance, station & train accessibility and Disabled Persons Railcard information e.g. [National Rail](#)
- Coaches** - serving your destination from other parts of the country e.g. [National Express](#)
- Sea and Air** - access details of the nearest ferries, port(s) and airport(s)

Top Tips

- Check the terminology you use in your literature and on your website. Don't say, the disabled/the blind, handicapped/invalid, afflicted with/victim of, suffering from/crippled by, wheelchair bound, disabled toilet/disabled parking.

Do say, disabled/ blind people, wheelchair user, hearing impaired person, sign language user, accessible toilet, accessible parking.

✓ Getting around

- Buses** - accessibility details of buses and trams serving the destination and surrounding area
- Accessible taxis** - company numbers, with details of vehicle accessibility e.g. 1 mini-van with tail lift and estimated costs from key points of access e.g. rail stations, airport, ferry terminal
- Accessible parking** - where can accessible/Blue Badge parking be found? Provide address, with postcode (for Sat Nav and online route planners) with a downloadable map, if possible, showing relevant car parks. Also cover park & ride where applicable.
- Shopmobility** - details of local branches

Top Tips

- Ensure your descriptions are clear and unambiguous. Phrases like 'Close to the beach' or 'We are accessible' will mean different things to different people. See [Plain English Campaign](#) for an excellent guide.

- Use photos, pictograms and symbols. They help readers with learning disabilities as well as the massive potential market of non-English speakers. See [appendix 1](#).

✓ The geography & terrain

- Describe how level or hilly the key tourist areas are and the terrain
- State when busy/crowded days are expected
- Provide a link to the Beach Access Statement (where applicable). Beach managers can write an Access Statement using the [VisitEngland Online Tool](#)
- Do pavements have dropped kerbs at crossing points? Are there any [shared spaces](#)?

Top Tips

- Don't make assumptions about people's abilities i.e. avoid describing hills as 'challenging'. Simply state that there are 'some steep hills' and describe where they are.
- Try and provide good quality photographs of key visitor areas as these can often say much more than a written description can. [See appendix 1.](#)

✓ Accessibility of tourism businesses

TICs:
Provide a link to the TIC Access Statement. TICs can write an Access Statement using the [VisitEngland Online Tool](#). State any services the TIC can provide for people with access needs e.g. information sheets in alternative formats

Accommodation:
Link to where people can search for/find accommodation with self-assessed Accessibility Information.

Link to where people can search for/find accommodation with a valid National Accessible Scheme (NAS) rating. If you have only a very few NAS rated properties, list and link to these on your access page. (Remember, NAS covers accommodation only so don't link it with attractions and confuse visitors.)

Attractions:
Link to where people can search for/find attractions with self-assessed [Accessibility Information](#)

All tourism businesses*:
Ensure all tourism venues listed on your website complete an [access statement](#) and either include this as part of their listing or link to it on their own website.

Advise visitors to ask local businesses for an Access Statement (further guidance in Appendix 1.)

*e.g. accommodation, attractions, pubs, bars, restaurants, cafes, shops, shopping centres, theatres, cinemas, clubs, music venues, swimming pools, activity providers

Reviews/audits – link to any trusted resources that detail the accessibility of tourism businesses. This may help you to provide access information on shops and restaurants.

Local access groups e.g. [VisitEastbourne](#) links to an Access Eastbourne site that contains reviews of tourism venues by local disabled people.

Check whether [DisabledGo](#) has produced an Access Guide for your destination. If so, link to it [\[Example\]](#)

Top Tips

- Promote businesses that have excellent accessible facilities in your editorial. For example, highlight those that are particularly good at catering for guests with dietary requirements.
- Provide accessibility search functionality. Both New Vision and New Mind DMS providers have NAS & Accessibility Information search functionality available to deploy on client destination websites.

✓ Assistance during stay

- Hospitals and local pharmacists** for medical care and prescriptions. Where it is not practical to list all health services link to [NHS Choices](#)

- Greeter schemes and tours**

Is there a greeter scheme? E.g. [Visit Birmingham](#) offers a service to help disabled people find their way around

Is there a disabled 'Tripbod' in your destination?

Give details of any guided tours and their accessibility

Top Tip

- Consider presenting your access information in a Destination Accessibility Guide to increase its marketing value e.g. [Poole Access Guide](#) and [Accessible Oxford Guide](#)

✓ Other useful information

- Public toilets:**
State where [Radar key toilets](#) are located, how keys can be obtained and times of opening

State where any [Changing Places](#) toilet facilities are located (for those who cannot use standard accessible toilets)

- Links to key access information portals** e.g. [VisitEngland](#) and [Tourism for All](#), which include a wealth of links to information sources such as [DisabledGo](#), [Direct Enquiries](#) so you don't have to.

- Equipment hire/repairs** e.g. wheelchairs (beach wheelchairs – where applicable), oxygen etc. [\[Example\]](#).

Top Tip

- You and your local businesses need to be aware of the [Equality Act 2010](#) (which replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995), but your consumer website does not need to provide information about the Act.

Downloads, Alternative Formats and Printing

- Where you can, provide tourist information in alternative formats e.g. large print, CDs/audio downloads, DVD/video versions with subtitles, Braille. Make it clear on your website what you offer and ensure that all your staff know too.

Weymouth and Portland provide an excellent '[Talking Holiday Brochure](#)' for visually impaired visitors, or anyone else who finds using the standard holiday brochure a problem.

- Don't just make your access guides available by phone or visiting a TIC, also offer them as downloadable files on your website.
- Avoid providing download documents from different sources. Choose one source e.g. a web page window or Microsoft Word, and try to be consistent.
- Try to reduce the number of PDFs you use as they can make it hard for the reader to adjust the font size for reading and printing. The ideal accessible alternative is an equivalent HTML page, or a Microsoft Word document, in a sans serif font, such as Arial in 14pt.
- Offer an easy print option for web pages and downloads.

Accurate information is vital:

- Review your access information on a regular basis.
- Work with a local [access group](#) (A group of people who seek to help improve access and inclusion within the built environment, within their local area), or local disabled people, to help monitor the range and accuracy of what you provide. [Poole Tourism](#) produce their access information in this way.
- Check your website for broken links or changes in contact details.
- Ask businesses to tell you when they change their facilities/accessibility information.
- Ask for and act on feedback from visitors.
- Let people know how you have acted on their feedback. [[Example](#)].

Don't delay...

Review the access information you currently have on your website. Is it easy to find? Do you cover the range of suggested information and in formats that people want?

See an example 'Access for All' section in [Appendix 2](#).

VisitEngland will be linking to high quality 'Accessibility' sections on destination websites from www.visitengland.com/accessforall so [keep us updated](#).



Where to get more help

- See the [Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#) for the definitive and internationally accepted guidelines for accessible web communications
- [Access Statement Online Tool](#)
- [BBC guidelines](#) on making websites accessible
- [Office for Disability Issues](#) has a useful section on communicating to disabled people
- [See it Right](#) is a practical guide from RNIB on producing information in a variety of formats. [Inspired Services](#) also provides guidance
- [Sign Design Society](#) promotes excellence in signing and wayfinding
- [Tourism For All](#) provides information to help disabled and older people travel as well as comprehensive business advice and training
- VisitEngland's [National Accessible Scheme \(NAS\)](#) and the entry level One Step Ahead
- [ACE – Accessible Countryside for everyone](#)
- [Walks with wheelchairs](#)
- Find [Blue Badge Parking Bays](#)
- [Local Access Groups](#)
- Find [Changing Places Toilets](#) with extra features and more space than standard accessible toilets.

Appendix 1 What is an Access Statement?

An Access Statement is a written description of a venue's accessibility to inform people with access needs. It is merely a summary of what is on offer and NOT a judgment on accessibility. Many disabled people will go straight to an Access Statement before checking out any other web pages or literature.

All VisitEngland Quality Assessed Accommodation and Attractions are required to have an Access Statement.

Encourage other local businesses to also produce one, including photographs and floorplan, so that they too can benefit from this potential business. VisitEngland has a free-to-use [online access statement tool](#) that is simple and easy for businesses to use. Tailored guidance is available for a wide range of business types such as accommodation, attractions, restaurants, TICs, nature reserves and beaches.

Logos & Photographs

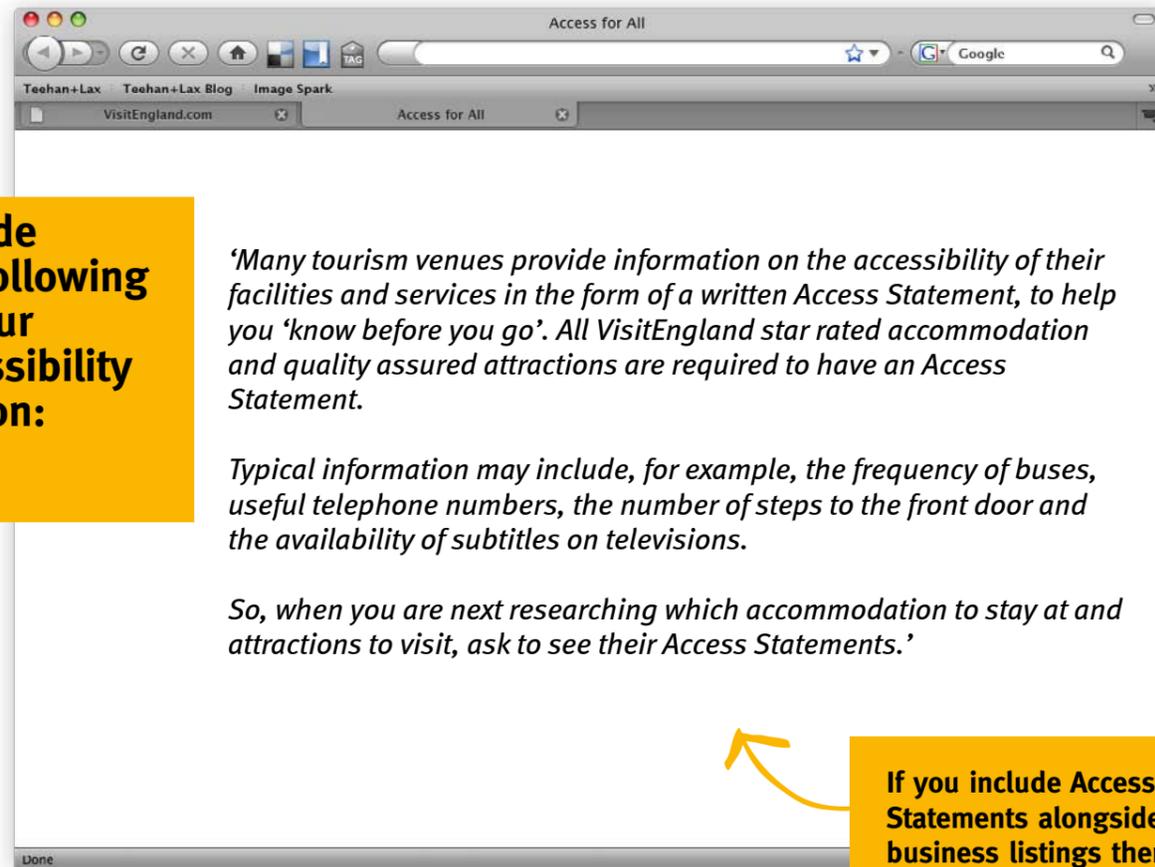
Some websites include out of date logos. Check to make sure that you use the most up-to-date official logos for the different VisitEngland schemes, e.g. National Accessible Scheme. This will reinforce recognition of them among visitors.

Standard text to describe the NAS is available from [VisitEngland](#).

Logos can be requested from [Quality in Tourism](#).



Include photographs of disabled people not only in your access section but throughout your website. Photographs of disabled people in a tourism context are available, free of charge to our destination partners in the 'Accessibility' gallery at [VisitBritain Images](#).



Include the following in your Accessibility section:

If you include Access Statements alongside business listings then state this here.





Appendix 2 - Example 'Access for All' section

We reviewed all DMO consumer websites and gathered examples of best practice to create a complete example of an 'Access for All' section.

Access for all

Home Accommodation Things to do What's on **Access for all** Contact us

Travel Planning Environment & Geography Accessibility of tourism businesses Assistance during your stay Other Useful Information

Access for all

We want everyone to enjoy XX. That's why we make every effort to ensure it is accessible and welcoming for visitors and residents with accessibility needs.

Please use this section to help plan your visit and make your time in XX more enjoyable. There's plenty of information and useful tips. Rest assured, we are working hard to keep improving accessibility for visitors with mobility and sensory needs. It's very important to us; so please let us know if you feel something in XX could be improved.

Access for all

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Getting here by train

The main train service in the area is operated by South West Trains. If you are a wheelchair user or need assistance when travelling by train you should book your rail journey at least 24 hours in advance. Please contact South West Trains Assisted Travel Tel: Free phone 0800 528 2100 6am - 10pm.

Trains have ramps for wheelchair access, designated accessible spaces in some cars, and an accessible WC, as well as visual & audible announcements that are helpful to people with a sensory disability.



Detailed information on station & train accessibility, travel assistance and discounted travel is available on the National Rail website www.nationalrail.co.uk/passenger_services/disabled_passengers/, on 0845 7484 950 or text phone (customers who are deaf or hard of hearing) 0845 6050 600.

Getting here by coach

National Express coaches stop at Lyndhurst, Lyminster and Ringwood. If you are a wheelchair user or need assistance when travelling by coach, National Express advise you to book your coach journey at least 24 hours in advance. Please contact National Express for information on timetables, access and fares:



National Express - 08717 818179 or text phone (customers who are deaf or hard of hearing) 0121 455 0086.

Access for all

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Local Buses

There are several low-floor, easy access buses in service, some with space for a wheelchair. All main bus stops have "real time" information screens for passengers and the bus timetable is available on-line.



For details contact First Eastern National on 01206 366911 and Network Colchester on 01206 764029. For on-line bus timetables in the Colchester area please click on <http://www.firstgroup.co.uk/> or <http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/>.

Parking

The following city car parks have spaces for Blue Badge holders and allow the first 3 hours parking free:

Grafton Centre East – 43 designated spaces
 Grafton Centre West – 3 designated spaces
 Grand Arcade - 27 designated spaces
 Park Street – 8 designated spaces

[A map of Blue Badge parking is available here.](#) Payment at these car parks is normally made at machines before returning to your car.

To claim the concession do not pay at a machine - take your Blue Badge to the car park kiosk so that the cashier on duty can process your ticket and take the reduced payment if one is due.

All on street Pay & Display parking is free to Blue Badge users.

Taxis

There are several taxi companies throughout XX with accessible vehicles:

- Zodiac Travel Ltd, Brockenhurst Tel: 01590 624337 - 5 mini buses with ramps and tail lifts.
- Waterside Taxis, Totton Tel: 023 8084 2134 - 1 mini bus with tail lift.

We advise you to contact each company to confirm they meet your accessibility needs.

The following taxi companies offer a text-a-taxi service for deaf people:
 BlueLine Taxis - Tel: 0795 87 300 76 - Covering Middlesbrough.
 Text name, the address to be picked up from, time and destination. You will receive a message straight back to confirm when a taxi will be available. The service runs round the clock, seven days a week. When the driver arrives to pick you up s/he will ring your mobile so that the light/vibration will notify you s/he is there.

Shopmobility

Shopmobility is a scheme that, for a small charge, provides manual and powered wheelchairs and scooters to members of the public with limited mobility, so they can shop in town and enjoy other facilities. It is a popular scheme, so pre-book early, or call into the Shopmobility office at St Mary's Car park next to Manor Road. The office is open Monday to Thursday from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Tel: 01206 216600. Email: shopmobility@ccvs.org. For more information visit <http://www.ccvs.org/>.

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Environment & Geography

XX is situated on a hill that runs from north to south, and from west to east across the town centre. This means that some of the routes within the centre are quite steep, including North Hill which runs south from the main train station, which is a mile from the town centre. Wheelchair users arriving by train may therefore prefer to take a taxi to get to the town centre (see 'Taxis' in Travel Planning).

Some of the streets in the historic parts of the town can be rather narrow, including Judd Street and Ward Street, which means that they can become quite congested.



Please contact the Visitor Information Centre for information on forthcoming major events which might help you to plan your trip:

vic@colchester.gov.uk
tel: 01206 282920.

On the beach



Details on access to the beach is provided in the [Beach Access Statement](#).

XX has five specially designed beach wheelchairs with large pneumatic wheels which just slide over sand so that everyone in your party can enjoy the beach. Information on how to hire a beach wheelchair can be found in the [Beach Access Statement](#).

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Accessibility of tourism businesses

Many tourism venues provide information on the accessibility of their facilities and services in the form of a written Access Statement, to help you 'know before you go'. All VisitEngland star rated accommodation and quality assured attractions are required to have an Access Statement.

Typical information may include, for example, the frequency of buses, useful telephone numbers, the number of steps to the front door and the availability of subtitles on televisions.

So, when you are next researching which accommodation to stay at and attractions to visit, ask to see their Access Statements.

Visitor Information Centre



The visitor information centre can provide assistance and information for visitors with access needs. The centre is also fully accessible. Download the [VIC Access Statement \(270KB\)](#).

The Visitor Information Centre also has a wide range of information sheets, which can be made available in large type, Braille or CD. If you would like to receive our guide on CD please [contact us](#).

Please contact us for more information.

For those with hearing difficulties, communication via Minicom is possible on 01273 292595.

Access for all

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Accommodation



XX has a range of accessible accommodation establishments.

You can search for establishments that have an official rating under VisitEngland's National Accessible Scheme and also those that have provided self-assessed Accessibility Information. You can also filter for accommodation with ground floor rooms.

Go to the [Accessible Accommodation search page](#)

Attractions



Most attractions have provided self-assessed Accessibility Information.

This can be found by clicking the green 'Accessibility Information' button on the visitor attraction's listing.

Please check with the attraction direct to confirm the accessibility before setting out.

Restaurants



Information regarding access into the many restaurants, cafes & public houses can be found in the Eating & Drinking section of this site.

Restaurants offering good access include:

B Bar Market Passage, Cambridge. Tel (01223) 309796.
The B Bar offers good wheelchair access & toilets.

More info on [Eating Out](#)

Done

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Meet and Greet

If you need some company or support for a short visit to XX City Centre, the City Centre Partnership also runs a meet and greet service. A member of the Street Warden team can meet you at a pre-arranged location - your bus stop or the train station for example and then help you to find your way around the city centre.

Please call 0121 616 2259 or email dean.meyer@birmingham.gov.uk to take advantage of this free service.

Guided Walking Tours



Guided walking tours of the colleges operate from the Tourist Information Centre at Peas Hill on a daily basis. Our experienced guides have completed disability awareness training and will take the needs of all visitors into account when conducting tours.

No charge will be made for escorts of wheelchair users on tours operated by the Information Centre.

Tickets are limited on all tours, please book in advance of your visit on (01223) 457574.

Health services



You can find information on local hospitals, doctors and chemists using the NHS search <http://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/ServiceSearch.aspx>

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Accessible Toilets

There are a number of accessible toilets around the town which are part of the RADAR national key scheme.

RADAR toilets require a key to gain access.

Keys can be purchased from the TIC or RADAR website (<http://www.radar-shop.org.uk/Detail.aspx?id=0>) for £2.25. Download a [map showing the locations of accessible toilets](#).

A Changing Places facility, which is larger than a standard accessible toilet, is available at the bus station. A key fob is required to access the toilet, which is available from the information desk between 7am-10pm.

Wheelchair and equipment hire



The following companies offer sales (new and old), repair and hire of manual and electric wheelchairs, scooters and equipment:

- Yorkshire Care Equipment, Linkside House, Forest Lane Head, Harrogate HG2 7TE. Tel: 01423 799960.
- Able to Enable, Hookstone Park, Harrogate HG2 7DB. Tel: 01423 880882. Ring in advance to book

Useful Contacts



VisitEngland provides tips and ideas on holiday travel in England for people with physical and sensory needs. www.visitengland.org/accessforall

Tourism for All UK is a national charity that provides holiday and travel information to older and disabled people. info@tourismforall.org.uk; www.tourismforall.org.uk

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