



Mapping of Skills and Training Needs to Improve Accessibility in Tourism Services in Europe

Case Study 9. People 1st, Welcome All, United Kingdom

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**Case study
Welcome to Excellence / Welcome All &
People 1st / WorldHost**

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Executive Summary

This case study looks at the two training courses – “Welcome All” and “Customers with Disabilities” - developed and delivered by Tourism South East and People 1st respectively.

Both training courses are classroom-based trainings provided to the tourism sector with the aim to increase awareness of the business benefits and knowledge of customer service in relation to accessibility. The trainings are also given with the aim of dispelling myths and stereotypes of disabled customers to businesses who may be reluctant to engage with this market.

In particular, this case study demonstrate the benefits of classroom-based training and from the perspective of the training providers, classroom-based training is seen as a preferred way to engage with businesses due to the benefits that can be gained by bringing people together and interacting. However, both Tourism South East and People 1st recognise the need to give businesses choices and options and will have online courses available in the future for those businesses that would prefer to use that as a way of learning.

In the period leading up to the London 2012 Olympics both companies played an important part in preparing businesses by helping them look at their facilities and customer service for those with access and other requirements. In addition, it is believed that the Equality Act has also driven more businesses to engage in the trainings. To date 30,000 participants from a range and size of tourism and hospitality businesses have attended the Welcome All training since its introduction, while the Customer with Disabilities training course have issued 703 certificates issued in the past two years.

The barriers identified in this case study on the uptake on the training, especially for SMEs, are relating to the lack of time and costs. However, it also identifies the subject of accessibility as a barrier in itself. From the training providers’ perspective, a lack of funding is also seen to hamper the uptake of the training. No specific measures have been put in place to overcome these barriers, but the training providers work closely in partnership with the national tourism board – VisitEngland, who through its emphasise and focus on accessibility lead businesses to discover these two classroom-based trainings.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The visitor economy is worth £97 billion and is England's third largest employer supporting 2.2 million jobs. Over the next 10 years the sector is expected to grow by £50 billion and support an additional 225,000 jobs¹.

To achieve this growth in a sector that is highly competitive, one of the key areas that needs to be addressed is the customer service. Key to this is the need to have trained staff with appropriate skills and knowledge. In addition, an important part of this growing market is likely to be the ageing population who will have access requirements.

There are currently two significant classroom courses for the tourism leisure and hospitality sector in England, 'Welcome All' and 'Customers with Disabilities' which offer accessibility training focused on the service sector.

'Welcome All' first appeared in 2002 and is part of a suite of nationally available training courses called 'Welcome to Excellence' covering a range of customer service topics managed by Tourism South East. This one-day classroom based course is promoted as one that can 'create an understanding of the importance of providing great customer service to customers with disabilities as well as knowledge how to do so'. It is described as 'offering 'a mix of inspirational presentation, stimulating group activity, essential tips and individual action planning'.

Similarly, 'Customers with Disabilities' launched in 2011 against the backdrop of the London 2012 Olympics is part of a range of customer service training courses offered by People 1st, under licence from 'World Host' training, developed in Canada. This is a half-day course promoted as a course to 'Give your staff the knowledge and confidence to provide a warm welcome for customers with disabilities, and become a business of choice.' Described as an 'interactive programme, staff will gain the knowledge and confidence to cater for disabled customers' needs sensitively and effectively.

¹ Visitor Economy Briefing for Local Enterprise Partnerships, August 2013
http://www.visitengland.org/Images/130905%20LEP%20Visitor%20Economy%20Briefing%20Issue%204_tcm30-38506.pdf

2.0 OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Welcome All

Welcome All is managed by Tourism South East a not-for-profit organisation that provides service and expertise that supports the performance and growth of tourism businesses in the South-East of England. While they deliver training regionally, their main role is to manage Welcome to Excellence on a National Basis through a network of franchise partners or similar. Being previously a Regional Tourist Board, membership and clients are made up of small and medium sized organisations (SMEs) giving them considerable experience of working with and understanding these types of businesses. Many SMEs attend their training courses to keep up to date, refresh their skills and learn from other businesses. Many are lifestyle businesses with little or no formal training in how to run a business, therefore training related to marketing, social media, converting enquiries into sales and customer service training are all relevant to them.

The first Welcome all programme was developed as a completely new course in 2002. The English Tourism Council, the National Tourist Organisation at that time, led the initiative in partnership with the, then, Holiday Care Services, an NGO, which later merged with Tourism For All. A steering group was formed which included relevant charities.

The reasons for developing the course were:

- To help businesses within the tourism sector understand their obligations under the then Disability Discrimination Act, which made it illegal to discriminate against people in respect of their disabilities and the provision of goods and services.
- Raise standards of professionalism within the tourism sector.
- Raise awareness of the business benefits.

A lawyer assisted in the development of the course, covering the legal aspects for businesses. However, a conscious decision was made that the main focus of the training should be on this. A key aim was to help people gain confidence, as it was felt that many get frightened and concerned about doing the right or the wrong thing. It was decided therefore to make the course focused on the customer service side in a practical way, with hints and tips to give reassurance to businesses. At that time the tourism industry was concerned about costs,

believing they should not be required to make expensive structural changes to their properties.

When launched, Welcome All was the first one-day classroom based course to be developed in England, specifically for tourism businesses, that focused on how to welcome customers with disabilities and additional needs.

At present the course does not link with Vocational Educational Training (VET). However, when originally developed it was mapped to a level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework² (NQF). This specifically entailed:

‘Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to go to university, people working independently, or in some areas supervising and training others in their field of work.’

The NQF was replaced in 2010 with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), this is a national framework that is referenced to the European Qualifications Framework and as such is understood across Member States. Whilst mapped to this level there is not a formal qualification associated with the course.

The programme content has been revised several times since its launch to reflect changes in legislation and thinking, based on experience.

Also available on-line is a very short, free to use, accessibility learning burst www.southeastservices.co.uk/learningbursts/rdd/launch.htmlprogramme

People 1st - Customers with Disabilities

People 1st is the sector skills council for hospitality, passenger transport, travel and tourism. A charity, it is a government recognised, industry-focused body with responsibility for developing skills and training with this sector.

² <http://ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-frameworks/>

Leading up to the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic, it was recognised that there would be a need for customer service training. People 1st commissioned a report in 2008 to identify the skills gaps that would need to be addressed for these events and beyond. The report highlighted a need to look at customer service from a disability point of view. They searched globally for a training course that would be suitable and identified the programme 'WorldHost' developed by the British Columbia Tourist Board. This half-day classroom course was being used around the world and was also used for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. People 1st bought the licence to use the training in the UK, adapting it to suit the local market and created the 'Customers with Disabilities' course. Training began in 2010, and it went live in 2011.

People 1st worked with the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and adapted their WorldHost customer service programme to train volunteers. They integrated the best parts of the disability programme into this training. It was delivered to 8,000 London Ambassadors and others in the lead up to the games. The course was awarded the 'London 2012 Inspire Mark'.

The global brand food chain McDonalds were responsible for training the 70,000 Games Makers and they used the world host training within their overall training. They used elements of 'Customers with Disabilities' and created an customer service e-learning version which uses some of the videos that are used in the classroom training course and gives a certificate upon completion.

McDonald's have updated the course and given it People 1st, who in turn have updated it. Linda Greenwood of People 1st believes that classroom training is to be preferred as people can learn from each other, however she recognises that small companies in particular may not be able to afford the half day course. The online training costs £10 a person and is seen as being cost effective and would suit induction and refresher training.

People 1st work in close partnership with the National Tourist Boards, VisitEngland, Visit Scotland and Visit Wales. Many in People 1st also work directly with businesses.

'Customers with Disabilities' is an accredited course and can lead to the qualification Level 2 award in Meeting the requirements of customers with specific needs in Hospitality Leisure Travel and Tourism (HLTT) qualifications.

The qualification has 1 credit with 10 guided learning hours and can be awarded by Edexcel³ and City and Guilds⁴.

Recent research by People 1st indicates that the current economic climate of austerity has had an impact on the attitude of tourism businesses in that it has made people recognise the need to improve the customer service experience. In the benchmark study 'Train to retain' Sharon Glancy, Director of People 1st observes that:

“In a competitive market the quality of the experience is the key differentiator for hospitality and tourism companies and their people are essential to delivering this. So what business can afford not to train and keep its staff”.

People 1st have just launched a business resource for SMEs⁵ aimed at providing them with resources to help them develop, offering tips and access to training. There is an additional section for start-ups.

3.0 CONTENT, TRAINING MATERIAL AND AVAILABILITY

The trainer is key to the success of the training for both courses. They have their own version of the delegates work-book which gives added information for them to use during training. In addition they will research further and add to their knowledge of the subject.

Welcome All – Full day training course

The course is promoted with the aim to:

‘Create an understanding of the importance of providing great customer service to customers with disabilities as well as knowledge about how to do so.’ It is described as ‘a definitive one-day training course, which includes a mix of inspirational presentation, stimulating group activity, essential tips and individual action planning.’

The course covers:

³ www.edexcel.com/migrationdocuments/BTEC%20Specialist%20Qualifications/BA027024-L2-Principles-Customer-Service-HLTT.pdf

⁴ www.cityandguilds.com/Courses-and-Qualifications/business-skills/customer-service-and-contact-centre/4421-principles-of-customer-service/level-2

⁵ www.mybusiness1st.co.uk

- **Introduction:**
Attitudes and behavior; Personal objectives; Why accessibility matters; Legal requirements; Accessibility means business; First class service for all.
- **A positive approach**
Everyone is an individual; Visible and invisible disabilities; Removing barriers
- **Effective communication**
Communicating with customer with different access requirements.
- **Improving Accessibility**
Ensuring a warm welcome; Helping wheelchair users; Accessible food and drink facilities; Accessible accommodation; Accessible attractions; Accessible transport services.
- **Making a real difference:**
Participants are taught to make their own action plan.
- **Assessment activity**
- **The Equalities Act**
- **National Accessible Scheme**

The specific disabilities covered include mobility, deaf and hard of hearing, blind and partially sighted, learning difficulties, those requiring special diets or with allergies.

The course is very participative and includes learning from each other, discussions, quizzes and activities. Simulation, where delegates might use wheelchairs or other aids to replicate the experience of an impairment or disability is not used as the trainers responsible for Welcome All have reported they do not think this a good way of learning. The training does not focus on service roles e.g. receptionist. Mainly the course covers good practice.

This training can be delivered either as an open course, where delegates from different businesses come together to be trained, at a cost of £95 person. Or as In-house training, which can be tailored by the trainer for the company the cost for this is £900. In both instance a fully trained and accredited Welcome All trainer delivers the training. Some companies want to train their own trainers and in those cases, Welcome All have a Service Level Agreement with these businesses. They monitor the trainers and the courses that they run to ensure consistency and quality of delivery. They also manage all the registrations and certification.

Nationally they do not have many trainers, up to 8. These are all specialists in

this field and work for either charitable organisations or as consultants. If someone wants to train as an in-house trainer, there are two master trainers who each run 'train the trainer' workshops.

Customers with Disabilities – Half-day training course

This course is promoted as: 'Give your staff the knowledge and confidence to provide a warm welcome for customers with disabilities, and become a business of choice.' Research conducted in 2008 indicated that practical activities would be most appropriate for disability awareness training, which has been the approach to this training.

The objectives are to:

- Demonstrate and understanding of the importance of excellent customer service skills for disabled customers.
- Describe appropriate language when referring to disabled customers.
- Demonstrate how to communicate effectively with disabled customers.
- Awareness of feelings, misconceptions and biases when serving disabled customers.
- Identify the tourism businesses in your community that are accessible to disabled customers.

The course covers:

- 1. An overview**
- 2. What's in a word**
 - a. Language of Disabilities
 - b. Tips for improving communication
- 3. Debunking the myths**
- 4. How may I help you?**
- 5. Our growing tourism market**
 - a. Our Local Tourism Businesses
 - b. Accessible Tourism – this highlights the NAS and symbols used.
- 6. Customers with Disabilities review exercise**

There are three options for training staff with this classroom course:

Option 1 is delivered by an independent WorldHost trainer and is an open programme where staff from different companies will come together. The cost is £75 per delegate.

Option 2 is in-company training where a qualified WorldHost trainer can deliver a course for up to 15 people. The price is £695 (plus trainer expenses)

Option 3 is for a company to train a member of their staff to deliver the training after completing the 3 day People 1st 'Train the Facilitator' programme. The price for this is £250 person and includes the first year licence fee, which thereafter is £150 per annum.

Under option 3, participant workbooks can be purchased from People 1st.

As this course is accredited there are also colleges with trained trainers delivering this programme. To date thirty trainers in total have been trained to deliver the course.

It does not focus on legislation, although very important, as it is believed this often frightens people. It covers practical information about 'doing and saying' the right thing, which is seen as important. Linda Greenwood, Training Manager, always 'tweaks' or adapts the course when she trains and signposts people to the VisitEngland Access Statement Tool and has to reassure them that it is free of charge. They encourage businesses to be proud of it and to use it as a marketing tool. The belief that accessibility is for everyone, not just disabled people, underpins this approach, as people generally are expecting better customer service.

In both courses PowerPoint slides are used videos are used to promote thought and discussion. People 1st think their videos are quite powerful as some of the messages are quite shocking, seen from the perspective of a person with disability, which they think helps. They are set in real environments, with disabled people, not actors, which is very important. They try to dispel the stereotype image when people think of disability, tending to think it is primarily wheelchair users. They do skill practices to simulate what it is like for example to have a visual impairment. The view is however, that it can be hard to cover everything in a half day as the topic covers so much, but the main points are covered.

All delegates have workbooks, which outlines the training programme. The workbooks are used to reinforce learning points, have exercises that they participate in and additional space to make notes. Delegates keep these as a resource that they can refer to when back in the workplace. Trainers have a manual which is an expanded version to guide the course. They use this to deliver the core elements, but in their own way. Delegates are signposted to further resources such as the business support tools provided by VisitEngland.

Trainers have access to a 'WorldHost License Trainers resource area' on their website, where they can keep up to date and informed about any new initiative, for an example a new resource that has been published.

All delegates receive a certificate upon completion of the course and Welcome All participant receive a badge.

4.0 TARGET AUDIENCE, COMMUNICATIONS AND BARRIERS

Welcome All

The target audience for Welcome All is tourism, leisure, hospitality, conference and event providers. This covers a range of businesses such as Bed & Breakfast's, Guest Houses, restaurants, pubs, transport, retail. In essence, it relates to any service sector organisation and was the first course of its type to target this audience.

They promote their training through E-shots, E-newsletters, Website, franchise partner websites, VisitEngland website, marketing leaflets and attendance at events

After Welcome Host, their general customer service training, Welcome All is the second biggest seller for Tourism South-East. However, these are not large numbers. They tailor the course for businesses, major clients have been the National Trust and Red Funnel Ferries, who have nearly 300 staff who have gone through the training. This has resulted because of the Department of Transport issuing criteria on accessibility. So they are buying off the shelf workbooks and tailoring it for themselves. While English Heritage have their own guide tailored to them. They have also had some universities buy into the training this year, for example Chichester University.

Numbers attending a course are managed. If it is an in-house course this is usually a maximum of around 14 as there is a lot of participation and the opportunity needs to be given to let people speak and contribute.

Key drivers bringing people to the course have been:

- The Equality Act 2010;

- A desire to attract new business and the growing number of elderly visitors.

To date 30,000 participants from a range and size of tourism and hospitality businesses have attended since the training was first introduced.

However, they have limited success in reaching their target audience effectively. They use various databases and work with other agencies such as Local Authorities and Destination Management Organisations. One of the consequences of the changing tourism landscape in England with the loss of the Regional Tourist Boards and Regional Development Agencies means that there is a lack of England wide contacts. Also because of reduced funding in Local Authorities, staff in charge of tourism, such as tourism officers, have been made redundant.

One difficulty they have is that as a small business they cannot run many open courses, for SMEs to attend for example, as there is a time resource issue and they need enough numbers, more than 10 to make it worthwhile financially to run it, if they don't achieve these they end up cancelling which can annoy people, especially if courses get moved two or three times.

In addition to the small number of open courses that are run, another barrier for SMEs is perceived to be the cost. During 2012, with the London Olympics there was support funding provided by Accentuate, the 2012 Legacy Programme for the South East. The funding meant they were able to sell the course, reflecting the impact of the Olympics at £25 for the open course and £250 for an in-house course. It is felt that a fee is important, for if it is free people do not value it and may not bother attending.

Sue Gill, head of *Skills and Training at Tourism South-East*, thinks that a main reason that some businesses will not address the issue of accessibility is that they fear legal action and may be sued if they 'say or do the wrong thing'. This is linked with the issue of confidence, as many are likely to have the sense that if they get it right then the relationship with the customer is likely to be good. However if there is no knowledge or understanding of the issues, then the relationship with the customer may have a bad result. There is also the issue of stereotyping that many may feel that a bad experience with a customer with certain access requirements is representative of all of those with similar requirements and therefore try to avoid engaging them as customers overall.

She also believes that there is a perception that many people running tourism businesses do not engage with accessibility and want nothing to do with it. One

reason given for this lack of interest is that, for some owners, running their businesses is motivated by a lifestyle. This is not therefore a market they are interested in attracting and catering for. And therefore have no interest at all in looking at accessibility.

Another reason for lack of engagement with small SME businesses is that many are family run and often it is impossible to leave the business at points in the day when a training course might be run. Furthermore, is felt that for small businesses the cost can be seen as too high, this of course can be reinforced if the market is misunderstood and there is no motivation at all to consider it.

Customers with Disabilities

For this programme there are a wide variety of organisations who have shown interest, not just tourism businesses. In particular, there has been a big uptake by passenger transport organisations. A range of different businesses that have used the programme, these include; a large number of small hotels, as well as some larger ones, personal transport taxi firms and hospitals. The course is suitable for anywhere that there is a business with a customer service environment. They run a pre-employment training programme for tourism and transport, together with all the WorldHost Programmes, it is included as part of a six week programme, which gives it a bigger market. This is not however a bestseller programme for them. To date 703 certificates have been issued in the past two years.

The People 1st and WorldHost websites are the main form of communication used to reach businesses together with regular newsletters. Whilst they have built relationships with a number of businesses, there are however many that they have not yet engaged with in respect of training.

They have however been effective in growing a base of businesses. This is through the model of WorldHost. If a company has a certain number of people go through training programmes they are recognised as a 'WorldHost business'. This is good PR for these companies, which is an incentive. What they are now seeing occur is a synergy with that towns and shopping centres are joined together to be 'World Host Destinations'. This means that local councils, colleges, and local trainers are working together to improve the customer service experience in the community. There are towns that are striving for this status, which includes accessibility for all visitors and that is growing. There are over 500 WorldHost recognised businesses and there are

about 20 to 30 destinations. There is some way to go, but it is coming together to raise the profile of the training. This was not planned to happen, it has been as a result of people's interest and motivation in recognising the need.

Key barriers to SMEs looking for training are identified mainly as lack of time and cost. However, it is also thought that the subject of accessibility is a barrier in itself. As some people do not necessarily like to talk about different disabilities. It is only when you get a group of people in a room that it feels like a safe environment to discuss about disabilities. One reason suggested for this is that it is a generational issue and that younger people are likely not to have any problems addressing the subject. Another factor that might affect attitude and be a barrier is that some businesses are observed to be blasé about their existing customer base and not recognise that they could appeal to a wider market, in particular the older generation.

5.0 EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

Welcome All

At the end of Workshops all delegates complete feedback course sheets that are monitored by trainers and the national training support team.

Many managers attend Welcome All courses. The experience of trainer Richard Gray, who also helped shape the experience, believes that they attend for a "taster" of the course, to decide if they want to run it for their own staff at their own workplace, either by subsequently delivering the training themselves, or by booking an in-house course. Others will just use it as an information gathering exercise in order to "cascade" the relevant information to their staff.

Richard Gray also observes that open courses, where people from different business come together, are useful in that they give people the chance to sample the course to see if it will be relevant to their needs. He also thinks they offer good networking opportunities, the delegates get to meet other people from different companies in their industry or their region and exchange experiences/information about disabled access and other issues.

In-house courses he feels can be more focused, in that the course material can be customized to a certain extent to suit the needs of the organization, whereas with open courses the material tends to remain more general. These can also be a good networking opportunity, in that they create time to share information

about disability issues within an organisation. They can be especially useful for sharing information about equipment and other facilities offered. Very often not everyone within a company knows what they offer disabled customers – they may be vaguely aware of things like induction loop systems, but be unclear about who they are for, how they work, or even where they are.

A Welcome All course is a great vehicle for disseminating this information to everyone and for answering questions about equipment. He remembers running a course at Blenheim Palace, (which resulted in the attendance of 2 or 3 staff from the attraction attending an open course), where for the first time all the attendees got to know about the various things which were available to disabled visitors to the palace.

Sometimes delegates on in-house courses are there because they have been told to be. The vast majority of delegates however are positive about attending the course, because they are so unsure about how to deal with disabled people. At the start of any course he thinks delegates are often very nervous about disability. They come on the course for that reason. They want to know what they should (and should not) be doing in the way of offering help to disabled customers. They need reassurance that they are doing the right thing, or more often, guidance on what the right approach actually is. They may know what the issues are, but they do not know how to resolve them. They are very glad of information on disability etiquette, on the legal issues, on ways to improve customer service to disabled people and on equipment available to help. At the end of a course they are very positive indeed, most feel glad they have attended, because the doubts and concerns they may have arrived with have been alleviated. They feel more confident about interacting with disabled customers.

An example of how training can have a positive effect with far reaching consequences and help to bring about change is shown in an example following a course that Richard ran in 2012. A delegate from Knole, the National Trust property near Sevenoaks, attended an open Welcome All course. Some months later he got in touch to say that as a direct result of attending the course, he had produced an “easy read” guide to Knole for learning disabled visitors. It was a first for the National Trust, and he reported that as a result other National Trust properties were considering doing the same thing. He also mentioned that he was now planning other “creative interpretation opportunities” for learning disabled visitors.

Another example is the attendance of Tony Barnfield, the owner of The Nurses Cottage, a restaurant with rooms in the New Forest, who attended an open

Welcome All course in Oxford some years ago. Tony was inspired by the course to introduce a wide range of adjustments to his property, which went on to win many awards and to achieve the Standards for Hearing Impaired and Sight Impaired Visitors of the National Accessible Scheme, one of the few accommodation providers to do so at that time.

Training is still very necessary. So many people are still so unsure of how to inter-act with disabled people. It can help to overcome these fears and thus in a small way help create a better, more accessible, equal world for disabled tourists – and also inspire organizations to do more to meet the needs of disabled visitors.

One thing he would like to see and believes would be of great value is the development of more “niche” courses e.g. Welcome All for football clubs, Welcome All for cruise ships, Welcome All for theatre staff etc. He believes that cost seems to be the main reason for not taking this approach, but with modern technology he doesn't think it should be unreasonably difficult or expensive, and could lead to increased business.

Customers with Disabilities

Feedback about the course is reinforcing that People 1st are achieving their objectives in respect of the training they are providing through this programme. The impact has also been much wider than was first anticipated because of elements of it being included in their other WorldHost programmes. Parts of the Customer with Disabilities programme has also been integrated into their mainstream training courses. In particular, some parts of it was included in the general training for those people who were involved in delivering customer service during the 2012 Olympics. It also integrated, not in any great detail however, into the Ambassador and Games Maker training where it was touched on. Some parts have also been included in the pre-employment and apprenticeship training which they offer. They feel that they have made this course work really hard for them and it has helped to add value to all of their courses.

The main impact is thought to be that it has helped to raise awareness. It can start to get a business to think about accessibility and the issues that it raises. The training also highlights the importance of accessibility for a business and the lack of information that some businesses have. What is observed from the courses is that many businesses have much in place already to serve people

with access requirements, but many just do not realize what they have.

The course is only half a day and therefore it has to be seen as the start of a journey for the business as everything cannot be covered in such a short space of time. A key part of the training is therefore signposting them to tools and resources that can help them and from which they can learn more and increase their knowledge of this market.

People 1st receive no external funding for development “so success ensures revenue to ensure future developments” observes Linda Greenwood, Training Manager. The money that is earned from the training courses is used to update and refresh courses. One such area is in respect to dementia, which is not covered on the course. However, it is a major issue that is becoming increasingly prominent in parallel with an ageing population.

Feedback is collected from delegates completing the course and is evaluated. The returned forms are analyzed and if the scores are not good an audit would be carried out. Anyone running the course remotely has to notify People 1st of this. They will send score sheets after the course for review and for certificates to be issued to participants. Someone will attend a course to monitor the training by sending someone to sit in on the course and observe them to ensure consistency of delivery. However, in general view is that the course is successful.

An example of positive feedback about this course again indicates the practical benefits in the workplace and the impact it has had on customer service can be found in the experience of the Strand Palace Hotel a prominent 3 star hotel located in the heart of London. Their decision to use the World Host was two fold:

- The hotel wanted to improve their customer service standards to meet the challenges of London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics; and
- It was also believed that it could offer development opportunities to motivate and engage staff.

The flexibility of the course meant that they could train staff in-house and were able to supply the training directly to each department and allowed them to incorporate the local disability features of the area as part of the training. They identified ramps and other facilities that they could tell guests with access requirements about to help make their stay or visit better. The effect of introducing the training this way has been to help create a training culture in the hotel. This has impacted on the hotel with more customers specifically praising

the brilliant service and helpfulness of staff as they put the training into practice. As Fernanda Antonio, Training Officer, Strand Palace Hotel observes,

“Staff are a lot more confident in dealing with guests with disabilities. The ‘ask, listen and don’t assume’ technique has worked brilliantly”.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Both training programmes, ‘Welcome All and ‘Customers with Disabilities, are successful classroom-based courses. For many, if not all attending, it will be an introduction to accessibility and disability in tourism. They may possibly have fears and stereotype ideas about disability, which these courses, through their format and content can help to dispel. They reinforce the value of bringing people together, to add to the experience by learning not only from the trainer but from others participating in the course, through discussion and the opportunity to question. Businesses have a choice, either a full day or half day training session is offered, in this way the courses complement each other and allow businesses to select on what suits their circumstances best.

The courses also offer a networking opportunity, especially the ‘open course’ where those from different businesses will come together to learn. The other option is for a company to have in-house training where the course can be tailored for that business. In-house training can be with an existing trainer or an in-house person can be trained to deliver. Such flexibility is important and allows a business to have options as to how it will approach staff training and approach it in a way that best suits them.

The way in which the courses are delivered also means that learning can continue after the training has finished. There is a great emphasis placed on signposting to practical tools and resources available, which otherwise businesses might not be aware of. In particular both courses refer to the range of publications produced by VisitEngland and the online Access statement tool that they provide. This has the effect that the learning does not necessarily stop after this training, but can continue afterwards using these resources. It also means that it can support the transition from the theoretical to the practical, that those attending will leave the course and act on what they have learned and there is some evidence to support this as shown through the examples of National Heritage and the Strand Palace Hotel.

Both Tourism South East and People 1st recognise the need to give businesses choices and options and will have online courses available in the future for those businesses that would prefer to use that as way of learning. Both providers however believe that classroom learning has many advantages over e-learning, as described above.

In the period leading up to the London 2012 Olympics both companies played an important part in preparing business by helping them look at their facilities and customer service for those with access requirements. Tourism South East had access to additional funding to support businesses in the South East for this period, but this has now ceased, while the need to reach many businesses across the country continues.

Communication with SMEs and the ability to promote training has also been made more difficult for them with the changes in the administrative arrangements for managing tourism at regional level. With the abolition of the 9 Regional Development Agencies, like VisitEngland they now have to deal with 140 different organisations, LEPs and DMOs spread across England. This means that some parts of the country have no formal structure of support at this level for tourism. It has removed a communication channel, which could be used to reach businesses through the Regional Development Agencies themselves and has resulted in the loss of the ability to deliver local training with reduced costs to businesses.

Costs for many companies or business are seen as an issue and can also constrain what they can actually do and deliver in terms of training. With issues of funding resources, aggravated by the current economic climate, they are limited in the capacity of courses they can run at any one time, which they would like to do so but are constrained by the limited resources at their disposal. As People 1st observe, success motivates, for if they can sell their courses this raises revenue that can be used for future development.

Despite legislation which requires service providers to make their facilities and services accessible, some owners fear legal challenges, so a few may do nothing and some may not promote any changes that they have made so as to avoid attracting customers with specific access requirements. It is also thought that many owners misunderstand accessibility and the market. They believe that it can be expensive to make changes, as they see accessibility being primarily for the benefit of wheelchair users. In addition, many SME tourism businesses are run to suit a desired lifestyle of the owners, they may therefore focus on a target market that does not however include issues of accessibility.

As shown by the Palace hotel, training about accessibility can be delivered as part of wider training for staff and can contribute to improved customer care and as part of a policy to retain staff and improve motivation.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS






Both these courses demonstrate the benefits of classroom-based training and is seen as a preferred way to engage with businesses and staff because of the benefit that can be gained by bringing people together, either from different businesses or within one company. The following recommendations are made to support and grow these to reach tourism businesses that will benefit from such training:

- Develop a framework or guide of characteristics that anyone looking to develop or deliver a successful course on accessibility within tourism could follow. This could be developed to a recognised standard to add recognition and authority to such courses. This framework would guide the delivery, content and resources required for an effective course, covering such things as: Description of what a successful trainer would look like e.g. relevant business experience and experience of accessibility issues, an outline of key topics to be covered, how it can be made interactive and engaging.
- Look at providing funding support, to recognised courses of a high standard to support them and subsidise participation, by small businesses and their staff, recognising the value and effectiveness of classroom training.
- Develop funding schemes to assist in the marketing and promotion of accessibility courses to reach businesses more effectively. Also to raise awareness of the benefits of attending classroom based training. Promotion is crucial to reach businesses where there is no local administrative business support for tourism across a country.
- Consider the development of more sector based classroom training on accessibility that offers a greater focus on different parts of the industry e.g. transport, hospitality, attractions etc.
- Encourage at a National Level e.g. National Tourist Boards, the development of supporting tools and resources to aid the development of accessible tourism, which offer a consistent message, demonstrate national support for accessibility and can be used and signposted by

classroom based courses to facilitate and support continued learning after the formal training ends.

8.0 ANNEX 1

Table 1: Best practice criteria and justification

Criteria	Justification	On track/off track
Innovative	Both courses have been innovative in their time, responding to need and as they are classroom based they are delivering in a way that is engaging and participative for delegates. The use of videos, bringing real-life situations into the classroom, is effective. Both are adaptable offering open courses, where different businesses come together, and more tailored in-house training is available.	
Relevant	'Welcome All' was developed in response to the introduction of disability legislation in the UK. 'Customers with Disabilities' evolved as a result of a report of skills required in the lead up to the Olympics where a gap was identified. Major business as well as SMEs use these courses	
Transferable	Both initiatives can be replicated in other Member States and for other target groups. If funding were available it is an ambition for these courses to be developed further with a focus and on the different sectors of the tourism industry to make it more relevant and effective to each of these. Both are developing online courses based on their experience of the training they offer.	
Efficient & Effectiveness	The training is viewed as being very effective because of the classroom style format, where delegates can ask questions of the trainers, share experiences, learn from each other and develop business networking opportunities. Difficulties faced are time constraints enabling businesses to attend and costs, which for some are viewed as high.	
Impact	It is very hard to measure the impact that this training has had on the industry and ultimately their customers. However, measures of	

	success are shown through the feedback from the courses themselves. Development of this training has assisted delivery of accessibility training, albeit more limited, into their other mainstream customer care courses.	
Sustainable	Both courses are run on a commercial basis. There needs to be a critical number of delegates enrolled to ensure the viability of each course. Development costs are critical, and both are reviewed and updated as and when funds are available. They increase their reach when public funded subsidies have helped boost numbers.	