

## **Visits4u online Module for Hotel and Accommodation Providers - Transcript**

### **Opening:**

Welcome to the visits4u online training course. This is the module for Hotels and Accommodation Providers. It has been designed, by the Centre for Accessible Environments as part of the visits4u, which is an 18 month capacity building project co-funded by the COSME Programme of the European Union.

### **Slide 2:**

The aim of the module is equip you with better understanding of some of the access barriers that may exist in hotels and overnight accommodation. By the end of this module, you will know more on what you can do to make your hotel more accessible.

The module is two parts and will cover:

1. Management in regards to
  - a. Staff/volunteers
  - b. Spaces
2. Booking procedures

### **Slide 3.**

Let's consider first Management as it relates to your staff and volunteers.

Your customers, with or without access needs, have expectations for the services you provide. Good manners and respectful language are important for everyone, and willingness to assist (where possible) is highly valuable. Remember that “a happy customer tells a friend; an unhappy customer tells the world!”

## Slide 4.

So what can you do to help?

- Train your staff in disability and deaf awareness - to understand more about why training is so important, have a look at our Communications and D/deaf awareness module
- Promote available assistive technology on the hotel website, with the option to reserve equipment in advance
- Ensure all assistive equipment is regularly checked and is kept fully charged (there are many devices on the market to check a hearing enhancement system is working correctly)

An inclusive attitude makes all the difference!

## Slide 5.

It is important that your building and external spaces are suitable for a range of people. Here are some examples of what can make a real difference: Clear accessible signage helps everyone - think about using internationally known symbols and clear easy to read text. It's important to know about signage and other forms of information - have a look at our module on information and wayfinding. The local language may not be the first language of your guest.

- Corridors with widths of at least 1500 mm, preferably 1800 mm or greater, to permit two people to walk side-by-side using sign language or when accompanied by an assistance dog.
- Increased circulation width also helps when customers are being shown to their room by a member of staff and lipreading or signing with them while luggage is being pulled or carried.
- Vision panels in doors to public circulation areas and views through to public rooms for visual interconnectivity between spaces and visual awareness of activities taking place within them.
- Corridor corners rounded or angled, to enable users to be aware of another person

Consider adapting the layout of your restaurant or spaces, where possible, to allow your guests to comfortably circulate. In cases where your space has limitations, be ready to offer alternatives, for example: a staff member is available to offer direct assistance or alternatives accessible circulation routes.

### **Slide 6.**

This is a quick exercise.

please pause the presentation and spend a few minutes identifying possible access barriers.

### **Slide 7.**

These are some of the issues that we have identified:

- Mirrors around the wall can disorientate people with visual impairments
- Lighting is quite low / dim and may prevent visually impaired people to find and read signs. Or it might make it difficult for a hearing impaired person to lipread their companion or hotel staff
- Carpeted flooring could makes space difficult to navigate for a wheelchair user, someone with a baby buggy, heavy luggage or someone who uses a walking stick and relies on tactile indicators

### **Slide 8.**

Good lighting and visually contrasted nosings to stairs.

The provision of a passenger lift serving all floor levels (including basement floors) is essential in ensuring convenient and comprehensive access to all areas, facilities and services within multi-storey buildings. Visual connectivity through glazed panels is helpful, but a fully glazed lift can be an issue for some users with balance conditions or fear of heights, (this can be reduced by partial manifestation to the glazing), - what lifts

must have is a means of reassurance and communication in the event of emergency.

Visual display information alongside audio announcements is very helpful to people with hearing impairments. Consider adding not only the floor level but also key facilities, such as restaurant level, or conference centre etc.

Consider a tablet-type device with a built-in camera to be put on a side panel of the lift car. This will aid in lipreading/signing in an emergency, but on a day to day basis - you can use it to display live information as well as an electronic floor directory

Alternatively, if you have full mobile phone signal coverage within the lift, consider displaying a mobile number to text for assistance in case the lift breaks down.

As a minimum, you should provide clear, plain English emergency instructions with guidance about waiting times and ensure that all emergency calls are answered by lift repairers, even if the call is silent; an indicator light to show that an emergency call has been acknowledged and is being dealt with.

Lastly, think about installing light diode strips to the leading edge of lift doors, which change colour from green to red. This is helpful for users who may not hear the “Doors closing” announcement, particularly for older or frailer users, who may be slower in moving.

## Slide 9.

Flashing light doorbells in hotel bedrooms for room service and visitors. These are either a hard wired or portable devices that can be hung on the back of the door and are activated by vibration when there is a knock at the door. Vibrating pager alerts can also be linked to these systems. Avoid controls that are too complicated for guests to understand and operate.

Guest rooms often have low level atmospheric or set-programmed lighting which cannot be raised to a sufficient level. Provide portable, task or desk lamp; These will help not only when reading, but also when using video relay communication and for lipreading and/or signing.

### **Slide 10.**

Switches and controls in guest rooms should be accessible and easy to use. The location and detailing of switches and controls should take into account ease of operation, height, location and visibility. For example, Bathroom light should be operated by a switch outside the bathroom door, not a pull cord; another example is the provision of a portable thermostat to control AC/heat.

High quality cost-free Wi-Fi is desirable for all guests; but more so for people who are highly reliant on internet services for text and video communication. If not possible in all areas, this should be available in reception, meeting rooms and guest rooms at least.

Always consider providing alternative methods for communication, for example a mobile phone number to order room service by text.

### **Slide 11.**

Here are a few of the things you can consider to improve accessibility in your facilities:

- Circular or oval tables in restaurant, meeting and bar areas, for the purpose of facilitating communication. Because a profoundly deaf person will be able to see everyone to lip read.
- Good lighting is critical to effective communications as many people rely on visual information, such as body language, expression, signing and lip reading, to supplement or replace audible information.

- Quiet spaces where people can escape busy, noisy areas such as restaurants and bars.
- Minimising noise and echo in areas like reception

## Slide 12.

Technology and equipment considerations may include:

- Vibrating pager to alert guests when their bar food, restaurant table or taxi is ready when waiting in the bar or another part of the hotel is useful for guests with hearing difficulties.
- Customer facing visual cash display to tills, so that customers can see the amount required to be paid
- Hearing enhancement systems to key areas such as reception are essential for improving communications and enabling people who are deaf and hard of hearing to receive amplified sound signals without interference from background noise. There are a range of hearing enhancement systems: common ones are Induction Loops, Infrared, Radio and Soundfield systems.

To find out more, see our factsheet about different types.

## Slide 13.

The training programme for reception staff should include how to sensitively ask guests if they have any access requirements; particularly for identifying means of escape in case of emergency. Many guests will not declare any access needs unless asked.

Alarms should incorporate both visual strobes and audible sounders. These are recommended in all accessible rooms and communal areas - the gym, pool, spa, steam, sauna and changing areas.

Visual alerts alone are insufficient to wake all sleepers and additional vibrating alerts are recommended. For example Pillow/mattress vibrator alert pad issued as required and advertised as available to guests.

#### **Slide 14.**

This next section will look at how you can make the booking process more accessible

#### **Slide 15.**

If bookings are made using an agency or third party organisation it is often difficult for a guest with hearing loss to communicate directly with the hotel at the last minute and a direct text or messaging contact number is helpful.

It can help if guests with assistance dogs are given a room away from main corridors (such as at the end) as dogs have to be alert at all times and noisy corridors can disturb them.

Are your reception desk and information points clearly lit?

This makes the desk easily identifiable and the faces of the staff are seen clearly without shadow. Don't forget to keep the lower section of the reception desk clear at all times for wheelchair users.

Reducing echo by introducing soft finishes in areas where communication takes, such as reception, shop till, bar, restaurant, meeting, conference and break-out areas is helpful.

A tablet, laptop or smartphone on reception for staff to communicate with guests using voice recognition or to type text can be quicker than writing things down, should there be communication difficulties. A tablet, laptop or smartphone on reception can also be used with video relay interpreting services (VRI) to facilitate face to face communication with a guest.

## Slide 16.

The last section will look at steps you can take straight away.

## Slide 17.

Put into practice what you have learned from this module, do a walk around and check your spaces. You can then commission a comprehensive audit, if need be, to give you an idea of how accessible your spaces are - be sure to use a qualified professional.

Make your website more user friendly by looking at things like good colour contrast, size of text and clear information on any access provisions you have regarding your facilities and services. It's important that you don't make assumptions on the needs of a potential guest.

Train your staff - Attitude is everything. A happy customer will tell a friend, an unhappy one will tell the world.

See what other hotels and businesses around you are doing; make use of these practices and use them as reference points.

Work with disability organisations to increase your understanding and awareness of the needs of people with different types of disabilities. This links to training your staff.

It is good to know what you are doing right and where you can improve so always ask for customer feedback.

## Slide 18.

You have now completed this module.

You can find useful documents on the project website, please follow the link provided on this slide:

<http://www.visits4u.eu/visits4u-access-guide/>

Also remember, this is part of a series of three modules and these are currently available on project website:

<http://www.visits4u.eu/online-course/>

## Slide 19.

Thank you and good luck on your journey!

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