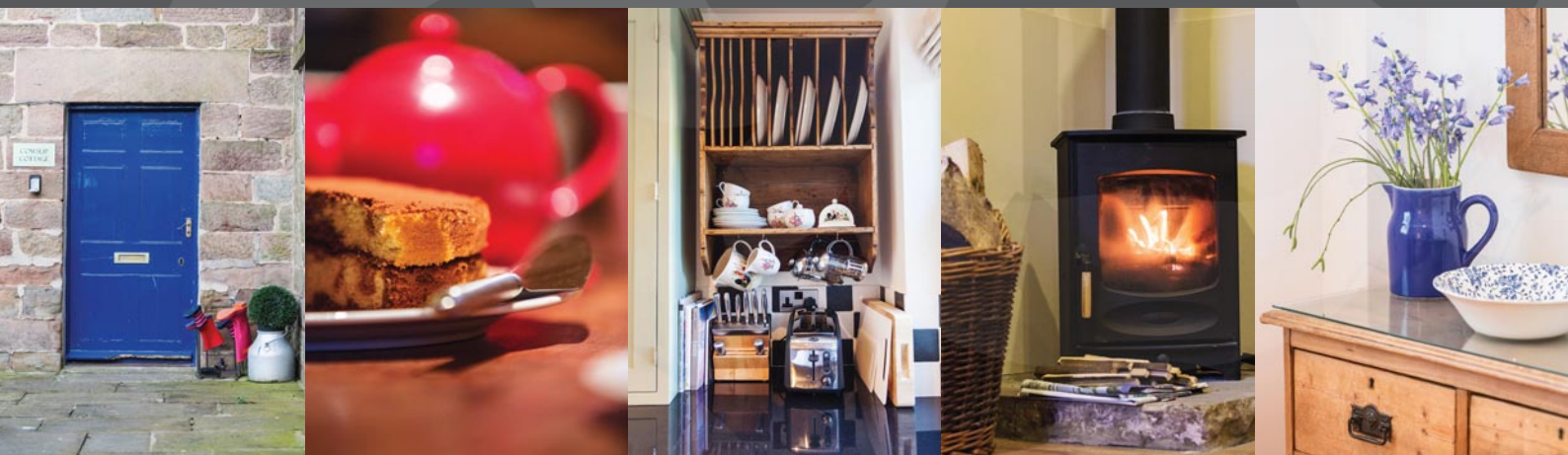


VisitEngland

Self Catering Accommodation

Quality Standard



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Welcome to the VisitEngland Quality Standard for Self Catering Accommodation

Message from the Chairman of VisitEngland

Quality accommodation is a critical element of the visitor experience for both our leisure and business visitors. VisitEngland's quality assessment scheme for self catering accommodation plays a vital part in our national strategy and underlines our commitment to championing quality in England.

Taking the decision to be assessed annually against our national Self Catering Accommodation Standard by independent professional assessors will reassure your guests that you are seriously committed to quality. You can promote the VisitEngland star rating you achieve extensively in your own marketing.

This booklet explains in detail the minimum entry requirements with hints and tips about how to achieve a higher star rating.

Since 2006 England has shared a 'Common Standard' for all self catering accommodation with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This means that all self catering accommodation establishments in the UK are assessed to the same criteria and awarded one to five stars.

We look forward to working with you to drive forward the quality of self catering accommodation in England.



*Penelope, Viscountess Cobham
Chairman of VisitEngland
August 2013*

enjoyEngland.com



SELF CATERING

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VisitEngland understands that quality is the key to success within the modern hospitality industry. In order for the Self Catering sector to be successful and competitive both nationally and internationally, it is important that quality standards are set high and continue to improve. The Self Catering standard is designed to help all businesses achieve this success.

Our Commitment to You

Our professional assessors will work with you in order to maximise the potential of your business. As a member of the star rating scheme you will receive an annual assessment visit. This visit will look at all aspects of your customer facing business, from viewing your website through to customer departure. Each assessment visit will be followed by a verbal debrief and a detailed written report. Both these tools are designed to help you to improve your business.

Quality Across the Star Ratings

Our assessors will quality grade each aspect of your business to five levels, based on customer expectations of quality and current standards seen across the sector in the UK. The assessment is objective and judgement will not be made on any aspect of your business based on style or personal taste. The aim is to add quality without taking away any of the character and style of the property. In advance of their visit your assessor will review your property's website, as would any potential guest.

What is Quality?

Whatever the style or concept of your Self Catering property, both quality and comfort is what your guests and our assessors will be looking for.

The assessor will be looking at areas such as:

Living & Kitchen Areas

- The quality and comfort of furniture
- Attractive, well-co-ordinated décor and soft furnishings
- The space and comfort provided for the maximum number of guests catered for
- Extra touches that enhance a guest's stay such as the availability of Wi-Fi, modern TVs, sound/music systems and outdoor facilities
- Well equipped, easy to use kitchens with a range of modern appliances

Bedrooms & Bathrooms

- The quality and comfort of the bed(s)
- The quality of bed linen and the presentation of the bed(s)
- Attractive, well-co-ordinated décor and soft furnishings

- Those extra touches that make the rooms more welcoming
- The quality of bathroom fittings and towels
- Ease of use: bedrooms and bathrooms can offer good ease of use, if well designed, without necessarily being large and spacious

Welcome & Hospitality

Your assessor will be looking at the welcome that you provide for your guests, which can range from a personal welcome to a well organised remote arrival procedure. Welcome packs and guest information are also an important element of the assessment.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness is of paramount importance to all customers at all star levels. It is expected that all properties will be clean throughout.

Hints & Tips

Be objective and self-critical when thinking about quality:

- Do not over promise: Do not be tempted to claim you offer luxury on your website unless the facilities you are selling are truly luxurious. Customers travel with expectations. It is better to exceed these expectations rather than not live up to them.
- Be a customer in your own business: Take time to use your own website and to sleep in your own bedrooms in order to experience what you are offering to your guests.
- No need to follow the crowd: Don't be afraid to have your own style.
- First impressions: Arriving at any Self Catering property for the first time involves a series of first impressions. Paying attention to the following critical areas will pay dividends:
 - The clean and tidy parking areas
 - Well-tended grounds and gardens
 - Fresh flowers and welcome baskets
 - Clean and well aired rooms
 - Beautifully presented beds

1.1

How Do We Measure Quality?

During your assessment visit, your assessor will make quality judgements across all aspects of your Self Catering business. When the scores are totalled you will have an overall percentage score that will place you within one of the five star rating bands. However, in order to confirm a particular star rating, the scores awarded within each of the five key areas also need to fall within that band or higher. In this way we, and you, can be confident that the business is offering a consistent level of service at the star rating awarded.

These key areas are:

- Cleanliness
- Public areas
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Kitchen

Assessors are trained to award scores against national benchmarks in an objective and consistent manner.

Quality Assessment Report

The business **meets** the percentage scores required for **cleanliness** and **public areas** in order to achieve a 4 star rating

	Score
Exterior	
Appearance of buildings	5
Grounds, gardens, roadways and car parking	4
Environment and setting	4 +
	<u>13</u>
Exterior = 13/15	86%
Management Efficiency	
Pre-arrival information including brochure	4
Welcome and arrival procedure	4
In-unit guest information and personal touches	4 +
	<u>12</u>
Management Efficiency = 12/15	80%
Cleanliness	
Cleanliness - Living and dining area	4
Cleanliness - Bedroom	4
Cleanliness - Bathroom	4
Cleanliness - Kitchen	5 +
	<u>17</u>
Cleanliness = 17/20	85% 4 star quality
Public Areas	
Decoration	4
Flooring	4
Furniture, furnishings and fittings	3
Lighting, heating and ventilation	5
Space, comfort and ease of use	4 +
	<u>20</u>
Public Areas = 20/25	80% 4 star quality

Please refer to the table on **page 11** showing percentages required to achieve each star rating level.

Assessment Example

In the example shown, Self Catering property X provides all of the services and facilities required of a four star property and is seeking a four star rating. In order to be awarded a four star rating the property needs to meet the overall percentage required (of at least 75%) as well as the percentage required in each of the key sections (cleanliness, public areas, bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen).

The property meets the overall percentage score required for the four star rating (with 79%) and achieves four star for cleanliness, public areas,

bedrooms and the kitchen. However, the property fails to meet the score required for the bathroom. Although the property meets the four star score for the kitchen, this score is borderline.

The outcome is that a **three star rating** is awarded but with future potential for a four star rating. Advice is provided as to how to improve the percentage scores for the bathroom and the kitchen in order to meet a four star rating at the next assessment.

		Score
<p>The business meets the percentage scores required for bedrooms</p>	Bedroom(s)	
	Decoration	4
	Flooring	4
	Furniture, furnishings and fittings	4
	Lighting, heating and ventilation	4
	Beds	5
	Bedding and bed linen	4
	Space, comfort and ease of use	4 +
		<u>29</u>
	Bedrooms = 29/35	82% 4 star quality
<p>The business fails to meet the percentage scores required for the bathroom. Advice will be given as to how the decoration and flooring may be improved in order to achieve the 4 star rating.</p>	Bathroom(s) and WC(s)	
	Decoration	3
	Flooring	3
	Fixtures, fittings and sanitaryware	4
	Lighting, heating and ventilation	4
	Space, comfort and ease of use	4 +
		<u>18</u>
	Bathrooms and WCs = 18/25	72% Below 4 star
<p>The business meets the percentage score required for the kitchen. However, the percentage score awarded is below average for a 4 star property and is classed as borderline. As the lower marks awarded are for crockery, cutlery, glassware and kitchenware, advice will be given on how to improve those areas in time for the next assessment.</p>	Kitchen	
	Decoration	4
	Flooring	4
	Furniture, furnishings and fittings	4
	Lighting, heating and ventilation	4
	Electrical and gas equipment	4
	Crockery, cutlery and glassware	3
	Kitchenware, pans and utensils	3
	Space, comfort and ease of use	4 +
		<u>30</u>
	Kitchen = 30/40	75% 4 star but borderline
	Overall score = 139/175	79%

Note: This report is an example at the time of going to print. Marks and scoring thresholds may be subject to change in the future.

1.1.1

Gold Award

VisitEngland's unique Gold award is given in recognition of exceptional quality within the star rating bands. This award helps customers find those extra special places where the owner and staff go the extra mile, whatever the size, style or star rating of the business. In order to achieve an award you will need to demonstrate consistent levels of high quality in the five key areas identified by consumers as very important:

- Cleanliness
- Public Areas
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Kitchen

Eligibility for an award is triggered by the property's overall score meeting a minimum score in each of the critical areas listed above (see separate sheet showing the percentages required).

Awards are confirmed with the written assessment report but do require confirmation by the Quality Assessment Area Manager and may involve a second visit. The assessment report will show the scores in all areas, so owners can see how close they are to achieving an award and can ask the assessor's advice about key improvements required to aim for a Gold award.

A Gold award can give a significant marketing advantage. A gold logo can be displayed on websites and in other forms of advertising. Certificates are provided for display within the property and exterior signage is also available.



“ People expect more than they have at home. Expectations are high, but if you exceed them your business will do well. ”

1.2

VisitEngland's Professional Team of Assessors

All of our assessors are highly experienced within the Self Catering sector. They experience best practice in all areas and are able to pass that knowledge on to you for the benefit of your business. They will assess the quality of your business honestly and always with the objective of helping you to improve your business. Make use of your assessor.

Determining the Star Rating

There are three main elements to the assessment process which will need to be satisfied in order to achieve a star rating:

- All statutory obligations must be met. These are listed in section 2.1.1 on page 14.
- All minimum entry requirements (MER) need to be provided. These are listed within each of the criteria sections and for each star level.
- The minimum quality scores. See page 11 for more details.

When awarding a quality score out of five for a particular item, be it a floor covering, a piece of furniture or a kitchen appliance, our assessor will take into account a number of factors.

1. What is the intrinsic quality?
2. What is the age and condition of the item?
3. How does the item perform the task for which it is intended?

An example of this might be a heating system for a cottage. Two cottages might have the same modern gas boiler and radiator system, but the mark of five is more likely to go to the cottage with thermostatic valves on each of the radiators and a wood burner in the living room, as this would give guests the most flexibility.

In order to achieve a rating of 5 stars and an overall score of at least 87%, the aim is to score five in as many areas as possible and certainly no lower than four anywhere. Scores of five are given when the item has that level of 'special' quality.

A 4 star rating is likely to be made up of mainly scores of four, with a few marks at three and perhaps a few at five.

Continual investment from operators and rising guest expectations mean that the benchmarks are regularly shifting upwards. A bathroom that scored mostly 'fives' five years ago may only score 'fours' now. The assessors will always advise and suggest when and where upgrading should be prioritised to retain a rating. It is a good idea to visit other properties to get ideas or review websites of similarly-priced and rated properties.

Dispensations

Whilst most businesses are able to provide all of the minimum entry requirements (MER), it might not be possible for every business to provide every MER.

This might be due to restrictions placed on a building by Listed Building status, for example. VisitEngland operates a dispensation process in order to accommodate this type of problem and a dispensation can be sought through your assessor. This flexibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Hints & Tips

The assessment process

- Ahead of your assessment prepare your property as you would for guests on arrival. Make sure that the arrival pack and guest information is on display. Dress your beds and ensure the towels are in place. This will help the assessor experience your holiday home as a guest would.
- The first time you meet your assessor you might be concerned that you have not yet provided or understood all of the requirements of the assessment scheme. Do not worry, your assessor will discuss this with you and allow you time to add any items or facilities that might be missing.
- Beyond that it is about help and advice. The style and character of your property are what make it unique. Your assessor is there to enhance that, not change it.
- Ask your assessor questions, lots of questions!
- Stay in touch. Assessors are happy to answer your questions in between assessment visits. You might like to arrange an interim assessment visit in order to measure improvements to your property, especially if you are aiming for a higher rating or a Gold award.

1.3

Sustainability and Accessibility

Sustainability

Sustainability: Doing Business Even Better

Green tourism and sustainability practices in your business are one and the same thing; it's all about taking small steps that enable you to do business even better, not differently. Small changes will not only save money, improve employee relations, enhance profitability and provide a richer experience for customers but over time you will also improve your business' impact on the local economy, community and environment. 'Going Green' does not have to be a chore and is just as applicable to properties in a city centre as a rural location.

VisitEngland Can Help

VisitEngland is committed to promoting the adoption of sustainability practices among all tourism businesses. It is our aim to ensure that a sustainable approach is complementary to improving the overall visitor experience in England. Your help is needed in this aspiration. For further information on how to enhance your business to be more sustainable, please visit www.better-tourism.org for tools to help "green" your business. Or visit www.visitengland.com/green for further information and case studies on the benefits of adopting sustainable practices.

Sustainable Tourism Certification

If your business is already a successful sustainable business and you wish to demonstrate this to new or existing consumers, you may wish to join one of the certification schemes that exist in England. These schemes are not operated by VisitEngland but by independent organisations which have been verified to ensure they are offering a rigorous and well-founded sustainable certification scheme that will allow you to confidently promote your green credentials. Visit www.visitengland.com/green for more information.

Throughout this standards booklet, suggestions are included on how you can improve the sustainable performance of your business. These are not compulsory but are recommended if you wish to make a positive impact on your business and also save money.



Accessibility

Improving your Accessibility – A Lucrative Market

Many people have access needs, including disabled people such as those with hearing and visual impairments, wheelchair users, older and less mobile people and people with pushchairs. The accessible tourism market is worth over £2bn p.a. to tourism businesses in England and is growing due to an ageing population.

By making some small adjustments to your facilities, providing information on your accessibility and understanding the needs of disabled people, your business will appeal to a wider range of visitors and attract more business. Demand for accessible accommodation outstrips the current supply. VisitEngland provides a number of tools and resources to help you benefit from this loyal market at www.visitengland.org/access

Accessibility good practice is included throughout this standards booklet to help you consider and improve your accessibility.

More detailed guidance and accessibility ratings are provided by the National Accessible Scheme (NAS) www.visitengland.org/nas



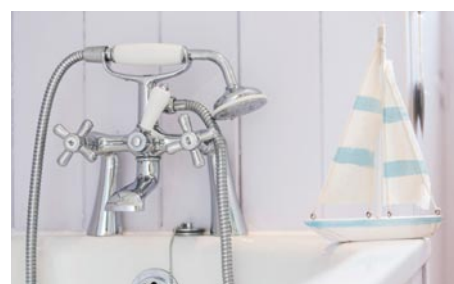
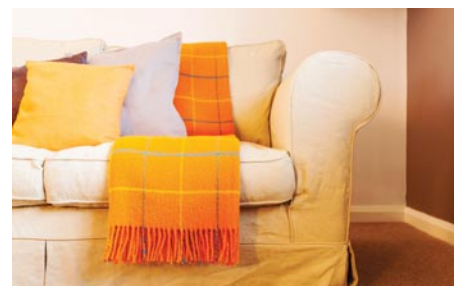
1.4

Key Requirements at Each Rating Level

Overall Quality Bands

Self Catering Accommodation	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	5 Star
Overall	34%-47%	48%-59%	60%-74%	75%-86%	87%-100%
Cleanliness	40%	50%	65%	80%	90%
Public Areas	34%	48%	60%	75%	87%
Bedrooms	34%	48%	60%	75%	87%
Bathrooms	34%	48%	60%	75%	87%
Kitchens	34%	48%	60%	75%	87%

Footnote: Percentages correct at the time of going to print, summer 2013.





2.1

Overall Standards



2.1.1

Statutory Obligations

Legislation Affecting Self Catering Accommodation

- **Safety**
 - Health and Safety at Work
 - Fire, Gas and Electrical Safety
 - Electric Appliance Testing
 - Product Safety
 - Bunk Bed Regulations
 - British Standards applying to items such as cots, high chairs and play pens
- **Premises**
 - Planning Permission
 - Private Water Supplies
 - TV Licensing
- **Discrimination**
 - The Equality Act 2010 (see below)
- **Records**
 - Data Protection
 - Immigration Hotel Records
- **Consumer Protection Act**
 - Advertising
 - Pricing
 - Unfair Contract Terms

For more information on legal obligations, see VisitEngland's Pink Book: legislation for tourist accommodation

Accessibility Statutory Obligations

Accessibility

Tourism businesses have obligations under The Equality Act 2010, which replaced the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (DDA) on 1 October 2010. Tourism providers should treat everyone accessing their goods, facilities or services fairly, regardless of their gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religion or belief, and guard against making assumptions about the characteristics of individuals.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that service providers must think ahead and take steps to address barriers that impede disabled people. Providers should not wait until a disabled person experiences difficulties using a service, as this may make it too late to make the necessary adjustment.

1. Make 'reasonable' changes to the way things are done – such as changing practices, policies or procedures where disabled people would be at a 'substantial disadvantage' e.g. amend a 'no dogs' policy.
2. Make 'reasonable' changes to the built environment – such as making changes to the structure of a building to improve access e.g. altering or removing a physical feature.
3. Provide auxiliary aids and services – such as providing information in an accessible format, or an induction loop for customers with hearing aids.

A service provider cannot legally justify failing to provide a reasonable adjustment. The only question is whether the adjustment is a 'reasonable' one to make. What is 'reasonable' will depend on a number of circumstances, including the cost of an adjustment, potential benefit it may bring to other customers, the resources an organisation has and how practical the changes are.

Additional Scheme Requirements

- **Public Liability**

Proprietors will be asked to provide evidence that Public Liability Cover is being maintained and to provide a signed confirmation, at application and renewal of participation, that the above requirements are being fulfilled.
- **Access Statement**

Proprietors will be asked to provide evidence that they have written, and made publicly available, an Access Statement – a description of facilities and services offered, specifically in relation to accessibility, to inform people with access needs; for guidance and a free tool refer to: www.visitengland.org/accesstatements



2.1.2 General Miscellaneous

Minimum Entry Requirements

- In assessing the acceptability of 'enclosed' floor area available, assessors will take account of usable space around furnishings and fittings. It is unlikely that the minimum requirements will be met where accommodation is less than the following: 18.60 sq. m (200 sq. ft.) for a two person unit plus 7.40 sq. m (80 sq. ft.) for each additional person normally accommodated. Enclosed floor area includes living, sleeping, cooking and bathroom areas.
- Consideration should be given to freedom of movement, the ceiling height for the major part of the room should be sufficient for a person of 183 cm (6 ft.) to move around without stooping. Sloping eaves and roofs are acceptable providing these do not restrict guests' movements to an unacceptable degree.
- Additionally for a Star rating higher than the base level of One Star, floor area available will need to be greater with significantly more usable space around furnishings and fittings.
- There must be reasonable space for movement in the bedroom/sleeping and living room areas for easy access to beds, doors and drawers.
- Doors and drawers to be fully openable. Account should be taken of space needed for convertibles, e.g. bed settees etc.
- All fixtures, furniture, furnishings, crockery and cutlery to be adequate for the maximum number of occupants, including any extra sleeping accommodation.

2.1.3 Maintenance

- All electrical and gas or oil fired equipment must meet all relevant statutory obligations (see previous page), be safely maintained, in good working order and serviced regularly, as appropriate.
- Fixtures, furnishings, floor coverings and fittings must also meet all relevant statutory obligations, particularly in relation to fire safety. These must be maintained in a sound, clean condition and be for the purpose intended.
- The exterior should be free from hazards on roads and pathways and the building itself.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Maintaining electrical, gas and oil fired equipment also helps ensure the equipment is working efficiently, keeping your fuel bills down as a result. When boilers are serviced ask the engineer to carry out an efficiency test and provide an efficiency rating. If the rating is 'D' or lower you could make significant savings by replacing it with an 'A' rated boiler.



2.1.4

Health, Safety and Security

Minimum Entry Requirements

- A high degree of general safety and security maintained, including information on procedures in the event of an emergency.
- If the proprietor is not resident on the premises, his/her name, address and telephone number or that of his/her agent, who must have a set of keys, to be prominently displayed, together with clear details of how to summon assistance in the event of an emergency.
- Prominently displayed printed details of how to summon the assistance of emergency services to be provided e.g. doctor, dentist, location of nearest payphone and casualty unit and vets (if pets accepted).
- All units to be provided with suitable refuse disposal arrangements as required by the Local Authority. Dustbins, where provided, must have lids. Arrangements for refuse collection to be specified and prominently displayed.
- Occupiers to be provided with a key to the entrance door of their unit, and where applicable a key giving access to the building and any other relevant facilities.
- A minimum of one well positioned smoke detector per property. Your risk assessment will determine whether these should be linked/hard wired.
- Adequate levels of lighting at night for safety and comfort in all public areas, including on stairways and landings and in car parks and paths/steps to the property at night, should be provided.
- Electricity should be available (not necessarily mains supply). Where it is not, this must be stated. Voltage to be stated if not on mains.
- Where electricity is available, an adequate number of power sockets to be provided, commensurate with the number of electrical appliances provided.
- Some forms of emergency lighting to be available, e.g. torch or night-lights. Candles are not acceptable for safety reasons. Rechargeable torches are useful, especially the type which flash in the event of a power cut.

Essentials

Safety

- You have a duty of care to ensure that the property you are letting out is safe.
- To comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 supply evidence that a Fire Risk Assessment has been carried out annually. For guidance refer to www.visitengland.org/fire
- Provide a carbon monoxide detector in every room where gas or oil are burnt. Also in rooms where there is an open fire or wood burner. A detector should always be placed in a kitchen unless all appliances are electric. Also in rooms where central heating boilers are housed. People die every year in accidents caused by carbon monoxide.
- Regular Portable Appliance Testing (PAT Testing) will ensure appliances are safe, but don't forget that all aspects of the electricity supply need to be safe.
- An annual landlord's gas certificate is required if you have gas in your property.
- Are garden ponds fenced, if you take children?
- Do you have a handrail fitted to stairways?
- If you plan to survey your guests after their stay, you could ask them if there is anything they thought unsafe or potentially dangerous.
- Finally, be sure to cover yourself with a good public liability insurance policy.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Consider fire safety for guests with hearing loss who may not hear the smoke alarm. Strobe light fire alarms or a domestic paging system may be appropriate, see 'Listen Up!' guide www.visitengland.org/access

2.2

Exterior



2.2.1

Appearance of Buildings

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Buildings maintained in a sound, clean condition and fit for the purpose intended. Entrance adequately lit.

2.2.2

Grounds and Gardens

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Gardens and/or open areas that are part of the unit maintained in good order.
- Where gardens are available then garden furniture should be provided.
- If the property has ancillary areas, the facilities provided will be taken into account in the assessment of the establishment, where under the control of the operator. They should be well surfaced, in good condition and adequately lit.

Hints & Tips

Don't forget the outside space

- If you offer outdoor space, be it a garden or a balcony, treat it as part of the house and furnish and equip it to a similar standard.
- Be sure to have enough seating for all guests, unless you have a small balcony area.
- Guests buying at the higher star rating levels will expect something more than plastic garden furniture.
- Barbeques are very popular with guests. Ensure it is safe, but make it a high quality and an easy experience for them. It should always be cleaned between lettings, so factor this in to your cleaning schedule.
- Consider providing good quality plastic crockery and wine glasses etc.

“If aiming for a higher star rating, consider upgrading your garden or patio furniture. Does it look good and match the quality of your interior?”

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Provide within the grounds of the property or identify nearby, a free run/spend area for assistance dogs.
- Ensure paths are kept clear of obstacles, debris, moss, ice and fallen leaves and have firm, well-maintained surfaces. Ensure that any permanent features en route are securely fixed e.g. flower pot arrangement.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- If your property has gardens or grounds, consider adding small features to encourage wildlife such as bird boxes and use of wildlife-friendly and/or local varieties of plants that will add interest for guests (you could even provide some information on what they should look out for).

2.3

Cleanliness



2.3.1 Cleanliness



“ It has taken me a while to find a good housekeeper who lives close to our apartment, but now that we have we won’t be letting go, even if it is costing us a little more. ”

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Cleanliness is of paramount importance to guests, so a high standard of cleanliness must be maintained throughout the property. Particular attention must be given to kitchens, bathrooms, shower rooms and toilets and items involving direct contact with guests, such as bedding, linen, towels, baths, showers, washbasins, WCs, flooring, seating, crockery, cutlery, glassware, kitchen utensils and equipment.
- It is the proprietor’s responsibility to ensure that all properties are thoroughly cleaned throughout, before each new let, irrespective of whether the guests have cleaned it prior to departure. Any broken or damaged items should be replaced.

Hints & Tips

Housekeeping

- It is, of course, essential that your holiday home is thoroughly cleaned and prepared for in-coming guests.
- There should be no evidence of the previous guests (no left-over food, clothes, rubbish, old newspapers and of course no hairs from the dog or human guests).
- Housekeeping is probably the single most important part of the holiday home letting process; there are more customer complaints about cleanliness than any other area.
- For those owners who are not able to carry out their own housekeeping, it can present a real challenge. Good reliable cleaning services can be difficult to find, so think about who can carry out this task for you. It might be your letting agent, a contract cleaning company, or a local resident/neighbour.
- Remember, it’s not just about the cleaning. The general presentation of the property also needs to be good, including the beds and the contents of the kitchen cupboards, for example.
- Be specific when instructing cleaners and housekeepers, in order to ensure that the extra touches are carried out to your requirements.
- Don’t skimp on the hours allocated for the cleaning. If you are aiming for a four or five-star rating, your housekeeping standards will need to be consistently ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. Allow enough time for those (hopefully) rare occasions when the outgoing guests leave the property in a real mess.
- Do not leave anything to chance. Ask your customers for feedback to ensure that they are happy with the cleaning service.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Consider using low impact and chlorine free cleaning products, including microfibre cloths that reduce the amount of cleaning liquid required.

2.4

Management Efficiency



2.4.1

Bookings and Prices

Minimum Entry Requirements

- To make clear to guests exactly what is included in the prices quoted for the property including service charge, taxes and other surcharges, e.g. electricity, fuel, towels, cots etc. Where VAT is applicable, all prices to be shown inclusive of VAT at standard rate.
- Full details of accommodation, including sleeping arrangements and bathroom (whether it is equipped with a bath or shower) provided on the website or printed form in advance or normal booking. Where sleeping accommodation is provided by means of bed settees, wall beds, “Z” beds, camp beds etc., in addition to the bedroom accommodation, the type, size and number of bed spaces to be clearly indicated.
- Details of any in-house policies, e.g. no smoking, no pets etc. must be communicated at the time of booking, for example, clearly stated on website. If requested, allow guests to see the property before booking (if property is occupied this may not be possible).
- Website or printed information required. A floor plan is encouraged. Arrangements for access communicated pre-arrival.
- Prospective guests should be made aware, prior to booking, of charges for additional services or facilities available, including cancellation terms, housekeeping and/or breakage deposits.
- Guests advised at the time of booking, or subsequently, in the event of any change in booking details.
- Prices quoted at the time of booking not exceeded.
- Guests provided with details of payments due and a receipt if required.
- The receipt to be clearly presented and well laid out.
- The following information to be readily available prior to booking:
 - Car parking arrangements near unit
 - Arrangements for pets
 - Distance of unit from nearest shop(s), etc.
 - Nature of water supply, if not mains (water supply must meet all statutory regulations for drinking water)
 - Types of energy supply if not electric
 - Electricity voltage, if not standard
 - A map and/or directions provided showing the location of the unit on booking or with brochure (this may be provided in more detail after booking)
 - Distance of unit from nearest public transport

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Offer your guests a choice of how to contact you e.g. telephone, fax, letter, email, text message and find out about Text Relay used by people with a hearing impairment at www.textrelay.org
- Always ask if an enquirer or any of the guests in the party have any specific access requirements. Promote your Access Statement.
- Provide guest information in a range of formats e.g. large print, photographs, video, audio description and possibly Braille.
- Even if you don't accept pets, state that you welcome trained assistance dogs [legal obligation]. Many disabled people rely on assistance dogs to provide independence. See the dog as being part of the person.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- If you have taken actions to improve your impact on the environment and local area, make sure this is mentioned on your website/ leaflet – this will add to the appeal of your business. You may want to consider taking part in a certification scheme to back up these credentials – search for ‘sustainable tourism certification’ on www.visitengland.org
- Include the full range of transport options for reaching your property in promotional and booking information. As well as providing greater choice this will enable you to appeal to a wider range of customers. www.transportdirect.info provides a door-to-door journey planner for both car and public transport.
- Pre-arrival information can promote options for local food delivery services and nearby shops so that guests do not feel the need to stock up before leaving home or ordering a supermarket delivery.



2.4.2

Welcome and Arrival

“I take great pride in making my cottage look lovely for my guests. I also bake them a cake. It is wonderful to see their faces when they see the cottage for the first time following a long journey.”

Minimum Entry Requirements

- An inventory of equipment to be available.

Hints & Tips

The Welcome & Arrival Procedure

- Arrival and welcome procedures vary greatly, from a key in a key safe, to hampers of local produce, fresh flowers, home-made cake on arrival and a personal welcome.
- Remember, your guests have chosen a self-catering holiday. A personal welcome is very good, but keep it short and informative and allow your guests to enjoy their holiday home.
- Provide a welcome that works for you. You might not live close to your holiday home, but a simple welcome pack can be provided by your housekeeper. If you are unable to provide a personal welcome, it may be prudent to phone the guests on their mobile later on the day of arrival or the following morning.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Specific training is available on how to welcome all types of guests e.g. VisitEngland/DisabledGo online training, Welcome All and WorldHost Customers with disabilities. Consider learning to communicate in basic British Sign Language (BSL).
- Ensure guests identifying themselves as being disabled, e.g. those with visual impairment, are offered a familiarisation tour.
- Provide a vibrating alarm clock for hearing impaired guests.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- If you are showing guests around the property, time taken to familiarise them with the heating controls will help ensure they are comfortable and your business does not incur unnecessary expense.
- Consider providing an example(s) of local produce to welcome guests – providing information on where they can purchase it and other similar items.



2.4.3

Guest and Tourist Information



“My favourite job is testing all of the local restaurants so that we can add recommendations to the information folder.”

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Tourist information to be available.
- Access Statement/Information to be available.
- See also section entitled Health, Safety and Security.

Hints & Tips

The Welcome & Arrival Procedure

- Good guest information is essential. Who do I contact if a water pipe bursts? How does the oven timer work? Who and where is the local GP? What day is the recycling collected? The answer to these and many more questions need to be readily available and easy accessed, ideally in a single and well indexed folder. Simple and clear instructions for all your appliances, including the controls for the heating and the TV, will reduce the calls to you from your guests. However, there should always be someone the guests can contact 24/7 – you or your housekeeper, for those rare serious problems, such as a boiler failure.
- Tourist information is just as important. As well as the usual tourist information leaflets you might also provide menus for local pubs, restaurants and take-aways.
- Provide Wi-Fi and then a whole extra layer of information is available to guests.
- A simple ‘Guest Notebook’ might also be provided. By making the first entry about how much you enjoyed a local restaurant or tourist attraction, you will soon find that many more recommendations follow.
- Consider buying a local Ordnance Survey map, which you could mount on the wall, even marking recommended places to visit.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Remember to include basic accessibility information for local pubs and attractions or access statements where available.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Each property could contain, where possible, an up-to-date visitor information folder including:
 - A range of places to visit and events – placing an emphasis on those within a short distance, and, if feasible, information on reaching them by public transport.
 - Don’t forget the property and any grounds – highlight points of interest or opportunities to explore.
 - Information covering a variety of means of exploring the area – cycling, walking, horse-riding, public transport. Rather than simply providing timetables and maps, provide examples of the potential experiences to enjoy, including options for stopping points.
 - Details of places nearby to buy local food, drink and gift products.
 - Promote any actions being taken by the business to improve the impact of guests’ stays and ideas for how they can join in to make a difference.

Interior General For non self-contained* properties

Additional Requirements

1 Star ★

- All facilities to be for the sole use of one unit.

2 Star ★★

- There should be no more than one non self-contained* unit on each floor.

3 Star ★★★

- Non self-contained* units where there is only one unit and guests have sole use of the upper floor are acceptable up to a Three Star level.

4 Star ★★★★

- All units must be totally self-contained*.

Interior General For self- contained* properties

Additional Requirements

5 Star ★★★★★

- No coin meters or smart card systems for fuel payment. However, meter readings are acceptable.
- An additional five items from the following list should be provided:
 - Tumble dryer, Telephone, DVD/(Video), Sound/Music system, Docking Station, Games consoles, Internet access/Wi-Fi, PC/laptop and Printer for guest use, Sauna (in unit), Spa bath, Hot Tub (not shared), Outdoor cooking facility, Additional TVs in some/all bedrooms, Extensive library/Local reference materials, Binoculars/telescope.
 - These items need to be of excellent quality.

What does self-contained* mean?

A self-contained unit must have bedrooms, bathrooms, public areas and kitchen all contained behind one main door where occupants have sole access.





2.5

Public Areas (Living and Dining Area)





2.5.1 General

“At higher star ratings, just looking good is not enough. Furniture needs to be very comfortable.”

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Dining table and seating facilities for the maximum number of guests.
- Where there is a functional open fireplace, a fireguard, poker, hearth brush, tongs, shovel, fuel container and ashes bucket provided.
- Easy chair and/or sofa seats provided, sufficient for the maximum number of advertised guests.
- A TV to be provided where a TV signal is available, at no extra charge. Where terrestrial TV channels are not available every effort should be made to provide an alternative such as cable or satellite TV.
- Non-flammable waste paper bins provided in living areas.

Additional Requirements

4 Star ★★★★★

- All easy seating to be provided in the main lounge(s).

5 Star ★★★★★

- Please refer to additional requirements on page 27.

Hints & Tips

The Extra Touches

- Some of your guests might book your holiday home in order to ‘get away from it all.’ Others will want some technology to hand, and those that do not, will not turn it on. So, think about providing Wi-Fi, docking stations and games consoles.
- There are many other extra touches that can be added in order to make your holiday home more comfortable and to encourage repeat business. These range from walking maps of the local area, binoculars, books and games to larger items such as hot tubs.
- Guests will appreciate the extra effort that goes in to providing the extra touches, but try to avoid personal clutter. Personal items should be stowed away in locked cupboards and containers.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Provide a variety of seating: low, high, firm, soft, with and without arms.
- Ensure TVs can provide subtitles (digital (DVB) or Sky subtitles), to benefit hearing impaired and foreign language speaking guests.

2.5.2 Flooring

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All rooms/areas, passages and staircases must have suitable finishes or coverings.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- On each step or change of level, provide a nosing strip that contrasts in colour to the floor.
- Avoid deep pile carpets that may cause trips or make it difficult for a wheelchair to manoeuvre.

2.5.3 Furniture, Furnishings and Fittings

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All exterior windows in living areas fitted with opaque curtains, blinds or shutters. Glass doors will also require covering where the lounge is used for sleeping or where lack of privacy could be an issue (the apex of an 'A' framed window and roof light windows need to be curtained only where the lounge is used in sleeping accommodation).
- Where there is sleeping accommodation in living areas, there must be adequate storage for bedding and guests' clothes.

Hints & Tips

Privacy

- Beautiful views might be one of the main selling points for your holiday home, but always be mindful of the privacy of your guests.
- Quality is partly about choice and the option as to whether or not to pull a curtain or blind adds to that personal choice.
- Bathrooms without opaque window covers will make guests feel uncomfortable and a well fitted blind helps to dress and finish a room. Indeed, all windows within the property should be fitted with a curtain or blind.

“We had a tiny space that was too small to do much with. We put in a TV, a games console and couple of bean bags. The kids love it, but not as much as the parents.”

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Consider having the door frames a contrasting colour to the wall and avoid high gloss finishes to assist visually impaired guests.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Make sure that furniture or furnishings are not blocking heat from circulating into the room.
- When an item has come to the end of its life in your property remember that it may still have a useful life elsewhere. You could make use of Freecycle or offer to local community facilities. For electric appliances, remember to choose energy-saving models with low running costs (check for an energy rating or consult www.sust-it)
- Use could be made of local artists' work, prints, or photographs depicting local scenes, historical and heritage related images - it all adds to a visitor's enhanced sense of place.

2.5.4

Heating and Ventilation

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Adequate means of heating must be available at all times which will mean heating will be provided in living areas (free standing paraffin and Calor gas heaters are discouraged for safety reasons).
- All living room areas to have at least one window opening directly into the open air.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Ensure windows and curtains can be reached by your guests and are easy to open and close.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Achieve comfort and efficiency by maximising insulation, ensuring that any radiators have thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs) and guests are confident in how to use heating controls. Properties need to be warm ready for guests' arrival but consider when to start bringing the property up to the required temperature so that energy is not used unnecessarily.



2.5.5

Lighting

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All living areas must be adequately lit and lights must have shades (unless bulbs are decorative e.g. candle).

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Enable lighting levels to be adjusted using a dimmer switch.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- As lights in these areas are likely to be on the longest, make these a priority for low energy options such as LEDs for halogen down lighters and low energy bulbs (CFLs) for standard incandescent bulbs. Providing a number of lights and light switches helps to avoid an 'all or nothing' situation.

2.6

Bedrooms



2.6.1 Flooring

2.6.2 Furniture, Furnishings and Fittings

“ Adding a bedspread or throw can create a better first impression – and look good on your website. ”

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All rooms must have suitable floor finishes or coverings.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Avoid deep pile carpets that may cause trips or make it difficult for a wheelchair to manoeuvre.

Minimum Entry Requirements

- A bedside table/shelf and light for each permanent bed, including bunk beds (twin beds may share a table and light and top bunk to have light, but a shelf should only be provided where safe to do so).
- Non-flammable waste bins to be provided.
- A dressing table (or equivalent) with mirror, wardrobe or clothes hanging rail and adequate drawer space in each unit (shelf space is an acceptable alternative to drawers), in at least one double or twin room, to be provided. Hooks on backs of doors etc., are not acceptable, garments should be able to hang free.
- Sufficient hangers per person. Wire hangers are not acceptable.

Additional Requirements

3 Star ★★ and 4 Star ★★★★★

- Bedside table or shelf and light for each occupant (twin beds may share). For bunk beds a light per occupant is required and a shelf for the top bunk should be provided, except where it is not safe to do so.
- It is a requirement that a hairdryer is provided at Three and Four Star.

5 Star ★★★★★

- A hairdryer is provided in every bedroom at Five Stars (except children's rooms).

Hints & Tips

How many guests should I be catering for?

- There is no hard and fast rule here, but always be aware of space, comfort and usability in all areas of the property.
- Gone are the days of squeezing as many beds as possible into the available space; today's guests are expecting more.
- Bedrooms need to be comfortable for the number of guests sleeping in them and you need to provide ample clothes storage and ease of use to all items of furniture.
- Do not be tempted to accommodate more guests than can comfortably use the lounge dining and kitchen areas.
- Sofa beds might provide that extra sleeping space, but if you are looking to provide a high quality experience to all of your guests, then it might not be the best option.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Providing a ground floor bedroom may increase the property's appeal to older couples, extended family groups and people with broken limbs and other impairments that limit mobility.
- Consider having the door frames a contrasting colour to the wall and avoid high gloss finishes to assist visually impaired guests.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Thermally lined curtains will not only help to keep the bedroom warm, but will help to block out light and reduce noise, leading to better sleeping conditions.

2.6.3

Beds and Bedding



Minimum Entry Requirements

- Single beds – minimum size 183cm x 76cm/6' x 2'6". Double beds – minimum size 183cm x 120cm/6' x 4'.
- At least one bed for adults which is not a bunk bed.
- All mattresses sprung or foam or similar quality and in a sound clean condition.
- A headboard (or equivalent) should be provided for all permanent beds.
- Bedding supplied in sufficient quantity i.e. bedspread and two blankets per bed or one duvet of suitable tog rating, and at least two pillows per person. For winter, late or early season letting, the amount of bedding should be increased. Bedding clean and well aired.
- A mattress protector or under blanket fitted to all beds (plastic or rubber mattress protectors are not acceptable for normal use. Where a rubber cover is provided for children, it should be as an optional extra in addition to the normal mattress protector).
- Where linen is provided, it should be changed for all new occupants and weekly changes offered during the letting period. Spare linen and bedding available on request. Sheets must be poly-cotton or cotton.
- Where a bedroom is accessed via another bedroom, then this must be clearly advertised.
- Where a bathroom is accessed via a bedroom (not including ensembles), then these units must be designated, and advertised, as only being suitable for single family occupation.

Additional Requirements

2 Star ★★

- All beds to be full size (except those clearly specified in brochures etc. as being for children's use; or bed settees. Size of bed settee mattress to be clearly shown in brochure):
 - Adult single – minimum size 190cm x 90cm/6'3" x 3'
 - Adult double – minimum size 190cm x 137cm/6'3" x 4'6"
 - Child size – minimum size 183cm x 76cm/6' x 2'6"

3 Star ★★★

- Bed linen available with or without extra charge. We strongly recommend beds are made up when linen is provided (cot bedding not included).

NB

Where there is access to only one side of a double bed, a maximum rating of Three Star can be awarded and guests must be made aware at time of making the booking.

4 Star ★★★★

- All advertised sleeping spaces are to be in bedrooms only (where studio flats are clearly advertised as such, an exemption will be made to this).
- Bed linen provided and included in the hire charge. Beds must be made up for guests' arrival.

5 Star ★★★★★

- All beds to be full sized proper beds including beds for children (exclude 'Z' beds used on a temporary basis for children only).

(It is unlikely that where a bedroom or bathroom is accessed via another bedroom that this would ever achieve Five Star).

Galleried Bedrooms

- Where a property accommodates only two guests, any rating can be achieved (the galleried bedroom must be advertised as such).
- Where the property accommodates more than two guests and there is a galleried bedroom, this must be clearly advertised. The highest rating that could be achieved is Four Star. This is due to lack of privacy, light exclusion and noise interruption.

Hints & Tips

Beds

- Beds are one of the most important items you will purchase.
- Buy the best quality that you can afford; always.
- A good quality bed will last longer, if the mattress is turned regularly.
- Consider pocket sprung or memory foam mattresses as a high quality option.
- Match the quality of the bed with high quality linen and dress it well in order to add to the first impression of your property.

2.6.4 Heating and Ventilation

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Provide zip and link beds so that a guest and partner or a guest and carer/personal assistant can be accommodated.
- Provide blocks so that bed heights can be adjusted.
- Provide hypoallergenic bedding.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Blankets do not need to be wrapped; freshness can be indicated by tying the folded blankets with a re-useable ribbon, or other tie, or simply by folding neatly. Alternatively, they could be placed in a re-useable bag.

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Means of heating must be available at all times which will, in most cases, mean heating to be provided in each bedroom.
- All bedrooms to have at least one window opening directly into the open air, windows to have opaque curtains, blinds or shutters

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Ensure windows and curtains can be reached by your guests and are easy to open and close.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- As bedrooms can be left unoccupied for long periods, encourage guests not to leave power on unnecessarily when they leave by using friendly, positive information. Check windows are draught-proof and that heating appliances are not blocked by furniture or curtains.

2.6.5 Lighting

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All bedrooms must be adequately lit and lights must have shades. Greater wattage and range of lighting will be expected in larger rooms.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Enable lighting levels to be adjusted using a dimmer switch and/or make available additional bedside/dressing table lamps.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Choose good quality low energy light bulbs to avoid the frustration of long warm-up times (Which? provide online reviews of low energy lighting and other appliances) and make use of multiple lights/switches to provide guests the choice of how much lighting is required.

2.7

Bathrooms and WCs



2.7.1 General

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All units to have at least one bathroom and WC for every eight guests. The bathroom to be equipped with a bath or shower, bathmat, towel rail (pegs and hooks are not acceptable), shelf or flat surface and wash basin. Where the base of the bath or shower is not anti-slip then a non-slip mat must be available. Soap dish to be provided in showers.
- Where no bath is available this must be clearly advertised.
- Unless ensuite, access through a bedroom to the bathroom is not normally acceptable, except where the unit is for single family occupation.
- Washbasin in main bathroom is a minimum of 36cm x 24cm/14" x 9" internal, although a standard size wash basin is always recommended where space allows (additional basins offered in ensuites or separate WCs where basin in main bathroom complies, could be of smaller dimension).
- A mirror above or adjacent to the washbasin.
- All units to have at least one WC equipped with a full toilet roll and holder, toilet brush and disposal bin with sanitary bags or a lidded bin.
- All windows to have opaque curtains, blinds or shutters (glass doors to bathrooms and WCs must also have opaque curtain(s) or blind(s)).
- A means to provide hot water available at all times.
- A lock or bolt to be provided on all bathrooms/WC doors, including ensuites.
- Shaver point adjacent to the mirror, preferably with light. An adapter elsewhere in the unit is an acceptable alternative, providing it can be used close to a mirror.

Additional Requirements

3 Star ★★ ★

- Where more than six guests are accommodated a shower should be available. This must be hands free, but can be fitted over a bath e.g. mixer tap.

4 Star ★★ ★★

- Extra WC and washbasin (which may be in another bath/shower room) to be provided if the unit sleeps more than six. The shower must be hands free.
- Towels (one hand and one bath towel per person) available with or without extra charge.

5 Star ★★ ★★ ★

- All units to have at least one bathroom with bath/shower, WC and basin for every **four** guests. Ratio to be maintained if the property sleeps more than four guests. At least one bathroom should have a bath (a dispensation may be given if the shower is of an exceptional quality).
- Towels provided and included in the hire cost.



Hints & Tips

Bathroom Ratios

- The provision of en-suite bathrooms in holiday homes is growing and growing quickly.
- When setting up your holiday home consider the ratio of bathrooms to guests. The VisitEngland standard looks for different ratios at the different star rating levels, but try to exceed these, as customer demand will move that way over time.
- That extra bathroom might be a greater value to you than a third or fourth bedroom. Think of the two or even three couples wanting to holiday together (or two or three single guests).



Good Practice

Accessibility

- Hot water supply should have at each fitting a mixer valve, controlled to a maximum 41°C to prevent scalding.
- Provide a selection of equipment such as bath seats, toilet seat height raisers and shower chairs.
- Provide a support rail by the shower attachments.
- Provide towels that contrast in colour to the walls and floor to assist visually impaired guests.

“If you are looking for a higher bathroom score, consider improving your lighting, such as adding backlit mirrors.”

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Although providing shower facilities can help reduce water consumption, remember that power showers can use more water than a bath. Where water pressures are not low, aerated shower heads, which mix air with the water to provide power with less water, can be used to improve water efficiency. Aerated basin taps mix air with the water to provide a ‘foamy’ flow of water which is more efficient than a standard tap fitting.
- In older toilet cisterns, which have a larger capacity, water saving devices (often available free from water supply companies) can be fitted easily to reduce water use.
- Larger, pump action dispensers (topped up at all times to ensure they are well-presented) can replace the need for individually wrapped soaps and toiletries. Assessors will look at the contents and style of presentation. Alternatively, make use of locally produced individual soaps.
- There is no need for the spare drinking cup/glass to be either plastic, or wrapped.



2.7.2 Flooring

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All bathrooms/WCs must have suitable floor coverings. Consideration should be given to the suitability of floor coverings for hygiene and housekeeping reasons.

2.7.3 Heating and Ventilation

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Heating to be provided in all bathrooms where there is an external window. A heated towel rail is acceptable. Heated bulbs are discouraged.

Good Practice

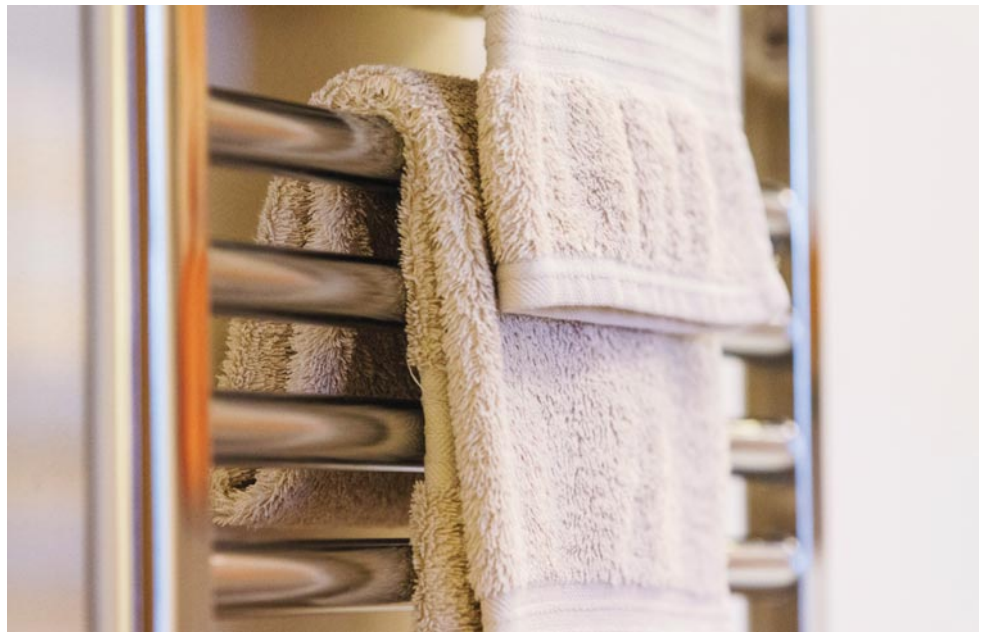
Accessibility

- Ensure windows and curtains can be reached by your guests and are easy to open and close.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Heated towel rails can enhance the visitor experience but ensure that they can be controlled so that they are not left on unnecessarily throughout the whole day.



2.7.4 Lighting

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All bathrooms/WCs must be adequately lit and lights must have shades or be suitably protected.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Halogen down lighters are popular in bathrooms but can now be replaced with LED equivalents that use up to 10 times less energy and last 10 times longer.

2.8

Kitchens



2.8.1 General

“When purchasing or replacing kitchen equipment, look for durability and functionality. Cheaper pots and pans will not last; invest in a good quality set.”

Minimum Entry Requirements

- A cooker with an oven, with at least two shelves, a grill and at least four boiling rings that may be used simultaneously with the oven or grill. If two guests only are accommodated, then two boiling rings plus oven and grill must be provided. For any larger numbers i.e. twelve or more, accommodated, it is anticipated that additional cooking facilities will be provided. A microwave is an acceptable alternative for one boiling ring. A combination microwave (oven, grill and microwave) is acceptable as a grill or oven, provided that a three-ring hob is also available separately.
- Cookers to be clean and in sound condition and functioning properly.
- Microwave oven to be provided, and microwave cookware or compatible crockery.
- A refrigerator with an ice making compartment (unless a freezer is also provided). Larder fridges are not acceptable if no freezer is provided.
- A sink equipped with a draining board, dish drying rack, hot water and cold drinking water supply to be provided.
- At least one hygienic work surface.
- An opening window or Local Planning Authority approved ventilation system. Opaque curtains, shutters or blinds on external glass doors and windows.
- A covered waste disposal bin to be provided, with liner.
- A fire blanket to be readily available. This should be between the cooker and the door, and wall mounted. Storage in a cupboard or over the cooker is not acceptable. It could be sited outside the kitchen provided it is quickly and easily accessible (further advice can be sought from your local fire prevention officer).
- Storage space suitable for food.
- Vacuum cleaner provided in each unit (may be compact type), unless a daily cleaning service is provided.
- Where a dishwasher is provided, crockery, cutlery and utensils should be dishwasher safe. Extra crockery should also be provided, so the dishwasher does not have to be operated at each mealtime for smaller numbers of guests.
- Sufficient storage space for crockery, cutlery, kitchen and cleaning equipment provided.

Additional Requirements

4 Star ★★★★★

- Access to washing machine if not provided in the unit. Ratio of one machine to every five units. 24 hour return laundry service also acceptable.
- Access to freezer at Four Star is now a requirement (and not just a 3* icebox within a fridge), but it could be in a shed/garage etc. Assessors will use their judgement on appropriate size, depending on the occupancy of the unit. Dispensations may be considered if the property sleeps only two guests. Access to a shared freezer would be acceptable.

5 Star ★★★★★

- Freezer provided within the unit.
- Dishwasher provided within the unit (consider size for the number the unit accommodates).
- Washing machine provided in the unit (may be provided in an exterior purpose made laundry room on multi-unit sites, but must have 24 hour access). Ratio maximum of one machine to every five units. Use of property owner's washing machine is not acceptable (24 hour return laundry service also acceptable).





“Many guests look forward to relaxing with a glass of wine soon after arrival. Higher star ratings need to offer a selection of glasses – and make sure they fit in the dishwasher.”

2.8.2 Flooring

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Ensure crockery contrasts with table surface to assist visually impaired guests.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Most guests will now be familiar with separating at least some of their waste but systems do vary around the country so providing a simple, clear system is essential to gaining participation. Clean, well-presented and labelled/colour-coded containers are essential.
- Given that fridges and freezers will be on for long periods, then it is essential to consider their running costs as well as their purchase cost by choosing an energy efficient model. Where there is going to be a gap of several days between guests, consider switching off the fridge and leaving the door open to ensure there is ventilation.

Minimum Entry Requirements

- All kitchens must have suitable floor finishes or coverings. Consideration should be given to the suitability of floor coverings for hygiene and housekeeping reasons.

2.8.3 Heating and Ventilation

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Adequate means of heating must be available at all times which will, in most cases, mean heating provided in the kitchen, if large or separate.
- There should be an opening window or local planning authority approved ventilation system.

Good Practice

Accessibility

- Ensure windows and curtains can be reached by your guests and are easy to open and close.

2.8.4 Lighting

Minimum Entry Requirements

- Kitchens must be adequately lit and lights must have shades or be suitably protected. Greater wattage and range of lighting will be expected in larger rooms.

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Halogen down lighters are popular in kitchens but can now be replaced with LED equivalents that use up to 10 times less energy and last 10 times longer.

Kitchen Inventory

Items	Notes	Higher Star Ratings
Matching crockery and cutlery.	Sufficient for number of guests unit sleeps. Extra if dishwasher in unit. Plenty of teaspoons essential, nothing chipped or cracked. Egg cups should be included.	Greater range of items, e.g. different sizes of plates and bowls and mugs/cups & saucers. Not essential to offer cups & saucers, but aim for very good quality and range. Guests will expect small knives & forks and soup spoons at higher star ratings.
Glassware.	At least tumblers and wine glasses. A water jug might be appreciated.	Possibly champagne flutes or greater range and quality of glasses to suit target market.
Serving dishes.	To suit target market – possibly salad bowl, platter, fruit bowl, bread basket etc. Consider small containers/dishes for serving crisps & nuts.	Greater range and quality expected at higher levels.
Serving spoons.		
Teapot, milk jug & container for sugar.	Cafetiere or coffee maker might be included, depending on target market.	At higher star ratings guests may expect different sizes of teapots, cafetieres & jugs.
Condiments (salt & pepper). Useful containers for bread, food items etc.	Some airtight lidded plastic in different sizes worth including, especially if can go through dishwasher.	
Bread knife, carving knife & fork and other sharp knives.	Larger capacity units would need greater range so if group all cooking together, they have sufficient.	
Chopping board(s), bread board etc.		
Range of kitchen utensils.	e.g. tin opener, potato peeler, grater, fish slice or similar, potato masher, ladle, kitchen scissors, wooden spoons, whisk etc.	At higher star ratings more gadgets would be expected, e.g. food processor, bread mixer, pasta maker, electric whisk etc. and pestle & mortar.
Range of kitchen bowls, measuring jugs etc.	Kitchen scales should be considered, depending on target market.	At higher star ratings, guests may expect bakery items, such as cake tins, cooling racks, rolling pin, cutters, pie dishes, casserole dish etc.
Roasting tin(s) and other oven-proof trays, dishes etc.		
Electric kettle and toaster.	Toast rack might be considered.	
Range of saucepans (incl one non-stick) and at least one frying pan.	Ensure adequate provision of large saucepans and frying pans if unit takes larger groups. Omelette pan might be appreciated.	Ensure frying pans in very good condition.
Colander or sieve.		
Corkscrew and bottle opener.		
Tray(s).		
Ice-making tray (unless ice making unit).		
Vase(s).		
Straws (for children and disabled guests).		
Miscellaneous.		
Ashtrays (if smoking permitted).		
Matches/lighter.		
Facility to dry clothes (airer or clothes line with pegs).	Plastic/wicker laundry basket might be appreciated.	
Vacuum/broom, floor mop & bucket, dustpan & brush, as appropriate depending on flooring.		

Kitchen Inventory (continued)

Items	Notes	Higher Star Ratings
Basic supply of cleaning materials, washing-up liquid, toilet roll for each WC.	Guests might appreciate starter supply of dishwasher powder/tablets.	At higher star ratings, operators might consider leaving kitchen roll, foil, cling film etc.
Iron and ironing board.		
Oven glove or mitts.		
Supply of clean tea towels/ kitchen towel.		
Spare light bulbs.		
Torch(es).		
Tablecloth or place mats, as appropriate.	Consider plastic cloth(s) for dining table if welcome families.	Linen/cloth napkins might be appreciated by some guests, especially if from overseas.
Washing-up bowl with new sponge/disposable cloths/clean brush.		
Door mat at exterior door(s).		

Hints & Tips

Equipping the Kitchen

- Guests expect all the modern conveniences of home, even if they are not intending to use them.
- Your property might be in an area surrounded by restaurants, but not all guests want to or can afford to eat out all of the time; therefore it needs to be fully equipped.
- If you have the space, then a dishwasher, washing machine, dryer and separate freezer should all be considered, in addition to the other essential equipment.
- Provide double the amount of crockery, cutlery and glassware, particularly if you do provide the dishwasher.
- Add extra touches, such as champagne flutes.

“As soon as kitchen utensils and frying pans look tired, replace them.”

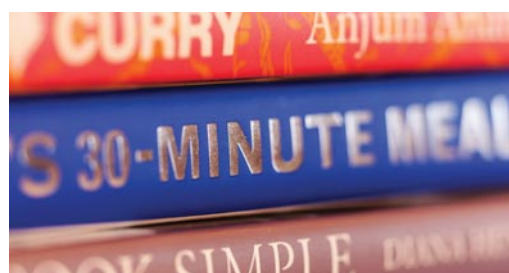
Additional Facilities

Laundry, recreation, reception, shop, bar, restaurant facilities. None of these are required, but where they are provided, their quality and condition will form part of the quality assessment

Good Practice

Sustainability

- Laundry – washing machines and, in particular, dryers, can use significant quantities of energy. When replacing equipment choose an energy efficient model with lower running costs. Some businesses also invite guests to make a donation towards a local charity when making use of dryers as a means of moderating use without being prohibitive.
- Reception/ shop/ bar/ restaurant – Use the opportunity to stock a range of the best locally produced food and drink (e.g. bacon, sausage, eggs, jams) and local crafts which can act as souvenirs and gifts.



Code of Conduct and Conditions for Participation

Code of Conduct

The operator/manager is required to undertake and observe the VisitEngland Code of Conduct:

Prior to booking

- To describe accurately in any advertisement, brochure, or other printed or electronic media, the facilities and services provided.
- To make clear to guests in print, in electronic media and on the telephone exactly what is included in all prices quoted for accommodation, including taxes, and any other surcharges.
- To provide information on the suitability of the premises for guests of various ages, particularly for the elderly and the very young.
- To allow guests to view the accommodation prior to booking if requested and possible.

At the time of booking

- To clearly describe the cancellation policy to guests i.e. by telephone, fax, internet/email as well as in any printed information given to guests.
- To adhere to and not to exceed prices quoted at the time of booking for accommodation and other services.

On arrival

- To welcome all guests courteously and without discrimination in relation to gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief.

During the stay

- To maintain standards of guest care, cleanliness, and service appropriate to the style of the operation.
- To deal promptly and courteously with all enquiries, requests, bookings and correspondence from guests.
- To ensure complaint handling procedures are in place and that complaints received are investigated promptly and courteously and that the outcome is communicated to the guest.

Payment

- To give each guest, on request, details of payments due and a receipt, if required/requested.

General

- To give due consideration to the requirements of guests with special requirements, and to make suitable provision where applicable.
- To ensure the accommodation is prepared for the arrival of guests at all times when the operation is advertised as open.
- To advise guests, at any time prior to their stay, if there are any changes in what has been booked.
- To hold current public liability insurance and to comply with all relevant statutory obligations including legislation applicable to health and safety, planning and fire.
- To allow VisitEngland representatives reasonable access to the operation, on request, to confirm that the Code of Conduct is being observed or in order to investigate any complaint of a serious nature notified to them.
- To allow VisitEngland moderation assessors reasonable access to the operation, on request.
- When a business is sold or ceases to trade, every effort should be made to inform VisitEngland.

Conditions for Participation

All businesses participating in the VisitEngland quality assessment schemes are required to:

- Meet or exceed the VisitEngland minimum entry requirements for a rating in the relevant accommodation sector.

- Observe the VisitEngland Code of Conduct.
- Be assessed annually, and in the event of complaints, by authorised representatives of VisitEngland.
- Pay an annual participation fee.
- Complete an annual information collection questionnaire either online or by post, as required.
- Any participant disqualified from the VisitEngland National Quality Assessment Schemes for whatever reason will not be allowed to re-join for a minimum period of one year from the date of disqualification. Re-application at an earlier stage may be considered by VisitEngland where it is felt special circumstances apply. In all cases acceptance of re-application will be at the sole discretion of VisitEngland. Application to re-join the scheme will always incur an additional fee. If disqualification was on the basis of quality or the level of complaints, then it must be demonstrated that the areas of concern have been addressed. This may be done in the form of an advisory visit by a VisitEngland representative, for which an additional charge is likely to be made.

Change of Ownership

When an accommodation business is sold or the method of operation changed e.g. contracted out, and the new owner does not continue participation in the VisitEngland National Quality Assessment Scheme, the existing rating cannot be transferred.

If a property is sold as a going concern, for continued use to accommodate guests and details of the new owners are provided to VisitEngland, the rating may be continued under the following circumstances:

- The current (outgoing) owners have made all payments due to date for the current participation year. If payment is made by Direct Debit this should remain active until the change of ownership process is completed.
- The current (outgoing) owners provide forwarding details for themselves along with full contact details for the new (incoming) owners to VisitEngland's appointed assessment contractor.
- The current (outgoing) owners provide the expected completion/transfer date to VisitEngland's appointed assessment contractor.
- The new (incoming) owners apply and pay for participation in the VisitEngland National Quality Assessment Scheme within 28 days of the completion/transfer date.

If all of these criteria are met then the current (outgoing) owners may be entitled to a pro-rata refund for any complete remaining months paid for in the current participation year.

Signage

Use of all quality ratings should always be accompanied by the VisitEngland Quality Rose Marque.

Any listing in a VisitEngland publication or website and within the Tourist Information Centre network is conditional on continued participation in the quality assessment schemes. Continued use or display of inaccurate, misleading or out-of-date signage by a participant in the VisitEngland quality assessment schemes may result in VisitEngland withdrawing the establishment from participation in the schemes.

Where a business, for whatever reason, ceases to participate in the VisitEngland quality assessment schemes, all relevant display signs and electronic and print material must be removed (please note that this may not apply in the case of change of ownership if the new owner joins within 28 days of completion. See 'Change of Ownership' text above).

Failure to observe these conditions may result in the establishment becoming ineligible to display or use the VisitEngland endorsement in any form whatsoever.

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Aur

Thank you so much for
your hospitality, kindness
and friendship and for
helping to make our family
holiday great.

Just to say
thank you very

lots of love
10-Aune, Eric
Cameron &
Frances

To find out more about VisitEngland's quality assessment scheme
for self catering accommodation please contact:



VisitEngland™

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