

The Autism Friendly Award

Case study: Burlton Cottages and Spa



“Applying for the Autism Friendly Award has ensured that our customer service, facilities and environment are welcoming and accommodating for everyone wanting to holiday here.”

Rachel Mee,
Owner of Burlton Cottages

Why did you apply for the Autism Friendly Award?

We applied for the Autism Friendly Award as it truly demonstrates our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility for autistic people. It has ensured that our customer service, facilities and environment are welcoming and accommodating to everyone wanting to holiday here.

How did the framework help you to reflect on your business and develop your accessibility to autistic people?

The framework provided us with a structured approach to evaluate our current practices, policies and the physical environment of the business. We identified our strengths and weaknesses and soon made the improvements to enhance the guest experience here.



What things did you put in place as a result of using the Autism Friendly Award workbook?

We now have a dedicated section on our website highlighting pre-arrival information and what to expect during your holiday. There is a link to our sensory guide that we created while applying for this award. The guide includes details and photographs about what you may see, hear, touch, smell and taste while holidaying at Burlton Cottages and using the swimming pool and spa. We now have a site map, 3D visual tours and floor plans of the cottages and plenty of photographs of all the cottages, swimming pool, studio and farm on our website. Blackout curtains are in all the bedrooms, and 4K Wi-fi enabled TVs are provided in all the properties.

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How did you find the experience of using the workbook and making adaptations?

The workbook is easy to use as it is broken down into three topics with options for what is essential to act on and what is desirable. Uploading supporting evidence was easy. In fact, nothing was too onerous to complete.

Since achieving the award, have you seen an increase in autistic customers and their families?

We have seen an increase in the number of autistic customers and their families. One family have now visited four times as their autistic son really enjoys our swimming pool. Having daily access to private sessions in the swimming pool when nobody else is in there has allowed him to really enjoy his swimming in a peaceful, calm environment. He now arrives in his swimming shorts ready! Another family have repeatedly booked as their autistic daughter enjoys her own space in The Studio, where it is quiet and restful, enabling her to play with her toys in relaxed surroundings.

What feedback have you received from autistic people/families who have stayed with you since you received the award?

The pre-arrival visit where guests can come and look at our cottages, swimming pool and spa beforehand has become increasingly popular, and guests are very grateful. It is especially useful for multi-generational families who are staying in all the properties. They really like to see what they are coming to beforehand to help their pre-holiday planning for all generations with different requirements.



How has gaining the award benefited your business?

Our staff are now trained to understand and support autistic individuals and their families. This gives us all a sense of pride that our business is fully understanding and values inclusivity. Guests also feel that their individual needs can be met; they know we want to help them have the best holiday here at Burlton, time and time again.

To find out more about the Autism Friendly Award visit: <https://www.autism.org.uk/autism-friendly-award>