

The Autism Friendly Award

Case study: Hoe Grange Holidays



“Applying for the Autism Friendly Award was a natural way to continue improving our services and offer a holiday to remember for even more guests.”

David and Felicity Brown,
Owners of Hoe Grange Holidays

Why did you apply for the Autism Friendly Award?

We have always focused on inclusion and enabling everyone to enjoy a holiday in our beautiful Peak District countryside, so they go home with happy memories to treasure. Since opening our accessible self-catering log cabins in 2006, we have welcomed people with various disabilities, including mobility, visual and hearing impairments. Applying for the Autism Friendly Award was a natural way to continue improving our services and offer a holiday to remember for even more guests.

Providing a welcoming environment for autistic people is also beneficial from a financial point of view. When guests find facilities that are suitable for them, they often return and become loyal customers.

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

The workbook is extremely helpful. It is split into three sections: accessible customer service, accessible environment and accessible information, and outlines the requirements, giving examples and tasks to complete. You can also easily upload evidence to support your application.

As a result of the application process, we reviewed and improved our pre-visit information and updated our accessibility guides. There are 3D virtual tours and photo galleries of each cabin on the website. We also created a sensory story to introduce the sights, sounds and smells of a holiday on our farm. We know providing potential guests with the right information can make all the difference to them choosing your accommodation.

We also put up new clearer signage on our log cabins and created an autism-friendly holiday pack with mindfulness colouring books, puzzles, mini stimulation packs and holiday communication cards.

We offer pre-booking visits so autistic people can prepare for their holiday and do a 'test run' to reduce anxiety - we allocate plenty of time so the visit isn't rushed and people have time to process everything. As we live on site, we can offer help if needed throughout the holiday. We have learnt that small changes can make a massive difference to autistic guests and just a little understanding can go a long way. For example, blackout curtains in the bedrooms allow people to relax in a calm, quiet space.

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

Since receiving the award, we have welcomed more autistic guests to stay in our self-catering log cabins. Our peaceful environment is a safe, calm place.

One family who stayed then booked a further two visits for this year as their son, who retreated into his shell during COVID, came alive while here on holiday, meeting the animals. He even spoke to us; the first time he has talked to anyone other than family for several years! This is so heartwarming for the family.

Another autistic guest came with his carers. They explained he loves collecting old things, so we gave him an old ear tag from one of our cows and also took time to show him our vintage car. He felt so at home that he has since returned twice. As soon as he arrives, he chats about our car.

"As a result of the application process, we reviewed and improved our pre-visit information and updated our accessibility guides."

David and Felicity Brown,
Owners of Hoe Grange Holidays

"Since receiving the award, we have welcomed more autistic guests."

How has gaining the award benefited your business?

As a company, the benefits of repeat business are significant. Guests who return become your best advocates; there is nothing better than personal recommendations. In terms of job satisfaction, the smiles on people's faces say it all.

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