



## THE NURSE'S COTTAGE, SWAY, HAMPSHIRE

### Case study: restaurant with rooms

Providing unrivalled accessibility is a natural extension of the business philosophy behind 17 years of continued success for The Nurse's Cottage Restaurant with Rooms in Sway. Chef/proprietor Tony Barnfield and his team have a real commitment to personalised service – evident in how they cater for clients with accessibility issues. Since opening in 1992, the five-bedroom business has collected an array of awards to rival the Manchester United trophy cabinet!

A guest with hearing difficulties was introduced to using a hearing loop for the first time, bringing lifestyle benefits; allergy sufferers became repeat customers as their specific needs were met from arrival; and a continuous improvement policy adds little touches such as offering magnifying glasses to people who do not want to use large print menus.



A former journalist and national radio presenter, Tony had a clear strategy for the business, which is situated in the heart of the New Forest, and has combined this with a flair for marketing and an ability to meet customers' changing needs. With a single level property, including a totally wheelchair-accessible restaurant and good car parking, The Nurse's Cottage had the physical facilities on which to build.



“Our core market is always going to be older people, who tend to visit for longer stays rather than for weekends, sometimes on escorted tours. They generally want to stay in the property for dinner, rather than go out at night,” explained Tony.

He attended a Welcome All course run by Tourism South East in the mid 1990s and realised accessibility mirrored his overall philosophy: “always think about people and treat them as individuals with individual needs”.

He said: “Welcome All was an ideal starting point and really reinforced that being accessible is much more than thinking about wheelchairs and mobility.”

The Nurse’s Cottage went on to introduce a wide range of accessible facilities, such as large print menus and information, big button telephones in rooms, toilet seat-raisers, jar-openers, magnifying glasses and hearing loops in all bedrooms (with one for reception planned for 2009).

More than 60 part-time and full-time staff have attended Welcome to Excellence training courses over the years, including many taking part in Welcome All training. Customer relationship management includes retaining details of customers’ requests and needs, such as guests with allergies who require non-feather pillows or have special dietary requirements, or those with hearing and visual impairments.



“Meeting accessibility needs is core to customer care. By getting to know customers during their stay, and talking to them about any additional needs when they book, we can welcome people and help them relax and enjoy their holiday from day one,” commented Tony.

Accolades range from winning the Tourism ExSEllence Awards Customer Service and Access for All categories, covering the entire South East tourism sector, to the regional Edge training award for small business, as well as achieving outstanding industry inspection ratings. It is not just customers that have benefited from this approach to accessibility – it is integral to the business success of The Nurse’s Cottage.