Profiting through Accessible Tourism

SACO: Meeting the needs of visually impaired guests
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SACO has used the National Accessible Scheme (NAS) to understand exactly what people with visual impairments need. Their apartments in Bath have V1 status as part of the NAS scheme, helping to ensure their guests have a great experience.

SACO operates a network of serviced apartments with premises in 25 locations throughout the UK including Bath, London, Glasgow, Jersey and Manchester.

In Bath, SACO operates 43 apartments in a restored Georgian terrace in the centre of the city. Behind the facade the building was substantially remodelled in 2006 to accommodate the serviced apartments, which are now used by both business and leisure visitors to the city.
Getting rated

In 2010, SACO UK’s management encouraged each of its UK sites to apply for the National Accessible Scheme (NAS). The NAS, run by VisitEngland, has been operating since 1992 and sets the standards for hotels, self-catering, hostel and campus accommodation, holiday, touring and camping parks and caravan holiday homes.

Assistant Apartment Manager, Karen Sheppard says, “Our apartments are all newly refurbished with pretty good access so we decided to go one step further and apply for V1 as well.” V1 status sets the standard for key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of visually impaired guests.

Karen continues, “Other SACO locations around the country will be going for different NAS levels depending on the age and accessibility of their buildings. It’s good that our company gives us the time and support to do this.”

The apartments are rated as suitable for visually impaired guests under the National Accessible Scheme.
Making adjustments

“In order to get V1 we will be moving a few power sockets out from behind furniture so they are more obvious, installing touch sensitive lamps and putting some handrails and better signage in corridors.”

“We have 12 staff in Bath, looking after reception and cleaning, and we will all be involved with the audit so that we understand exactly what people with visual impairments need. It’s all about customer service as well as facilities. And going through a proper audit for V1 means that I’ll feel confident to promote the apartments.”

Committed to accessibility

Lesley Freed, SACO Chief Executive, said, “It’s no secret that the last couple of years have been tough for the industry. But we were determined not to let our customer service suffer and we remain committed to making all of our locations accessible.”

“We take all reasonable steps to accommodate and welcome guests with disabilities. Each serviced apartment location has an individual Access Statement which is available on request from our central reservations team. Applying for V1 status as part of the NAS scheme will help reassure our guests of our commitment to their needs and ensure they have a great experience when they stay with us.

“It’s a fantastic scheme and we’re delighted to be part of it”