



VisitEngland™



HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

VisitEngland's Quality Standards for Hotel Accommodation



Welcome to the VisitEngland Quality Standards for Hotels

At VisitEngland, we're passionate about raising England's profile, increasing the volume and value of tourism, and developing England's visitor economy by working with organisations of all sizes and specialities. These quality standards will help you become part of this mission.

A VisitEngland star rating gives potential customers a label they can trust. Highlighting your dedication to quality shows that your business has been independently verified by the national tourism agency as offering a consistently high standard of service.

Over the years, our Quality Standards have evolved to keep pace with consumer expectations, and we've worked hard to ensure our ratings and awards are accurate, consistent and reliable. We also work closely with accommodation providers to ensure our standards are straightforward and realistic. This document is the result of an independently chaired Quality Advisory Board which included key stakeholders from across the hospitality industry, that was convened in 2023 to modernise and simplify the standards.

Our Quality Standards are the building blocks that form the basis of what our assessors will be looking for when they visit you. By reading and applying these criteria carefully, you can be confident that your establishment will meet the high industry standards required to become recognised by VisitEngland. And remember, the assessment is not only of the physical product, but also of the experience that your establishment provides. It's not just a box-ticking exercise. We focus on the quality of what you offer, and not on what you don't offer.

We look forward to working with and promoting your property.

– VisitEngland

Contents

2 Welcome to the VisitEngland Quality Standards for Hotels

Quality is the key

- 5 Our commitment to you
- 5 Quality across the Star ratings
- 6 Defining a hotel
- 6 Service and hospitality

Quality

- 8 How do we measure Quality?
- 9 Scores
- 9 Determining a Star rating
- 9 Quality bands

Sustainability

- 13 Sustainability is becoming a business basic
- 13 Getting started

Accessibility

- 15 Improving your accessibility – A valuable market

17 Statutory obligations

- 19 Safety and security
- 20 Maintenance

Standards

21 Hospitality and services

- 21 General
- 22 Reservations, prices and billing
- 23 Reception and luggage handling
- 24 Other reception, concierge and housekeeping services
- 24 Dining
- 24 General
- 25 Meal service staff
- 25 Breakfast provision
- 26 Breakfast menu and range of dishes
- 26 Dinner provision, menu and range

- 6 Bedrooms and bathrooms
- 7 Cleanliness
- 7 Hints and tips

- 9 Dispensations
- 10 VisitEngland's assessors

11 Awards

- 11 VisitEngland's Gold and Silver Awards
- 11 VisitEngland's Breakfast Award

- 13 Taking things further
- 13 Sustainability – easy wins:

- 15 Legal obligations
- 16 We can help

- 20 Cleanliness

- of dishes
- 27 Alcoholic drink services, licences and wine service
- 27 Light refreshments, snacks, lunches and afternoon teas
- 27 Room service provision
- 28 Bedrooms
- 28 Bedroom provision
- 28 Size and spaciousness
- 29 Suites
- 29 Bed size and access
- 29 Bedding Requirements

- 30 Heating and temperature control
- 30 Lighting
- 30 Windows and window coverings
- 31 Flooring
- 31 Furniture – tables, mirrors and clothes storage
- 32 Furniture – Seating (best practice/hotel markets will be taken into account)
- 32 Beverage making facilities
- 32 In-room information
- 33 In-room entertainment
- 33 General connectivity and telephones
- 34 Miscellaneous
- 35 Bathrooms**
- 35 Size and spaciousness

- 35 Provision of en suite
- 35 Equipment
- 36 Lighting, heating and ventilation
- 36 Towels and toiletries
- 37 Public areas**
- 37 Reception areas and lobby
- 37 Bar, lounge and sitting areas
- 37 Other public areas, including corridors and staircases
- 38 Lifts
- 38 Communication
- 38 Public area WCs
- 39 External areas (where applicable)
- 39 Annexes (where applicable)

40 Code of conduct



Quality is the key

VisitEngland understands that quality is the key to success within the modern hospitality industry. In order for the hotel sector to be successful both nationally and internationally, it is important that quality standards are set high and continue to improve.

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 VisitEngland hotel scheme you will receive an overnight mystery assessment visit every year. The visit will look at all aspects of your customer facing business from the initial booking to check out. Each visit will be followed by a full verbal debrief and a detailed written management 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. The assessment is objective and judgements will not be made about 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.

Defining a Hotel

A hotel is a commercial establishment that provides accommodation and various services to guests. These services typically include rooms or suites for overnight stays, as well as amenities such as restaurants, bars, and often additional facilities like swimming pools, gyms, and meetings and events space. Hotels cater to a wide range of budgets and preferences, offering different levels of comfort and services, from budget accommodation to luxury resorts. A hotel will have a minimum of five bedrooms.

Service and hospitality

A smile, a warm and genuine welcome and a willingness to please and serve customers is a common requirement and achievable across all star ratings. Seamless and efficient service requires thought and planning. A smaller sized hotel can rely on the natural friendliness and hospitality of the owners, whilst a larger business will require a team of well-trained staff and this can present a different challenge.

Bedrooms and bathrooms

Whatever the style or concept of the bedrooms and bathrooms, both quality and comfort is what guests and our assessors will be looking for, specifically:

- The quality and comfort of the bed
- The quality of the bed linen
- Attractive, well co-ordinated décor and soft furnishings
- The quality of bathroom fittings, of towels and toiletries
- Ease of use, being well designed without necessarily being large and spacious
- Those extra touches that make the rooms more welcoming

Cleanliness

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

Hints and 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 rather than not to live up to them.

Be a customer at your own business. Take time to use your own website, sleep in your own bedrooms and eat your own breakfast in order to experience what you are offering your guests.

Your website is the first contact most customers will have with you. Make sure it is up to date, easy to use and engaging.

Good quality photographs are the best way to show off your business. Modern smartphone cameras are often up to the task, and online tutorials are widely available.

If you have the time for social media, it's a great way to engage with potential guests. Your assessor can help with advice on how to get started.



Quality

How do we measure quality?

During your visit, your assessor will make quality judgements across all areas of your customer facing business. When the scores are totalled you will have an overall percentage score that will place you within one of the three different 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
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Kitchen Facilities
- Any Public Areas

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

Scores

For each area included in the assessment, the assessor will decide whether to award a score of

- 1 = Poor
- 2 = Disappointing
- 3 = Good
- 4 = Very good
- 5 = Excellent

Determining a Star Rating

A property will need to satisfy three elements to reach a particular star rating:

- All relevant requirements must be met (detailed later in this booklet).
- The overall percentage score for quality must reach the appropriate banding (see below).
- **Sectional Consistency Requirements** - No section to be more than one star rating band below the overall rating. The exception to be: 'Cleanliness' - which must be of at least the same standard as the overall rating.

Quality bands

THREE STAR	FOUR STAR	FIVE STAR
55-69%	70-84%	85-100%

Dispensations

Dispensations for certain individual requirements within the VisitEngland Quality Standards may be given as long as all the remaining requirements and quality levels for that rating are met or exceeded. This flexibility will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Any exceptions will need a proportional increase in quality in other areas to compensate for the area where an exception is sought.

VisitEngland's assessors

All of our assessors are hospitality professionals and each has a proven background in the industry. More importantly, our assessors now spend their working lives as professional guests. They experience best practice in all areas and are able to pass that knowledge on to you for the benefit of your business. They are your eyes and ears for the duration of their visit. They will assess the quality of your business honestly, but always with the objective of helping you to improve your operation. Make use of your assessor.

Your assessor is there to help your business succeed, so make use of their knowledge and expertise:

- Their aim is to maximise the quality potential of your business, whilst allowing the character and uniqueness of your business to shine through.
- They are an industry professional with extensive knowledge of the hotel sector, and they are there to share all of that knowledge with you, so be sure to ask plenty of questions.
- Stay in touch. Assessors are happy to answer your questions in between visits. You might like to arrange an interim visit in order to measure improvements that you have made to your business, especially if you are aiming for a higher rating or a Silver, Gold or Breakfast award at your next assessment. The assessor can help to organise this for you.
- The first time you meet your assessor is likely to be when they arrive at your property for an overnight visit. Even then, they will not reveal their identity until the following morning. This will allow them to experience your service as a customer would and begin to understand your business prior to your meeting after breakfast.
- 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 services that might be missing.
- Beyond that, the assessment 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 to change it.

Awards

VisitEngland's Gold and Silver Awards

VisitEngland's unique Gold and Silver awards are given in recognition of exceptional quality within a hotel's star rating. These awards help customers find those special places where the hotelier and team go the extra mile, whatever the size, style or star rating of the hotel.

Hotels must demonstrate consistent levels of high quality in the six key areas identified by consumers as very important:

- Hospitality and Friendliness
- Service and Efficiency
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Cleanliness
- Food

Eligibility for an award is triggered by the hotel's overall score meeting a minimum level plus a minimum score in each of the critical areas listed above.

Nominations for an award are confirmed with the written assessment report but Gold awards require confirmation by the Quality Assessment Area Manager and may involve a second 'mystery visit'.

The assessment report will show the scores in all areas, so hotels can check how close they are to achieving an award and can ask the assessor's advice about the key improvements required to aim for a Silver or Gold award.

A Gold or Silver award gives hotels a significant marketing advantage – they can feature the award logo on their website as well as display their award certificate at their property.

VisitEngland's Breakfast Award

Hotels achieving exceptionally high scores for the quality of their breakfast will qualify for the VisitEngland Breakfast award.

As part of the annual assessment the assessor will score the breakfast served based on the following criteria.

- Choice and range of dishes offered
- Presentation and culinary skills
- Quality of ingredients/produce
- Breakfast service/hospitality

The assessor will confirm during the assessment debrief if you have achieved the award.

The Breakfast award logo can then be used in your own marketing.



Sustainability

Sustainability is becoming a business basic

To meet growing expectations from consumers and address our twin challenges of climate change and nature loss, it is increasingly essential that your operations are run as sustainably as possible. Many organisations and businesses are going further than just preventing more damage being caused, and are aiming to have a positive impact on people and places, by implementing regenerative tourism practices. Both sustainable and regenerative tourism make business sense. See the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub for more details: visitengland.org/businessadvice

Getting started

The crucial thing is to take steps to start doing something: think measure, monitor, reduce. Look to measure how much gas, electricity, water and waste is used each month, monitor this to identify patterns and track where efficiencies could be made, and then use this information to implement changes and reduce consumption. This not only helps our environment but will also save you money.

Taking things further

If you have gone beyond the basics and are already taking these and other steps to be more sustainable, you may wish to demonstrate this to the growing number of consumers factoring environmental and/or social criteria into their buying decision by joining one of the sustainable tourism certification schemes that exist in England. See the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub for more information on how to choose the certification that's right for you: visitengland.org/businessadvice

Sustainability – easy wins

PEOPLE:

- Think local to keep money in the community. Welcome packs or hospitality trays can include local produce (or Fair-Trade items, which benefit communities in developing countries). Make use of airtight containers rather than providing things individually wrapped. Waste plastic can cause litter and impact health.
- Display the work of local artists or photographers depicting local scenes and historical and heritage related images – it all adds to a visitor's enhanced sense of place.
- Make it easy for customers to do the right thing. For example including public transport options for getting to your property in promotional and booking information makes it easier to leave the car at home.

PLACE:

- Better insulation and greater use of thermostatically controlled and zoned heating will save on energy use.
- Food waste is a major contributor to climate change. Weigh your food waste for a week and see where you could make changes to cut this down.
- Examine your stock order history and review the single-use plastic items your business consumes. How many are just ordered from habit? Can you eliminate any items by doing things differently?

PARTNERSHIP

- Partner with other organisations looking to improve the local environment and support communities. For example, could you team up with a local college to provide work experience, or if you have space, can you work with a local wildlife trust to install bird or bat boxes.
- Consider creating a sustainability policy, setting out the environmental and sustainable management actions taken by your business. The VisitEngland Business Advice Hub has resources to help get you started. Ensure any staff are fully briefed on your sustainability policy and can articulate your progress to customers.

PROFIT

- Make best use of local tourist information in your properties promotional literature, on the website and in any visitor information located in the accommodation. Or consider an online information system, such as 'Touch Stay'.
- Adding charging points for electric vehicles can help attract EV drivers to your business. See the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub for information on the grants available to support this.

Visit the VisitEngland Business Advice Hub for more information on all aspects of sustainability.



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Accessibility

Improving your accessibility – A valuable market

Many people have accessibility requirements 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 around £14.6bn 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. Find out how other tourism businesses are benefitting from this loyal market at [visitengland.org/access](https://www.visitengland.org/access)

Legal obligations

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 sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, or age (this applies to those aged 18 or above), 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.

- 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' for example, amend a 'no dogs' policy.
- Make 'reasonable' changes to the built environment – such as making changes to the structure of a building to improve access for example, altering or removing a physical feature.
- Provide auxiliary aids and services – such as providing information in an accessible format, 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.

We can help

VisitEngland provides tourism businesses with a range of free guidance and resources to help increase engagement with the valuable accessible tourism market in the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Toolkit for Businesses. Go to visitengland.org/access

It is important to provide information on the accessibility of your facilities and services and this is a requirement for all scheme participants.

You can provide details of your venue's key accessibility features on your website and supply this information for inclusion on your RatedTrips.com venue listing by completing a new questionnaire produced by VisitEngland (anticipated available from summer 2024).

Today's guests also want detailed and factual descriptions of venue accessibility, in the form of an Accessibility Guide, to empower them to make personal choices.

Participants can book and pay for a Detailed Access Guide with AccessAble to provide robust accessibility information on your venue. To learn more and book either a Guided or On Site Assessment, go to visitengland.youraccessibilityguide.co.uk (not a requirement of scheme participation).



The Waterfront Hotel Southport

Statutory obligations

Minimum entry requirements

- **Public Liability Insurance:** whilst not a statutory requirement, it is a requirement for participation in this scheme. Proprietors may be asked to provide evidence that Public Liability Insurance cover is being maintained and that the requirements are being fulfilled.

Fulfilment of all relevant statutory obligations including but not restricted to:

- **Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Amended 2023:** comply with this order, supply evidence that a written fire risk assessment has been carried out.
- **Portable Appliance Testing (PAT):** electrical appliances should be subject to service and testing in accordance with guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).
- **EICR:** an electrical installation condition report (EICR) on your property will ensure the overall safety of the electrical components of your building. Professionals must perform this essential inspection at least once every five years.
- **Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998:** to comply with regulations to ensure all fittings are maintained and annual gas safety inspections are carried out by a Gas Safe engineer, and certificate is issued and displayed in the accommodation.

- **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (regulations 2022):** comply with these regulations.
- **Food safety/hygiene:** register with the local Environmental Health department.
- **Health and safety:** operate safely with due regard to health and safety legislation.
- **Bunk Bed Regulations:** bunk beds sold in the UK must conform to the current safety regulations (British Safety Standard number BS EN 747:2012 + A1 2015).
- **British Standards** applying to items such as cots, high chairs and play pens
- **Blind cord legislation:** according to the BS EN 13120 regulations, your blinds must have no accessible cords – if they do, they must be fitted with the appropriate child safety devices.
- **Planning:** comply with local planning regulations.
- **Licensing:** comply with all local licensing regulations.
- **Hotel Proprietors Act:** comply with this act.
- **Data Protection Act/General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as of May 2018:** comply with this act/these regulations.
- **The Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008:** comply with these regulations by describing accurately in any advertisement, brochure, or other printed or electronic media, the facilities and services provided.
- **Food allergy and intolerance:** in the UK, food businesses must inform guests if they use any of the 14 allergens as ingredients in the food and drink they provide on menus or verbally.
- **Calorie legislation:** calorie information will need to be displayed on menus at the point when a customer is making their food and drink choices. As well as listing the calories for each food item, menus will also need to include daily recommended calorie needs (for business with 250 employees).
- **Natasha's Law:** where food is freshly prepared, then packaged and displayed before being sold, must have a label listing full ingredients and highlights any of the 14 major allergens it contains.
- **PCI compliance:** the standards of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS). The standard contains a set of requirements designed to increase data security and protect merchants and customers when taking and making payments by debit or credit card.
- **PPL/PRS:** license required where applicable.
- **Single use plastics:** an extension on the ban for customers including plates, trays, cutlery, bowls, balloon sticks and polystyrene boxes for ready to consume food items.
- **Equality Act 2010:** comply with this act. Welcome all guests courteously and without discrimination in relation to gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief. Make 'reasonable' adjustments to improve services for disabled customers.

Safety and security

Minimum entry requirements

- Proprietor and/or staff to be on site and on call to resident guests 24-hours a day. Printed instructions, provided in the bedrooms, for summoning assistance during an emergency at night. If the proprietor lives away from the hotel, it is expected that a member of management or staff sleep on site and that their night-time contact details are clearly advertised in every bedroom.
- A high degree of general safety and security, including information on evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency, to be advertised in every bedroom. Multilingual emergency procedure notices or use of symbols/diagrams clearly displayed in every bedroom.
- Particular attention given to the safety and security of guests and their belongings in car parks, ground floor and annexe bedrooms including external paths and walkways.
- Once registered guests should have access to the hotel at all times.
- In the interests of safety, guests to be escorted to bedrooms if requested.
- The hotel entrance should be clearly identifiable and the doorway illuminated when it is dark. Adequate levels of lighting for safety and comfort in all public areas, including sufficient light on stairways and landings at night.
- A telephone accessible 24 hours a day, unless direct dial telephones provided in each bedroom.
- Adequate measures for the security of guests and their property. Means of securing bedroom doors from inside and out, and a key or key card provided. The issuing of a bedroom key to guests and charging of items to account always done discreetly to ensure guest security.
- Security fittings installed on any window which could be left open and access gained from outside, for example, windows near fire escapes.

Maintenance

Minimum entry requirements

- Buildings, their fixtures, furnishings, fittings, exterior and interior décor maintained in a sound, clean condition and fit for the purpose intended.
- All electrical and gas equipment in good working order and regularly serviced to ensure guests' safety.
- Monitoring procedure in place for reporting of broken/damaged items in guests' bedrooms.

Cleanliness

Minimum entry requirements

- Cleanliness is of paramount importance to guests, so a high standard of cleanliness must be achieved and maintained throughout the property.
- Bathrooms and shower rooms should be clean and smell fresh with particular attention paid to fittings and sanitary ware, plugholes, shower curtains, flooring, mirrors, extractor fans and towels.
- You also need to pay special attention to wherever guests have direct contact - seating, crockery, cutlery, glassware, beds, bedding and linen.
- All bedrooms, bathrooms and public spaces should be cleaned and checked daily to ensure a very high standard of cleanliness.

At 4 and 5 Star levels

At these higher levels, there will be evidence of greater attention to detail and a more diligent approach across all areas of the business; bedrooms, bathrooms, public areas and outside. There will also be evidence of regular deep cleaning.

For more information about your legal obligations as a tourism business owner in England, visit the Pink Book Online at [visitengland.org/pinkbookonline](https://www.visitengland.org/pinkbookonline) The Pink Book gives clear guidance and practical information on the legislation that affects you, including licences, health and safety, employment and taxation



Standards

Hospitality and services

General

Minimum entry requirements

- Guests should be greeted and acknowledged in a friendly, efficient and courteous manner throughout their stay. Staff should have a helpful attitude. All enquiries, requests and reservations, correspondence and complaints from visitors dealt with promptly and politely. All staff demonstrate a positive attitude and willingness to help. Good guest social skills and service, with ample numbers of staff to provide a prompt, courteous and efficient service.

Four Star

- Very good social skills and anticipation of individual guest's needs evident. The ability to personalise the guest experience encouraged.

Five Star

- Excellent social skills and anticipation of individual guest's needs to create unique and memorable experiences.

- Service and efficiency of an exceptional standard without detriment to other service areas at any time delivered by a structured team of staff with a management and supervisory hierarchy.
- Where there is a market need some consideration should be given to having multilingual staff.
- Staff impeccably presented.

Reservations, prices and billing

Minimum entry requirements

There should be a simple and efficient booking service both digitally and via telephone that includes the following:

- Prospective visitors advised (verbally or via the hotel's website) clearly what is included in the prices quoted for accommodation, meals and refreshments, including service charge, taxes and other surcharges.
- Ability to make a prompt and effective reservation during the day and evening. Guests should have access to transparent and easy to find information when booking.

Communication with prospective guests, whether verbal or written, should be prompt, efficient, professional and helpful. A good first impression is critical at all grades.

Therefore:

- The price agreed at the time of booking must not be exceeded.
- All agreed prices must include service charges, taxes and other surcharges where applicable.
- Every endeavour should be made to advise guests in advance about the hotel location, any car parking restrictions and the location of their room if it is in an annexe.
- Other information which may impact on the guests' stay, for example, no smoking or vaping policy, refurbishment work in progress, planned functions/events etc provided. Where house policy dictates that certain facilities need to be pre-booked, for example, spa treatments, dinner etc, these should also be mentioned at the time of booking.
- Where no or limited meal service is provided this should be made clear at the time of booking and on your website to avoid disappointment.
- Full details of the hotel's cancellation policy. Information about charging credit cards for cancellation or changes to the booking is particularly important.
- Information about deposits if required, including details of how the deposit is taken and whether or not it is refundable on cancellation.
- Clear explanation of charges for additional services.
- Information about any unacceptable types of payment, for example, credit cards etc.
- Confirmation provided on request by hotel (not only from third party booking site) by e-mail, text or letter.
- Prospective guests left confident that their booking was recorded accurately.

- As a minimum, name, address, and/or contact telephone number recorded at the time of booking.
- All bookings handled in a friendly and courteous manner, even if there is no dedicated reservations department.
- Provide each guest with printed (can be via email) or clearly written details of payment due and a receipt on request.
- Presentation of accounts ensuring that purchases are clearly detailed.
- The VAT element of the account (where applicable) should be clearly identified.
- Guests should be able to charge all account services to one main account.

Four Star

- Confirmation provided by email/text or letter from hotel (not only from third party booking site).

Five Star

- Ability to make a prompt and effective booking, 24 hours a day (online acceptable out of hours)

Reception and luggage handling

Minimum entry requirements

- As reception is likely to be the guests' first and last point of contact with a hotel, special attention should be given to providing a high standard of customer care.
- Direct guest contact given priority over other reception duties.
- Guests clearly directed to their room and given a brief explanation of location of hotel facilities.
- Assistance with luggage available on request throughout the day and evening.
- Once registered, resident guests have access to the hotel at all times. Proprietor and/or staff to be on site and on call to resident guests 24-hours a day.
- It is acceptable for a front door key or security code to be issued.
- Guests informed of meal times, bar opening times etc.
- Secure short term luggage storage.

Four Star

- Reception services available and at least between 7am and 11pm.
- Consideration should be given to providing 24 hour reception where there is a market need.
- Assistance with luggage offered on arrival and advertised as available for departure.

Five Star

- 24 hour reception to be provided where there is a market need. For example, in city centre hotels.

- Where valet parking offered, guests greeted outside the hotel without delay.
- Guests are shown to their room and given a full orientation of hotel and bedroom facilities.
- Hotel staff taking control of luggage from guest's arrival outside to prompt delivery in bedroom. The same quality of service repeated on departure.

Other reception, concierge and housekeeping services

Minimum entry requirements

- Iron and ironing board available.
- Well-presented travel and/or local information such as details of visitor attractions, taxi firms, banks, churches, railway stations etc available suitable to market needs.

Four Star

- Laundry and possibly dry cleaning service provided and advertised with prices (where a market demand exists).
- Daily media available for example, newspapers available via physical or digital forms.

Five Star

- 24-hour return laundry service.
- A shoe-cleaning service advertised and available.
- A full concierge service provided where appropriate to market. This may vary depending on location and style of the hotel but may include some or all of the following: theatre bookings, sightseeing trips, taxi bookings, valet parking, travel and other requests.

Dining

General

Minimum entry requirements

- Guests informed when they book if dinner is not available or where dinner is served in a restaurant which is separate to the hotel or contracted out.
- Provision is made for a variety of dietary requirements.
- Details regarding allergens to be available.
- There is a facility for guests to charge meals and drinks to their hotel account.
- Individual tables available for each guest or party.

Five Star

- At least one restaurant/outlet open to residents for all meals during hotel opening hours 7 days a week
- Restaurant tables should have sufficient space around them to allow a high degree of privacy and freedom of movement.

Meal service staff

Minimum entry requirements

- Sufficient staff to ensure prompt service at all meals served.
- Staff providing a good standard of customer care and demonstrating good levels of food, beverage and wine product knowledge and service skills.

Four Star

- Unobtrusive, polite and courteous staff providing a very good standard of customer care and demonstrating very good levels of food, beverage and wine product knowledge and service skills.
- Staff demonstrate proactive service, anticipating customer requirements.

Five Star

- A well-structured team with management presence
- Unobtrusive, polite and courteous staff providing an excellent standard of customer care. Highly trained, professional and pro-active staff.
- A personalised welcome and guests escorted to their table in all areas where food and drinks are served.
- Staff demonstrating excellent levels of food, beverage and wine product knowledge and service skills.

Breakfast provision

Minimum entry requirements

- A cooked and continental breakfast provided in a designated eating area on the premises and advertised as such.
- Appropriate breakfast times where there is a specific market need, for example, city centre hotels, airport hotels and rural hotels.
- Breakfast price on display when a room-only rate option is available.
- The price of any breakfast items carrying an additional charge clearly advertised.
- Self-service buffet style is acceptable. However, buffets should be replenished on a regular basis. Where provided, buffets laid out and operated in a practical and customer friendly manner.

Four Star

- Table service advertised and available on request.
- Hot beverages are served at the table but the additional option of high quality vending machines is acceptable.

Five Star

- Table service proactively offered.
- Where there is a buffet, a higher level of assistance is required.

Breakfast menu and range of dishes

Minimum entry requirements

- A good range of hot and cold items, together with a choice of good quality accompaniments. Examples include preserves, ground and decaffeinated coffee, teas, butters and spreads. A set menu can be acceptable.
- Guests offered a choice of how their eggs are cooked to include fried, poached, boiled and scrambled.

Four Star

- A menu detailing the full breakfast range provided.
- A superior range and wider variety of hot and cold items.

Five Star

- A menu, presented to the highest standard, detailing the full breakfast range provided.
- A comprehensive range of excellent quality hot and cold dishes. Examples might include freshly squeezed juices, a variety of fresh fruits in season and ripe, cold meats and cheeses, free range eggs, local specialities, a fish option, range of bakery items and pastries, special dietary produce and a comprehensive range of appetising hot items.
- Where possible, source food and drink products locally. Build up relationships with local producers and traders.
- Menus highlighting local specialities can really help differentiate your offering from that of your competitors.

Dinner provision, menu and range of dishes

Minimum Entry requirements

- Appropriate dinner times where there is a specific market need, for example, city centre hotels, airport hotels and rural hotels.
- All charges, such as VAT, service, and cover charge, clearly identified on the menus.
- Where dinner is not provided this must be clearly communicated to the guest. Hotel should provide further information as to alternative options.
- A choice of substantial hot and cold dishes (a self-service operation for example, carvery or buffet-style, is acceptable). Quality written menus with prices clearly displayed.

Five Star

- Full table service of all courses served to the guest at their table.
- An extensive choice of food.
- A broad range of dishes of outstanding quality.
- Immaculately presented menus.

Alcoholic drink services, licences and wine service

Minimum entry requirements

- A current residential liquor licence or equivalent.
- Staff demonstrate good knowledge of drinks, including wines and spirits.

Four Star

- A very good range of drinks offered.
- An informative and detailed wine list.

Five Star

- Excellent range and quality of drinks offered including cocktails and non-alcoholic drinks
- Staff demonstrate excellent drinks knowledge and service skills. Likely to involve dedicated wine team (sommelier).

Light refreshments, snacks, lunches and afternoon teas

Minimum entry requirements

- Hot and cold drinks available to residents and their guests in the public areas during the day and evening. Guests may be required to order at reception or at the bar. Vending option in the public areas may be acceptable.
- Light refreshments of at least hot and cold drinks and sandwiches available to residents and their guests in the public areas during service times. This service is to be clearly advertised.

Four Star

- Light refreshments and hot and cold snacks available to residents and their guests in the public areas during service times.
- Guests able to order and be served at their table.

Five Star

- Full afternoon tea to be available where there is a market need.
- A superior brasserie/bistro/bar is acceptable for lunches, providing that guests are able to eat in comfort, and order and be served at the table.

Room service provision

Minimum entry requirements

- Optional except in the case of illness.

Four Star

- Room service should be provided and delivered to the room where there is a market need during service hours (including breakfast and dinner). It is acceptable to have a central area where guests can help themselves to a range of food and drink.

Five Star

- 24-hour room service of hot and cold snacks and drinks including alcoholic drinks where there is a market need.
- Guests able to choose from the full dinner menu during restaurant hours.
- For breakfast a wide choice of substantial hot and cold dishes.
- Room size and layout, and delivery method ensures the highest guest dining experience.

Bedrooms

Bedroom provision

Minimum entry requirements

- Minimum of five letting bedrooms.

Size and spaciousness

Minimum entry requirements

All bedrooms should have sufficient space for guests to move easily around the room.

- When we assess bedroom size we take into account the usable space available around furniture and fittings.
- It should be possible to fully open doors and drawers without having to move other furniture.
- Rooms for family occupation need to be significantly larger.
- Easy and convenient use of facilities, for example, use of surfaces without moving tea tray or TV, access to power points etc.

Four Star

- All bedrooms with a higher degree of spaciousness, allowing ample ease of use for guests and considerably exceeding the minimum
- Consideration given to location of bedroom facilities including plug sockets use. This includes TVs being placed at convenient viewing height and visible from the bed and/or seating.
- Consideration given to eating room service meals in comfort

Five Star

- The significant majority of bedrooms very spacious, allowing generous ease of use for movement, comfort, dining and relaxation.

Suites

Minimum entry requirements – Five Star

- A minimum of one permanent luxury suite/superior luxury room available. N.B. A suite consists of at least three separate rooms – bedroom, bathroom and sitting room, all with a door.

Bed size and access

Minimum entry requirements

Minimum bed sizes, including sofa beds and bunks, as follows:

- **Single:** 190cm x 90cm (6ft 3ins x 3ft)
- **Double:** 190cm x 137cm (6ft 3ins x 4ft 6ins). 122cm (4ft) beds to be designated as singles.
- Sofa beds are not acceptable as permanent bed spaces.
- Bunk beds (permanent bed spaces) are acceptable for child use only.
- All beds including supplementary beds (such as z-beds, sofa beds etc) to be of acceptable quality and in good condition. They should have a sound base and sprung interior, foam or similar quality, modern, comfortable mattress.
- Secure headboard or equivalent on all permanent beds.
- Good access to both sides of beds for double occupancy.

Four Star

- A choice of larger sized beds.

Five Star

- Bunk beds are not acceptable.
- Beds for single occupancy to exceed 90cm (3ft) width.
- Beds for double occupancy to be at least 153cm (5ft) in width.

Bedding Requirements

Minimum entry requirements

- Adequate bedding and bed linen provided suitable for the season. Additional bedding available on request.
- Sufficient quantity of linen provided for each guest.
- All beds made daily. Bed linen changed at least once in every week and for each new guest.
- Where feather duvets or pillows are used, a non-allergenic alternative to be available on request.
- A mattress protector provided for each bed. Plastic or rubber mattress protectors are not acceptable except for children's beds.

Heating and temperature control

Minimum entry requirements

- Individually controlled thermostatic heating.
- Supplementary heating provided in rooms on request when heating levels are not within the control of the guest, for example, some central heating systems.

Four Star

- Individually controlled thermostatic heating operable 24-hours.

Five Star

- Air conditioning, mechanical ventilation or ability to cool the room with fresh air that doesn't allow noise or pollutants in the room.

Lighting

Minimum entry requirements

- Bedrooms well lit.
- At least one light controlled from the door.
- Bedside reading light for and controllable by each person, in addition to the light controlled by a switch near the door. However, twin beds may share a central bedside light.
- Lighting specifically provided to illuminate the writing desk/dressing table.

Four Star

- Lighting specifically for the lobby area, wardrobe area, dining area and easy seating.
- Two bedside lights in a twin-bedded room.
- Room lighting controllable from the bedside.

Five Star

- Excellent levels of lighting with a range of separately controllable options

Windows and window coverings

Minimum entry requirements

- At least one window that can be opened safely to provide good levels of direct natural light and ventilation. Air conditioning or mechanical air ventilation provided where windows cannot be opened.
- Windows well fitted, easy to shut and open and remain open. A pole provided to open any Velux-style windows or skylights.
- Rooms without windows are acceptable, but must have air-conditioning and pass all building regulations. The lack of window needs to be clearly communicated to the guest before booking.

- It is acceptable for a bedroom to overlook a large internal atrium. The bedroom should be air-conditioned and naturally illuminated.
- Opaque curtains, blinds or shutters provided on all windows including glass panels to doors, fanlights and skylight windows so that guests have privacy and can exclude any light from outside the room. All window coverings to be properly fitted or hung.
- Curtains should be reasonably substantial – with or without lining. Curtains large enough to draw easily and completely across the width and height of the window.
- In ground floor bedrooms additional privacy provided by means of a net curtain or blind.

Flooring

Minimum entry requirements

- All flooring, carpets, rugs, hard wood flooring etc properly fitted and of an acceptable quality and condition.

Furniture – tables, mirrors and clothes storage

Minimum entry requirements

- Writing table or equivalent such as substantial flat surface or desk providing sufficient free space for practical use with mirror adjacent.
- Lighting adequate for use. Conveniently positioned power sockets at desk height.
- A bedside table or equivalent provided for each person. Twin beds may share a bedside table.
- Wardrobe or clothes hanging space.
- Sufficient good quality hangers (not wire).
- At least one mirror in the bedroom preferably full length and to be close to sockets and/or hairdryer.
- Dedicated area for unpacking luggage.
- At least two mirrors in the bedroom, one of which must be full-length mirror and one at the dressing table area.

Five Star

- A fully fitted or freestanding wardrobe. Open alcoves are not acceptable.
- A generous amount of clothes storage.
- A wide range of high quality hangers provided.
- Illumination inside the wardrobe expected.
- A substantial writing table/equivalent with excellent free space.

Furniture – Seating

Minimum entry requirements

- **Single/Double/Twin** – one easy chair. Where this is the only chair, consideration given for ease of use at the dressing/writing table, or an additional chair provided.

Four Star

- **Double/Twin** – one substantial easy chair with another chair positioned at the writing desk.

Five Star

- **Single** – one substantial easy chair plus an additional chair providing comfortable use at the dressing/writing table.
- **Double/Twin** – two substantial easy chairs plus an additional chair providing comfortable use at the dressing/writing table.

Beverage making facilities

Minimum entry requirements

- Tea/coffee-making facilities available and accessible 24-hours either in bedrooms or in public areas (Self-service/vending option in public areas acceptable).
- Where only room service is provided, the availability of a hospitality tray at no extra charge to be advertised to guests.
- A wider range of hot drinks and snacks likely to be provided, for example, choice of teas, biscuits, and other drinks such as hot chocolate.
- Fresh milk available on request.
- Where applicable, self-service ingredients for making hot drinks should be kept wrapped or in lidded containers.

Five Star

- In-room facilities, where provided, of an excellent standard, for example, chinaware, choice of hot drinks including a range of speciality teas, fresh milk and freshly ground coffee.
- May feature bespoke coffee machines in room.

In-room information

Minimum entry requirements

- Hotel services and facilities advertised in all bedrooms possibly in a folder of room information or via in-room technology e.g, QR codes. This should include the following where applicable (printed or digital):

How to summon assistance in a night-time emergency.

Multilingual instructions or diagram for fire evacuation. Consideration given to providing multi-lingual information materials where relevant to the customer base.

Meal times and menus including room service menu where provided.

Details on connecting to the WiFi.

Local tourist information or a reference to where this is available within the establishment to be included within the room information.

How to use TV, radio and other technology in the room (if not obvious to the guest)

Iron and ironing board advertised as available (if not already provided in the bedroom).

Where Apps are available for service elements such as ordering of newspapers or additional items, such as room service, or booking a spa treatments, full details to be given during check in and information to be available in the room information.

Four Star

- A more comprehensive guest directory.
- Where technology allows, the guest directory likely to be shown on the room TV or a portable device (such as a tablet), including examples of the local visitor attractions, recommended nearby restaurants and public transport information.

Five Star

- Consideration given to multilingual and visually enhanced material.

In-room entertainment

Minimum entry requirements

- Digital TV with remote control available in bedrooms.
- All available channels properly tuned in.
- Televisions in bedrooms can be safely mounted on a wall bracket. Ease of viewing and safety taken into account when positioning television.
- Guests able to watch TV in comfort from both a chair or the bed.

Four Star

- Televisions with generously-sized screens – (proportionate to room size)
- Guests able to watch TV in comfort from both a chair and the bed.

Five Star

- Adoption of the latest innovation in entertainment technologies expected for example, smart TVs, Bluetooth and Chromecast.

General connectivity and telephones

Minimum entry requirements

- Bedroom telephone optional.
- Where not provided, a means of communication with staff in the event of an emergency must be provided, and advertised in the bedroom.
- Telephones, where provided, displaying the hotel telephone number together with the bedroom extension or telephone number.

- Telephones, where provided, with instructions on how to use any additional services such as telephone message service and room-to room calls.
- Where telephones are provided, rate card displayed in bedrooms illustrating typical charges for local, long-distance, international, internet, use of phone cards and connection to mobile phones. Sample call charges required.
- In addition, an explanation of what constitutes a local and long-distance call should be given as well as a clear explanation of peak and off peak times
- Free Wi-Fi and/or internet connection available in all bedrooms and public areas where connectivity allows. A conscious effort to strengthen any weak spots should be evident.

Four Star

- An effective means of internal communication should be provided.

Five Star

- Guests able to call individual hotel departments directly.
- High Speed Broadband available to guests, where connectivity allows.
- Excellent in-room communication technology with best available connectivity and good support to resolve any problems.
- Notepad with pen or pencil provided.

Miscellaneous

Minimum entry requirements

- A drinking tumbler per guest, in clear glass, or scratchless plastic.
- Sufficient and conveniently situated power sockets (including USB chargers) allowing for the safe use of all electrical equipment provided. Power adapters acceptable, but not overloaded.
- A hairdryer provided in every bedroom.

Four Star

- Easily accessible plug sockets to also include continental sockets or adapters, along with USB sockets
- A superior quality hairdryer.

Five Star

- An in-room safe or facility for the storage of valuables.
- An evening housekeeping service provided or on request – possibly including some of the following services: bed turn-down, bins emptied, curtains drawn, towels tidied, room service trays removed.
- May feature a valet tray and umbrella.

Bathrooms

Size and spaciousness

Minimum entry requirements

- All rooms should have sufficient space for guests' comfort and ease of use. Guests should be able to move easily around the room.
- When we assess the size of the bath, shower and WC rooms, we take into account the usable space available around furniture and fittings. For a higher quality grade, rooms will be expected to afford a higher provision of free space together with more generously sized equipment, such as a larger bath, shower and basin.

Provision of en suite

Minimum entry requirements

- All bedrooms to have en suite bathrooms or shower room. All en suites with WC and thermostatically controlled showers, either separate or over the bath.

At 5 star, spaciousness and quality is a key factor.

Equipment

Minimum entry requirements

- En suite bathrooms or shower rooms equipped with:

A mirror with good lighting situated above or adjacent to the washbasin.

Adequate storage, with space for guests' own toiletries.

Soap and soap dish (can be pump action dispenser).

Hook for clothes.

Non-slip surface or mat for use in baths or showers to be available on request.

Towel rail or equivalent sufficient for the number of guests in the room.

Conveniently located electric shaver point, with voltage indicated or adaptor.

Note: bedroom sockets can fulfil this requirement too.

Toilet paper and holder plus spare toilet paper.

A lidded sanitary disposal bin and sanitary bags.

Where a window is fitted, a curtain, blind or shutter to be provided for privacy.

Lighting, heating and ventilation

Minimum entry requirements

- Adequate covered lighting.
- Adequate heating. Note: All bathrooms with an external window require dedicated heating. A heated towel rail is acceptable.
- Adequate ventilation and extraction (window or extractor fan).
- A means of providing guests with additional dry towels on request or a heated towel rail or equivalent.
- Graduated improvements in the context of light intensity, heating and ventilation for example, underfloor heating often the norm at 5 Star.

Towels and toiletries

Minimum entry requirements

- Good sized co-ordinated towels/bathmat of good quality and condition provided for each new guest
- Good quality soap, shampoo and bath/shower gel
- Emergency toiletries such as toothbrush and disposable razor available, possibly for a charge.

Four Star

- A very good range/quality of towels and toiletries, may include face cloths.

Five Star

- A range of towels which includes bath sheets, robes and face cloths of excellent quality and condition.
- A wider range of luxury guest toiletries and bathroom accessories to include, soap, shower gel, shampoo, moisturiser, cotton pads and vanity items.

Public areas

Reception areas and lobby

Minimum entry requirements

- Dedicated reception area with desk, counter or table, unless alternative, well-managed procedures in place to check in guests in lounge or in guest bedroom. This can also include self-check-in as long as staff are on hand to offer assistance.
- Acceptable space and comfort for guests, relative to the number of bedrooms.

Four Star

- As above, usually with a greater amount of space and comfort (including seating) for arriving and departing guests.

Five Star

- A clearly designated reception area within an impressive lobby or foyer or a bespoke check in/out process.

Bar, lounge and sitting areas

Minimum entry requirements

- A bar and/or lounge with adequate comfortable seating for resident guests accessible throughout the day and evening.
- Suitable seating layout and range of furniture appropriate for meeting the market needs of certain hotels, for example, hotels where business meetings take place or where refreshments are offered in the lounge.

Five Star

- A variety of seating styles expected.
- Sitting areas not necessarily all lounges but certainly offering a range of environments.

Other public areas, including corridors and staircases

Minimum entry requirements

- Corridors and stairs in good repair and free from obstruction.
- Adequately lit 24-hours.
- Particular attention given to the maintenance of door handles, numbers, brassware and glass panels.
- Clear, directional signage to bedrooms and reception (where needed).

Four Star

- Corridors normally wide and spacious.

Five Star

- Corridors and staircases wide and spacious allowing freedom of movement for guests and service trolleys.

Lifts

Minimum entry requirements

- A lift is required when there is a guest bedroom more than two floors higher or lower than the ground floor, for example, on the third floor.

Five Star

- It is expected that a lift will be provided to all floors in the main building and assistance with luggage offered.
- A separate lift for hotel services such as luggage, laundry and room service is available.

NB Dispensation is possible in older buildings and/or architecturally listed buildings where it can be shown that fitting a lift is impractical or unacceptable to planning authorities.

Communication

Minimum entry requirements

- A telephone accessible 24-hours a day unless direct dial in-room facilities are provided (payphones, house phones or mobile handsets).
- Free Wi-Fi available in public areas for the use of email checking and light internet browsing. Charges are acceptable for downloading of music, films and other heavy internet usage.

Public area WCs

Minimum entry requirements

Where open to non-residents:

- A toilet facility conveniently situated to cater for public areas.
- All toilets well maintained, regularly cleaned, checked and adequately ventilated.
- The following facilities provided as a minimum: washbasin with soap, efficient hand-drying facilities, covered light, ample mirrors, hook on door, lidded sanitary bin and bags, toilet roll holder with toilet paper.

Four Star

- Separated facilities for Men, Women or Unisex

Five Star

- Spacious, luxurious and numerous (in the context of the size of the operation). Often with refinements such as individual hand towels and accessories, serviced regularly.

External areas (where applicable)

Minimum entry requirements

- External areas include the appearance of the building, signage, grounds and gardens, pathways, drives and any car parking, including external lighting, marked bays and borders.
- All areas to be maintained in sound condition and must be fit for the purpose intended; to include EV charging points, where provided.

Annexes (where applicable)

Minimum entry requirements

- Where a hotel has an annexe, the facilities provided will be taken into account when determining the overall grade of the hotel.
- Annexe accommodation may be situated in a separate unit or units within the hotel grounds or within easy walking distance of the main building. Paths or passageways to the annexe must be in good condition, well surfaced and adequately lit.

Five Star

- Undercover access to any accommodation separate to the main building. This could include chauffeured transport or escort with umbrella provided.

Code of conduct

All Quality Scheme participants must agree to comply with the following 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. Details of charges for additional services/facilities should also be made clear, for example breakfast, leisure etc.
- To anticipate the needs of disabled guests and make reasonable adjustments to improve the premises and business practices.
- To allow guests to view the accommodation prior to booking if requested.
- At the time of booking:
 - To clearly describe the cancellation policy to guests such as 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.
 - To make clear to guests if the accommodation offered is in an unconnected annexe or similar, and to indicate the location of such accommodation and any difference in comfort and/or amenities from accommodation in the establishment.

On arrival:

- To welcome all guests courteously and without discrimination in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010).

During the stay:

- To maintain standards of guest care, cleanliness and service appropriate to the type of establishment.
- 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.

On departure:

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

General:

- To ensure the accommodation is prepared for the arrival of guests at all times when the establishment 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 have a complaints handling procedure in place to deal promptly and fairly with all guest complaints.
- To hold current public liability insurance and to comply with all relevant statutory obligations including legislation applicable to fire, health and safety, planning and food safety.
- To allow VisitEngland representatives reasonable access to the establishment, 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.
- When a business is sold or ceases to trade, every effort should be made to inform VisitEngland.



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