



VisitEngland™



SELF CATERING ACCOMMODATION

VisitEngland's Quality Standards for Self Catering Accommodation



Welcome to the VisitEngland Quality Standards for Self Catering

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 or accreditation 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

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Niver Dew Cottage

Quality is the key

VisitEngland understands that quality is the key to success within the modern hospitality industry. In order for the self catering 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 self catering scheme you will have a 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 and agree a rating of Three Stars to Five Stars, or a Quality Assessed rating. 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.

Management efficiency

Seamless and efficient service requires thought and planning. This starts with your website, the arrangements for guests gaining access to a property, the ability to obtain assistance in an emergency and the checkout procedures.

Bedrooms and bathrooms

Whatever the style or concept of the bedrooms and bathrooms, both quality and comfort are 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.



Serena

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
- Public Areas
- Kitchen Areas including any utility rooms

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 mark** – Poor
- **2 marks** – Disappointing
- **3 marks** – Good
- **4 marks** – Very Good
- **5 marks** – Excellent

After your visit you will receive a detailed written report on the customer experience with individual scores for each criteria. Positive aspects of your business will be outlined as well as areas for improvement. This will give you a benchmark for maintaining the quality of your services and facilities and will help you to prioritise and plan future developments to increase standards and boost your bottom line.

Hints and tips

- No need to follow the crowd, don't be afraid to do things your way. For example, locally sourced toiletries can be of equal quality to national brands.

Remember that first impressions matter. Paying attention to the following critical areas will pay dividends:

- Clean and tidy parking areas
- Well-tended grounds and gardens
- A smooth arrival procedure – whether in person or via a key safe
- Fresh flowers
- The final touches in bedrooms and bathrooms with care taken over the presentation of bedding, towels and toiletries.
- Be objective and self-critical when thinking about quality and make sure your description of your business is accurate. 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 use the kitchen equipment in order to experience what you are offering your guests.

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)
- The relevant standard of quality in the five critical areas:
 - Cleanliness
 - Bedrooms
 - Bathrooms
 - Public Areas
 - Kitchen Area including any utility areas

The Star rating level across all of these five areas must be met in order to achieve a particular Star rating. The remaining areas are: exterior, management efficiency and any additional facilities such as leisure, recreation, reception or on site shop facilities (particularly for larger complexes).

Overall quality bands

	THREE STAR	FOUR STAR	FIVE STAR
Overall	60%-74%	75%-86%	87%-100%
Cleanliness	65%	80%	90%
Public areas	60%	75%	87%
Bedrooms	60%	75%	87%
Bathrooms	60%	75%	87%
Kitchens	60%	75%	87%

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 self catering accommodation 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 Gold 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 a visit.
- 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.

Accolades

VisitEngland's Gold Award

VisitEngland's unique Gold award is given in recognition of exceptional quality. This award helps customers find those special places where the owner and staff go the extra mile, whatever the size, style or Star rating of the business.

In order to achieve an award, you will need to demonstrate consistent levels of high quality in the five key areas identified by consumers as very important:

- Cleanliness
- Bedrooms
- Bathrooms
- Public Areas
- Kitchen

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

A Gold award can give a significant marketing advantage. The logos can be displayed on websites and in other forms of advertising. Certificates are provided for display within the property and exterior signage is also available.



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 decisions 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 travellers 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).



Statutory obligations

- **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.
- **Accessibility information:** whilst not a statutory requirement specifically, it is a requirement for participation in this scheme. 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).

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 Standards:** this applies 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 1956:** 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.
- **Natasha's Law:** where food is freshly prepared, then packaged and displayed before being sold, it must have a label listing full ingredients and highlight 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.
- **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 sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, age (this applies to those aged 18 or above). Make 'reasonable' adjustments to improve services for disabled customers.
- For more information about your legal obligations as a tourism business owner in England, visit the Pink Book Online at 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.



Mill Granary Cottages

Standards

Booking and prices

- Make clear to guests exactly what is included in the prices quoted for the property, including service charge, taxes and other surcharges, for example, electricity, fuel, towels, cots etc. Where VAT is applicable, all prices to be shown inclusive of VAT at standard rate.
- Full details of accommodation, including sleeping arrangements and bathroom (whether it is equipped with a bath or shower) provided on the website or printed form in advance of booking. Where sleeping accommodation is provided by means of bed settees, wall beds, 'Z' beds, camp beds, etc, in addition to the bedroom accommodation, the type, size and number of bed spaces to be clearly indicated.
- Details of any in-house policies, for example, no smoking/vaping, no pets etc, must be communicated at the time of booking, for example, clearly stated on website. If requested, allow guests to see the property before booking (if property is occupied this may not be possible).
- Guests should have access to a website showing a floor plan/360 degree tour etc, with arrangements for access communicated pre-arrival.

- Prospective guests should be made aware, prior to booking, of charges for additional services or facilities available, including cancellation terms, housekeeping and/or breakage deposits.
- Guests advised at the time of booking, or subsequently, in the event of any change in booking details.
- Prices quoted at the time of booking to include VAT and cannot be not exceeded.
- Guests provided with details of payment due and a receipt to be provided.

The following information to be readily available prior to booking:

- Car parking arrangements should be highlighted at the booking stage and in the case of no parking being available, this should be clearly stated.
- Arrangements for pets if accepted.
- Distance of unit from nearest shop(s), etc.
- Nature of water supply, if not mains (water supply must meet all statutory regulations for drinking water).
- A map and/or directions showing the location of the unit on booking or provided on website.
- Distance of unit from nearest public transport.

Exterior

Appearance

- First impressions are very important. Whatever the size of the property or the location, guests will be impressed if, on arrival, the property looks well cared for.
- Any signage should be prominent, well-maintained and cleaned regularly. Some owners prefer not to advertise that their property is let out, in which case the name or number of the property should be clearly visible from the road or the approach to the property. First-time guests will appreciate reassurance that they have arrived at their destination.
- Whatever the location of the property, it should look welcoming, with clean paintwork and windows, well-tended gardens all year-round and evidence of little extra touches, such as hanging baskets or window boxes to make it stand out from other properties in the road or area.
- Wherever possible refuse bins or oil tanks should be screened.
- Ensure any flower beds, porches, patio or parking area are completely litter free when guests arrive.
- Assessors will award the highest scores in this area for properties where the owners' attention to detail and maintenance is exceptional and where the overall presentation of the exterior of the property suggests to guests they will not be disappointed when they go inside.

Grounds, gardens and parking

- Gardens and/or open areas that are part of the unit should be maintained in good order, whether for the sole use of the property or shared.
- Where gardens are available then garden furniture should be provided.
- If the property has ancillary areas, the facilities provided will be considered in the assessment of the establishment, where under the control of the operator. They should be well surfaced, in good condition and adequately lit.
- Parking is a key consideration for guests that arrive by car. If parking is not available off-road, assessors will review the advice and steps taken by the property owner to assist guests in finding a parking space on their arrival and on their return to the property each day.
- On-site parking needs to be clearly marked to reduce stress for guests when they arrive and well-lit for late arrivals in the dark.
- Where an EV charging point is provided, this will attract the highest score for the parking element.
- Assessors will award the highest scores for immaculate gardens and grounds that really 'wow' guests on arrival, whatever the size of the plot or the location.
- If a property has no grounds, garden or parking, then assessors will not score this section, but mark as not applicable.

Privacy, peace and quiet

Many customers choose self-catering accommodation instead of serviced accommodation as they want to relax and enjoy the company of their friends or family, without being disturbed by neighbours.

- Any outside space for guests' use should be screened from adjoining/neighbouring properties, where possible.
- In city centre locations, this is inevitably more difficult, but guests will appreciate the provision of double or triple glazing to reduce traffic noise, along with good blackout curtains or blinds and other measures to allow guests to enjoy a good night's sleep and minimal disturbance from the occupants of neighbouring properties. Air conditioning might even be installed in locations where opening windows at night is not conducive to a good night's sleep.
- Assessors will reserve the highest scores in this section for those properties where the guests' privacy is undisputable and there is minimal risk of disturbance from neighbouring properties or unwelcome traffic noise. The steps taken by property owners to minimise noise or light intrusion will be taken into account in the scoring.

Cleanliness

- Cleanliness is of paramount importance to guests, so a high standard of cleanliness must be maintained throughout the property, whatever the Star rating.
- Particular attention must be given to kitchens, bathrooms, shower rooms and toilets and items involving direct contact with guests, such as bedding, linen, towels, baths, showers, washbasins, WCs, flooring, seating, crockery, cutlery, glassware, kitchen utensils and other equipment.
- It is the proprietor's responsibility to ensure that all properties are thoroughly cleaned throughout, before each new let, irrespective of whether the guests have cleaned it prior to departure. Any broken or damaged items should be replaced.

Management efficiency

Welcome and arrival procedures

The assessor will ask questions about your check-in procedures and guest information provided prior to arrival. The highest scores will be reserved for those that demonstrate an excellent understanding of guests' needs, with a level of personalisation aiming for every guest to get the most out of their stay, going home with some lasting memories and experiences to talk about, relaxed and refreshed from their holiday.

House manuals and local information

To award the highest score in this section, the assessor will be looking for well-indexed information on how everything works in the property plus a range of local information.

Quality back-up in the event of a problem

To award the highest score in this section, the assessor will be looking for evidence of the highest level of management response to any problems (whether real or perceived) that guests may experience during their stay. Online reviews will be taken into account and any comments in the guest book.

Public areas

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

- Dining table and comfortable seating facilities for the maximum number of guests.
- Where there is a functional open fireplace, a fireguard, poker, hearth brush, tongs, shovel, fuel container and ashes bucket provided.
- Easy chair and/or sofa seats provided, sufficient for the maximum number of advertised guests.
- A TV to be provided where a TV signal is available. Where terrestrial TV channels are not available, every effort should be made to provide an alternative such as satellite TV.

Furniture, furnishing and fittings

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

- Where there is sleeping accommodation in living areas, there must be adequate storage for bedding and guests' clothes.

Sofa beds

Sofa beds may be counted in the maximum number of sleepers up to Three Stars.

Four Star

- At Four Stars any sofa beds in the property (bedrooms or public area) must not be counted in maximum number of sleepers in any description on any website. Any search results should not include the sleepers accommodated on sofa beds. They can, however, be mentioned in descriptions.

Five Star

- At Five Stars any sofa beds must not be counted in maximum number of sleepers (whether in bedrooms or public areas) and must not be mentioned in any descriptions on any websites. A sofa bed may be left in the property, but if not as comfortable as a regular sofa, the 'Comfort' score may be reduced.

Heating, lighting and ventilation

- Adequate means of heating must be available at all times and guests must be able to override a time switch for the heating and hot water. If storage heaters are the means of heating the property, additional supplementary heaters must be provided. Free standing paraffin and Calor gas heaters are not acceptable. Coin meters not acceptable.
- All living room areas to have at least one window opening directly into the open air.

Bedrooms

Furniture, furnishing and fittings

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

- A bedside table/shelf and light for each permanent bed, including bunk beds (twin beds may share a table and light and the top bunk should only have a shelf and a light where it is safe to provide this).
- A dressing table (or equivalent) with mirror, wardrobe or clothes hanging rail/space and adequate drawer space ideally in each bedroom (shelf space is an acceptable alternative to drawers) to be provided.
- Sufficient hangers per person. Wire hangers are not acceptable.
- A hairdryer must be provided.

Five Star

- A hairdryer is provided in every bedroom (except children's rooms).

Beds and bedding

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

Bed sizes – minimum permitted sizes –

- **Children's beds** 183cm x 76cm (6ft x 2ft 6ins)
- **Single beds** for adults 183cm x 90cm (6ft x 3ft)
- **Double beds** 183cm x 135cm (6ft x 4ft 6ins)
- At least one bed for adults which is not a bunk bed.
- A mattress protector or under blanket fitted to all beds (plastic or rubber mattress protectors are not acceptable for normal use. Where a rubber cover is provided for children, it should be as an optional extra in addition to the normal mattress protector). Pillow protectors also required.
- All beds (excluding sofa beds) should be made up on arrival with freshly laundered linen and fresh linen should be supplied (at least weekly) for guests that stay more than one week.
- Spare linen and bedding available on request. Sheets must be poly-cotton or cotton.
- Linen must be included in the rental fee.
- Where a bathroom is accessed via a bedroom (not including en suites), then these units must be designated, and advertised, as only being suitable for single family occupation.
- Where a bedroom is accessed via another bedroom, then this must be clearly advertised.

Four Star

- All advertised sleeping spaces are to be in bedrooms only (where studio flats are clearly advertised as such, an exemption will be made to this).

Five Star

- All beds to be full sized proper beds including beds for children – so single minimum is 183cm x 90cm (6ft x 3ft) (exclude 'Z' beds used on a temporary basis for children only). Larger and over sized beds are normally featured where space permits.

Bed access

- Where there is only access to one side of a double bed either through space limitations or due to bed design (cabin style), a maximum rating of Four Star can be awarded and guests must be made aware at the time of booking.

Galleried bedrooms

- Where a galleried bedroom is provided, any rating can be achieved if the quality is of a suitable standard, and this is clearly advertised prior to booking..

Heating, lighting and ventilation

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

- Means of heating the bedroom must be available at all times, which means guests should be able to override a time switch. If storage heaters are the main means of heating, freestanding electric heaters should be available to supplement the storage heating.
- All bedrooms to have at least one window opening directly into the open air, windows to have opaque curtains, blinds or shutters.

Bathrooms and WCs

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

- All units to have at least one bathroom and WC for every six guests. The bathroom to be equipped with a bath or shower, bathmat, towel rail (pegs and hooks are not acceptable), shelf or flat surface and wash basin. Where the base of the bath or shower is not anti-slip then a non-slip mat must be available. Soap dish to be provided in showers.
- Where no shower is available this must be clearly advertised.
- All units to have at least one WC equipped with a full toilet roll and holder, toilet brush and disposal bin with sanitary bags or a lidded bin.
- All windows to have opaque curtains, blinds or shutters (glass doors to bathrooms and WCs must also have opaque curtain(s) or blind(s)).
- Heating to be provided in all bathrooms. A heated towel rail is acceptable. Heated bulbs are discouraged.
- A means to provide hot water available at all times (such as, ability for guests to turn on boiler or immersion at any time).
- A lock or bolt to be provided on all bathrooms/WC doors, including en suites.
- Shaver point adjacent to the mirror, preferably with light. An adapter elsewhere in the unit is an acceptable alternative, providing it can be used close to a mirror.
- Where three or more guests are accommodated a shower must be available. This must be hands-free but can be fitted over a bath for example, mixer tap.
- Towels - (one hand and one bath towel per guest) to be provided at no extra cost.

Four Star

- Extra WC and washbasin (which may be in another bath/shower room) to be provided if the unit sleeps five or more.

Five Star

- All units to have at least one bathroom with bath/shower, WC and basin for every four guests. Ratio to be maintained if the property sleeps more than four guests. If no bath in the unit, showers should be of exceptional quality and the shower room spacious with top quality fittings, and this must be clearly highlighted in pre-booking information.
- There must be a means of drying towels in the bathroom all year round (for example, towel rail with electric element).

Kitchen

Minimum entry requirements (Three Star)

- A cooker with an oven, with at least two shelves, a grill and at least four boiling rings that may be used simultaneously with the oven or grill. If two guests only are accommodated, then two boiling rings plus oven and grill must be provided. For any larger numbers such as, twelve or more, accommodated, it is anticipated that additional cooking facilities will be provided. A microwave is an acceptable alternative for one boiling ring. A combination microwave (oven, grill and microwave) is acceptable as a grill or oven, provided that a three-ring hob is also available separately.
- Microwave oven to be provided, and microwave cookware or compatible crockery.
- A refrigerator with an ice making compartment (unless a freezer is also provided). Larder fridges are not acceptable if no freezer is provided.
- A sink equipped with a draining board, dish drying rack, hot water and cold drinking water supply to be provided.
- At least one hygienic work surface.
- A covered waste disposal bin to be provided, with liner.
- A fire blanket to be readily available. This should be between the cooker and the door, and wall mounted. Storage in a cupboard or over the cooker is not acceptable. It could be sited outside the kitchen provided it is quickly and easily accessible (further advice can be sought from your local fire prevention officer).
- Adequate space for storage of guests' food items.
- Appropriate cleaning equipment provided.

Four Star

- If a washing machine is not provided, or access to a washing machine is not available, this must be clearly highlighted in all pre-arrival information.
- Access to a freezer (not just a 3* icebox within a fridge), but it could be in a shed/garage etc. Assessors will use their judgement on appropriate size, depending on the occupancy of the unit. Dispensations may be considered if the property sleeps up to four guests, as long as the lack of a freezer is clearly highlighted in pre-booking information. Access to a shared freezer would be acceptable.

Five Star

- Freezer provided within the unit.
- Dishwasher provided within the unit (consider size for the number the unit accommodates).
- If a washing machine is not provided, this must be clearly highlighted in all pre-arrival information.

ITEMS	NOTES	HIGHER STAR RATINGS
Matching crockery and cutlery	Sufficient for number of guests unit sleeps. Extra if dishwasher in unit. Plenty of teaspoons essential, nothing chipped or cracked. Egg cups should be included	Greater range of items, for example, different sizes of plates and bowls and mugs/cups and saucers. Not essential to offer cups and saucers but aim for very good quality and range. Guests will expect small knives and forks and soup spoons at higher Star ratings.
Glassware	At least tumblers and wine glasses. A water jug might be appreciated.	Possibly champagne flutes or greater range and quality of glasses to suit target market.
Serving dishes	To suit target market – possibly salad bowl, platter, fruit bowl, bread basket etc. Consider small containers/dishes for serving crisps and nuts.	Greater range and quality expected at higher levels.
Teapot, milk jug and container for sugar. Condiments (salt and pepper)	Cafetiere or coffee maker might be included, depending on target market.	At higher Star ratings guests may expect different sizes of teapots, cafetieres and jugs.
Useful containers for bread, items etc.	Some airtight lidded plastic in different sizes worth including, especially if can go through dishwasher.	
Range of kitchen utensils	for example, tin opener, potato peeler, grater, fish slice or similar, potato masher, ladle, kitchen scissors, wooden spoons, whisk etc.	At higher Star ratings more gadgets would be expected, for example, food processor, bread mixer, pasta maker, electric whisk etc, and pestle and mortar.
Range of kitchen bowls, measuring jugs etc.	Kitchen scales should be considered, depending on target market.	At higher Star ratings, guests may expect bakery items, such as cake tins, cooling racks, rolling pin, cutters, pie dishes, casserole dish etc.
Range of saucepans (including one non-stick) and at least one frying pan	Ensure adequate provision of large saucepans and frying pans if unit takes larger groups. Omelette pan might be appreciated.	Ensure frying pans in very good condition.

ITEMS	NOTES	HIGHER STAR RATINGS
Facility to dry clothes (airer or clothes line with pegs)	Plastic/wicker laundry basket might be appreciated	
Basic supply of cleaning materials, washing-up liquid, toilet roll for each WC	Guests might appreciate starter supply of dishwasher powder/tablets.	At higher Star ratings, operators might consider leaving kitchen roll, foil, cling film etc.
Tablecloth or place mats, as appropriate	Consider plastic cloth(s) for dining table if welcome families.	Linen/cloth napkins may be appreciated by some guests
<p>Additional Items :- Corkscrew and bottle opener, tray(s), serving spoons, bread knife, chopping board(s), bread board, roasting tin(s) and other oven-proof tray(s) or dishes, electric kettle, electric toaster, ice cube tray (unless icemaking unit in fridge/freezer), appropriate cleaning equipment such as a mop and bucket, iron and ironing board, oven glove or mitts, supply of clean tea towels, torch(es), washing up bowl with supplies, door mat at exterior door(s).</p>		

Additional facilities

For example: laundry, recreation or leisure facilities for example, hot tub, reception, shop, bar, restaurant facilities. None of these are required, but where they are provided, their quality and condition will form part of the quality assessment.

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, 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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