



# Say *Yes* to Welcoming Visitors

**The Island Ambassador Training programme**





In a normal year the Isle of Wight welcomes 2.6 million visitors, they spend upwards of £330 million on the Island, that excludes the ferry part of their travel. Visitors to the Island are the life-blood of our economy and it is always great to welcome them here. We are lucky to live, work and play here and to call the Island home, for our visitors this could be their 1st time or their 50th time here, but the welcome and the service we deliver should never change.

So welcome to this Isle of Wight Tourism Ambassador course today, where you will be given some information that you perhaps didn't know, some I am sure you already know, along with some tips and techniques about that overall island welcome that we want to share, everyone is welcome on the Isle of Wight.

By the end of this session today, you will be an Isle of Wight Tourism Ambassador and I hope you will be proud to tell everyone that.

Kind Regards

Will

**Will Myles**  
**Managing Director**  
**Visit Isle of Wight**

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# Welcome to the Isle of Wight



More and more people are choosing to holiday in Britain and on the Isle of Wight, we have a great opportunity to attract visitors by providing an outstanding experience.

The Isle of Wight has an area of just 147 square miles. It measures 23 miles from The Needles in the west to Bembridge in the east, and 13 miles north to south, from Cowes to St Catherine's Point. The short ferry crossing from the mainland adds to the excitement of visiting the Island. Your holiday starts as soon as you step on board.

There is a magnificent 60-mile coastline, with the Solent to the north and the English Channel to the south. This features spectacular chalk and sandstone cliffs, award-winning beaches and traditional seaside resorts where local families still fish, rent deckchairs and serve seafood. The Island's coast offers endless opportunities for sailing and other watersports.

The Isle of Wight is only one of 7 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the UK. Designated in June 2019. UNESCO Biosphere Reserves are very special places with world class high quality natural environments. Half of the Island is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Inland, visitors can find rolling hills, river valleys, fascinating towns and pretty villages. They can also explore our rich heritage, walk, cycle or ride through stunning scenery, and visit some amazing attractions.

Nowhere in Britain hosts events quite like the Island and with a vibrant local community, a wide range of high quality accommodation, lively pubs and restaurants, excellent local produce and great sports facilities, it's the perfect holiday venue.

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Isle of  
Wight

# 1

## Welcoming visitors to the Island

### Introduction

Tourism is a people industry. Every time someone visits your organisation, gets into your taxi, boards a bus, comes into the pub, asks for an ice-cream or comes to enjoy a cup of tea and a scone, the welcome and quality of service they experience will strongly influence the memories they take away. And will ensure they are keen to return and recommend your organisation and the Isle of Wight to others.

Excellent customer service is an essential element in attracting and retaining customers – and for the future success of the Island. Visitors are much more likely to share information about their service interactions through social media and review sites so it's important to exceed expectations and present the Isle of Wight in a passionate and inspiring way.

Taking part in the Isle of Wight Tourism Ambassador Programme will enable you to work with others to review and develop your customer service skills and your knowledge of the Island. This participant's guide is for you to use during the session and keep for future reference – you will be an Isle of Wight Tourism Ambassador.



## Why are we here?

**The Isle of Wight Tourism Ambassador programme will help you to:**

- Appreciate your role in helping visitors enjoy the Island experience
- Find out more about what the Island has to offer
- Identify who visits the Isle of Wight and their needs and expectations
- Present accurate information about the Isle of Wight with passion and enthusiasm
- Deliver excellent service to customers on a consistent basis
- Identify sources of information available to visitors and key messaging about the Island

## What do you want to achieve?

**Write down what you would like to achieve today.**

## Your experience of customer service

**Give a specific example of excellent customer service that you have received recently.**

What impressed you? What impact did the service have on you?

**Give a specific example of poor customer service that you have received recently.**

What irritated you? What impact did the service have on you?

## How does the Isle of Wight compare?

In your opinion, which three countries in the world provide the best customer service?

**1:**

**2:**

**3:**

How do you think that the Isle of Wight compares with the best in the world in terms of customer service?



## Who benefits from excellent service?

How do the following benefit from the delivery of excellent customer service?

Your customers:

Your organisation:

You:

The Isle of Wight:

## Being an Ambassador for the Isle of Wight

The Island is a great place to live, work and visit. So as well as providing first-class service, it is important for everyone who meets visitors to act as an ambassador for the Isle of Wight.

### Everyone needs to:

- Enhance the visitor experience through excellent destination and product knowledge
- Show enthusiasm for, and promote, the wide range of opportunities throughout the Island
- Encourage repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations



## Communicating your passion for the Isle of Wight

### A great place to visit

The Isle of Wight has something for everyone, whether they are looking for a day trip, a relaxing short break, a fun-filled family holiday or high-adrenaline activity. It is also one of the UK's warmest and sunniest places. The Island covers an area of 147 square miles, and measures 23 miles from west to east and 13 miles from north to south.



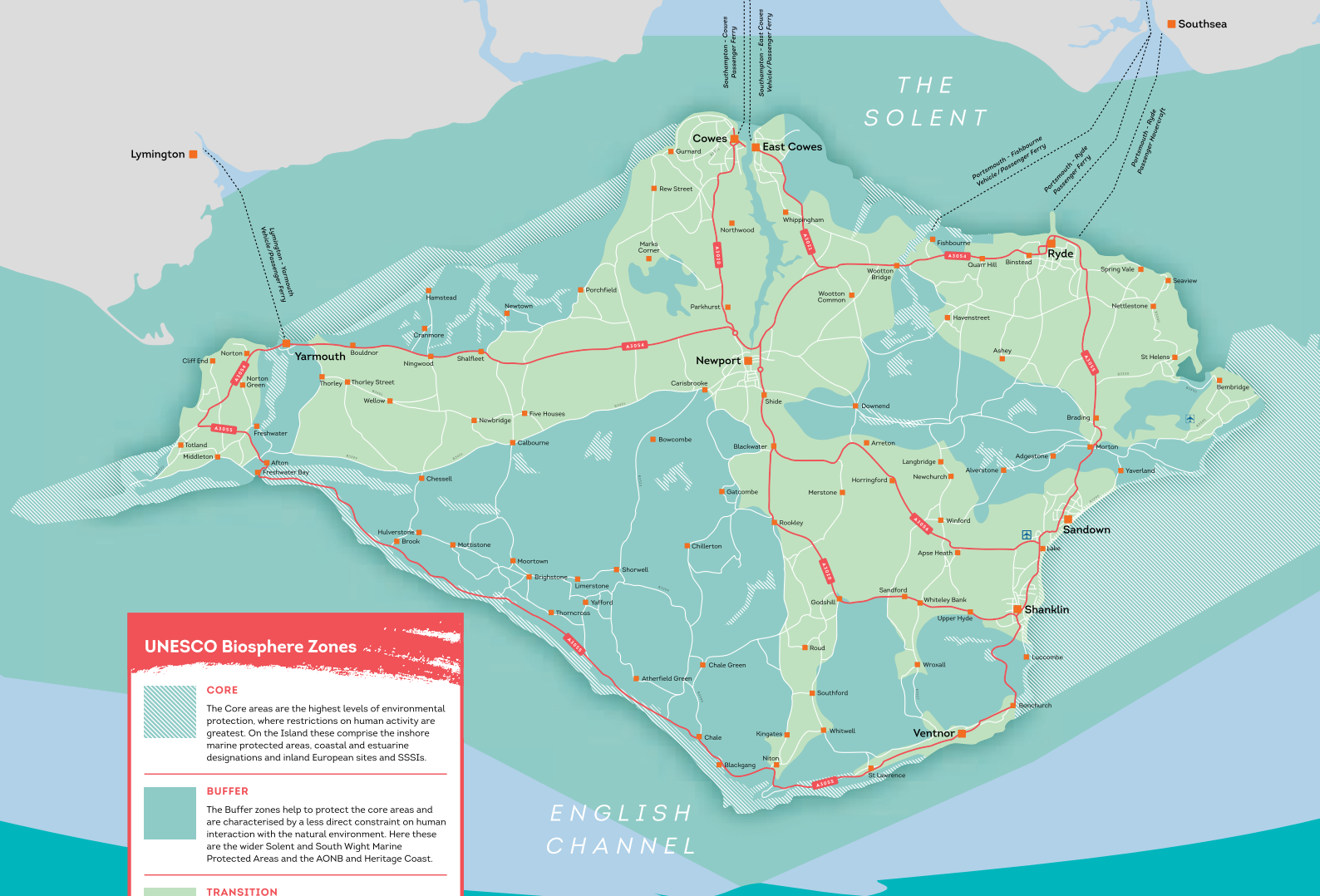
The Island has a stunning coastline, including 30 miles of Heritage Coast, delightful seaside resorts, spectacular cliffs and 14 award-winning beaches. It is a perfect destination for watersports enthusiasts and is known as the home of yachting. The Isle of Wight is only one of 7 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the UK and more than half the Island is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there are river valleys, meadows, forest, downland and 500 miles of public footpaths and bridleways – ideal for those who enjoy walking, cycling and riding.

Visitors can explore a rich heritage – from dinosaur remains to castles and a royal palace, historic fortifications to fine manor houses. There is also an amazing range of attractions including museums and galleries, piers, theme and adventure parks, gardens and animal sanctuaries. The island plays host to an array of events each year. From small village fetes, large scale Festivals and on the water sailing regattas bringing thousands of visitors to enjoy the islands unique charm. Over 1,000 local, national and international festivals and other events are held each year, including the world-famous Cowes Week and the Isle of Wight Festival to name but two.

The Island offers visitors a huge variety of accommodation, food and drink to suit all tastes and budgets, from traditional seaside hotels to country pubs, award-winning restaurants to holiday parks with extensive leisure facilities.

Approximately 2.6 million visitors are attracted to the Isle of Wight each year, spending over £330 million. The visitor economy supports one in four of all jobs on the Island and the economic impact is worth nearly £500 million.





**UNESCO Biosphere Zones**

**CORE**  
 The Core areas are the highest levels of environmental protection, where restrictions on human activity are greatest. On the Island these comprise the inshore marine protected areas, coastal and estuarine designations and inland European sites and SSSIs.

**BUFFER**  
 The Buffer zones help to protect the core areas and are characterised by a less direct constraint on human interaction with the natural environment. Here these are the wider Solent and South Wight Marine Protected Areas and the AONB and Heritage Coast.

**TRANSITION**  
 The Transition zones incorporate all of the main centres of human population and infrastructure as well as more intensively farmed rural areas.

# Isle of Wight UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The island has over 500 miles of well-maintained and signposted footpaths and bridleways.

## DARK SKIES

In places with low light pollution millions of stars are revealed at night in what are termed 'dark skies'. The Isle of Wight has some of the best Dark Skies in England.

## HIDDEN TREASURES

The Isle of Wight is full of interesting and little known treasures. It would take several lifetimes to discover them all.

## WILDLIFE

The Isle of Wight is widely recognised as an important wildlife haven. It is a stronghold for the red squirrel thanks to the Solent preventing grey squirrels invading.

## COAST

Surrounded by water, the coast and sea have hugely influenced the landscape of the Isle of Wight.

## ESTUARIES

There are five main estuaries on the Isle of Wight, three of which are found in the area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).

## LANDSCAPE

The present day beauty of the island's Landscapes is the legacy of a complex relationship between the natural environment and the human activity of its inhabitants.

## LOCAL PRODUCE

The island is one of the sunniest places in Britain and its varied landscapes, geology and sea breezes mean that it produces a rich abundance of local food and drink.

## HISTORY

Humans have lived on the Isle of Wight for many thousands of years, shaping the landscape and leaving many signs of their activities.

## FARMING

The Isle of Wight has long been an agricultural island, growing food and produce for export.



## A fascinating history

The Isle of Wight was formed at the end of the last Ice Age. A rise in global sea levels flooded the former river valley of the Solent to the north and the future English Channel to the south. This cut Wight off from the island of Britain and the Continental landmass.

The Island is renowned as one of Europe's finest sites for dinosaur remains. They date back 120 million years and can be found together with fossilised trees in the old yellow, brown and grey rocks exposed in the bays of Compton, Brook and Brighstone. Giant casts of dinosaur footprints in stone are a famous feature at Hanover Point. Dinosaur Isle in Sandown is a spectacular building that gives visitors an opportunity to meet life-sized models of the Island's five famous dinosaurs and skeletons that have been found by fossil hunters.

The Island is rich in Stone and Bronze Age remains. Overlooking Freshwater Bay is an earthen long barrow (an ancient tomb) from the Stone Age, and above the village of Mottistone is a great stone pillar, the Longstone. Bronze Age islanders crowned their hilltops with bold, round burial mounds to honour dead leaders.

During Roman times, the Island was known as Vectis. It was invaded by a Roman legion commanded by Vespasian in the first century AD and the remains of Roman villas can still be seen by today's visitors.

In 534, Cerdic and his son Cynric invaded and conquered the island, and it became a Jutish kingdom. In 661 it was invaded again by Wulfhere of Mercia and in the 9th and 10th centuries by Viking raiders.

In the Domesday book of 1086 the Island's name is Wit. After the Norman Conquest, the title of Lord of the Isle of Wight was created and William Fitz-Osborne became the first to hold the title. It was sold to Edward I in 1293. Henry VIII developed fortifications at Yarmouth, Cowes, East Cowes and Sandown. In 1545 French troops landed on the southern coast of the Isle of Wight and were decisively defeated by the local militia in the Battle of Bonchurch.

## Discovering the Island's heritage

Identify the heritage properties described below.

- 1 [redacted] is best known as a prison for King Charles I and for its donkeys. There has been a fortress on the site since at least Saxon times, but construction of the present building began in about 1100. Today it is an English Heritage property where visitors can enjoy the tranquil chapel, the museum and the Princess Beatrice Garden.
- 2 [redacted] is one of the finest Roman archaeological sites in the UK. The award-winning exhibition and visitor centre offers a unique insight into Roman life in Britain, from beautifully preserved mosaic floors to an extensive collection of Roman archaeology, including coins, pottery and tools. Evidence of an Iron Age settlement has been found in the area.
- 3 [redacted] were constructed from 1861-95 on the most westerly point of the Island for coastal defence against invasion by France, and are now owned by The National Trust. There are spectacular views of the Solent, Dorset and Hampshire from the ramparts, and the old searchlight emplacement at the end of a 65-metre tunnel provides the closest view of The Needles from land.
- 4 [redacted] is a seaside palace built by Thomas Cubitt where Queen Victoria lived with Prince Albert and their nine children. It offers a glimpse into the private life of the royal family and is filled with original furnishings and priceless artworks. The terraced gardens and grounds immediately surrounding the house are a joy to explore and have stunning views of the Solent.
- 5 [redacted] was built around 1700 and is the only surviving windmill on the Island. It has most of its original machinery intact and is now owned by the National Trust. Visitors can explore its four floors and see the breathtaking views across the countryside that inspired the artist Turner.







## Spectacular heritage coasts

There are two stretches of Heritage Coast on the Isle of Wight, covering nearly half of the 60-mile coastline.

- The **Tennyson Heritage Coast** extends from St Lawrence to Totland Bay along the Island's southern coastline. This wild open coastline of fossil-rich sediments includes the towering chalk cliffs at Freshwater Bay, the Needles rocks and the multi-coloured sandstone cliffs of Alum Bay. This coast is very accessible with the Military Road alongside and a clifftop footpath following its entire length.
- The **Hamstead Heritage Coast** on the Solent side of the Island includes the wooded coastal slopes of Bouldnor Forest, the shallow, drowned estuary of the Newtown River and the pasture-fringed bay of Thorness.



## On the coast

Identify the coastal towns and seaside resorts described below.

**1** Located in the south east of the Island, this is one of Britain's most famous Victorian health resorts. The part sand, part shingle beach is great for swimming and sunbathing, and there are pubs and cafés dotted along the seafront. The town is built on a series of zigzag terraces and is home to a 22-acre, sub-tropical botanic garden.

**2** This resort has a long, sandy beach, overlooked by dramatic sandstone cliffs. There are beautiful parks and the peaceful Rylstone Gardens. The historic Old Village has thatched cottages and tearooms, and visitors can also enjoy the famous Chine, a gorge with rare plants and a delightful waterfall.

**3** This northerly town is steeped in maritime heritage and famed for its sailing events, which attract participants and spectators from across the world. The pedestrianised high street is full of interesting boutiques, art galleries and shops with a nautical theme.

**4** This is the terminus of the car and passenger ferry from Southampton. The town has a small shopping centre, lively marina and seafront promenade. It is also home to the magnificent Osborne House. It is linked to a nearby town by a floating bridge.

**5** Sheltered in a beautiful bay, this resort is famed for its golden sand beach, traditional seafront with a broad promenade and the pier, which dates from 1879 and now provides all-weather amusements. Along Culver Parade visitors can find tennis, bowls, crazy golf, a pitch and putt course, Sandham Gardens, Dinosaur Isle and the Wildheart Animal Sanctuary.

**6** The largest town on the Isle of Wight, it is known as 'The Gateway to the Island'. The catamaran from Portsmouth docks at the end of the pier, and the hovercraft next to the pier and the esplanade. There are several miles of sweeping, golden sand beach, and the town and seafront are packed with pubs, restaurants and shops.







## Exploring inland

Historic **Newport** in the centre of the Island is the Island's principal town. It is centred on two elegant squares with fine Georgian and Victorian town houses. The impressive colonnaded Guildhall was designed by John Nash and built in 1816, with its clock tower added in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. It now houses the Museum of Island History. Newport is a good place for shopping and has a cinema, three theatres, pubs, restaurants and nightclubs. Newport Harbour has facilities for visiting yachts.

Situated just a few miles inland from Bembridge, **Brading** is one of the oldest towns on the Isle of Wight. Visitors can see some delightful cottages, interesting architecture, the pretty Norman church of St Mary's, the Bull Ring and the Old Town Hall with its whipping post and stocks. The town is home to a number of attractions including, cider making and maize maze. Brading offers good access to both the Brading and Arreton Downs, where the views are breathtaking.

With its thatched-roofed cottages and winding main street, **Godshill** is the quintessential English village. Godshill's name derives from the 15th century church set upon a hill overlooking the village, which is among the top 10 most visited churches in the UK. The village has a number of attractions including The Old Smithy, a former blacksmiths forge, shops offering local crafts and produce, and welcoming tearooms.

**Brighstone** has an interesting church dating back to 1190 and is home to the Brighstone Village Museum and Isle of Wight Pearl, which houses the largest collection of pearl jewellery in the UK.

**Calbourne** is one of the most unspoilt villages on the Island. It has a sloping green beside an ancient church dating back to 826 and a pretty row of houses known as Winkle Street.



## An attractive Island

Draw lines to link the attraction with the relevant description

**Blackgang Chine**

**A** Home to one of Britain's largest collection of tigers, as well as lemurs, jaguars, monkeys and lions.

**Tapnell Farm Park**

**B** The Island's biggest rides, children's play features, a new woodland centre and gardens.

**Isle of Wight Steam Railway**

**C** The well-preserved remains of a Roman farmhouse built around the year 280 AD.

**Godshill Model Village**

**D** In over 40 acres of stunning cliff-top gardens, this is a magical mix of fantasy, legend and heritage.

**Fort Victoria Country Park**

**E** A spectacular chairlift past amazing coloured sand cliffs, plus children's rides and boat trips.

**Robin Hill Country Adventure Park**

**F** Family owned holiday destination set in the beautiful rural West Wight countryside with the most amazing sea views.

**Osborne House**

**G** This island palace is where one of the greatest love stories played out and is set in stunning gardens and grounds.

**Wildheart Animal Sanctuary**

**H** Take a stroll through the woods, with stunning views across to Hurst Castle from the Viewpoint.

**Newport Roman Villa**

**I** A park including an aquarium, planetarium, model railway and underwater archaeological exhibition.

**Needles Landmark Attraction**

**J** The Island's only all weather, outdoor floodlit track where you can enjoy a taste of action

**Wight Karting**

**K** An exciting 10-mile journey back in time in Victorian and Edwardian carriages.



## Enjoying the outdoors

**The Isle of Wight offers wonderful opportunities for outdoor leisure. Visitors can roam in a variety of different landscapes.**

- The Isle of Wight is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Each Biosphere reserve are defined by their internationally important natural and cultural environments and recognised as places where local communities have an aspiration to live sustainably within their local ecosystems.
- Parkhurst Forest, north of Newport, was mentioned in the Domesday Book as a royal hunting forest and still has some of the best oak trees on the Island, as well as Scots and Corsican pine. Visitors can follow the Pine and Oak Forest Trails to find red squirrels.
- Borthwood Copse near Sandown is owned by the National Trust and is a fragment of the medieval forest that covered most of the eastern end of the Island. A bridleway and smaller paths guide visitors through this beautiful woodland, which has vivid colours in autumn and is carpeted with bluebells in spring.
- The Eastern Yar drains much of South and East Wight, making its way through important wetland habitats. The Western Yar, which enters the Solent at Yarmouth, flows through some of the most undisturbed and tranquil lowland landscape on the Island.



## Take action

The Isle of Wight offers wonderful opportunities for sport and active leisure – on land, on the water and in the air. It is gaining a reputation for high adrenaline sports, **including gliding, paragliding, tree climbing and off-road adventure trips**, as well as more peaceful activities such as **birdwatching** or **Alpaca & Llama trekking**.

The Island is the perfect destination for watersports activities. It is known as the home of **yachting**, with a great range of sailing events taking place all year round including **Cowes Week** and **Round the Island race**. The offshore waters of the Channel and the Solent provide excellent conditions for **sailing**, with sailing clubs located throughout the Island. Visitors, whether beginners or experts, can enjoy **diving, surfing, windsurfing and kitesurfing** at a number of locations and, of course, swimming on the Island's many beaches. **Kayaking** and **paddleboarding** are also popular and there are a number of inlets, caves and coastal areas to be explored.

Visitors can charter a yacht, catamaran or motor boat for a coastal cruise, adventure experience or **fishing** trip. Sea anglers have 64 miles of coastline available for beach and rock fishing, and can catch bass, conger, plaice and rays. For freshwater anglers, the Island's lakes, ponds, reservoirs and streams hold species such as trout, carp, perch, rudd and roach.

Criss-crossed by more than 500 miles of signposted footpaths, the Isle of Wight is the ideal destination for **walking**. The 67-mile Isle of Wight Coastal Path is a fantastic way to explore the Island. Inland, there are a number of trails ranging in length from five to 13 miles. There are many organised guided walks throughout the year. Quiet country lanes and scenic off-road routes provide excellent opportunities for **cycling** including the popular Red Squirrel trail. Cycles can be hired from outlets throughout the Island. With hundreds of miles of bridleways, **horse riding** is also popular. There are a number of riding schools and equestrian centres.

The Isle of Wight has eight **golf** clubs, including both exhilarating downland courses and peaceful parkland courses. There is also a floodlit driving range for those keen to practice into the evening.





## Somewhere to stay

The Isle of Wight has an extensive choice of holiday accommodation from luxury hotels to cosy bed and breakfasts, self-catering cottages to holiday parks. Give one example of each type of accommodation close to where you work.

1 Hotel:

2 Bed & breakfast:

2 Self-catering accommodation:

4 Holiday park:

5 Glamping and Camping:

6 Caravan and Motorhome park:

## Travelling to and around the Island

With 3 routes and sailings across the day, it's simple to travel across the Solent to the Isle of Wight.

- **Red Funnel** provide a vehicle ferry service between Southampton and East Cowes, and a fast Red Jet Hi-Speed foot passenger service between Southampton and West Cowes. [www.redfunnel.co.uk](http://www.redfunnel.co.uk)
- **Wightlink** car ferries operate between Portsmouth and Fishbourne, and between Lymington and Yarmouth. Wightlink also operate a catamaran service for foot passengers only between Portsmouth and Ryde. [www.wightlink.co.uk](http://www.wightlink.co.uk)
- **Hovertravel** operates hovercraft services between Southsea and Ryde. Once visitors are on the Island, it's easy for them to move around on public transport. [www.hovertravel.co.uk](http://www.hovertravel.co.uk)
- **Island Line** trains operate from Ryde Pier to Shanklin, via Ryde Esplanade, Brading, Sandown and Lake. [www.southwesternrailway.com](http://www.southwesternrailway.com)
- The **Isle of Wight Steam Railway** connects with the Island Line at Smallbrook Station. [www.iwsteamrailway.co.uk](http://www.iwsteamrailway.co.uk)
- **Southern Vectis** operates a comprehensive network of Island-wide bus services. [www.islandbuses.info](http://www.islandbuses.info)
- Car hire is available.





## Island events

There are over 1000 events on the Isle of Wight each year ranging from local festivals to major events.

**Cowes Week** is the oldest and largest annual sailing regatta in the world. The eight-day event combines competitive racing and great fun for the 8,500 competitors and 100,000 spectators with a fantastic programme of shore-side entertainment. The annual **Round the Island Race** attracts 1,600 boats, crewed by some of the biggest names in sailing as well as keen amateurs. There are many other sailing events each year, such as the **Little Britain Challenge Cup Regatta**.

The **Isle of Wight Festival** is now fully re-established as a major UK music festival, with top acts and 70,000 fans attracted to Seaclose Park each June. The **Rhythmtree Festival** is a 3 day much loved family event held in Thorness and the **Ventnor Fringe** is an annual wonderland of creativity hosting over 100 shows.

The two-week **Isle of Wight Walking Festival** in May and October is one of the longest running walking festivals. All the walks are led by very experienced volunteers with a great deal of knowledge about the Island and its stunning landscapes and scenery.

The Isle of Wight loves a carnival. There are 18 carnival parades each summer and up to 10 winter carnivals and lantern parades, including events such as the **Arts Parade** in Ryde, **Sandown Carnival**, **Ryde Carnival** and **Newport Christmas Carnival**.





## Local Island Produce

The climate ensures that the Isle of Wight is home to a huge variety of local produce – the freshest seafood, locally brewed beer, wine and cider, organic fruit and vegetables, including giant elephant garlic and asparagus, and delicious locally-produced ice creams and other dairy produce. Many shops sell local Isle of Wight food and drink.

Great local produce features on the menu in many of the Isle of Wight’s accommodation establishments, restaurants, pubs, cafés and tea rooms. In most towns and villages throughout the Island visitors can find individual craft outlets and galleries selling handcrafted jewellery and pottery, Isle of Wight sculptured glass and rustic wood carvings. [www.visitisleofwight.co.uk](http://www.visitisleofwight.co.uk)

## Finding out more about the Isle of Wight

**Tourist Information Points can be found at many of the main towns and villages including:**

Brighstone, Brading, Newport (Bus Station), Newport (Quay Arts Centre) Bembridge, Ventnor, Havenstreet, Yarmouth, Cowes, East Cowes, Freshwater Bay, Godshell, Ryde, Sandown and Shanklin. [www.visitisleofwight.co.uk/travel/tourist-information-points](http://www.visitisleofwight.co.uk/travel/tourist-information-points)

They stock a wide range of free brochures and leaflets and have excellent local knowledge of what is happening in their area.

### Presenting your destination knowledge:

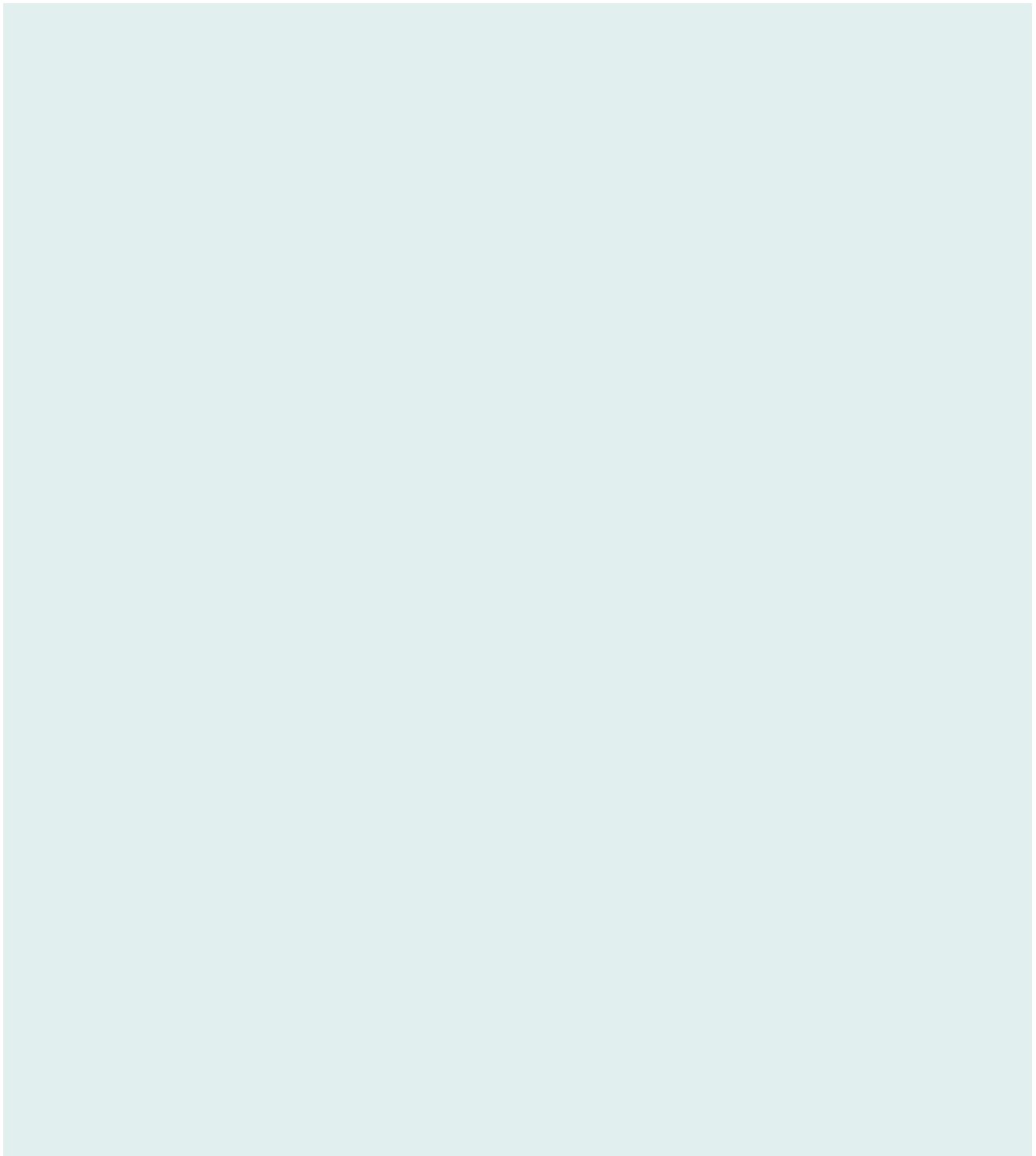
- **Avoid making assumptions:** ask questions to find out what visitors already know. Give accurate and up to date information: never guess the answer and find out if you don’t know.
- **Personalise information:** tailor information to visitor needs. For example, by referring to facilities for children, places to eat that are accessible, public transport connections.
- **Judge the level of response required:** Don’t give an incredibly detailed response to a simple question.
- **Use relevant information options:** maps, leaflets, booklets or website addresses. Offer further assistance: ask if the visitor has any questions, tell them about any special offers or whether you can make a booking on their behalf.



## Planning an itinerary

**Plan an itinerary for a weekend (Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon) for one of the following groups of visitors:**

- A family with younger children interested in wildlife and natural attractions who are travelling by car
- A group of ramblers interested in exploring the coastline who have access to a minibus
- First time visitors to the Island interested in history and heritage who want to travel by public transport.



## Understanding your customers

### Know your customer

The more you know about your customers, the easier it is to meet their expectations and provide an experience they value.

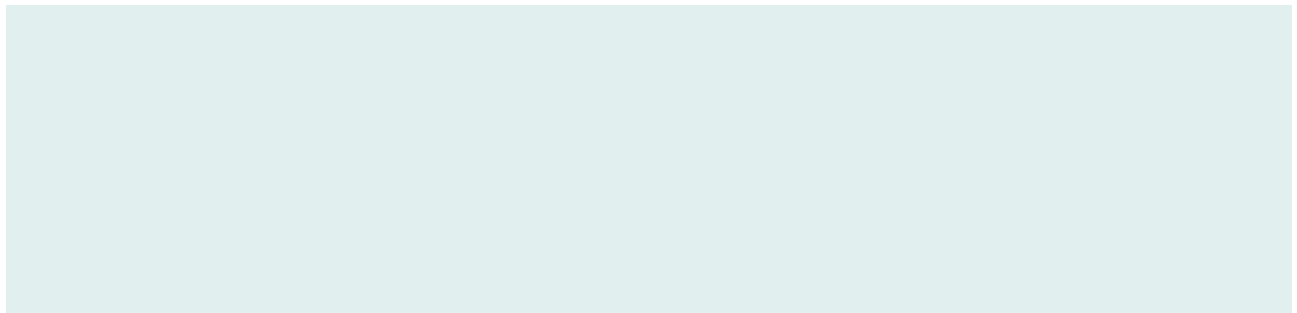
#### Try to find out as much as possible about them including:

- Where they come from
- How they travelled to the Island and your organisation
- Why they chose to use your facilities and services and what they need and expect
- What attracted them to visit the Isle of Wight and their perceptions of the Island
- How they found out about you and their perceptions of your organisation

**Knowing your customers enables you to plan and deliver what they really want, rather than what you think they want.**

### Who are your customers?

What categories of customers do you welcome (such as families, ramblers, school groups)?



### Meeting, managing and exceeding customer expectations

If an employee, organisation or destination fails to meet customer expectations, it creates dissatisfaction and they will probably remember this poor service, but for all the wrong reasons. They are unlikely to want to return. They may also post negative comments on social media and review sites.

If an employee, organisation or destination meets or manages customer expectations it creates customer satisfaction. Customers are likely to view this service as satisfactory or good, but it is unlikely to be memorable and will not stand out.

If an employee, organisation or destination exceeds customer expectations, it creates loyalty. Customers will remember outstanding service encounters and are likely to return and make recommendations to other people through social media, review sites and word-of-mouth.

**Fail to meet expectations = customer dissatisfaction**

**Meet/manage expectations = customer satisfaction**

**Exceed expectations = customer loyalty**

## Identifying needs and expectations

Customers will have different expectations of your organisation and the service it provides. Some expectations are often common to most customers. For example, feeling safe.

What do all customers expect from you and your organisation?

Choose one specific customer group and list their expectations.

What do visitors to the Isle of Wight expect from the destination overall?



## Changing expectations

As customers, we are becoming more demanding. We usually know our rights and have increasingly high expectations of the service we receive from businesses and public sector organisations.

### We expect:

- Efficient, proactive and consistent service encounters
- Service at times convenient to us
- Everything to be in working order
- High standards of cleanliness
- Wi-fi and internet access
- Greater value for money
- To be treated as a valued customer
- Concern for the environment
- People to apologise and put things right when there is a problem.

## A green advantage

Environmental or 'green' issues have become increasingly important to many visitors.

- Encourage the use of recycling facilities.
- Make sure you know about public transport options on the Isle of Wight.
- Be prepared to provide information on cycling and walking routes.
- Find out about local produce and use these where applicable.
- Encourage visitors to buy local products and use local services.
- Being familiar with the island EV extensive charging points which are located at accommodation providers, Tourist Attractions, Car Parks and shops.

## Looking to the future

How do you think the expectations of your customers will change in the next few years?

How can you respond?

What are the Isle of Wight unique selling points?

## Customer loyalty

Regular customers, repeat business, recommendations and referrals are vital to the success of any organisation. It's the reason so many organisations operate customer loyalty schemes and apps and have a social media presence.

Even if a customer spends only a small amount of money during each visit, the total value of their business over a period of time can be very considerable.

### The lifetime value of a customer

Estimate the lifetime value of a customer by using the calculation below.

- A** How much do they spend each visit?
- B** How many times do they visit each year?
- C** How many years have they been (or could be) a customer?
- D** How many times might they recommend your organisation to others?
- E** Multiply A x B for the amount spent by this customer each year
- F** Multiply C x E for the value of this customer over a number of years
- G** Multiply F x D for the potential value of sales gained from this customer's recommendations
- H** Add F + G for the total lifetime value of this customer

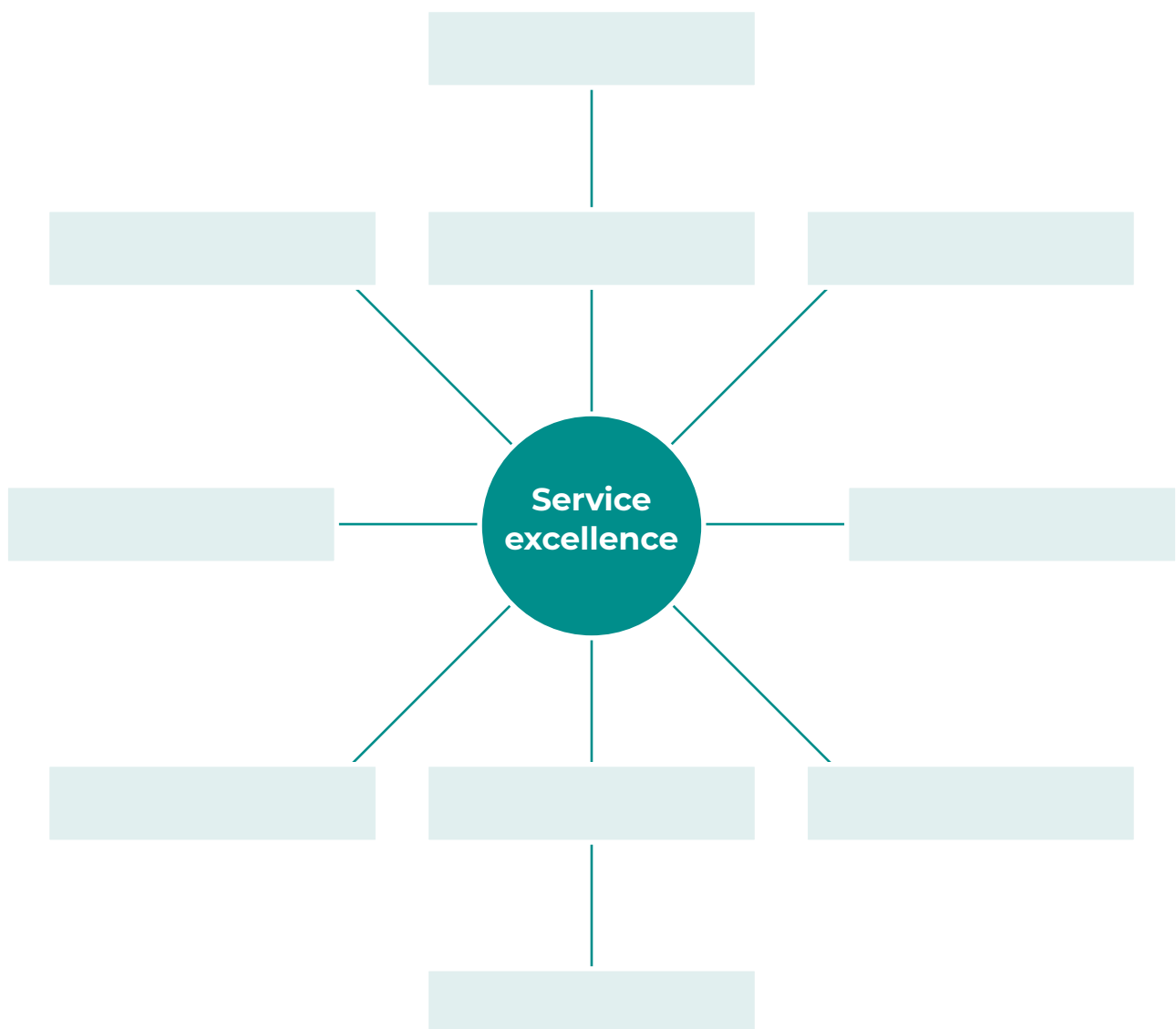


## Isle of Wight service excellence

### What is service excellence?

You need to deliver service that is over and above customer expectations so it compares favourably with other organisations in the UK and worldwide.

### What words do you associate with service excellence?





## First impressions count

If your job involves meeting customers, including welcoming them in a taxi or a bus, onto a ferry or speaking to them on the telephone, you create their impression of your organisation. It takes only seven seconds to form a first impression and after 30 seconds that impression is set. It's very difficult to change an opinion if the initial contact is not positive.

### **This first impression can be influenced by many factors including:**

- the environment in the area where you work
- your personal presentation and the way you look
- your behaviour
- how you sound and what you say.

Make those 30 seconds count. A positive attitude can help create a positive first impression. Think ahead. Make each customer feel they made the right choice in selecting your organisation and in visiting the Isle of Wight.

What can you say or do to create a positive first impression?

What can you say or do to create a great lasting impression?

## It's your choice

How you choose to behave and your the attitude to customers is very important in service encounters.

### You can choose to:

- behave in a way that is polite, friendly and helpful
- be pro-active rather than reactive – to take the initiative rather than wait for customers to approach you or start a conversation
- admit when you don't know or have made a mistake
- listen patiently while a customer is speaking
- make the customer experience fun and engaging
- be open and honest
- be positive about the Isle of Wight
- think creatively and find solutions
- go the extra mile to help a customer and make them feel special.

### You can motivate yourself to avoid:

- taking your problems out on the customer
- acting in a way that is confrontational
- raising your voice or using aggressive gestures
- showing that you are upset or irritated
- adopting a negative or inflexible approach.

What can you do to engage with and inspire visitors to the Isle of Wight, and make a real difference to their experience?

## Internal customers

Wherever you work, you are likely to have both:

- **external customers** – people from outside your organisation who purchase or use your facilities, products and services
- **internal customers** – colleagues within your organisation who need a service from you. Some of your colleagues will also provide a service to you.

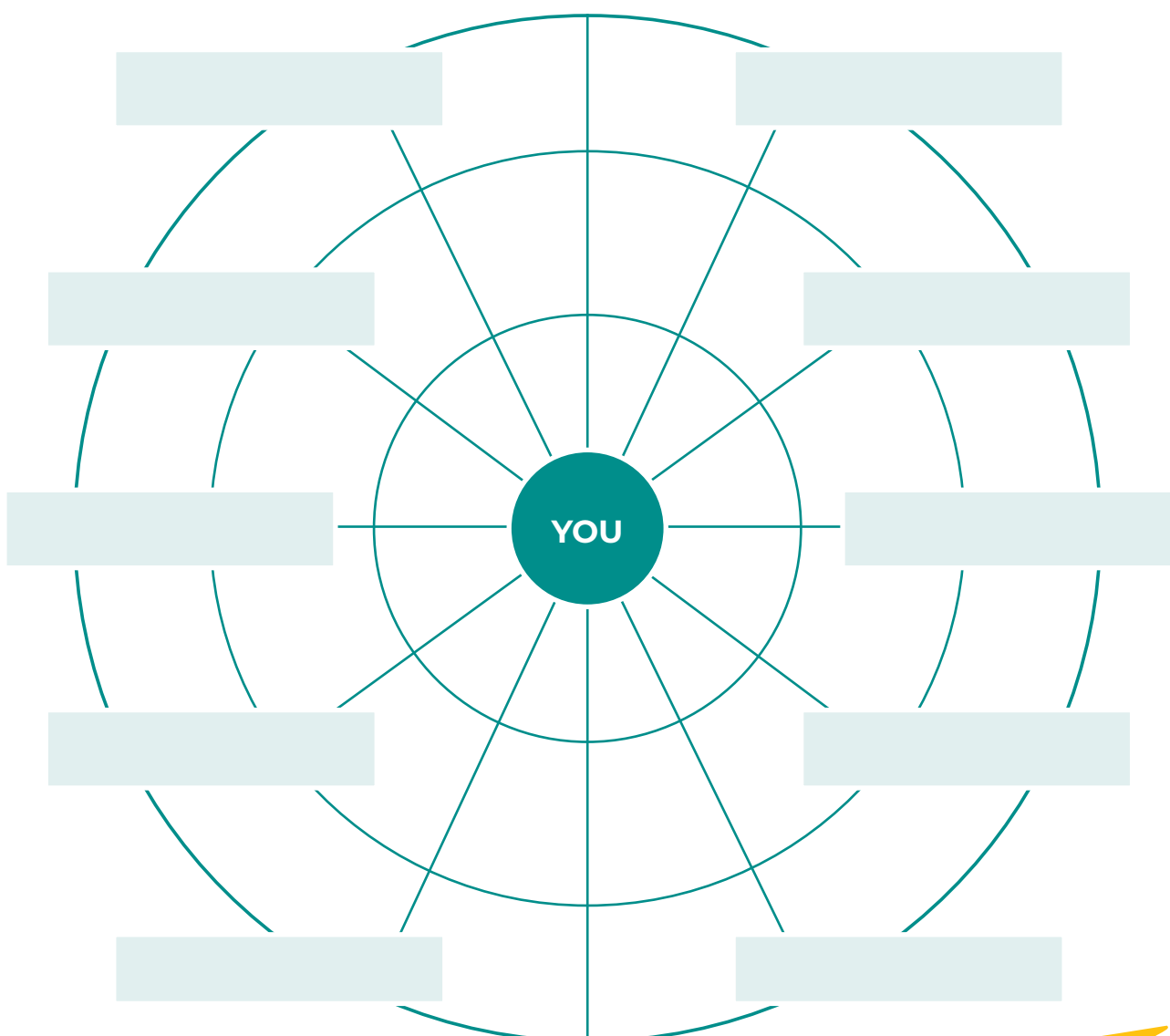
The service that you provide to internal customers is just as important as the service you provide to external customers.

## The internal customer web

The network of internal customers within an organisation is often like a spider's web. Fill in the boxes in the web below to show:

who provides a service to you

who you provide a service to





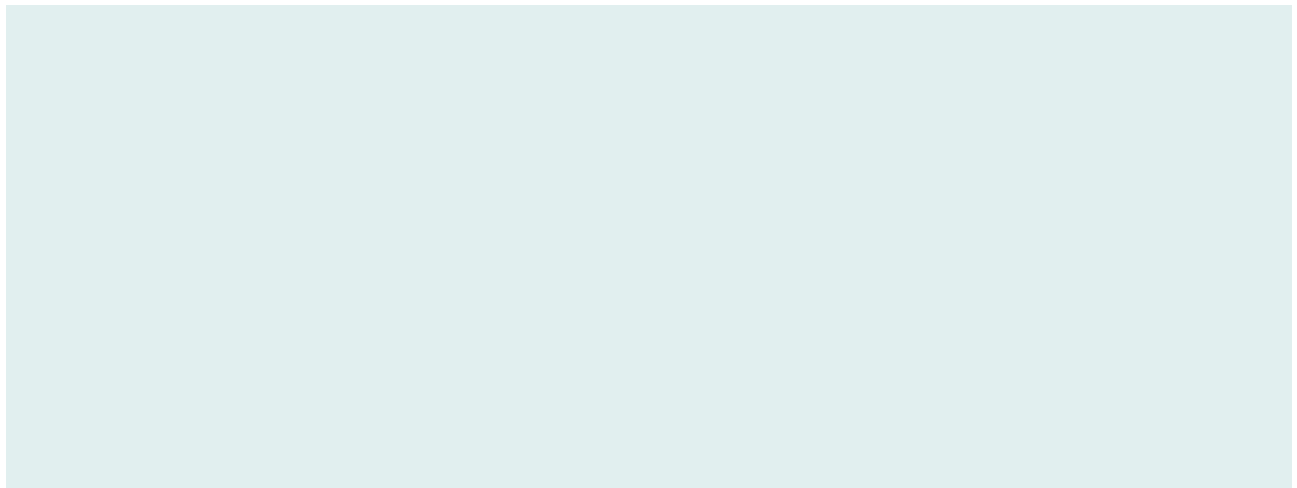
## Working as an effective team

**Effective teamwork doesn't just happen. It needs everyone to:**

- **commit** to achieving the team's goals
- **communicate** and **co-operate** with other team members
- **consider** and respect other people's views
- **contribute** to creating a memorable visitor experience
- **connect** with other staff and volunteers, as well as with visitors
- **co-ordinate** activities
- **coach** and mentor new staff

## Improving your team's performance

What action could you take to improve the performance of your team?



## Policies, procedures and standards

**Most organisations have policies, procedures, standards and charters that are relevant to the delivery of customer service. These can include:**

- policies that relate to the organisation, such as health and safety, security and the environment, and policies that relate to people, such as complaints, equality and diversity, staff behaviour and personal presentation
- operational procedures for activities such as answering telephones and responding to emails
- standards, such as those for greeting customers and offering assistance.

**All of these help to ensure that:**

- legal obligations are met
- employees know what is required
- there is consistency in service standards and other areas of operation
- customers know what to expect
- the effectiveness of customer service can be measured.

Make sure you understand and follow policies and procedures within your organisation.

## An accessible Island - a great experience for everyone

Good accessibility benefits all customers, and improving facilities and services will help the Isle of Wight become a visitor destination of choice. The spend from trips taken by those with an impairment and their travelling companions is huge and meeting their needs can result in a high level of repeat business. There are a number of important reasons why it matters to promote and market accessibility and inclusivity to visitors including:

- You have legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010
- It provides opportunities to engage with a range of the Island's businesses and the wider community
- You will be helping to increase and grow the impact of the Island's visitor economy.

### Remember you need to meet the needs of people with temporary injuries and other illnesses.

Globally 1 in 7 of us live with a disability and of those, 80% - that is over 1 billion people who are living with a non-visible disability. Often many people experience a combination of both visible and non-visible impairments and conditions. The more we understand about visible and non-visible disabilities, the more we can help provide products and services to welcome and meet the needs of visitors to the Isle of Wight.

### The following websites will help you find out more:

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative

[www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com](http://www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com)

[www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible](http://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible)



What disabilities are visible?

What disabilities might not be so obvious?



### Be creative and make a difference

Who benefits from your organisation being accessible and offering an inclusive service?

How does this benefit the Isle of Wight overall?

Make sure you provide open and honest information to disabled customers so they can decide if a facility or service meets their needs.

**What information might they need:**

Small changes to your facilities can often help many other customers and make a big difference to their experience. Information on the options is available from [www.VisitEngland.org/access](http://www.VisitEngland.org/access)

## Connecting with customers

### Making a connection

**Communication is at the heart of engaging, inspiring and connecting with visitors.**

**You communicate through:**

- Your website and social media activities
- Telephone conversations and emails
- Leaflets, maps and information sheets
- Talking to visitors

### Communication matters

How does your organisation communicate with customers?

Can you suggest any improvements?

**We communicate in a number of ways.**

- Verbal communication: the words you say and your grammar
- Vocal communication: how you say your words
- Body language: your gestures, posture, expressions, eye contact and personal appearance.





## Choosing words to inspire confidence

What type of language is likely to make communication more difficult?

What type of language is likely to improve communication?

## Building trust

What we say and how we say it can help to inspire confidence in customers and build trust in our organisation – and in the Isle of Wight as a destination.

### **Be honest and straightforward but avoid:**

- using words such as perhaps, probably, possibly and maybe
- telling customers about your problems
- sounding hesitant or uncertain.

### **Try to:**

- find a way to say yes
- use positive words and phrases
- make a note about what you have agreed to do
- provide information in a confident manner and smile
- confirm what has been agreed at the end of the conversation.

## It's not what you say, it's the way you say it

- **Volume:** speak too quietly and the customers may struggle to hear and ask you to repeat your remarks. Speak too loudly and you may seem aggressive or irritating.
- **Pace:** it can be difficult to follow someone speaking quickly, particularly if they are presenting new or complex information. Speaking too slowly can sometimes be annoying for the listener.
- **Tone:** speaking positively and with enthusiasm inspires confidence and builds trust. It's difficult to concentrate when someone sounds bored.
- **Pronunciation:** it's hard for anyone to understand you if you mumble, especially if the listener's first language isn't English. Be precise.
- **Pitch:** occasionally it's helpful to change the pitch of your voice, for example, when you want to emphasise a point.
- **Variety:** changing the volume, pace and pitch of your voice adds interest to your words and helps your customer to concentrate on what you are saying.
- **Smile:** a smile significantly affects how you sound. It makes you appear more approachable and it encourages open communication.



## Positive body language

### Try to avoid using negative body language for example:

- Avoiding eye contact
- Folding arms, leaning away or moving backwards
- Using aggressive gestures such as pointing fingers
- Frowning or glaring

### How can you display positive body language through:

gestures?

facial expressions?

eye contact?

posture and position?

## Are you a good listener?

**When holding a conversation with a customer, do you ever:**

- |    |   |        |
|----|---|--------|
| 1  | try to carry on with another task at the same time?                                 | YES/NO |
| 2  | assume that you know what someone is going to say at the start of the conversation? | YES/NO |
| 3  | find that your mind is wandering on to unrelated issues?                            | YES/NO |
| 4  | interrupt before the customer has finished their remarks?                           | YES/NO |
| 5  | have to ask the customer to repeat their remarks?                                   | YES/NO |
| 6  | find it hard to concentrate on the conversation?                                    | YES/NO |
| 7  | try to listen to another conversation at the same time?                             | YES/NO |
| 8  | jump to conclusions about what the other person wants?                              | YES/NO |
| 9  | make it difficult for the customer to get a word in?                                | YES/NO |
| 10 | become bored and try to speed the conversation up?                                  | YES/NO |

## Active listening

The best way to understand customers and identify their needs is to listen to them.

Active listening involves not just hearing the words that are spoken, but also interpreting, understanding, responding and remembering.

- Don't interrupt
- Show interest
- Check your understanding
- Stay focused
- Maintain eye contact for most of the time
- Give feedback
- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Keep an open mind
- Ask questions
- Summarise at the end of a conversation.

## Asking questions

Open questions make people think. An open question is one that needs more than a yes or no answer. They start with words like how, what, where, when or how.

When should you use open questions in a customer transaction?

**Give an example**

Closed questions encourage short and direct answers. They often start with words like do, is, would or could.

When should you use closed questions in a customer transaction?

**Give an example**

## Presenting information to customers

- **Know your customer:** use their names and refer to their wants and needs. Make them feel valued.
- **Be careful and consistent:** in the age of instant communication and global social media networks, you never know who might report on what you say, write or do.
- **Avoid making assumptions:** ask questions to find out what customers already know.
- **Check your facts:** make sure your information is accurate, up-to-date and free of jargon.
- **Answer the question:** what is the reason for the enquiry? Don't give a detailed response if a simple explanation is all that is needed.
- **Be informative:** if appropriate, use maps, leaflets, information sheets or other written information on your organisation and the Isle of Wight to help you answer questions or provide advice.
- **Keep positive:** even if you cannot meet a particular request, find a way to end positively.

## Telephone calls

What annoys you when you call an organisation?

What impresses you when you call an organisation?

- Keep a pen and paper ready
- Remember you can't use body language to help convey your message – callers might be able to tell if you are smiling
- Give reliable, accurate and clear information
- Provide an interested, warm and personal approach/response
- Be efficient and professional
- Don't get distracted or try to do another task at the same time
- Act as an ambassador for your organisation and the Isle of Wight
- Keep a list of frequently asked questions.

## Leaving voicemail messages

**You may only have limited recording time. Speak slowly and clearly.**

- say who you are – your name and organisation (spell any unusual words)
- give your contact details
- outline very briefly the subject you want to discuss
- encourage a response by saying when you will be available.



## Communicating in writing

### All written communications should be:

- clear and understandable
- aim to present your organisation in a positive way.

## Sending emails

- Choose your words with care. You can't rely on your voice or body language to help put your message across. Write with a smile on your face.
- Never respond in haste and check for mistakes. Poor spelling and grammar imply poor service and can lose you a customer.
- Keep it professional and friendly.
- Be courteous and polite. Beware of inappropriate remarks or comments that might offend.
- Include your full contact details.
- Respond promptly.

## Text messaging

- ask if customers want confirmations/reminders via sms
- avoid using 'text speak'
- keep messages short and to the point
- include relevant information and contact details.

## The power of social media and review sites

Customers are more likely to make decisions on visiting your organisation based on your online reviews rather than website information or marketing literature. What you say is now less important than what other customers say.

### This makes it more important than ever to:

- Create experiences that will generate favourable online comments and ratings
- Make sure you meet everyone's needs
- Stop problems happening in the first place if you can
- Deal effectively with complaints



# Dealing with challenging situations

## Challenging situations

A dissatisfied customer can tell thousands of people about a bad experience through online review sites and social media platforms. Getting things right and resolving challenging situations has never been more important.

What situations do you find hard to handle when dealing with customers?

## Customer dissatisfaction

Many customers have little patience when something isn't right or doesn't meet expectations. They may complain or start making demands.

When things go wrong and you have to deal with a difficult situation, you need to remain in control and continue to act professionally even if a customer is being rude or difficult.

However, many dissatisfied customers don't complain, and they may take their business elsewhere in the future. They may also tell family, friends and colleagues about their experience. If they use social media, this can happen within seconds.

If something doesn't work or a mistake is made.

### **Customers are most likely to feel dissatisfied or complain if they encounter:**

- unfriendly, uncaring or inefficient staff
- inaccurate, confusing, misleading or unavailable information
- poor value for money
- a gap between the promise and reality
- facilities and service standards that don't meet their needs or expectations
- services available at times that aren't convenient
- poor standards of housekeeping and cleanliness.

## Handling a complaint

How would you respond?

## Resolving complaints

Always use opportunities to turn negatives into positives. If you resolve a difficult situation to the customer's satisfaction, you can create a loyal ambassador for your organisation and for the Isle of Wight.

- Thank the customer for taking the time to alert you to any issues.
- Listen and if necessary, take notes. Stay calm, don't interrupt or make excuses.
- Apologise and say you are sorry.
- Decide whether you are the best person to deal with the situation or ask if you may get the person best able to help them.
- Where appropriate ask questions to clarify your understanding.
- Once you have established the facts, look for a solution. Discuss options and involve the customer in the decision-making process. Make the agreed action happen as soon as practical.
- Ask what else you can do to make sure the rest of their visit is enjoyable.

## Customer feedback

Why is customer feedback important?

For your organisation:

For the Isle of Wight:

How can you get visitor feedback?

## Receiving praise: building customer loyalty

- Thank the customer for letting you know.
- Tell your colleagues if the praise relates in any way to service they have provided.

# Promoting the Isle of Wight

## Options for boosting business

There are many ways of boosting business for your organisation and the Isle of Wight.

### These include:

- persuading customers to stay longer and spend more during their stay
- gaining positive feedback on review sites and social media platforms
- encouraging word-of-mouth recommendations and referrals
- converting more enquiries into sales
- attracting new markets.

## Encouraging repeat business

What can you do to encourage visitors to return?

To your organisation:

To the Isle of Wight

- Make sure you have excellent product and destination knowledge
- Talk positively about what there is to do and see
- Be proactive and offer information about events, local produce, transport options and other visitor services
- Go the extra mile and offer a warm welcome to everyone
- Look for opportunities to impress and delight visitors.

## What is selling?

### People don't buy products and services – they buy solutions.

No-one wants to be 'sold to'. Selling is about helping and serving customers. It is a process of identifying and meeting customer needs by offering solutions. Sales involves three key elements.

- **Communicating:** providing information and creating awareness.
- **Persuading:** showing that what you have to offer will meet the customer's needs.
- **Differentiating:** creating a difference between your organisation and your competitors.

It is easy to concentrate on what you want to sell, but success is more likely to be achieved by concentrating on what customers want to buy. People want to buy products and services that meet their needs and provide benefits to them.



## Now it's up to you

What have been your most important learning points from today?

What can you do differently to make sure all your customers receive a great welcome?

To your organisation:

To the Isle of Wight:

### **What help might you need from:**

Visit Isle of Wight tourism

Other organisations





Welcome  
to Excellence

[www.welcometoexcellence.co.uk](http://www.welcometoexcellence.co.uk)