

The longest journey starts with a single step

Anyone who has watched the television series *The Hotel Inspector* knows that running a hospitality business is demanding. It takes effort, commitment and a desire to welcome and serve. You'll find that there are 101 things to do when you are setting up a new business. It's important to prioritise. As well as understanding relevant laws and planning how to develop your business, you will need to know where to find relevant and accurate information and advice.

Be realistic Assess your strengths. Recognise and improve your weaknesses.

Check legal and regulatory issues Available online from VisitBritain's new subscription service www.accommodationknowhow.co.uk

Monitor current trends and demand Use Visit London www.visitlondon.com/corporate and the London Development Agency www.lda.gov.uk/tourismsupport

Build up the business Start with a business plan. Contact Business Link London for information, advice and business support. Introduce yourself to local networks such as the Chamber of Commerce and the nearest Tourist Information Centres or library service and invite them around.



“You've got to be on the ball all the time. I know within Stratford, we're getting more and more planning applications for hotels. If I want to stay on top of my high occupancy levels, I've got to keep my standards up all the time.”

Jan Dooner, The Railway Tavern, Stratford.



Provide a quality experience Promotion, efficiency, fixtures and fittings, tone of voice, warmth of welcome – they all matter. So do cleanliness, facilities and the 'wow factor'.

Check out the competition Stay as a guest or send your staff as 'mystery shoppers'. Study the winners of the Enjoy England Awards for Excellence, the AA Hospitality Awards and Visit London Awards. What are they doing that you could be doing?

Stay on your toes Measure customer satisfaction, organise feedback, anticipate complaints and deal with them promptly.

Get a star rating Showing a star rating attracts customers. This is especially important when you are starting out and don't have repeat visitors. A star rating shows the level of quality and services guests can expect. Star ratings range from no frills 1 star to luxury 5 star. Your star rating comes with additional marketing benefits. These include entries on websites and in printed accommodation guides. They are only available to star rated properties so you'll be in good company.



“ I think the real benefit of star ratings is that they give visitors a starting point in their search for somewhere to stay. Without that, it's a minefield. It's a confusing marketplace out there. ”

Keith Richards, ABTA.



i Take advantage of Get London Graded

Until you've been through the process, it's easy to imagine the assessor as an examiner looking for reasons to fail you. In reality the process is a genuinely useful measure of quality and a good source of business advice.

The London Development Agency's Get London Graded initiative offers free training, a £400 subsidy towards the cost of quality assessment and up to two days of free one-to-one support with quality advisors to help you to prepare for your star assessment. All quality advisors are former assessors so they know exactly what to look for. To find out more about Get London Graded go to www.lda.gov.uk/tourismsupport email qualityLDA@live-tourism.co.uk or call LiveTourism on 0800 077 8082.

i Useful websites

- www.blondon.co.uk
- www.visitbritain.com/corporate
- www.visitlondon.com/corporate
- www.lda.gov.uk/tourismsupport