



exclusive research in association with



into the attitudes of people with disabilities

towards, hotels, restaurants,

pubs and bars.

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October 2005

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1.0 Introduction

Arnold Fewell (AF) is a wheelchair user and works as a marketing consultant in the Hotel and Catering Industry. He was a hotel general manager with Trusthouse Forte and has extensive experience in all aspects of the industry. As a regular customer within the hospitality sector he became aware of issues facing people with disabilities and their carers. He has worked with the Caterer and Hotelkeeper Magazine to see what disabled people thought of the service they received in hotels, restaurants, pubs and bars.

The research was carried out in August 2005 with the readers of the magazine produced by the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club. This report covers the methodology of the research, the sample size, the overall findings including the results of the open question, comparisons between industry sectors, the variances between different impairments and the comments and recommendations of the author. A biography of the author is included in the appendix of this report.

AF would like to thank the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club for making this research possible and Peter Bramich for providing the incentive of a weekend break at The Deans Place Country Hotel and Restaurant, Alfriston, East Sussex.

2.0 The aims of the research

These are: -

- 1) To identify the attitudes of people with disabilities towards the hotel and catering industry.
- 2) To help the hotel and catering industry understand the needs of people with disabilities so they can improve the service provided.
- 3) To improve the service for people with disabilities so that more of them use hotels, restaurants, pubs and bars.
- 4) To use the research on an ongoing basis to monitor how the industry is meeting the challenges of the Disability Discrimination Act 2004.

3.0 Methodology

AF carried out interviews with a number of personal contacts about the issues people with disabilities faced when using hotels, restaurants, pubs and bars. Based on these discussions he produced a draft questionnaire that was distributed to the Caterer and Hotelkeeper, experienced Access Auditors, the Chief Executive of the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club and other people with disabilities.

The questionnaire was revised after the feedback received and printed in the July/August edition of the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club magazine. Readers were invited to complete and return the questionnaire using a freepost address. An incentive for completion was included. This was for a weekend break at The Deans Place Country Hotel and Restaurant, Alfriston, East Sussex and kindly donated by Peter Bramich.

AF then arranged for the data to be put into the software package, he has then analysed the results and produced this research report.

4.0 Sample size

A total of 505 questionnaires were received. The table below shows the type of person that completed the survey. Respondents could tick more than one option and this is why the figures add up to more than 100%.

Type of respondent	%
I am a carer	15.6
I am a wheelchair user	64.6
I am visually impaired	0.8
I have a hearing impairment	11.3
I have an impairment	38.4
I drive myself	73.9
I am unable to drive myself	10.3

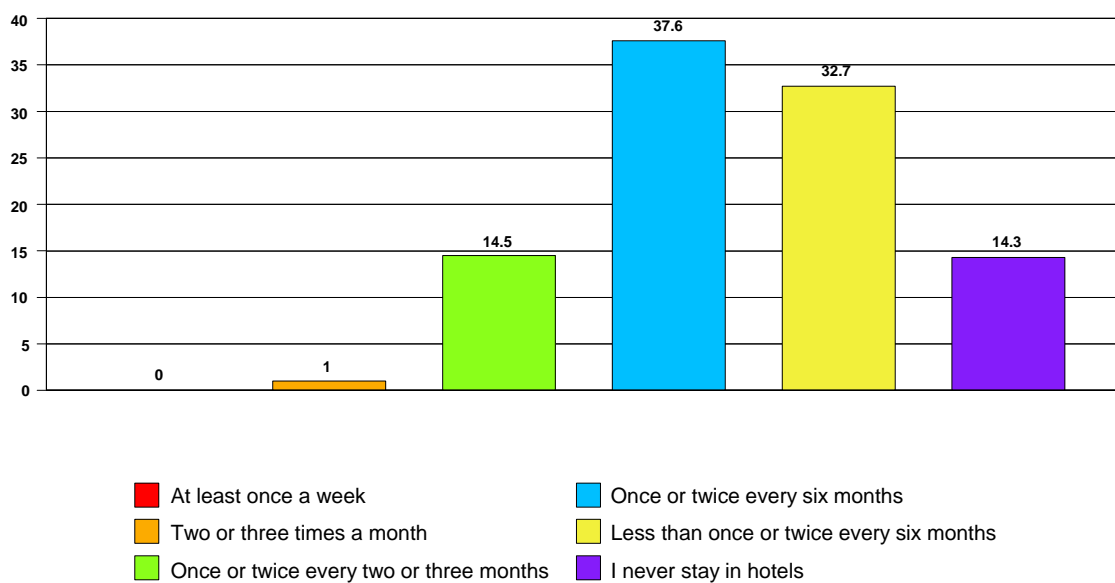
There is a bias towards wheelchair users with very few responses by those with a visual impairment. This is due to the database used. The views of other people with disabilities will be obtained in future research e.g. visually impaired and with a hearing impairment.

5.0 Overall results from the survey

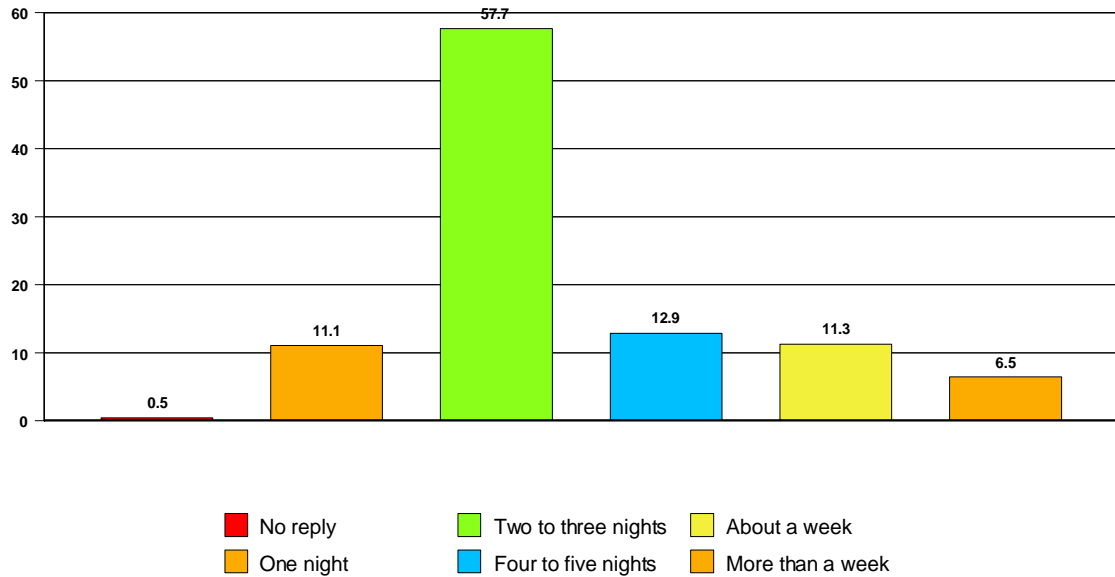
The survey was split into three sections. The first looked at hotels, the second covered restaurants and the last section was about pubs and bars. The questions and results are shown in a series of graphs and tables. At the end of this section respondents have identified the most important issues that the industry has to tackle.

5.1 Hotel results

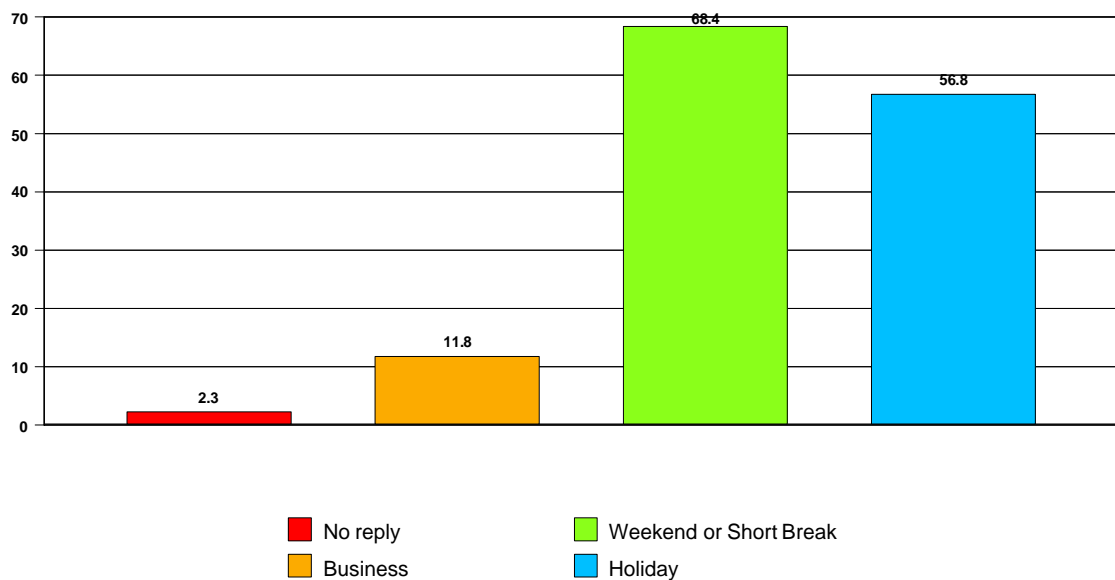
How often do you stay in hotels?



On average how long would you stay in a hotel?



Why do you stay in hotels?



The table below shows the areas where people with disabilities thought the hotel standards were poor, with the highest score at the top.

Hotel standard	% that said poor
Access to a toilet for disabled people	33.8
Suitability of car parking on arrival	33.6
Bathroom facilities	33.2
Availability of car parking on arrival	31.0
Information given by the hotel at the time of booking	28.3
Layout of bedroom	27.8
Access to bar facilities	21.0
Signage around the hotel	20.3
Location of room	18.4
Access to restaurant facilities	15.8
Quality of directions given	15.1
Ease of readability of marketing materials	11.4
Availability of directions	11.2
Ease of check-in	9.8
Helpfulness of staff	7.0
Ease of booking	3.7

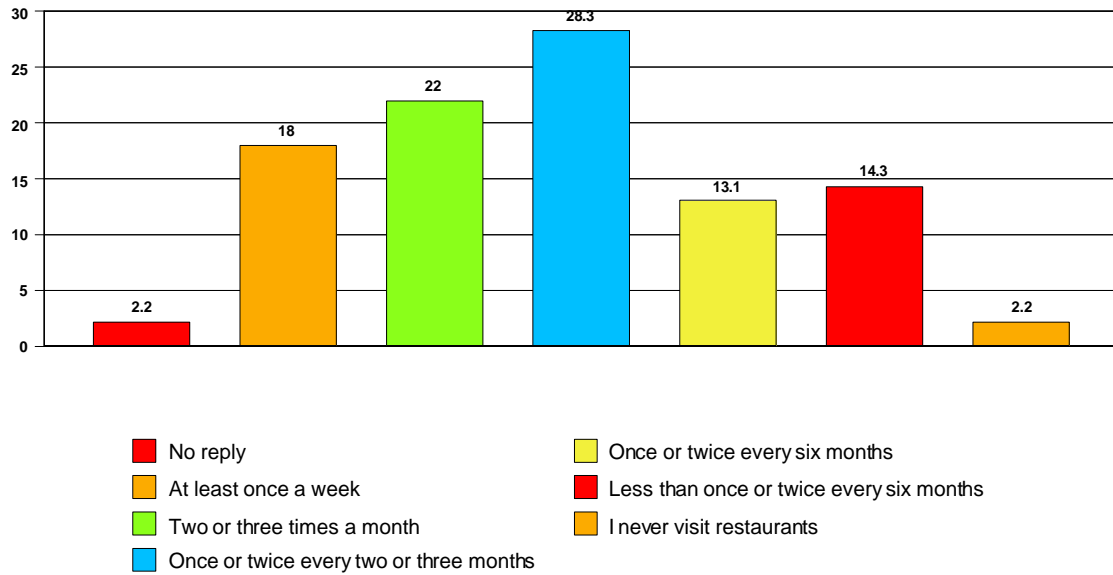
Respondents were asked how well hotels catered for the needs of people with disabilities. 46.0% said not very well, 25.3% said OK and only 18.2% said well or very well. They were then asked how hotels should change so that they are more accommodating for people with disabilities. The top 10 responses have been collated in the table below with the most frequent

comments at the top. The figures in the column on the right show the number of times a comment was made.

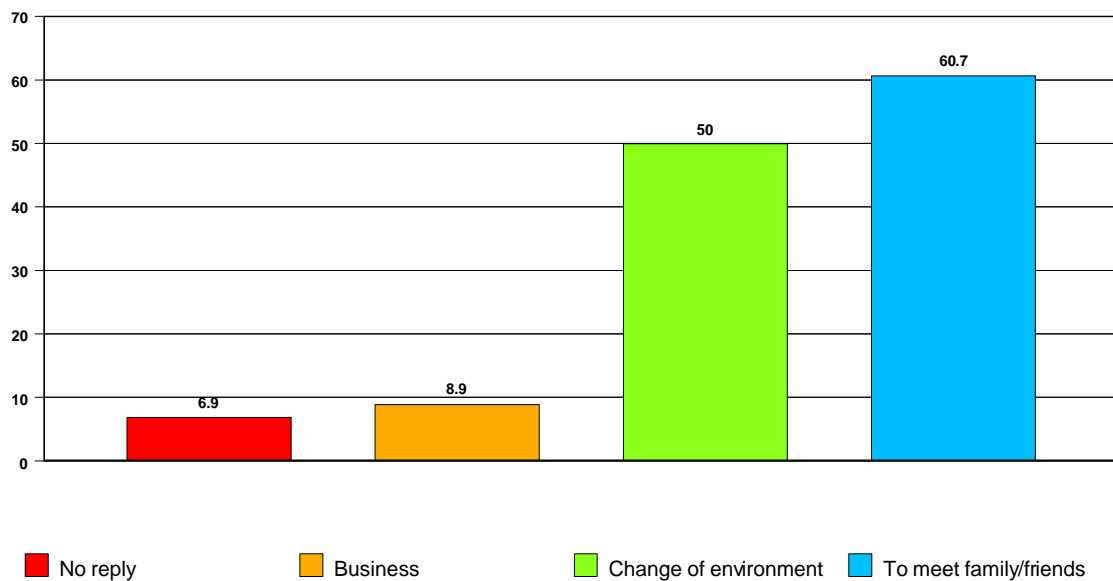
They should get expert advice, from a disabled person when designing the rooms, bathrooms etc as they are often inaccessible	38
Give staff training on disability awareness, the difficulties people with disabilities encounter and how staff can help	35
There is no point in having handles on the side of the bath with shower over it if one can't get your leg over the side of the bath. Shower cubicles with wheelchair access are required	33
Too many stairs and steps, too few ramps	32
Need wheelchair access to lifts	31
Wider doors and corridors without unnecessary obstructions	31
Make sure all disabled parking bays are used correctly, are wide enough and near the main entrance	30
Larger rooms and better bathroom facilities	28
Correct height of toilet seats	16
Have a lower reception area for people with disabilities when checking in.	16

5.2 Restaurant results

How often do you visit a restaurant?



What is the main reason for visiting a restaurant?



The table below shows the areas where people with disabilities thought the restaurant standards were poor, with the highest score at the top.

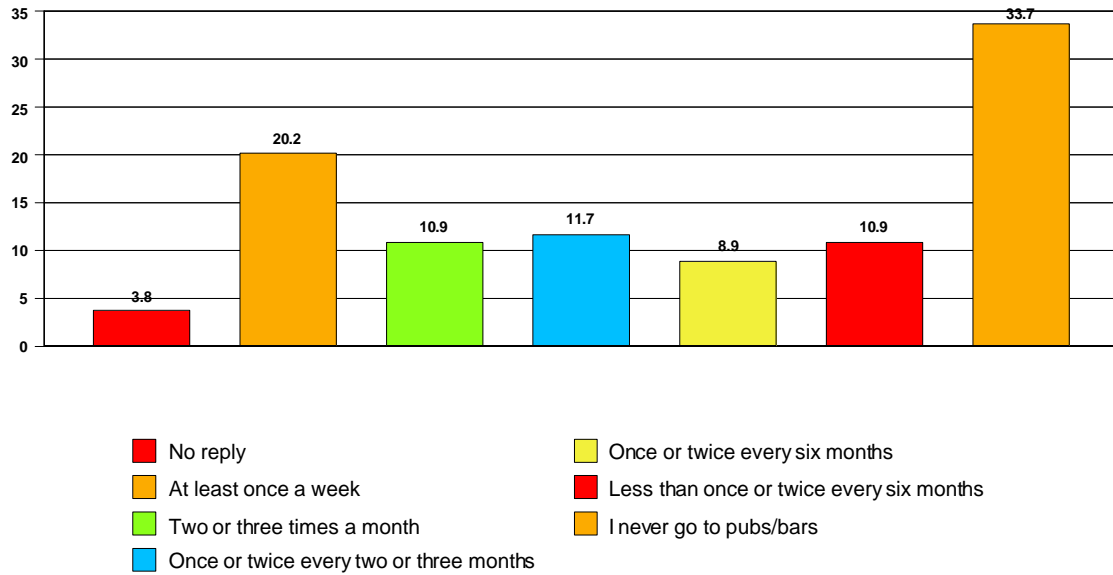
Restaurant standard	% that said poor
Access to a toilet for disabled people	48.0
Suitability of car parking on arrival	36.0
Availability of car parking on arrival	34.6
Ease of access to the building	29.6
Suitability of table and seating	23.9
Access to bar facilities	22.3
Access to restaurant facilities	20.9
Information given by the restaurant at the time of booking	17.4
Quality of directions	14.6
Availability of directions	14.0
Ease of reading signs	13.4
Helpfulness of staff	9.1
Ease of reading menus	6.5
Ease of ordering	6.1
Ease of payment	4.3
Ease of making a reservation	3.2

Respondents were asked how well restaurants catered for the needs of people with disabilities, 39.1% said not very well, 36.8% said OK and 20.5% said well or very well. They were then asked how restaurants should change so that they are more accommodating for people with disabilities. The top 10 responses have been collated in the table below with the most frequent comments at the top. The figures in the column on the right show the number of times a comment was made.

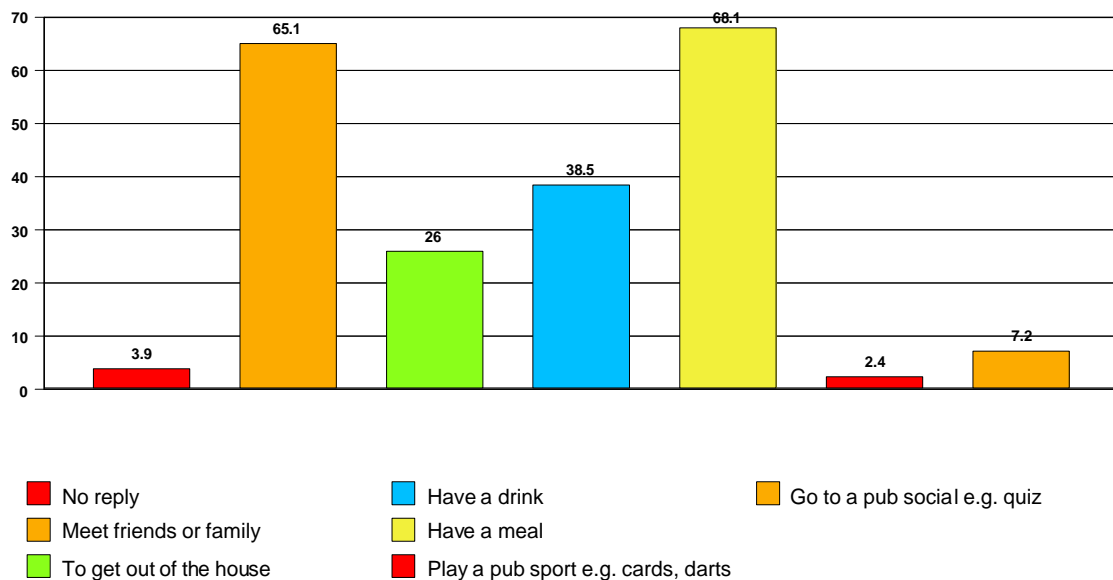
More room for wheelchairs between tables	47
Need ground floor disabled toilets, all restaurants should have disabled toilets with more space and no steps to them, nappy changing is required in disabled toilets	38
Have tables that are accessible, so one can get ones knees under	29
More access for wheel chair users, with ramps into buildings and not steps	24
Educate the staff to be a little more understanding	22
Supervise disabled parking so able bodied people do not abuse the facility. Disabled parking near entrance	19
Restaurants need more education for staff in the needs of disabled people and a disabled person should give advice when doing alterations	15
Staff should put themselves in a persons place who has the disability e.g. try using a wheelchair	15
No disabled parking available	14
They seem all right to me and they are getting there gradually	13

5.3 Pubs and bars results

How often do you go to a pub or bar?



Why do you go to a pub or bar?



The table below shows the areas where people with disabilities thought the pub and bar standards were poor, with the highest score at the top.

Pub and bar standard	% that said poor
Access to a toilet for disabled people	60.3
Access to garden areas	41.5
Availability of car parking on arrival	41.2
Suitability of car parking on arrival	39.7
Access to bar facilities	36.7
Ease of access to the building	36.1
Suitability of table and seating	35.8
Access to restaurant facilities	26.9
Helpfulness of staff	15.5

Respondents were asked how well they thought pubs and bars catered for the needs of people with disabilities, 55.2% said not very well, 33.7% said OK and 7.8% said well or very well. They were then asked how pubs and bars should change so that they are more accommodating for people with disabilities. The top 10 responses have been collated in the table below with the most frequent comments at the top. The figures in the column on the right show the number of times a comment was made.

More accessible buildings, garden and toilets, ramps not steps	29
Leave more space between tables	26
There should be more ramps into pubs and toilets for disabled people	25
Better toilet facilities	21
Lower bar area	21
Better staff training	20

Better access to the bar	18
Better disabled car parking near the entrance	18
Have table that one can get ones knees under	16
Use disabled people to give advice and access audits	13

5.4 Overall result

Car parking is an issue in this survey and it is important to note that 33.5% of people with disabilities said they always found people without orange and blue badges using allocated accessible car spaces. A further 49.7% said they very often found it and 15.8% said sometimes. Only 1% said they never found it happening.

In the last question of the survey we asked respondents to identify the most important issue for the hotel and catering industry to tackle first. Respondents were only able to tick one answer and the results are shown in the table below.

Issues to tackle	% of respondents
Car parking	25.5
Training staff to understand the needs of people with disabilities	25.3
Accessibility into buildings	21.8
Improving information given out to people with disabilities e.g. over phone, in writing	10.5
Availability of accessible toilets	10.3
Clear signage	2.4

6.0 Comparisons between industry sectors

In this section there is a comparison between the different sectors of the industry. The tables below shows how people with disabilities and their carers rated the service they received for each sector. In some cases comparisons could not be made e.g. bedrooms. These responses have been removed so that only a like for like rating is given. N/A means the question was not asked.

How often do you visit hotels/restaurants/pubs?

Response	Hotels	Restaurant	Pubs
At least once a week	0.0	18.0	20.2
Two or three times a month	1.0	22.0	10.9
Once or twice every two or three months	14.5	28.3	11.7
Once or twice every six months	37.6	13.1	8.9
Less than once or twice every six months	32.7	14.3	10.9
I never stay in hotels/restaurants/pubs	14.3	2.2	33.7

In this table the frequency of visit is clearly shown with hotels having the lowest number of visits and pubs/bars the highest.

How would you rate hotels/restaurants/pubs in the following areas?
The table shows those that said what was poor

Response	Hotels	Restaurant	Pubs
Ease of booking	3.5	3.2	N/A
Information given by the hotel at the time of booking	25.6	17.4	N/A
Availability of directions	10.2	14.0	N/A
Quality of directions given	13.2	14.6	N/A
Availability of car parking on arrival	29.1	34.6	41.2
Suitability of car parking on arrival	31.2	36.0	39.7
Helpfulness of staff	6.7	9.1	15.5
Suitability of table and seating	N/A	23.9	35.8
Access to bar facilities	18.2	22.3	36.7
Access to restaurant facilities	14.5	20.9	26.9
Access to a toilet for disabled people	33.0	48.0	60.3

The yellow highlighted boxes show the highest poor scores in each section. Pubs have the highest poor scores and also the highest frequency of use. If they wish to take advantage of the business opportunity they need to take positive action. All sectors need to look at car parking and accessible toilets. Hotels should pay more attention to the amount of information they collect at the time of booking and restaurants should look at the suitability of their seating.

In general how well do you think restaurants/hotel/pubs cater for the needs of people with disabilities?

Response	Hotels	Restaurant	Pubs
Very well	9.2	7.1	1.8
Well	9.0	13.4	6.0
OK	35.3	36.8	33.7
Not very well	46.0	39.1	55.2
Not sure	0.5	0.4	0.9

It is apparent from this table that no sector is really meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

7.0 Variances between types of respondents

In the first question respondents were asked to identify from a list of statements those that applied to them. In this section the variances between these statements have been identified. The questions are shown in bold. The author has highlighted figures that he believes are significant. For example the role of the carer, how often they use hotel and catering facilities and what they expect. It is apparent that the carer can be both a decision maker and a key influencer when it comes to the frequency of usage of hotel and catering facilities.

The key for the tables is: -

- Column one – I am a carer
- Column two – I am a wheelchair user
- Column three – I am visually impaired
- Column four – I have a hearing impairment
- Column five – I have an impairment
- Column six – I drive myself
- Column seven – I am unable to drive myself
- Column eight– Overall

Please tell us which of these statements apply to you.

Response	1	2	3	4
I am a carer	100.0	9.5	0.0	22.8
I am a wheelchair user	39.2	100.0	50.0	54.4
I am visually impaired	0.0	0.6	100.0	0.0
I have a hearing impairment	16.5	9.5	0.0	100.0
I have an impairment	54.4	25.5	50.0	80.7
I drive myself	68.4	76.1	0.0	86.0
I am unable to drive myself	2.5	12.9	100.0	3.5

Response	5	6	7	8
I am a carer	22.2	14.5	3.8	15.6
I am a wheelchair user	42.8	66.5	80.8	64.6
I am visually impaired	1.0	0.0	7.7	0.8
I have a hearing impairment	23.7	13.1	3.8	11.3
I have an impairment	100.0	14.6	21.2	38.4
I drive myself	79.9	100.0	0.0	73.9
I am unable to drive myself	5.7	0.0	100.0	10.3

How often do you stay in hotels?

Response	1	2	3	4
At least once a week	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Two or three times a month	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0
Once or twice every two or three months	32.9	16.6	0.0	3.5
Once or twice every six months	25.3	35.0	50.0	22.8
Less than once or twice every six months	35.4	34.0	50.0	66.7
I never stay in hotels	6.3	12.9	0.0	7.0

Response	5	6	7	8
At least once a week	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Two or three times a month	0.0	0.0	5.8	1.0
Once or twice every two or three months	22.7	16.9	3.8	14.5
Once or twice every six months	40.7	38.6	23.1	37.6
Less than once or twice every six months	28.9	31.9	26.9	32.7
I never stay in hotels	7.7	12.6	40.4	14.3

The highlighted figures show the highest level of frequency response for each type of person.

On average how long would you stay in a hotel?

Response	1	2	3	4
One night	4.1	10.6	0.0	9.4
Two to three nights	60.8	66.9	50.0	52.8
Four to five nights	0.0	10.6	50.0	13.2
About a week	21.6	4.9	0.0	24.5
More than a week	13.5	6.3	0.0	0.0

Response	5	6	7	8
One night	7.3	12.3	0.0	11.1
Two to three nights	59.2	61.7	64.5	57.7
Four to five nights	13.4	9.5	12.9	12.9
About a week	15.1	11.0	16.1	11.3
More than a week	3.9	4.9	6.5	6.5

The most frequent usage is with carers, wheelchair users, drivers and passengers.

When you stay in a hotel please tell us the reason for the stay?

Response	1	2	3	4
Business	29.7	16.5	0.0	3.8
Weekend or Short Break	77.0	67.6	50.0	81.1
Holiday	70.3	53.9	100.0	43.4

Response	5	6	7	8
Business	15.1	10.7	9.7	11.8
Weekend or Short Break	80.4	70.2	54.8	68.4
Holiday	57.5	54.0	67.7	56.8

The highlighted figures show the top reason that different types of respondents gave for staying in hotels.

How would you rate hotels in the following areas? The table shows those that said what was poor

Information required	1	2	3	4
Ease of booking	2.7	5.3	0.0	0.0
Information given by the hotel at the time of booking	43.2	31.3	0.0	50.9
Availability of directions	2.7	10.9	0.0	5.7
Quality of directions given	6.8	13.0	0.0	9.4
Ease of readability for marketing material	9.5	11.3	50.0	15.1
Availability of car parking on arrival	20.3	32.7	0.0	13.2
Suitability of car parking on arrival	52.7	33.1	0.0	7.5
Ease of check – in	0.0	12.7	0.0	9.4
Helpfulness of staff	4.1	7.4	0.0	37.7
Location of room	13.5	17.6	0.0	18.9
Signage around the hotel	51.4	19.0	50.0	17.0
Room facilities	20.3	36.6	50.0	50.9
Bathroom facilities	31.1	35.6	50.0	22.6
Layout of room	27.0	29.6	50.0	17.0
Access to bar facilities	40.5	22.2	0.0	11.3
Access to restaurant facilities	16.2	15.1	0.0	13.2
Access to a toilet for disabled people	35.1	34.9	0.0	20.8

Information required	5	6	7	8
Ease of booking	1.1	1.8	0.0	3.5
Information given by the hotel at the time of booking	31.8	25.5	16.1	25.6
Availability of directions	8.9	11.3	22.6	10.2
Quality of directions given	11.2	15.6	6.5	13.2
Ease of readability for marketing material	7.3	9.5	16.1	10.4
Availability of car parking on arrival	19.0	30.7	29.0	29.1
Suitability of car parking on arrival	29.1	30.4	35.5	31.2
Ease of check – in	2.2	10.1	0.0	9.2
Helpfulness of staff	14.5	8.3	0.0	6.7
Location of room	15.6	16.0	9.7	17.6
Signage around the hotel	24.6	16.3	32.3	19.4
Room facilities	28.5	27.9	38.7	29.3
Bathroom facilities	21.2	29.1	35.5	32.1
Layout of room	15.1	22.1	48.4	25.4
Access to bar facilities	22.3	19.0	16.1	18.2
Access to restaurant facilities	8.9	12.0	6.5	14.5
Access to a toilet for disabled people	20.1	31.0	58.1	33.0

It is interesting to see how people with different disabilities and their carers rate the service provided by hotels.

In general, how well do you think hotels cater for the needs of people with disabilities?

Response	1	2	3	4
Very well	0.0	7.7	0.0	5.7
Well	5.4	3.9	50.0	5.7
OK	25.7	34.2	50.0	62.3
Not very well	68.9	53.5	0.0	26.4
Not sure	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0

Response	5	6	7	8
Very well	8.4	6.7	0.0	9.2
Well	13.4	9.5	19.4	9.0
OK	40.8	36.8	32.3	35.3
Not very well	37.4	46.9	48.4	46.0
Not sure	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5

Carers and wheelchair users have the poorest opinion of hotels.

How often do you visit a restaurant?

Response	1	2	3	4
At least once a week	7.6	19.0	0.0	3.5
Two or three times a month	40.5	23.0	50.0	10.5
Once or twice every two or three months	24.1	27.6	50.0	24.6
Once or twice every six months	11.4	15.0	0.0	14.0
Less than once or twice every six months	2.5	13.5	0.0	47.4
I never visit restaurants	3.8	1.8	0.0	0.0

Response	5	6	7	8
At least once a week	16.5	17.7	36.5	18.0
Two or three times a month	29.4	20.4	28.8	22.0
Once or twice every two or three months	33.0	26.3	17.3	28.3
Once or twice every six months	3.1	15.0	7.7	13.1
Less than once or twice every six months	16.5	17.7	3.8	14.3
I never visit restaurants	1.5	2.9	0.0	2.2

The highlighted figures show the highest level of frequency for each type of respondent.

What is the main reason for visiting a restaurant?

Response	1	2	3	4
Business	28.9	12.2	0.0	3.5
Change of environment	73.7	45.9	50.0	29.6
To meet family/friends	34.2	66.9	100.0	59.6

Response	5	6	7	8
Business	14.7	9.4	0.0	8.9
Change of environment	59.2	48.3	63.5	50.0
To meet family/friends	59.7	64.9	44.2	60.7

Carers are more likely to use restaurants for a change of environment and business while a person with a visual impairment is more likely to meet family/friends.

How would you rate restaurants in the following areas? The table shows those that said what was poor

Information required	1	2	3	4
Ease of making a reservation	2.6	3.1	0.0	3.5
Information given by the restaurant at the time of booking	10.5	20.6	0.0	43.9
Availability of directions	7.9	14.7	0.0	8.8
Quality of directions given	7.9	15.6	0.0	3.5
Availability of car parking on arrival	56.6	37.8	0.0	31.6
Suitability of car parking on arrival	51.3	39.1	0.0	31.6
Ease of reading signs	23.7	11.9	50.0	29.8
Ease of reading menus	7.9	5.9	50.0	8.8
Ease of access to the building	55.3	31.9	50.0	26.3
Helpfulness of staff	23.7	7.5	0.0	10.5
Suitability of table and seating	50.0	23.4	0.0	31.6
Ease of ordering	0.0	8.1	0.0	7.0
Access to bar facilities	28.9	23.8	0.0	24.6
Access to restaurant facilities	53.9	19.7	0.0	21.1
Access to a toilet for disabled people	75.0	51.9	0.0	71.9
Ease of payment	0.0	4.1	0.0	8.8

In the table above and on the next page the boxes in yellow show the highest poor ratings for each type of respondent.

Information required	5	6	7	8
Ease of making a reservation	3.1	3.9	0.0	3.2
Information given by the restaurant at the time of booking	19.4	22.7	0.0	17.4
Availability of directions	9.9	16.9	11.5	14.0
Quality of directions given	9.9	18.5	5.8	14.6
Availability of car parking on arrival	39.8	37.6	23.1	34.6
Suitability of car parking on arrival	41.9	39.2	32.7	36.0
Ease of reading signs	12.6	13.8	17.3	13.4
Ease of reading menus	3.7	5.0	9.6	6.5
Ease of access to the building	31.9	33.7	34.6	29.6
Helpfulness of staff	17.8	9.4	13.5	9.1
Suitability of table and seating	35.6	23.8	32.7	23.9
Ease of ordering	3.1	6.4	9.6	6.1
Access to bar facilities	20.9	23.8	23.1	22.3
Access to restaurant facilities	32.5	23.8	17.3	20.9
Access to a toilet for disabled people	63.4	48.6	36.5	48.0
Ease of payment	5.2	4.4	5.8	4.3

In general, how well do you think restaurants cater for the needs of people with disabilities?

Response	1	2	3	4
Very well	7.9	2.5	0.0	5.3
Well	2.6	15.6	50.0	0.0
OK	32.9	39.4	50.0	3.5
Not very well	40.8	41.6	0.0	82.5
Not sure	2.6	0.0	0.0	3.5

Response	5	6	7	8
Very well	11.5	5.5	0.0	7.1
Well	8.4	11.3	32.7	13.4
OK	38.2	40.1	32.7	36.8
Not very well	40.8	41.7	28.8	39.1
Not sure	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.4

The highlighted figures show the respondents who gave a higher than average score of not very well.

How often do you visit a pub/bar?

Response	1	2	3	4
At least once a week	7.6	19.0	50.0	5.3
Two or three times a month	12.7	10.7	50.0	14.0
Once or twice every two or three months	3.8	14.7	0.0	5.3
Once or twice every six months	11.4	9.8	0.0	3.5
Less than once or twice every six months	10.1	9.8	0.0	8.8
I never visit pubs/bars	44.3	33.4	0.0	57.9

Response	5	6	7	8
At least once a week	17.5	19.8	44.2	20.2
Two or three times a month	15.5	10.7	17.3	10.9
Once or twice every two or three months	6.7	13.9	3.8	11.7
Once or twice every six months	6.7	8.3	9.6	8.9
Less than once or twice every six months	10.3	11.3	0.0	10.9
I never visit pubs/bars	42.3	34.6	19.2	33.7

The high percentage of people never using pubs and bars shows the business opportunity available. The highlighted figures show the highest usage for each type of respondent.

When you go to a pub/bar please tell us the reason for the visit?

Response	1	2	3	4
Meet friends or family	70.5	59.4	100.0	79.2
To get out of the house	22.7	22.6	50.0	25.0
Have a drink	50.0	36.9	50.0	37.5
Have a meal	72.7	70.0	100.0	50.0
Play a pub sport e.g. cards, darts	4.5	0.9	0.0	8.3
Go to a pub social e.g. quiz	9.1	8.3	50.0	8.3

Response	5	6	7	8
Meet friends or family	80.4	68.0	45.2	65.1
To get out of the house	37.5	22.1	61.9	26.0
Have a drink	53.6	35.7	38.1	38.5
Have a meal	65.2	64.3	81.0	68.1
Play a pub sport e.g. cards, darts	1.8	2.5	0.0	2.4
Go to a pub social e.g. quiz	7.1	6.1	9.5	7.2

The highlighted figures show the top reason that each type of respondent had for visiting a pub or bar.

How would you rate pubs/bars in the following areas? The table shows those that said what was poor

Information required	1	2	3	4
Ease of access to the building	72.7	33.6	0.0	58.3
Availability of car parking on arrival	36.4	47.5	0.0	20.8
Suitability of car parking on arrival	54.5	39.6	0.0	20.8
Helpfulness of staff	11.4	15.7	0.0	8.3
Suitability of table and seating	50.0	38.2	50.0	29.2
Access to bar facilities	52.3	44.2	0.0	50.0
Access to restaurant facilities	50.0	28.6	50.0	20.8
Access to a toilet for disabled people	77.3	60.8	0.0	54.2
Access to garden area	43.2	43.3	50.0	33.3

Information required	5	6	7	8
Ease of access to the building	32.1	36.9	16.7	36.1
Availability of car parking on arrival	39.3	43.4	31.0	41.2
Suitability of car parking on arrival	38.4	36.5	35.7	39.7
Helpfulness of staff	19.6	20.1	7.1	15.5
Suitability of table and seating	31.3	36.5	40.5	35.8
Access to bar facilities	28.6	35.2	31.0	36.7
Access to restaurant facilities	18.8	25.4	23.8	26.9
Access to a toilet for disabled people	63.4	61.5	40.5	60.3
Access to garden area	47.3	41.0	42.9	41.5

The highlighted figures in the table above show the highest three poor scores for each type of respondent.

In general, how well do you think pubs/bars cater for the needs of people with disabilities?

Response	1	2	3	4
Very well	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Well	0.0	5.1	50.0	0.0
OK	25.0	33.6	0.0	12.5
Not very well	68.2	57.6	50.0	75.0
Not sure	6.8	0.0	0.0	0.0

Response	5	6	7	8
Very well	2.7	2.5	0.0	1.8
Well	9.8	7.4	4.8	6.0
OK	33.0	33.2	40.5	33.7
Not very well	50.0	53.7	54.8	55.2
Not sure	2.7	1.2	0.0	0.9

The three poorest figures have been highlighted.

How often do you find cars without blue or orange badges using bays marked for people with disabilities?

Response	1	2	3	4
Always	21.5	30.7	0.0	10.5
Very often	65.8	50.6	50.0	78.9
Sometimes	12.7	17.8	50.0	10.5
Never	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0

Response	5	6	7	8
Always	27.3	33.2	51.9	33.5
Very often	63.4	48.8	32.7	49.7
Sometimes	9.3	16.6	15.4	15.8
Never	0.0	1.3	0.0	1.0

The abuse of car parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities is disgraceful and urgent action is required by the Industry.

Which of these issues relating to people with disabilities do you think is the most important for the hotel and catering industry to tackle first?

Response	1	2	3	4
Car parking	22.8	23.3	0.0	19.3
Training staff to understand the needs of people with disabilities	25.3	19.9	50.0	38.6
Improving information given out to people with disabilities e.g. over phone, in writing	6.3	11.3	50.0	10.5
Accessibility into buildings	31.6	24.2	0.0	12.3
Availability of accessible toilets	10.4	12.3	0.0	5.3
Clear signage	3.8	3.7	0.0	5.3

Response	5	6	7	8
Car parking	24.7	25.2	28.8	25.5
Training staff to understand the needs of people with disabilities	32.0	28.7	19.2	25.3
Improving information given out to people with disabilities e.g. over phone, in writing	9.8	10.5	17.3	10.5
Accessibility into buildings	14.4	18.8	28.8	21.8
Availability of accessible toilets	9.8	9.7	5.8	10.3
Clear signage	3.1	3.2	0.0	2.4

The highlighted figures show the top issue for each type of respondent. Although car parking is the top point overall it is only rated number one by those who do not drive themselves.

8.0 Comments and recommendations of the author

AF stays in hotels between 100 and 150 nights per year. He also eats out regularly in a variety of pubs and restaurants. As part of his consultancy work he visits all sectors of the industry and has to overcome the difficulties of using a wheelchair. In this section AF has made a number of comments based on the results of the research and his experiences of the industry.

They are: -

- 1) AF plans to continue this research on an annual basis. He will ensure that future research includes more responses from non wheelchair users. This will include those with hearing and visual impairments so the hotel and catering industry fully understands their needs.
- 2) The Caterer and Hotelkeeper magazine estimated that the market value from people with disabilities was £5 billion. It is apparent from this research that there is a huge opportunity to gain more business from this market segment for hotels, restaurants, pubs and bars.
- 3) To prove the business case 37.6% of respondents are staying in hotels once or twice every six months and 57.7% said they stayed for two to three nights. The most common type of stay is for a weekend or short break (68.4%) so the value of the visit is high especially when they may be accompanied by a member of the family, a friend or a carer. However, 46% said hotels did not cater for the needs of people with disabilities very well. The biggest issues that need to be addressed are access to toilets, suitability and availability of car parking on arrival, bathroom facilities and layout of the bedroom. If the business opportunity is to be grabbed then these issues must be resolved quickly.

- 4) Another issue that can improve the service to people with disabilities is obtaining more information at the time of booking. 28.3% said that this was poor at present. A person with a disability is likely to ask for specific requirements at the time of booking so if staff are well trained and alert they should know what questions to ask. For example if you know a person is arriving by car at 6pm then someone can ensure a car parking space is available. Those wanting to provide excellent service would mark the space reserved with the name of the resident. This would give an excellent first impression and solve the car parking issues raised in the research.
- 5) In the open question respondents suggested hotels using a disabled person/consultant to offer advice on hotel design. It is apparent from the research that hotels would greatly benefit from an access audit as this would highlight key issues, put them in priority order and help hotels plan ahead for any reasonable capital expenditure. One issue that can be tackled straight away is disability awareness training for staff. This would improve the service provided and increase the return visits from people with disabilities. In my own case I have great loyalty to the hotels that I know will look after me. I may well divert my journey by half an hour so I can stay in a hotel where I will experience very few difficulties.
- 6) A similar situation can be seen in restaurants, pubs and bars. The business case in pubs and bars is even stronger with 20.2% using pubs once a week while it is 18% in restaurants. In restaurants people with disabilities want a change of environment and to meet family and friends. In pubs it is to have a meal and meet family and friends.

- 7) In restaurants the main problems for people with disabilities are access to a toilet, suitability and availability of car parking, ease of access into and around the building and suitability of tables and seating. As a wheelchair user it is surprising the number of times one finds that one can't get ones knees under the table. The result is sitting too far away from a table and dropping food. In pubs and bars the poor access to toilets was highlighted by 60.3% followed by access to gardens (41.5%) and then availability (41.2%) and suitability (39.7%) of the car park. If people with disabilities can't park their cars and access the facilities then their usage is unlikely to increase. Under the DDA there is a requirement to make reasonable adjustments and surely it is reasonable to ensure people with disabilities can use garden facilities.
- 8) The poor scores for pubs and bars are much higher than the other sectors surveyed and they need to take action now. AF has visited pubs that provide a ramp into the building but then it is impossible to manoeuvre a wheelchair into the restaurant. On top of that many pubs visited do not have accessible toilets and this can lead to some very embarrassing and distressing situations. The DDA allows people with disabilities to claim for hurt feelings and this could be a situation that results in an investigation by the Disability Rights Commission, especially if the pub concerned is not prepared to take reasonable remedial action and put in an accessible toilet.
- 9) The overall results show the abuse of car parking spaces that is taking place. If able bodied people abuse the spaces provided for blue and orange badge holders then they should be identified and asked to move their cars. Some supermarkets and retail stores are now naming and shaming errant car owners over the loudspeaker system and asking them to move their car from the marked spaces.

- 10) The top three issues for the industry to tackle are car parking, disability awareness training and access to buildings. The first two can be achieved quickly and with little cost. Access can be improved over time but many wheelchair situations could be solved if portable ramps were available and staff were alert to when people with disabilities might need them.
- 11) The comparisons between sectors show that the greatest room for improvement is in pubs and bars. However, each sector needs to be aware of what it has to do and this can be seen in the following table. It shows the top five issues for each sector based on the poor scoring by respondents.

	Hotels	Restaurants	Pubs and bars
1	Access to a toilet	Access to a toilet	Access to a toilet
2	Suitability of car parking on arrival	Suitability of car parking on arrival	Availability of car parking on arrival
3	Information given at the time of booking	Availability of car parking on arrival	Suitability of car parking on arrival
4	Availability of car parking on arrival	Suitability of table and seating	Access to bar facilities
5	Access to bar facilities	Access to bar facilities	Suitability of table and seating

- 12) The section showing the variances between the different types of respondents highlights the importance of the carer. This could be a member of the family or a friend and they are decision makers and key influencers. Anyone that is serious about attracting more people with disabilities should read the section starting on page 19

9.0 Conclusion

About twelve months ago AF attended a breakfast meeting hosted by the Caterer and Hotelkeeper magazine. At the meeting a senior figure from the Disability Rights Commission suggested it would take 15 years for society to make changes so that people with disabilities would be fully accepted into society. The Hotel and Catering Industry must not wait that long. It needs to take action now so that it can take advantage of the business opportunity, if it doesn't then it is going to lose many billions of pounds in both revenue and profit.

It is apparent from my stays in hotels and visits to restaurants, pubs and bars there is some reticent to fully embrace the DDA. It is uncertain whether it is the lack of understanding of the market or not knowing how to deal with and help people with disabilities. Statistics show that one in five people will have some form of disability in their life. Most, if not all others will have a member of the family or a friend that will need help in dealing with a disability. Surely it is every disabled person's right to be able to use the facilities provided by the hotel and catering industry. Therefore we all have a part to play.

The research highlights the need for improved car parking, training of staff in disability awareness and improved accessibility. Car parks must have: clearly marked bays near the entrance for people with disabilities; bays with extra space at the rear and side so wheelchairs, walking aids and other luggage can be off loaded easily; and everyone has a role to play in minimising the abuse of car parking spaces. If this means naming and shaming some guests then so be it.

Many staff are brilliant with people but they may have some reticence about the best way of helping a person with a disability. They need to understand what it is like in a wheelchair trying to avoid the many obstacles placed around a hotel or restaurant. Just think how difficult it is for a visually impaired person to negotiate a corridor that has trays of dirty crockery, housekeeping trolleys, vacuum cleaners and trailing wires. And then there is the wheelchair user who is trying to negotiate occupied restaurant tables in an effort to reach an accessible toilet.

It is vital that more information is taken at the time of booking so all staff can be made aware of the needs of people staying or visiting. Staff will then be alert and ready to help. The additional use of disability awareness training will improve the quality of service provided and quickly build up customer loyalty. Surely these are simple, low cost and positive ways forward for all sectors of the hospitality industry.

It is hoped that in future research there will be positive improvements in all aspects of the industry. If there are not then it won't be long before the value of hurt feelings is tested in the courts. This is the penalty under the DDA for non compliance. What would you award in compensation for the wedding that was ruined because the bride's favourite auntie could not get into the reception or use the toilet? On top of the financial penalty there is the loss of reputation and future business. Surely it is safer, easier and more cost effective to take on board the issues in this research and gain significant competitive advantage.

10.0 About the author

Arnold Fewell has spent over 30 years in the Hotel and Catering Industry in a variety of line management positions. After leaving college with a Higher National Diploma he spent eleven years with Trusthouse Forte Hotels and was General Manager at three separate locations in Chipping Norton, Abergavenny and Ilkley.

In 1985 he joined North Yorkshire County Council as Catering Manager. He took over an unpopular service that failed to meet the needs of customers. He transformed this into a popular and highly successful catering service using innovative marketing techniques centred on the customers' request for Healthy Eating. It resulted in savings of £2 million per year, the creation of hundreds of new jobs with market share rising from 21% to 60%.

In recognition of his achievements he won the 1988 Foodservice Catey and in 1989 he was the key figure behind North Yorkshire County Council becoming the first authority to win a Chartered Institute of Marketing Award and The Daily Telegraph Award for Marketing Innovation. In the words of the Chartered Institute of Marketing he "pioneered a marketing revolution in a local authority environment".

In 1988 he joined Gardner Merchant where he opened up the Grant Maintained Schools market and was promoted to Divisional Marketing Director for Education. He started his own marketing consultancy in September 1990 and specialises in the Hotel and Catering Industry. In 1992 his first book was published by Butterworth Heinemann.

Arnold has worked for a wide range of clients including Sodexho (formerly Gardner Merchant), The Bank of England, Consort Hotels, McCain, Green

Gourmet, Induced Energy, Barconwood, the Hotel and Catering International Management Association, the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA), the Association of Civic Hosts, Anchor Trust, HBS Catering, City Leisure in Salford, Thanet Leisureforce and a large number of Local Authorities for a variety of departments. The work includes developing and implementing marketing strategies, market research, operational reviews, training, video production, copy writing, promotional strategies and disability training.

In September 1998, Arnold was the first independent marketing consultant to become an Accredited Training Provider for Hospitality Assured. This is a standard of best practice for the Hotel and Catering Industry, which recognises and rewards high standards of customer service. In June 2001 Arnold won the LACA Nan Berger Award for his work on the Sodexo School Meals Survey and in June 2005 he won the LACA Roger Davis Award for outstanding achievement in Local Authority Catering.

In July 2003 he won the LACA Award for Marketing for the www.myschoollunch.co.uk website, in 2004 he won the Cost Sector Marketing Award and was short listed for the Group Marketing Category in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper Awards 2004. The website was the overall, worldwide winner in the Management Advisory Services Award run by the Foodservice Consultants Society International.

Arnold is a wheelchair user and is now developing training resources to help the hotel and catering industry meet the challenges and opportunities of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2004. He is keen to show hoteliers that the DDA can have real business benefits.