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## PRESS RELEASE

### **The AA and AccessChamp to work in partnership to improve customer service standards for disabled guests.**

The AA and AccessChamp have announced a new partnership that will help drive up standards of customer service in hotels for disabled guests. They will provide joint training courses, create a new checklist for hotel inspectors, and promote on line training solutions from AccessChamp. The market value, as identified by VisitEngland, is well over £2 billion and at present hotels are not taking full advantage of this market opportunity.

The AA is one of the UK's most recognised and trusted brands. Each year the AA's team of inspectors visits and rates thousands of establishments, from hotels and restaurants to guest accommodation, campsites and self-catering properties. The AA is the only UK wide accommodation assessing organisation, and inspects under a set of common standards shared with the three national tourist boards, ensuring consistency with every accommodation rating scheme in the UK.

AccessChamp is a new online training resource for managers to complete an e-learning programme and then be able to deliver a wide range of coffee time training chats. These cover ways of improving customer service for mobility, sight, and hearing impaired people. In this way great customer service for disabled people can be quickly and easily trained in and will help increase profitability in this growing market. AccessChamp was created by Arnold Fewell, who is a former Hotel General Manager with Trusthouse Forte and is now a permanent wheelchair user who has been trained in how to look after people with different impairments.

Simon Numphud, Head of Hotel Services, from the AA, said, "This is a really exciting development for the AA as it enables us to enhance the inspection process and provide our clients with ways of improving the service they provide to all customers. We have many enquiries about accessibility each month and now we can direct hoteliers to a valuable and well

respected source of information. In the autumn we plan to introduce an accessibility checklist that we will develop with AccessChamp.”

Arnold Fewell, Managing Director of AccessChamp, added, “I have stayed in many hotels since I was disabled after an accident 14 years ago. I know that hotel staff need to gain more confidence when helping a disabled person and training using the AccessChamp resources will achieve that. I hope hotels will create an AccessChamp for their property and that they will be part of the senior management team. This will go a long way to put accessibility on the sales and marketing agenda and so increase occupancy and profitability. The partnership will develop over time but it represents two organisations that are committed to provide great customer service.”

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