

Guests and Contracts?



SUMMARY

Making sure all eventualities are covered in the contract you have with you guests is vital. This together with understanding what to do if they cancel is an important part of operating your business successfully.

There are regulations and laws relating to whether you can pick and choose your customers and how you treat certain categories of guests. It is also important to remember that once a booking has been agreed with a customer a contract exists in the eyes of the Law. This contract cannot be changed without the express agreement of BOTH parties.

If you take chance customers (this does not apply if you only ever take pre-booked guests) you can only refuse to take a guest if

- They appear unable or unwilling to pay
- They are not in a fit state e.g. drunk

Remember nobody can refuse to take a guest (subject to availability of a room) on the basis of disability, gender or race.

Provision for people with disabilities are covered separately (see the section of whodoiask.com that deals with this issue specifically)

BOOKINGS

Once you have accepted a booking from a guest this becomes a contract. You may only change the terms of the booking with the agreement of both parties – you and the guest. This applies to bookings made over the phone, by email, fax as well as a letter.

Make sure that all terms and conditions of booking e.g. deposits are fully understood by the customer including your cancellation policy. Check out any terms and conditions you apply with your legal advisor do not just copy another establishments.

Make sure that you have a cancellation policy and if the guests will be staying some time encourage them to take out cancellation insurance (see the insurance section of whodoiask.com). If a booking is made by credit card some companies provided this service automatically.

Contact your relevant trade or tourist association as many have organised cancellation policies to suit small operators.



KEY POINTS

- Make sure you are familiar with the laws relating to "choosing" customers.
- Take time to develop a terms and conditions document for your business.
- Ensure that your customers are aware of your terms and conditions at the time when they make the booking/pay the deposit.