

John's story

- John is caring for wife Jane who suffers from aphasia
- Jane needs to be in a wheelchair - she can walk a few metres if aided but cannot walk up or down any steps or stairs at all
- They have not had a holiday for four years.

Our holiday was totally ruined! We were so looking forward to it but I guess it's my own fault for trusting the hotel booking officer and not double checking. But how much can we keep checking if they simply don't understand or care and just want our money anyway!

Due to Jane's condition, I specifically selected a hotel that clearly stated it had wheel chair access. I went further and specified I wanted a hotel room on the ground floor – I even said I would be willing to pay extra to secure this – I just didn't want to take any chances for the lifts not working! We haven't had a break for such a long time, I wanted the holiday to be special and completely stress free.

When we arrived at the hotel, the car park was quite a distance away from the reception unlike what I had been told. To compound it, you had to go up the steps from the car park to get to the reception – this was never made clear either - even though they should have picked it up when I rang with the questions.

I had to wheel Jane up a long roundabout path to get to the reception only to be told the wheel chair access was all the way back of the building through the kitchen!

But there's more – we had to go through two fire exit doors which could only be opened by the reception at the front of the hotel!

Finally, I lost my temper when the receptionist made some excuse about overbooking and tried to sweeten me with a “nicer room” on another floor.

Even after a lot of stress and resolving this, it just didn't end there – the hotel restaurant was on the ground floor but had a couple of steps at the entrance. When we went out to an outside restaurant in the town same sort of problem – steps leading from the restaurant to the toilets. Shouldn't have relied on a recommendation. After blaming everyone else, I end up blaming myself for not coping.

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questions:

1. why does John feel he cannot cope?

2. why does John blame himself?

3. what could the staff at the hotel done differently to avoid embarrassment and distress to John and Jane?

4. as an organisation how aware are we of the difficulties faced by people with special needs and those who care for them?

5. what could I or my organisation do differently in the future to ensure difficulties are resolved sensitively and appropriately?
