



NEW HOMES  
OMBUDSMAN SERVICE

# Reasonable Adjustments



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The New Homes Ombudsman Service [NHOS] is committed to providing an excellent service to all our customers. We recognise that some customers may need us to change the way in which we normally deliver our services to them. This is called making a 'reasonable adjustment'.

We must take reasonable steps in the way that we work to ensure we are compliant with Equality & Diversity legislation and regulations.

This policy does not seek to explain how we will approach every situation, it is intended as a general statement of our policy and:

- confirms our commitment to improving accessibility for everybody with whom we deal
- sets out some of the basic principles of our legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments
- sets out the factors that we will take into account in dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments

## 2. WHAT IS A REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT?

A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way that we usually do things to ensure that we are fair to all our customers. For example, this may involve providing information in a different format.

NHOS will not make assumptions about whether a person requires any adjustments or about what those adjustments should be. We will discuss the requirements with the person concerned and seek to reach agreement on what may be reasonable in the circumstances.

## 3. OUR LEGAL DUTIES IN RELATION TO DISABLED PEOPLE

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people, defined by the Act as "those who have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

## 4. DUTY TO MAKE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

NHOS has a legal duty to make adjustments as a service provider if the way that we carry out

our functions, the absence of an auxiliary aid, or any physical feature places the disabled person at a 'substantial disadvantage' compared to someone who is not disabled.

The duty requires NHOS to consider what can be done to overcome any such disadvantage, and whether an adjustment can be made which is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case.

NHOS will use its best efforts to agree in advance with the individual the reasonable adjustments that we are able to make and provide reasons when it may not be possible.

## 5. REQUESTING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

To request a reasonable adjustment, please contact our offices by telephone, in writing or by email. You can ask for a reasonable adjustment at any time during the complaints process.

We will let customers know that we can provide reasonable adjustments, for example in the following ways:

- by including a paragraph in written communications
- by asking whether an adjustment might be required over the telephone
- by including a note on our website and our published documents indicating that we can provide the document in an alternative format on request
- by publishing this policy on our website

## 6. TYPES OF REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT WE CAN OFFER

Whilst we will consider each request for reasonable adjustments individually, there are some common adjustments which we will offer as a matter of course and some other adjustments that we can make particular arrangements to provide.

The adjustments will always be agreed with the person concerned to avoid making incorrect assumptions about a person's needs.

Some examples of the simple reasonable adjustments that staff can make may include:

- providing documents or correspondence in a larger font size
- providing documents on coloured paper or with a specific colour contrast which can often help people with conditions such as dyslexia
- allowing a person who has a learning disability or mental health problems more time than would usually be allowed to provide further information—except where there is a statutory deadline which we have no power to change
- using email or the telephone in preference to hard copy letters where appropriate, which may assist those with a vision impairment
- speaking clearly to our customers and offering additional time to cover the issues they need to discuss—this will help everyone understand our processes and procedures
- using plain English language appropriate to the person we are dealing with and avoiding jargon
- providing assistance and guidance on the use of our website translation tool
- using Language Line to assist customers whose first language is not English
- using Text Relay for deaf persons

A minority of requests may require more detailed consideration and our approach to these requests is discussed in the section below.

## 7. OUR RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FOR REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT

In the majority of cases we will be able to agree and deliver the required reasonable adjustments with a minimum of delay. In some cases, we may need to consider in more detail how best to overcome the difficulty a disabled person may be experiencing.

## 8. HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT IS "REASONABLE"?

The Equality Act does not define what is 'reasonable' but guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission suggests what the most relevant factors are. We will therefore rely on this to help us in more difficult cases.

### Will the adjustment help in overcoming the difficulty that the disabled person may have?

The adjustment should be designed to fully address the disadvantage it is meant to overcome—for example providing an audio version of documents may not properly overcome the barriers faced by the disabled person if there are other requirements that need to be overcome if, for example, the customer also has a hearing impairment.

### How practical is it to provide the adjustment?

What are the resource implications of making the adjustment? How much will it cost and is this proportionate to the adjustment being requested.

### Would the adjustment cause disruption to others?

For example, the amount of extra time provided must be 'reasonable' in all the circumstances.

The consideration of whether an adjustment is 'reasonable' is judged against the following:

- The effectiveness of the adjustment(s) in preventing the disadvantage
- The extent to which it is practical for NHOS to make the adjustment(s)
- The cost and availability of resources, including external assistance and finance
- The extent to which making the adjustment(s) would disrupt NHOS activities.

## 9. MONITORING

NHOS will record and monitor the reasonable adjustments that have been requested and made. This will allow us to review the services we provide and help us identify whether there are any wider steps that we can take to improve our services.



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