

Havering Housing Services Reasonable Adjustment Policy 2024

V1

Document Control

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1. Purpose and Scope

LB Havering is committed to making sure that people with disabilities, and those with health conditions, receive an equitable service and are not disadvantaged. This policy describes our approach to making reasonable adjustments to our services for housing applicants, tenants and leaseholders with disabilities.

This policy does not intend to describe how we will approach every situation but describes the basic principles by which we will make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, and the factors that we will consider when evaluating requests.

This policy should be read alongside the:

- Complaints Policy
- Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Act 2010

This policy covers all staff, housing applicant and residents of LB Havering.

2. Definition

The definition of disability is set out in section 6 of the Equality Act 2010. It says person is disabled if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- their impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to do normal day-to-day activities

Some impairments are automatically treated as a disability, even if they don't affect the person's day-to-day activities:

- have cancer, including growths that need removing before they become cancerous
- are certified as blind, severely sight impaired, sight impaired or partially sighted
- have multiple sclerosis
- are HIV positive - even if they don't have any symptoms
- have a severe disfigurement - for example severe facial scarring or a skin disease

3. Policy Objectives

This policy outlines what is a reasonable adjustment and how these adjustment will be provided.

A reasonable adjustment is any kind of change that is reasonable for us to make so people with disabilities are not disadvantaged when it comes to getting access to or using our services.

Reasonable adjustments may include changing work practices. Examples of such changes include:

- allowing more time than usual for a person to provide information that we need
- providing specialist equipment or extra support such as a sign-language interpreter

When carrying out our role as a landlord we will always consider beforehand what we can do to make sure people with disabilities are not disadvantaged.

4. Policy Aims

This policy aims to ensure that:

- People with disabilities can access our services, as far as reasonably possible, in the same way people who don't have disabilities do
- Our staff understand our duty to make reasonable adjustments
- Our staff and contractors understand the types of adjustments they can make when delivering services to people with disabilities
- We anticipate adjustments that people with disabilities may require

5. Reasonable adjustments

A reasonable adjustment involves making a change to the way we usually do things to make sure that our services are accessible and we are fair to people.

These adjustments may come in a variety of forms such as a physical alteration to our premises, changes to our policies, procedures or ways services are operated, or adjusting how we communicate with people to meet their specific needs.

When providing a specific adjustment for an individual person, we will discuss and confirm this with the person or their representative to avoid making incorrect assumptions about a person's needs. In cases where we can't meet a person's preferred adjustment, we'll work with them to find the best solution.

Under the Act, we must make reasonable adjustments in the following three circumstances:

- If there is a policy, practice or procedure which disadvantages a person with a disability significantly more than a person who does not have a disability.
- If a physical feature disadvantages a person with a disability significantly more than a person who does not have a disability.
- If a person with a disability does not have any aids, adaptations or support service would they be disadvantaged significantly more than others without a disability.

If the circumstance relates to providing information, the steps that are reasonable for us to take include making sure that information is provided in an accessible format (for example, in Braille or as an audio file).

In relation to physical features, the steps that are reasonable for us to take to avoid a significant disadvantage include:

- removing the physical feature
- altering it (for example, providing a ramp or handrail), or

- providing a reasonable way of avoiding it (for example, an alternative entrance or dedicated parking).

If we have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments, we cannot charge the person any costs of us keeping to that duty. We are committed to providing a high standard of accessibility to our services. We will therefore make sure our approach takes account of all people with disabilities.

6. How people can request reasonable adjustments

We will let people know that we can make reasonable adjustments.

We will do this by:

- including a paragraph in written communications such as letters
- asking whether the person might need a reasonable adjustment
- including a note on our published documents to say that we can provide the document in an alternative format, and
- publishing this policy on our website.

People can ask us for a reasonable adjustment by:

- sending us a letter or email to explain what adjustment they need and why they need it
- contacting us online through our website, or
- phoning our Customer Call Centre.

A family member, friend or representative can ask for an adjustment for a person, if they have given us permission to deal with them.

A member of council staff may suggest an adjustment if they know it will help a person.

In most cases we can agree to and make the necessary adjustment without delay. However, in some cases we may need to consider in more detail how best to overcome the difficulty a person is having or get advice from disability organisations.

We may need medical evidence, for example to identify the effect or disadvantage that we need to tackle or to confirm that a particular adjustment would be effective. We would pay any costs involved in getting this information.

7. Examples of reasonable adjustments we offer

The adjustments we will make will vary depending on the needs of the person and the situation. It's not possible to provide a list of every reasonable adjustment but this section provides an overview of the more common adjustments that we provide for our customers.

Examples of the reasonable adjustments we can make include:

- Providing information in alternative formats, for example in large print or Braille, as an audio file, or on coloured paper
- Giving people more time to do something, if this is allowed by law. For example, we can be flexible with timescales we have set ourselves, such as asking people to contact us within a certain amount of time to make a request or respond to something, but we can't change timescales set out in legislation, such as if a person wants to ask for a review after receiving a notice of seeking possession.

- Adapting our communication method, for example if email or phone is preferred to hard copy letter
- Providing a sign language interpreter for deaf people who use British Sign Language (BSL) if it is necessary to communicate face to face
- Taking extra time and adapting communication methods, such as using visual aids, where a person has a learning disability
- Providing extra breaks in meetings

Our premises will be accessible to people through:

- Making sure that our public office reception services are accessible to wheelchair users and have induction loops wherever possible
- Making sure that people with mobility needs, including wheelchair users, are able to attend residents meetings and that the selected venues also have accessible toilet facilities.

Examples of adjustments to physical features includes:

- The design or construction of a building
- An approach to, exit from or access to a building
- A fixture or fitting, furniture, furnishings, materials, equipment and so on in or on the premises, or
- Any other physical structure, item or quality.

8. Legislation and Regulation

Public Sector Equality Duty and The Equality Act 2010 provides a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and to advance equality of opportunity for all.

That act requires us to provide reasonable adjustments in the provision of services to those who have “a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to- day activities.”

The duty is ‘anticipatory’ to people with disabilities in general as well as to individuals, so we must think in advance and anticipate what people with disabilities might reasonably need. Under the Act, we have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments in three circumstances:

- Where there is a provision, criterion or practice which puts a person with a disability at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who do not have disabilities
- Where a physical feature puts a person with a disability at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who do not have disabilities
- Where a person with a disability would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who do not have disabilities.

Substantial disadvantage is defined in the Equality Act 2010 s.212(1) as ‘more than minor or trivial’.

The Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard requires us to provide choices, information and communication that are appropriate to the diverse needs of our customers, and to treat customers with fairness and respect.

The Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code requires us to have in place a reasonable adjustments policy that covers how we may adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs.

9. Equality impact assessments

We carry out an equality impact assessment each time we develop or review a policy, procedure of service. The assessment is to help us make sure our decisions are fair and do not disadvantage any disabled person.

10. Appeals

If a customer is dissatisfied with the arrangements or decisions, we have made regarding a reasonable adjustment, we will respond in accordance with our Complaints Policy.

If necessary when reviewing our decision, we will seek advice from specific expert disability groups.

11. Compliance and Monitoring

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by periodic reviews of case records by the relevant service lead.

We 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 service