

Housing Services - Reasonable Adjustment Policy

We can provide a copy of this policy in alternative formats (for example, in large print or Braille, as an audio file, or on colored paper)

Purpose	To set out the basic principles of our commitment to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people.
Owner	Head of Tenancy Services
Related documents	n/a
Approved by	Executive
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1. Introduction

1.1 Ipswich Borough Councils Corporate Strategy, Proud of Ipswich, recognises the importance of meeting the housing needs of our community. We aim to be an excellent landlord to the people who live in our properties.

Ipswich Borough Council is committed to ensuring that disabled people are not disadvantaged in accessing its services. To this end we will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. 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 our tenants
- Sets out some of the basic principles of our commitment to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people
- Sets out the factors that we will consider in dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments.

1.2 Many of the arrangements that we offer for disabled people can also be made available for those who do not have disabilities. For example, provision of documents in larger font than our usual font.

This policy applies to all Ipswich Borough Council tenants.

1.3 This policy adheres to the current Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code and our commitments under the Equality Act 2010.

In addition, this policy is compliant with the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, that Ipswich Borough Council needs to:

- Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants', and
- Demonstrate that we understand the different needs of tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

2. What is a reasonable adjustment?

2.1 A reasonable adjustment is any kind of change it is reasonable and proportionate for the Council 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 you 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 disabled tenants are not disadvantaged.

3. What we will do

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects people's rights and aims to provide equal opportunities for everyone. Under the Act, Ipswich Borough Council must make reasonable adjustments in the following three circumstances:

1. If there is a policy, practice or procedure which disadvantages a disabled person significantly more than a person who is not disabled.
2. If a physical feature disadvantages a disabled person significantly more than a person who is not disabled.
3. If a disabled person without any aids, adaptations or support service would be disadvantaged significantly more than a person who is not disabled.

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

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

- Removing the physical feature
- Altering it (for example, providing a ramp or handrail)
- Providing a reasonable way of avoiding it (for example an alternative entrance or dedicated parking).

A physical feature includes:

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

3.3 If we have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments, we will not charge tenants any costs incurred by us keeping to this 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 tenants with disabilities. Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered to have a disability if:

“He or she has a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial

and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

4. Asking for reasonable adjustments

4.1 We will let tenants know that we can make reasonable adjustments. We will do this by:

- Including a paragraph in written communications such as letters
- Asking whether tenants might need a reasonable adjustment.
- Include a note on our published documents to say that we can provide the document in an alternative format.
- Publishing this policy on our website.

4.2 You can ask us for a reasonable adjustment by:

- Sending us a letter or email to explain what adjustment you need and why you need it
- Contacting us online through our website
- Phoning our Customer Service Centre
- Advising a member of staff employed by Ipswich Borough Council.

A family member, friend or representative can ask for an adjustment for you, you would have to give us permission to communicate with them.

Council staff may suggest an adjustment if they know it will help you and you have given permission.

4.3 In most cases we can agree to and make the necessary adjustment without delay. However, in some cases we may need to consider more detail how best to overcome the difficulty you are having or get advice from specialist bodies.

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.

5. Types of reasonable adjustments we can offer

5.1 There is no set list of reasonable adjustments. The adjustments the Council can provide depend on your needs. We will discuss your needs with you and try to agree

what may be reasonable in the circumstances. We will not make assumptions without talking to you.

What is reasonable can depend on several factors including:

- The disadvantage caused
- What difference the adjustment would make
- If the adjustment is what is needed to make the difference or if it is more than is necessary
- What will put you in the same position as others using the service
- The cost associated for the adjustment

What is unreasonable in one situation might be reasonable for someone else. If we cannot make a reasonable adjustment due to cost or resources, we will work with you to find the most appropriate alternative solution.

5.2 Examples of adjustments that we can make include:

- Providing information in alternative formats (for example, in largeprint or Braille, as an audio file, or on colored paper)
- Giving you more time to do something (if this is allowed by law)
- Communicating with you by alternatives methods including but not limited to email, phone, letter
- Dealing with a family member, friend or representative (if you have given us permission to do so)
- Providing breaks in meetings

In some instances, we may provide reasonable adjustments for tenants who are not disabled but may have a special need.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Providing translation services or interpreters for customers whose first language is not English.
- Providing extra support for customers with literacy problems.

6. Reasonable adjustments to our complaints process

6.1 Where required, we will make reasonable adjustments to our complaints process to provide equal access.

Examples of the reasonable adjustments we can make if you need support making a complaint include:

- You can appoint a family member or friend to act on your behalf, or we can help you find a representative.

- A family member, friend or representative can attend meetings with you.

6.2 In line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code April 2024, Ipswich Borough Council have appointed the new role of “Quality Assurance Complaints Officer”.

To ensure accessibility for all Ipswich Borough Council tenants, the Quality Assurance Complaints Officer is available to assist residents in launching or escalating a complaint where reasonable adjustments are required. This can be arranged by calling 01473 432000 and asking for a “formal complaint” call back and, if eligible, will be actioned within 2 working days of request.

7. Equality and Diversity

The Council will meet the needs and choices of customers from all backgrounds taking into consideration age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion and sexual orientation.

We will ensure that all sections of our communities can have equal access to our services.

An equality impact screening exercise was carried out for this policy, and it identified positive impacts for the following protected characteristic.

Disability – This policy confirms the Council’s commitment to ensuring that disabled people are not disadvantaged when accessing our services.

8. Appeals

8.1 A tenant who disagrees with a decision made in the application of this policy may request a review of that decision within 21 days of receiving the written decision from the Council. A review request should usually be made in writing, although the Council may also consider verbal requests for a review.

The tenant should clearly outline the reasons that they have formally requested a review and a different officer at the Council will review the original decision. The review officer will be more senior than the original decision maker and will not have been involved in making the original decision. In some cases, the Council may need to request further information from the resident in order to make a decision. The Council will respond to the review request in writing within 8 weeks.