

Accessible Services Policy

How we can make a reasonable adjustment to make your life easier if you're struggling to access our services due to a disability

1. Policy Statement

Yorkshire Housing (YH) is committed to making sure that all customers have equal access to our services by listening and taking action when people ask for reasonable adjustments.

This policy is intended as a general statement as YH understands that everyone's needs are different, and each solution should be personalised to the individual.

The policy has been written in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code and our commitments under the Equality Act 2010.

The Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard requires us to provide choices, information and communication in that is appropriate to the diverse needs of our customers that demonstrate we understand the different needs of customers, including the equality strands and customers with support needs.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides a legislative framework that protects the rights of individuals and makes sure that there are equal opportunities for all. We have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments when:

- There is a provision, criterion or practice which puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage and not a person who is not disabled.
- Where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to someone who does not have a disability.
- Where a person would, if not for an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone who is not disabled.

2. Policy Aims

This policy doesn't seek to explain how YH will approach every situation, but it will:

- Confirm our commitment to improving accessibility for everyone that we work with.
- Set out how we will provide reasonable adjustments for disabled people and customers with additional support needs.
- Define what we consider when dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments.

3. The Policy

What is a reasonable adjustment?

Reasonable adjustments are changes to work practices, either on a temporary or permanent basis, making sure customers who have a disability have equal access or are given extra support where necessary.

The term disability also relates to mental health conditions which have a long term impact on the individual's day to day activities, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

What a reasonable adjustment isn't

This policy only covers adjustments that make our services more accessible to customers who may need extra support due to having a disability.

This policy doesn't cover adjustments that a customer asks for to make their home more accessible, for example, the addition of a ramp to a front door or fitting of a walk-in shower. These are called adaptations and we've a separate policy for this.

Requesting a reasonable adjustment

- **Email:** customerservices@yorkshirehousing.co.uk.
- **Phone:** 0345 366 4404.
- **Website:** <https://www.yorkshirehousing.co.uk/>.
- Customer portal.
- **Letter:** Yorkshire Housing, 2 Central Place, The Place, Leeds LS10 1FB.
- Face to face with any YH colleague.

Where reasonable, a customer can nominate a representative to deal with a request on their behalf. We might need to ask for authority to discuss the request with the representative. A representative could be a family member, friend, social worker or support worker (this list is not exhaustive).

Types of reasonable adjustments we can offer

There is no set list as each reasonable adjustment is suited to an individual's needs. Examples could include:

- A portable induction loop for people with hearing aids.

- Providing information in alternative formats such as braille or audio CDs.
- Extension of time limits (where there isn't a legal time limit).
- Sending letters or emails in larger print.
- Changing a meeting venue to one that is easily accessible.
- Rest or comfort breaks in meetings.
- Using a representative or intermediary.
- Using a password when calling or coming to your home.

For each request, we'll:

- Consider all reasonable adjustments requests from customers.
- Speak to the customer to agree on what may be reasonable in their circumstances.
- Never make assumptions about whether someone needs an adjustment or what that adjustment may be.
- Always consider how best to overcome the difficulty facing the customer.
- Consider the effectiveness of the adjustment to make sure it fully addresses the issue it's meant to overcome.
- Consider if we're practically able to provide the reasonable adjustment. For example, if a customer requests additional time to read documents but there is a legislative deadline out of our control that means we can't provide this.
- Consider our resources. This could be cost or resources and skill of Yorkshire Housing colleagues.
- Put the reasonable adjustments into place with minimum delay.
- Let the customer know if more time is needed to look into the request.
- Seek advice from expert organisations or signpost the person to other forms of specialist support if needed.
- Keep the customer up to date about their request.

How do we decide what's reasonable?

We're committed to considering all reasonable adjustments requests from customers. Although the Equality Act 2010 doesn't specifically define what 'reasonable' means, the guidance suggests the relevant factors are:

- How effective the adjustment is at preventing or reducing a person feeling disadvantaged because of their disability.
- The practicality of us making the adjustment.
- The availability of our resources.
- Any disruption to services that are because of the adjustment.

Potential disruption to services

We need to understand whether the adjustment will impact the effectiveness of our services. For example, it's not practical for one YH colleague to be working solely on one customer's concerns as others who also need our help and support may suffer. While it may solve the issue for that one customer in a short term, it could affect the services that we deliver to all customers.

If this happens, we could offer the customer extra time to have the issue or concern dealt with.

Reasonable adjustments to our complaints process

We'll make reasonable adjustments to our complaints service where necessary to make sure that all customers can easily access the complaints process. Examples of the reasonable adjustments we'll make are:

- Using the customer's communication preference throughout the complaint.
- We'll never ask that a complaint is made in writing where this creates a barrier or disadvantages the customer due to their disability or additional needs.
- Extension of any time limits (where it is lawful to do so).
- Arranging to visit the customer in their home if this makes it easier.
- Using video chat technology.

Dissatisfied with a reasonable adjustment?

We'll always work with all customers in a fair way and free from discrimination. If a customer is unhappy with an agreed reasonable adjustment, they can make a formal complaint. Details of how to raise a formal complaint are in our customer feedback policy, details of which can be found on the YH website [here](#).

4. Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Fairness and accessibility is a key aim of this policy. Whilst it is designed to ensure we meet our obligations under the Equality Act, it's also because we want to be customer obsessed and personalise our services to meet our diverse customer needs. All requests for reasonable adjustments from customers with any of the protected characteristics will be actioned and responded to, with a personalised solution put into place.

5. Reporting and Monitoring

We'll monitor and record any reasonable adjustment requests on our customer relationship management system (CRM). This will help us to identify the needs of our customers and improve our services.

It's the responsibility of the YH colleague receiving the request for a reasonable adjustment to record the details on the CRM system and to ensure there is a recorded review date. YH colleagues will be able to identify a reasonable adjustment via the CRM system by means of a system flag.

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| Date approved | 30 October 2023 |
| Approved by | Homes and Places Committee |
| Recommended / scrutinised by | Your Voice Matters group Housing Diversity Network Yorkshire Housing colleagues |
| Summary of changes | The policy has been made easier to understand with more positive language using the YH tone of voice. The policy title has been changed to reflect the YH brand and tone of voice. More examples of what a reasonable adjustment is have been added. Reasonable requests related to customer engagement have been removed as it was not specific to customers with disabilities. |
| Frequency of review | Every 3 years |
| Next review date | 30 October 2026 |
| Policy owner | Head of Customer Service Delivery |
| Policy author | Customer Insight and Engagement Manager |
| Associated policies or guidelines | Customer Feedback Policy |
| Associated procedure | Reasonable Adjustment Request Procedure |