



# Additional Assistance and Reasonable Adjustment Policy

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## 1. What this policy's for

1.1 We want to make sure everyone can easily access our services. We recognise that our customers all have unique circumstances, and there are times when you might need additional help to interact with us and manage your tenancy or lease. At these times, we might need to provide additional assistance to you or make reasonable adjustments – to our services, to your home or within your community.

1.2 We've created this policy to:

- explain what we mean by 'reasonable adjustments' and 'vulnerabilities'
- clarify what reasonable adjustments we can make for you
- explain how you can request reasonable adjustments
- explain what we'll consider when dealing with requests for reasonable adjustments

This policy does not explain how we'll approach every single situation, as this will vary person to person.

1.3 We sometimes refer to other policies in this policy – their names are in **bold**. You can find these on our [customer website](#). If you work for us, you'll find them in the myPolicy area on the O-zone.

1.4 We also refer to procedures – these are in **bold**. You can ask to see these by calling us on 0800 678 1221 or emailing [info@orbit.org.uk](mailto:info@orbit.org.uk). If you work for us, you'll find them in the myPolicy area on the O-zone.

1.5 When we talk about 'Orbit' in this policy, we mean the Orbit Group. That's made up of Orbit Group Limited, Orbit Housing Association Limited, Orbit Homes (2020) Limited, Orbit Treasury Limited and Orbit Capital Limited.

## 2. Our definitions

### 2.1 How do we define a reasonable adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment is any kind of change it's reasonable for us to make if you have a disability, are vulnerable (see our definition below), or need additional support for any other reason. The adjustment should mean you're not at a disadvantage when accessing our services. The adjustment can meet a short-term or temporary need, or a longer-term or permanent need. We are not under any obligation to automatically agree to make reasonable adjustments; we review them on a case-by-case basis as every individual case is different.

## 2.2 How do we define vulnerability?

The term 'vulnerability' has no standard definition. Some examples of vulnerabilities are mental health conditions, physical health conditions, neurodiversity, age, unemployment, previous homelessness, bereavement, domestic abuse, and financial difficulties. Vulnerabilities can be temporary (short or long-term) or permanent.

## 3. Reasonable adjustments

- 3.1 We want to make sure any customers who are vulnerable, have a disability, or require additional assistance for any other reason can access our services. This could mean you or a member of your household needs support to manage your tenancy and complete certain landlord-tenant transactions, such as paying rent or opening the door to allow contractors to carry out a gas safety check in your home.
- 3.2 When it comes to vulnerabilities, disabilities and any requirements for additional assistance, we'll take steps to:
  - recognise these
  - respond appropriately, and
  - record the reasonable adjustments offered.
- 3.3 We make sure all our colleagues have the training, information and tools to recognise vulnerabilities and additional needs. We also make sure they can respond consistently and appropriately to all customer needs, to offer an equitable and accessible service for all customers. However, we won't assume whether or not you need any reasonable adjustments or additional assistance and what those adjustments or assistance should be.
- 3.4 The aim of the Equality Act 2010 is to "advance equality of opportunity for all", meaning wherever possible, reasonable adjustments should be made to make sure people with a disability can access services and support. Though reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act are specifically for people with disabilities, we will make reasonable adjustments available for customers who request them or who we have discussed them with. We want our services to be equitable and accessible for everyone.

### 3.5 Examples of the reasonable adjustments we can provide

We cannot offer a full list of reasonable adjustments as the adjustments we provide vary according to individual need. Examples of reasonable adjustments that we can make include:

- Home adaptations, where we make changes to your home, so it's better adapted to your needs. You can find more information about home adaptations in our [Home Adaptations Policy](#).
- Specialist support, where we provide additional support to help you manage your tenancy through our tenancy services and Better Days teams, for example providing welfare benefits assistance.

- Offering alternative communication and ways to access our services. This could mean dealing with a family member that you've asked to act on your behalf; or providing alternative forms of communications, such as Easy Read or large print letters or documents.

We'll also make sure that our homes are "fit for human habitation". This means that they're safe and healthy places to live, free from anything that could cause serious harm to anyone living there. For example, if your home is too cold and you can't heat it, we'll work with you to resolve the issue using reasonable adjustments.

### 3.6 Asking for a reasonable adjustment

You can ask us for a reasonable adjustment by:

- Filling in the [contact form](#) on our customer website
- Sending an email to [info@orbit.org.uk](mailto:info@orbit.org.uk)
- Sending a letter to Orbit Group, PO Box 6406, Coventry, CV3 9NB
- Calling our Customer Support team on 0800 678 1221, or
- Speaking to one of our colleagues, such as a Scheme Manager, Property Manager, Community Connector, Better Days team member or Tenancy Coach.

When you contact us, we'll need you to explain what adjustment you're asking for and why you need it.

A family member, friend or other representative can ask for an adjustment for you, if you've given us permission to communicate with them.

We'll discuss your request with you to try and agree what's reasonable in the circumstances. In most cases, we can agree to the adjustment and put it in place without delay. However, in some cases we may need more time to consider how best to provide the adjustment or get advice from other organisations. We may also need you to give us some supporting information from third parties, such as your doctor, to ensure we make the appropriate reasonable adjustment.

### 3.7 How we decide what's reasonable

When deciding whether an adjustment is reasonable, we'll consider:

- How **effective** the adjustment will be. For example, will the adjustment reduce the chance of you or someone you live with being at a disadvantage when accessing our services?
- The **practicality** of us making the adjustment
- The cost of the adjustment and whether this is possible based on our **resources**.

To explain these further:

## **Effectiveness:**

The adjustment should be designed to fully solve the problem it aims to address. For example, providing braille documents may not effectively overcome all barriers for a person with a visual impairment if they can't read braille.

## **Practicality:**

An important consideration is whether adjustments can be implemented in practice or whether there are reasons they can't be put in place. For example, in some situations, it may not be possible for us to provide you with additional time for tasks such as responding to letters, due to the legal deadlines we need to meet.

## **Resources:**

For an adjustment to be considered reasonable, it should be effective. However, an adjustment can be effective, but we might not agree to it if the resources needed to put the adjustment in place are considered unreasonable, unfair or are simply not available. Resources can refer to time or money.

For example, if a customer living on the second floor of a building asks for a lift to be fitted as they've started to use a wheelchair, it's likely the adjustment would not be considered reasonable. This is because the cost of installing the lift and ongoing servicing and maintenance costs would be shared among all the customers in the building through their service charge.

## **4. What we do with your data**

We follow the law and our data retention schedule when we keep and store data, documents and information.

In line with the Data Protection Act 2018, we only use the information you give us about any vulnerabilities, disabilities, or additional support to provide reasonable adjustments and make sure we provide you with an accessible and inclusive service.

We make sure your data is kept confidential. This information is 'special category' data because it's sensitive, so we have a process for it. This covers how we store the information, when it's reviewed, and who has access to it.

You can find out more about what we do with your information in our [privacy policy](#).

### **4.1 Sharing information**

We don't share your personal information with anyone else, except where we need to so we can carry out statutory duties and functions, where we're required to by law, or if we get consent from you.

We share information where we have an information sharing agreement with another party.

We share with you how we use data to improve and tailor our services.

## 5. Extra information about this policy

5.1 We review this policy every three years unless the law says we must review it more often or we change our policy on reviews. We develop all our policies and procedures in line with our:

- data protection statement
- equality diversity and inclusion approach
- [complaints and customer care policy](#)
- regulatory and legal obligations.

This helps us make sure we deliver our services lawfully, and that we treat people equally and fairly. You can view our privacy policy on our website at [www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/publications/policies/](http://www.orbitcustomerhub.org.uk/publications/policies/)

5.2 There are a few laws and regulations that are relevant to this policy. They are:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 1996
- Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) Order 2002
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 2004 - Health and safety standards for rented homes
- RSH Tenant, Involvement and Empowerment Standard (changing to Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard)
- Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code 2024
- Mental Capacity Act 2005, Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords (2015)
- Public Sector Equality Duty section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

5.3 You might also want to check these other Orbit policies:

- Home Adaptations policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-social behaviour policy
- Hate Incidents policy
- Property Management Operational policy
- Domestic Abuse policy
- Data Protection policy

<b>EA</b>	Equality Analysis will be completed by June 2024
<b>DPIA</b>	A DPIA will be completed by with the Additional Assistance and Reasonable Adjustment procedure
<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Internal:</b> Customer and Communities teams, Communication Team, Human Resources, Support and Service Development, Information Governance
	<b>External:</b> Disability Working Group, LGBTQ+ Working Group, customer engagement
<b>Applies to</b>	Business Wide

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