



Additional Assistance & Reasonable Adjustments Policy

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Policy Owner Role Title	Head of Customer Service Delivery
Responsible Director	Executive Director of Customer and Operational Services

Policy Checklist

Is Customer engagement required?	Yes
Does this Strategy require input or validation from external or legal experts?	No
Is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) required?	Yes
Is a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Required?	Yes – as we may collect additional data about customers.
Is the Strategy compliant with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements?	Yes
Sign off by Policy Lead	October 2024



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1.0 Introduction and scope

We are committed to making sure that customers can easily access our services and that we deliver services in a way that is fair, proportional and equitable.

We recognise that some customers may require adjustments to their home, the way in which we deliver a service or how we work together as a result of a disability or vulnerability. This policy sets out the principles of our approach to doing this.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- The Aids and Adaptations Guidance
- The Complaints Policy
- Other service delivery policies.
- The Safeguarding Policy

The assistance and adjustments required will vary from person to person and as such, this policy does not detail every scenario but the principles we will consider when reviewing a request and making decisions.

The Additional Assistance and Reasonable Adjustments Policy is underpinned by Wandle's values, which are:

- Think customer
- Build relationships
- Work together
- Aim high
- Own it

2.0 Objectives and Performance Monitoring

We've created this policy to:

- Explain what we mean by the term 'reasonable adjustment' and 'vulnerabilities'.
- Clarify what reasonable adjustments we can carry out.
- Set out the ways in which a customer can request a reasonable adjustment.
- Detail what we'll consider in reviewing requests for a reasonable adjustment.

We will monitor the impact of this policy through:

- Customer feedback
- Complaints
- Colleague feedback

3.0 Policy Statement & Definitions

The Additional Assistance and Reasonable adjustments Policy applies to all customers, their household members (i.e. children) and service users interacting with Wandle, irrespective of tenure. It does not apply to staff.

What is a Reasonable Adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment is any kind of change that it is reasonable for us to make for a customer with a disability, vulnerability or additional support need. The assistance or adjustment should mean that they are not at a disadvantage when accessing our services.

The assistance or adjustment may be short or long-term depending on the customer's needs. Additional assistance or adjustments are reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that they appropriately support the unique needs of the customer.

We will not ask a customer to provide proof of their disability or vulnerability in establishing whether additional assistance or a reasonable adjustment is required. However, in some instances we may ask you to provide further information from a third party, like your doctor or an occupational therapist, to ensure that we get the requirements and specifications of the reasonable adjustment right.

How do we define disability and vulnerability?

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as an impairment that has substantial or long-term effects on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes hidden disabilities.

The term 'vulnerability' has no set definition, but we take it to mean customers with mental health conditions, physical health conditions, neurodiversity, age, unemployment, previous homelessness, bereavement, experiencing domestic abuse or financial difficulties. Vulnerabilities can be temporary, both long and short-term or permanent.

Throughout the policy, we use these definitions when referring to disability or vulnerability.

4.0 Policy

We want to make sure that customers and their household members are able to access our services. Where a customer or their household member has a disability, vulnerability or may require additional assistance, we will work with the customer to identify whether any reasonable adjustments are needed and whether we can accommodate them.

We will make sure that we:

- Recognise our customers circumstances once we've been made aware of them;
- Respond appropriately;
- Record the information we've been given and details of the assistance or adjustment.

We will ensure that staff members have received training to appropriately identify and support customers who have an additional need, disability or vulnerability. However, we

won't assume that because of this need that adjustments are or are not required and will instead work in partnership with the customer to identify the best way to support them.

The assistance or adjustment offered will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the customer's needs at the centre of this decision. We will deal with all requests for assistance or reasonable adjustments in a confidential, sensitive and person-centred way.

What adjustments can be made?

The assistance and adjustments required will depend on the needs and circumstances of the customer. Staff members are empowered to use their discretion and work with the customer to identify the most appropriate course of action.

Whilst we cannot list every type of assistance and adjustment in the policy, examples include:

- Changes to the home so that it is better suited to the needs of the customer and their household members.
- Providing specialist support through our Engagement and Partnership team or sign posting to other relevant services.
- Offering alternative communication methods or ways to access our services such as a dealing with a family member on behalf of the customer or other forms of communication such as large font letters and documents.
- Amending our usual service offer such as removing deadlines (where lawful and practical to do so), offering appointments outside of usual hours or arranging rest breaks during meetings.
- Carrying out small repairs that are usually the responsibility of a customer (such as changing batteries in a smoke alarm or changing a light bulb) if it is particularly challenging for the customer to complete as a result of their circumstances.

Requesting a Reasonable Adjustment

Customers can request additional assistance or a reasonable adjustment at any time. This can be done by:

- Calling us on 0300 2000 120;
- E-mailing us at customerservices@wandle.com;
- Discussing your needs with any Wandle staff member;
- Visiting us in person at Second Floor, 230 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8NW.

If a customer has given us permission to speak to a family member or third party on their behalf, they will also be able to report and discuss the assistance or adjustment required.

Deciding if an adjustment is reasonable

When reviewing the request for additional assistance or a reasonable adjustment, we will look at the impact of the adjustment, the practicalities of putting it in place and the resources needed.

We will consider whether:

- The assistance or adjustment will reduce the chances of a customer or household member being at a disadvantage when accessing services.
- The assistance or adjustment can actually be implemented in a reasonable way.

- There are resources available (time or money) to put the assistance or adjustment in place.

For an adjustment to be considered reasonable it must be effective and reduce disadvantage in accessing services, it must be practical to implement, and the resources needed to put it in place must be fair and available.

How long does it take before an adjustment is put in place?

In some instances, we can put the assistance or adjustment in place without delay. If the assistance or adjustment required is more significant, it may require further investigation or planning. If this is the case, we will notify the customer of the likely timescale and next steps.

In all instances, we will ensure that we are working within the shortest timeframe as practically possible.

What happens if we can't offer additional assistance or put a reasonable adjustment in place?

If it is not reasonable, effective, practical or we do not have the resources available to provide additional assistance or put the adjustment into place, we may have to decline the request. In this instance, we will explain this to the customer and set out how this decision was made. Where possible, we will work with the customer on alternative solutions or sign post the customer to other services that may be able to provide support.

5.0 Data and Sharing Information

We take keeping customer data secure very seriously. We adhere to the law and our data retention schedule when we keep and store data, documents and information. We will 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 that your data is kept confidential. This information is 'special category' data because it's sensitive. We have processes in place to ensure that we're storing, reviewing and accessing your data appropriately. Customers can find out more about how we use their data in our privacy statement.

We don't share your information with anyone else except where we need to do so to allow us to carry out our statutory duties and functions, where we're required to by law or if we get consent from the customer. We share information where we have an information sharing agreement with another party.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Head of Customer Service Delivery

The Head of Customer Service delivery is responsible for the overall implementation of this Policy and for ensuring that its principles are implemented throughout the organisation.

All Staff

All staff members have a responsibility to listen to, and to work with customers to identify and agree additional assistance and reasonable adjustments. Staff will ensure that they are working in partnership with customers to identify their requirements and keep them informed throughout.

All staff members have a responsibility to ensure that they keep effective records of the conversations and decisions made and that these are recorded on the customer record. They are also responsible for ensuring that review dates are set where required.

All staff must ensure that they check for relevant adjustments required where relevant.

7.0 Relevant Legislation

The content of this policy has been shaped by the following legislation:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code of Practice
- The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing
- The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- The Housing Act 1996

8.0 Equality & Diversity

Equality & Diversity is central to our business; promoting fairness and opportunity for customers and staff; helping provide the best services shaped by and for customers; and right for recruiting and developing our staff.

We are committed to celebrating diversity. To ensure equal access to our services is available, Wandle will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and all other legislative requirements relating to equality. We will work to avoid exclusions or restrictions that are not appropriate to the housing and support needs of our tenants and that may lead to discrimination. We will endeavour to ensure that all tenants receive a consistent level of quality service.

Equality Consideration

Under the *Equality Act 2010* Wandle must consider whether our policies adversely affect our customers and/or staff.

The following table identifies whether this policy disproportionately impacts upon any individuals in regard to the key protected characteristics, as identified in the Act:

Special Characteristic	Any impact? (Yes or No)
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Age	No
Disability	No
gender reassignment	No
marriage and civil partnership	No
pregnancy and maternity	No
Race	No
religion or belief	No
Sex	No
sexual orientation	No

We do not consider this policy to disproportionately impact any individuals in regard to these characteristics and therefore a detailed Equality Impact Assessment is not required.