

## What are Reasonable Adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are changes or modifications to services to ensure individuals can access and benefit from them as easily as everybody else, promoting equality and inclusivity. Reasonable adjustments can be simple changes made by one practitioner, or they can be more complex and need multiple teams to work together. All Oldham organisations including health; criminal justice; social care; advocacy; and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector organisations, should consider making reasonable adjustments to make sure that people are not substantially disadvantaged when accessing their services. The [Equality Act 2010](#) requires organisations to implement reasonable adjustments, protecting people with disabilities from discrimination and removing or reducing a disadvantage related to disability. 'Reasonable' means that adjustments should be practical, realistic, and proportionate to the person's needs and the ability of organisations to implement them. Organisations must anticipate any potential barriers and act to address them proactively; without reliance on someone asking for changes. If a barrier exists or could exist for an individual due to their needs, organisations must act.

### Prevention & Empowerment

Forward-thinking organisations prevent obstacles rather than only reacting to them. Whilst there is a responsibility to anticipate any potential barriers to accessing services a person may experience, it is important that the person themselves feels empowered. Staff should listen to the person as well as their family members, carers, or supporters, and act to remove any potential barriers they are made aware of. It is important to review reasonable adjustments regularly and keep a record of them on the person's profile. NHS staff must keep the relevant [Digital Flag](#) in the [NHS Spine](#) up to date.

### Adjusting Physical Environments or Using Alternative Spaces

Adjustments to buildings or facilities can make a significant difference. Modifications can make services inclusive and navigable for all. Some examples include ensuring doorways and toilets are wheelchair-accessible; relocating key services to ground floor spaces to accommodate people who cannot climb stairs; and marking obstacles clearly for people with visual impairments.

The environment can have a major impact on how a person manages their sensory needs. Good contrast, good lighting, lack of clutter, calm environments and sound levels all play a part in reducing difficulties. Some people may be distracted by lights, sounds or patterns or objects that other people miss, such as fluff on floor. Distractions may lead to difficulty focusing, fatigue and withdrawal. Read the [OSAB Sensory Needs 7-Minute Briefing](#) for more details.

Certain environments can be unsuitable for some people, considering a trauma informed approach it may be beneficial for staff to meet a person in casual clothes rather than in gowns and masks or formal clothing. The most appropriate environment for engaging with a person to provide care or support, should be arranged considering their needs. Some examples include visiting a person at home or in a safe space they are comfortable in and familiar with, this might be at another organisation or in a public space.

## Who Reasonable Adjustments Should be Applied to

The Equality Act refers to people with a disability. A disability, as defined by the Act, includes physical or mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term negative effect on making day-to-day activities easier to perform. Reasonable adjustments are specific to each person and depend on the circumstances. Learning from [Safeguarding Adult Reviews](#) and practice in Oldham has found that reasonable adjustments should be considered for many groups who experience difficulties accessing services including people with Learning Disabilities and autistic people; people with severe mental illness or a multiple complex needs presentation, for example, additional drug misuse or homelessness; people living with frailty; people with dementia; people experiencing domestic abuse; people with [sensory needs](#) including sight loss or hearing loss; people for whom English is not their first language, or black and minority ethnic people; people at risk of lack of capacity or fluctuating capacity; people under 18 years old or younger including people older than 16 years old who have the right to make their own decisions; and adults with [care and support needs as set out in the Care Act 2014](#).

### Additional Equipment or Material

In some cases, people may require specialised tools or resources to effectively access services. These reasonable adjustments focus on removing physical or technological barriers. Some examples include offering a hearing loop for individuals with hearing aids; providing wheelchairs within a hospital or care home; installing ramps or lifts to improve physical accessibility in buildings; providing plain English or easy read information leaflets or letters or providing these in different languages; and using weighted blankets to help reduce anxiety for some people.

### Practices and Procedures

Practices and procedures should be flexible enough to accommodate people with varying needs, reasonable adjustments might involve altering the way a service usually operates. Some examples include speaking clearly and using simple words, it is really important not to make assumptions that someone has understood information they have been given; offering a double appointment, as some people may need more time to be able to understand information and to make themselves understood (just ten extra minutes can make a big difference to many people); offering an early morning appointment when buildings and waiting rooms are quieter or having a quiet space available for people waiting; modifying communication or appointment booking processes, such as avoiding contact via letter or text message for some people or permitting bookings via email or verbally for other people; working with a person's support worker, or family member, but remembering to talk to the person directly and supporting them to make decisions (support workers and family members can help staff do this).

### Practices and Procedures: Engagement

Organisations and staff should ensure that their practice in response to people not attending appointments and not engaging in support plans or treatment are person-centred, trauma informed and demonstrate a supportive approach considering reasonable adjustments. There may be a need to allow staff the opportunity to provide longer term engagement, repeat visits, assertive outreach, or to reduce the number of new professionals introduced to person, depending on their needs. There should be consideration given to why people are not engaging with support plans and appointments are missed, considering factors such as communication needs, physical ability, and Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest Decision Making. Find more information via the [OSAB Guidance Where the Individual is Not Engaging with Services](#); [OSAB Trauma Informed Practice Guidance](#); [OSAB Professional Curiosity Guidance](#); and [OSAB Mental Capacity Policy](#) and [Practical Guide to Assessing Capacity](#).

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