

Making contact accessible: Reasonable Adjustments for customers of Northamptonshire County Council – a guide for customers



The law says that because Northamptonshire County Council (the Council) is a public body it must take steps to remove the barriers you might face because of your disability or condition when you talk to the Council, seek information or use its services. The Equality Act 2010 calls this the duty to make reasonable adjustments. These are made at no charge to you as the customer.

The Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustments if:

- you are at a disadvantage by something because of your disability or condition, and
- it is reasonable to make the changes to remove the disadvantage.

Public functions include things like:

- child protection and care services for children and young people
- enforcement of parking controls and trading standards
- investigation of complaints
- library services

When is something reasonable?

What's a reasonable step to ask for can vary and will depend on things like:

- your disability
- the size and resources needed to make the change that you request
- how easy it is to make changes
- if the change you ask for would overcome the disadvantage you and other disabled people experience
- if the change is what's needed or is more than necessary
- whether you already have arrangements in place that could be used to help you access services

Examples of reasonable adjustments the Council might make

- Changes to the way things are done like:
 - The way the Council communicates with you - in writing, on the phone or online
 - Adapting application processes or appointment booking systems - for example, if you want to apply for a Blue Badge
 - Adjusting a blanket policy - for example, one that disadvantages you if you have a learning difficulty

- Provide extra aids or services like:
 - A portable induction loop for people with hearing aids
 - BSL interpreters
 - Information in alternative formats, such as Braille, large text or audio CDs
 - Extra staff assistance - for example, taking extra time to explain something or provide face to face services for people who can't use the internet or phone

- Change a physical feature like:
 - Steps and stairs
 - Passageways and paths
 - Entrances and exits
 - Toilets
 - Signs

What you should do if you think you need a reasonable adjustment to be made

You can ask anyone who is dealing with your query to make a reasonable adjustment for you. If this is straightforward and costs little or no money, the member of staff should be able to

make the change directly. If it is complex or costly, it will need to be considered by the Council's financial approval panel.

How the Council will decide what reasonable adjustment to make for an individual

Whether an adjustment will be considered reasonable will depend on several factors, which may include:

- the needs of the disabled customer;
- the effectiveness of the adjustment;
- the cost of the adjustment; and
- the likely impact of the adjustment on other customers or the desired outcome.

Can the Council sometimes refuse to make the adjustment?

The Council does not have to make a reasonable adjustment if it is outside of its powers - for example, because the law says it can't do something.

An adjustment will not be made if it:

- involves unreasonable costs to the Council;
- involves unreasonable timeframes; or
- affects the security and integrity of the Council and its staff.

If a request for an adjustment is refused the reason for the decision will be explained. This should include the factors that were taken into account and any suggested alternatives which will be given the same level of consideration as the original request. If you are unhappy with this, the member of staff that dealt with your request will give you the name of a senior member of staff who will review that decision.