



UK Government

Making the social housing complaints process accessible

A handbook



Introducing this handbook

Everyone has the right to a well-maintained home. As a social housing landlord, you have a vital role in helping residents with issues that need fixing.

The UK government's 'Make Things Right' campaign aims to ensure all social housing tenants in England understand the complaints process, including new timeframes under Awaab's Law.

However, some residents may need extra help.

This handbook has been created to help landlords communicate with their tenants, particularly those tenants who may find the complaints process more difficult, such as those with a disability or for whom English isn't their first language. It offers tips on how to more confidently support these tenants. It should be used alongside landlords' existing policies and legal responsibilities detailed in policies such as the Equality Act 2010.

You can find out more about the 'Make Things Right' campaign and read guidance on Awaab's Law by visiting **housinghub.campaign.gov.uk**

Contents

Introduction to accessibility	4
What this handbook covers	5
Section 1	
Better accessibility for everyone	6
Section 2	
Accessibility considerations in the complaints process	10
2.1 Accessible documents, letters and emails	11
2.2 When you visit someone’s home	17
2.3 When someone visit your offices	18

Section 3	
Handy guides for different needs	21
3.1 Blind/partially sighted	22
3.2 Deaf/hard of hearing	24
3.3 Mobility impaired	26
3.4 Speech impediment	27
3.5 Immunocompromised	28
3.6 Neurodiverse/learning difficulties	29
3.7 English as a second language	31
3.8 Assistance dogs	32

Introduction to accessibility

Everyone should be able to report social housing issues and complain if necessary.

If someone has a disability, English is not their first language or they need other types of support, you should be able to provide reasonable support to enable them to report or complain about a social housing issue.

For example:

- If a tenant has limited mobility, they may not be able to get into tight spaces to take photos when they report issues or may not be able to move furniture before a tradesperson visits to make repairs.
- Not everyone has the same access to a computer or the internet or is confident using them. An older person or a tenant with learning difficulties may not be able to receive emails, complete online forms or use digital communications.

This handbook helps you consider these types of limitations, and what you can do to help overcome barriers.

You have legal responsibilities to provide reasonable adjustments to support tenants through the social housing reporting and complaints process under the Equality Act 2010. This handbook is general guidance and does not constitute legal advice or in any way replace your legal responsibilities under any regulations.

What this handbook covers

This handbook should act as a quick reference guide for landlords and those involved in the social housing complaints process, to be aware of the challenges some vulnerable groups can have with the reporting/complaints process, and what you can do to make your service easier to use and get to quicker and better resolutions.

It's broken down into the following sections:

Section 1 Core accessibility good practices

Consistent behaviours that landlords, agents, officers and tradespeople can use.

Section 2 Accessibility considerations in the complaints process

Specific considerations for different stages of the reporting and complaints process, including the different types of engagement with tenants during each step.

Section 3 Access needs for different audiences

Quick reference guidance about how you can help tenants with specific accessibility needs. You could keep these in mind to refer to when you find you need specific advice in your work.

The aim of this handbook is to give you the tools to help tenants with additional needs. Not every suggestion is mandatory, but you should always try your best to support tenants' needs within the options you have available.

Section 1

Core Accessibility

Good Practices

This section covers things you should think about in day-to-day activities, including digital, written and in-person interactions with tenants.

Not all points may be applicable to your current situation, but they can help you consistently offer a more accessible experience when dealing with tenants who have additional access needs.

Bear in mind that you might need to use a combination of approaches and always start by finding out about people's needs.

Ask

Establish preferred communication methods.

For example, check if they can receive emails, are happy to talk on the phone, need translation or sign language services.

Don't ask a tenant to disclose their diagnosis.

Tenants may not want to share their personal medical information with you and in any case, they don't need to have a diagnosis to ask for adjustments. Instead, focus on the practical barriers and solutions. What do they find challenging? What help can you offer? Medical conditions and their impacts should only be brought up in more detailed discussions about complex support or if more specific adjustments need to be made.

Access needs change over time – be prepared to change the help you provide.

A tenant may have a condition that gets worse over time or have good days and bad days. If someone says the support they've been receiving no longer works, take this seriously and discuss what changes need to be made to continue supporting them.

Ask what they need, don't assume.

Not all people in the same category have the same needs. For example, not all blind people have the same level or 'type' of sight loss, so they won't necessarily need the same type of adjustment.

Ask

Avoid stereotypes about cognitive ability.

Disabled people sometimes face a common misconception that because they may speak differently, move differently, or not be able to see or hear as well, they also have learning difficulties. You should listen and speak to people with disabilities in the same way as you would anyone else.

Focus on their needs

On tenants' files, note their communication preferences or additional needs to make the process easier in future.

This will mean tenants don't have to repeat their preferences or requests for reasonable adjustments every time they contact your office. Let tenants know they can update this information at any time. Be considerate about how you store this information and your Data Protection policies.

Encourage tenants to bring a trusted interpreter or support person if needed.

Housing issues can be complex for people to understand, and English is not everyone's first language. If a tenant wants to bring a family member, friend, support worker or guardian

continued...

to a meeting, or to be present when tradespeople visit a property, encourage and assure them that this is welcomed. Ensure there is a procedure for adding trusted advisers or representatives to the tenant's record.

Check understanding

Repeat back outcomes and actions to confirm everyone involved understands the same thing.

If a tenant has given you a lot of information, repeat back key points to double check you have understood correctly. If you've told the tenant they need to take certain actions, repeat at the end to confirm they have understood correctly.

Section 2

Accessibility considerations in the complaints process

Section 2.1

Accessible documents, letters and emails

Written documents can be inaccessible to different user groups for several reasons including:

- text being too small or hard to read
- incorrect formatting which means assistive technologies are unable to read a document
- poor or overly complex writing making them hard to understand.

You should always try to make any digital documents you share accessible. The suggestions below will help you make documents accessible. You may also need to customise writing further to help tenants with specific access needs. More customised suggestions can be found in section 3.

For more information on [making documents accessible](#), there are more guides on the [Make Things Accessible website](#).

Below are a set of quick reminders and examples for good practices to make documents accessible:

Don't make it a PDF if you don't have to.

PDFs can strip out accessibility features and make it harder for tenants to view documents or adapt them for their needs. For web use HTML text, or if you have to send documents, try and make them Microsoft Word (.docx) format.

Use Arial 12pt font minimum size.

This is considered the basic readable font, but any 'sans-serif' font such as Calibri or Aptos is good.

Avoid using tables.

Information within tables makes documents harder for users of screen readers to understand.

Use bold, not italics, for emphasis.

Many dyslexic users struggle with reading italic fonts, especially when used for whole paragraphs. Use bold text if you need to emphasise words, figures or important points.

Section 2.1

Accessible documents, letters and emails

Use standard formatting, e.g. numbered/bulleted lists.

Lists should be for listing individual points one after another and helping users of assistive technology move through content with lots of options.

Use in-built accessibility checkers.

Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF have inbuilt accessibility checking tools. These will not make your documents perfect but can help you double check you are making your document more accessible.

Make your templates accessible.

Using accessible templates for letters or other documents sent to tenants will mean you have a head start towards accessibility each time you communicate.

Good vs bad colour contrast

We all use colours as part of branding or to make our documents look more interesting, but colour choices can make your text harder to read. For example, yellow text on a white background is hard to read. Use free tools like [WebAIM Colour Contrast Checker](#) to make sure all text has a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1.

Example

Bad Contrast

Yellow on white
1.64:1 contrast

Good Contrast

Green on white
4.93:1 contrast

Using colour alone

Do not use traffic light systems to show information.

Example

In tables, use text as well as colour so they can be perceived by colourblind users.

	Bad Example	Good Example
Action 1		Late
Action 2		On Time

Writing good alt text

Alt text descriptions are the way blind people get the same information from your images. If an image is important to the content of your document, you should describe the image in text underneath. You can right click on the image and click ‘View alt text’, which will allow you to write hidden alt text that describes an image.

Writing good alt text

When writing alt text for an image, describe what is in the image and why it is important to what you are talking about. Describing why you are showing an image in reference to a topic is more useful than just describing exactly what you see. More detailed guidance can be found on [MakeThingsAccessible.com](https://www.makethingsaccessible.com)

Example



Bad alt text
"Boiler pipes."



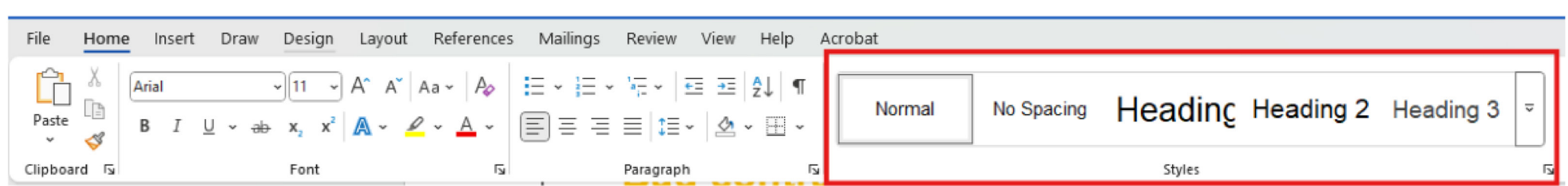
Good alt text
"Pipes connected to the underside of a boiler. Outflow pipe is pictured as rubber pipe exiting from front left corner of boiler underside."

Adding programmatic headings

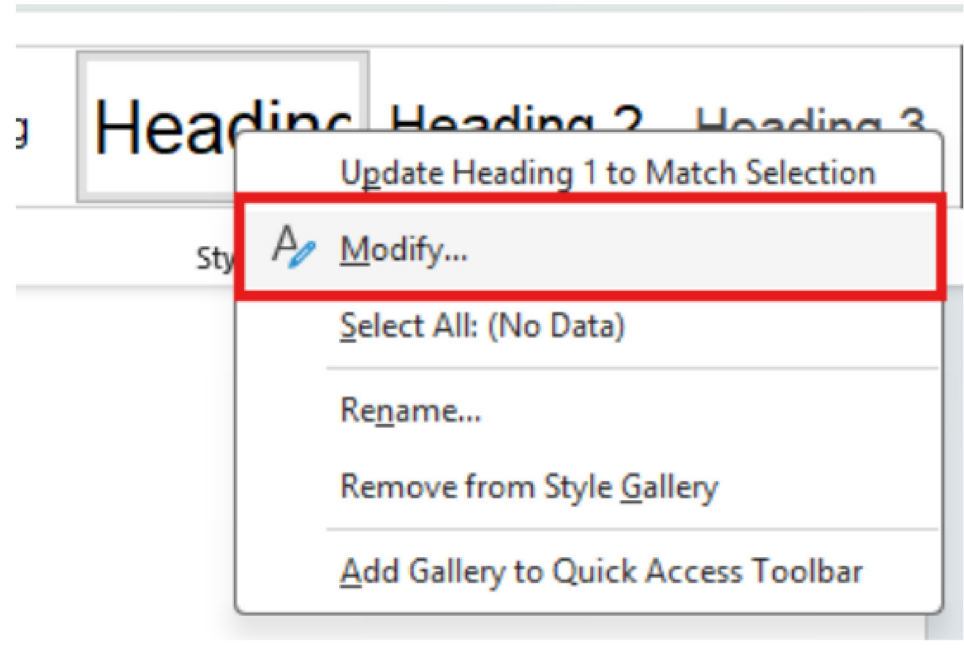
When you put headings in a document, they must be ‘programmatic’. This means they are navigational headings, not just normal text that is bold or a larger font size. Programmatic headings are important for the technology used by people with disabilities to navigate documents.

Example

programmatic headings are important to help a blind user read the document with a screen reader tool. To make a heading programmatic, use the ‘Styles’ heading options in the Microsoft Word ribbon.



You can make these headings look however you like by right clicking on one of the options and clicking ‘Modify’.

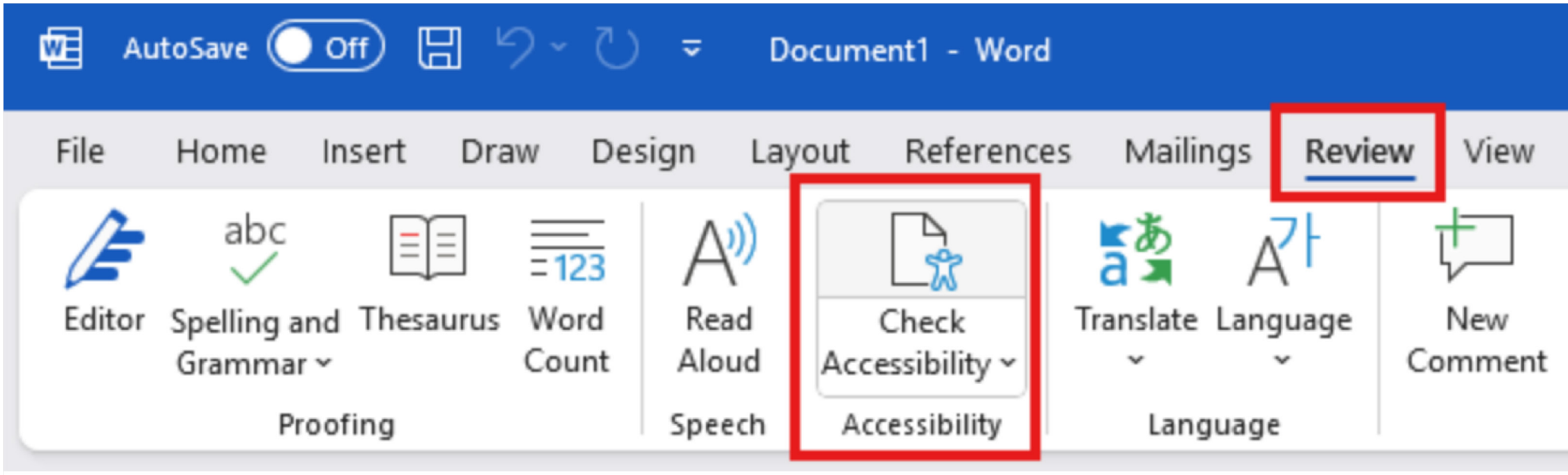


The range of heading options on offer is not designed to allow you a selection of different looks or to suggest you should use those headings one after another. Each heading option is a different hierarchical level of heading. You should use Heading 1 for your document title, Heading 2 for the first level of subheadings, Heading 3 for the level below that and so on.

Checking accessibility in Microsoft Word

To check how accessible your document is, go to the ‘Review’ tab in Microsoft Word and click on the Check Accessibility button. It is like spellcheck for accessibility and will show you where you need to improve your content and give you instructions on how to fix it.

Example



Plain English

Plain English means writing with simple language and avoiding jargon or overly complex words, while thinking about what information is most useful to the reader. Think about your audience: who are they and which part of your communication is most important for them? What do they need to do? Speaking and writing in plain English helps you get your message across and be understood. Find more tips on how to write your content in plain English using our [Plain English Tip Sheet](#).

Section 2.2

When you visit someone's home

You, or tradespeople and other agents acting on your behalf, may have to enter a tenant's home to resolve issues and complaints. The guidance in this section is meant to help you put tenants with access needs at ease, and understand why some tenants may not be able to complete preparatory tasks before a visit.

Before you arrive

- **Remind yourself of what the tenants' communication preferences or access needs are** or inform the tradesperson/agent before the visit.
- **Ensure the pre-visit checklist is communicated in writing beforehand.**
Clearly communicate what a tenant needs to prepare before the visit and why. Give plenty of notice and a reminder. Be prepared to offer additional support if significant changes to space are causing the tenant distress.
- **Contact the tenant before the appointment.**
Let tenants know you are coming before the appointment. Unexpected visits can be unsettling, especially for neurodiverse tenants.
- **If furniture needs to be moved, ask the tenant if they would like support to do so.**
Some tenants may be unable to move furniture or clear spaces due to mobility or visual impairments. Ensure repair agents are briefed that they should be prepared to work around furniture or assist with moving items safely where appropriate and should proceed with work where possible.

When at the tenant's home

- **Clearly announce yourself and who you work for.**

Provide accessible means of independent verification.

Being able to phone head office to verify can help put tenants at ease.

- **On arrival, ask the resident about any accessibility needs/**

anything you can do to make this a less stressful visit, e.g:

- In an immunocompromised person's home, wearing a mask, using hand sanitiser, encouraging the tenant to open windows to enable airflow and communicating the risks of dust/particulates from works carried out can be important. Similarly, be prepared to take masks off to support deaf and hard of hearing people who need to lip read
- Using a transcription app, e.g. [**Live Transcribe \(Android\)**](#), and [**Live Captions \(Apple\)**](#) to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing tenants.

- **Encourage tenants to bring a trusted interpreter or support person if needed.**

Reassure tenants that bringing a family member, friend, support worker or guardian to a meeting is welcomed.

- **Describe what you are doing/key activities.**

This means a blind tenant will know where you are/if you have left the room, and why there might suddenly be noises such as drilling noise.

- **Don't assume the tenant needs you to lift/move everything.**

At the start of the visit, politely ask the tenant to let you know if the task requires you to move anything they may struggle to move independently.

- **Be considerate of tenants' home and culture.**

Not strictly an accessibility action, but consider how you are respectful of the tenants' space, e.g. removing shoes before entering.

Section 2.3

When someone visits your offices

Your tenants may need to visit your offices throughout their tenancy, for example to pick up keys, to speak to someone face to face about an issue, or to raise a complaint directly. In each of these cases, consider what you can do to make your office environment more accessible to tenants with additional needs.

Not all landlords are the same size, therefore not all office spaces will be the same. Your offices may have accessibility barriers that you cannot resolve by yourself, may take a long time to fix, or may require significant renovations. Try to follow this guidance to make your offices more accessible as much as is reasonably possible.

- **Provide clear advice on your office location.**

how to get to it from nearby travel modes, opening times, and any additional support a user might need when visiting. This can include Google maps locations, [What3Words](#), nearby train station information, whether there are stairs, etc.

- **Make it easy for deaf and hard of hearing users to see you and your staff.**

Good lighting and facing the person when speaking helps people read lips and understand you better.

- **Be prepared to communicate in different ways.**

Shouting or speaking louder is not a solution. Write on a note pad, or use apps such as [Live Transcribe \(Android\)](#), and [Live Captions \(Apple\)](#) for text alternatives.

- **Be patient.**

Try not to interrupt and try to keep discussion focused on reporting the current issue.

- **Encourage tenants to bring a trusted interpreter or support person if needed.**

Reassure tenants that bringing a family member, friend, support worker or guardian to a meeting is welcomed. See more information in section 1.

Section 2.3

When someone visits your offices

- **Offer to have windows open/closed.**

An immunocompromised visitor may want more airflow when visiting.

- **Be open to wearing a mask if a tenant asks you to (confirm in advance).**

This can be important to immunocompromised people; likewise be prepared to take masks off to support deaf and hard of hearing people who need to lip read.

- **Be conscious of bright lighting or noise in your environment.**

Moving to quieter or less bright spaces for conversations can help neurodiverse tenants, and tenants with learning difficulties feel more at ease, as well as help deaf and hard of hearing users focus more on your words

Section 3

Quick reference guide

– access needs for different audiences

Remember that each person's disability or disabilities can affect them in different ways, and even people who share the same condition may have different access needs. The best thing to do is always ask the individual what support they need.

The guidance below should help you think about common suggestions that might help people in these broad categories; they will not always be right for everyone but can get you started with suggestions for help when speaking with tenants that have access needs and working on solutions together.

Section 3.1

Blind/partially sighted

Blind and partially sighted covers a broad range of vision impairments and whilst many people think being blind means ‘seeing nothing’ or ‘seeing black’, most blind people have some level of vision.

For example, someone might have no usable sight whatsoever or may have partially obscured vision or struggle with glare, therefore you should always ask the individual what adjustments they may need.

- **Written documents may not be accessible.**

Blind tenants may use a screen reader to have digital documents read out to them. If the documents are not accessible to a screen reader, such as printed documents or untagged PDF, a blind tenant may not be able to read it at all.

- **Online forms can be inaccessible to screen readers.**

If your reporting/complaint journey uses online forms, these can pose barriers to screen readers. If a tenant is having trouble with your online form, offer alternative ways people can report issues or complain. To check if your online forms are accessible, ask your web developer to check for a possible:

- Lack of associated input labels
- Lack of keyboard accessibility and focus indication
- Lack of error and success alerts.

Section 3.1

Blind/partially sighted

- **Provide clear advice on your office location,** including how to get to it from nearby travel modes and opening times. Ask the tenant what additional information or support they might need in order to visit, such as Google maps locations, [What3Words](#), nearby train station information, whether there are stairs, etc.
- **Offer help navigating inside your office.** Ask blind and partially sighted tenants whether they need a guide in the building when they arrive. Courtesy when guiding a blind person is to let them hold on to your arm as you lead the way. Describe upcoming obstacles as you go, e.g. about to head up stairs to the left, passing close desks/chairs on the right, describe any overhanging shelves, signage, etc.
- **Blind people may have trouble taking accurate photos or describing issues accurately when reporting or collecting evidence.** If a blind tenant cannot provide you with pictures or descriptions of issues, be ready to organise in-person inspections to obtain evidence yourself and share a copy with the tenant for their records.
- **Blind people may not be able to complete furniture moves.** Advise the tenant to do what they feel comfortable doing to prepare in advance, and advise agents that not all pre-visit clearing or furniture moves may have been completed but they should proceed with the job if possible.
- **Describe what you are doing/key activities.** This means a blind tenant will know where you are/if you have left the room, and why there might suddenly be noises such as drilling noise.

Section 3.2

Deaf/hard of hearing

Deaf and hard of hearing covers a broad range of hearing impairments and whilst many people think being deaf means ‘hearing nothing at all’, the vast majority of deaf and hard of hearing people have some level of hearing.

For example, someone might have no usable hearing whatsoever, or may have difficulty with certain frequencies, struggle with tinnitus therefore you should always ask the individual what adjustments they may need.

- **Make yourself easy to see for deaf and hard of hearing tenants.**

Good lighting and facing the person when speaking helps people read lips and understand you better.

- **Be prepared to remove masks.**

This may be important to support deaf and hard of hearing people who need to lip read.

- **Use transcription apps** such as [Live Transcribe \(Android\)](#), and [Live Captions \(Apple\)](#) to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing tenants. If you are using Microsoft Teams for online meetings, there is a live transcription service that you can turn on.
- **Text or British Sign Language (BSL) alternatives.**
English is not always a deaf tenant's first language – for some, BSL is their primary language. Be prepared to suggest text alternatives for phone calls, or BSL interpretation if necessary. For example, suggesting [Relay UK](#).
- **Encourage tenants to bring a trusted BSL or other interpreter or support person if needed.**
Reassure tenants that bringing a family member, friend, support worker or guardian to a meeting is welcomed. See more information in section 1. If an interpreter is present, face and speak to the deaf person, not the interpreter.
- **Hearing assistance (tech).**
Support tenants using hearing aids, for example by letting them know if your offices have a [hearing loop or other assistive listening system](#).

Section 3.2

Deaf/hard of hearing

- **Consider noisy environments.**

Moving to quieter spaces to have conversations can help deaf and hard of hearing tenants focus more on your words.

- **Don't shout.**

A lot of hard of hearing people have hearing loss at certain frequencies. Shouting does not make the sound easier to hear and may move your voice out of the frequency range they can hear, or their hearing aid is tuned to. By shouting, the person might even hear you less well. Instead you should:

- **Face the person** so they can see your lips as you speak.
- **Speak at your normal volume**, no need to shout.
- **Speak at a measured pace.** Speaking too fast can be hard to follow, and speaking too slow can be seen as offensive.
- **Be prepared to repeat.** If someone asks, be ready to repeat yourself.

9 Useful apps for people who are deaf or have hearing loss

Section 3.3

Mobility impaired

Mobility impairments could mean that someone uses a wheelchair, a walking aid or has limited stamina, balance or dexterity. People often assume that mobility impairment means full-time wheelchair use but it can include people who walk but may experience pain, tiredness or difficulty with some certain movements. That's why it's important you always ask what adjustments someone needs.

- **Paper copies may be hard to manipulate or collect if not sent by post.**

Offer digital alternatives such as email.

- **Make physical access easy.**

Ensure step-free access, working lifts, accessible toilets and nearby parking. Advise on the availability of accessible parking nearby and public transport links, the current function of any ramps and lifts and if any routes are undergoing any maintenance work that may restrict access. Reference all accessibility guidance in all communications.

- **Be flexible during home visits.**

Tenants may not be able to move furniture or reach certain areas. If you need to inspect something in a hard-to-reach place, offer help or allow extra time.

- **Taking in-focus photos/taking photos in restricted spaces.**

Capturing images in tight spaces may be difficult. Offer to help or suggest alternatives like video calls or in-person checks.

- **Mobility can change day to day.**

Like many disabilities, mobility conditions are changeable. Just because someone can do something one day doesn't mean they'll be able to do it the next. Many people who use a wheelchair only do so part time, and someone using a wheelchair when they didn't previously is not doing it for attention.

- **Mobility impaired people may not be able to complete furniture moves.**

Advise the tenant to do what they are comfortable with to prepare in advance and advise agents that not all pre-visit clearing or furniture moves may have been completed but they should proceed with the job if possible.

Section 3.4

Speech impediment

Speech impediments can include stammering, slurred speech, or other differences in how someone speaks.

- **Speak to the person directly and respectfully,** be patient and don't interrupt or finish their sentences, giving them plenty of time to speak. If you are meeting someone in person, allow extra time and ideally try and use a quiet space to improve understanding and conversation flow.
- **Offer alternatives to speaking.** Some people may prefer to write things down or communicate through apps. Often these kinds of apps are called Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Always ask what works best for them.
- **Encourage tenants to bring a support person if needed.** Reassure tenants that bringing a family member, friend, support worker or guardian to a meeting is welcomed.
- If an interpreter is present, face and speak to the tenant, not the interpreter.

Section 3.5

Immunocompromised

Immunocompromised people have weakened immune systems which can make them more vulnerable to infections. This might be due to a medical condition or treatment such as chemotherapy.

Often people who are immunocompromised must stay away from things that might cause them to get sick. They may prefer to wear face masks, use hand sanitiser (and ask that you do as well), not want to meet in confined or busy spaces, and not want people showing signs of sickness to enter their home/be near them. This is not a personal attack on you or your cleanliness; it is a set of behaviours designed to keep them safe.

- **Offer remote options like phone or video calls.**
- **Avoid unnecessary in person contact** especially in shared or busy spaces and communal areas. Meeting in person or taking public transport to get to your offices is often dangerous for immunocompromised people.
- **Support requests if a tenant asks you to wear a mask.** It can be useful to confirm this in advance.

- **Offer to have windows open/closed.** Some immunocompromised visitors may want more airflow when visiting.
- **On arrival for in-person inspections, ask residents if there are any accessibility needs you should know about** or anything you can do to make this a less stressful visit. In addition to the suggestions above, it may be useful to communicate the risks of dust/particulates from works carried out.
- **Immunocompromised people may not be able to complete furniture moves** due to side effects of their condition. Advise the tenant to do what they are comfortable with to prepare in advance and advise agents that not all pre-visit clearing or furniture moves may have been completed but they should proceed with the job if possible.

Section 3.6

Neurodiverse/learning difficulties

Neurodiversity and learning difficulties are not the same thing, and both can cover their own wide spectrum of conditions and accessibility needs. Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyscalculia, non-verbal, strokes and the effects of accidents leading to brain injury are all widely different conditions that all have their own impacts on how people think and interact.

The best thing to do is to speak with the individual to understand their own individual needs. Because this guidance below covers so many broad conditions, it should be treated as general guidance that not only might help someone with a noted neurodiverse condition or learning difficulties but may help anyone have a more relaxed and productive interaction with you.

- **Use plain English.**
Try to be clear in your speech and writing and use the [plain English tips](#) in this handbook.
- **Make processes as simple as possible.**
Online journeys, complex agreements, overly detailed instructions and other areas where the process may be lengthy can wear people out and stop them from interacting. Review your processes, instruction documents and online journeys to try and make them as simple as possible.
- **Speak to the person directly and respectfully,**
be patient and never interrupt or finish their sentences, giving them plenty of time to speak. If you are meeting someone in person, allow extra time and ideally try and use a quiet space to improve understanding and conversation flow.

Section 3.6

Neurodiverse/learning difficulties

- **Encourage tenants to bring a support person if needed.**

Reassure tenants that bringing a family member, friend, support worker or guardian to a meeting is welcomed. See more information in section 1.

- **Repeat back outcomes and actions to confirm everyone involved understands the same thing.**

If a tenant has given you a lot of information, repeat back key points to double check you have understood correctly. If you have told the tenant they need to take certain actions, repeat these at the end to confirm they have understood correctly.

- **Consider bright lighting and noisy environments.**

Move to quieter or less bright spaces to have conversations. This can help neurodiverse tenants and those with learning difficulties feel more at ease.

- **Ensure the pre-visit checklist is communicated in writing beforehand.**

Clearly communicate what a tenant needs to prepare before the visit and why. Give plenty of advanced notice and a reminder. Be prepared to offer additional support if significant changes to space are causing the tenant distress.

Section 3.7

English as a second language

English is not everyone's first language, and tenants with English as a second language may not be as confident in explaining issues or understanding your instructions/responses.

- **Avoid complex wording.**

Try to be clear in your speech and writing and use the [plain English tips](#) in this handbook.

- **Make processes as simple as possible.**

Online journeys, complex agreements, overly detailed instructions and other areas where the process may be lengthy can wear people out and stop them from interacting. Review your processes, instruction documents and online journeys to try and make them as simple as possible.

- **Speak to the person directly and respectfully,**

be patient and never interrupt or finish their sentences, giving them plenty of time to speak. If you are meeting someone in person, allow extra time and ideally try and use a quiet space to improve understanding and conversation flow.

- **Encourage tenants to bring a trusted interpreter or support person if needed.**

Reassure tenants that bringing a family member, friend, support worker or guardian to a meeting is welcomed. See more information in section 1.

- **Offer alternatives to speaking.**

Some people may prefer to write things down or communicate through apps such as [Google Translate](#). Always ask what works best for them.

- **Repeat back outcomes and actions to confirm everyone involved understands the same thing.** If a tenant has given you a lot of information, repeat back key points to double check you have understood correctly. If you have told the tenant they need to take certain actions, repeat at the end to confirm they have understood correctly.

- **Be extra considerate about entering homes.**

Any language confusion coupled with insisting on entering a property can cause significant stress. Try to de-escalate if confusions occur, speak with other more fluent family members if possible, and return when everyone understands the reason for the visit.

Section 3.8

Assistance dogs

Some tenants may have assistance dogs to support a wide variety of conditions. There are guide dogs, hearing assistance dogs, diabetic alert dogs, autism and psychiatric service dogs, allergy detection dogs, and more.

Not all assistance dogs are a golden retriever or labrador. If someone arrives at your offices or otherwise requires the assistance of an assistance dog, consider the following.

- **Do not ask them to prove they need the dog.**
A tenant does not need to prove to you anything about their condition.
- **Allow the dog to enter your business premises.**
They are there for a job, and denying someone entry because they have an assistance dog is discrimination.
- **Try to avoid engaging with assistance dogs.**
They are working.
- If possible, **have a dog bowl for visiting dogs to have a drink,** or be willing to fill a dog bowl the tenant has brought with them.
- If possible, **have suggestions ready for the nearest green space,** patch of public grass, park, etc. that the tenant can take the dog to for sanitary reasons.



UK Government

Thank you

Thank you for reading this toolkit. We hope it helps you and your team understand the challenges vulnerable tenants face when navigating the complaints process and feel more confident in supporting them.

