

Accessing services and requesting reasonable adjustments



Contents

How to find services that you need in your area	3
Accessible information.....	5
Reasonable adjustments	6
Log sheets.....	7
Preparation for meetings guidance	9
Reasonable adjustments letter template	13

How to find services that you need in your area



Online search

An online search is often the quickest way to locate a service to suit your need. Some good tips to use when searching are:

- use quotation marks online search “ ” around the key word of your search, and include the town or county you are in

For example “benefits support” London

Local authorities can be responsible for most services in your area.

How to find services in your local area – who has responsibility for what?

- your local authority will typically be responsible for housing support, social services and so on
- your Community NHS or NHS Integrated Care Board will be responsible for NHS Primary care, Social prescribing and Community Mental Health - you can find the details of your NHS ICB by using the following link:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/find-your-localintegrated-care-board/>

There are many other organisations for common support queries some of which are listed below:

- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**

People rely on CAB because they're independent and totally impartial. They also give advice on consumer rights on their consumer helpline, support witnesses in courts through the Witness Service and give pension guidance to people aged over 50. They help millions of people every year.

- **Healthwatch**

The aim of local Healthwatch is to give citizens and communities a stronger voice to influence and challenge how health and social care services are provided within their locality. Local Healthwatch organisations are a statutory service commissioned by local councils as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

- **ACAS the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service**

ACAS work with millions of employers and employees every year to improve workplace relationships. They're an independent public body that receives funding from the government.

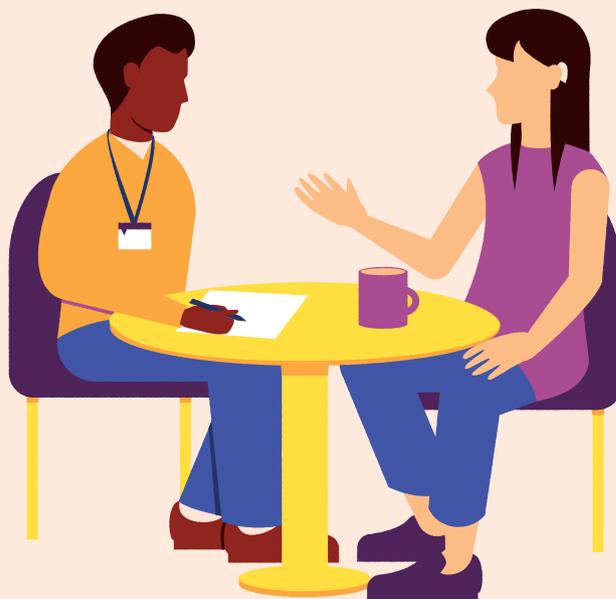
- **EASS – Equality Advice Support Service**

The EASS advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights, across England, Scotland and Wales.



Accessible information

In 2016, the government introduced the Accessible Information Standard (AIS).



This means that it is the law for the NHS and adult social care services to give people information in a way that they can understand. This covers all NHS and social care services, including:

- GPs, dentists, and pharmacies
- hospitals
- adult social care services

If you have a disability or sensory loss, this means that the service must adapt how they communicate to meet your needs. This could be through:

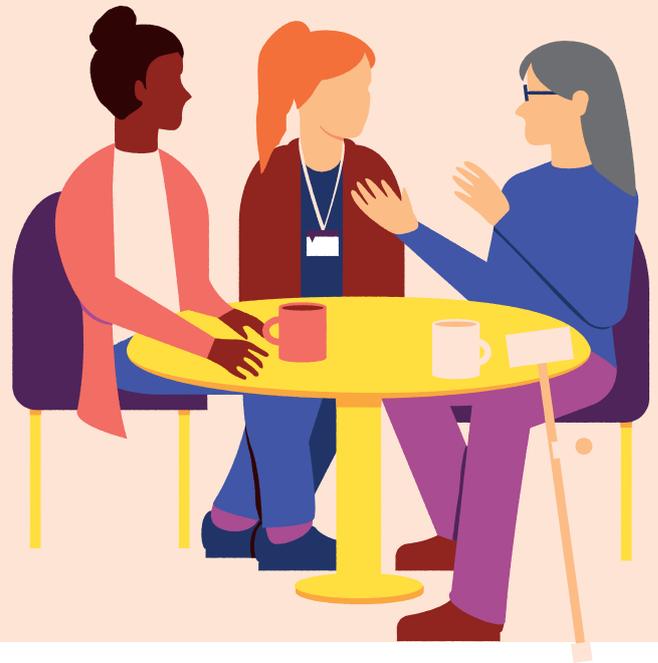
- written communication, such as email, text, or text relay
- other forms of communication, such as Braille, audio, large print, or easy read
- providing a professional to support communication at meetings, for example a British Sign Language interpreter

You should let the service know if you need them to adapt their communication to meet your needs. This information should be written on your records so that everyone that speaks with you is aware of what they need to do.



Reasonable adjustments

In 2010, the government introduced the Equality Act.



This lays out the duty to make reasonable adjustments (changes). The aim of this is to remove any barriers you may face in accessing services because of your disabilities, so that it is not harder for you to get the same support.

This law covers employers and all services, including the NHS, local authority, charities, schools and universities, leisure centres, shops and restaurants, and transport services.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments are:

- longer appointments if you need more time to take in and understand information, for example at the GP or hospital
- quiet spaces away from large open-plan offices or classrooms
- having someone (like a family member or friend) with you for support at an appointment
- only having appointments at certain times of day

You can ask for reasonable adjustments in writing or in person/over the phone. There is a template letter at the end of this document to help you think about what you want to say.

Organisations can refuse reasonable adjustments if it would be too expensive for them (for example a small shop having their doorway widened) or if it would cause health and safety concerns for other users. If you request a reasonable adjustment and the organisation you are requesting it from refuses, they should explain why.

Log sheet section 1: Record the event(s) you have experienced

Date	What happened?	Who was involved?	What did you do next?

Log sheet section 2: Record the stages of your experience

Date	Who did you contact?	What did they agree to do?	What did you agree to do?

Preparation for meetings guidance

Use the section below to prepare **before** a meeting by answering some or all of the questions. You can take this with you to help you on the day.

What is the meeting about?

What time and date is the meeting? Where will it take place?

Who am I speaking to? How many people will be there?

Top tips: If you are unhappy about someone who is due to attend, you can raise this before the meeting. If there is someone you would like to be present to support you, you could ask for them to attend too. Additionally, you can request that the meeting is held in a place / location that is accessible to you. It is ok to ask for a better explanation if you do not understand what is being said, professionals can use abbreviations that people won't always understand, it's ok to ask as many times as you need.

What do I want to say? What outcome do I want?

What information do I need? How can I go about gathering this information?

What information will they need from me? Who could help me with this?
Do I need to ask for advice?

What questions do I want to ask?

What do I want to happen as a result of this meeting?

Would I need to have someone with me during the meeting? Who would be the best person for this?

What happens next if I don't get the outcome I want?

Notes and actions

Use the section below to write down key words or information during the meeting. If there are actions at the end, you could write these down. It may be useful to make a note of who has said they are doing them and when, so that you can refer back to this later.

Top tip: At the start of the meeting make sure everyone introduces themselves and their role so you know everyone in the room – don't forget to introduce yourself as you are the most important person in the room.

Notes about the meeting

Actions	Who	When

Reflection after the meeting

After the meeting, reflect on the following questions. This could help you to make the next meeting go even better:

What went well?	
What do you think could have gone better?	
What could you do differently next time to help you to self advocate?	

Reasonable adjustments letter template

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

[Your name]

[Your address]

[Your phone number]

Dear [manager of the service/organisation]

I am writing to you to ask that you make reasonable adjustments for me under the Equality Act (2010). This is because I have [insert disabilities], which make it difficult for me to [insert activity or space you want to access].

Explain how your disabilities make it difficult for you, for example:

- I often find it difficult to take in all of the information that I am given
- I find it difficult to sit for long periods of time in the waiting room because it is so noisy/bright/hot/cold, etc
- my appointments are always on the first floor but there is no step-free access and I am a wheelchair user

Explain what changes you would like, for example:

I would like to request that:

- I am offered longer appointments to give me more time to process information
- information given to me is also provided in writing so that I can remember it later
- I can wait outside in the hallway near the reception rather than in the main waiting room
- my appointments are held on the ground floor

I am aware that the Equality Act applies to your organisation. Under this law, you have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people when they find it difficult to access your services due to their disabilities.

I look forward to your response and I hope you are able to make these changes so that I can access your services.

Kind regards,

[Your name]

VoiceAbility

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🌐 voiceability.org

🐦 [@VoiceAbility](https://twitter.com/VoiceAbility)



About VoiceAbility

We make sure you're heard when it matters most. We've been supporting people to have their say in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for over 40 years. We're an independent charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.