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## **Making reasonable adjustments for HCPC customers and stakeholders**

### **Introduction**

This guidance is intended to help employees:

- understand what reasonable adjustments for customers and stakeholders are;
- be able to identify where reasonable adjustments are needed;
- know what to take into account when considering making reasonable adjustments; and
- access additional resources for more support.

The guidance also provides some examples of the types of reasonable adjustments HCPC employees might make for any customers and stakeholders they interact with at work.

By customers and stakeholders we mean anyone who uses the HCPC's services and facilities including registrants, complainants, visitors, partners, and members of the public.

### **What is a reasonable adjustment?**

A reasonable adjustment is a legal term introduced under the Equality Act (2010). It means that we have a duty to make changes to make sure that, as far as possible, a disabled person has the same access to the HCPC's services and facilities as a non-disabled person.

This may include, for example:

- Providing extra aids or services – for example providing information in alternative formats, such as Braille.
- Changing a physical feature – for example providing clearer signs, or different equipment, such as an alternative chair in a hearing.
- Changing approach – for example, letting people park in spaces closer to a building, even if those spaces are allocated to someone else.

### **What is meant by 'reasonable'?**

Reasonable means fair and sensible and, in the context of reasonable adjustments, depends on things like:

- the person's disability;
- how practicable the changes are and what they might cost;
- what money and resources are available;
- if the change requested would help overcome the challenges a person might otherwise encounter.

### **When should we make reasonable adjustments?**

We should always be mindful of the needs of the customers and stakeholders we engage with and remember that individuals may not always make a formal request for a reasonable adjustment (how to manage formal requests for reasonable adjustments is covered in the next section). We should take a proactive approach, for example:

- when organising meetings we should ask participants if they have any access, support or dietary requirements;
- If an individual struggles to hear us on the phone, we should ask if they would prefer us to communicate with them in a different format;
- If someone says they cannot get to a meeting or hearing because of mobility issues, we should ask if there is anything we can do to assist them.

### **What we should think about when considering requests for reasonable adjustments**

We should always endeavour to agree to a genuine<sup>1</sup> request for a reasonable adjustment. We should only refuse a request when we do not have the resource or ability to accommodate it, or if the change asked for wouldn't help overcome the barrier.

It is important to be aware that some disabilities are harder to recognise than others, particularly cognitive impairments, such as:

- mental health problems;
- dementia;
- autism; and
- brain injury.

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<sup>1</sup> By genuine request, we mean that it has been requested in order to address access issues for a disabled person.

The indicators for cognitive impairment are highly varied – an individual might have difficulty engaging with people, might exhibit emotional and behavioural issues (such as anger), and might struggle with practical skills (for example using the telephone).

In considering a reasonable adjustment, it is important to:

- listen to the individual, as they will know what support they need;
- avoid making assumptions about what they need;
- be flexible where you can, and make adjustments on a case-by-case basis, as no two disabilities are the same;
- be open and honest, letting them know when you need to seek advice;
- ask for help if you need it;
- keep a record of the approach you take to the request and the outcome.

## **Case studies**

The following case studies help show how people across the organisation might make reasonable adjustments.

### **Jack, member of the public**

Jack, a member of the public, has a hearing impairment and wants to observe a hearing at the Health and Care Professions Council Tribunal Service (HCPTS). He calls the HCPTS to see what adjustments can be made to ensure he can observe fully. The HCPTS team let Jack know that they offer a hearing loop in all hearing rooms and ask whether or not that is an appropriate adjustment for him. Jack agrees that it is. They ask him to arrive a little early so that they can ensure the equipment is working correctly and he can hear all the proceedings. The HCPTS makes a record of the reasonable adjustment and asks Jack to let them know in advance if he wants to observe other hearings in future so they can make sure the hearing loop is available in the relevant room.

### **Dipak, partner**

One of our partners, Dipak, has a physical disability and is concerned about getting to an education approvals visit. He calls the Education team and speaks to Sarah. Sarah asks Dipak what adjustments would help ensure he is able to attend the approvals visit, and he explains that a taxi to and from the train station would be helpful. Sarah confirms that the HCPC is committed to making reasonable adjustments, but that she'll need to speak to her manager to check that they are able to arrange a taxi for him. She arranges to call him back later that day.

Sarah discusses the matter with her line manager and it is agreed that a taxi will be arranged for Dipak, picking him up at the train station and taking him to the university and back. Sarah calls Dipak to let him know and gives him all the details. She makes a note on his record to outline what was discussed and agreed so that if he calls back and speaks to someone else, they will have all the information they need.

### **Jessica, complainant**

Jessica has tried to make a complaint on the HCPC website, but cannot understand the information or the form she thinks she is supposed to fill out. She calls the fitness to practise department and speaks to Matthew. She details her disability to Matthew and her distress at not being able to make her complaint. Matthew reassures Jessica that he will support her in making her complaint, and asks her what would help. She asks if he can take her complaint over the phone. Matthew explains that complaints must be received in writing, but he will speak to his manager to see if there's anything they can do. He confirms he will update her later that day.

Matthew discusses the matter with his manager and suggests taking the complaint over the phone, and then sending the document to Jessica to sign and return. Matthew's manager checks with the organisation's legal representative who confirms this is in line with the HCPC's legislative requirements. Matthew calls Jessica to confirm he can take her complaint over the phone, but will need to send it back to her in writing to check and sign. Jessica agrees.

### **Xin, a registrant**

Xin is an arts therapist. She has recently been selected for a continuing professional development (CPD) audit. Xin has a visual impairment, and is unable to access the supporting guidance on the HCPC website. She calls the Registration department to see if the documents can be provided in large font, and requests an extension to her submission deadline to account for the delay in accessing these documents. Jason, a registration advisor explains that he'll be able to send Xin the documents in large font, but will need to check with his managers about giving her an extension to the submission deadline. He tells Xin that he'll call her later that day with an update.

Jason speaks to his manager who agrees a two week extension to the submission deadline. Jason calls Xin to let her know the extension has been agreed and checks that it is sufficient time for her. Xin agrees.

### **More information**

There are a number of internal resources available to support employees in making reasonable adjustments:

- you can find advice on how to adjust documents for people with visual impairments on the intranet - <http://hpc-notes.hpcuk.org:8081/Intranet/InfoNet2.nsf/InformationByUniqueID/DKNT-9P3ESV?OpenDocument&SessionID=HPCN-AS8B38>;
- the publications team can help you translate a document in to another language, braille or an audio version - <http://hpc-notes.hpcuk.org:8081/Intranet/InfoNet2.nsf/InformationByUniqueID/TGLR-6A9JY2?OpenDocument&SessionID=HPCN-AS8BAN>;
- there are assistive listening systems available in reception and HCPTS hearing rooms for people with hearing impairments; and
- Our website sets out our accessibility options here - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/accessibility/>. This includes. Information about how to change the view of the website to suit an individual's needs - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/accessibility/website/visual/>.

There are also lots of helpful external resources about reasonable adjustments online, some of which are set out below:

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission, an independent statutory body that encourages equality and diversity, helps eliminate unlawful discrimination, and protects and promotes the human rights of everyone in Britain, has useful information on their website - <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-are-reasonable-adjustments>.
- Citizens advice provide guidance on the duty organisations have to make reasonable adjustments - <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/duty-to-make-reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-people/>
- Mind, a mental health charity, provides detail on reasonable adjustments in their paper on 'Discrimination using services and public functions' - <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/4217873/discrimination-services-and-public-functions.pdf>

### **What if you still have questions?**

If after reading the above resources and seeking advice from your manager you're still unsure about what to do, get in touch with the Policy team at [policy@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:policy@hcpc-uk.org), 020 7840 9815 or the Partners team at [partners@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:partners@hcpc-uk.org), ext. 9757 on.