

Customer Accessibility

Generic instructions

These instructions are divided into the key areas of customer accessibility needs. Below these areas are a list of the pages covered: [Equality Act and Disability](#)

[Searchlight and CIS Action](#)

[Reasonable Adjustments](#)

- Reasonable adjustments in DWP
- Reasonable adjustments available
- Accessibility checklist
- Using email as a reasonable adjustment.
- DWP email confirmation declaration

[Alternative Formats](#)

- Communications in alternative format
- Alternative formats available
- Using a BSL interpreter

- Video Relay Service

[Types of Disability and Impacts](#)

- blind or partially sighted customers
- deaf or hard of hearing customers
- learning difficulties
- hidden Impairments
- mobility Issues
- customers with mental health problems

- vulnerable customers

3 way call (conference call)

Note: a 3 way (conference call) is an audio call and will consist of the customer, you and a third party or parties. Where a video call is required see Video Relay Service.

Where a customer, including vulnerable customers indicate they require third party assistance, or it is identified that third party support needs to be put in place to support the customer, a 3 way call (conference call) must be offered.

The customer may indicate that they require assistance from, for example

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- social worker
- support worker or advocate
- solicitor
- a family member or friend
- an non spoken or foreign language interpreter
- Welsh language.

Note: the customer must provide the connection details for the third party or parties to enable the 3 way call (conference call) to take place. Do not offer to search for a telephone number on behalf of the customer. The only exception to the customer providing details is when Using DA Language Services, as this requires you to connect with DA Language Services prior to the customer.

This list is not exhaustive.

Note: before arranging a 3 way (conference call), you must read [Working with representatives](#)

If the call fails to the third party, or the third party is unable to take the call, the caseworker must ask the customer:

- do they wish to proceed with the call without third party assistance
- or
- do they wish to end the call and contact their third party support?

Once the call has been completed, the customer's record must be updated to confirm a 3 way call (conference call) was attempted or completed at the request of the customer.

Alternative Formats

DWP is committed to meeting the needs of all disabled people and has a legal duty to make sure all services are accessible to disabled customers. The aim of this guidance is to make sure that alternative formats are provided consistently by DWP staff. These pages will advise staff on what alternative formats DWP offer and how they can be used to help customers communicate with us. For a full list of available Alternative formats refer to [Alternative Formats Available](#).

Communications in Alternative Format

Under the Equality Act and as a service provider, DWP has a legal duty to provide information that is accessible to all of our customers. This means we must supply information to customers with a disability or health condition in a format to ensure they are not at a disadvantage when accessing our services.

When a customer has requested communication in an alternative format, we must recognise the request and deliver a solution which meets the customer's needs without offering a lesser service. When an alternative format has been agreed, we must continue to supply information in that format until notified differently.

Every effort will be made to supply the communication in the format preferred by the customer, however if more than one format is suitable, then the most secure and cost effective format must be chosen.

All available options of alternative communications must be considered, however if a benefit area is unable to provide a certain option, then an appropriate alternative must be agreed upon between DWP and the customer.

Note: When considering which Alternative Format is available, timescales must always be taken into account. The customer must be informed if the Alternative Format chosen may result in any delay.

For information on Alternative Format costs contact the AF team/SPOC for your area.

What is an alternative format?

Anything that differs from the standard methods or formats for communicating with customers is known as an alternative format. For example in regard to written correspondence, an alternative format is anything that differs from the standard Arial 12 point font print.

Alternative formats for documents

If you require a document producing in Braille, Easy Read or need an audio version of a document, your requirement will be managed by HH Global (HHG) who have access to a number of approved alternative format suppliers.

For more information on the process (and a link to the required form) visit the [Managed Print Services pages](#).

What alternative formats are available in DWP?

Refer to [Alternative Formats Available](#)

Note: Although this is a full list of all the alternative format options in DWP, there are some benefits/areas which may not provide all of these options. However it is the employee's responsibility to make sure an alternative appropriate solution is determined and agreed with the customer.

Alternative formats available

- Audio
- Audio recording of interview
- Braille
- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Easy Read format
- Hands on Signing
- Large print
- Lipspeaking

- Paper
- Relay UK
- Sign supported English
- SMS text
- Telephone
- Textphone
- Video Relay Services (VRS).

Note: This is a full list of the alternative formats available in DWP however there are other considerations you may need to take into account. For example, Welsh is not an alternative format however we are obligated to provide general high level information, for example benefit leaflets, in national and regional tier languages.

Audio

Audio cassette or compact disc (CD) is of particular benefit to people who are blind or partially sighted, and those with learning difficulties, low literacy levels, or who may have problems with their hands.

Audio is provided when a customer is unable to read written communications. This may be due to a visual impairment (but not exclusively).

If a customer requests communications in audio format take the following steps:

1. It is important staff discuss the full range of options with the customer.
2. The customer usually knows what format is most suitable for their needs but you must discuss all options in case we can provide a better service.
3. If after discussing with the customer, you agree audio is an appropriate reasonable adjustment to put into place you must order audio formats like CDs. You must do this by following the instructions in the **Communication support services guidance**. If this is not possible, for example if a form is needed, explain that we will send them the form to fill in, via post or email, and ask if there is anyone who can help them with the form. If not, consider arranging a visiting officer (VO).

Audio recording of interview

Staff must be aware that interviews can be recorded where it is requested by a disabled customer as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010.

If necessary speak to your Local Office Manager who can facilitate this.

See: Are customers allowed to record interviews for more information.

Braille

Braille is an important means of accessing information for people who are blind or partially sighted.

It is a system of raised dots, which some blind and partially sighted people can read with their fingers. Many blind and partially sighted people prefer information in Braille.

Braille is used for most other languages that use the western alphabet. For languages that do not use the western alphabet, large print or audio formats may be more suitable.

Note: Both Braille and the standard version are sent to the customer or representative.

Grade 1 Braille - Translates each individual print letter, number or punctuation mark into a braille sign. Each possible arrangement of dots within a cell represents only one letter, number, punctuation sign, or special Braille composition sign.

Grade 2 Braille - Introduced as a space-saving alternative to grade 1 Braille. In grade 2, a cell can represent a shortened form of a word. Many cell combinations have been created to represent common words, making this the most popular grade of Braille. There are part-word contractions, which often stand in for common suffixes or

British Sign Language or fingerspelling

British Sign Language (BSL) is a visual sign language, which many deaf people use to communicate. The BSL fingerspelling alphabet involves spelling out words on the hand of the receiver and used by the deafblind community.

If a customer or representative requests this method of communication, DWP can book a BSL interpreter for them.

Easy Read format

Easy Read is an alternative format which gives people with learning difficulties access to the same information as everyone else. It uses simple language and images to make information easier to understand.

Easy Read is not normally appropriate for general communications, for example a letter regarding a customer's benefit but more appropriate for planned documents such as leaflets and signage.

Note: Remember DWP aims to make all its communications plain, clear and easy to understand.

Many of our products are not suitable for translation due to their complexity therefore if a customer requests communications in Easy Read as a reasonable adjustment, you must:

1. Consider if you can provide better customer service by using other means. For example, by telephone, face to face interview or the use of an intermediary (including family or friends).
2. Take into account the information that has been requested in Easy Read as not all information is suitable for Easy Read format.
3. Request Easy Read format through HH Global (HHG).
4. Contact HHG Customer Service team to discuss the requirement and obtain a quote.

See: Specific instructions for your work area.

Note: Easy Read format is not widely available. Refer to the Communication Support Services guide for how to request Easy Read. Business Disability Forum briefing papers give practical disability related guidance for employers on specific disabilities, including learning disabilities, hidden impairments and reasonable adjustments.

Hands on Signing

Hands on Signing is for people who have lost their sight after learning sign language. Using BSL, the receiver places their hands over or under those of the signer and follows the sign.

Large print

Large print forms or communications are documents which use a font size bigger than the standard Arial font 12. Large print is the most common form of Alternative Format and the standard for this is usually font 16.

Large print 16+

Customers may request larger font than this and there is currently no upper size limit however this can impact the amount of pages in the document. In this case the document can become difficult to package and send therefore other formats must be considered on the lawful grounds that this would be reasonable.

Lipspeaking

Lipspeaking is a skilled method of communicating for deaf people who are lip readers using unvoiced speech, gestures and, where appropriate, fingerspelling to convey meaning.

Paper

Some conditions mean that the colour of the paper, in particular Brilliant White, can make it difficult for information to be read.

If a customer informs us that the colour of the paper makes it difficult to read, follow these steps:

1. Ask them if they need their communications in a different format or on different coloured paper.
2. Consider either another colour or a heavier weight than the Unit normally uses.

Note: Documents, such as letters or forms, must be printed singled sided.

3. Consider whether email may be a more suitable option.

Relay UK

This is a national telephone relay service offered by BT and Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or speech-impaired and have access to a textphone (sometimes known as a minicom).

Please be aware that textphone users can make calls:

- directly to another textphone user
- with the assistance of an Operator, to a standard voice phone.

The Operator relays any typed conversation on the caller's behalf. The caller may prefer to use their own voice to communicate but need your responses to be typed back to them.

Note: If a caller doesn't possess a textphone but would like to make a textphone call to us, tell them that textphones are available in some libraries or Citizens Advice.

The user requires access to a Smartphone, tablet or computer that has software installed called NGT or Relay UK Lite.

Once installed the user links their phone number to Relay UK Lite. Relay UK Lite connects to the service over the Internet so the user can type and read the text from a third party relay assistant or the other person on the call.

The software is free but calls are charged at normal phone call tariffs.

There is no requirement for anyone to be in the same location, there is no need to pre-book a relay agent and this facility enables real time communication for the customer.

If you receive a call from a Relay UK User and want to call them back or a customer has indicated their number is a textphone you can ring them by adding **18002** to the start of the number. This puts you through to a BT Interpreter who translates your words to text for the customer.

Note: Staff must follow standard security procedures and use **Identity Verification (IDV)** to establish the identity of the customer when making the call.

Sign Supported English

Sign Supported English (SSE) is a combination of signs from British Sign Language (BSL) together with English grammar.

Note: Unlike BSL, SSE is not an independent language and the balance of English to BSL signs varies from individual to individual.

SMS text

SMS text has become a standard way of reminding customers about appointments.

Where this is not standard practice, it must be considered if required as a reasonable adjustment for customers with a disability, such as memory problems.

When using this service staff must always comply with DWP Security Policy and Standards for SMS text.

See: [DWP SMS text guidance](#) for more information.

Telephone

This is the easiest form of communicating with people who have a visual impairment and where relevant or possible must be used in the first instance.

Literacy problems

There may be times when the customer can't understand the correspondence that is sent to them because they have literacy problems or are unable to read or write.

In these instances, make sure you:

1. Provide the customer with a service that enables them to interact with you.
2. In most cases, you can gather the information that you need over the phone.
3. If you do identify a customer who has literacy problems, the decision to provide any specific Alternative Format lies with the agent. Refer to the [Specific instructions](#) for your work area for advice.

Textphone

Textphones are used by customers who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech problem. All areas of DWP have a number by which a textphone user can contact us.

Calls to the DWP textphones are handled at our Contact Centres by staff with a TextBox license. Staff with a TextBox license can also phone customers who use a textphone.

To contact a customer you must have access to TextBox software.

Note: Pensions Directorate now have Texbox software to deal with these calls. All calls to this number are routed to an appropriate member of staff.

If it is a query that would normally be dealt with by phone:

1. Send an email to the textphone representative asking for the customer to be contacted.
2. Make the subject heading of 'Alternative format needed – textphone'.
3. In the main body of the email include:
 - customer's name
 - National Insurance number (NINo)
 - textphone number
 - details of exactly what information is needed from the customer.

See: [_Specific instructions](#) for your work area for further information.

Video relay service

The Video Relay Service (VRS) allows DWP to communicate with customers who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired via a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter using a video connection.

Note: This service can only be used for inbound calls, where staff are accepting a call from a customer via VRS. However, staff are unable to use this service for any outbound calls.

Refer to the Video Relay Service instructions for information on what to do if a customer requires this.

Using a BSL interpreter

Face to face BSL interpreting

See: [How to use face to face interpretation service \(for external customers only, including British Sign Language\)](#)

Video Relay Service

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to provide suitable methods of communication for customers who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired.

Customers can use Video Relay Service (VRS) to contact:

- Attendance Allowance,
- Access to Work
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Employment Support Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Jobcentre Enquiry Line
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Fraud
- Debt Management
- Compensation Recovery Unit
- National Insurance Number
- Tell us Once
- New Style Jobseeker's Allowance
- New Style Employment and Support Allowance
- Funeral expenses payment
- Child Maintenance Group

- Maternity Allowance
- Bereavement Benefit
- Benefit Cap
- Incapacity Benefit
- Legacy Benefits
- Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (including pneumoconiosis Workers Compensation System (PWC) user guide)
- Carer's Allowance
- Carer's Credit
- Vaccine Damage Payment Scheme
- State Pension
- Independent Case Examiner
- Winter Fuel Payment
- Pension Credit
- Pension Forecasting Service
- Pension Tracing Service

- International Pension Centre
- Social Fund (including Funeral Payments and Sure Start Maternity Grant)
- Warm Home Discount Scheme
- The Exportability Team
- Employer service line.

VRS is provided through DA Language Services.

VRS allows DWP to communicate with customers who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired via a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter using a video connection.

Customers must have access to a computer or tablet (with an enabled webcam) to communicate using BSL.

Customers can access the links to VRS on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) to connect them to an interpreter.

VRS is for inbound contact to the DWP only, and cannot be used for outbound calling.

The customer will communicate with the interpreter via their computer screen or web cam and the interpreter will translate that message verbally to DWP. In turn, DWP's verbal response will be translated into BSL by the interpreter visually on screen for the claimant.

VRS offers distinct advantages when communicating with customers.

All VRS calls only involve 3 people:

- the customer

- the BSL interpreter
- the DWP member of staff

There is no need:

- for everyone to be in the same location
- to pre-book a BSL interpreter as this service also allows real time communication for the customer

VRS callers may request DWP to add a hearing person as an additional participant to a call. This can be done in-call through the 'Conferencing' function on your Genesys telephone or the 'Instant Call Conference' on your softphone app, as long as the customer has the contact number for the third party. At the beginning of the call:

- The interpreter will give their name and say they are from SignVideo before starting to interpret for the customer.
- For example, they may say:

'Hello, my name is ***** and I am a sign language interpreter from the SignVideo interpreting service. I will be interpreting the call for you both, and I will hand over to the caller now'.

During the call you must:

- speak to the deaf customer directly rather than to the interpreter
- use the customer's name and ask them the questions. You must not say "can you ask them?"
- remember:
- use plain language, be aware that deaf claimants don't always have a good understanding of English
- that there will be short periods of silence between you asking the question and hearing the interpreted response as this allows the interpretation to take place
- that if necessary, the interpreter will ask you to clarify or repeat information
- that they may also need to clarify information from the customer
- to read all statements at a slightly slower pace to allow the interpreter to keep up with you, otherwise speak at your usual speed

You must take the following actions during the call with the customer and interpreter:

- you must make the claimant aware that the call is being recorded, for example you could say: "Your call may be recorded for training and legal purposes"
- continue the normal process as per current operational instructions.
- If Identity Verification (IDV) failed, continue as per current operational instructions

DWP visit required for help with forms completion

If the agent identifies, or the customer indicates that they need additional support to complete the form, ask them if they would like a BSL interpreter to be present at the visit.

If the customer says yes, follow current operational instructions for that process.

At the end of the call you must check that the customer has no more questions before disconnecting the call, allowing time for the interpreter to interpret the response.

ESA

In line with the Equality Act 2010, DWP staff from all areas have a legal duty to make sure every customer is able to access our services. This means ensuring they have access to the appropriate channel of communication to suit their needs.

DWP colleagues must check Searchlight on every customer intervention to check if an accessibility/Alternative Format (AF) need is held.

Where an AF requirement is held a check must be completed on JSAPS to ensure the information held on Searchlight is recorded. If the AF requirement is not held AF Instructions below must be followed.

If customer declares or DWP identifies a new AF or changes have occurred to an existing requirement, you must:

- follow existing AF Instructions below
- follow CIS500 instructions to ensure the new or amended customer needs are recorded on Searchlight. For further information on completion of CIS500 see CIS Data Amendment Forms

Please see below for ESA specific guidance on how to handle Alternative Format and Reasonable Adjustment requests:

Alternative formats available to customers

Identification

1. A customer can request correspondence to be produced in an alternative format as a reasonable adjustment at any time throughout the life of their claim to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). For more information see: [emailing personal data](#) .
2. You must be aware of how to identify if/when a customer may need additional support to access DWP services.

Responsibilities

The nominated ESA processor is responsible for:

- making sure the AF process is followed
- making sure all customer requests are considered
- deciding whether the requests are reasonable
- making sure the appropriate systems **must** be updated with a standard note:

Alternative Formats (AF) available:

- audio
- Braille
- british sign language
- coloured paper
- easy read format
- hands on signing
- large print (many large print forms are available on-line)
- lip-speaking
- next generation text/relay UK
- sign supported english
- SMS texts (if requested)
- telephone
- textphone
- video Relay Service (VRS)

Note: Welsh language is not an alternative format; it is a legal requirement for any customers within Wales. Alternative formats can only be supplied in English or Welsh, for Welsh language forms refer to Welsh Versions .

Reasonable Adjustments (RA) available:

- car parking facilities
- changing location of interview
- changing time and place of meetings/interviews
- email

- induction loop systems
- private interview rooms
- representatives and intermediaries
- toilet access for customers in DWP offices
- transport – public and private
- visiting officer

Customers with access to an e-reader can access DWP forms held on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website as all forms are compatible with the e-reader facility.

For guidance on choosing the right RA/AF and disabilities and their impact, see: [Types of disabilities and impact](#).

Note: If there is any doubt the AF request is reasonable, contact the AF team to decide if the requested format can be provided. The following email address must be used,

The AF team will only provide

advice on the types of AF available, but **not** on whether the reasonable adjustment policy applies. If it cannot be provided the customer must be contacted to agree a format that meets their needs.

When RA/AF identified

1. When ESA teams identify that an AF is needed, make sure that the customer receives any letters, forms or leaflets in the requested AF from the point of request onwards, throughout the claim.
2. DWP and DWP representative suppliers, including medical services, aim to provide customers with the most suitable and cost effective AF particularly for the end to end **ESA50** process.
3. The intention is that when a customer requests an AF at any stage of their ESA claim, including the **ESA50** process, then the required format is used throughout the **ESA50** process and claim. This removes the need for the customer to ask for an AF at each stage.
4. The **ESA50** AF process to follow will depend on when the customer makes either DWP or medical services aware that an AF is needed.
5. If the nominated ESA manager has any queries they can contact the AF team. The following email address must be used:

Alternative format team action

All Alternative Format (AF) correspondence must include **Private and Confidential** in the updated correspondence address. Use the **F15** function to reformat the address if necessary. The consequence of not doing so may result in the

customer's future correspondence from DWP and Other Government Departments (OGDs) being inappropriately opened and uploaded to DRS.

Correspondence received from the customer

Take the following action when you receive the customer's correspondence:

1. Amend the customer's correspondence to show their correspondence or residential address.
2. Upload the correspondence on DWP's contracted online portal provision to request the appropriate AF.
3. Send the requested AF to the customer with the appropriate print copy when the AF is received from DWP's contracted online portal provision.
4. Update all relevant systems to show that the AF was sent to the customer. For example, ESA, LMS and the AF database.
5. Check Searchlight to confirm if the correct accessibility need is recorded. If so, no further action is required.
6. If the accessibility need is not recorded on Searchlight, complete CIS500. For further information on completion of CIS500 see CIS Data Amendment Forms.

AF request received from AF SPOC

For a list of what AFs DWP can supply see: [Alternative Formats available](#).

1. Convert the customer correspondence to an appropriate format if the customer requests large print font size 12 to 16 or coloured paper.
2. Send by appropriate class post to the customer's correspondence or residential address.
3. Make a referral to the external printing provider to convert to the customer's required format if the customer requires font size 18 to 48 and, or coloured paper.
4. Make a referral to the external provider if the customer has requested:
 - audio
 - Braille
 - web accessible PDF
5. On receipt of correspondence from the external provider, send by appropriate class of post to the customer's residential address, or, will forward the web accessible PDF to the Service Centre (SC) by e mail for it to be sent to the customer's e-mail address.
6. Set a 21 day user case control using section type [18] for the WCA team following the issue of ESA50 or ESA51.

7. If the ESA50 is not returned and an ESA53 reminder letter is required, set a 7 day user case control using section type [18] for the WCA team, following the issue of ESA53.
8. Set case control, using section type [18], for the day after the specified activity.
9. Alert WCA team that future WCA referral auto-push must be stopped.

Note: It is the responsibility of the SC for the issue of all correspondence to the customer where email is the agreed AF due to a reasonable adjustment.

Service centre maintenance action

Identification

1. If an Alternative Format (AF) is requested/identified during a live claim, the ESA agent or the claims maintenance agent will consider if DWP's reasonable adjustments apply.
2. If the agent considers that an AF reasonable adjustment may apply so that the customer can communicate effectively with DWP, they must ask the customer if an AF would suit their needs. They must also explain the types of AF which are available and can be provided. For more information, see:
Alternative Formats available to customers

AF requested during live claim

3. If an AF/reasonable adjustments(RA) is needed, complete the following actions:
4. Complete the correspondence address action by inserting the following AF centralised teams address on Jobseeker's Allowance Payment System (JSAPS) and all relevant benefit systems:
5. Set case control, using section type [18], for the day after the specified activity.
6. Alert the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) team that any future WCA re-referral auto-push must be stopped.

Recording

7. The claims maintenance team must take the following action to notify the AF team that the customer requires an AF:
8. If an AF is required, you must email the AF team for them to record it on their database.
9. Give exact details of Alternative Format required, for example:
 - Audio cassette tape, CD/DVD/MP3
 - Braille 2
 - British Sign Language DVD/MPG
 - Large Print (16 font standard, any larger please stipulate)
 - Large Print Custom font
 - Web Accessible PDF
 - Colour paper if applicable.
10. Make sure the email includes the following details:
 - the customer's name
 - National Insurance Number (NINo)
 - host Service Centre

11. Check Searchlight to confirm if the correct accessibility need is recorded. If so, no further action is required.
12. If the accessibility need is not recorded on Searchlight, complete a CIS500. For further information on completion of CIS500 see CIS Data Amendment Forms.

Note: The AF team will not issue any correspondence to the customer by email. It is the responsibility of the SC for the issue of **all** correspondence to the customer where email is the agreed reasonable adjustment.

Customer requests email as a reasonable adjustment

13. If the customer requests email as a reasonable adjustment, their email address must be confirmed. Use a validated contact point (for example telephone or postal address) to do this, before accepting the information as genuine. For more information see emailing citizens policy .
14. Email validation also applies where DWP receives unsolicited (unrequested) personal information such as when a change of circumstances is received from citizens via email.
15. If DWP receives a change of circumstance by email where email as a reasonable adjustment has not been agreed, the customer must be contacted by telephone to establish if a reasonable adjustment is now required by the customer due to their health condition or disability.
16. If the customer's AF request does not satisfy DWP AF as a reasonable adjustment, DWP must advise the customer that all correspondence will be sent and received by DWP using standard communication channels.
17. Throughout the life of the claim all JSAPS system generated letters which are to be sent to the customer will be redirected to the AF team by the Mail Opening Unit (MOU).
18. The AF team will convert the correspondence to the customer's requested format and send to the customer by the appropriate class of post.
19. If the customer's AF is email, the AF team will arrange for the notification to be converted to a web accessible PDF. They will then return the converted PDF to the SC by email for it to be sent to the customer's email address.

Note: The AF team **will not issue** any correspondence to the customer by email.

Note: It is the responsibility of the SC for the issue of all correspondence to the customer where email is the agreed AF due to a reasonable adjustment.
20. To make sure that DWP complies with the Equality Act 2010, you must consider and anticipate the customer's correspondence and or accessibility needs at every intervention.
21. When the customer contacts the ESA enquiry line or correspondence is received by post you must access dialogue JA670 to establish the customer's health condition.

End of claim process

22. The SC site must notify the AF team by email when the customer's entitlement to ESA ends. The following email address must be used:

Jobcentre unaware that alternative format is needed

After an interview/intervention if a customer requires an Alternative Format (AF) you must:

1. If **Audio** - note if MP3, CD or Audio Tape.
2. If **Large Print** - confirm typo size required between 16 Arial Bold and 26 Arial Bold (the default size is Arial 16).
3. If **Braille**, a standard version is produced.

Note: Email is available as a reasonable adjustment if this format is best suited to the customer and their communication requirements.

For a list of alternative formats available, refer to [Alternative Formats Available](#) .

4. Update LMS Conversations and CAMLite with customer AF requirements.
5. Update Correspondence address in LMS to:
6. Email template to AF Shared Inbox and the AF Team at Ilford will update Regional database.
7. Scan customer's correspondence and email to AF Shared inbox.
8. When the AF is given to the customer, a standard format version must also be provided to the customer.
9. If the customer does not need to sign the correspondence, it will be sent direct by the AF Team, the original copy of the standard format letter must be sent to the AF Team.
10. If the Jobcentre issue the letter, update Legacy notepad JA110 and LMS to show the date of issue.
11. Check Searchlight to confirm if the correct accessibility need is recorded. If so, no further action is required.
12. If the accessibility need is not recorded on Searchlight, staff must complete a CIS500. For further information on completion of CIS500 see CIS Data Amendment Forms.
13. Send a Customer Handover and Resolution Management tool (CHaRM) to the Service Centre to advice that as AF is now required the Centralised AF Teams address must be recorded on JSAPS as a correspondence address.

Note: If issued by the AF Team they will do the system updates.

Reasonable adjustments

DWP is committed to meeting the needs of all disabled people and has a legal duty to make sure all services are accessible to disabled customers. The aim of this guidance is to make sure that reasonable adjustments are provided consistently by DWP staff. These pages will advise staff on what reasonable adjustments DWP offer and how they can be used to help customers access our services.

Reasonable Adjustments in DWP

Reasonable Adjustments available

Under the Equality Act 2010 DWP has an obligation to make **reasonable adjustments** for disabled customers and or representatives to allow them to have equal access to our services and to claim benefits. Below is a list of the reasonable adjustments provided in DWP:

- Car parking facilities
- Changing location of interview
- Changing the time and date of meetings and interviews
- Communications in alternative format
- Email as a reasonable adjustment
- Filming and Recording as a reasonable adjustment
- Home visits
- Induction loop systems
- Postal claiming JSA
- Private interview rooms
- Representatives and intermediaries
- Toilet access for customers in DWP offices
- Transport – Public and private .

Car parking facilities

If a customer has to travel by car because of mobility issues, you must consider the car parking facilities at your office and if possible arrange a parking space for the customer. If there are no car parking facilities then consider an alternative way to allow them to access benefits and services.

Changing location of interview

To make reasonable adjustments for customers with mobility needs the office environment and other accessibility issues must be considered. For example:

- if the interview is to take place upstairs, is there a lift available?
- can you arrange to interview on the ground floor?
- can you arrange the interview at another suitable office?

- is there suitably trained staff available to carry out an emergency evacuation if required?

Changing the time and date of meetings and interviews

Consider if the customer and the delivery of our services can be supported by:

- changing the date and time of a meeting or interview
- increasing the length (time spent) in the interview.

If customers are unable to access or travel to DWP or partner premises we will provide alternative interview arrangements. In this instance arrangements will be made to change the location of the interview to the customer's home at another more accessible location, or if possible via telephone.

Communications in an alternative format

In order to make services accessible DWP, where possible, staff must supply information to disabled customers in the format they request.

For example, if a customer is unable to communicate via telephone due to a disability, DWP may make arrangements to communicate via email instead.

A range of services can be provided to successfully communicate information to a disabled customer both written and verbal.

For a full list of the services provided see: [Alternative Formats Available](#).

Email as a reasonable adjustment

For information on using email as a reasonable adjustment see [Email as a reasonable adjustment](#). If you have any doubts or questions, contact:

- the Knowledge, Information and Records Management team
- the Security Advice Centre.

Filming and Recording as a reasonable adjustment

- Customers ARE allowed to record their interviews for personal use, and some customers may need to, as part of a reasonable adjustment. You may have been advised differently in the past, but things have changed since, and we're currently reviewing the guidance. They do need permission though whilst on our sites, and we have an obligation under General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) to make sure we protect other customers' details and privacy. For this reason, we'd usually arrange to see someone needing to record their interview in a private room.

- Customers ARE allowed to record their telephone interviews for personal use or as part of a reasonable adjustment.
- To avoid risking an incident, if customers record their interviews just remind them that recordings are for their own personal use and should not be shared and/or posted onto social media.

The guidance explains what to do if you think you are being filmed, photographed or recorded without permission, and tells you exactly what to say- “you do not have my permission to film, please stop”. You should also remove yourself from the situation and complete a UCB/ESI report if the behaviour doesn’t stop.

Home visits

To make reasonable adjustments for customers, the office environment and other accessibility issues must be considered. Home visits are a service provided to customers, however, they are only offered in exceptional circumstances.

DWP Visiting help those customers who are unable to complete their business transaction through any of the other channels by undertaking home visits. For more information, see: [DWP Visiting](#).

Induction Loop Systems

The induction loop system enables hearing-aid users to tune into what they want to hear without the interference of background noise.

Not all customers will have heard or understood everything that has been said even with an induction loop system. Checks must be made to make sure that the parent/guardian/representative fully understands.

These systems are available in all our public offices.

Note: Portable loops are available for visiting officers (VOs) and staff involved in outreach work.

Postal claiming JSA and ESA

Customers must be offered postal status if they have a mental or physical disability which restricts their mobility.

If a JSA customer requests postal status and they meet the eligibility criteria, tell them that they must fulfil the same availability and actively seeking employment conditions for the receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance. See: [Claimant requests postal status](#).

ESA also provide this option if requested by the customer via the New Claims telephony line.

Private interview rooms

We will arrange a private interview room or quiet area for those customers attending a face-to-face meeting who have a specific need, require additional support or who have requested this as a reasonable adjustment. We will provide accessible interview facilities in DWP buildings and/or on our partner premises.

Refer to internal processes for arranging interviews.

Representatives and intermediaries

All types of disability and all customers with protected characteristics can be supported by providing services through a representative or intermediary. This can be done as a reasonable adjustment for disabled people and as additional assistance where appropriate for any customer.

Some of our customers want or need to use a representative or intermediary to help them access DWP services. If a customer wishes to use a representative/intermediary to access our services, follow the **Working with Representatives Guidance** and work with them.

Note: You must be aware of the duty to protect customers' personal information, and disclosing information rules. If you feel a representative or intermediary would help the customer check with them first; don't make assumptions. The only exception to this rule is that you can assume the representative/intermediary has the customer's permission where the **alternative enquiry** rules apply.

We have a duty to protect vulnerable people and you must be alert to possible signs of harm and abuse. If necessary, you must alert the appropriate authorities to safeguard the customer, their children or anyone you come into contact with.

Refer to **Disclosing personal data for safeguarding** for further information.

Toilet access for customers in DWP offices

Some customers may have a disability which means they may need the toilet at short intervals and can coincide when attending jobcentre.

Given that all of our Jobcentres are unique it isn't possible to design a generic approach for the customer use of toilets on our premises. However each Jobcentre or DWP customer facing office must risk assess the impact of granting our customers access to toilets for their particular office and handle these situations and issues on a site by site basis.

Any decision to allow customers access to a toilet will be at the discretion of the Jobcentre/ Office manager taking into account the particular circumstances identified in the risk assessment and factors such as:

- time spent in Jobcentres seeing work coaches or using a computer to search for jobs
- Disability/medical conditions
- proximity of any other local toilets
- customers accompanied by children

- pregnancy (Equality legislation also covers maternity and pregnancy, and it could be argued under the Equality Act 2010 that we should give pregnant women and mothers with young children means of accessing a toilet)

Note: This list is not exhaustive.

A reasonable adjustment option could include a home visit or a telephone interview in place of an office visit, but this will not be appropriate in every case.

The Health and Safety Community are fully supportive of our managers using their discretion in these types of situations providing adequate control measures are in place and it will not compromise the safety of others.

Transport - public and private

If mobility issues mean a customer cannot walk for long distances and your office is not near to public transport, consider an alternative way to allow them to access benefits and services.

Consider paying for a taxi or other transportation that will overcome the issues in relation to accessing DWP sites.

Accessibility checklist

Important note: This checklist is currently undergoing amendments/updates.

DWP has a legal duty under the Equality Act to make reasonable adjustments where applicable to aid disabled customers. Our duty to make reasonable adjustments is **anticipatory**. This means you must anticipate the requirements of disabled people and the adjustments they may need. You **must not** wait until a disabled person wants to use our services before you consider any possible reasonable adjustments needed.

This checklist includes a series of questions to help all DWP staff to consider how accessible your services are. This page can be printed off and used as a checklist if required. However **you must** refer to this online copy each time in order to make sure you are referring to the most recent version.

Note: Not all of the questions will be applicable to your site.

Accessibility Checklist Contents:

- Exterior
- Interior
- Emergency or Unusual Situations
- Staff Awareness
- Blind/Partially sighted
- Deaf/hard of hearing
- Mental health conditions
- Hidden Impairments
- Learning difficulties

- Mobility needs/ Physical impairment
- Gender Recognition
- Language requirement_.

Area

Yes/No

Exterior

You must consider how accessible your services are by assessing your premises. Where applicable, consider the following:

Car Park

Are there disabled parking spaces marked out?

Do staff know how to book/reserve a space for a disabled customer?

If so, are steps taken to prevent non-disabled customers parking in these spaces?

Entrance to building

Are there steps to the main entrance?

If so, is there an alternative ramped entrance?

Are there clear directional signs to it?

Is the ramped entrance easily accessible?

Is there a doorbell?

If so, is it obvious and at the correct height on the alternative entrance?

Are all staff aware of the need to answer the bell promptly?

Are the entrance doors excessively heavy to open?

If so, are staff aware that some customers may require assistance?

Are all the staff aware of the possible need to assist a disabled customer as appropriate, from the time and point of arrival?

Interior

The interior of premises vary greatly and only some of the following points may apply to your location.

Consider:

Is the floor space free from obstacles which may obstruct access?

Is the Welcome or Reception area easily seen and accessible?

Is the Welcome or Reception area always staffed?

Have receptionists had disability awareness training?

Is there an audio loop positioned at reception?

Are all signs clear?

Are graphics used to help people who have difficulties understanding signage? (This could include people with visual impairments or learning difficulties).

Are there arrangements to deal promptly with those unable to appreciate verbal signs?

Are there chairs for those unable to stand for prolonged periods?

Are the chairs of an appropriate type? (cushioned ones may be too low for some people).

Are queuing arrangements suitable for all?

Are emergency exits clearly identified and can they be operated by disabled people?

Are seating areas easily accessible and large enough for wheelchair users?

Lifts

Is the lift large enough to accommodate a wheelchair and a helper?

Can buttons be reached by someone in a wheelchair?

Is there a talking floor indicator?

Is the emergency phone accessible from a wheelchair?

Are arrangements in place to have repairs carried out quickly?

Interviewing facilities

Can interview points be reached easily by all customers?

Is there a reasonable level of privacy for customer interviews?

Can private interview rooms be used if required?

Do staff know how to arrange the use of a private interview room?

Is there a portable loop aid available? Do staff know how to use it?

Can the lighting and seating arrangements be adjusted?

Can staff interview on the ground floor if customers are unable to access other floors?

Are all facilities available in alternative locations?

How easily can room/area accommodate an assistance dog, wheelchair or pushchair?

Can the room/area accommodate a support worker or advocate?

Is a handset available for contacting Interpreting Services?

Computers in Jobcentres

Is there clear access to computers?

Is there access to the desks, seating area etc. for wheelchair users?

Is there clear information in relation to a customer using their own device?

Is there appropriate clear signage displayed to inform customers?

Are arrangements in place to give alternative services to those unable to use computers for example personal help?

Are there arrangements in place to provide advice and support to help customers use their own devices to access DWP benefits and services?

Are staff aware of how to help a customer change the settings on computers to make them more accessible? For example, change screen colour and font size?

Access to other information

Is there clear access for all customers to displayed leaflets and other materials?

Are staff aware of the need to give information verbally if necessary to disabled customers?

Are staff aware of the need to supply information in alternative formats and how to arrange this if there is a specific request?

Are staff aware of how to access Interpreting Services and translation services and how to use them if there is a specific request or on-going need?

Emergency or unusual situations

Line Managers have a legal and moral responsibility to keep staff and customers safe both on and off site. Managers therefore must make sure they complete the necessary Introduction to Health and Safety Responsibilities for DWP Managers training to make sure they have the competence to do so.

Is the Evac Chair in the correct place?

Do staff know how to use the Evac Chair?

Do staff know how to escort a disabled person from the building in the case of an emergency?

Does everyone understand their roles and responsibilities for customers and themselves in an emergency?

Staff Awareness

Everyone has an individual responsibility to make sure the legal requirements of the Equality Act are met.

You must think about what your staff need to be aware of to implement its requirements. Consider:

Staff must be aware of the need to record customers accessibility requirements. Staff must check customer records so they can overcome any barriers when accessing our services

Customer needs: How aware are staff of the needs of disabled customers and how these must be addressed?

Customer needs: How aware are staff of the needs of customers with a language requirement and how these must be addressed?

Interviewing: Are staff confident about interviewing disabled customers and how confidence can be raised if necessary?

Etiquette: Do staff have a basic understanding of equality etiquette, including appropriate behaviours and language?

Legislation: Are staff aware of current legislation and their responsibilities?

Customer complaints

Are staff aware of what to do if a customer wishes to make a complaint?

General equality etiquette

Have staff read the Welcoming Disabled Customers guide?

Do staff know where to get information about interviewing disabled customers?

Have staff completed the diversity and equality training and disability awareness training?

Have staff completed the vulnerable persons training on Civil Service learning?

Specialist help:

Do staff know what specialist help is available to disabled customers, for example, Disability

Employment Adviser, Mental Health Adviser?

Do staff know how to call upon the specialist help when necessary?

Blind or partially sighted

You must consider how to get relevant help and who will take responsibility for procuring items. Further guidance on obtaining alternative formats can be found in the [Customer Accessibility guidance](#).

Do staff know to check customer records on DWP systems prior to contact in order to accommodate any reasonable adjustments/special arrangements?

Do staff know how to arrange for correspondence to be sent to customers in alternative formats?

Do staff know to identify themselves and speak as they approach a visually impaired or blind customer?

Do staff know to offer rather than impose assistance to visually impaired customers?

Do staff know how to get materials in large print?

Do staff know how to get materials in Braille, audio?

Do staff know how to use email as a reasonable adjustment?

Deaf of hearing impaired

Do staff know to check customer records on DWP systems prior to contact in order to accommodate any reasonable adjustments/special arrangements? For example making sure a hearing loop is available, book a British Sign Language interpreter?

Do staff know where the loop aid is and how to use it?

Is the availability of the loop aid advertised to customers?

Are staff aware of the BT Next Generation Text/Relay UK facility and how to use it correctly?

Have people received deaf awareness training?

Do staff know how to engage and procure the services of a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, Lipspeaker or other language professional?

Are staff aware that deaf customers who communicate using BSL may not understand written English?

Mental Health conditions

Do staff know to check customer records on DWP systems prior to contact in order to accommodate any special arrangements for example to allow longer interview time if appropriate?

Are staff aware that some people with some mental health issues display what may appear to be inappropriate behaviour?

Do staff know to offer the customer a private room (if available) or a quieter part of the office to create a more suitable environment?

Do staff know that some of our customers want or need to use a representative/intermediary to help them access our services?

Hidden Impairments

Customers with hidden impairments for example, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorders/ Conditions, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia do not always find it easy to take full advantage of our services, so the hidden impairment toolkit has been developed which will help you to engage with them.

Learning Difficulties

Do staff know to check Labour Market System (LMS) prior to contact in order to accommodate any special arrangements for example allow longer interview time if appropriate?

Are staff aware of the etiquette when interviewing people with learning difficulties?

Are staff able to explain matters in easy to understand language?

Are staff aware that some customers may require an audio recording of interviews due to their disability and how to accommodate this?

Mobility needs/physical impairment

Do staff know to check customer records on DWP systems prior to contact in order to accommodate any special arrangements for example to arrange interview on the ground floor?

Are staff aware of the issues concerning customers with manual dexterity impairments?

Are staff aware of the issues concerning customers with mobility difficulties?

Are staff aware of the etiquette when interviewing wheelchair users?

Gender Recognition Certificate

Are staff aware of how to engage and advise customers with a gender recognition certificate?

Etiquette: Do staff have a basic understanding of gender recognition, including appropriate behaviours and language.

Language Requirement

Are staff aware of the need to provide interpreters and when and how to arrange this if there is a specific request or on-going requirement?

Are staff aware of the language identification point card?

Are staff aware of how to access interpreting and translation services and how to use them if there is a specific request?

Using email as a reasonable adjustment

Some of our customers may find it difficult to communicate effectively with us without extra support.

This means we must make reasonable adjustments to our communications.

We can use email as a reasonable adjustment for a customer when other alternative format products are not suitable in meeting the customer's needs.

Email may be appropriate if, for example, a customer is unable or finds it difficult to use:

- telephone because they are Deaf, hearing impaired, have no speech or have a mental health condition
- letter because they are blind, visually impaired or have a learning disability
- handwriting to fill in forms because of a physical disability such as Rheumatoid Arthritis, Parkinson's Disease or a learning difficulty such as dyspraxia

In some of these cases, customers may use assistive software such as Zoomtext, JAWS or Dragon Software.

Where possible, staff must consider if another alternative format can be used due to the risks involved in communicating by email. However, if using other alternatives would mean the customer will be clearly disadvantaged, email can be used and the security policy must be followed. Refer to the current [Security policy](#) for further advice on the security steps which must be followed when putting in place email communications with customers as a reasonable adjustment.

Note: Email cannot be requested just as a preference.

The individual customer journey may need to be adapted to enable email to be offered as a reasonable adjustment. Refer to relevant instructions based on the service which is being offered to the customer.

Customers who request email as a reasonable adjustment

In line with security guidance, DWP email to customers must contain a Disclaimer message informing them of the risks of data loss when using email. As email has been agreed as a reasonable adjustment, a disclaimer message only needs to be sent **once** to the customer.

When the customer has understood the risks involved follow the steps below to communicate with them:

1. The agreed group mailbox must be used to email out and receive emails from the customer. Refer to the specific instructions.
2. You must only send emails to the customer, or in some cases the customer's authorised representatives (including MPs).
3. You must confirm the identity of the customer via Identity Verification (IDV) before sending information. DWP processes for checking customer or appointee identity and disclosing information must be followed.

Note: Confirming the identity of the customer or validating an email address is only required once and only when unsolicited correspondence had been received.

4. If there are any doubts about the authenticity of an email or the sender, verify their credentials. For example, by telephoning them at the number held on the customer's record or arranging for a Visiting Officer if telephone is not possible. If any doubts remain use an alternative method of communication.
5. You must not highlight the sensitive nature of the email in the subject line.
6. You must only include reference to one customer record in any one email.
7. You may need to send the personal data by email as the customer has requested this communication method, however only send what is needed.
8. You must store and keep all emails and correspondence as outlined in the Information Management Policy (IMP).
9. Record the reasonable adjustment for consistency of service, make sure other customer journeys who may have a shared interest in communicating with that customer are notified.

Sending Attachments

1. You must consider whether the body of the email needs to contain all the information or if you should attach a separate document.
2. If you need to send an attachment, consider the content, for example:
 - does it contain personal data?
 - do you need to send it?
 - Is it necessary to send the whole attachment or can you send an extract?
3. Consider the format. Is the format of the attachment one that the customer's assistive software can read? All electronic forms or letters that staff can attach and send to customers should be accessible. If not, it is the responsibility of the Customer Journey Owners to work with Design and Production Team.
4. System produced letters must be sent to print service provider to be converted to a readable pdf.
5. You must state in the email - **If the document cannot be accessed please let DWP know immediately to correct the problem.**

Further information on email security can be found on the portal and in the [How to Email Securely](#) guide.

DWP email confirmation declaration

The following confirmation declaration must be included in all Alternative Format (AF) email communications with a customer.

“This is your confirmation email. We have received your request to receive communications from DWP by email. We can offer this as a reasonable adjustment because of your health condition or disability.

If you have been sent this email in error, please reply to let us know then delete the email.

Please read the information below about using emails in future.

Sending emails over the internet isn’t always secure. We automatically scan the emails we send to check there are no viruses, but DWP isn’t responsible for anything that happens after it’s been sent. This includes someone changing, deleting or adding something to emails that could be harmful or misleading. It’s your responsibility to make sure any email from DWP that you open or forward on is safe and doesn’t affect the software or device you’re using.

If we ever send you an email that’s meant for someone else, you shouldn’t use, share or copy anything in the email. Please let us know you’ve received the email in error and delete it as soon as possible”.

The Equality Act and Disability

The Equality Act 2010 has replaced most of the previous anti-discrimination laws. Under this law, DWP is required to make reasonable adjustments for customers with a disability when using our functions.

This includes making reasonable adjustments to the format in which we communicate.

DWP has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments in all the following circumstances, where:

- a disabled person is at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with a non-disabled person we must remove or alter what we do to avoid the disadvantage. This could be a certain practice or physical feature
- but for the provision of an auxiliary (supporting) aid, a disabled person would be put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with a non-disabled person we take reasonable steps to provide the auxiliary aid or service
- the adjustment relates to the provision of information for example, letters and correspondence, this must be provided in an accessible format. For example, this could be large print, braille or audio or email. It could also include the contents being read to the customer or representative by a friend or a member of staff.

Staff responsibilities

Whenever we interact with a customer or representative, we must actively seek to find out if the customer needs additional support or a reasonable adjustment. Staff must use the information about any physical or mental challenges that a person has, to identify if they need a Reasonable Adjustment to be put in place and how to make sure this is consistently applied.

Note: The duty to make reasonable adjustments is anticipatory. We must not wait until a disabled person wants to use our services before we consider the type of reasonable adjustments needed. We must anticipate the requirements of disabled people and the adjustments that may have to be made for them.

When a customer or representative requests a specific reasonable adjustment, it is important staff discuss the full range of options with the customer or representative so they are aware of what is available. This will help when arranging with the customer or representative the most appropriate way of helping them to access benefits and use our services.

The customer or representative should only need to tell DWP once. Staff must check if the customer is receiving any other benefits and notify the appropriate areas that the customer has requested an alternative format.

All staff must familiarise themselves with the [Delivering Equality for Customers guidance](#) and the [Reasonable Adjustments Available](#).

Types of Disabilities and Impact

DWP is committed to meeting the needs of all disabled people and has a legal duty to make sure all services are accessible to disabled customers. The aim of this guidance is to inform staff of appropriate adjustments for a range of disabilities. These pages will cover types of disabilities and the impact they can have on customers in relation to the way they access our services.

- Blind or partially sighted customers
- Deaf or hard of hearing customers
- Learning difficulties
- Hidden Impairments
- Mobility Issues
- Customers with mental health problems
- Vulnerable customers

Blind or partially sighted customers

DWP have a number of reasonable adjustments that can be made to meet the needs of an individual customer. For a list of all the reasonable adjustments DWP offer see: [Reasonable Adjustments available](#).

We are able to send certain leaflets, forms and letters in Braille at the customer's request and this must be noted on the Customer IT system relevant your area.

Products such as letters and leaflets in Braille, large print and audio format can be ordered via the **Communication Support Services** from the Department's authorised supplier when requested by a customer. The use of **Email** as a reasonable adjustment for a disabled customer is also possible.

What to do if customer is blind or partially sighted

If a customer has a visual impairment it is important to establish how to assist them in accessing our services. Take the following actions:

1. Discuss with the customer if they require any support to enable them to access benefits and use our services.
2. Consider, does the individual require extra support to communicate with DWP?
3. Take the appropriate action to implement the required support and record the details on the customer record.

For a full list of the reasonable adjustments available in DWP see [Reasonable Adjustments in DWP](#).

Customer visiting for appointment

A blind or partially-sighted person may ask for someone to greet them on arrival. This could help to reassure them about their interview or appointment, in this scenario you must:

- make a specific member of staff aware of the appointment time of the customer and make sure they are available to undertake this task
- make sure there is a contingency plan if this officer is unable to greet the customer.

Customer requests information via email

There could be many reasons why a blind or partially-sighted customer requests email. It may be that they have a reader application on a device of their own or would like information emailed to them so they can pass it over quickly to someone whom assists them, etc.

Customer requests communications in Braille

If a customer requests communications in Braille, it is very important staff discuss the full range of options with the customer so they are aware of what is available, in order to help the customer make an informed decision taking into account all the pros and cons of the alternative format.

If after discussion with the customer you agree Braille is an appropriate reasonable adjustment to put into place you must order braille by following the instructions in the [Communication support services guidance](#).

Note: Braille translations take up to two weeks to arrive, therefore its important customers are aware of this when discussing if this is the best option for them.

Deaf or hard of hearing customers

DWP offer a range of alternative formats for disabled customers. If a customer tells you they have a hearing impairment, you must discuss the range of options available. This is important in order to make sure we are using the appropriate method of communication to meet the customer's needs, and to make sure they are not at a disadvantage when using DWP services.

Below are the forms of alternative formats/reasonable adjustments which could be appropriate to a deaf or hard of hearing customer:

- Textphone
- Relay UK
- Video Relay Service (VRS)
- Email as a reasonable adjustment
- Home visits
- British Sign Language interpreter .

For information on what to do if a customer has a hearing impairment see: [Choosing the right alternative format or reasonable adjustment for our customers](#).

Learning difficulties

When dealing with a customer with learning difficulties, the most important thing is to talk to them and find out what support they need. You must have this discussion to agree if an Alternative Format or Reasonable Adjustment is needed. A customer's needs may change so you must have this discussion throughout their contact with DWP.

Note: A learning difficulty can often be hidden, therefore you must ask questions to understand the most appropriate method of communication and any reasonable adjustments that may be needed. See: [Hidden Impairments toolkit](#) for more information.

For information on what to do if a customer has a learning difficulty see: [Reasonable adjustments for our customers with learning difficulties](#).

Hidden Impairments

Some customers have hidden impairments and may need additional help to use our services. Customer with hidden impairments may have conditions such as:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

- Dyscalculia
- Dyslexia
- Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) also referred to as Dyspraxia
- Speech, Communication and Language Needs (SCLN).

Note: This list is not exhaustive.

It can be difficult to provide an appropriate service for customers or representatives who may not find it easy to explain their needs, especially if those needs are not easily visible.

A Hidden Impairments Toolkit has been developed to help staff support customers with conditions which are difficult to see straight away. It gives staff information to help them improve services to individuals who have hidden impairments, for example, ADHD, Autism Spectrum disorders/conditions, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia.

Help and support available:

- The Business Disability Forum briefing papers give practical disability related guidance for employers on specific disabilities. This includes asthma, back problems, diabetes, dyslexia, epilepsy, HIV, learning disabilities, mental health problems, progressive or fluctuating conditions, sight problems, stammer, upper limb disorders (repetitive strain injuries).
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) guidance is also available. ASD is the name for a range of conditions that affect the way a person communicates and interacts with other people. Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. This information provides advice for staff on autism spectrum disorder and is mainly sourced from the National Autistic Society website.
- The Health Conditions & Disabilities page gives guide notes which are primarily designed to help Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres but contains useful information for all staff.

Mobility Issues

The Equality Act requires DWP to make sure that disabled people can access all the services provided. A provider cannot offer a lesser standard of service to a disabled person simply because of unsuitable premises.

Where customer has mobility issues and a physical feature of the premises puts the customer at a substantial disadvantage when using DWP services, reasonable steps must be taken to:

- remove the feature
- alter it
- provide a reasonable means of avoiding it.

Customers with mental health problems

The most important thing is to talk to the customer to find out what support they need and their preferred communication method. You must have this discussion to agree if an Alternative Format or Reasonable Adjustment is needed and what type. A customer's needs may change so you must have this discussion throughout their contact with DWP.

For information on what to do if a customer has a mental health problem see: [Types of Alternative Formats and Reasonable Adjustments](#).

Vulnerable customers

DWP deals with a wide range of customers who at some point in their lives may be vulnerable because of life events or disability.

The definition of vulnerability for DWP purposes is an individual who is identified as having complex needs and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services.

See: [Vulnerability instructions](#) for all information on dealing with vulnerable customers.

Vulnerability Instructions

The Vulnerability Instructions will help you deal with individuals with complex needs, or individuals who require additional support, to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services.

For DWP purposes the description of Vulnerability is “An individual who is identified as having complex needs and/or requires additional support to enable them to access DWP benefits and use our services”

“Individual” refers to claimants, customers, clients, service users, anyone who accesses benefits and uses our services.

“Complex needs” are difficult personal circumstances and/or life events that affect the ability of the individual to access DWP benefits and use our services.

Identification

During the application process, or when a customer asks to change their contact preferences, caseworkers must give a full explanation of the facilities available for customers. Staff must be aware of how to identify if/when a customer may need additional support to access DWP services.

Alternative Formats available:

- audio CD/Cassette
- Braille (types 1 and 2)
- coloured paper
- email (only in exceptional circumstances if the My Child Maintenance Case Website is not suitable)
- large print
- Next Generation Text/Relay UK
- Video Relay Service
- telephone
- textphone
- My Child Maintenance Case

The My Child Maintenance Case Website allows customers to manage their own case without needing to use traditional contact methods such as telephone. Always ensure you fully explain the benefits of this as it may be the most suitable and secure method of communication for customers who have accessibility needs especially if they need to communicate with us digitally or use screen reading software to view communications.

If the customer requests email but states they cannot use the My Child Maintenance Case Website you should transfer their case to the Special Client Records team by following the [Personal Interest-Register instructions](#) clearly stating the reason for the referral. Do not confirm to the customer at this point that email will be offered but inform them that another team will contact the customer to arrange a suitable solution for their needs.

If the customer or their representative use British Sign Language (BSL) because they have a hearing or speech impairment, then they may choose to contact CMS using [Video Relay Service \(VRS\)](#).

VRS is currently only available for inbound contacts so cannot be flagged as an alternative format on the customer's CMS record. If the customer wishes to use VRS, direct them to the [_Video Relay contact page_](#) where they will be able to access a link to the service as well as finding information on how to make contact via Relay UK.

Timescales:

The Standard Service Level Agreements:

- **Braille, Large Print and MS Word Documents within 5 calendar days**
- **Audio and Web Accessible PDFs within 8 calendar days**

Reasonable Adjustments available:

- home visits
- representatives and intermediaries

Refer to the [_Policy, Law and Decision Making Guidance_](#) for information about managing customer contact and home visits.

For guidance on choosing the right Reasonable Adjustment/Alternative Format and disabilities and their impact, see: [Types of disabilities and impact](#).

Available to order

Letters and leaflets can be ordered in:

- Braille
- large print
- audio
- coloured paper

Note: Process to follow depends on whether the letter is clerical or system generated. See section on [Delivery](#) for more information.

Forms are available in:

- large print
- coloured paper

Note: As an alternative to this, customers can use the [My Child Maintenance Case](#) to complete forms electronically and standard PDF-reader software can read out any letter or leaflet on MCMC using a PC and headphones where the customer is connected to the internet.

If customer requests Reasonable Adjustment (RA) that CMS do not offer:

CMS do not offer a referral service therefore if the customer requests a RA which is not available, staff must discuss with the customer if there are any other alternatives which would be suitable.

If no options available to CMS suit needs of customer, staff must speak to their team leader for advice.

This may need to be escalated if a bespoke solution cannot be agreed.

Use instructions on [Types of Disabilities and Impact](#) to advise alternative channels of communication/service.

Responsibilities

It is the caseworker/telephony agent's responsibility to identify and record Reasonable Adjustments/Alternative Formats.

The correspondence is referred to Print & Post team or the Print Provider and they take responsibility for producing the Alternative Format and sending this out to the customer.

At the end of the process the case owning team is responsible for updating records to note actions taken.