

Reasonable Adjustments for Patients with Disabilities Policy

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Document Control

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Purpose

This policy sets out how Ballards Walk Surgery ensures that disabled patients and their carers are not disadvantaged when accessing our services. We are committed to meeting our legal and ethical duties to make reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010 and to comply with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS).

Scope

This policy applies to all staff (clinical and non-clinical), contractors and volunteers at Ballards Walk Surgery. It covers all aspects of service delivery, including registration, communication, appointments, consultations, and follow-up care.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

Equality Act 2010 – duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

NHS England Accessible Information Standard (SCCI1605) – duty to identify, record, flag, share, and meet communication needs.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) – compliance with Regulation 9 (Person-centred care) and Regulation 10 (Dignity and respect).

NHS Reasonable Adjustment Digital Flag – framework for recording and sharing adjustment needs across NHS systems.

Definitions

Disability: As defined by the Equality Act 2010 – ‘a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.’

Reasonable Adjustment: A change made to remove or reduce disadvantage experienced by disabled people when accessing services.

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments:

Communication and Information

- Providing letters and information in large print, easy-read, audio, or Braille formats
- Offering a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, lip speaker, or communication support worker
- Using plain language and avoiding medical jargon
- Recording communication needs clearly in the clinical system.

Appointments and Consultations

- Offering longer appointments for patients who need more time
- Providing priority or quieter appointment times (e.g. for autistic patients).
- Allowing patients to wait in a quieter area or their car if the waiting room causes distress.
- Offering home visits where mobility or health prevents attendance.

Physical Access

- Ensuring step-free access, wide doorways, and accessible toilets.
- Maintaining clear signage and ensuring staff are available to assist.
- Keeping the premises well-lit and free from clutter.

Procedural and Administrative Adjustments

- Providing support with registration or forms where literacy or cognitive issues exist.
- Recording a “Reasonable Adjustment Flag” on patient records.
- Allowing advocates or carers to accompany patients.
- Offering alternative ways to book appointments (in person, online, or via a carer).

Roles and Responsibilities

Practice Manager and Lead GP

- Ensures systems are in place to identify and record adjustment needs.
- Oversees staff training and policy compliance.

Reception and Administrative Staff

- Ask patients if they have any communication or access needs.
- Record and flag these needs appropriately.
- Ensure relevant adjustments are applied for each interaction.

Clinicians

- Review flagged needs before appointments.
- Adapt consultation style and environment as needed.
- Ensure understanding and informed consent.

All Staff

- Treat patients with dignity and respect.
- Report barriers or incidents where adjustments are not effective.

Identification and Recording of Needs

New patients are asked about access and communication needs during registration. Existing patients can update their needs at any time. These needs are recorded in the patient record and flagged using the NHS Reasonable Adjustment Flag where applicable. Staff check and update this information regularly.

Staff Training

All staff will receive periodic training on:

- Equality Act and reasonable adjustments
- Accessible communication
- Awareness of hidden disabilities (e.g., autism, mental health, learning disabilities)
- Use of the NHS Reasonable Adjustment Flag

Monitoring and Review

Compliance will be monitored through audits and patient feedback. Complaints or incidents relating to accessibility will be reviewed to identify learning and improvement actions. This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

Related Policies

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding Adults and Children Policies
- Accessibility and Inclusion Policy
- Accessible Information Standard Procedure

11. References

- i. NHS England – Reasonable Adjustments Guidance:
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities/improving-health/reasonable-adjustments/>
- ii. CQC – Mythbuster 67: Reasonable adjustments for disabled people:
<https://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/gps/gp-mythbusters/gp-mythbuster-67-reasonable-adjustments-disabled-people>
- iii. NHS Digital – Reasonable Adjustment Digital Flag:
<https://digital.nhs.uk/services/reasonable-adjustment-flag>
- iv. Equality Act 2010