



REQUEST 17350

Our client aims to understand to what extent local authorities providing housing advice and homelessness support have measures in place with regard to digital exclusion disability discrimination. Our client is particularly focused on what support (if any) is provided by local authorities to people who cannot access digital services without support (this could be due to a variety of reasons e.g. Physical accessibility issues: People with physical, visual, or hearing impairments may have difficulty accessing websites; Communication difficulties: People with learning and behavioural impairments may find it hard to read, write or otherwise to communicate and be understood online ; Lack of training: Some people may not have the skills or confidence to use digital devices; Cost of equipment: The cost of equipment may be a barrier to those on a low wage or reliant on state social security). In accordance with s.149 Equality Act 2010, we request that you provide us with:

1. A copy of your most recent and your historical written compliance record;
2. Any other information you have recorded / hold about the impact of requiring Disabled people and non-Disabled people applying for housing and homeless assistance under either Part 6 or Part 7 Housing Act 1996 to complete application forms (or otherwise communicate) online. It would be really appreciated if you could please send us the above information by 30 December 2024 via email to

RESPONSE

1. The Council has a [Digital strategy](#) which aims to ensure that all residents, including those with disabilities have access to digital services. We also have the PSED report: [Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report](#).
2.
 - All officers within our service areas have remote devices, and can connect to them at any location, including a customer's home. This enables officers to sit with a customer and to complete any online application forms, or support with any other online activities to help the customer.
 - We have several locations across the borough whereby members of the public can access computers and devices, such as our life centres and libraries.
 - Tech mates - TechMates is a digital mentor service run by volunteers and council staff. We provide basic digital support over the telephone and in-person at TechMate Tea Parties.
 - We offer a device lending scheme for those that cannot afford a device, supplemented with digital support to use it from our TechMates programme
 - The Adult Learning service offers free* learning courses across the borough from absolute beginner courses in tablets and basic pc/laptop skills, (e.g. how to use a mouse/ switch a laptop on and off safely etc) up to level 2 digital qualifications, with many programmes being run in community venues, in areas of deprivation.
*eligibility for free courses based on a range of residency rules.

- If a customer has someone who they would like to advocate on their behalf, we will ensure that consent is gained, and they can have a third person support with their housing or homeless application which may include offering them digital support.
- Embrace Wigan & Leigh offer support to adults who have a disability. The service currently holds the Care Act and Parental contracts and are also able to provide general advocacy for adults with care and support needs. A referral can be received by the individual or professional, and staff will support and advocate on the behalf of individuals in need.
- We can offer face to face visits at home or in a council office, or community venue.
- During a Homeless assessment several questions are asked about a person's support needs, or anyone else in their household. This is to ensure that we are considering any known disabilities or support needs, to enable us to also adapt our approach of the type of support that we need to offer to ensure the experience for the customer is seamless and they fully understand the process.
- We also have access to interpreter services, whether translating in person, over the phone and helping to translate documents for customers.
- Multi – agency working, we ensure that we work collaboratively with partner agencies, who may be working with a customer and have the best relationship at that time, using others to support with their application and understanding of the process.