

CUSTOMER INFLUENCE REPORT

Customer Inclusion and Support Policy Review

Date: November 2025

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Background

Ensuring our services are inclusive and accessible for all customers, regardless of their circumstances, characteristics, or needs, is essential to building trust, and confidence. This commitment also reflects our responsibilities under the updated housing regulatory requirements, which place a stronger focus on equality, accessibility, and customer experience.

In practice, this means we must continue to invest in providing safe, inclusive, and responsive services, along with communication channels, media, formats, and alternative languages that enable every customer to engage with us in a way that suits them. This approach ensures our customers can access the services and support they need, delivered in a way that recognises and responds to their individual needs and risks.

Therefore, Accent will soon be launching its Customer Inclusion and Support Policy, designed to ensure that we deliver fair, accessible, and inclusive services tailored to the individual needs of all our customers.

Consultation

The customer consultation ran from 15th September 2025 for a period of six weeks. As Customer Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Jackie Best gave initial feedback on the new policy. After we included Jackie's suggestions, the draft was shared with the EDI Group and Editorial Group for further input. 24 customers were invited to provide feedback and six customers responded.

'At a Glance' Summary

Customers told us the policy should be clearer, more inclusive and easier to understand. Feedback focused on plain English, explaining customer benefits, providing examples of reasonable adjustments, recognising cultural and protected characteristics, improving accessibility, and reassuring customers about dignity, fairness and data privacy. Most recommendations were accepted and used to strengthen the final policy.

Listening and Acting on Customer Feedback

Customer recommendation	Accent's response	Service lead	Completion date/ notes
Please add something about asking customers about their pronouns.	Accepted: New content on pronouns has been added.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Use capital letters on protected characteristics.	Accepted: Policy has been reviewed and amended where necessary.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
The policy title 'Diverse and Additional Needs Policy' – seems to already put customers in boxes. Please make the title to be more inclusive.	Accepted: The title has been changed to Customer Inclusion and Support Policy (which was agreed by customers)	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Social dynamics because of current socio-political.....' This sentence appears to be incomplete.	Accepted: Sentence has been reviewed and amended.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
'Regularly checking on vulnerability 'flags' and following up with customers to check on their wellbeing and needs' Please make this point into two points for clarity and importance.	Accepted: Sentence separated.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Please add information on how a customer appoints a representative	Accepted: New content has been added to explain what customers can do if they want to appoint a representative.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Do staff members need help to understand what reasonable adjustments are	Accepted: We have added greater detail and further examples of what are reasonable adjustments.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Can we add something which demonstrates we need to	Accepted: New content has been added	Jo Gallagher	November 2025

consider cultural needs and beliefs.			
The document is text heavy, please consider using flowcharts and process diagrams.	Partially accepted: Flowcharts and diagrams for explaining processes are not usual policy content. This may be something we could reflect in the 'additional guidance' document for further clarity.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Use simple and direct language.	Accepted: The policy has been amended where possible to better explain such terms. There are further references and explanations in the additional guidance document.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Explain customer benefits, with more emphasis on customers.	Accepted: We have included additional content to explain what the policy directly means to a customer and how they will benefit.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Could there be two versions of the policy, one for staff or other stakeholders, and another for customers. Not sure the policy is in enough plain English.	Partially accepted: Our aim is to make policies clear and accessible for everyone, using one version for both customers and colleagues to ensure consistency and fairness. We have updated the language and added explanations to make the policy easier to understand using plain English.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Early in the policy explain what this means for a customer. For example, we will record your needs so you don't have to keep repeating them, You can let us know if you need extra support, and we'll adapt our service, you	Accepted: We have added additional content in response to this feedback and our 'tell us once' approach also covers this.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025

can ask for information in different formats.			
Customers may not understand abstract promises like “reasonable adjustments” please add examples.	Accepted: We have added greater detail and further examples of what are reasonable adjustments.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Simplify technical language: Some terms (e.g., “intersectional”, “programme board”) may be unclear to frontline staff or customers. Consider adding a glossary or plain-English alternatives.	Accepted: We have added descriptions to language which is technical or corporate. Terms are also explained further in the additional guidance. We have added a glossary and added links to information on our website where relevant.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Consistency in formatting: Mixed use of underlining, italics, and strikethroughs (e.g., “”) may confuse readers. Use consistent formatting for clarity	Accepted: We have checked the grammar and made it consistent.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Avoid passive voice: E.g., “Customers will be consulted...” could be “We will consult customers...”	Accepted: Reviewed policy and made sure it’s in an ‘active’ tense.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Coverage of Protected Characteristics: Gender reassignment, religion/belief, sexual orientation: These are mentioned as “not specifically addressed” but assumed to be covered under general vulnerability. This could be seen as insufficient. Consider: Adding explicit examples of how services will support these groups.	Accepted: Gender reassignment itself does not render someone vulnerable but is absolutely a risk factor that may lead to being vulnerable. We have added additional wording to support this comment including staff training.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Specify how often the policy and EIA will be reviewed (e.g., annually, bi-annually).	Accepted: We have added that the policy will be reviewed every two years.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025

Clarify what data will be collected (e.g., complaints by protected characteristic, service usage) and how it will be used to inform improvements.	Accepted: We have linked to our online Privacy Policy which explains why we collect data, what we use it for and how it is stored.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Reasonable adjustments: Expand on what constitutes a reasonable adjustment in housing services (e.g., communication formats, physical access)	Accepted: We have listed additional examples of reasonable adjustments for improved clarity.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Glossary of terms (e.g., EIA, SLT, ERF, CEC).	Accepted: This has been added.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025
Reassure customers that they have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness, information will be kept safe (link clearly to Accent privacy statement), They will not be disadvantaged for disclosing needs.	Accepted: New content has been added to reassure customers.	Jo Gallagher	November 2025

Next steps

Once finalised, the report will be shared on the 'You Said, We Did' page of the Accent website and provided to the Customer Experience Committee for information. Customers who participated in the consultation will also be informed of the outcome and the changes made as a result of their feedback.

The Customer Engagement Team is responsible for monitoring the progress of the agreed recommendations and ensuring actions are completed within the agreed timescales.

All of Accent's policies follow a robust governance process and are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain up to date and effective. This policy is due for review in November 2027.