



The Phone Co-op Accessibility and Vulnerability Policy

Introduction

At The Phone Co-op we're committed to providing the best customer service to all our customers, including those with vulnerabilities and disabilities. We want to make it as easy as possible for our customers to get the most out of the services we provide. This policy outlines our approach so that we can continue to ensure that we are able to look after the needs of everyone.

Identifying Vulnerable Customers

We know that there are lots of different factors and life events which may cause vulnerability, whether it be long-term or on a temporary basis. It could be because of age, a physical or learning disability, or difficulty in communicating. We also understand that challenging events like bereavement or separating from a partner can mean that you need extra support, to help keep you connected while you get back on your feet.

Vulnerability can impact everyone in different ways and the required support will vary upon individual circumstances. We ask our agents to pay that extra level of care, attention and sensitivity when communicating with vulnerable and disabled customers and this means

- We will allow people to take their time and be patient.
- Actively listen, play back your understanding, paraphrase, etc.
- Check understanding.
- Avoid jargon and think about the language we use
- Be prepared to repeat information and explanations.

At the same time we ask you to respect our agents and refrain from any abusive behaviour.

How We Record This Information

We will only record information about a vulnerability or disability which is relevant to the services that we provide. We may need to ask for your permission to keep a record of any personal information about your disability and any alternative formats you require for your personal circumstances. Likewise we may need to keep a record of aspects of vulnerability where we need to provide you with additional support or adapt our services. This information will be recorded on our Customer Relationship Management systems and/ or recorded on system notes for internal use. This information will be stored and used to help ensure we provide you with the right services and support to meet your needs.

For more information about how we hold or use your data please refer to [privacy policy](#). Rest assured that we'll treat any information you provide in confidence and in accordance with data protection law.

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How we support our Vulnerable and Disabled Customers

Where we are made aware someone is vulnerable we will make reasonable adjustments. Below are some examples of how we may adapt our service.

Low literacy (including dyslexia), numeracy skills:

- We will check understanding and your requirements.
- We will be clear and concise with selling terms.
- We will repeat information if needed.

Severe or long term illness:

- You can nominate someone to speak on your behalf or whether you need us to consider your illness in our decisions.

Mental health problems:

- You can ask us for additional time to help you understand or process information,
- Tell us how you would prefer to communicate with us. You can contact us by email or by letter if you don't want to talk to us over the phone.

Caring responsibilities (including having Power of Attorney)

- Caring for someone can be challenging and we understand that Carers may require additional support. We understand that they might need added as a contact on to someone's account. We will explain our processes on how to do this

Bereavement:

- We understand how difficult it can be when a friend or family member has passed away. Our Customer Services team are here to make the process of changing owner or closing an account as easy as possible for you. Our team will talk you through the next steps.

Services for customers with disabilities and vulnerabilities

1. Large Print

We want to make sure you always get the information you need in a way that's easy for you to use and understand. If you need your bills and other important documents in an alternative format we can provide them in large print

2. Free Directory Enquiries Service

If you're not able to read or hold a printed directory, you can apply for free 195 Directory Enquiries. To sign up for this service, you'll need to complete an application form, which will need to be counter signed by a medical professional. To request a form, call 0800 587 0195 and ask to speak with the registration team, whose opening hours are 9am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Once signed up, you'll be given a PIN number and can start using the 195 service. Please note: this service is not provided by The Phone Co-op

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3. Next Generation Text Relay Service

A text relay service is designed to help customers use a phone because they have difficulty hearing or speaking. It's effectively a translation service, which converts voice-to-text or text-to-voice.

If you have difficulties with hearing, a relay assistant will type what the other person is saying, so that you can read their words in real time. If you have difficulty speaking on the phone, a relay assistant will speak the words you type, so the other person can hear your words in real time

Next Generation Text (NGT) is a new and improved version of the previous text relay service and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

You can use a text phone for NGT (like the old text relay service), but a free NGT app is also available, which works with smartphones, tablets, laptops and PCs, so that you can use NGT wherever you have an internet connection.

NGT is not a service provided directly by The Phone Co-op. To find out lots about the options available and how to use NGT we recommend that you visit the Next Generation Text website: www.ngts.org.uk.

The cost of a text relay call is the same as if you made the call without text relay. We know that text relay calls can take longer than a normal voice call, so we make adjustments to your call charges to make sure that you aren't out of pocket.

4. Emergency SMS

The emergency SMS service is there for people who struggle to speak on the phone, so they can alert the emergency services without needing to call them.

The emergency SMS service lets deaf, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people in the UK send an SMS text message to the UK 999 service where it will be passed to the police, ambulance, fire rescue, or coastguard.

5. Assigning a nominated contact and Power of Attorney

Appointing a Nominated contact enables someone you trust or one of your employees to discuss various aspects of your account including balance enquires and call charges. They can also make payments on your behalf. Your Nominated User is not directly liable for any charges on your account, as the Account Holder remains the same.

There may be times when you need someone to manage your affairs for you. A Power of Attorney (PoA) is a legal document which gives someone else (known as the attorney) legal authority to make decisions and act on your behalf. If you have a PoA we'll treat them as the account holder, which means you'll no longer be able to manage your account. You can find out more information on PoA including other types of PoA on [Ofcom's website](#).

6. Priority Fault Repair

We provide priority fault repair for customers who depend on the telephone service because of illness or disability (landline phones only). Priority fault repair is a free service for customers who rely on their Phone Co-op services for health and mobility reasons. If

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you're eligible, you'll get priority when you report a fault to us. The service is only available to you if your household includes someone at risk, or you have accessibility requirements such as:

1. Renal Dialysis Machine.
2. Artificial Ventilator.
3. Unable to access the house unaided due to chronic long-term illness or disability.

The priority fault repair service doesn't cover:

1. Your line is supplied by another service provider.
2. You live in warden-controlled, residential nursing, care home or similar type of property.
3. The service doesn't cover alarm monitoring stations, control rooms or other types of alarm lines or installations.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it effectively supports the fair and appropriate treatment meets the needs of Vulnerable Customers or End Users with Disabilities. The review will include an assessment of customer complaints and feedback received regarding this policy.

How to obtain additional copies of this Accessibility and Vulnerability Policy

You can obtain additional copies of this Vulnerability Policy in the following ways:

By Writing

The Phone Co-op

5 The Millhouse

Elmsfield Business Park

Chipping Norton

OX7 5XL

Alternatively you can download and print off additional copies from our website at:

<https://www.thephone.coop/help-resources/contact-us>

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