

Equity and access for people with disabilities Policy

Council, 27 July 2001.

1. That the Council adopt the Policy of Equity and Access for People (see below)
2. That the City Manager be requested to address the barriers to participation and services in relation to Council's activities identified during the consultation
3. That an annual report regarding the progress of implementing the policy on Equity and Access for People with Disabilities be prepared by each unit for the Committee.

Policy Statement

The Christchurch City Council will endeavour to remove the barriers to participation and contribution to community life for people with disabilities and their families/whanau.

It will contribute to developing an inclusive city where diversity is celebrated, human rights protected, our interdependence is recognised and varying abilities are valued and developed.



Scope

This policy has adopted the social model of disability. The social model views disability as something that arises from the disadvantages people experience because of their particular differences and characteristics. The social model of disability aims to remove the barriers in the social and physical domains that prevent people with disabilities from participating and contributing to community life.

The policy has adopted the following definition of disability:

- A person with a disability is a person with a physical, intellectual, sensory, or age-related disability or mental illness (or combination of these) who faces barriers in the social and physical environment that prevent them from fully participating and contributing to community life.

A disability may be related to age, previous injury or illness, associated with physical, sensory or intellectual disability or mental illness that people were born with or acquired.

- Physical disability: Reduced physical capacity which for example affects mobility.
- Sensory: Impairment of the senses (mostly commonly sight and hearing).
- Mental Illness: A mental health condition arising from continuous or intermittent disorders related to thinking, feeling, volition or behaviour.

- Intellectual disability: Permanently impaired learning ability (usually from birth) which prevents or inhibits people from developing the range of physical and social skills usually found in a person of that age.
 - Age-related Disability: Physical, sensory, intellectual, disability or mental illness related to the onset of old age. This includes conditions which can affect younger people, such as Alzheimer's disease or stroke, but which are more often found amongst older people.
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Policy Principles

- Social Model of Disability - Disability arise[s] from the disadvantages people experience because of their particular differences and characteristics.¹ People with impairments are disadvantaged by social and environmental barriers to participation.
 - Access - People who experience disabilities have equal rights to access the physical environment, information, communication and services including education, employment, recreation, rehabilitation, participation as citizens, health and accommodation services and the right to a meaningful and adequate income.
 - Diversity - People who experience disabilities have a freedom and a right to define themselves. The diversity of people who experience disability, including their ethnicity, needs to be recognised, and there should be flexibility to meet their differing aspirations and goals.
 - Equity - Equity of outcomes and equitable opportunities for all people is critical to the development of our city. People with disabilities should have equity, regardless of gender, ethnicity, type of disability and when the disability was acquired.
 - Inclusion - All people, including those with disabilities, have the right to live in an inclusive community where they are able to make the most of their talents and abilities in learning, training and work.
 - Participation - People who experience disabilities have a basic human right to participate in all aspects of Christchurch's community, this includes the right to influence and shape policy at all levels.
 - Treaty of Waitangi - The Council has made a commitment to honouring the Treaty of Waitangi in its Strategic Statement and its Social Well-being Policy. The Council will work with Maori to ensure they are able to participate at all levels of decision-making around disability issues.
 - Human Rights - The Council will acknowledge and abide by the terms of the Human Rights Act 1993. This Act prohibits 'unreasonable' discrimination on the grounds of disability (amongst other factors).
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Council Strategic Roles

The Council has the following roles:

- Advocate - As a leading advocate for all citizens of Christchurch, the Council has responsibilities to advocate for access and equity issues as they relate to people with

disabilities. The Council recognises that self-advocacy is the strongest and most effective form of advocacy and will support advocacy groups.

- Partner - The Council seeks to support and consolidate the efforts of the wide range of groups and individuals actively involved in the advocating on disability issues.
- Planner - The purpose of the planning system is to govern the development and use of land in the public interest. Planning permission is needed to undertake development and therefore the Council has a key role in designing the future development and redevelopment of the city, including physical characteristics such as parks, gardens, riverbanks, buildings and network of roads, cycle ways, and footpaths. It plays a key role in promoting sustainable development that sustains a diverse community and is barrier free.
- Provider - The Council is a key provider of facilities and services including information and library services, recreation and leisure services, housing, parks, sports facilities, community halls, advisory services and infrastructure services.
- Educator - The Council has a role of educating the wider community [in] access and equity issues as they relate to people with disabilities. It recognises that one of the best ways to educate is leading by example.
- Employer - The Council is a major employer in Christchurch. As an employer it has a role of ensuring a fair and equitable workplace and maximising the benefits that a diverse workforce can bring.
- Regulator - The Council has a regulatory function to ensure that quality standards and safety are maintained and barriers to access are removed.

Policy Goals

The Council has identified nine broad goal areas. Key objectives are identified for each of these goal areas.

Communication Access

The Council recognises that there must be particular recognition of the information needs of those who cannot use standard means of communication. This includes people who have disabilities of hearing and/or vision, who have communication disabilities who use facilitative communication, as well as those who need help in using the information provided. Information must be available in a form appropriate to peoples' needs.

Goal 1 - Communication with people with disabilities allows and encourages full access to Council information, events, services and facilities.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 1.1. Ensure staff are aware of the need to provide information in various ways to meet different needs.
- 1.2. Ensure information is available in alternative formats that are easier for the wider disability community to access, for example of audio tape, website, teletext, Braille, message services, large

print, simple language and diagrams, radio, and email.

1.3. Provide information about events and services in a variety of media (for example, publicise telephone and fax numbers, provide print information and radio notices).

1.4. Provide sufficient notice of events to ensure there is time to arrange transport or other requirements.

1.5. Publicise information about Council events and services through disability networks.

1.6. Provide targeted information for people with disabilities, their families and whanau and service providers for no additional charge.

1.7. Ensure all Council facilities have clear signs which include internationally recognised symbols and indicators.

Consultation and Decision Making

"We learn, when we respect the dignity of the people, that they cannot be denied the elementary right to participate fully in the solutions to their own problems. Self-respect arises only out of people who play an active role in solving their own crisis and who are not helpless, passive, puppet-like recipients of private or public services. To give people help, while denying them a significant part in the action, contributes nothing to the development of the individual. In the deepest sense, it is not giving but taking - taking their dignity. Denial of the opportunity for participation is the denial of human dignity and democracy. It will not work." Saul. D. Alinsky.

The Council is committed to promoting good practice in improving the participation of people in local government. It is essential that people with disabilities are involved in decisions on local services that affect their lives.

Goal 2 - People experiencing disabilities have opportunities to fully participate in Council design, planning and decision making.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

2.1. Ensure that consultation and seeking community views processes enable the wider disability community to participate fully in decisions which affect them.

2.2. Establish an on-going dialogue with people experiencing disabilities and their agencies to ensure their needs are recognised.

2.3. Ensure the participation of people with disabilities in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services.

2.4. Ensure that, where appropriate, the family, Whanau and carers of people who experience disability are given a legitimate voice in issues that affect them.

2.5. Facilitate the Kiwi able network.

2.6. Develop appropriate consultation and advisory guidelines for Council Units.

2.7. Establish an advisory/reference group or groups consisting of people from the wider disability community to ensure that appropriate expertise is available for the planning or reviewing and implementation of services.²

2.8. Continue to introduce ways of involving children and youth with disabilities in decision-making and giving them greater control over their lives.

Service and Programme Access

Local Government, health and social services provision are crucial to enable many people with disabilities to participate and live full lives. For example, lack of access to transportation services hinders the ability of people with disabilities to live independent lives. Lack of access to telecommunications services limits the ability of people with disabilities to obtain information and can pose a threat to safety. Council wishes to ensure that these services are delivered without discriminating against people with disabilities.

Council services programmes and events have a significant role to play in ending the marginalisation of people with disabilities in society. For example, the increase in services that are accessible through the Internet and over the telephone has obvious benefits for people with mobility or sensory difficulties. However, unless people with disabilities have the choice of accessing services in the same environment as people without disabilities, we shall never achieve a truly inclusive society. The need for integrated services is clear; people with disabilities should not have to be segregated from their family and friends in accessing services.

Goal 3a - All Council services are accessible for people with disabilities.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 3.1. Provide services which meet the specific needs of people with visual and hearing impairments and physical disabilities.
- 3.2. Ensure housing services are available (in terms of criteria), accessible (in terms of their physical characteristics and location) and safe (in terms of their design and equipment).
- 3.3. Develop and enforce a standard of accessibility for all Council housing services to promote the development of community amongst residents.
- 3.4. Develop mechanisms to improve the accessibility of rubbish and recycling collection services.
- 3.5. Provide an auxiliary aid or service, where appropriate, which would enable people with disabilities to use a service or provide the service by a reasonable alternative method (e.g. visiting people with disabilities at home).
- 3.6. Involve consumer groups in the development of services

Goal 3b - There is equitable access for people with disabilities to participate in Council run events and programmes.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 3.7. Provide recreation and sports programmes which are accessible to people with disabilities by ensuring physical access needs are met (for example, interpreters).
- 3.8. Provide events which are accessible to people with disabilities by ensuring physical access needs are met (for example, designated viewing areas and parking).
- 3.9. Provide the Kiwi able programme and the Kiwi able Leisure card.
- 3.10. Include specifications for access for people with disabilities in contracts and sponsorship agreements with providers of public events and programmes (for example, adequate car parking).

Physical Access

People with disabilities should not be prohibited from participation in their chosen recreational, social or employment activities because of architectural or attitudinal barriers. The barriers to the participation of people with disabilities in society are nowhere more clear than in the built environment. The step, heavy door and entry phone at the entrance to a building; the lack of colour contrasting on busy thoroughfares; and the high positioning of lift buttons and door handles all act as barriers to people with disabilities. With a little thought for the needs of people with disabilities, the environment could just as easily be designed to be accessible.

The Council recognises that access is a critical issue for people experiencing disabilities. Lack of access to buildings and other facilities is an obstacle in obtaining employment, education, housing, entertainment, health care and other services.

Goal 4 - People with disabilities have equitable access to public services, facilities and environments.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 4.1. Design, construct, maintain footpaths, crossings, paved areas and streets in ways, which facilitate their safe and practical use.
- 4.2. Address specific road safety issues raised by people with disabilities. These include problems with specific pedestrian crossings and intersections and uneven footpath surfaces.
- 4.3. Design, provide and monitor the use of mobility parking which is physically accessible, affordable, safe to use and appropriately located.
- 4.4. ensure parking provisions for people with physical disabilities are retained or enhanced when 'green' anti-car measures are implemented in central cities, by giving these parking provisions proper legislative standing.
- 4.5. Enforce regulations relating to footpaths and streets to allow people with disabilities to move about unobstructed (this includes, for example, cars parked across entrance ways and sandwich boards on footpaths).
- 4.6. Ensure all Council services, facilities, amenities and places of recreation (for example parks and beaches, galleries, libraries and cultural venues) maximise the opportunities for people with disabilities to attend and participate.
- 4.7. Employ general design principles appropriate for people with disabilities in any re-development or new building undertaken.
- 4.8. Enforce statutory requirements for buildings and amenities to ensure their compliance with Building Act, Building Code and NZ\$4121: 1985 Code of Practise. New Zealand Standard 4121: Design for Access and Mobility - Buildings and Associated Facilities.
- 4.9. Consult people with disabilities in the early planning and design stages of new developments and redevelopment.
- 4.10. Develop and implement (with appropriate consultation) a standard of excellence for building access.
- 4.11. Provide pedestrian traffic signals which maximise the ability of people with visual and hearing impairments to move about safely.
- 4.12. Provide appropriate designated changing facilities at Council swimming pools and facilities.
- 4.13. Work in partnership with Canterbury Regional Council to identify and resolve bus and other public transport barriers.
- 4.14. Facilitate an appropriate range of levels of access to parks and outdoor facilities.

Advocacy

As a leading advocate for all citizens of Christchurch, the Council has responsibilities to advocate for access and equity issues as they relate to people with disabilities. The Council recognises that self-advocacy is the strongest and most effective form of advocacy. The Council will work to empower individuals with disabilities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, independent living, and inclusion and integration into all aspects of society regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. The Council will work to ensure that it not only advocates for good practice but is a source of good practice.

Goal 5 - The rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities are upheld and promoted through advocacy and self advocacy.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 5.1. Identify and take up opportunities to advocate for equity and access for people with disabilities.
- 5.2. Participate in the development and implementation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy through submissions and participation in other consultation opportunities.
- 5.3. Create opportunities for people with disabilities to advocate on their own behalf.
- 5.4. Fund and support disability advocacy services in accordance with Council funding policies.
- 5.5. Advocate for policies, programmes, practices, and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all people with disabilities.
- 5.6. Take measures to disseminate information and knowledge on disability to all political and administration levels within national, regional and local spheres.
- 5.7. Monitor and make recommendations about the updating and implementation of legislation and practices to achieve the optimum approachability, accessibility and usability in architectural and environmental design.
- 5.8. Advocate for the participation of commerce, industry, statutory and non-statutory agencies, individuals, territorial Authorities, and central government in the provision of an accessible environment for everyone.
- 5.9. Encourage the portrayal of persons with disabilities by the media in a positive way, particularly the Council's own publications and publicity material.

Partnerships with the Disability Sector

The organisations which serve the needs and represent the interests of people experiencing disabilities are also diverse. They consist of government departments, private business, charitable organisations, and self-help and consumer groups. The Council seeks to support and consolidate their efforts. It will build links with existing disability and advisory organisations and networks and organisations and relevant businesses and employers and public and voluntary sector agencies.

Goal 6 - The Council works in partnership with the wider disability community, private, public and voluntary sector organisations to remove barriers for people with disabilities.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 6.1. Encourage and support the formation and strengthening of organisations of persons with disabilities, family members and/or advocates.
- 6.2. Establish ongoing communication with organisations in the disability community.

- 6.3. Establish ongoing relationship with organisations in order to develop and deepen the exchange of views and information between them and the Council.
 - 6.4. Develop partnerships with appropriate government and non-government organisations to ensure the delivery and co-ordination of necessary services (for example, housing provision).
 - 6.5. Work through interagency networks, such as Strengthening Families, to ensure that government agencies, disability sector agencies, organisations of children, youth and families, and carers work in a collaborative and empowering way to support children and youth who experience disability and their families.
 - 6.6. Build the capacity of disability groups to take responsibility for governing, managing, advising and delivering services.
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Prevention

The Council notes that one fifth to one third of disability may be attributable to late effects of injury³. The Council is committed to the development of a comprehensive and integrated approach to reduce the incidence of some forms of disability.

Goal 7 - A reduction in preventable injury and disability rates.
Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 7.1 Advocate the need for preventative measures to reduce injury or diseases such as diabetes which can result in disabilities.
 - 7.2 Advocate for policies and strategies which address the determinants of health, such as access to education, employment opportunities, adequate income and safe housing in order to improve people's standard of living and vulnerability to injury and disease.
 - 7.3 Facilitate and participate in intersectoral injury prevention programmes which employ comprehensive multi strategic health promotion approaches.
 - 7.4 Monitor and enforce regulations and safety standards which aim to reduce injury.
 - 7.5 Promote road safety through monitoring traffic, parking and accident patterns, related research, physical changes to roads and signals and education programmes.
 - 7.6 Monitor and regulate the physical environment and our foodstuffs from chemical and other contamination.
 - 7.7 administer environmental health statutes, including food licensing, dangerous goods, sale of liquor, offences trades and hazardous substances.
 - 7.8 Maintain a civil defence capability to plan for and respond to emergencies.
 - 7.9 Provide recreation and leisure programmes which promote healthy lifestyles.
 - 7.10 Provide recreation and sports facilities which facilitate the provision of recreation programmes aimed at improving health.
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Diverse workforce

The Council believes that it is essential that for a fair and equitable workplace to be established, equal employment opportunity strategies should be implemented. It is the right of all persons with disabilities to have the opportunity to be engaged in productive and meaningful employment which provides flexibility, equal opportunity and career path development.

One of the purposes of Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) is to ensure that assumptions and stereotypes do not prejudice the selection of candidates. EEO allows the Council to recruit the best person for the job, once they have made any reasonable adjustments.

EEO policies will benefit both employees and the wider Council, customers with disabilities and service providers, citizens and others in society. Reaching shared solutions to problems faced by people with disabilities must be the model for the future.

We welcome the benefits that a diverse workforce can bring.

Goal 8 - The Council has an Equal Employment Opportunities environment and a diverse workforce.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 8.1 Encourage and facilitate the employment and development of staff with disabilities.
- 8.2 Ensure that communication services, resources, and flexible workplace options are available.
- 8.3 Ensure that job modification, skills training and on the job training is available.
- 8.4 Ensure workplace modification services are available free of charge.
- 8.5 Endeavour to eliminate discriminatory or insensitive behaviour.
- 8.6 Implement the requirements of the Health and Safety Act.
- 8.7 Consult with key service providers and advocacy agencies regarding the removal of barriers to the recruitment and development of people with disabilities.

Cultural Change

People with disabilities may share experiences of barriers and discrimination. But individuals will face different problems. In many cases, it is society's attitudes towards people with disabilities that create problems, for example, the woman with a speech impairment who is not allowed to finish her contribution to discussions. Individuals' assumptions also become part of organisations' policies and practices, resulting in institutional discrimination which also needs to be addressed.

A sustained staff and elected member training programme is needed to challenge attitudes and ignorance towards people with disabilities and to ensure that all in Council and [the] wider community understand why these rights are necessary and what they mean. The Council is committed to taking action to raise awareness about people experiencing disabilities, their rights, their needs, their potential and their contribution.

Goal 9 - Disability staff and elected member training programmes are developed and implemented at all levels within the Council.

Christchurch City Council will endeavour to:

- 9.1 Ensure staff members involved with providing facilities, programmes and services are educated about removing barriers/the issues of people with disabilities.
- 9.2 Ensure that council staff and elected members undertake disability awareness training and that staff whose work impinges directly on the well-being of people experiencing disabilities undertake more specific training.
- 9.3 Initiate and support information campaigns concerning persons with disabilities and disability

policies, conveying the message that people with disabilities are citizens with the same rights and obligations as others, thus justifying measures to remove all obstacles to full participation.

9.4 Develop resource material for Council staff to enhance their awareness and understanding of potential barriers, appropriate consultation processes, available networks and strategies to integrate the needs of the disability community into services, facilities and decision-making processes.

9.5 Sponsor barrier free seminars for Council officers to improve staff understanding and ability to be responsive to needs of people with disabilities.

Footnotes

¹ Brown, I, Public Health and An Effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Ontario Health Promotion Electronic Bulletin, No 138.1, January 2000. Bach, M (1999) Current views on developmental disabilities. In I. Brown & M. Percy (Eds.), Developmental disabilities in Ontario, (pp.33-42) Toronto, ON: Front Porch Publishing.

² Those representing people with physical, intellectual, sensory, age-related disabilities, visual impairments, blindness, the deaf community and mental health needs. Also representatives such as family members, staff of service providers and other external expertise.

³ Ministry of Health (1999). Our Health, Our Future. Hauora Pakari, Koiora Roa. The Health of New Zealanders 1999. Wellington.

N.B. The standard referred to in clause 4.8, NZS 4121:1985 Code of practice for design for access and use of buildings and facilities by disabled persons, has been superseded by NZS 4121:2001.