

# Equity and Access for People with Disabilities Policy (including Older Persons)

Last reviewed December 2011

## [A] Policy Statement

The Grey District Council is committed to removing the barriers to full participation for people with disabilities, in community life, in line with the Ministry of Health Disability Strategy and the **National Positive Ageing Strategy**. It is accepted that a community that removes barriers for people with disability is a community that is accessible for all people, including Older Persons.

This policy is intended to provide direction for Council over the next 10 years and the outcomes to be achieved will be dependent on sufficient financial and other resources being provided by Council each year in its annual budgets.

## [B] Policy Principles

- **Social Model of Disability** – disability arises from the disadvantages people experience because of their particular differences and characteristics. Statistically 1 in 5 people in New Zealand experience some form of disability. These people are disadvantaged by social and environmental barriers to participation.
- **Access** - people who experience disability 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 cultural backgrounds, needs to be recognised, and there should be flexibility to meet their differing aspirations and goals.
- **Equity** - the Council is committed to creating a district that promotes both equity of outcomes and equitable opportunity for all people. People with disabilities should have equity, regardless of gender, cultural background, age, type of disability.
- **Inclusion** - the Council is committed to the creation of a socially inclusive community where people with disabilities 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 the Grey District community, including the right to be consulted and influence and shape policy at all levels.
- **Treaty of Waitangi** - the Council recognises the Treaty of Waitangi and will invite local Iwi to participate at all levels of decision-making around disability issues.

## [C] Council Strategic Roles

The Council has the following roles:

- **Advocacy** - The Council recognises and encourages self-advocacy as the strongest and most effective form of advocacy.

- **Regulatory** - The Council has a regulatory function to ensure that quality standards and safety are maintained and barriers to access are removed, eg Building Act and Building Codes.
- **Partner** - There is a wide range of groups and individuals actively involved in the disability community in the Grey District. Council seeks to support and consolidate their efforts.
- **Planning** - The purpose of the planning system is to consider the development and use of land in the public interest. Planning is needed to undertake development and therefore the Council has a key role in designing the future development and redevelopment of the district, including physical characteristics such as parks, gardens, riverbanks, buildings and network of roads, cycleways and footpaths. It plays a key role in promoting sustainable development that sustains a diverse community that 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.

## [D] Scope

This policy has adopted the social model of disability and has, as its foundation document, the intent of the New Zealand Disability Strategy. The social model views disability as something that arises from the disadvantages people experience because of their particular differences and characteristics and 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 who has a physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, or age-related disability which is likely to continue for at least six months and results in a reduction of independent function to the extent that ongoing support is required.*

Disabilities may be related to age or previous injury, or associated with physical, sensory, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities that people were born with or have developed.

- **Physical Disability** - reduced physical capacity, includes people with mobility and/or agility disabilities.
- **Sensory** - impairment of the senses, includes people with hearing and/or seeing disabilities.
- **Psychiatric Disability or Mental Health Condition** - disability arising from continuous or intermittent disorders related to thinking, feeling, volition or behaviour (for example, schizophrenia, severe chronic depression or long-term addiction to alcohol or drugs).
- **Intellectual Disability** - refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterised by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work.
- **Age Related Disability** - physical, intellectual or psychiatric conditions related to the onset of old age. This includes conditions which can affect younger people, such as Dementia or Alzheimer disease or stroke, but which are more often found amongst older people.

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## [E] Communication with Council

The following means are available for individuals and organisations to raise any issues with Council relating to this policy:

Write to: Chief Executive Officer  
Grey District Council  
PO Box 382  
Greymouth 7840

Telephone: (03) 769 8600

Fax: (03) 769 8603

Email: [info@greydc.govt.nz](mailto:info@greydc.govt.nz)

Web: [www.greydc.govt.nz](http://www.greydc.govt.nz)

## [F] Policy Goals

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

### [1] Physical Access

People with disabilities should not be prohibited from participation in their chosen recreational, social or vocational activities because of architectural or attitudinal barriers. The barriers to the full participation of disabled people in society are nowhere clearer than in the built environment. The Barrier Free Audit is an example of a means of ensuring that building standards relating to disability are adhered to. 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 disabled people, the environment could just as easily be designed to be accessible.

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

#### GOAL 1: People with disabilities have equitable access to public services, facilities and environments

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal Council will consider:

- Designing, constructing and maintaining footpaths, crossings, paved areas and streets in ways which facilitate their safe and practical use.
- Addressing specific road safety issues raised by people with disabilities. These include problems with specific pedestrian crossings and intersections and uneven footpath surfaces.
- Designing, providing and monitoring the use of mobility parking which is physically accessible, affordable, safe to use and appropriately located.
- Ensuring parking provisions for people with mobility impairments are retained or enhanced when "green" anti-car measures are implemented, by giving these parking provisions proper legislative standing.

- Enforcing 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).
- Ensuring 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.
- Employing general design principles appropriate for people with disabilities in any redevelopment or new building undertaken.
- Enforcing statutory requirements for public buildings and amenities to ensure their compliance with Building Act and Building Code.
- Ensuring new buildings, and the redevelopment of existing buildings, employ design principles which are responsive to the physical access issues identified by people with disabilities.
- Providing pedestrian traffic signals crossings per national guidelines which maximise the ability of people with visual and hearing impairments to move about safely.
- Providing appropriate designated changing facilities at Council swimming pools and facilities.
- Working in partnership with West Coast Regional Council to identify and resolve bus and other public transport barriers.

Note: Some of the above are required by legislation and will be carried out as normal day to day maintenance or as part of annual budgetary actions.

## GOAL 2: 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 disabled people with mobility or sensory difficulties. However, unless disabled people have the choice of accessing services in the same environment as non-disabled people, 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 2a: All Council services are accessible for people with disabilities

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Provide library services which meet the specific needs of people with visual and hearing impairments and physical disabilities.
- Ensure sufficient housing services are available (in terms of criteria) and accessible (in term of their physical characteristics and location).
- Develop and enforce a standard of accessibility for all Council housing services to promote the development of community amongst residents.
- Explore the provision of 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 (eg visiting

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customers with disabilities at home – generally restricted to people who are physically confined to their homes).

### GOAL 2b: There is equitable access for people with disabilities to participate in Council run events and programmes

- Provide recreation and sports programmes, where possible, which are accessible to people with disabilities by ensuring physical access needs are met for all ages and gender.
- Provide events, where possible, which are accessible to people with disabilities by ensuring physical access needs are met.
- Support and encourage participation in the Active West Coast programme and the Green Prescription (information on these schemes are available from the Disability Resource Service West Coast, Guinness Street, Greymouth).
- Include specifications for access for people with disabilities in contracts and sponsorship agreements with providers of public events and programmes (including, for example, adequate car parking).

## [2] 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, people 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 people's needs. Assistance will be provided where necessary.

### GOAL 3: Communication with people with disabilities allows and encourages full and equal access to Council information, events, services and facilities

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Provide information about events and services in a variety of media where practical (for example, publicise telephone and fax numbers, provide print information, radio notices, community notices and on [www.greydc.govt.nz](http://www.greydc.govt.nz)).
- Provide sufficient notice of events to ensure there is time to arrange transport or other requirements.
- Publicise information about Council events and services through the Disability Resource Service West Coast, Guinness Street, Greymouth and by posting information on the Library notice board and/or other community notice boards.
- Provide targeted information for people with disabilities, their families and whanau and service providers for no additional charge.
- Ensure all Council facilities have clear signs which include internationally recognised symbols and indicators.
- Ensure information is available in alternative formats that are easier for the wider disability community to access, for example on audio tape, website, message services, large print, simple language and diagrams, radio and email.

## [3] 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*

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*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 4: People experiencing disabilities have opportunities to fully participate in Council planning and decision making**

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Establish an on-going dialogue with people experiencing disabilities, their family, whanau, carers and their agencies to ensure their needs are recognised. This will be achieved by Council participating in regular disability network meetings.
- Establish a portfolio responsibility for disability issues.
- Establish an advisory/reference group or groups consisting people from the wider disability community as a point of contact to ensure that appropriate expertise is available for the planning, reviewing and implementation of services. At this time the Disability Resource Service West Coast, Guinness Street will serve this purpose.
- Continue to recognise ways of involving children and youth with disabilities in decision-making and giving them greater control over their lives.

#### **[4] Advocacy**

As a leading advocate for all citizens of the Grey district, 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 of 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**

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Identify and take up opportunities to advocate for equity and access for people with disabilities.
- Consider funding and supporting community disability advocacy services in accordance with Council funding policies, eg Annual Plan, Community Grants Scheme etc.
- Advocate for policies, programmes, practices, and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all people with disabilities.
- Take measures to disseminate information and knowledge on disability to all political and administration levels within national, regional and local spheres.
- Monitor and make recommendations where appropriate about the updating and implementation of legislation and practices to achieve the optimum approachability, accessibility and usability in architectural and environmental design.

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- 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.
  - Encourage the portrayal of persons with disabilities by the media in a positive way, particularly the Council's own publications and publicity material.

## [5] 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, Non Government Organisations (NGOs), and self-help and consumer groups. The Council seeks to support and consolidate their efforts. It will build links with existing disability and advisory organizations, networks, other relevant organisations and businesses, 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

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Encourage and support the formation and strengthening of organisations of persons with disabilities, family members and/or advocates.
- Establish ongoing relationship with organisations of persons with disabilities.
- Establish ongoing relationship with organisations in order to develop and deepen the exchange of views and information between them and the Council.
- Develop partnerships with appropriate government and non-government organisations to ensure the delivery and co-ordination of necessary services (for example, housing provision).
- 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 manner with people with disabilities and their families.
- Build the capacity of disability groups to take responsibility for governing, managing, advising and delivering services.
- Attend, on a regular basis, meetings of the Disability Network.

Note: Council's contact and liaison responsibilities will be through its portfolio system. A staff member will be assigned to attending Disability Network.

## [6] Prevention

The Council notes that one fifth to one third of the burden of disability may be attributable to late effects of injury, especially road traffic injury in younger people and osteoporotic fractures following falls in older people.

The Council is committed to the development of a comprehensive and integrated approach to reduce the incidence of some forms of disability such as that resulting from injury or from disease.

### GOAL 7: A reduction in preventable injury and disability rates

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:



- Advocate the need for preventative measures to reduce injury of diseases that are identified as being particular problems in our community.
- 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.
- Participate in inter-sectoral injury prevention programmes which employ comprehensive multi strategic health promotion approaches.
- Monitor and enforce regulations and safety standards relating to local government which aim to reduce injury.
- Promote road safety through monitoring traffic, parking and accident patterns, related research, physical changes to roads and signals and education programmes.
- Administer environmental health statutes, including food licensing, dangerous goods, sale of liquor, offences trades and hazardous substance as appropriate.
- Maintain a civil defence capability to plan for and respond to emergencies.
- Provide recreation and leisure programmes which promote healthy lifestyles.
- Provide recreation and sports facilities which facilitate the provision of recreation programmes aimed at improving health and are inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Promote activity programmes targeted at the aged through Council's partnership with the Canterbury/Westland Sports Trust and/or other appropriate agencies.

## [7] 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 that provides flexibility, equal opportunity and career path development.

One of the purposes of the Equal Employment Opportunities Policy (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 reasonable adjustments have been made to the workplace and work practices.

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 workplace

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Encourage and facilitate the employment and development of staff with disabilities.
- Encourage staff with disabilities to identify barriers they encounter during their day to day employment and to raise these with either the Health and Safety Committee, their immediate supervisor/divisional manager or failing satisfaction, with the Chief Executive Officer.
- Ensure that communication services, resources, and flexible workplace options are available.



- Where practical, job modification, skills training and on the job training is available.
- Ensure workplace modification services are available free of charge.
- Endeavour to eliminate discriminatory or insensitive behaviour.
- Implement the requirements of the Health and Safety Act.
- Encourage all Council staff and Councillors undergo disability awareness training.

## [8] Cultural Change

Disabled people may share experiences of barriers and discrimination, but individuals will face different problems. Physical barriers, such as steps to the entrance of a shop, or not making information available on tape are clear examples of the problems faced by people who use wheelchairs and people who are blind. In many cases, it is society's attitudes towards disabled people that are the real 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 that also needs to be addressed.

A sustained awareness programme is needed to challenge attitudes and ignorance towards people with disabilities and to ensure that all in Council and 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 awareness programmes are developed and implemented at all levels within the Council

To remove the barriers to achieving this goal the Council will:

- Encourage staff members involved with providing facilities, programmes and services are educated about removing barriers/the issues of people with disabilities.
- Encourage all Councillors to undertake disability awareness training.
- Encourage all Council staff to undertake disability awareness training and that staff whose work impinges directly on the well-being of people experiencing disabilities undertake more specific training.
- 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.
- Provide 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.

### GOAL 10: To be leaders in the implementation of the NZ Disability Strategy Council will encourage and participate in the development of a West Coast Regional Strategy for people experiencing disabilities

To achieve this goal Council will:

- Encourage the development of, in partnership with the disability sector, a regional strategy with other District Councils, the West Coast Regional Council, all Businesses and Tourist Operators and the DHB so that not only the people with disabilities of our regions but all people with disabilities visiting our region are valued and have an experience that encourages others to come to the West Coast.

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- Initiate consultation with the above groups as to how this could be developed on a regional basis.
  - Make available to these groups copies of the Council's policy on Equity and Access for People with Disabilities.
  - Invite sports and sporting facilities owners and/or operators in this development.
  - Participate and assist in the facilitation of disability workshops in the region to ensure all people initiating policy for the region have an understanding, not only legislation as it relates to disability, but also the day to day needs of these people.
  - Council will use, as its foundation documents, the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the National Positive Ageing Strategy when developing policy that affects these groups.