

EQUITY AND ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Effective from 11 April 2017

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Remove barriers to participation in the community for people with disabilities and their families or whanau.
- Create an inclusive city, celebrating diversity, protecting human rights and recognising interdependence.
- Recognise the need for integrated services amongst the community.

This policy is crafted to reflect the real needs of the disability sector within our community, and outlines realistic expectations of Council.

Scope

To remove barriers that exist within the Invercargill City community so that people with disabilities are able to participate and contribute in both social and physical aspects of community life.

Definitions

Access	Ensuring that people with disabilities have equitable access to Council events and services – be it in the physical sense such as designated viewing areas and parking; or accessibility through the Council website, social media or telephone to aid in information retrieval.
Community Building	A building with the sole purpose to be accessed by the local community and is Council funded. For example, the Invercargill Public Library, Splash Palace, Civic Theatre etc.
Council	Invercargill City Council

Council's Role	Council will be an advocate for all citizens; a partner of likeminded institutes advocating on disability issues; will plan in the best interests of the public affected; continue to provide facilities and services; educate others and lead by example; continue to be an equal employment opportunities (EEO) organisation and regulate to ensure quality standards and safety is maintained.
Disability	A person experiencing disability is a person with a physical, intellectual, sensory, neurological, psychiatric or other impairments who faces barriers in the social and physical environment that prevent them from fully participating and contributing to community life.
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
Events	Any organised public occasion that occurs either regularly (i.e. Council Meeting, Citizenship Ceremony, etc.) or is a one-off (i.e. Surf to City).
Facilities	A Council place, amenity or piece of equipment that provides a certain purpose, for public use.
Human Rights	The Council will acknowledge and abide by the terms of the Human Rights Act 1993. The Act prohibits "unreasonable" discrimination on the grounds of disability (amongst other factors).
Information	Council data that will aid in the understanding of a certain event, news update or document. This will likely be found by searching the Council website, social media or phoning the Council.
Programme	Planned series of events organised by Council.
Services	A system supplying a public need such as transport, refuse and recycling or providing a utility such as water or sewerage treatment and disposal.
Social Media	Council Facebook page, Instagram and Twitter account.

Communication

Council will endeavour to do the following to ensure that all people with disabilities have equitable access to Council information, events, services and facilities:

- Ensure staff are aware of the need to provide public information, where practicable or on request, in a multitude of ways to meet different needs.
- Ensure information, where practicable or on request, is available in alternative formats that are helpful or easier to comprehend and access. This may include such things as the Council website, message services, large print, Word versions, simple language and diagrams, radio and e-mail.

- Provide information about Council services or events across a variety of media. This may include publicising telephone numbers, providing print information or radio notices.
- Provide sufficient notice of events.
- Publicise information about Council services and events through disability networks known to Council.
- Ensure Council facilities have clear signs and include internationally recognised symbols and indicators, where appropriate.

Consultation

Council will ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in Council decision making. Council is committed to do the following:

- Ensure that consultation will enable the wider disability community to participate, when decisions greatly affect them.
- Recognise the needs of those people with disabilities and their wider agencies.
- Ensure, that when affected, the disabilities community including their family, whanau and carers, will be able to participate in the whole consultation process.
- Encourage staff liaison with combined disability groups and Disabled Person's Organisation (DPO) to ensure that appropriate expertise is available when required.

Accessibility

Council recognises the need for services and events to be accessible for people with disabilities. Council will endeavour to do the following:

- Provide services that meet the needs of people with visual or hearing impairments, and physical disabilities.
- Ensure housing care 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).
- Continue to ensure mechanisms are in place that improve the accessibility of rubbish and recycling collection services.
- Provide events that are accessible to people with disabilities by ensuring physical access needs are met. For example, designated viewing areas and specific parking areas at events.
- Include specifications for access for people with disabilities in Council contracts and sponsorship agreements with providers of public events and programmes. For example, adequate car parking.
- Design, construct and maintain footpaths, crossings, paved areas and street in line with design guidelines to ensure their practicable use.
- Design, provide and monitor the use of mobility parking in the CBD and wider community areas that are physically accessible and appropriately located.

- 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).
- Ensure all Council services, facilities, amenities and places of recreation maximise the opportunities for people with disabilities to attend and participate. For example, parks and beaches, galleries, libraries and cultural venues such as the Civic Theatre.
- Ensure that any re-development or new building undertaken has appropriate fittings and fixtures for people with disabilities and that they are compliant with the Building Act, Building Code and Design for Access and Mobility – Buildings and Associated Facilities Code NZS 4121:2001.
- Consult people with disabilities in the early planning and design stages of new community building developments and redevelopment.
- Consider pedestrian traffic signals that maximise the ability of people with visual and hearing impairments to move about safely.
- Provide appropriate designated changing facilities or restrooms at Council swimming pools and other facilities.
- Work alongside the affected communities to resolve any issues that affect accessibility, such as any transport barriers that arise.
- Facilitate an appropriate range of levels of access to parks and outdoor facilities.

Advocacy

The Council is an advocate on behalf of the City for a myriad of areas. Should issues arise impacting on access or infringe on one's right to equity then Council will act. The rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities are upheld and promoted through this method, and recognise that self-advocacy is the most effective form. The Council will endeavour to:

- Participate in the implementation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, providing feedback where necessary. Council will amend their Disabilities Policy in line with this Strategy every four years.
- Create opportunities for people with disabilities to advocate on their own behalf.
- Advocate for policies, programmes, practices, and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all people with disabilities.
- 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.
- Support and 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 people with disabilities by the media in a positive way, particularly the Council's own publications and publicity material.

Partnerships

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

- Encourage and support the formation and strengthening of organisations of people with disabilities, family members and/or advocates.
- Establish ongoing communication with organisations in the disability community.
- Establish ongoing relationships 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 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.
- Build the capacity of disability groups to take responsibility for governing, managing, advising and delivering services.

Prevention

Council will work to reduce the prevalence and incidence of disability related injuries, particularly in preventable situations. Council will endeavour to:

- Advocate for policies and strategies that 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.
- Monitor and enforce regulations and safety standards that aim to reduce injury.
- Promote road safety through monitoring traffic, parking and accident patterns and related research and education programmes.
- Maintain a civil defence capability to plan for and respond to emergencies.
- Promote recreation and leisure programmes that promote healthy lifestyles.
- Provide recreation and sports facilities that facilitate the provision of recreation programmes aimed at improving health.

Equal Employment Opportunities

The Council has an Equal Employment Opportunities environment that encourages a diverse workforce and will endeavour to:

- Encourage and facilitate the employment and development of staff with disabilities.

- Ensure that communication services, resources, and flexible workplace options are available.
- Ensure that job modification, skills training and on the job training is available.
- Ensure workplace modification services are available free of charge.
- Eliminate discriminatory or insensitive behaviour.
- Implement the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act.
- Consult with key service providers and advocacy agencies regarding the removal of barriers to the recruitment and development of people with disabilities.
- Ensure staff members involved with providing facilities, programmes and services are educated about removing barriers/the issues of people with disabilities.
- 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.
- Encourage information campaigns concerning people 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.
- Host seminars for Council officers to improve staff understanding and ability to be responsive to needs of people with disabilities.

Revision History:	NIL
Reference Number:	A1681534
Effective Date:	April 2017
Review Period:	This Policy will be reviewed every four (4) years, unless earlier review is required due to legislative changes, or is warranted by another reason requested by Council.
Supersedes:	
New Review Date:	April 2021
Associated Documents/References:	New Zealand Disability Strategy
Policy Owner:	Invercargill City Council