

7. POLICY ON EQUITY AND ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Corporate Plan Output: Policy Advice	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the outcomes of the final consultation phase for the Equity and Access Policy, and to seek the Board's endorsement of the policy (distributed separately).

INTRODUCTION

In May 2000 the Council endorsed a proposal to develop a disability policy. The Council resolved:

1. That the Policy Unit and the Community Relations Unit work closely with representatives of the disability community in planning and undertaking the necessary consultation and policy development process.
2. That the issue of the appointment of a disability advocate be addressed as part of the subsequent strategy development process

Since then a number of meetings and focus groups were conducted with people from the disability community, Council staff, elected members and community boards. Based on the feedback from this consultation and a review of the literature, a draft policy was developed.

The Policy Team then sought feedback on the draft policy (community boards provided feedback on the draft earlier this year). Based on the feedback a final draft has been developed. This is the third time that community boards have had an opportunity to comment on the policy.

BACKGROUND

The proposal arose out of a research project commissioned by the Council's Leisure Unit in 1999 to evaluate the future direction of the KiwiAble Programme¹. In the course of the KiwiAble study issues were raised regarding the Council's position on disability in general. The research conducted by the Leisure Unit found that the KiwiAble Co-ordinator is currently acting informally as a consultant/adviser to other units within Council on issues affecting people with disabilities (for example access to buildings and public spaces), and deals with enquiries from outside the Council on these matters. Councillor Graham Condon also acts as a consultant to Council units on occasion. This suggests that there is a lack of knowledge of disability issues in some areas of the Council's work. The research concluded that these informal roles should not continue, as it compromises the co-ordinator's and councillor's time and expertise.

Representatives from the wider disability community therefore approached the Council with a request to address these issues. The Council agreed that further work was needed in the area.

The Council identified that through the adoption of a policy, it could formalise its commitment to people with disabilities by ensuring:

- All Council services are accessible to people with disabilities
- Council consultation processes enable the wider disabled community to participate fully in decisions which affect them
- The wider community is encouraged to remove barriers to participation in "an ordinary life" for people with disabilities

The Council also identified that it had a key role in reducing the incidence of some forms of disability such as that resulting from injury. For example, working with other agencies to improve people's standard of living and vulnerability to injury and disease, developing intersectoral injury prevention programmes such as road safety campaigns and monitoring and enforcement of regulations and safety standards which aim to reduce injury.

The Council is leading (with Crown Public Health) an Injury Prevention Intersectional Initiative funded by ACC. A report on this initiative will be presented to a subsequent Board meeting.

¹ This programme aims to promote people with disabilities into sport and recreation.

Local Demographic Profile

According to data from Statistics New Zealand, 20% of the population in New Zealand are people with disabilities (as defined below). In the Southern Region, this proportion rises to 24%. Although there is no breakdown for Christchurch, there is no evidence to suggest that the figure will be lower in this city. If anything the figure might be higher, given the existence in the city of a specialist spinal injuries unit, and the fact that 520 ex-residents of the Templeton Centre (people with intellectual disabilities) have moved into the community over recent years. On issues of population size alone, a disability policy appears to be necessary. There are however additional factors that indicate a need for this policy.

Policy Context

Strategic Objective A5 of the Council's 1999 Annual Plan (and in the 2000 draft Annual Plan) is to ensure "that the needs and aspirations of children, youth, elderly and people with disabilities are taken into account in all Council activities". The needs and aspirations of people with disabilities are not addressed by a specific Council policy, although there are policies for the other population groups mentioned in this Objective.

The Council's Social Well-Being Policy provides evidence of its commitment to the principles of equity, social justice, empowerment and engagement. These principles endorse Council action in addressing the social, environmental and economic barriers that people with disabilities face in their attempts to participate in community life. Furthermore, from a human rights perspective, Council needs to have clear processes in place to ensure that there is no risk of discrimination against people with disabilities occurring in any of its future activities.

References to people with disabilities in Policy Register (to December 1998) are found in the following policies: Recreation and Sport, Housing, Early Childhood Education, Public Toilets, Arts and Culture (general reference to universal access).

CONSULTATION REGARDING THE POLICY

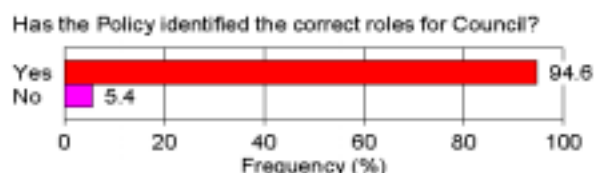
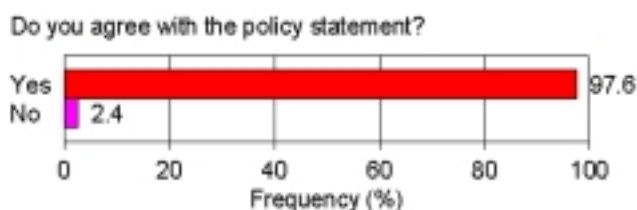
Feedback was sought from people with disabilities, their families/carers and service providers and from community boards, Council units, individual staff, KiwiAble and committees. The process was designed with advice from people with disabilities, and consultation materials were piloted to ensure that they would be accessible to different sectors of the disability community. The process involved a two phase consultation. The first phase sought input and ideas regarding key issues and policy priorities. The second phase sought feedback on the draft policy.

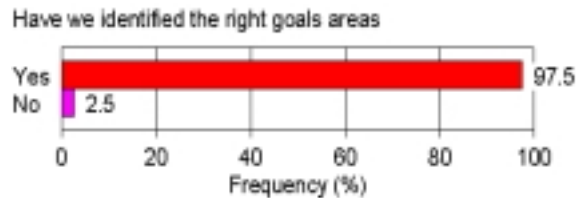
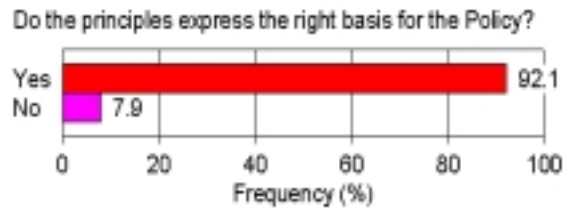
During the first phase a range of participation methods was developed. It was particularly important to make sure that the methods used did not exclude particular groups from participation. People were invited to choose the method that suited them best from a range of options, including written surveys, audio tape, response via Council's website, focus group discussion, an interview in their own home and meetings with network and advocacy groups. Community boards received a detailed report on this consultation.

The second phase used similar methods outlined above to get feedback on the draft policy. The feedback on the draft policy was extremely positive and is summarised below:

Feedback on Draft Policy

The following is a brief summary of the feedback.





General Feedback

The general feedback was extremely positive, for example.

“The council need to be congratulated in this whole process. It indicates that they genuinely care about people with disabilities. Communication is a key point in the whole issue of disabilities. Listening to issues and understanding the effects of problems is a concern. Training and education is needed.”

“I thought it was an excellent document - clear and comprehensive.”

“This is a great start and I'm sure our organisation and others are more than happy to assist in any way we can to make everyday life more accessible. We may be able to help with networks and support. Also, we may be able to assist you to consult with people with disabilities themselves through forums etc.”

Specific Feedback

Respondents also made specific suggestions regarding different aspects of the draft policy and suggested various amendments. This feedback was considered during the preparation of the final draft.

Attached is an outline of the Board's previous feedback, together with advice on how these comments have been reflected in the amended document.

Respondents also provided feedback about specific facilities or services. This feedback will be given directly to the units concerned.

FINAL DRAFT POLICY

Based on the feedback received, the draft policy was amended, a copy of which has been distributed separately. The Board's endorsement of this draft is now sought.

Recommendation: That the Board endorse the amended policy.