

Horowhenua DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

Horowhenua District Council Vision Statement:

“To make Horowhenua the best rural lifestyle district in New Zealand.”

Horowhenua Disability Vision Statement:

“To make the Horowhenua District fully accessible for all people.”

What does this mean?

To make sure the Horowhenua community is equally accessible for all people, no matter their disabilities. This includes accessibility to physical spaces and facilities, information and communications, civic and Council processes and community events and initiatives.

Who are our people with disabilities?

While we know that a large proportion of our community have some level of impairment, there are no official statistics on this. Impairments can be physical, visual, audio, mental and/or emotional. We expect that the results from the 2013 Census will provide us with more information about our District.

What is this Action Plan for?

- **To guide Council on best practice when considering the needs of people with disabilities**
- **To inform the Horowhenua community on what Council is doing in this area**
- **To encourage our community leaders and other Horowhenua residents to appreciate the value people with disabilities contribute to our community**
- **To act as a tool for those working within the Disability Sector**

What documents have guided this Action Plan?

Council has used The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which New Zealand is a signatory to, as the founding document for the Disability Action Plan. The Convention guides governments (including territorial authorities) on how to remove barriers and make sure disabled people have “full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

In addition, Council referred to the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001 which guides government action and promotes a more inclusive society. The Strategy acknowledges that local authorities have a significant impact on the lives of disabled people by the decisions they make.

The Horowhenua Disability Network, in conjunction with Council, developed a Draft Disability Strategy two years ago and actions from this have been incorporated into the Disability Action Plan where appropriate.

Disability Strategies from other territorial authorities were also used as a source of valuable information.

Who participated in writing this plan?

Eighty four people with disabilities and six family members spoke with Council over a three month period. A wide range of ages were represented from 16 to 84 years. Many of the people spoken with were active in their community with some participating in two or three community groups. Input was given by people with visual impairment, physical disabilities and learning disabilities. Many older people had more than one impairment including significant illnesses.

A workshop for young people (under 25 years) with learning disabilities was attended by fourteen people. Meetings were also held with groups, and group representatives, such as the mobility scooter group, the stroke support group, Foundation of the Blind volunteer support, the disability support network and the multiple sclerosis support group.



What are the current issues for people with disabilities in Horowhenua?

- Access to transport within the District and between Districts
- Employment opportunities (including paid and voluntary positions)
- Physical access to shops, public places and around town
- Access to services and entitlements
- Affordable and accessible housing
- Access to networks for those working within the sector
- High health needs
- Access to information
- Access to events, sport and leisure activities
- Attitudes towards people with disabilities

What are the key objectives that need to be achieved, and how?

Aim 1: People with disabilities have improved access to public places and spaces.

- People are encouraged to submit issues that need fixing to Council (e.g. uneven footpaths)
- Council laws relating to access are continually enforced
- Council offices are audited for accessibility and areas for improvement noted
- Common pedestrian travel routes are identified and upgraded when possible
- Public facilities and spaces are audited for accessibility and areas for improvement noted and fixed when possible
- A proposal for funding to undertake access improvement works (based on audit findings) is submitted to the 2015-2025 Long Term Plan
- Mobility car parks are checked to make sure rear and side access is safe

Aim 2: People with disabilities can participate in Council democratic processes.

- Electoral information and publicity is provided in accessible formats
- Access checks are completed for polling sites and accessible venues publicised
- Local Government Elections 2013 are publicised to the disabled community in appropriate formats
- Actively encourage and support young people with disabilities to successfully apply for Youth Voice

Aim 3: Increase the participation and inclusion of young people with disabilities in cultural life, employment, education, recreation, leisure and sport.

- Communication pathways are created to ensure young people with disabilities receive information about events in the community

- Up skilling community organisations so they can encourage and support the participation of young people with disabilities
- Investigating an initiative to buddy young people with disabilities looking for employment and/or day activities with Community Assets staff

Aim 4: Council communications are fully accessible to disabled people and processes make it easy to do business with Council.

- Alternative file formats are provided for documents on Council's website
- Increasing the font size of the Council ElderBerries publication to 12 font and ensuring information meets communication access standards
- The Council website meets the New Zealand Government Web Standards 2.0, as possible within resource constraints

- Council communications and publications are accessible at all Council Offices and Service Centres, Libraries and Council newsstands (for example, height of shelving, visual and audio displays in the foyer)
- Communications are reviewed and a plan is developed to achieve 100% accessibility
- A more streamlined rates rebate process is investigated, which does not require applicants to provide annual proof of income from WINZ (joint project with Ministry of Social Development)
- Communications methods for residents to report problems in the District are publicised

Aim 5: Full access to all available information, services and facilities for disabled people in times of emergency and disaster.

- Welfare centres are audited for accessibility and areas for improvement noted and fixed when possible
- All welfare and operational plans include specific consideration and provision for the needs of people with disabilities

- Welfare and operations staff are trained in how best to meet the needs of people with disabilities

Aim 6: Council staff are responsive and respectful when interacting with disabled people.

- Council staff complete disability awareness training, beginning with Customer Services staff and other 'front-of-line' staff
- Disability awareness training is built into the induction process for all new staff

Aim 7: Protocols for working with the disability community and disability sector experts are established.

- A Council disability leadership forum made up of at least 60% of members with disabilities is established and supported
- The disability leadership forum monitors the Action Plan and ensures accountability
- Relevant documentation and resources in accessible formats are provided, to allow all members to contribute equitably to the process

- Credible and Best Practice resources (including people) are identified and utilised

Aim 8: The rights of disabled are embedded in all Council strategies and policies.

- Strategies and policies include disability specific content where appropriate, including links to the Disability Action Plan

Aim 9: Sector agencies and organisations are supported, and Council advocates to Central Government on behalf of local issues.

- Council is an active participant of Disability Sector Network meetings
- Fale Pasifika Horowhenua is supported to identify and establish relationships with Pasifika families with disabled adults and children
- Iwi are engaged with to discuss issues for Maori disabled people
- Employment opportunities for people with disabilities are advocated for across the District by Council

For more information about the United Nation's 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', see <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=261>, or write to:

Office for Disability Issues
PO Box 1556
Wellington
New Zealand

For more information please call Council Ph. 06 366 0999, email enquiries@horowhenua.govt.nz or go to our website www.horowhenua.govt.nz