
Strengthening Contribution

Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere

2009-2011

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Waitakere City Council

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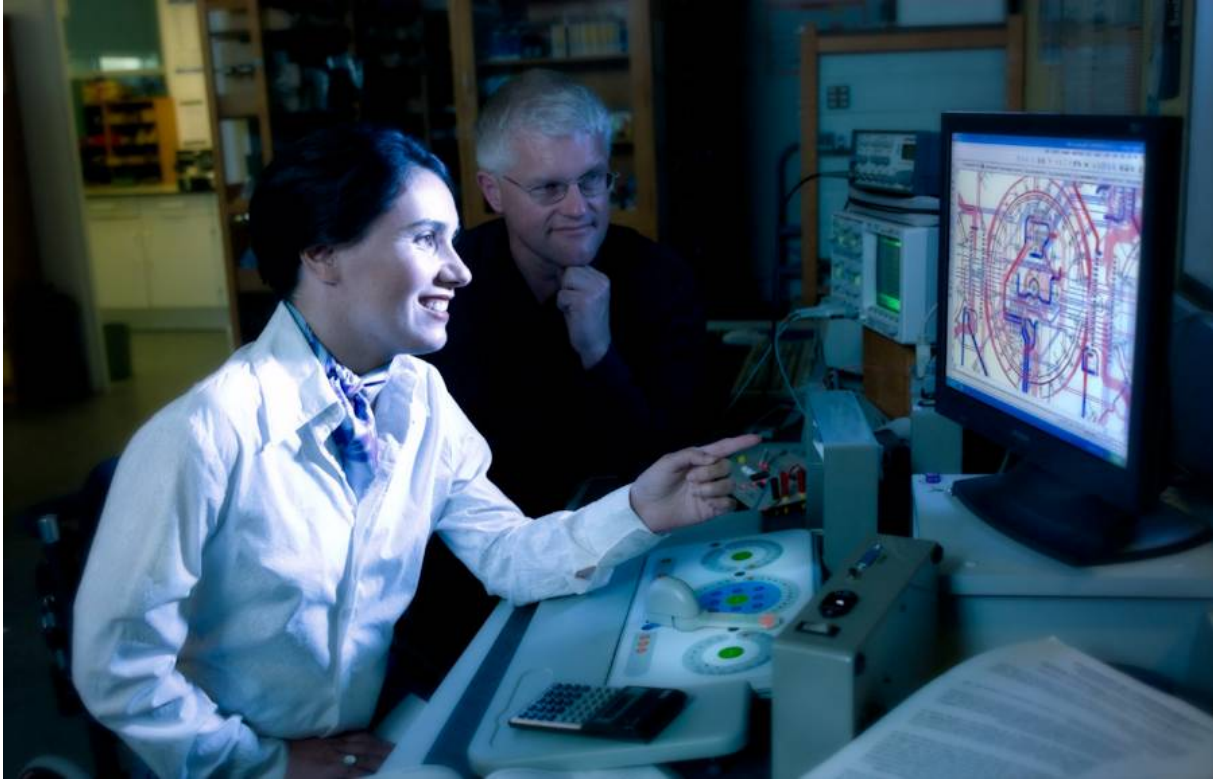


Image caption: Disabled graduate Karen Elliot from Lomak International's "Everyday Champions" initiative, 2004.

Large Print Version

- The contents of this document are just the same as the small print version, including pictures. There is a table of contents after this page.
- The standard text is 18 point Arial like this. Headings are larger and have black lines above them.
- All text is left-aligned and this document is structured so it should work properly with screen reading software.
- Total pages in this large print version = 80.
- Total pages in the small print version = 28.
- Page numbers for this large version are shown in the headers and footers at the top left corner and bottom right corner of every page.
- Page breaks from the small print version of the document are shown like this: **--- 11 ---**
- We welcome your feedback about the layout of this document.

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Introduction

The Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere (“the Plan”) will coordinate long-term improvements to the city’s public spaces, services, communications, organisations and activities to improve the wellbeing of disabled residents.

We will remove barriers that stop everyone contributing to their fullest potential, improve understanding about disability and strengthen disabled people’s leadership in Waitakere’s diverse communities.

Leading and Coordinating Action

The Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere is Waitakere City Council’s response to the national New Zealand Disability Strategy (Minister for Disability Issues, 2001).

Census figures show that about one in five New Zealanders are disabled, which means approximately 35,000 residents in Waitakere. They

are a significant community in our city and one that is disadvantaged in many ways by barriers that prevent their full contribution to our society and economy.

The Local Government Act 2002 broadened Councils' responsibilities for the wellbeing of citizens. It added specific requirements to engage appropriately with significant communities and to partner with other agencies in meeting needs. The Council is charged with delivering services, infrastructure and leadership for all its citizens, including the one in five who is disabled.

The Council has regulatory powers and a significant influence over local spaces, buildings, programmes and infrastructure. The Council is also a large employer, provider and consumer of services and products, and an owner of buildings and public spaces.

We can expect more participation of disabled people in the life of the city – due to an ageing population who are living longer, a shift from segregated institutions into community-based services and the increasing aspirations of younger

disabled people. This will bring pressure for public infrastructure, services and programmes to be genuinely accessible for everyone.

Waitakere will prosper when everyone has the opportunity to contribute to their full potential. We all benefit when disabling barriers are removed from buildings, services, information and communities.

When those aspects of the city work for disabled people, it is easier for everyone to participate and contribute, including parents pushing prams, migrants paying bills and older people reading street signs and attending community meetings.

Barriers will be tackled over time in a range of areas like streetscapes, transport, education, work, housing, civic participation, shopping, recreation, events, employment and economic development. Social attitudes about disability play a big part in all those areas, so fostering understanding is a key part of this Plan.

The Council is well placed to lead and coordinate action, and this Plan is a vehicle for that. Partnering will be a large part of the approach,

building on strong local, regional and national relationships. Stakeholders will be encouraged to focus on what they can bring to the table, and strengths will be considered alongside needs.

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Achieving success will take some time, so building a sustainable process is important. Ingredients include celebration of progress and ongoing development of greater capacity for involvement of disabled people, their families and organisations.

Before everyone can take a seat at the table, we must build it. Investment is needed in accessible infrastructure to support genuine ongoing engagement with disabled people, families and communities, and to develop their ability to contribute direction and governance. The Council is well placed to take an overall leadership role in that development, co-ordinating the involvement of relevant organisations in the interests of the wellbeing of disabled people in Waitakere.

The New Zealand Disability Strategy

In 2001, the New Zealand Government's Minister for Disability Issues released the first New Zealand Disability Strategy ("the Strategy") aimed at guiding improvements in the responsiveness of government agencies to the needs of disabled people. While local government is mentioned, the Strategy does not formally apply to councils at this stage.

A number of councils have begun to voluntarily incorporate it into their policies and workplans.

The published Strategy has 15 separate Objectives containing a total of over 130 Actions.

These have subsequently been grouped by the Ministry of Health's National Health Committee into four basic areas:

- Rights of citizenship
- Government capacity
- Participation in all areas of life
- Specific population groups.

No specific funding was committed to putting the Strategy into practice, although a small Office for Disability Issues ("ODI") was established within the Ministry of Social Development to monitor progress and report to the Minister for Disability Issues. Government departments file annual workplans and the ODI compiles annual progress reports which the Minister delivers to Parliament. The ODI work programme also includes two other workstreams, "Accessible Government" and "Policy into Action" which tackle barriers in government practices and programmes.

The creation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy involved an expert steering group and wider consultation with disabled people and their families (referred to collectively here as the "disabled community"), and with the "disability sector" of organisations which provide, manage, fund and advocate about specialised disability services and issues.

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Responding Locally

A successful local response to disabled citizens requires strategic factors that do not fit within the New Zealand Disability Strategy's framework. For instance, the Strategy applies at this stage only to government departments and agencies which deliver services but do not have direct citizenship relationships with disabled people. One of the Council's strengths is local mandating, representation and community development, which can greatly help us achieve our Plan's outcomes.

One limitation of the Strategy is its tendency to position disabled people mainly as dependent recipients of services whose greatest aspiration is "participation". By contrast, the government's Positive Ageing Strategy treats older New Zealanders as people with a contribution to make.

Similarly, the Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy assumes that for migrants and refugees, contributing to their new society and economy are paramount.

This Plan applies that same thinking to disabled people in Waitakere. The city deserves nothing less than everyone contributing to their fullest potential.

About Disability

The Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere embodies a modern and pragmatic understanding of disability, consistent with the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

It is worth noting that many stakeholders – including disabled people and disability organisations – do not share a common understanding about disability, and that a distinctive New Zealand interpretation is still evolving. This Plan is another step in that evolution and is part of Waitakere’s contribution nationally.

What Disability Means

Disability has two parts to it – how a person functions, and how our world functions.

Historically, disability meant only the **personal** aspect, and it was seen as an individualised “health

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problem”, described in terms of weakness, deficit and cost.



Image caption: “Children from the Wilson Home for crippled children, about to go to hospital by ambulance, for special treatment, Takapuna, Auckland.” Photograph taken by John Pascoe in August 1943. Reference number: 1/4-000651-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

What used to be called “disabilities” are now known as “impairments”. An impairment is an ongoing reduction, absence or difference of personal function.

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Impairment means a person may have difficulty doing some things in their daily life, like moving around, hearing, learning or socialising.

Those difficulties are often reduced by doing things differently or using forms of support including equipment and human services. Most disabled people are impaired in only certain aspects of daily living, and have other personal strengths.

Impairment is usually not something that can be “treated” or “cured” through health services, although rehabilitation services may be helpful for some people.

Impairment comes about in many ways, including birth, illness, accident and ageing – and it has always been a normal part of human life.

However, social attitudes play a large part.

People function differently, but some differences tend to be socially valued, such as the abnormal

physical function of athletes, while others are not valued, like using methods of communication other than speech.

These days, we understand that disability is a complex **social** process, not something “wrong” with a person. Disability is the interaction between people’s impairments and the various “environments” we all live in – built environments, service environments, communication environments, civic environments and social environments. Those environments can contain barriers that prevent disabled people from participating and contributing in the same way as everyone else. General attitudes and assumptions about disability are a common underlying barrier at both individual and societal levels.

Disability is experienced when a person with impairments interacts with environments that have not anticipated diverse needs. Rather than seeking to “fix” people, our logical focus for improvement is to design and manage all environments so that they meet everyone’s needs, and to remove barriers that prevent people being able to contribute and participate on a fair footing.

This approach is reflected throughout the New Zealand Disability Strategy and in the New Zealand-influenced United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

The Convention's Preamble says:

"...disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

The New Zealand Disability Strategy puts it like this:

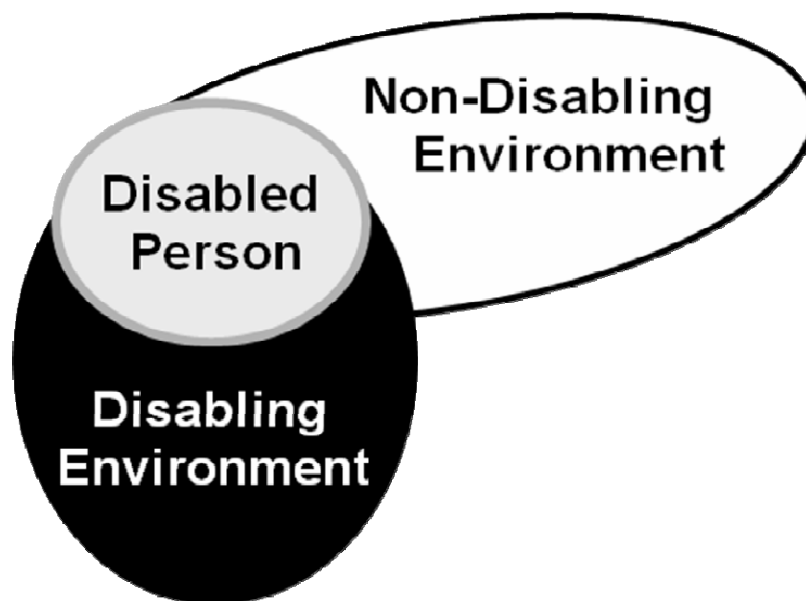
"Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have. Our society is built in a way that assumes that we can all move quickly from one side of the road to the other; that we can all see signs, read directions, hear announcements, reach buttons, have the strength to open heavy doors and have stable moods and perceptions."

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The Impact of Barriers

People have always had a huge range of abilities in different areas of life. Some are great athletes, parents, artists or entrepreneurs, but are weaker in other parts of life.

That diversity is what is actually “normal”. We all contribute in many ways to our families, communities, society and economy. A disabled person usually experiences a mixture of disabling and non-disabling environments and a variety of barriers to contribution.



Barrier-free environments benefit all of us throughout our lifetimes. Disability is a factor in whether our services, programmes and decisions genuinely include everyone.

People are resourceful and adaptable, but there are limits to our ability to influence our environments. Often those most affected by barriers are least able to remove them. The barriers themselves can play a part in that – for example, complaints processes that assume everyone speaks English or has a computer.

Persistent experience of barriers also shapes major life opportunities including education, work, wealth and social connectedness. Disabled people are disproportionately disadvantaged in many social and economic measures.

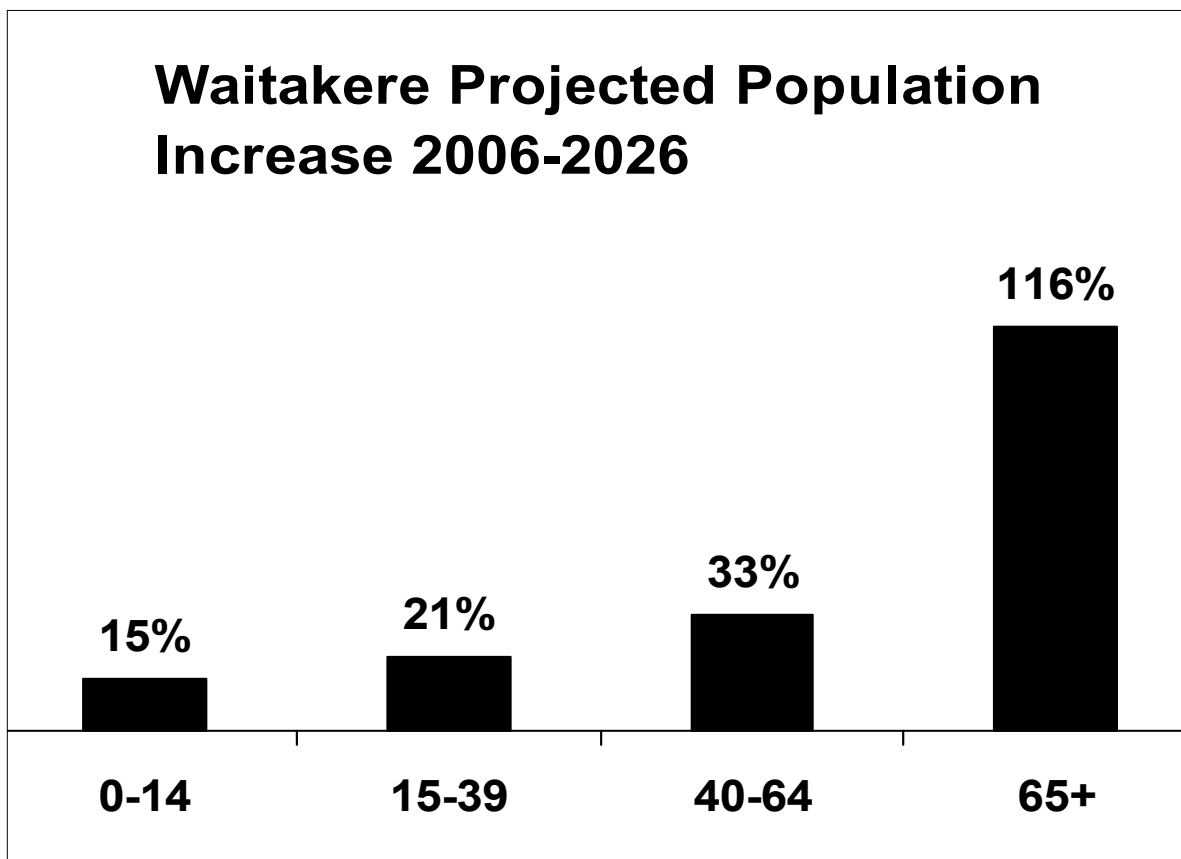
The experience of disability is shaped by how free of barriers our environments are. It is also influenced by factors like wealth, home ownership, strength of family support and whether a person has always had an impairment or has become impaired during their life. Personal resilience comes into it too, as do educational achievement,

employment status and other common social factors like ethnicity, gender and age.

The Influence of Ageing

Being disabled is a normal part of life as we grow older. Nationally, about half of over-65 year olds are disabled and the rate increases dramatically with age. New Zealand's baby boomers are all moving into that age bracket over the next two decades.

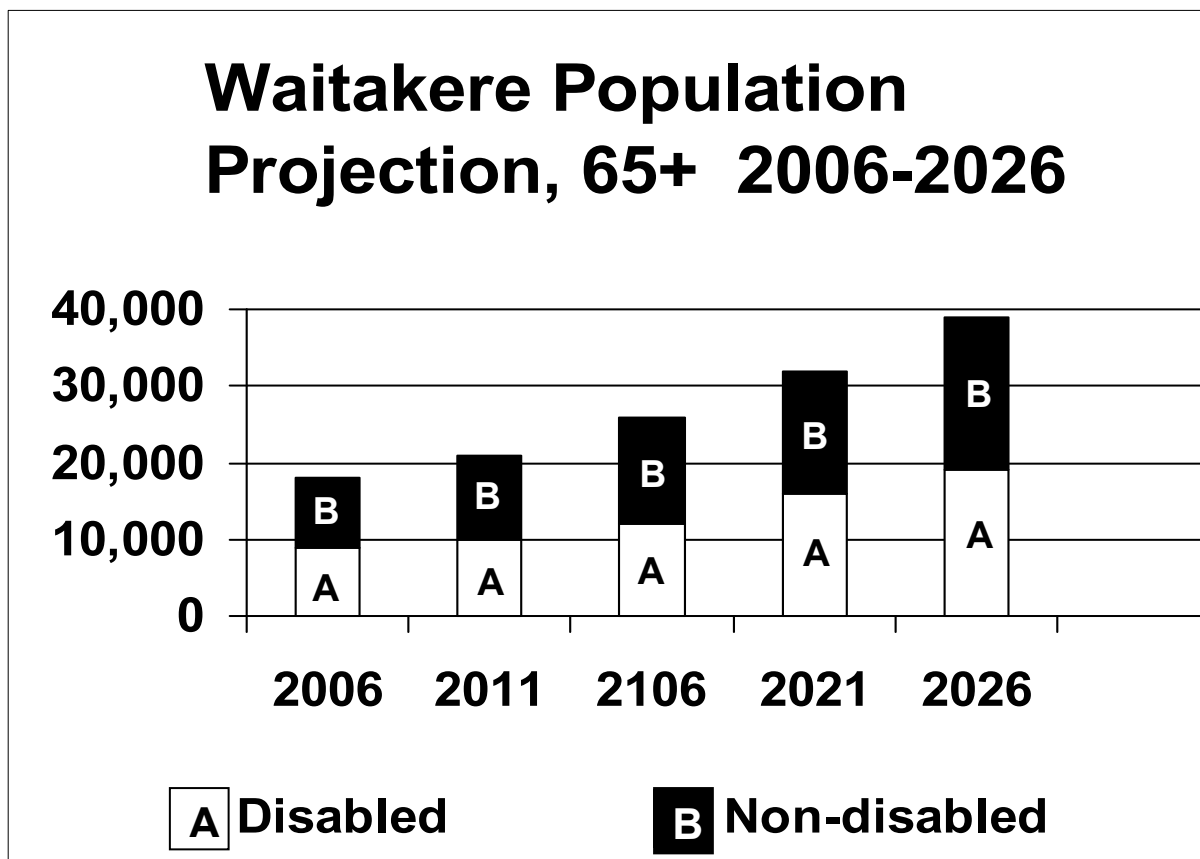
This will have a big impact locally, even though Waitakere has a relatively young population. Statistics New Zealand's projections show that the city's older population will increase much faster than younger age groups.



Graph caption: Source: Statistics NZ projections 2007. Medium scenario.

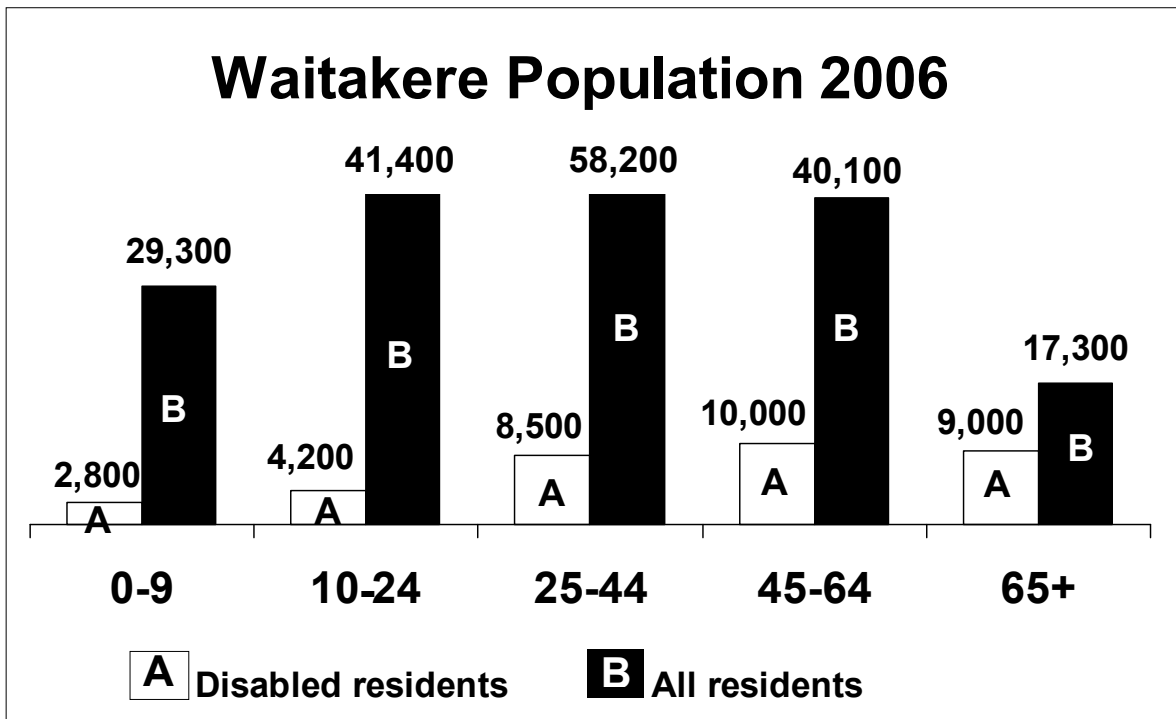
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Focusing only on the over-65 year olds, those projections show their numbers in Waitakere nearly doubling to around 40,000 people by 2026.

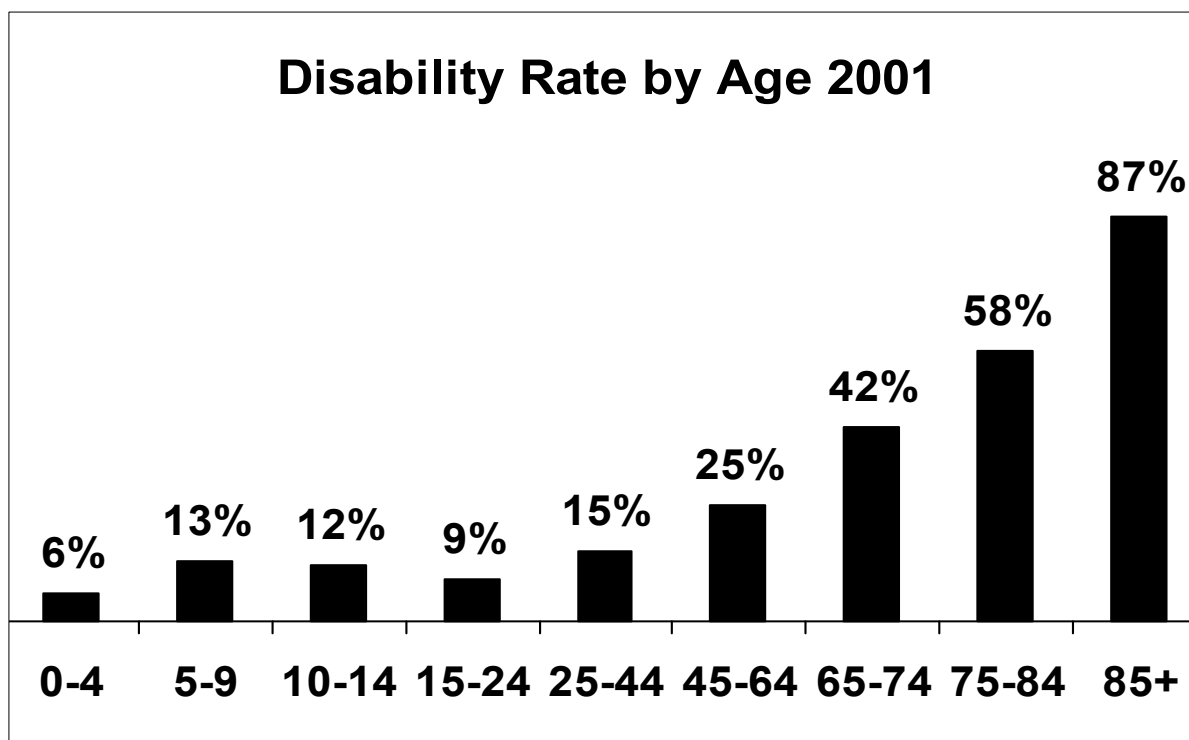


Graph caption: Source: Statistics NZ projections 2007, Disability Survey 2001. Medium scenario, assuming disability prevalence for age band stays same over time.

The following two graphs show the estimated **numbers** of disabled people in Waitakere for each age bracket and then the national **rate** of disability experienced by different age groups. This is based on applying national rates from the 2001 Census to population numbers for Waitakere from the 2006 Census, and these are preliminary results from the demographic work that is part of this Plan.



Graph caption: Source: Statistics NZ Census 2006, national Disability Survey 2001. Note that age bands are not equal width.



Graph caption: Source: Statistics NZ national Disability Survey 2001. Note that age bands are not equal width.

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The Legacy of History

The history of disability in New Zealand has been dominated by European perspectives. This section reflects that, although other cultures bring a variety of approaches today.

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Disabled people used to be part of their family's daily life, until industrialisation and capitalism began separating work from home a couple of centuries ago. People became disabled in large numbers due to war and to health events like the polio epidemic in the 1940s.



Image caption: "Room of invalid returned soldiers receiving instruction in crafts." In the foreground is a table showing cane work. WW1 veterans, photograph undated. Reference number: MNZ-0944-1/4-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Families were expected and encouraged to put their disabled family members in specialised residential institutions.

These were run by either government or voluntary organisations, subsidised by charitable donations and isolated from the community. Some current disabled community leaders bring to their work a deep personal experience of being separated from their families and forced to live with those assumed to be “like them”. For most New Zealanders, disability became someone else’s problem.

New Zealand’s last large residential institution finally closed only in 2006, and disabled people are now officially seen again as part of the daily life of their family and community. There are still lags in delivering genuine community-based services to replace those that used to be part of the institutional offerings. Services remain fragmented, hard to find out about and access.

Thinking and practice around disability is still catching up with life beyond the institution’s walls, and “community” is often positioned as something “out there” rather than all around us. It is a fresh concept for many of us that disabled people can be communities of interest and identity in themselves. A strong example is the Deaf community (with a capital “D”) who are anchored by their shared use

of our nation's third official language, New Zealand Sign Language, and for whom Waitakere is a nationally significant place to study, work, and live.

Locally, the Council has a role to play in improving the wellbeing of significant population groups and communities of interest, while the District Health Board and key government agencies are responsible for helping to plan, coordinate, fund and provide individual and family supports.

Organisations that provide specialist services for disabled people and their families have a role, as do those who represent the interests of particular groups. All the relevant stakeholders share a rapidly-evolving context underpinned by a history we are only beginning to describe.

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Achieving Common Purpose

Historically, many large charitable organisations were established by parents of disabled children to make sure their basic needs were met.

Few disabled people survived into adulthood, so childhood was the focus and it lives on in some

organisations' names. Each organisation tended to work with a particular group of people, strictly defined by historic medical categories like blindness, arthritis or paraplegia.

Organisations were often mainly focused on support services, rather than the whole of a disabled person's life.

Government contracts to actually provide services usually followed, and some disability organisations are now predominantly large non-profit businesses. Their motivations can be an interesting mixture of familial love, charity, service excellence, bureaucratic accountability and some sense of social justice.

They combine professional expertise with varying degrees of lived experience of disability, but often have blurred mandates alongside strengths and resources. They exist alongside advocacy organisations whose main purpose is providing a voice for groups of disabled people or their families – but similarly divided by traditional medical categories and isolated from one another.

The process of developing the New Zealand Disability Strategy brought together a variety of disability organisations and disabled communities to focus on common aspirations. Locally, we will benefit by fostering and sustaining a similar sense of shared purpose amongst all those people and organisations

that can increase the wellbeing of disabled people in Waitakere, together.

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Language We Use

Historically, there have been many ways of talking about disability and about people who experience it. Stakeholders in this Plan are bound to use a variety of terms, which may form part of direct quotes and conversations.

However, recognising the power of language to influence change, this section lists the key understandings and terms that we must foster and advocate for the use of. These will be used in any publications that Waitakere City Council produces.

- Disability is not something a person “has”. People may have impairments. Disability is a social process.
- We describe a person experiencing disability as a “disabled person” or a “person experiencing disability”.
- Similarly, we talk about “disabled people” when describing a group rather than an individual. We do not use terms like “the disabled” or “the blind”.
- We describe people who are not disabled as “non-disabled people”. We do not use the term “able-bodied”.
- Although some people still say “people with disabilities”, we avoid that phrase because it positions disability only as a characteristic of the person.
- If it is relevant to refer to a medical condition or impairment label, examples of acceptable constructions include “blind people”, “people with arthritis”, “hearing-impaired people” or “people with impaired mobility”. Seek advice if unsure.

- If relevant, we describe the extent of impairment with words like “degree” and “level”, not “severity”.
- We do not use terms like “handicapped”, “crippled” or others that many disabled people will find offensive. If in doubt, ask.
- We avoid words like “normal” or “special” or “suffer” or “overcome” or “despite” or “lets”, as these usually signal disabling assumptions.

References

Minister for Disability Issues, 2001. **New Zealand Disability Strategy**. Ministry of Health, Wellington, New Zealand.

Ministry of Health, 2004. **Living with Disability in New Zealand**. Ministry of Health/Intersectoral Advisory Group, Wellington, New Zealand.

National Health Committee, 2003. **To Have an Ordinary Life**. Ministry of Health, Wellington, New Zealand.

Office for Disability Issues, May 2007. **Supports for Living – An overview of a shared framework for developing an effective disability supports system.** Ministry of Social Development, Wellington, New Zealand.

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Abbreviation/Glossary

This Plan contains some abbreviations and specialised terms.

ARPHS

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

ARTA

Auckland Regional Transport Authority

DHB

District Health Board

DIWN

Disability Information Waitakere Network

HRC

Human Rights Commission **or** Health Research Council

ITO

Industry Training Organisation

KDEC

Kelston Deaf Education Centre

LGNZ

Local Government New Zealand

LTCCP

Long-Term Council Community Plan

Lu'i Ola

A regional inter-agency project to improve services for Pacific disabled people

MED

Ministry of Economic Development, New Zealand Government

MSD

Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand Government

NorSGA

Northern Strategic Growth Area

NZSL

New Zealand Sign Language

ODI

Office for Disability Issues, part of MSD

TDAG

Transport Disability Advisory Group

WDHB

Waitemata District Health Board, the local DHB

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About the Plan

Focus and Purpose

The Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere is Waitakere City Council's local response to the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

The Plan provides a framework of objectives and the ability to monitor progress. It informs the

Council's activities, and gives expression to the Council's Strategies, policies and plans.

This Plan is intended as a clear, practical platform for progress. It will:

- Coordinate and provide context for ongoing shared and individual action by the Council, other public sector organisations, community organisations, service providers, business and academic bodies, disabled people and their families.
- Lead improvement and share resources, risks and engagement with other stakeholders.
- Contribute to the development of ongoing policies and arrangements.
- Enable actions to improve the wellbeing of disabled people, their families and organisations in Waitakere.

Scope

This Plan is:

- Acknowledging regional and national initiatives which contribute to local outcomes for Waitakere.
- Mainly for the period ending October 2010, although some actions may continue beyond that. New regional governance arrangements will clearly have a big impact on planning.
- Informed by currently available demographic information, predominantly national in scope. Development of localised statistics is part of this Plan.
- Aligned with other key local processes like the current LTCCP, high-level Council strategies and the Social Wellbeing Collaboration programme.
- Reflective of obligations under the Local Government Act 2002, Human Rights Act 1993, Local Government Meetings and Information Act 1987 and other relevant legislation.

Strategic Linkages

Nationally, the Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere links to the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001, and to other significant guiding documents including the:

- Local Government Act 2002
- Local Government Meetings and Information Act 1987
- New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy 2001
- Carers Strategy 2008
- Human Rights Act 1993
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, to which our Government is a signatory

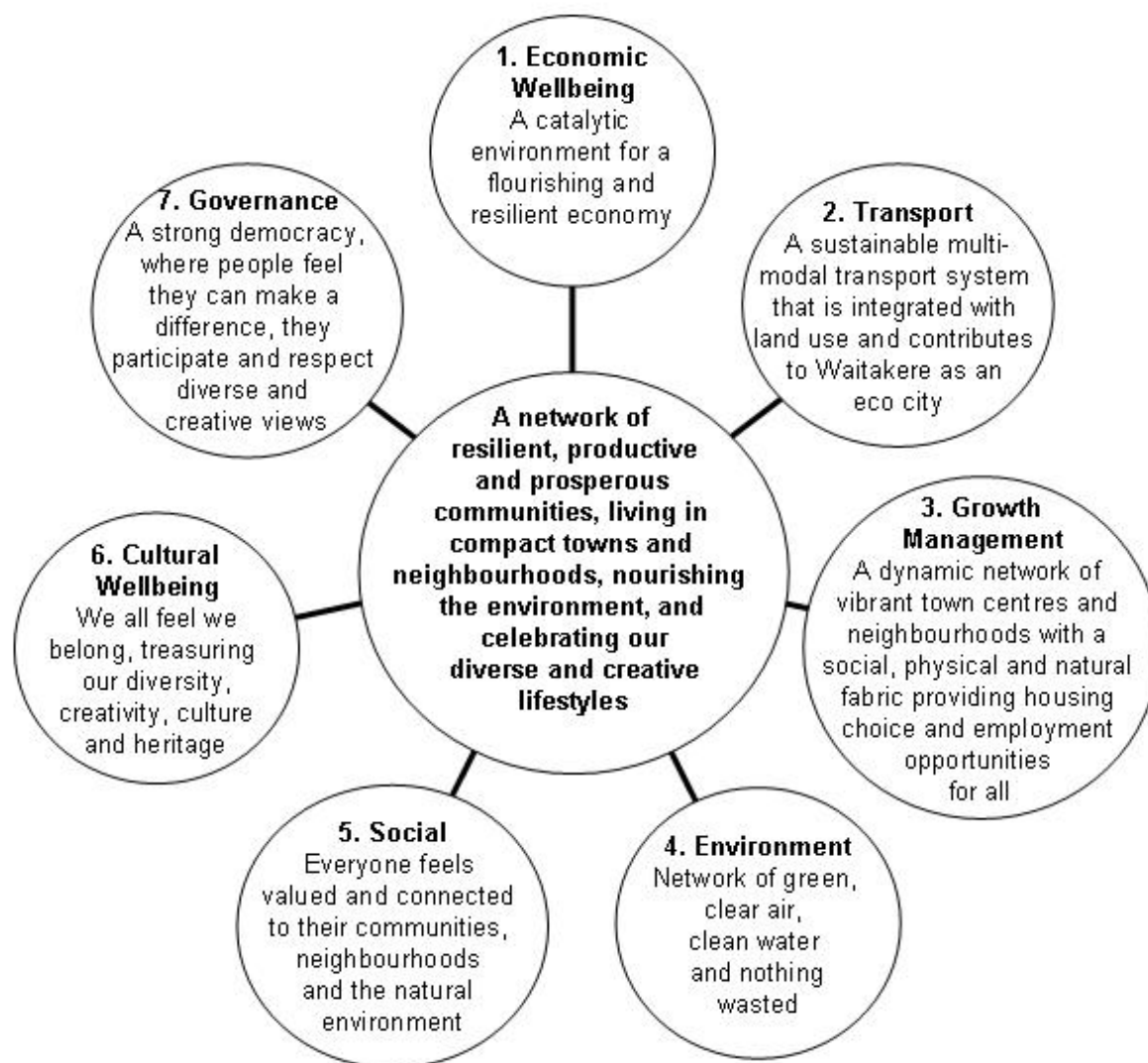
Locally, the Plan responds to Waitakere's Community Outcomes – particularly, Strong Communities, Urban and Rural Villages, Sustainable Integrated Transport, Strong Economy, Vibrant Arts and Culture, and Working Together.

The Plan informs and is informed by the Council's:

- LTCCP and Annual Plans
- Social Strategy, other high-level Strategies like the Transport Strategy and their regional counterparts including the Auckland Sustainability Framework and Regional Growth Strategy
- Action Plans, Activity Plans, Codes of Practice and projects across many areas of the Council's operations
- Plans for significant developments such as the New Lynn Transit Oriented Development
- Shared initiatives such as the Social Wellbeing Collaboration programme and Safe Waitakere
- Statutory obligations under regulations such as the Building Act 2004.

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The Council's seven high-level strategies are shown in the following diagram:



Transcriber's note: Key to diagram

Centre: A network of resilient, productive and prosperous communities, living in compact towns

and neighbourhoods, nourishing the environment, and celebrating our diverse and creative lifestyles.

1. Economic Wellbeing

A catalytic environment for a flourishing and resilient economy.

2. Transport

A sustainable multi-modal transport system that is integrated with land use and contributes to Waitakere as an eco city.

3. Growth Management

A dynamic network of vibrant twin centres and neighbourhood with a social, physical and natural fabric providing housing choice and employment opportunities for all.

4. Environment

Network of green, clear air, clean water and nothing wasted.

5. Social and Community Wellbeing

Everyone feels valued and connected to their communities, neighbourhoods and the natural environment.

6. Cultural Wellbeing

We all feel we belong, treasuring our diversity, creativity, culture and heritage.

7. Governance

A strong democracy, where people feel they can make a difference, they participate and respect diverse and creative views.

High-Level Themes

The Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere has four high-level themes which incorporate the Objectives of the New Zealand Disability Strategy in a sustainable and locally relevant way:

- Championing understanding

- Removing barriers to participation and contribution
- Ensuring fairness
- Leading, partnering and developing.

These themes group together actions and are explained more below.

Results and Measures

The current Plan contains only high-level themes and selected actions. Eventually it is intended to include Themes, Results, Actions, and Measures.

As further work is done on the Plan, desired **results** will be added to link the broad themes and specific actions – for example, “that all Council’s own buildings meet universal design standards”.

The Plan will also need to say how we will **measure** our achievements – so we know when our work has made a difference.

It is intended that results and measures will be added to the Plan through collaborative work with

stakeholders, using the proven Results Based Accountability (RBA) method.

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Planned Actions

- The following sections of this Plan describe indicative planned actions over the next couple of years, although the list is not exhaustive.
 - Detailed work plans are maintained separately, but are subject to resourcing commitments.
 - The timing of actions is determined by resourcing and other constraints. Some actions may not be delivered in the 2009-2011 period.
 - Other opportunities will undoubtedly arise and priorities may be adjusted.
 - Priority actions for the 2009-2010 year are shown again in a separate section at the end.

- Actions listed are currently only those delivered, led or contributed to by the Council. Those by other stakeholders will be added over time as part of engagement activities.

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Championing Understanding

Lack of understanding about disability is the most common barrier that disabled people face.

This part of the Plan includes communications and marketing activities, responsiveness initiatives and gathering of local evidence to support policy and prioritisation of action. These underpin all other elements of this Plan.

Many people still think of disability as a medical problem, rather than a social process. Lack of up-to-date understanding about disability applies to Government, Council and most stakeholders – and is even prevalent among disabled people, their families and disability organisations. That is perfectly understandable when there has been no organised investment in education or awareness.

The Council can play a role in creating better understanding both internally and throughout the city. Local and internal communication efforts include development and distribution of quality information, promoting progress and recognising successes. Supporting and strengthening personal champions within Council and other organisations is also critical to the long-term success of the Plan.

Working with regional allies who have similar needs will help share the load and ensure a more consistent approach. The Council can also advocate for regional and national action to enhance understanding.

Larger marketing and education campaigns – for example, like the internationally-recognised “Like Minds, Like Mine” mental health awareness initiative – are simply more cost-effective when delivered at a national level.



Image caption: Popular stereotypical representation of an intellectually impaired person – the lead character in 1994 movie “Forrest Gump”. Photo: British Film Institute.

Hard evidence about disability to guide decision-making and investment is lacking. There is some basic national data about disability and an established international academic and policy literature with some New Zealand contributions. However, the data is patchy and the literature tends to be medicalised and seldom reflects a practical understanding of disability that is useful at the local government level.

The evidence base to support prioritisation of localised action in Waitakere has simply not been

available, and its creation is therefore a key action as part of the Plan.

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Gather Evidence

- Develop local summary document from joint population research project with Auckland City Council, Auckland DHB and AUT University's Centre for Local Government.
 - Develop and apply New Zealand's first localised disability demographics.
 - Advocate for and link with national and regional research and policy through stakeholders including ODI, Statistics NZ, ARPMS, LGNZ and the Health Research Council.
- Continue including disability as a standard component in Council surveying and advocate for its inclusion by other organisations.
 - Include a disability cross-tab in annual resident KPI surveying.

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- Link to work by other agencies including ODI and Statistics New Zealand.
- Generate further local Waitakere figures, including projections.
 - Analyse results from Council surveys and other local datasets.
 - Link with local demographic work by other agencies including Waitemata DHB and ARPHS.
 - Create local fact sheet resources for various aspects of the data – for example, transport, housing, children, Maori, localities where possible – suitable for inclusion in briefing/communication packages for other projects.

Communication and Marketing

- Create core conceptual material and stories that constructively frame and present disability and disabled people.

- Develop and deliver presentations conveying modern disability concepts for key project stakeholders.
 - Create images and stories of local disabled people that reflect their strengths, aspirations and contributions.
 - Contribute to and leverage elements from the Communications and Engagement workstream of the regional inter-agency Lu'i Ola programme.
 - Link with relevant tertiary and school academic programmes.
- Develop and implement a Communications Plan to support this Plan.
 - Using mainly existing channels, key stakeholder publications.
 - Actively engage media outlets, ensuring constructive framing is promoted.
- Plan incorporation of disability responsiveness elements into staff training programmes and courses.

- Draw on relevant developments from the Workforce workstream of the Lu'i Ola regional Pacific disability services programme, which links to national Industry Training Organisation frameworks.

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Removing Barriers

Disabled people encounter barriers when the environments we all live in have not taken everyone's needs into account. We can easily create barriers for others in services, activities, information, places, and decisions.

Removing barriers throughout the city's built, online, service and social environments is essential so that disabled people can contribute fully to our society and economy. Disabling barriers will over time be eliminated in a range of areas like transport, education, work, housing, civic participation, shopping, recreation, events and economic development. Social attitudes about disability play a big part in all those areas.



Image caption: Using Sign Language was a central issue in the 1986 movie “Children of a Lesser God”, featuring Deaf actor, Marlee Matlin. Photo: British Film Institute.

Disabling barriers are not a matter of degree – they are absolute at certain thresholds that vary for different people. However, it is obvious that if you use a wheelchair to get around, then a single step is as much of a barrier as twenty of them.

Likewise, someone who relies on New Zealand Sign Language for communication is not going to find any amount or quality of spoken English useful at a meeting or cultural event.

Universal access relies on eliminating those fundamental barriers, resulting in environments that are useful for everyone. For example, smooth,

level footpaths are great for parents pushing prams as well as for older pedestrians who may be less steady on their feet. Larger text makes signs in public places easier to read for all people.



Image caption: Barriers may be created during maintenance and construction activities.
Photo: Vivian Naylor.

Environments that provide multiple options are more likely to meet everyone's needs. Fairness suggests that those with the least options should

get their needs met before extra options are created for other people.

Planning for universal access from the beginning is more efficient than fixing inaccessible environments after they have been created. Accessible communication, places, and transport are core requirements for a genuinely inclusive city.

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Built Environment and Housing

- Develop detailed barrier free streetscape design guidelines drawing on work by Auckland and Manukau City Councils and the Barrier-Free Trust.
- Plan integration of universal design approach and “accessible journey” concept into strategic planning, detailed design, regulatory and maintenance function of the Council. This includes concept planning, development of policy and District Plan changes, amendments to the Code of Practice and Council’s capital works programme.

- Streetscape guidelines and Lifetime Design standards in Wilsher Village residential redevelopment will provide initial examples.
- Include in all Council development projects, including New Lynn transit and town centre, Hobsonville, NorSGA and Te Atatu.
- Plan creation, delivery and maintenance of targeted Barrier-Free training to relevant staff and promote the approach through project communications.
- Promote universal design elements incorporated into redevelopment of Wilsher Village housing complex for the aged.
 - Aligns with national Lifetime Design initiative supported by Mayor Bob Harvey.
- Plan a built access appraisal programme for all current Council buildings.
- Advocate for accessible housing provision in Hobsonville and other major developments.

Communication and Information Environments

- Produce this Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere document in large print format.
- Contribute to proposed regional development of shared accessible communications and engagement infrastructure.
 - Link to guidelines development by other agencies including ODI and Auckland City Council.
- Plan removal of communication barriers.
 - Plan to produce key Council publications in large print and other formats.
 - Plan work with the NZ Relay service to support the Council's customer service team communicating with Deaf, hearing-impaired and speech-impaired people.
 - Plan inclusion of universally accessible communication elements in staff training and business systems.

- Promote universally accessible communication to all Council stakeholders, including contractors and suppliers.
- Plan improved accessibility of all Council-hosted websites.
 - Conduct specialist assessments and identify corrective actions.
 - Include access considerations in any tender for proposed replacement web Content Management System software and ensure its implementation delivers genuinely accessible content and administrative interfaces.

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Transport

- Represent Waitakere on ARTA's regional Transport Disability Advisory Group (TDAG).
- Publicise the Total Mobility fare subsidy scheme to local residents.
- Publicise improvements to the mobility parking scheme.

- Implement marking changes to make spaces more obvious.
- Plan development of maps of all mobility parking spaces and other access features.

Work and Enterprise

- Plan improvements to the Council's HR practices and systems to better recruit and support disabled staff.
- Link to MSD's Employer's Network and similar resources.
- Contribute to implementation of the Council's Economic Development Strategy.
 - Link with employment development by other agencies.
 - Link with demographic work.
 - Work with key agencies like Waitakere Enterprise to include disabled people as a target group for enterprise development activities.

Civic Environments

- Plan improvements to the accessibility of the Council's consultation and democratic processes.
 - Consider communication options like large print and NZ Sign Language in Annual Plan processes.
 - Plan full accessible communications provision for future LTCCP processes.
- Plan implementation of accessible meeting and event guidelines, honouring the Council's commitment to the 2005 Waitakere Charter of Inclusion.
 - Integrate universally accessible meeting and event guidelines in all relevant Council processes.
 - Promote universally accessible meeting and event guidelines to all Council stakeholders.
 - Consider making equitable event and meeting access a condition of relevant Council contracts.

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Community and Recreation

- Contribute to the Regional No Exceptions Zone initiative led by Halberg Trust to develop more inclusive sport and recreation facilities and programmes.
- Contribute to regional community engagement as part of the Rugby World Cup programme.
- Plan how to include disabled people as a target group when developing and implementing plans, venues and programmes.

Education

- Link with actions from the citywide Education Plan and associated processes.

Disability Services

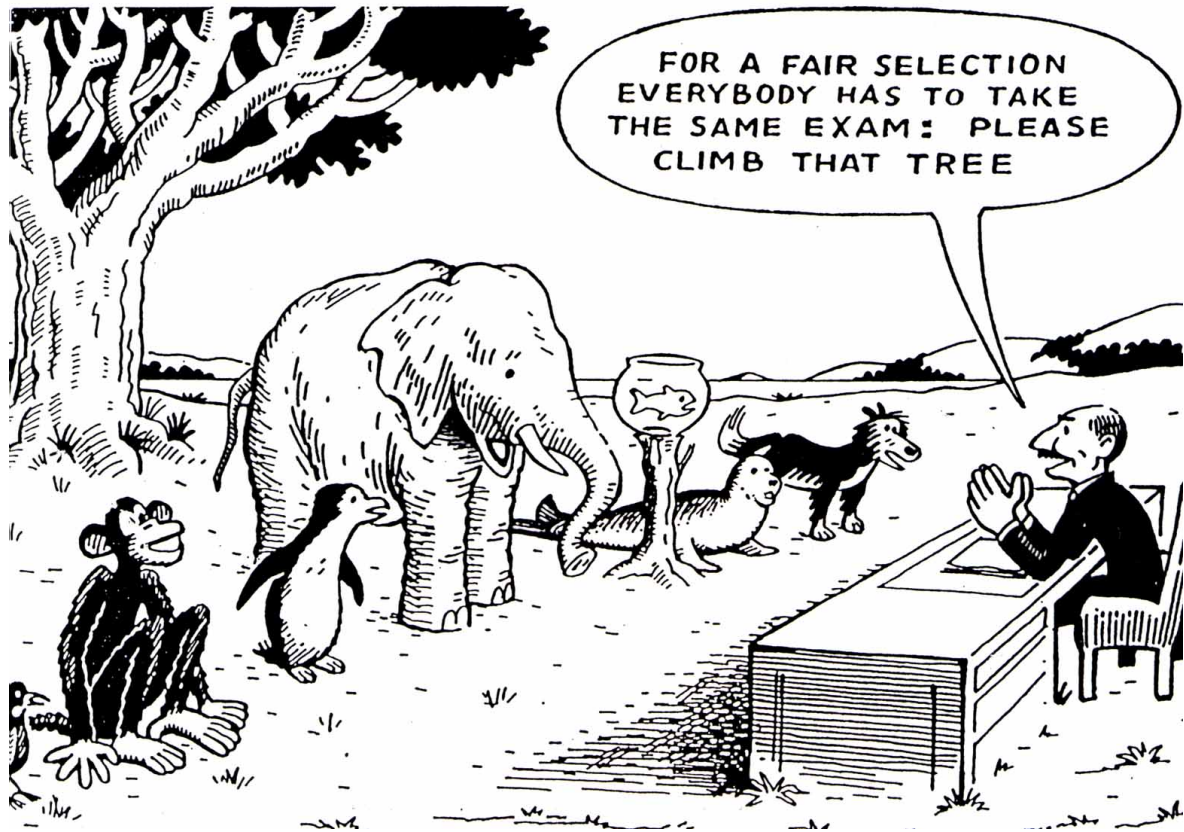
Although specialist disability support services are outside the scope of the Council's work and are only a very minor major focus of this Plan, their importance to stakeholders and fundamental influence on the lives of many disabled residents is recognised.

- Work with other stakeholders to monitor, publicise and advocate for improvements in support services.
 - Link with Waitemata DHB and with other sector agencies.
 - Monitor strategic national changes and advocate a consistent and equitable perspective.
- Publicise DIWN's directory of local support services.
- Consider continued participation in the regional Lu'i Ola Pacific disability service programme.

Ensuring Fairness

The New Zealand Disability Strategy includes objectives that focus on specific groups within the disabled community, like women, Maori and youth. It is proposed that the Plan is similarly responsive to the diversity of disability experience including different cultures, impairments, life stages and personal circumstances.

As a city, we benefit from the diversity of experience and talent that our people contribute to our communities, economy and society. Disabled people are part of that richness of difference. They are also part of every community in the city – of ethnic groups, neighbourhoods and social groupings.



Transcriber's note: Speech bubble

For a fair selection everybody has to take the same exam: please climb that tree.

Disabled people are our workmates, customers, peers and friends. Some are employers, entrepreneurs, artists, investors and developers – but the barriers in daily life often add up to make that less likely than for non-disabled people.

New Zealanders share a strong sense of fairness. Achieving equitable outcomes for different groups is

likely to require different approaches. Equity also demands that the aspirations and needs of disabled citizens are compared fairly with others when priorities are set and investments made.

Respecting Diversity

- Develop localised demographics that allow better understanding of the diversity of disabled residents.
- Consider continued participation in the Lu'i Ola programme for Pacific disabled people.
- Plan future activities focusing on particular population groups.

Ensuring Equity

- Develop demographic measures to guide decision-makers and other stakeholders about relativity with other population groups.
- Contribute to development and review of all the Council's strategic architecture, to ensure disability is included meaningfully.

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- Advocate for a disability perspective in local, regional and national processes and projects.

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Leading, Partnering, Developing

The New Zealand Disability Strategy contains only one objective about fostering leadership and it offers little guidance about how to turn strategy into action.

Attention to implementation is very important at a local level. In keeping with the Waitakere Way, this Plan proposes that the Council take a leadership role and partners with key allies, alongside broader community engagement and a community development approach that deliberately draws upon and builds the capability and capacity of disabled people.

The barriers that disabled people and families confront make it hard for them to contribute to removing those barriers and leading the change that is needed. Implementing the Plan will require accessible venues, information and meeting processes and equitable provision of transport and

personal support for disabled attendees where barriers would otherwise prevent their contribution.

Disability is a complex matter affecting all areas of life, so working with other organisations is the only real way to achieve success. Stakeholders will include other public sector organisations, community organisations, businesses and educational organisations.

Disability organisations are part of the answer, but for historical reasons tend to focus on specialist services and on only one narrow part of the population and have had little opportunity to work together and develop common understandings. Similarly, disabled people and their families have much potential to contribute but need to be brought together and properly supported to play their part. The Plan aims to create sustainable and genuine engagement with them and with disability-related organisations.

Building a long-term commitment to working together also relies on clarity about the motivations, capabilities and accountabilities of all stakeholders. Because of historical assumptions about disabled

people's competence, it has been easy for well-intentioned people and organisations to end up speaking on behalf of disabled people. Advocacy and service provision are often blurred.

Strengthening disabled people's contribution to the process, and distinguishing technical expertise from properly connected and mandated representation are important aspects of the Plan.

Other stakeholders will be expected to play their part in developing community capacity. The Council's leadership role will include promoting better shared understanding about disability amongst all stakeholders.

Recognising current issues with capacity and mandating, it is not proposed to create a dedicated advisory or representative group until proper measures are in place to deal with those problems. Advice for specific projects may be sought but will be properly resourced.

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Leadership

- Consider adding Results and Measures to the Disability Plan.
 - Develop with stakeholders, using the Results Based Accountability (RBA) process.
- Work with stakeholders to determine how to resource actions, especially during the transition to new regional governance arrangements.
- Coordinate the Disability Plan process, including communications, progress monitoring and stakeholder engagement.
 - Promote constructive understanding of disability amongst all stakeholders, including external ones.
 - Provide information to support and enable political leadership.
 - Help stakeholders identify and progress their needs, aspirations and contributions.

- Devote time to developing authentic and respectful relationships with local Maori leadership and engagement processes, aligned with Te Aho Tumanako.
 - Explore opportunities for work with Ruaumoko Marae in Kelston.
- Promote a prominent disability perspective in the strategic architecture of the Council and other influential organisations and forums.
- Evaluate progress.
 - Aim to include relevant outcome indicators in the Social Strategy and other guiding documents.
 - Plan and conduct evaluation.

Partnering

- Maintain linkages with relevant local, regional and national stakeholders, forums and programmes.
 - Continue joint regional projects.

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- Monitor and contribute to strategic developments including implementation of the United Nations Disability Convention and regional governance restructuring.
- Continue contributing to the new nationwide local body disability advisors network.
- Leverage local opportunities from broader initiatives like Strengthening Consumer Voice and Lu'i Ola.
- Promote shared responsibility throughout Council's teams.
 - Remind that disability is part of most staff's normal business.
- Work with key local stakeholders on relevant Actions.
 - Reinforce the Plan as a collaborative process drawing on diverse strengths and partnering expertise.
 - Encourage opportunities to work together and own change.

- Promote long-term thinking and funding arrangements.

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Engagement

- Contribute to proposed regional development of shared accessible communications and engagement infrastructure.
- Contribute with other stakeholders to Vaka Tautua's annual event for disabled and elderly Pacific peoples, celebrating the official United Nations Day of Disabled People.
- Plan better ongoing engagement with disabled residents.
 - Work with DIWN to reach local disability organisations.
 - Use other channels to reach disabled residents who do not use disability services, for instance Age Concern and business networks.
 - Begin mapping stakeholder positioning, including diversity and mandating aspects.

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- Plan and conduct community engagement activities, including accessible communication and meeting processes.
- Leverage local opportunities from broader initiatives like Strengthening Consumer Voice and Lu'i Ola.
- Investigate alignment with Waitemata DHB's consumer engagement efforts.
- Begin identifying local disabled leaders who may contribute visibly to future rounds of the Plan.

Development

- Partner in community development activities with local and regional stakeholders.
- Ensure Council's community development activities include disabled people and disability-focused organisations.
- Identify and plan development activities with stakeholders.

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- Consider funding innovative capacity development programmes with competing proposals led by stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities for development activity during other actions in the Plan.

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2009-2010 Key Priority Actions

This section is presented as a table in the small print version of this Plan.

Each key action has an identifying letter, a description and the strategic themes and sub-themes to which it contributes.

- **Action A** – Develop local summary document from joint population research project with AUT University, Auckland City Council and Auckland DHB, and continue including disability as a component of the Council’s regular residents surveys.
 - Understanding, Evidence.
 - Fairness, Equity.

- **Action B** – Develop and deliver presentations conveying modern disability concepts for key project stakeholders, incorporating filmed material from our population research project.

- Understanding, Communication.
- **Action C** – Develop detailed barrier-free streetscape design guidelines drawing on work by Auckland and Manukau City Councils and the Barrier-Free Trust.
 - Barriers, Built Environment & Housing.
- **Action D** – Plan integration of a barrier-free universal design approach and “accessible journey” concept into strategic planning, detailed design, regulatory and maintenance functions of the Council. This includes concept planning, development of policy and District Plan changes, amendments to the Code of Practice and Council’s capital works programme. Streetscape guidelines and Lifetime Design standards in Wilsher Village residential redevelopment will provide initial examples.
 - Barriers, Built Environment & Housing.
 - Leading, Partnering.

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- **Action E** – Produce this Disability Strategic Plan for Waitakere document in large print format.
 - Barriers, Comms & Information.

- **Action F** – Contribute to proposed regional development of shared accessible communications and engagement infrastructure.
 - Barriers, Comms & Information.
 - Leading, Engagement.

- **Action G** – Represent Waitakere on ARTA’s regional transport disability advisory group (TDAG).
 - Barriers, Transport.

- **Action H** – Implement and publicise marking changes to make on-street mobility parking spaces more obvious.
 - Barriers, Transport.

- **Action I** – Contribute to the Regional No Exceptions Zone initiative led by Halberg Trust to develop more inclusive sport and recreation facilities and programmes.
 - Barriers, Community & Recreation.

- **Action J** – Contribute to regional community engagement as part of the Rugby World Cup programme.
 - Barriers, Community & Recreation.

- **Action K** – Plan with stakeholders how to resource actions, especially during the transition to new regional governance arrangements.
 - Leading, Leadership.
 - Leading, Partnering.

- **Action L** – Maintain strategic linkages with relevant local, regional and national stakeholders, forums and programmes.
 - Leading, Partnering.

- **Action M** – Contribute with other stakeholders to Vaka Tautua’s annual event for disabled and elderly Pacific peoples, celebrating the official United Nations Day of Disabled People.
 - Leading, Engagement.

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- **Action N** – Partner in community development activities with local and regional stakeholders.
 - Leading, Development.

ENDS.