

Enhancing Accessibility

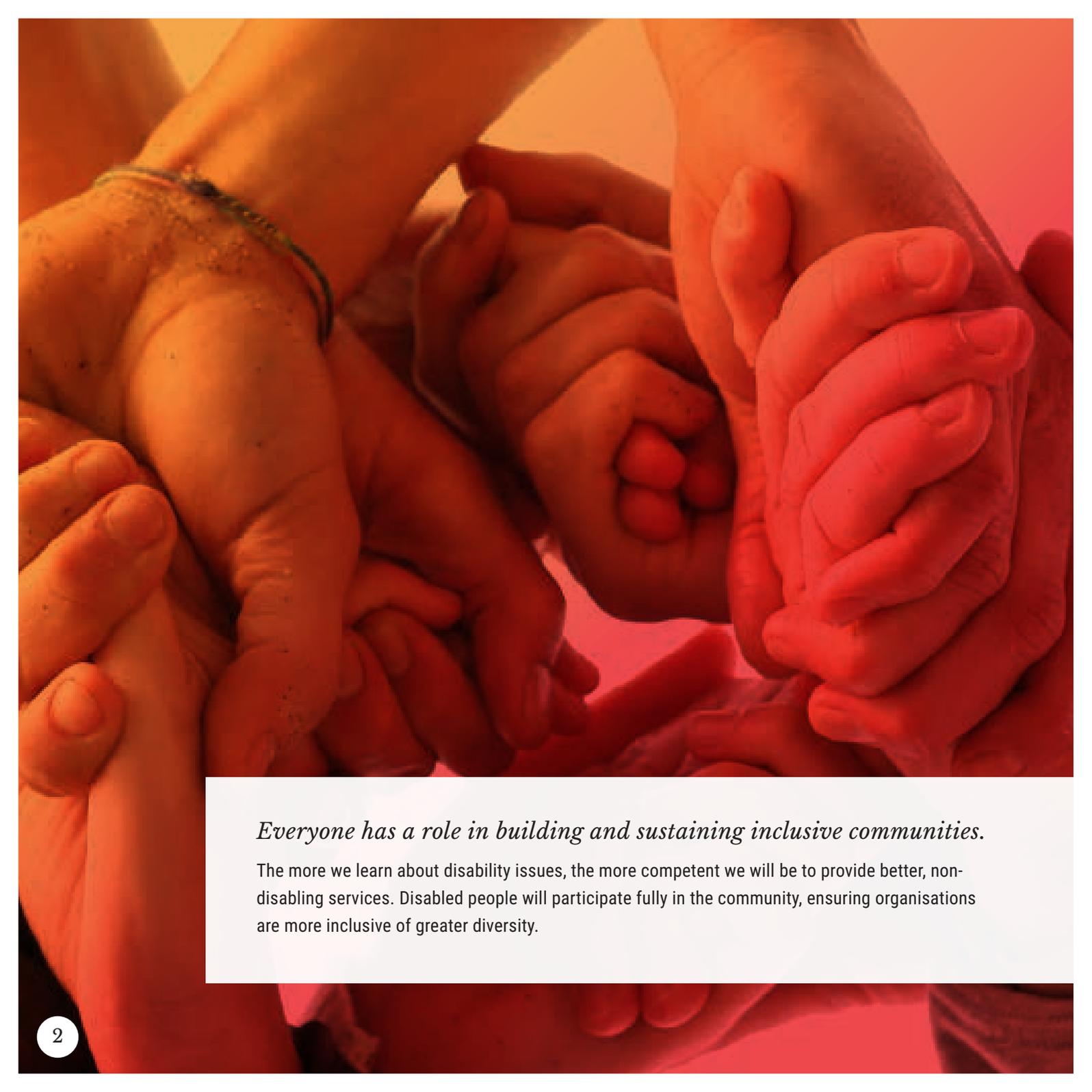
servicing disabled customers

Handbook



A resource for frontline staff





Everyone has a role in building and sustaining inclusive communities.

The more we learn about disability issues, the more competent we will be to provide better, non-disabling services. Disabled people will participate fully in the community, ensuring organisations are more inclusive of greater diversity.

Enhancing Accessibility

serving disabled customers

Contents

Welcome to the Enhancing Accessibility handbook	4
About impairment and disability	5
Yesterday and today	5
Community participation	6
What can be done right now?	8
What can be done in the medium term?	9
What changes can be planned for the future?	9
Communication	10
Mind your language	11
Producing accessible documents and web-content	12
Challenging behaviours	13
New Zealand Disability Strategy	13
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	14
Bibliography and further information	15



“New Zealand is a non-disabling society – a place where disabled people have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and all of New Zealand works together to make this happen”

NEW ZEALAND DISABILITY STRATEGY 2016-2026

WELCOME TO THE ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY HANDBOOK

This publication updates and replaces ‘DisCover: Serving customers with disabilities,’ initially funded by the Ministry of Social Development’s ‘Making a Difference Fund’ in 2011.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist customer service staff in all areas of society to learn about accessibility and how to engage with and serve disabled people.

No matter what customer service sector you work in: a community facility; retail outlet; community organisation; Local Authority; sport/recreation; or other service provider, Enhancing Accessibility

can help your organisation to become disability-competent and more inclusive. The more we learn about disability issues, the more competent we will be to provide better, non-disabling services. Disabled people will participate fully in the community, ensuring organisations are more inclusive of greater diversity.

This publication and the training guide which supports this handbook, have been produced by Pam MacNeill of Disability Responsiveness New Zealand www.drnz.co.nz which is based in Upper Hutt and provides disability responsiveness training throughout New Zealand.

This publication includes the views and words of disabled people and we thank them for sharing their ideas and experiences.

For more information about Enhancing Accessibility, please contact:

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www.upperhuttcity.com/enhancing-accessibility

ABOUT IMPAIRMENT AND DISABILITY

We live in a disabling society. Twenty-five percent of our population are disabled in some way—that's one in four New Zealanders. When we think about disabled people we tend to picture people with obvious impairments such as: someone with physical impairments using a wheelchair or crutches; or a blind or vision impaired person using a

guide dog or white cane. Invisible impairments include those which affect neurological, psychosocial and learning functions. These impairments are often difficult to detect visually. Impairments can affect anyone and most people experience temporary impairment of some sort at least once in their lifetime.

“Having more than one impairment can mean these sometimes impact on each other. But I don't let this rule my life.”

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The medical and social models of disability have been used over many years to illustrate the historic and modern perspectives of disability (see Oliver 1981).

The medical model is the framework historically used by the health system and service providers, for the development of health and disability support services. The medical model views disabled people as ‘the

problem’ requiring medical treatment or institutional care to ‘fix’ them so they are more acceptable to society.

The social model sees the problem as one which has been socially constructed and includes physical, attitudinal and other barriers to participation by disabled people. Rather than ‘fixing’ the person, society needs to ensure all communities are non-disabling and inclusive.

The Social Model of Disability is useful because this allows the resolution of issues relating to barriers by placing the emphasis on environmental, rather than personal deficiencies. Therefore we should all aim to identify and remove barriers in the social and physical environment that prevent disabled people from participating and contributing fully in the community.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

“I rely on people a lot, and it is nice when they are helpful and not scornful or irritated.”

Community is important. No one is truly independent; rather we are all interdependent and rely on one another. Community facilities enable people to have a space where we can all come together for learning, celebration, exercise, group meetings, worship etc. All of these places need to be accessible which means free from barriers.

Community facilities are important to everyone for many different reasons. They offer services, support people's needs and connect members of the community. Making facilities accessible is an important part of this process; enabling disabled people easy access to buildings, services and the outdoors.

Alongside physical access is the equally important factor of

disability-responsiveness. It is critical that staff working or volunteering in any facilities open to the public have an inclusive focus on the needs of everyone, including responding positively to disabled people. The goal is to create a positive experience for any person visiting your facility or organisation so they want to keep coming back. You can ensure this by eliminating barriers and providing good customer service.

You may not be in a position to personally remove the array of barriers experienced by disabled people but you can help by learning about them and advising others what can be done to eliminate these. Confronting and addressing negative attitudes, cited by disabled people as the biggest barrier to participation (New Zealand

Disability Strategy: Making a World of Difference 2001), is a great place to start. Your ability to be non-disabling and inclusive comes down to your attitude and willingness to make changes to ensure the inclusion of disabled people. If you are unsure how to do this, just ask us. Disabled people are the experts on our own needs and requirements.

Note: Never allow non-disabled people to 'pretend' to have impairments of any sort for the purposes of training. Being blindfolded or sitting in a wheelchair does not make a non-disabled person an instant expert on disability issues. Such an experience can be very frightening and lead to feelings of anxiety and negativity for someone unused to the situation.

Next time you enter your place of work or recreation, think about access and ask yourself:

- How easily can someone with a physical or sensory impairment enter the building?
- Once inside, can they move around with ease?
- How high or low are the desks or service points?
- Where are the toilets and are they accessible to everyone? Is the hand basin and mirror at a height that's accessible for people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters?
- Is there good lighting and clearly marked light switches
- How would someone get assistance if needed?
- Is the customer service person approachable and welcoming?

Tip: consider having your workplace assessed by the Barrier Free

New Zealand Trust.

Call or txt: 021 726 074

Website: barrierfree.org.nz



“Our communities are slowly becoming more accessible but there is always room for improvements.”





WHAT CAN I DO RIGHT NOW?

- Be yourself! Don't let your fear of saying or doing the wrong thing prevent you from getting to know a disabled person.
- Never make assumptions about whether someone needs assistance. Ask them if they need help and if so, what you can do to assist.
- Smile and address the person and use a tone of voice consistent with their age—i.e. speak to an adult as another adult.
- Be considerate of the extra time it may take a disabled person to get things done.
- Wear a clear large-print name badge.
- Be prepared to write things down or fill in forms for disabled customers.
- Learn some basic New Zealand Sign Language—how to say 'hello,' 'welcome,' and 'thank you.'

Tip: contact Deaf Aotearoa New Zealand about their sign language taster classes. Call 0800 332 322 or go to deaf.org.nz

Check out Learn NZSL, a free e-learning web portal developed by the Deaf Studies Research Unit at Victoria University of Wellington and supported by the NZSL Fund. You can visit and take part in the lessons at www.learnNZSL.nz

WHAT CAN I DO IN THE MEDIUM TERM?

- Know where the closest accessible car parks are located to your facility or business.
- Ensure public areas are free of clutter.
- Lower shelving.
- Ask disabled people how you can assist them.
- Make signage readable—large print in bold colours.
- Organise staff education with a qualified disability responsiveness trainer.
- Ensure your reception or welcome desk is at an accessible height and that there are chairs available.
- Put stickers on glass doors and windows to provide contrast.
- Have a public phone available and encourage staff to access the New Zealand Relay Service, a telecommunication service for Deaf people, people with hearing impairments, and those with speech impairments. Call 0800 4715 715 or go to www.nzrelay.co.nz

WHAT CHANGES CAN BE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

- Replace steps with ramps.
- Look at the layout of public spaces—think about aisle width and colour contrast.
- Provide an accessible toilet/changing room.
- Promote and run accessible events and programmes.
- Allow guide and other service dogs into your facilities.
- Ensure lifts include audible announcements and buttons have tactile surfaces.





“Communication leads to community, that is to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.”

ROLLO MAY

COMMUNICATION

“I have limited speech and need people to be patient when we are interacting. It’s great if the person doesn’t rush me, gives clear instructions and smiles.”

Being a good communicator is an important part of providing excellent customer service to all members of your community.

- Be prepared to listen.
- Always introduce yourself.
- Speak directly to the person concerned.
- Be aware of your facial expression and body language
- If the person wants to write a message, ensure they have access to a pen and paper.
- If you are unable to understand what someone is saying, show respect for the person and acknowledge the importance of their message by politely asking them to repeat this or write it down.
- Never pretend to understand when you do not—this is extremely disrespectful to the person concerned; it devalues their communication.

Tip: for more accessibility and communication advice, visit: www.odi.govt.nz

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

The language we use every day reflects our attitudes towards everyone, including disabled people. Remember, this is not 'political correctness,' it is about showing respect. Many people who are not currently disabled will acquire impairments later which may lead to disability. Others may have a family member or friend who was born with some sort of impairment. If you acquire an impairment in your lifetime, how would you want people to describe you?

Using the correct disability language is a positive step towards showing respect and being inclusive. Some words have negative connotations and others are downright disrespectful. It is highly offensive, for example, to refer to a disabled person as 'abnormal,' 'crippled,' 'dumb,' 'handicapped,' 'a victim' or 'a sufferer.' Instead, focus on the person's individuality, rather than any impairment:

- Refer to a person's impairment only if it is essential to the conversation, or if the person raises the topic or indicates that s/he wants to discuss it.
- Do not use words that imply pity for disabled people, e.g. 'suffering from,' 'victim of,' 'unfortunate,' 'afflicted with.'
- Emphasise abilities, not disabilities. For example, say 'uses a wheelchair' rather than 'cannot walk,' 'confined to a wheelchair' or 'wheelchair bound' — a wheelchair enables mobility, it does not confine or bind.
- Use the term 'non-disabled' when describing a person without impairments. 'Able-bodied' is less appropriate because it implies that all disabled people have physical impairments. Using the term 'normal' is offensive and highly subjective, i.e. who or what is normal?
- Do not refer to disabled people as patients, unless they are receiving medical treatment. An impairment is not an illness.
- Do not perpetuate negative stereotypes by implying that disabled people are helpless.
- Avoid patronising stereotypes that imply disabled people are courageous in the face of adversity, patient, endowed with special gifts as compensation for their impairment, or childlike.
- Describe people as they describe themselves. When in doubt, ask the person what they prefer.

The office of the Health and Disability Commissioner and Ministry of Health both provide excellent advice and information on this topic in the publications listed under 'Bibliography and further information' at the end of this handbook.

PRODUCING ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENTS AND WEB-CONTENT

There are many issues to be aware of when producing documents or content for websites. Things to consider include:

- Knowing your audience—what is important to them?
 - » When writing for a particular audience, consult with members of that group directly for advice.
- Plan your document. Have a beginning, middle and an end.
- Keep sentences short, clear and concise.
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms or technical words.
- Be consistent in your use of language, presentation, and layout.
- Use a clear typeface, large Arial font (16 point) is favoured by the New Zealand Collective of Disabled People's Organisations.
- Don't use all-caps or small-caps.
- Use pictures and symbols to assist understanding for Deaf people or those with learning impairments.
- Make sure words stand out on a page—dark text on a light background—preferably black on white.
- Ensure information on websites and in other formats is also available in 'Easy Read' format. People First New Zealand Ngā Tangata Tuatahi has a guide to writing Easy Read information at www.peoplefirst.org.nz/
- Contact Mosen Consulting for advice about building accessible websites: mosen.org



*"If we get it right for disabled people,
then we get it right for all people"*

LORNA SULLIVAN

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS

Working with those who have challenging behaviours is part of customer service. Customers, whether they are disabled or not, can behave in a variety of sometimes challenging ways. This might be due to a number of factors including medication for a particular health issue. Such behaviours could include impatience or speaking loudly and/or aggressively.

It is important to remain calm and ask the person how you can assist them:

- Listen to their needs
- Perhaps they would like:
 - » to sit down
 - » to move to a more private area
 - » a glass of water
 - » for you to phone someone.

NEW ZEALAND DISABILITY STRATEGY

In 2001, the Government introduced the first New Zealand Disability Strategy: Making a World of Difference (the Disability Strategy) and this was updated in 2016. The Disability Strategy clarifies Government obligations and provides guidance on how changes can be made to improve the lives of disabled people.

The Disability Strategy aims to make New Zealand a more inclusive society and is founded on the rights-based, social model of disability. This distinguishes between disability and impairment discussed earlier.

To recap:

- Disability = limitations caused by social and environmental barriers, which prevent disabled people from fully participating in the life of the community. "Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living" (New Zealand Disability Strategy: Making a World of Difference 2001).
- Impairment = injuries or conditions which affect physical, sensory (vision or hearing), neurological, psychosocial or learning functions.

In 2016 the Disability Strategy was updated and relaunched.

Here are three of the strategy outcomes which are particularly relevant to disabled people's participation in the community:

- Outcome 5 – Accessibility
- Outcome 6 – Attitudes
- Outcome 7 - Choice and control.

To read the full strategy, go to www.odt.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/



UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Accessibility is one of eight general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Disability Convention), which New Zealand signed and ratified in 2008. The Disability Convention does not create new rights especially for disabled people. Instead it brings together all the rights which apply to everyone, making it clear that these also apply to disabled people too.

A key aim of the Disability Convention is to promote respect for disabled people's dignity.

Here are five Disability Convention articles which are particularly relevant to disabled people's participation in the community:

- Article 5 – Equality and non-discrimination
- Article 8 – Awareness-raising

- Article 9 – Accessibility
- Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community
- Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

Tip: To read all of the articles of the convention, go to www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

Bibliography and further information

This publication includes a number of websites and resources noted throughout for your convenience. The following additional resources may also be helpful:

Disability Responsiveness New Zealand (2017).

DRNZ Survey - report on changing attitudes and the need for disability-lead responsiveness education and training.
www.drnz.co.nz/drnz-survey-march-2017/

Independent Monitoring Mechanism (2015).

Reasonable accommodation of persons with disabilities in New Zealand.
www.ombudsman.parliament.nz

Health and Disability Commissioner (2011)

Making Communication Easy.
www.hdc.org.nz

Human Rights Commission (2005).

The Accessible Journey.
www.hrc.co.nz

Office for Disability Issues

Has several useful handbooks at:
www.odi.govt.nz

- Accessible Cities Maps: A list of maps of accessible cities around New Zealand
- Running accessible meetings: Find out how to make your meeting accessible to all people—including those with impairments.
- Guides for school leaders and teachers: Guides are available to support school leaders and teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Give disabled people a smoother ride: Watch a video to find out how airline ground crew, taxi and bus drivers can give disabled passengers a smoother ride.

Ministry of Health (2017).

A Guide to Community Engagement with People with Disabilities (2nd edition).
Wellington: Ministry of Health.
www.health.govt.nz/publication/guide-community-engagement-people-disabilities

Ministry of Health (April 2001).

New Zealand Disability Strategy: Making a World of Difference.
Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Social Development (November 2016).

New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016–2026.
Wellington: Ministry of Social Development.

Oliver M. (1981)

"A New Model of the Social Work Role in Relation to Disability" p20 – 39 In *The Handicapped Person: A New Perspective for Social Workers?* Jo Campling (editor Radar).

Be sure to organise your disability responsiveness education and training with a qualified disability responsiveness practitioner to ensure you and your staff receive an authentic and professional training experience.

Visit www.upperhuttcity.com/enhancing-accessibility to download the full Enhancing Accessibility resource, including the companion training guide.

This resource was created by
Upper Hutt City Council with help from
Disability Responsiveness New Zealand.

