

Accessibility Policy

Adopted:
Last updated:

Background

The disabled community suffers from marginalisation, stigmatisation, and barriers that affect access to employment, education, recreation, entertainment, health care, and other services.

The council has a significant role as a provider of public services and facilities to support all people to access and participate in a meaningful manner. It is imperative that those with access needs are supported in a mana enhancing way that encourages independence and a strong sense of mana motuhake (self-determination) as guaranteed by te Tiriti o Waitangi and asserted in WAI2575 – Health Services and Outcomes Inquiry¹.

Supporting those who have accessibility needs to participate, may increase individuals' independence and oranga (wellbeing) which may contribute to positive interactions across the Far North, increasing quality of life, happiness, and reduction of stigma across the region.

The council can be champions in the region by providing safe and equitable experiences to all residents. This can be achieved by actively promoting accessibility services, and ensuring communications are accessible. Any action, service, and facility that provides for those with accessibility needs will benefit all who access these services.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Policy:

- **council** – means the Far North District Council.
- **policy** – means the Council's adopted Accessibility Policy
- **tangata whaikaha** – tangata refers to people and whaikaha means "to have ability" or "to be enabled" and refers to Māori with disabilities².

Disability

The council recognises the definition set out in the social model of disability. The social model of disability recognises that people have a disability when their needs are not considered, and access and participation is compromised.³

¹ [Hauora: Report on Stage One of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry \(justice.govt.nz\)](https://www.justice.govt.nz/hauora/reports/hauora-report-on-stage-one-of-the-health-services-and-outcomes-kaupapa-inquiry)

² <https://manawhaikaha.co.nz/about-us/mana-whaikaha-korero/>

³ <https://www.odi.govt.nz/home/about-disability/what-do-we-mean-by-disability-2/>

For the purposes of this policy, all who have access needs whether physical, intellectual, or other are considered, including but not limited to:

- disabilities and impairments
- English as a second language
- those with low literacy
- other impediments
- parents with young children
- disability assist dogs (as prescribed in Section 75 of the Dog Control Act)
- elderly and aging peoples
- temporarily impaired people (e.g., broken limbs and wheelchair support)

An accessible community is where everyone:

- is treated with dignity and respect
- can access all places, activities, services
- can access information easily and with dignity.

Legislative Context

This policy supports multiple legislative requirements for local authorities, including but not limited to:

- Human Rights Act 1993
- Building Act 2004
- NZS 4121:2001 – Design for access and mobility: Buildings and associated facilities

Te Tiriti o Waitangi ensures Māori can participate in important matters. This policy supports the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by ensuring the voice of Māori is heard. Tāngata Whaikaha (Māori disabled) will be supported to provide their input and expertise recognising our obligations set out in te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Strategic alignment

The policy will support and contribute to achieving outcomes set out in various strategies and action plans nationally and locally.

This policy is informed by, and supports:

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007)
- Human Rights Act 1993
- New Zealand Disability Strategy (2016-2026)
- He Korowai Oranga, the Māori Health Strategy
- National Disability Action Plan (2019-2023)
- Enabling Good Lives (EGL) by the Ministry for Disabled People.

Disability Action Group

The Far North District Council is supported by the Disability Action Group (DAG). The DAG provides advice and a conduit between the community and council for all matters as they relate to the disability and access-needs community. This policy supports the Terms of Reference for the DAG.

1. Council will ensure that information received on behalf of DAG is considered and responded to in a timely fashion.
 - a. Council will maintain a presence on DAG to provide information and guidance
 - b. Council will receive information from DAG and respond to this information in a timely manner.
2. The Disability Action Group Annual Strategic Goals document will be circulated to council and considered to provide cohesive alignment and accurate reflection of the accessibility communities' goals and stated outcomes.

Objective

To position the Far North District Council as a leader in inclusion through effective guidance, policies and strategies that ensure the mana motuhake (self-determination), participation and safety of all residents in the Far North Region by:

- recognising that people with disabilities are experts on their experiences
- ensuring information is accessible
- ensuring design and upgrades of facilities consider those with accessibility requirements,
 - referring to the engineering standards and minimum standards for buildings and actively considering universal access approaches to the design, build and alteration of new and existing facilities
 - considering accessibility requirements in each project and strategy
- encouraging and supporting all people regardless of ability to participate in democratic processes
- encouraging and supporting all residents regardless of ability to enjoy use of council facilities including recreation, reserves, parks, beaches, and buildings
- acknowledge that Māori are disproportionately represented in the disabled community
- upholding and delivering on the stated intentions set out by strategic documents.

Policies

Communications

3. Council will support people with disabilities and those with access needs to understand communications by council by:
 - a. providing information in a variety of formats such as easy-read, pictorial, video, audio and written as appropriate
 - b. recognising that people with disabilities are experts in their experiences
 - c. ensuring that public consultation is accessible.

Participation

4. Council will encourage participation by people with disabilities and access needs by:

- a. supporting the Disability Action Group to champion the needs and concerns of members of the access-needs communities
- b. giving effect to the principle of participation from Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure Māori participation in issues of significance to Māori and the access-needs community.

Consideration

5. Council will ensure accessibility is a key driver in all facets of council operations and strategic thinking by:
 - a. ensuring that plan, strategy, and policy processes include alignment to current policy, including alignment with this policy through the renewals program.
6. Council will consider the needs of the disability community are included in the development and resourcing of the Long-Term Plan and any other strategies or plans.

Staff

1. As an employer, council will provide all staff with support and guidance to promote safe inclusion and participation of people with disabilities by:
 - a. providing disability and access training to all people leaders
 - i. where people leaders identify accessibility training as vital to the role of their team, training will be provided; and,
 - ii. making available this training for all other staff.
 - b. providing this policy to all new staff as part of their induction
 - c. creating and reinforcing a culture that respects the diversity and individual needs of people who reside in the Far North District; and,
 - d. ensuring that disability is not a barrier to the democratic process, participation, or inclusion in council-led initiatives.

Facilities and amenities

2. As a provider of public facilities, amenities, programmes and services, the council will seek to improve access by:
 - a. ensuring clear signage is in place indicating accessible entrances, services, and facilities
 - b. providing suitable focus on the needs of the disabled community through capital works spending including upgrading and retrofitting of existing facilities through the renewals program, and services and design and development of new facilities and services; and,
 - c. incorporating universal design principles and applicable accessibility standards for all new infrastructure.

Monitoring and Implementation

- This policy will be reviewed in response to issues that may arise, every 5 years, at the request of the Council, or in response to changes to legislative or statutory requirements (whichever occurs first).
- Amendment to this policy following a review will be consulted on with the Disability Action Group and any other parties identified because of that consultation.

Council will monitor the implementation of the policy. An implementation plan for the Accessibility Policy will outline key activities to implement the policy.