



The Disability & Inclusion Strategy – what does it mean for everyone in Guernsey?

Introduction

At their meeting in November, States members will debate a new Policy Council initiative called “The Disability and Inclusion Strategy”. It will be the first time that the States has taken an overall look at what could be improved to make sure that disabled Islanders and carers are fully included in Island life.

It is important to realise that the Strategy is not a detailed plan, but it is the first stage of developing such a plan.

This leaflet summarises the initial changes that the Policy Council would like to make and what those changes will mean for everyone in the Island.

What is the Strategy?

The Strategy aims to improve the quality of life of disabled Islanders and carers so that they can be active and engaged socially, economically and culturally, improving Society's attitude towards disabled people by taking a pragmatic step-by step approach.

It is intended that the Strategy will do this by:

- **Improving** opportunities for disabled people and carers to participate across society.
- **Promoting** more positive and inclusive attitudes towards disability in the community.
- **Challenging** instances of disadvantage facing disabled islanders and carers.

The initial focus will be on information and education, backed by legislation and action.

Who will the Strategy help?

The Strategy is targeted at disabled Islanders and carers.

How many disabled people are there in Guernsey?

In 2012, the States conducted a Disability Needs Survey which estimated that there are 4,000 Islanders in Guernsey and Alderney with a long-term condition and who experience **significant difficulty in everyday life**. That's an estimated 6% of the population who it is anticipated will benefit most from the Strategy. The Strategy focuses here.

People experiencing significant difficulty are part of an estimated total of just under 14,000 people (21% of the population) in

Guernsey and Alderney with a long term condition that affects their day to day life. Potentially anyone with such a condition might experience discrimination, therefore, when developing disability equality legislation, all people with a long-term condition need to be considered.

Person with a long term condition and disabled person – what’s the difference?

“**Long-term condition**” means any health condition that has lasted (or will last) at least twelve months and which affects day-to-day life. Examples are: mental health conditions, chronic illness, brain injuries, sensory impairments, mobility impairments, severe back pain, disfigurement, learning difficulties, autism, and speech or communication difficulties.

“**Disabled person**” is a term that some people feel uncomfortable about and don’t believe applies to them. However, disability is about how society treats a person with a long term condition rather than about the effects of the condition itself. Barriers may be due to people’s attitudes or because of the environment; both may prevent disabled Islanders from fully participating in society on an equal basis with others.

So in reality there is little difference in the meaning of the two terms. Anyone who has a long term condition and who may experience such barriers is, according to the UN definition, a disabled person.

How many family members and friends care for a disabled person?

When the Strategy refers to carers we mean anyone who provides informal, unpaid care, not paid professional carers or nurses. Carers may be family, friends and relations who support another

person. They might not consider themselves carers, but play an important role in the life of a disabled Islander.

It is estimated that 8% of households in Guernsey have at least one person who provides informal or unpaid care for a family member, relative or friend. This adds up to around 2,080 households or an estimated minimum of 3% of the population (some households might have more than one carer).

What are the main proposals?

The main proposals in the Strategy are:

1. to improve the information that the States provides to disabled people, to carers, to businesses and to the general public;
2. to start the process of developing legislation to prevent discrimination against disabled people and carers;
3. to extend the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Guernsey; and
4. to make the States of Guernsey a more accessible employer and provider of services.

This is the start of a phased approach to the introduction of the Strategy.

What would Guernsey's disability legislation look like?

Guernsey has no specific legislation to prevent discrimination against disabled people. That means that if a disabled Islander is being discriminated against there is often very little he or she can do about it.

The vast majority of discrimination in Guernsey is not deliberate. People just make assumptions or do not think about the impact of the way they do things. For example, someone might assume that

a blind person cannot use a computer and therefore does not shortlist that person for a job – a job that he or she could do easily with the help of the right equipment.

One benefit of being later to introduce discrimination legislation, compared with other countries, is that we can learn from others. The Guernsey legislation will be designed from scratch, looking at best practice around the world. It will NOT be a duplicate of the UK law. The aim is for the States to work in consultation with businesses and disabled Islanders to develop simple legislation that everyone can understand.

It is likely that these changes to legislation will take around two years before protection against discrimination will be in place.

On its own, disability legislation is not enough to ensure that attitudes improve and disabled Islanders and carers can become more fully included in Island life. Most people want to do the right thing; they are just not confident about what to do. Legislation therefore must be combined with information – both are needed to ensure that changes are made.

What exactly is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)?

The Convention is a set of rules and promises which most governments in the world have helped develop and have now adopted.

The rules and promises within the Convention help governments focus on what needs to be done to make their societies more inclusive and less disabling. It also means that progress will be monitored.

There is a link to a more detailed guide to the UNCRPD on the States of Guernsey website at www.gov.gg/disabilitystrategy .

What does the Strategy mean for me?

I am a disabled person

This is the start of a long term plan so you won't see a dramatic immediate change. If States members vote for the Strategy, that simply means they are giving permission to **start** the long process of developing things like legislation and better information.

In a year or so you will notice that it's becoming easier to find out what's available to help support people with long term conditions. You'll find States departments more understanding of your needs and more staff will have had disability training. Many States buildings are already fairly accessible, but you'll start to see improvements that will not just help those with mobility impairments, but will help people with visual, hearing, communication and other long-term conditions too.

After a couple of years, you'll start to hear that there's a proposed new law coming to the States that is designed to protect disabled Islanders from discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

If that law is passed, you will gradually see more and more businesses and other organisations making changes. In some cases this may mean physical changes to buildings, but mostly these changes will be to do with the way businesses and other organisations employ or offer services to disabled people. The goal will be to make employment, and goods and services, more accessible to everyone.

However, other issues that may affect you, like community care nurses and services and respite care, are not included in the Disability and Inclusion Strategy. They will be in another Strategy called "Supported Living & Ageing Well" which will be debated by the States in 2014.

I provide care and support for someone with a disability

As a carer, you will also benefit from better information about the support available and you will be protected from discrimination under the proposed legislation.

If you are the parent of a disabled child under 18, the initiative to look out for is the “Children and Young People’s Plan” which is reviewed every three years. This plan will incorporate support and services for disabled children, including their education.

If you manage financial and other matters on behalf of someone else, in a few years time you’ll find a new law being discussed relating to disabled people who find it hard to make specific decisions, such as about how to spend their money. It will make it easier for people to be protected while still making their own decisions about other aspects of their lives.

I run a business or other organisation

Over time, you’ll be able to access more information about how to include people with long-term conditions in your organisation, both as employees and customers.

You will also be able to contribute to policy decisions throughout the development of the disability legislation to make sure it is simple, effective and right for Guernsey.

You are probably already making adjustments for staff or customers, and you will need to consider whether there are any more “reasonable adjustments” you need to provide to make your organisation more accessible, not just in terms of your premises but also your ways of doing things. The emphasis on the word “reasonable” is deliberate – any new legislation will only require you to make changes that are reasonable in relation to the size of your organisation and your resources.

Part of the development of the legislation will include working out what financial support the States should give businesses to help them make reasonable adjustments.

I'm a member of the public

It is hoped that, over time, you'll notice that there seem to be many more people with mobility impairments, communication difficulties, visual or hearing impairments, mental health issues and learning difficulties in Guernsey than there used to be. That's a sign of success - it means that the barriers that prevent disabled people from getting a job or going about their daily business are starting to come down. Attitudes will be changing and Islanders with a long term condition will be less isolated and more included in Guernsey life.

What research is the Strategy based on?

In 2012, the Policy Council commissioned a Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion survey of Guernsey and Alderney. The survey asked about all sorts of aspects of health. It was conducted by BMG Research who sent a questionnaire to one in four homes in Guernsey and Alderney. Nearly a third of those questionnaires were completed and returned, that's 2,000 homes. Such a high response rate means that Policy Council can be confident that the results reflect the overall picture for the Island.

Where can I get more information?

There is more information about the Strategy on the States website at www.gov.gg/disabilitystrategy.

There are also links from that site to the States report, which gives more information on what is proposed, plus links to the research the Strategy was based on and other information.

If you would like to read the States report that will be debated in November, but do not have internet access, or you would like a printed copy of the research reports, please contact:

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