



Disability Policy - Creating an Inclusive Aotearoa

Vision

The Green Party is committed to a New Zealand in which all disabled people can access their full rights, actively participate in their communities, are valued for their abilities and gifts, and lead rich and satisfying lives. We understand that disability is something that changes over time and it is our environment and people's attitudes that create disability.

Key Principles

Disabled people must be able to live free from discrimination and feel included in all areas of life. This should include being able to:

1. Access information about their rights in a suitable form.
2. Experience inclusive education in an appropriate form and with appropriate support.
3. Access income support and other services according to their needs, not the cause of their impairment.
4. Have equitable access to paid employment.
5. Access health and disability services that are responsive, flexible, accessible and culturally appropriate, focussed on inclusion and empowerment, and able to meet the individual needs of people living with impairments and of their families.
6. Be meaningfully engaged in the decision-making processes of the service providers that they use and other decision-making processes that affect the disabled community.
7. Access essential services such as public transport, housing, communication and legal services.
8. Fully access and participate in our democratic process for local and central government.
9. Take leadership roles and have a powerful voice in order to achieve effective change in communities and services.

10. Be consulted on and have input to legislative and policy changes that affect disabled people.
11. Contribute their talents and skills to their communities, through both paid and unpaid work.
12. Be safe from discrimination, abuse, exploitation and neglect.
13. Be supported in making their own choices about their relationships, sexuality and reproductive potential.
14. Have their reproductive autonomy and bodily integrity respected.
15. Have the barriers to their active participation in society removed through affirmative action and other programmes to reduce discrimination.

Specific Policy Points

1 Human Rights

Policy Position

- 1.1 Utilise the United Nations Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a basis for disability policy, and implement the relevant UN recommendations.

2. Inclusion, Access and Affirmative Action

High levels of discrimination and a lack of support and access mean that many disabled people are still excluded from active participation in education and from contributing their skills, talents and abilities to their communities, through paid and voluntary work.

Policy Positions

- 2.1 Support and fund awareness projects to raise public awareness of disability issues and support community based action to promote respect and equity for disabled children and adults.
- 2.2 Support affirmative action on barriers to inclusion to enable disabled people to take active roles in paid and voluntary work in their communities.
- 2.3 Support and encourage companies to register with a jobs website or disability employment consultants, such as Workbridge, to show their willingness to be an affirmative action employer of disabled people.
- 2.4 Implement measures that increase the access of disabled people to their communities, such as sign language interpreters, barrier-free buildings, and plain language documents.

- 2.5 Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan to ensure all disabled people can access their democratic and voting rights.
- 2.6 Work to improve access for disabled people to all forms of passenger transport including:
 - a) Ensuring passenger rail services purchased with government funding allow are accessible to disabled people.
 - b) Ensuring that all of the urban bus fleet and intercity coaches are accessible to disabled people.
 - c) Ensuring that airports and flights are accessible to disabled people
- 2.7 Ensure that disability awareness is part of all induction courses for the public service sectors, particularly those that deal directly with the public every day.
- 2.8 Implement mandatory on-going training programmes about disability issues, needs and rights for all employed in public services; and as part of all teacher education.
- 2.9 Support development of a fully accessible national website to inform, educate and empower disabled people on their rights.
- 2.10 Develop and implement accessibility or disability legislation, regulations and standards, including making it unlawful to discriminate against disabled people in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services (including education) or the disposal or management of premises; along the lines of the U.K. Disability Discrimination Act and other comparable disability or accessibility legislation. Such legislation must not weaken existing rights or entitlements.
- 2.11 Revise the building code so that new houses and building premises are required to be accessible by design unless specifically exempted (see also our [Housing and Sustainable Development](#) Policy).

3. [Leadership](#)

The Green Party believes that disabled people must be empowered to take leadership roles and to have a powerful voice in order for effective change in communities and services to occur.

Policy Positions

- 3.1 Advocate for effective and empowering processes and networks to support the individual development of disabled people, their contributions to the workforce, as a movement run by and for disabled people and their families, and as a collective at the national level.

- 3.2 Advocate that a percentage of the Disability Services budget is set aside to directly fund leadership training for disabled people and independent advocacy organisations.
- 3.3 Ensure disabled people are entitled to take leadership roles in evaluation and auditing of services they use, and that auditing focuses on the ability of services to meet individual needs, provide inclusive support and improve quality of life.
- 3.4 Ensure that tangata whenua are involved in auditing all services for disabled Māori people.

4. Inclusive Work and Education

Obtaining a quality education is essential for achieving a non-disabling society and schools remain an area of real concern. At the moment, parents constantly have to advocate so school principals and trustees understand their obligations and work in positive, non-discriminatory ways. With individual funding capped, children deemed to have moderate learning support needs often miss out and must rely on the goodwill of schools to meet their needs.

Disabled people are still over represented in lower-paid occupations, among the unemployed and have many more people on benefits. Supported employment has been shown to be cost effective but only a very small number of people benefit from this. Increasing numbers of disabled people are setting up small businesses with little support. The government's mainstream programme, which provides subsidies for government departments employing disabled people, can be effective but urgently needs expanding.

Reasonable accommodations must be made for disabled people in both work and education.

Policy Positions

- 4.1 Ensure education (pre-school to tertiary) is accessible to all and well resourced, and flexible, alternative approaches are available to meet the needs of all children and adults.
- 4.2 Introduce needs-based funding for disabled children and increase individual funding to meet demand.
- 4.3 Include schools within the New Zealand Disability Strategy, guided by the IHC Advocacy Toolkit and supporting decision making documents.
- 4.4 Ensure all disabled children can attend a local school.
- 4.5 Ensure that schools are accountable for the way they use disability funding.

- 4.6 Advocate for the replacement of segregated sheltered workshops with services that promote inclusion and enable all people to contribute their skills to their communities.
- 4.7 Ensure that disabled people who are in paid work have the same employment rights as all other workers (see also our [Workforce](#) policy).
- 4.8 Explore other mechanisms to proactively support people with disabilities that affect their ability to work to transition into paid work, such as extending the employer top-up scheme and expanding the range of employment support services to disabled workers.
- 4.9 Increase support for disabled people to gain paid work and self-employment until equity is achieved.
- 4.10 Provide financial assistance to employers of people for adaptations and to disabled employees for equipment and personal support.

5. [Service provision](#)

Currently the disability service system is undergoing a transformation. The Enabling Good Lives principles underpin a new model being rolled out across the country, centred on giving disabled people and whānau choice and control about the services they use. There is no real leadership in this services area with both the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) failing to implement suggested strategies. There is an Office of Disability Issues but this is under MSD and without the mandate to take the leadership role needed. Funding support for disabled people is immensely complex. There is also concern about the inequities which result from having one level of funding for people whose impairments were caused by accident (ACC) and a lower level for people whose impairments result from illness or genetics. Staff in the disability sector are too often on low wages without adequate recognition of or career development opportunities within their chosen profession.

The Green Party endorses the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

Policy Positions

- 5.1 Establish a Disability Commission to provide the leadership needed to ensure that disability services and other services used by disabled people become more responsive, flexible and empowering. The Commission would work with key sector leaders and families to, oversee and monitor the implementation of the Enabling Good Lives strategy, and provide advice to the Minister.
- 5.2 Support individualised funding for all disabled people and their whānau who wish to choose this option.

- 5.3 Make services available based on level of need, not cause of impairment.
- 5.4 Ensure tangata whenua can access culturally appropriate support, whether in Māori or mainstream services.
- 5.5 Encourage provision of services able to meet diverse cultural needs.
- 5.6 Resource and implement improved pay, conditions and training for disability service staff and caregivers.
- 5.7 Provide further support for families struggling to support children with high needs and difficult behaviours
- 5.8 Review the Child Disability Allowance with a view to increasing the levels in acknowledgement of the extra financial needs that parents and caregivers have when raising a disabled child (see also our [Income Support](#) policy)
- 5.9 Introduce further service provision in rural areas to ensure equity with cities.
- 5.10 Improve inter-agency cooperation, streamline services and reduce the complexity of funding and the need for constant advocacy for basic entitlements.
- 5.11 Ensure that those needing intermittent care or support can access services without having to go through a screening process every time.
- 5.12 Establish a voluntary register for disabled people to provide relevant information to people providing services and government agencies.

6. [Protection and Advocacy](#)

Some services still restrict access to advocates and advocacy organisations such as People First. People who need support to communicate are especially vulnerable. The Health and Disability Advocacy Service do not have the resources and skills to meet the needs of people who are most vulnerable.

Policy Positions

- 6.1 Support the right of disabled people to self-advocate.
- 6.2 Provide a free, easily accessible, well-resourced advocacy service for disabled people whose lives are encompassed by services. This service will also have the power to monitor services where people are at risk, and to educate about rights and speak out against abuse.
- 6.3 Support measures to encourage people, staff and services to speak out against abuse.
- 6.4 Reinstate the Parent Advocacy phone line to support parents needing to advocate for their children's needs.

7. Inclusive Health

Policy Positions

- 7.1 Require District Health Boards to implement a disability 'Plan of Action' in accordance with Article 25 'Health' of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. All District Health Boards DHBs should work with Disability Peoples Organisations to develop, implement and report to the Plan of Action.
- 7.2 Develop and implement a fully flexible, nationwide Independent Living strategy informed by Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 'Independent Living and being included in the Community'.
- 7.3 Support funding parity and other measures to establish parity of outcome between people who have disability through an accident and people who have a disability through a congenital event.

A. Reproductive Rights and Antenatal Screening

Many disabled people, particularly those with cognitive disabilities, are subjected to discriminatory treatment when it comes to sexual and reproductive rights. The Green Party believes that disabled people are entitled to the protection of their bodily integrity as much as anyone else, and should not be subjected, without their free and informed consent, to treatment or invasive processes that they would not be otherwise subject to if it was not for their impairment. However, there are sometimes cases where the disability is so severe that informed consent from the individual may not be possible.

Policy Positions

- 7.4 Ban all sterilisations/chemical castrations of individuals under the age of 18 years, unless it this being performed as a life saving measure or medical emergency. Implicit in this is the recognition that individuals under the age of 18 years cannot be expected to provide informed consent to sterilisation/chemical castration.
- 7.5 Ensure that sterilisations occur only at an age where the ability to give informed consent can be determined.
- 7.6 Prohibit sterilisation/chemical castration of disabled adults in the absence of informed consent, except in those circumstances where there is a serious threat to the individual's health (including mental health) or life.
- 7.7 Ensure that any antenatal screening programme is not biased towards termination of pregnancies when an impairment is diagnosed in the foetus.

- 7.8 Ensure that any antenatal screening allows for the preparation of the birth, and life, of children with impairments, including informing prospective parents about the likely and/or potential experience of people with similar impairments, without presuming that such an impairment is a tragedy, and about available or potential supports for disabled people and their families.

8. An Inclusive Justice System

It is important to recognise that there are specific dynamics of abuse that affect disabled people. There is a need to tailor responses to meet their needs, including ensuring in-depth understanding amongst service providers, sufficient data to enable an appropriate response, and the availability of dedicated services. See our [Justice Policy](#).