



# Mayo Local Authorities



## Disability Strategic Plan



2008 – 2010



### **Alternative Formats**

The Disability Strategic Plan 2008– 2010 is available on the Mayo County Council's website ([www.mayococo.ie](http://www.mayococo.ie)) and can be provided in alternative formats.

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Disability Strategic Plan 2008 - 2010

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## **Disability Strategic Plan 2008 - 2010**

### **Introduction**

Mayo Local Authorities are fully committed to meeting its obligations under the Disability Act 2005. This Act requires the four Local Authorities of Mayo (Mayo County Council and the Town Councils of Ballina, Castlebar and Westport) to provide people with disabilities full and equal access to all their services.

The development of this first Disability Strategic Plan (DSP) 2008 - 2010 reinforces this commitment to people with disabilities and builds on the achievements towards ensuring the Authorities services, programs and facilities are as accessible to people with disabilities as they are to the rest of the community.

The DSP identifies the Authorities responsibilities, objectives, goals and policies in relation to people with disabilities. It also provides a list of actions and initiatives that will progressively address discriminatory circumstances and practices, and will facilitate the adoption of management and business procedures to create accessible facilities, flexible services and disability friendly workplaces for people with disabilities.

### **What is Disability**

The Disability Act 2005 defines

“Disability”, in relation to a person, means a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person to carry on a profession, business or occupation in the state or to participate in social or cultural life in the state by reason of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment”.

This includes problems with walking, hand/arm movements, deafness and severe hearing loss, blindness and very low vision, intellectual disability, mental illness.

In the 2002 census 11,294 persons in Mayo were identified as having a disability. This represents 9.6% of the population of Mayo.

## **Developing the Disability Strategic Plan**

The first Disability Strategic Plan (DSP) was presented to the Cultural, Education, Heritage and Corporate Affairs Strategic Policy Committee and circulated for consultation with staff at all levels and appropriate external organisations. A consultation meeting was also held. Following the consultation period, all submissions were considered and an amended DSP for prepared.

The implementation process will continue the practice of consultation, involving representative organisations of people with disabilities.

The Corporate Affairs Directorate is responsible for driving the DSP and will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the DSP. The DSP will be reviewed annually, with the results published in the Annual Report.

## **The National Disability Strategy and Legislation**

The National Disability Strategy was launched by the Government in September 2004. This strategy built on existing legislation and comprised four elements:

Comhairle Amendment Bill 2004

Six Outline Sectoral Plans

The Disability Bill 2004

Funding commitment

The Outline Sectoral Plans were approved by the Oireachtas in June 2006. The Disability Bill was enacted in 2005. The National Disability Authority published a “Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information provided by Public Bodies” in July 2006.

The Act is complementary to the Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004, which also relate to the provision of goods and services.

## Objectives and Goals

The Authorities mission as defined in the Corporate Plan;

“To improve the quality of life for people living in Mayo and enhance the attractiveness of Mayo as a place in which to live in, work, enjoy, visit and invest” - means it has a responsibility to provide the Authorities services in a manner that promotes equitable participation by, and outcomes for, people with disabilities”.

This is underlined by our strategic goals which is:

- “We will promote the pursuit of excellence by continuously striving to improve the quality of our services and to deliver those services to all local communities both urban and rural throughout the county.”

This is underpinned by our Corporate Strategies some of which are:

- “Be a caring authority, ensuring that all our services take account of all sections of the community and give equal access to all.”
- “Promote as far as practicable, accessibility to employment and physical access to public buildings for persons with physical and mental disability.”
- “Promote and actively encourage equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of our communities.”
- “Continue to improve access to all our public offices for customers and staff with disabilities.”

The Authorities will accomplish this through the provision of accessible services and reasonable adjustments as required. It aims to meet this responsibility through the effective implementation of the DSP.

The objectives of the DSP reflect the Authorities commitment to ensure:

- all members of the community have equal access to all aspects of the Authorities services and programs;
  - there is no discrimination against people with disabilities in the Authorities services or workplaces;
  - disability principles are incorporated into the Authorities policies and practices.
  - Where practical and appropriate the Authorities policies and practices shall be disability proofed.
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## **The Access for All Committee**

The Access for All Committee will be a key player in the DSP. It will provide advice and guide the evaluation process.

The Committee was established in April 2006, with representation from all Directorates and disabled staff. It is an internal working group, headed up by The Director of Corporate Affairs. Members of the committee come from a wide cross-section within the authority. Membership of this committee may be obtained, upon request, from the Access Officer, or via the Accessibility Section of the County Councils website.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee are:

“To initiate, promote, create awareness and implement universal access policies in the four Mayo Local Authorities and to manage, co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of the policies and associated actions in compliance with current legislation”.

The responsibilities of the Committee are:

- To motivate other staff in the four Local Authorities and to assist them to develop appropriate responses to the access needs of people with disabilities;
- To review where the Authorities stands in relation to disability awareness measures, approaches and skills, implementation plans, support structures and staff skills;
- To plan and have carried out access audits of all public facilities in the four Local Authorities;
- To plan and put in place an implementation plan to bring the four Local Authorities public services and facilities to a standard that are useable by all.
- To ensure that accessibility is embedded across the organisation and integral to corporate plans and general business planning.
- To guide activities within the organisation, including the optimal spending of monies allocated by the DEHLG to ensure services and facilities are accessible for all.

## Evaluating The Disability Strategic Plan

Mayo Local Authorities have put a great deal of effort into preparing the DSP and staff are committed to its implementation. We will continue to monitor the DSP's implementation and respond to new challenges encountered. The aim is to remain on the cutting edge of service provision to people with disabilities within its service environment through its development of innovative solutions and effective evaluations.

Mayo Local Authorities DSP's goals are outlined throughout the Plan. We are working to ensure that the strategies adopted and the actions undertaken actually lead to their achievement. This means that we must measure the outcomes of the DSP's actions, qualitatively and quantitatively, and review its strategies and actions frequently to modify them where necessary.

We will make use of a full range of evaluation techniques and procedures, appropriate to the particular strategies or actions being evaluated. Quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools will be employed such as:

- Recording the development and impact of partnerships
- Exploring the development of organisational learning and reflection on practice
- Monitoring progress on the annual work plans, via individual and team inputs, on a monthly basis
- Annually reviewing the implementation of the Work Plans
- Preparing Annual Reports
- Reviewing the implementation of this Strategic Plan in its final year

The Director of Services, Corporate Affairs and the Access For All Committee will advise on relevant evaluation procedures and will be responsible for the overall evaluation of the DSP. Advice gathered through the evaluation processes will be analysed and improvement processes will be developed to improve our services.

On an annual basis the Director of Services, Corporate Affairs will prepare a report for the Manager evaluating the achievements and barriers to progress across Mayo Local Authorities. Recommendations on further refinements of the DSP and its implementation will be included in this review.



## **Strategic Priorities**

**Priority 1: Service Provision****Objective:**

To provide and adapt services to ensure people with disabilities do not experience discrimination as users of Mayo Local Authorities services, as service providers, or as staff, and that their particular needs of services and support are acknowledged and met.

**Outcome:**

Services are positively received by our customers and meet the requirements of the Disability Act 2005.

**Actions:**

- 1.1 We shall explore and evaluate initiatives and service improvements.
- 1.2 Each Directorate will review its services and programs to ensure they do not discriminate against people with disabilities.
- 1.3 We will develop and deliver DSP to our staff as required, leading to more responsive delivery of services and programs.

**Priority 2: Access To Mayo Local Authorities Public Buildings and Facilities****Objective:**

To ensure people with disabilities do not experience discrimination as either users of Mayo Local Authorities services, as service providers, or as staff, by providing and adapting our public buildings and facilities to ensure they are universally accessible.

**Outcome:**

Effective access by people with disabilities to our buildings and facilities enabled.

**Actions:**

- 2.1 All existing facilities will be access audited and priorities for access improvements will be identified and integrated into an implementation plan.
  - 2.2 Emergency access/egress facilities and procedures will be provided, as required, to ensure the safe and successful evacuation of people with disabilities from all buildings or facilities.
  - 2.3 All public buildings and facilities will be made accessible for people with disabilities.
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### **Priority 3: Information Communication Technology**

**Objective:**

To provide effective means of communicating information about all the Mayo Local Authorities services and activities for people with disabilities, and to enable them to communicate effectively, using appropriate communications practice, media and technologies.

**Outcome:**

People with disabilities can effectively access the services.

**Actions:**

- 3.1 We will ensure services are promoted in both hard copy and electronic format and are accessible to people with disabilities.
- 3.2 We will develop a training program for staff in the types, use of and maintenance of adaptive equipment as it is introduced.

### **Priority 4: Employment and Careers**

**Objective:**

To develop policies and practices that comply with the requirements of the Disability Act 2005, and to actively encourage employment and career progression for people with disabilities.

**Outcome:**

People with disabilities participate fully in our workplace.

**Actions:**

- 4.1 We will foster and promote staff with disabilities to develop a network to:
    - Raise awareness of disability issues in employment; and
    - Provide peer support opportunities.
  - 4.2 An audit of reasonable adjustments provided to staff with disabilities across the four Authorities will be conducted.
  - 4.3 Relationships with organisations will be developed to assist with reasonable adjustments, including adaptive technology required by staff with disabilities.
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## **Priority 5: Training and Awareness**

### **Objective:**

To ensure staff and Members of Mayo Local Authorities are adequately trained to provide effective and non-discriminatory services and employment options for people with disabilities.

### **Outcome:**

Staff are confident and competent in providing services for and managing people with disabilities.

### **Actions:**

- 5.1 We will promote and continue to introduce training programs to equip staff with the skills and awareness necessary to provide competent and effective services for people with disabilities, and to work effectively with other staff/service providers who may be people with disabilities.
- 5.2 We will consult staff with disabilities to determine their training requirements such as gaining career advice and identifying career pathways in addition to courses from the general course offerings.
- 5.3 The extent of current staff who have participated in Disability Awareness training will be determined and those who require training will be identified and training provided.

## **Priority 6: Consultation and Participation**

### **Objective:**

To provide an open, consultative environment in Mayo Local Authorities which ensures people with disabilities are consulted on matters relating to gaining access to services and facilities.

### **Outcome:**

Authorities' audits and implementation of their requirements reflects the interests of people with disabilities.

**Actions:**

- 6.1 We will provide a consultation forum to ensure interested groups may be consulted and provided with an opportunity to voice opinions on disability audits and implementation plans.
- 6.2 A forum enabling people with disabilities or interested individuals/groups make comments or suggestions regarding any aspect of the Authorities provision of access to services and facilities will be developed.
- 6.3 We will develop a complaints procedure enabling people with disabilities or interested individuals/groups make complaint regarding any aspect of the Authorities requirements to provide access to services and facilities.
- 6.4 Any training provided on complaints handling procedures will include disability awareness to ensure an accessible and non-discriminatory complaints handling process for people with disabilities.

**Priority 7: Best Practice in Management****Objective:**

To adopt management practices and provide sufficient resources (money, staff, skills and facilities) within the Authorities which reflect/establish best practice in meeting the responsibilities of Mayo Local Authorities, and in responding to the needs and protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

**Outcome:**

Mayo Local Authorities are acknowledged as progressive in the way we implement our Disability Strategic Plan.

**Actions:**

- 7.1 Good news stories of various Departments will be promoted and the profile of the DSP raised together with those of accessible services to people with disabilities. This will be done internally through a program of informative articles.
- 7.2 Our steering group, the "Access For All Committee" will meet regularly to guide the plan, evaluate implementation and participate in its annual review. Its membership will be reviewed annually for appropriate representation.
- 7.3 We will conduct an evaluation on the achievements and barriers to the implementation of the strategies of the plan.

**Priority 8: Housing**

Objective: To provide housing accommodation to meet the needs of people with a disability.

Outcome: To allow people with a disability to have better opportunities in life and break the cycles of disadvantage and dependency.

Actions:

- 8.1 Grant Aid will be provided to assist with the provision / adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of people with a disability. We will endeavour to ensure that resources available will be allocated to those with the most urgent needs.
- 8.2 We will implement the "National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability" which is to be developed by 2009.
- 8.3 With regard to the provision of housing for the elderly and people with disabilities, it is proposed to ringfence 20% of units of the additional social rented stock each year to meet the special needs of these categories of applicants.
- 8.4 In order to facilitate the allocation of housing between social and affordable, the council will use a mechanism, which will allow for a ratio of 1:1 to be allocated respectively. The local authorities will, however, when deciding on the ratio to be allocated in individual developments have regard to the existing local need and special needs requirements that exist in the community.  
  
The particular needs of people with disabilities will be assessed at the planning stages of each Scheme and particular design solutions will be involved to respond to the needs identified.