

The Group's aim

The Group exists to bring about improvements to the lives of people in Aberdeen who experience exclusion because of their disability. It will do this by promoting a rights based approach to disability equality¹.

The Group's Vision

The Group's Vision is to:

- Create a society where disabled people are valued, respected and included in the life of the City
- Encourage and promote inclusion and equality²
- Create a level playing field by identifying and removing the disabling barriers that disabled people face on a daily basis including prejudice, discrimination and negative attitudes.

The Group's Values

The Group believes that disabled people have a right to be heard and will strive to create a positive culture so that disabled people are empowered and their voices are listened to.

The Group

- Is committed to equality and taking a rights based approach,
- Is committed to developing positive relationships with all sectors,
- Will work in a way that is:
 - participatory, inclusive and empowering
 - open and transparent
 - respectful and courteous
 - flexible and accountable.

The Group's Remit

¹ A rights based approach is rooted in the values of fairness, equality, dignity, respect and autonomy (British Institute of Human Rights).

² By "equality" we mean treating people fairly by taking account of their different needs and views

- The Group will be a sub-group of the Council's Community Housing and Infrastructure Committee.
- As a Council sub-group, the Group will be a strategic advisory group with the aim of influencing policy makers and shaping policy.
- As an expert advisory group, the Group will be a driving force for positive social change.
- The Group's expertise is rooted in the knowledge and experience of disability of the Group's members.
- The Group will have links with the wider disabled communities through regular meetings of a wider forum and through use of various forms of social media.

Accountability of the group

- The Group will have a clear line of accountability both to the Community Housing and Infrastructure committee and to the communities it serves.
- One of the main ways that it will ensure accountability to the communities will be through the establishment of sub groups - each with a different focus and each with a membership that is influential and knowledgeable about the issue.

Membership

- There will be a core group with approximately 20 members.
- Four or five Councillors will be members of the Group – representing the broad spectrum of political views.
- Councillors need to have a commitment to disability equality and must have links into relevant Council committees.
- The Group's meetings should not be used for point scoring from a party political perspective.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Group will be decided on by the Group at their first meeting
- The length of service for office bearers and Group members will be three years.
- To avoid losing all members at same time, one third of the membership will step down each year.

- Members may serve for two terms, but cannot serve for more than 6 consecutive years.
- There is no individual or group or organisation that has an automatic right to be a member of the Group apart from Councillors.
- The other members will be individuals who are knowledgeable about disability because of their own experience, or members of organisations that work with disabled people.
- All members must have a commitment to the aims and values of the organisation.
- If members fail to attend three consecutive meetings without apologies they will cease to be members of the Group.

Leadership

To have an impact and not simply be a talking shop, the Group needs to be sure that it is listened to. This means that there is need for commitment from the top and an awareness within the Council about the importance of a rights based approach to disability equality.

- The Chief Executive Officer of the Council needs to visibly demonstrate commitment to the Group.
- The office bearers of the Group will be provided with a clear role description. Training will be provided to ensure that Group members are confident and competent in their roles.
- Within the Council there is a need for Disability Awareness Training across all departments. The training should take a rights based approach.

Support to the group

Given that the Group is made up (apart from the Councillors) of volunteers, it is important that the Group is adequately resourced and supported by the Council.

- The Council should appoint a Disability Access Officer to support the development of the Group and to act as a point of contact for queries around disability and access issues.

- Council officers will have responsibility for the administration of the meetings and communication about the meetings e.g. sign-in sheets, minutes, dissemination of information and ensuring communication between the Group and the sub groups and the wider forum.
- Council officers will work in partnership with the Chair and other office bearers as appropriate, to set the agendas and manage the input from the sub-groups. Their role will be advisory and supportive.
- Agendas will be circulated 10 working days before the meeting.

Ways of working

We want the meetings to be accessible to everyone who wishes to be involved. This means thinking about timings of meetings, conduct at meetings, who should be present and the ways in which the business of the meeting is made transparent including to those who are not in attendance.

- There should be standing attendance from roads, health and social care.
- Others will be invited as required.

Timings of meetings

- Meetings will be bi-monthly.
- The meeting times will rotate: one in three meetings will be held during the working day, one in three will be held at teatime and one in three will be held on a Saturday morning.
- The location will also vary.
- Dates will be set a year in advance.

Conduct at meetings

The Group wants to contribute to bringing about positive change for disabled people. This means working together positively with stakeholders in a range of sectors.

- As a Council sub-committee all members of the Group will have to agree and sign the Council's code of conduct for external members of council committees/ working groups etc.
- Individuals who are not members of the Group will be able to raise issues and speak under AOCB.

The agendas and minutes

- The agenda will be set in partnership between the appropriate Council officer and the Chair.
- Reports from the sub-groups will be a standing agenda item.
- The Chair will have already received reports from the sub-groups so that any required actions or decisions can be discussed.
- The convenors of the subgroups should be present to report back on the work of the sub-group.
- The minutes will be widely circulated to individuals and groups who are part of the wider forum or are interested in the work the work of the group. This could be done in a number of ways including an up to date data base, a website, a face book page.
- The priority areas of work should be set on an annual basis and an action plan should be drawn up that sets targets, identifies actions and specifies outcomes. The business of the Group should be framed, unless there are exceptional circumstances, by the work plan.
- When there are decisions or discussions to be had on policy or other developments that will particularly impact in the group, there needs to be participation at an early stage.
- The Group will be the contact point for The Council when they are carrying out Equality Impact Assessments.
- The minutes that are circulated to the wider community should focus on action, agreements and outcomes rather than conclusions such as - "the group noted".

Issues raised by individuals outwith the meetings

- Should individuals raise issues with Group members outwith meetings, the member should raise the issue with with the Chair of the group or the Convenor of a relevant sub groups.

Sub-groups

- Sub-groups (or working groups) will be formed as and when decided/needed because of the issues raised. (Initial suggestions have included Accessibility, Education, Community Safety, Transport and Health and Social care.)
- The bi monthly meetings of the Group will take up the issues raised by the sub-groups.
- A need to establish a sub-group with a remit to look at diversity and reaching out to the widest range of disabled people has already been identified.

Links with wider community

- A wider forum will be established as a means of sharing information and concerns.
- The forum will be open to anyone who is committed to the aims and values of the organisation. The forum will include individual members and those from organisations.
- The existence of the forum will be widely publicised.
- Members of the Group who are also members of other disability related organisations should inform their members about the issues being discussed by the group.
- The information from the wider forum will be used to set the priority areas for consideration by the Group and will influence the topics for the sub-group. The forum will meet at least twice a year.
- The venues will rotate.
- The Group will have an up-to date website, a Facebook page, an on-line forum and a blog. In this way it will ensure that it is in touch with the needs and concerns of disabled people.
- The Council will be responsible through the Disability Access Officer, for maintaining the on-line presence.
- Written communication (including minutes and agendas etc.) will be circulated in as many ways as is necessary, to meet the range of communication needs of the wider disabled community.
- People will be asked about their preferred means of communication.

Development needs

- Training will be provided for the Group as when required. It could include briefings about the Council's decision making processes, how to run effective meetings, roles in meetings, how to ensure that the needs of the wider communities are represented at meetings etc.

Points for further discussion

- We did not get round to renaming the new Group.
- Suggestions welcome!