

The value to Guernsey of a Disability and Inclusion Strategy

The Policy Council recently published a proposed Disability and Inclusion Strategy for the Island. If States members agree to the Strategy in November, Guernsey will gradually move towards meeting the disability standards that are now common worldwide.

The first steps are developing disability equality legislation and providing better information for disabled people, carers, organisations and the public.

If approved, everyone can be proud of the Strategy because:

1 It will improve the lives of all Islanders
Most of us will experience disability at some point in our lives. While the focus for the States is the 4,000 Islanders who currently face significant difficulties, the Strategy also provides protection and reassurance for us all.

2 Inclusive societies are happier societies
People's attitudes can - often unintentionally - exclude disabled people from society. Communities that accept and include everyone are happier places to live and work.

3 It's good for our reputation
95% of the population of the world lives in countries that have signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Guernsey is in the remaining 5%.

4 It's good for our economy
Disabled people are loyal customers and employees. Guernsey is currently losing out on talent and spending power. Carers are giving up work unnecessarily for lack of the right support.

5 It will make better use of resources
Guernsey's system of support for disabled people is not joined up. Information about services is not readily available. Disabled people who need support are less independent than they could be and the health of carers themselves is at risk.

6 It's all about being reasonable
Disability legislation will be simple and will not be a copy of UK law. In many cases, making sure disabled people are included just means finding a different way of doing things. An organisation's size will be taken into account and the States will provide plenty of guidance.

7 The States will lead the way
As a result of the Strategy, the States will become a more inclusive employer and will improve the way it delivers services to disabled people and carers. States employees will receive disability equality training.

8 It's all about attitudes
The barriers people face in Guernsey are what is disabling, not a person's impairment. Barriers are created by inflexible ways of doing things, not just inaccessible buildings. The biggest barriers are people's attitudes and prejudice.

To find out more, go to www.gov.gg/disabilitystrategy.

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