

HOW TO GUIDE – ADAPTING A DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN FOR A MERGED COUNCIL

September 2016

Overview

Local government is required by the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (DIA 2014)* to undertake disability inclusion action planning (DIAP) by 1 July 2017. Councils have a number of options. They can prepare a standalone DIAP, integrate their DIAP directly into their integrated planning and reporting (IP&R) framework or, if they have an existing Disability Action Plan (DAP), adapt it to meet the regulatory requirements.

This document provides guidance for councils that have recently merged and need to consolidate their disability planning in order to meet their legislated requirements for a DIAP. In doing so, recently merged councils will need to prepare a standalone DIAP (see How to guide and template) as they are not required to complete their IP&R process till September 2017. It is recommended that councils subsequently integrate DIAP consultation outcomes and actions into their IP&R framework and review implementation in line with their Annual Reporting process. This also applies to councils in a pending merger situation.

LGNSW have prepared [NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines for Local Government](#) ('the Guidelines') which provide a comprehensive support to councils in preparing their DIAPs.

Legislative requirements

The minimum legislative requirements for local government in relation to preparing a DIAP are set out in the *DIA 2014*. These are:

- NSW councils to prepare a DIAP by 1 July 2017
- Consulting people with disability must be undertaken and documented as part of the planning process
- Councils must give a copy of the DIAP actions to the Disability Council NSW
- Councils must report on implementation of their DIAP in their Annual Report, and forward a copy to the Minister
- Council must review their DIAP every four years.

Council's DIAP strategies and actions must address the four key focus areas of:

- Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
- Creating liveable communities
- Supporting access to meaningful employment
- Improving access to services through better systems and processes.

8 steps to creating a DIAP as a newly merged council

The NSW Guidelines identify ten steps that local government should consider in the preparation and implementation of their DIAP. This guide identifies considerations that a newly merged council should address in respect to particular DIAP steps. Preparation of the DIAP will need to be adapted to suit the circumstances and where in the planning process each pre-merged council is placed prior to amalgamation.

1. Integrated ownership and responsibility

Key considerations

Is there one lead project officer/ manager to develop a coordinated DIAP document or will a DIAP project team be created based on one staff member from each of the pre-merged councils?

It will be important to ensure comprehensive and sustained input from a staff member familiar with each of the previous organisations as processes, planning and operations of each pre-existing council will continue into the short-medium term.

How much pre-existing disability planning has been undertaken by each of the pre-merged councils prior to amalgamation?

It will be important to clarify the extent to which existing materials will be used to inform the final DIAP. In some cases a pre-merged council or councils may have already prepared a draft or final DIAP. Much of the work in developing a DIAP will have been undertaken already and will not need to be repeated, just simply updated.

Is the executive or an executive level sponsor informed as to how preparation of the DIAP will integrate disability planning undertaken by each pre-merged council?

This briefing should clarify how implementation and evaluation of the DIAP will be retrospectively incorporated within the IP&R framework and reinforce council's commitment to delivering the Plan in line with DIA 2014.

2. Creating a shared organisational understanding

Key considerations

Has a review been undertaken of each pre-merged councils' policies, programs and plans relating to disability inclusion?

Once reviews have been completed it will be important to identify the points of difference and commonality of each pre-merged council in respect to inclusion, disability programs, infrastructure, services and projects.

Post-merger analysis will also provide an opportunity to establish demographic statistics and a summary of key issues across the new LGA.

Has a review been undertaken of each pre-merged councils' community strategic plans (CSPs)?

Understanding similarities as well as differences in values, key directions/ themes and strategies will support the development of a shared disability inclusion vision and priorities.

3. Inclusive consultation

Key consideration

Has any inclusive consultation been undertaken to support the DIAP process prior to the merger?

Identify any gaps in relation to the geographic and organisational spread of participants. If no further consultation is required then ensure that the consultation outcomes report is updated to clearly document how engagement has been delivered across the new LGA.

Further information on how to undertake a consultation process to meet the regulatory requirements is provided in the Standalone DIAP How to guide.

4. Integrated strategies and actions for inclusion

Key considerations

Have any of the pre-merged councils identified draft or final DIAP strategies and actions for inclusion?

Existing strategies and actions should be reviewed for applicability to the new entity and to identify if any additional actions and strategies need to be incorporated as a consequence of the amalgamation. An example is addressing specific local considerations of the pre-merged councils or taking advantage of any broader opportunities the amalgamation may support.

Have strategies and actions been reviewed and supported by staff across each of the previous pre-merged councils?

It is essential that strategies and actions address all operational, service and resource needs and gain ownership from staff across each of the pre-merged councils.

5. Prepare an evaluation framework

Key consideration

Have key performance indicators (KPIs) been developed to monitor implementation of actions for disability inclusion in each of the focus areas?

Assess applicability of KPIs for monitoring the new organisation's implementation of the DIAP and update or revise as required.

In developing the DIAP evaluation framework take into consideration the scope and ability of the new organisation to support DIAP monitoring and reporting within its Annual Report. This includes consultation with staff responsible for coordinating the IP&R framework.

6. Publishing and promoting the new DIAP

Key considerations

Regardless of whether all pre-merged councils have published their DIAP previously or not, the new organisation will be required to repeat the requirements to make its DIAP publicly available in a range of accessible formats.

It is recommended that councils publicly exhibit their new DIAP by April 2017. Public exhibition provides an opportunity to promote an integrated statement of commitment and vision for inclusion that reflects the new merged entity.

Following exhibition and inclusion of any feedback the DIAP must be submitted to the **Disability Council NSW by 1 July 2017.**

7. Promote to staff and the community

Key considerations

Raise awareness of the DIAP process and implementation with councillors, council staff and the community.

There must be special consideration of communication of the DIAP to councillors following the delayed election process for merged councils. New councillors will not have been present during the development of the DIAP and therefore it will be necessary to inform them of the legislative, social and business case for supporting disability inclusion in order to gain their buy-in.

8. Implementation of actions

Key considerations

Facilitate cross-departmental accountability and community oversight during implementation.

Many of the administrative, governance and operational arrangements of pre-merged councils will be retained over the short to medium term within the new organisation. It is therefore recommended that a cross-Council working party comprised of staff across all of the new council locations be established to support integrated and comprehensive implementation of the DIAP.

For further assistance with your DIAP:

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