


<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Update on Camden's Accessibility Strategy	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Director of Place Management	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Disability Oversight Panel	<b>DATE</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> November 2019
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report provides a summary of how the Council's accessibility strategy has been developed using the insight from engaging with the Disability Oversight Panel.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b>  Jaclyn Bello  Senior Policy and Projects Officer  London Borough of Camden  5 Pancras Square  London N1C 4AG  Tel: 020 7974 3514  Email: <a href="mailto:jaclyn.bello@camden.gov.uk">jaclyn.bello@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION</b></p> <p>That the Disability Oversight Panel notes this update on the development of the accessibility strategy.</p>	
<p><b>Signed:</b></p>  <p>Paul Dunphy  Director of Place Management  <b>Date:</b> 24 October 2019</p>	

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the forthcoming accessibility strategy that will be published in winter 2019. The strategy was developed with major input from the Disability Oversight Panel and this is an opportunity to reflect on how the Panel has helped shape the strategy. Involving the Disability Oversight Panel has been essential as officers have been able to hear directly from residents the issues of accessibility that matter to them.

## 2. Development of the accessibility strategy

- 2.1. The Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden recognises that accessibility can play a fundamental part in helping people become resilient and lead independent lives. Camden has been working hard to promote accessibility in order to make accessing services easier. We have challenged ourselves to continue that journey and do more for our citizens and have looked to our communities to gain further insight on areas that matter to them.
- 2.2. At the meeting of the Disability Oversight Panel (DOP) on 1st November 2018, members of the public were invited to participate in workshops to discuss/develop an accessibility strategy. The Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden attended the workshop to explain the principles behind the strategy. These are listed below:
  - *Ability for everyone to travel around the borough.*
  - *Ensure that buildings are accessible to everyone.*
  - *Understand the Council's responsibility in this.*
  - *Ensure that everyone in Camden has the power to report any short comings in accessibility.*
  - *Understand how the success of the strategy will be measured.*
- 2.3. Four workshops took place where people were asked to provide their views on aspects of key accessibility issues using their own personal lived experiences. Working with the DOP through these workshops was an important part of community engagement as it was essential for the Council to hear directly from our residents to develop an effective strategy.
- 2.4. The feedback from the workshops was discussed by the DOP and collected by the Strategy and Change service on behalf of the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden. Examples of participants concerns included street clutter and use of community facilities. Residents put forward that accessibility should be addressed in the widest sense and wanted the Council to take the needs of everyone into account. They wanted to ensure that physical, sensory, mental health needs and learning difficulties as well as the needs of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia and dementia were considered.

- 2.5. We are aware that people have varying needs which on occasion may be conflicting however the Council will strive to incorporate inclusive design in its services and facilities to take as many people's needs into account.
- 2.6. Services across the Council were provided with the feedback from the workshops and reviewed their work to see how they could address the issues raised. This was an opportunity for the services to reflect on their policies and identify areas that could be enhanced and further actions that could be made to deliver for the people of Camden. Officers recognised that promoting accessibility within the borough did not just sit with the local authority but everyone had a role to play, from large organisations to local businesses and individuals.
- 2.7. An action plan was developed considering the feedback from the DOP workshops to develop specific strands of work that contributed to accessibility outcomes. An important theme that arose was the necessity to continually involve our citizens in an ongoing dialogue. Officers took on board the feedback and responded to the themes that were raised indicating the actions that the Council would take in direct response to DOP feedback. This was circulated to residents in August 2019, please see appendix 1.

#### **Next Steps**

- 2.8. An officer working group has been established to review the action plan and to ensure that the Council is continuously improving accessibility for citizens. The Council will work with partners to encourage the promotion of accessibility in areas that are not directly within the Council's control. The accessibility strategy is a relatively live document and will be subject to regular reviews, updates and expansion.
- 2.9. An easy read version of the action plan is currently being drafted and this will be published alongside the full strategy in winter 2019. Copies will be circulated to residents who have engaged with the DOP to share with their networks. We will also share copies with the local groups that we discuss accessibility issues with. Copies will also be made available at the Greenwood Centre, the new Centre for Independent Living.
- 2.10. The strategy upholds the ambitions that are set out in our Camden 2025 vision where we want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to play a part in strong, sustainable and open communities. Increasing accessibility within the borough will support our pledge to ensure nobody is left behind and will also contribute to reducing inequality.
- 2.11. We want to ensure that we continue to listen to residents about their experiences of accessibility within the borough and would welcome future feedback from the DOP.

### **3. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 3.1 There are no significant financial implications from this report.

#### **4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

4.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add.

#### **5. Appendices**

Appendix 1 resident feedback

**REPORT ENDS**

## **Appendix 1 – resident feedback**

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018, the Disability Oversight Panel hosted a workshop engagement session on the subject of accessibility in Camden. The aim of this workshop was to listen to the views and experiences of people in Camden to help inform an accessibility strategy we are drafting.

At the Disability Oversight Panel meeting we heard from a wide range of residents about their experiences.

Points raised at the meeting are summarised below. The boxes show what changed as a result of the feedback from the DOP meeting.

### **Different types of accessibility needs**

People wanted us to make sure that we defined accessibility in a very broad way that took the specific needs of different people into account: accessibility does not just mean considering the needs of people who use a wheelchair

- An accessibility strategy will need to make sure we take the needs of everyone into account - including those with physical, sensory, mental health needs and those with learning difficulties/ disabilities. We also need to make sure we consider the needs of people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), dyspraxia or dyslexia.
- More and more people in Camden are living with dementia. Places and spaces in Camden need to be dementia friendly in order to help people live independent lives.

#### **Our response**

The Camden Accessibility Strategy will consider the needs of the widest group of people as possible – including those with mobility, sensory and mental health needs. We want to take the approach that we are considering the easiest access for all as the default.

We will not have a formal set definition of ‘accessibility’, in order to remain flexible to emerging areas of accessibility that need to be taken into consideration.

## Getting around the borough

Many residents told us about challenging experiences they had of travelling around Camden. For example:

**On buses** - residents felt that bus drivers need better accessibility training and more powers to move people out of the disabled spot on buses, and more priority seats were needed, as well as more accessible bus stops

### Our response

Over 97% of bus stops within Camden are accessible (541 of 554) to wheelchair users.

We are also aware of concerns regarding 'floating bus stops' in Camden and will continue to work with organisations such as Visually Impaired in Camden (VIC and RNIB) to ensure visually impaired residents are able to comment on current and future plans.

We will work with organisations like TfL to improve the experience of Camden passengers on public transport.

**Street clutter** – cluttered streets are a real concern. People told us about some of the clutter on our streets that can cause a hazard, such as boards outside shops, tables and chairs on pavements, dockless bikes for hire, bins and rubbish, tree roots and overhanging branches. People were frustrated by the lack of consideration that can cause this clutter – they felt that it was easy to avoid creating unnecessary obstructions on the street and more should be done to encourage people to be more considerate.

### Our response

We will propose to refresh our 'Tables and Chairs' policy subject to consultation to ensure we are able to take action against those who create unnecessary clutter in our streets.

We take the issue of street clutter seriously – particularly bins and waste facilities on pavements. All bins on pavements must be returned to their property within 24 hours of collection. A recent article in the Camden magazine emphasised the importance of residents doing this and emphasised the impact of cluttered streets on vulnerable residents.

We monitor the performance of our waste contractors (Veolia) to ensure that bins are being returned to the right place, without blocking the pavements.

We run regular campaigns via stickers on bins and leafleting at problem streets and properties to ensure people bring in bins to prevent obstructions

We will engage with dockless bicycle hire companies on the management of their bicycles and will look to incorporate control and mitigation of this into a forthcoming bye-law on dockless hire in London.

**Signage and wayfinding** – some people said that clearer, easy-read signs would make it easier to get about the borough, especially to important places like hospitals and doctors' surgeries. The majority of street signs used on the public highway have to comply with Department for Transport regulations which determine what approved signs can be used, where they can be used, and the wording. Failure to comply with required signage can open the Council to challenge, especially in the event of a collision or personal injury. Lots of road work signs could be confusing and add to street clutter.

#### **Our response**

We have recently developed new signage for playgrounds to better reflect the needs of children with different abilities and avoid exclusion based on age alone. The green space team have undertaken a workshop with parents of special educational needs children to explore some of the barriers to using green spaces and plan to continue this engagement to identify and inform future improvements.

**Walking/accessible pavements** – many people fed back that they wanted to walk more around the borough in order to help stay active. But sometimes pavements and walkways weren't accessible enough, with uneven surfaces and dropped kerbs in the wrong places.

#### **Our response**

We will aim to make Camden's streets more accessible by conducting more street audits.

Whilst every street and open space in the Borough forms part of Camden's walking network, there are often problems within that network for many pedestrians and vulnerable road users. We will commission and carry out street audits within a 1km radius of stations and town centres across the Borough, identifying issues with the pedestrian infrastructure and providing funding to address those problems. These audits will also be used to feed into priorities for new development sites and for improvements via developer contributions/area based schemes.

The audits will be prioritised in areas with known high 'propensity to walk', and where there are known schemes coming forward that an audit can contribute to and/or where there are known accessibility issues.

As well as commissioning audits we will also ask for input and feedback from all residents, including disability/older people groups, to ensure accessibility considerations and opportunities for improvements for pedestrians are incorporated in our planning.

## Accessing services

Some people told us that they thought the fact that many services were moved online made them less accessible for some people, especially older people.

### **Our response**

We know many people find it easiest to access services online so we want to make sure people are able to do this. We provide accessible tools to help people use our website

- Guidance videos for a number of services, featuring BSL interpreters.
- The SignVideo service to access a BSL interpreter through a webcam
- The TexMee service that can be downloaded and accessed via a user's smartphone
- Guidance for those who struggle to use keyboards
- Browsealoud to help people with sight issues

People can still access our services by calling us or visiting us in person.



## Community facilities

People told us about some of the facilities they used in Camden, and some of the accessibility issues they faced there:

**Community Centres** - Some residents talked about the recent report from Healthwatch Camden and Camden Disability Action about accessibility in Community centres, and wanted to hear more about what would be done in response to that report.

### **Our response**

Disabled volunteers from Healthwatch Camden and Camden Disability Action visited 28 community centres across the borough (some council-funded, some independently funded), and produced a comprehensive report outlining difficulties faced in accessing the buildings and areas where centres could make improvements.

Some examples from this report are as follows:

- Sometimes accessibility equipment (e.g. induction loops) were not working, or staff didn't know how to use them.
- Better, clearer signage to community centres could help people find centres and feel more welcome
- More disability awareness training so staff could feel more confident making adjustments for people with accessibility needs

Following this report, Camden Council met with Healthwatch, CDA and C4 (the Camden Community Centre's Consortium) to discuss the report and response. We have provided the organisations with details of relevant funding opportunities for physical access improvements.

In addition, we have produced a document for all Community Centres to use detailing what free support on improving access is available, and aim to circulate this in early 2019, along with a training offer for voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners. Ensuring facilities are accessible will be a key consideration when we commission services with community providers going forward, and we will continue to work with the sector to support improvements in accessibility within community facilities.

**Parks** – A lot of people said they enjoyed visiting Camden parks, but said that whilst the parks themselves tended to be accessible places, many were lacking facilities that would make things easier for people with accessibility needs – such as more benches, water fountains and accessible toilets.

#### **Our response**

The majority of Camden's parks are physically accessible, with a limited number of sites with steps and/or steep slopes. A **comprehensive accessibility audit** is proposed for our park sites to gain a much clearer understanding of levels of accessibility and any barriers which we may be able to address. Improving accessibility is already a key objective of the Green Space Investment Programme (the capital programme of improvement works to parks and green spaces). Successes to date have included the renewal of older playgrounds to incorporate inclusive play principles, the resurfacing of uneven paths and the achievement of step-free access around previously challenging sites such as St Giles Churchyard.

**Toilets** - Many residents fed back that they wanted there to be more accessible toilets within the borough, including Changing Places facilities.

#### **Our response**

The Public Health Act 1936 empowered Local Authorities to provide toilet facilities but does not impose a statutory duty on them to do so. Camden provides borough wide public conveniences, which have been continually improved - where possible – to improve access to as many people as possible. We are restricted from further adaptations to some subterranean facilities due to listed status. Camden and Lincolns Inns have an accessible toilet with baby change, additional cubicle space and easier functionality. They also have automated hand washer dryers for easy use.

Our current toilet provision includes over 35 locations provided by Camden Council and collaborating bodies.

We will also continue work alongside businesses, retail and community facilities to ensure their toilet provisions are adapted to be accessible under current licencing regulations. We also work with businesses can adapt their existing facilities under the Community Toilet Scheme.

Camden currently has five fully accessible 'changing places' public toilets making it one of the highest number in inner London. The five Changing Places facilities have reasonable geographical spread around the borough, being located at the Camden Society in Kentish Town, 5 Pancras Square, King's Cross station and Great Ormond Street (two at GOSH).

Further Changing Places toilets are located at the new Centre for Independent Living/ Greenwood in Kentish Town. This facility will be updated onto the Changing Places website and Great British Toilet Map. Camden has responded to the MHCLG consultation on Changing Places toilets which ended in July 2019.

For greater accessible toilet provision within the borough, we discuss future builds with our planning department. Large developments with higher pedestrian activity or footfall can warrant the implementation of an accessible ground level toilet within the build. This is identified and requested at the early stages of planning and all new large applications are scanned for opportunities. We will work with the community, relevant council departments and partners in the borough to identify 'gaps' in Changing Places provision and identify potential opportunities for future locations.

**Greenwood Centre**— many residents talked about the new Centre for Independent Living at the Greenwood Centre in Kentish Town. Some residents fed back that they thought it was a positive step to have a new, highly accessible facility, but others had not heard about the Centre yet and wanted to find out more.

### **Our response**

The Greenwood Centre for Independent Living opened in February 2019, and has been built to a highly accessible standard.

There are 21 WCs throughout the building, all of which are unisex. Included within this number are 5 x changing places WCs plus 14 x accessible WCs.

Ceiling track hoists are extensive within Greenwood to allow full participation for all within the activity spaces. Rooms can be divided up by the use of wooden partitions, using the highest specification for effective sound proofing. This allows services to create a more peaceful environment for those who are affected by loud or excessive noise.

The Greenwood Centre has been a catalyst for improvements to street works within Greenwood Place. Colleagues from Highways have installed wider pavements, dropped kerbs, removed some pavement furniture, provided 3 x disabled parking bays and raised the pavement to road level to facilitate easier and safer road crossing for those with mobility issues.

There are 3 lifts within the Centre which are larger than standard lifts, thereby allowing access for all to each level, as well as the roof terrace. The theme of accessibility extends to the roof terrace where we have provided planters which allow wheelchair users to participate in planting flowers. The roof terrace has a combination of areas which have enclosed walls as well as glass fronted walls. This allows those with a fear of heights to enjoy the roof terrace without having the distinct feeling of being on a roof top area.

We have a text telephone at Reception for those who are deaf or for those with hearing issues and the Reception desk is bespoke in its design to allow wheelchair users to interact more easily with Reception staff. The colour scheme within Greenwood is neutral to aid those with visual impairment and signage has been selected which stands out due to the colours which have been used.

**Accessibility training** - Lots of people told us that they thought more accessibility training was needed for Council staff, and other people who work in places like shops, museums and cinemas. Often these places have accessibility aids like hearing loops but people don't know how to use them.

#### **Our response**

We will work with other organisations (such as community centres) to refresh accessibility training and signpost to available resources. We will also promote good practice in accessibility for individuals and businesses through a communications campaign.

#### **Respect/ feeling like part of the community**

Many participants reported that they sometimes did not feel like part of the community. They said that they often experienced impatience and lack of understanding from other people. Often other people don't look where they are going when moving about the community and were unaware of their surroundings, including the needs of people around them.

#### **Our response**

We will promote good practice for individuals to improve accessibility across the community by considering their surroundings.

The officer group tasked with delivering this accessibility strategy will look at how we can work with residents and stakeholders in the community to create a more accessible place through a 'shared endeavour'.