



Crip Up Climate Conversations: Making a community climate action plan

**A guide on how to write a community climate action plan
by and for Disabled people.**

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Sensing
Climate



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Summary

This guide has a **jargon buster** at the end of it. A **jargon buster** is a list of explanations of words that some people might not know. When we use a word that is in the **jargon buster** in the document we have highlighted it in bold so you know you can look it up.

This plan sets out how to write a **community climate action plan** by and for Disabled people. A **community climate action plan** is a plan that sets out actions that a community can take or can be taken for them to make things better for both people and the planet.

Introduction

The introduction explains where this work came from and why it is important. The two organisations behind the project are the **Community Climate Action Project** and **Sensing Climate**. Including Disabled people in climate change work is important because they face extra risks. For example, they are 2 to 4 times more likely to die or be hurt in disasters. Some action on **climate change** is also making things worse for Disabled people. This is called **eco-ableism**. To avoid these problems we need to include Disabled people in conversations about **climate change**. Making a **community climate action plan** is a great way to do this.

What does a community climate action plan look like?

This section explains that a **community climate action plan** lays out what a community wants to see happen on **climate change**. The section also explains more about how the Bristol plan is split into themes. For example, energy, transport, jobs etc.



Who should write a plan and why?

This section explains what kind of organisation should make a community climate action plan. Though it explains that a Disabled People's Organisation is always best, it gives **accessibility** advice for how a **climate change** organisation could do this work. It then explains the benefits of doing this work. For example making a plan can help get funding and win the community of Disabled people **allies** in the **climate change** movement.

Step by step

This section sets out some suggested steps for going about making a plan.

Before you start

This section talks about what to do before starting the project. It has tips on getting funding, support from your council, getting the right staff and making a plan of action.

Co-production

This section explains that **co-production** is the best way to work with Disabled people and is about giving a community power to design and make decisions about a project. It explains that a **steering group** of Disabled people is needed but also an expert **facilitator**. It also explains that though the steering group must have power that staff will need to write the plan based on the ideas of the group.

Communicating with Disabled people about climate

This section shares some ways of talking to Disabled people about **climate change**. Because of **eco-ableism** some Disabled people can feel like action on **climate change** will hurt them. It also suggests that conversations link **climate change** to issues Disabled people already care about. For example making transport better and making jobs for Disabled people.



Community engagement

This section explains different ways you can go about getting ideas from the public for your plan. For example, **surveys**, creative activities, going to meetings for Disabled people, holding stalls and running sessions where you bring Disabled people together with experts on the area you are talking about.

Writing the plan

This section explains how to take ideas you got from the public and write them up into a rough draft. It explains how to take this draft to the steering group so they can discuss and change it.

Sharing the plan

This section talks about how to share the plan. It suggests that this begins with a launch that brings together Disabled people with people with power to celebrate the work. However, it explains that work has to be done to share it with organisations and politicians who have the power to make the changes you want.

Links to more information

In the last section you can find some resources online to read more about disability and **climate change**.





Introduction

The Bristol Community Climate Action Project

This guide is based on knowledge picked up through **Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership's** (the Partnership) **Community Climate Action Project**. The **Community Climate Action Project** was a project that happened in Bristol in the UK. It was funded by the Lottery. It showed how communities can play an important part in taking action on **climate change** and looking after nature at the same time as making things better for people. The plans looked at themes going from transport, to energy, to food, to jobs.

To our knowledge Bristol's Disabled people's plan was the first **community climate action plan** to be made for Disabled people in the world. This is a big problem as **community climate action plans** are important for making sure Disabled people are included in action on **climate change**. We wrote this guide in the hope that it can help Disabled people in other places to make their own plan.





This guide has been written to join other guides made by the **Sensing Climate** project. This project runs from 2023 – 2028. It is looking at how to make sure that **climate change** action in the UK and Ireland helps make fair communities and include the knowledge of Disabled people. It is funded by 'UK Research and Innovation' and the 'Leverhulme Trust'. Both of these are groups that give money to universities.

While the **Partnership's community climate action plan** is written for Bristol many of its aims and actions could be useful in other places. It takes time, effort and money to write a plan so we welcome you to use ours to help you think of ideas. Just make sure to **credit** our plan and the **Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership**. You can talk to us about the best way to do this by emailing: contact@bristolclimatenature.org.

Why is it important to think about disability in climate change?

Climate change makes big risks for people all over the world. It is also making **inequality** worse. This is changing how we live and how we feel about our communities, homes and ourselves. For example, people might worry about if they'll be safe or have enough food.

Disabled people are already more likely to be experiencing difficulties from **climate change**. Disabled people are 2-4 times more likely to die or be injured in **heatwaves**, hurricanes and floods. Some of these risks comes from the effect of dangerous weather and harmful air on existing health conditions. For example, people with **spinal cord injury** have difficulties keeping a safe body temperature so when it is very hot this is extra dangerous for them.



The risks of **climate change** for Disabled people are made worse by **eco-ableism**. **Eco-ableism** is the failure to include Disabled people in action on **climate change** or to understand that some **climate change** actions are making things worse for Disabled people. For example **Clean Air Zones** are areas of a city when older cars have to pay to enter to clean the air. When these zones are made in a thoughtless way it means that Disabled people can no longer afford to get everywhere they want. However if climate action is done well it can make things better for Disabled people. For example, energy that is good for the planet could save Disabled people money. And Disabled people could get the jobs that are being made to look after the planet.

Almost everyone will experience disability at some point in their life. So it is important for everyone that action on **climate change** is good for Disabled people.





What does a community climate action plan look like?

A **community climate action plan** lays out the views of a community on how action can be taken that is good for both people in the community and the planet. It includes actions the community can take. And some plans include actions that it is asking other people to take.

The Bristol **community climate action plan** was made of aims and actions on the following themes: general, being prepared as communities, energy, food, nature, business, skills and education, housing, transport, waste. You can copy these for your plan if you like. Though you might find that you want to change, add or remove sections.

In each section there is a list of aims. The aims are what the community wants and needs to happen. For example 'all new transport projects to be **accessible**'. Beneath the aims are lists of actions that either add more detail or specify what change is needed for the aims to happen. For example 'for all buses to have two wheelchair spaces.'

The aims are split into those that are 'city owned' and 'community owned'. 'City owned' are the changes we are asking from the city so that Disabled people are able to take the actions that are good for the planet. For example, for many Disabled people to drive less we would need more **accessible** public transport. However Disabled people and disability charities have no control over the buses so we need the bus companies and the local councils to make these changes for us. 'Community owned' are the aims that the community has taken on doing. In Bristol several projects were run to meet 'community owned' aims as part of the Community Climate Action Project.



Who should write a plan and why?

Why write a plan?

Making a **community climate action plan** can do lots of good for your community and organisation. Some good things include:



1. Getting funding.



2. A tool for building **climate change** awareness in the community of Disabled people.



3. A tool for showing the importance of Disabled people within **climate change** work.



4. Making **allies**. The plan can also show people how **climate change** issues are tied up with disability issues.



5. More paid work for disability organisations.

There are huge wins for the community of Disabled people within this work. But only if it is **accessible**. The best first step in understanding how to do it in an **accessible** way is to make a **community climate action plan**.

What kind of organisation should do this work?

The best kind of organisation to do this work is a **Disabled People's Organisation**. This is an organisation that has staff that are mostly Disabled people. Local groups of Disabled people who are not a charity could carry out the work but should understand that they will need time and funding.

A **climate change** charity can do the work if the project is led by Disabled staff. The charity has to be ready to properly support the Disabled staff.



Step by Step

The below gives some ideas of what steps you could follow to make your plan:



1. Project idea and bring together **collaborators**.



2. Apply for funding. This work can't start without funding.



3. **Recruit** staff.



4. Create a plan of action.



5. Build awareness about the project and issue.



6. **Recruit steering group** and first meeting.



7. **Engagement. Engagement** means talking to the community for their ideas.



8. Create a draft version of the **Community Climate Action plan**.



9. Review plan with the **steering group**.



10. Public feedback on plan.



12. Sign off on the plan with **steering group**.

13. Checking and designing plan.



14. **Accessible** plan **translations**.



15. Launch.



16. Get support for the plan.



Before you start

Making a **community climate action plan** needs careful planning from the start. Here are some things to think about at the beginning of the project.

Funding

Funding is very important. You will need to be able to pay staff, Disabled people for taking part, **collaborators**, materials, venues for events and an **accessibility** pot.

Many funders see **climate change** as a key issue and want to support **disadvantaged** communities. So funders are likely to be interested. You will need to show the funder that you have a history of working with Disabled people and your community is interested in the project.

Getting support

Plans will have the best chance of success if they involve the local council and key local **climate change** and nature groups from the start. Take the time to build relationships with these organisations.

Staff

This work should be led by Disabled people. Community **engagement** is only successful if there is a good understanding of how to talk to Disabled people in a respectful way. Many Disabled people are also more likely to trust another Disabled person.



Co-production

Co-production is working with the community to make something. It means the community has power to make decisions and understand the power they have. It is very important your **community climate action plan** is made by **co-production**.

Approach

The key parts of **co-production** are:



1. Shared power,



2. Including a **representative** for everyone who could be impacted by a project,



3. Value the knowledge of everyone involved and treating everyone as equally important,



4. Make sure everyone can get something out of working together,



5. Build trusting relationships.





While sharing out the power to make decisions as much as possible is important there are often limits. For example, staff will have to do the writing of the plan. It is important for trust to be clear from the start of the project about:



1. How power will be shared,



2. What the work will and won't look at,



3. Roles and **responsibilities** of all the people involved,



4. The power the project has to make change,



5. What will happen after the project is over.

END

However you need to be willing to talk about ways the work can be done better. It helps to:



1. Have good **facilitators**. **Facilitators** lead meetings. They need to be good at listening.



2. Have a set of **groundrules**. These are rules that a group has agreed to work to. For example, that they agree to listen to other people.



3. A **terms of reference**. This sets out what is expected with people and what will happen when rules are broken.



4. Extra time in case you find the group needs more.



5. Extra money in case you need to pay people to join more meetings.



6. Time to meet outside of meetings. For example, some learning disabled people will find it helpful to meet before.



Steering group

Good **co-production** requires numbers taking part to be small (8 to 12 members). A **steering group** is a good idea. This group can take the ideas from the **engagement** and go more in depth. Get lots of different types of people in the group. For example, people with a wide range of **impairments**, age, gender and experience of other types of **disadvantage**. If you offer good pay for this work you are likely to find lots of people are interested. If you are doing a big **engagement** process instead of changing the Bristol plan it will be helpful to have this group meet at least once before **engagement** begins. They can give advice.

The **steering group** must have the power to make decisions about the plan but staff will need to:



1. Arrange meetings,



2. **Facilitate** meetings,



3. Turn the discussion into the written plan,



4. Gently question what should and shouldn't go in the plan.



5. Meet with **steering group** members who miss meetings.

Getting ideas from the wider community

You will need ideas from the wider community. **Surveys** and other forms of **engagement** (explored in the **engagement** section) should be used.



Communicating with Disabled people about climate

Disabled people have been left out of the **climate change** conversation for a long time. So some Disabled people don't trust people who talk about **climate change**. That doesn't mean people don't care. An organisation called 'Research Institute for Disabled Consumers' (RiDC) found 97% of Disabled were worried about **climate change**.

Changing the story

Below is a good story to use to get people to take part:

“**The best opportunity to make an accessible society in our lifetime.** Big changes are coming to our country and communities to slow down **climate change**. These changes will impact everything, from roads, to buses, to how we heat our homes, to the jobs we do. Doing this work in the right way would mean making changes that are good for both the planet and people. There will be a lot of money put into this work and it wouldn't cost much more to make these things **accessible** at the same time. Disabled people have to be involved if we want to avoid new barriers and create the good changes. This could be the biggest chance to make our **society accessible** in our lifetimes”.





Starting conversations with Disabled people

Starting conversations with Disabled people on **climate change** can be difficult. The best way to start is to connect the issue to things the community already cares about. The ideas below worked for us:



1. **Transport that is good for the planet linked to accessible transport.** You can talk to people about how making transport better for the planet could also make it more **accessible** at the same time. Make sure the changes you talk about are **accessible** and don't make people feel bad if they can't travel in a way that is good for the planet.



2. **Changes to energy linked to affordable energy.** The changes coming to energy on **climate change** could make energy cheaper.



3. **Green jobs linked to getting jobs for more Disabled people.** Action on **climate change** means there will be lots of new jobs. If made in an **accessible** way this could be great for many Disabled people. For example, some call centre support could be carried out from home.



4. **Emergency preparedness planning.** (**Emergency preparedness planning** means being ready for when disasters happen so people are kept safe). This is very important for making sure Disabled people's lives are looked after as **climate change** gets worse.

Accessible language

Speaking in **Plain English** and writing **Plain English** versions of documents is very important for making **climate change** work **accessible** for Disabled people. (And non-disabled people too!) Try to explain concepts as simply as possible. For example, in this document we are talking about things like 'being good



for the planet' instead of using jargon like '**sustainable**'. Sensing Climate has made a **Plain English glossary** to go alongside this guide. It suggests some possible **alternatives** to jargon.

This language can sometimes make conversations feel a bit clumsy. So if a piece of jargon is very important for the conversation then it is better to use the term and explain it at the start. Where you have to use some jargon make sure to have a **jargon buster** that explains words.

You will also need safe and supportive ways for people to say when **inaccessible** language is being used. You can use a 'red card' or jargon bells. These can be raised or rang when jargon is used. This is a playful way for people to ask for an explanation. Beth Richards is an **activist** who has done lots of work in this area. You can watch Beth's 'I hate you jargon' video on her YouTube channel.

Accessible documents

When making a document **accessible** you will need to think about word use but also length. Have a summary of the whole plan and summary at the head of each section.

Creating **accessible** versions of documents is important. Try to make the following for all your important final documents: **Plain English, screen-reader friendly version** (in PDF and Word formats), **BSL video, Easy Read**, Audio version. Make it clear that people can ask for other versions to be made.





Community engagement

Lots of options to engage

An event that is interesting and **accessible** for one Disabled person can be uninspiring and **inaccessible** for another Disabled person. So it helps to have several different ways for people get involved. Below are some ideas:



Presentations to existing groups: Some existing groups will be happy for you to talk at a meeting.



Stalls: You can ask to run stalls at places where Disabled people go often. For example, doctor's surgeries or supermarkets.



A survey. Make sure it is **accessible** and people can do it on paper or online.



Sharing sessions: You might want to run events on particular issues like public transport, jobs or nature. Invite both Disabled people and theme experts to these sessions. Give the theme experts time to share information, then give Disabled people space to share their **lived experience** of barriers. Then both groups can discuss how work in the area could be better.





When people struggle for ideas

It can sometimes be difficult for people to think of ideas. You are welcome to draw examples from ideas in Bristol's Disabled people's **community climate action plan** to help start people thinking. Sharing sessions (explained above) can also be useful.

Mental health

Talking about **climate change** can be very upsetting. Have ways to look after people. These could include: One-to-one talks with a person with mental health training, group chats, **quiet spaces** for people to go in events when they need space. Any mental health support must use the **Social Model of Disability**.

Pay

Talking about both **climate change** and disability takes a lot of emotional work. This work must be paid for. Give people the option to be paid in vouchers. For shorter **engagement** you can pay for time by things like a meal.

Creative engagement

Food, creativity, play and community can all offer ways into conversation that can make the content easier to handle. Possible creative **engagement** could look like: Community meals, creative writing workshops, or **Forum Theatre** (a form of interactive play where the audience can take part).

Design your creative activities around the **access needs** of people taking part. For example, visual arts may be less **accessible** to many visually impaired people.



Accessibility

When you start to work with Disabled people and for all events you must ask for **access needs**. All meetings must put in place the below:



1. An **accessible** venue. This needs step-free access, **accessible** parking, **accessible** seating, lighting, a **quiet space** and **accessible** toilet.



2. Breaks every hour.



3. Using **Plain English**.



4. **Hybrid meetings**. This means you can join online or in person. Or you can have a separate in person and online event.



5. Online sessions will need to have **captions** on.





Writing the plan

Creating the first draft

Start by typing up all the ideas you have been given in the **engagement** sessions. You can then gather these into the themes sections and sort them into aims and actions.

Working with feedback

After discussing each section the **steering group** will give you a series of ideas or edits to make to the draft.

Once you have a draft plan you can share it at a public event for feedback. Email the full plan out ahead of time. After these events take their feedback and make more edits to the plan.

The **steering group** will then check the plan one last time.

Translations

You will need to **translate** the plan. The versions below are important:



1. **A screen reader friendly Plain English document** in Word and PDF formats: Have some printed copies.



2. **Easy Read**: These can be ordered from a service like [A2i](#). Or learn to write them using [Photosymbols](#).



3. **BSL Video.**



4. **Audio CD:** Also host the audio file online.



5. **Technical version:** Write the main version of the plan in **Plain English** but you might also want to make a **technical** version. This is one that gives the information experts need.



Accessible community summary: Often plans will end up quite long. So it's important to have a short community summary of the most important points so that length doesn't put people off reading it or make it **inaccessible** to some.





Sharing the plan

For the plan to make changes you will need to put it in front of the people who can make them happen and get their support.

Launch

A launch is a great way to celebrate the work that has gone into your plan and raise awareness. Bring together Disabled people and people with power for this event.

Many people with power won't choose to go to an event about Disabled people. So it can help to link your launch with an event that these people already go to.

Getting support for the plan

Once you have a final version of the plan, make a list of people who can share it and how you will contact them. The following people are very useful to contact:



1. Local politicians,



2. Local environmental organisations,



3. Organisations mentioned in the plan,



4. Local disability organisations,



5. Local newspapers and radio,



6. The public.



Guides and resources

Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership has lots of resources they made for the Community Climate Action Project that you might find useful.



Bristol Disabled people's **community climate action plan**: <https://bristolclimatenature.org/projects/community-climate-action/#community-climate-action-plans>



Climate and creativity **insights** report: <https://bristolclimatenature.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Climate-and-Creativity-Insights-Report-Final.pdf>



Capacity building insights report: <https://bit.ly/400HXyt>. (**Capacity building** is building up the skills, knowledge, processes, and resources of people or a group so that they are stronger and more able to do a task.)



Community climate and nature action model: <https://bit.ly/4jBEtth>



Forum theatre video on the **accessibility** of buses: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ztvol2QbWSk>





Jargon Buster

Access needs: What a Disabled person needs so that they can take part fully in an activity.

Accessible: When something is made in a way so that it is good for Disabled people.

Activist: Someone who takes action to try make change happen.

Allies: People who take action for the needs of a community even though they aren't part of it. For example a non disabled person who helps Disabled people.

Asia: Part of the world that is east of Europe and south of Russia.

Branding: How an organisation presents itself. For example the logo and colours they use.

Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership (Partnership): This is an organisation in Bristol, UK. They helped write this plan with their knowledge of working with Disabled people on **climate change**.

BSL: British Sign Language. It uses hand movements to talk. A lot of Deaf people use it.

BSL interpreters: Someone who helps people who use **BSL** to talk with people who don't. Lots of Deaf people use sign language.

Capacity building: Building up the skills, knowledge, processes, and resources of people or a group so that they are stronger and more able to do a task.

Captions: Written text on video with what people are saying.

Clean Air Zones: Areas of a city that older cars have to pay to drive through.

Collaboration: When organisations or people work together to make something happen.

Co-production: Ordinary people working together with experts to create a project.

Community climate action plans: These are plans that communities make on what they can do to be better for the planet, nature and people.

Climate Change: The planet is getting too hot because of how people are using fuels like petrol. This is leading to lots of problems locally and around the world.

Credit: When work that is taken from someone else makes it clear who it was made by and how it has been used.



Crip: This word used to be a mean word about Disabled people. But Disabled people have taken it back to use with pride about how it can be good and powerful to be part of the community of Disabled people.

Disabled People's Organisation: An organisation that works for Disabled people and has mostly Disabled staff.

Disadvantaged: When someone or a group is treated unfairly because of who they are. This can make life harder for them.

Discrimination: When someone is treated unfairly because of the group they are part of. For example, Disabled people being treated unfairly because of their disability.

Easy Read: A document that uses clear language, not many words and pictures to make something easy to understand.

Eco-ableism: When action on **climate change** is unfair to Disabled people.

Emergency: Something dangerous that needs quick action to stay safe. For example a flood or fire.

Emergency preparedness planning: being ready for when disasters happen so people are kept safe.

Engagement: Talking to people to get their ideas on an issue.

Existing health conditions: Difficulties with health that existed before another problem came along.

Flexibility: When something can be changed as is needed.

Forum theatre: A type of play that lets the audience jump on stage to change what happens. It helps people think about how they might act on unfairness in real life.

Glossary: A list of words with explanations.

Heatwaves: When the weather gets dangerously hot.

Hybrid: When a meeting can be joined either online or in person.

Inaccessible: When something is made in a way so that it doesn't meet Disabled people's **access needs**.

Insights: Ideas about something that bring a deep understanding of it.

Impairment: When someone has a difference in their body or mind. When a person is treated unfairly because of this they become disabled.



Inequality: When people are treated unfairly.

Latin America: The south part of America.

Oceania: Islands and land in the Pacific Ocean. It includes Australia and New Zealand.

Plain English: Talking in a way that doesn't use jargon and isn't very complicated so that is **accessible** to most people.

Priority: Something that is highlighted as being really important and one of the first things to take action on.

Quiet space: A separate room that is quiet and kept free of strong smells. People can rest there when things are feeling too much.

Recruiting: The process of deciding who to give a job to then bringing them into an organisation.

Respectful: Treating someone in a way that shows an understanding that they have value.

Responsibilities: When it is someone's role to do something.

Representative: Someone who is speaking on behalf of other people like them or a group.

Screen reader friendly document: When Blind people can access a document because a document is setup to be friendly to the technology they use.

Sensing Climate: One of the projects involved in making this guide. It is looking at how Disabled people can be included in action on **climate change**.

Step-free access: When there are no steps that have to be climbed to get inside a building or place.

Sustainable: Something that is good for the planet because it can be used for a long time without being harmful.

Technical version: A document that gives the detail that experts need.

Template: A document that can be filled in to make another document.

Themes: Areas like transport, energy, nature.

Translations: When something is turned from one language into another. It can also be used for turning a document into **accessible** versions.

Updated: When something old is worked on so that it is good enough for the current moment.

Get in touch contact@bristolclimatenature.org

