Climate and disability resource for local authority green jobs planning

A resource to support local authorities to create sustainable green jobs policy and projects that are equitable for Disabled people

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This document is part of a set of local authority resources developed by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership's Climate and Disability project and the Sensing Climate research project. The Climate and Disability programme is part of the Community Climate Action Project, coordinated by Bristol Climate & Nature Partnership and funded by the National Lottery's Climate Action Fund.
The resources are designed to support local authorities to understand the impact that climate and nature projects can have on their local communities of Disabled people. The resources feature recommended actions that can be taken to make projects inclusive and just for Disabled people. As well as department-specific resources, there are also supplementary resources on co-production and inclusive engagement. We welcome any local authority to use the resources to support their work.

Introduction

With disability comes a need for adaptability and creativity in navigating an uncertain world. These skills are integral to many of the new green jobs that are being created to help protect the environment, including those linked to climate mitigation and

adaptation. Yet, without explicit policy intervention, there are risks that current barriers to employment will be reproduced in who is able to access and participate in the green jobs market and skills training pathways.

By breaking down disabling barriers to green jobs and training programmes, the disability employment gap could be reduced. For the last ten years, there have consistently been around 30% fewer Disabled people in work than non-disabled people in England. By harnessing the opportunity of green jobs, Disabled people could bring key problem-solving skills to complex challenges, including those linked to climate adaptation and mitigation.

It is also important to recognise care-giving roles as green jobs. These jobs sustain the lives of people and the planet, and should be recognised within ambitions to ensure that green jobs are good quality jobs; jobs that support overall worker satisfaction, fair pay, participation and progression, wellbeing, safety and security, voice and autonomy.

To minimise the exclusion of Disabled people from green jobs, it is important to:

- **Break down disabling barriers to green jobs**. As an initial step, opening up such jobs will require significant improvements to the national Access to Work scheme, and more effective enforcement of employer obligations under the Equality Act to prevent discrimination and provide reasonable adjustments for Disabled people in the workplace. Employers creating new green jobs should also work to make their recruitment and workspaces accessible, including lowering technical and language requirements where not necessary for the role.

- **Ensure green jobs skills training and apprenticeship pathways are fully accessible**, with input from Disabled people and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in course design, structure and delivery. As well as traditional centralised (college based) training, offer accessible place-based training for green jobs that connect

in with organisations and services that Disabled people use. Decentralisation of training can make it more inclusive and accessible to communities seeking opportunities local to them, provided the venues used for these courses are fully accessible.

- **Develop local or regional green jobs hubs** – shaped by Disabled people and DPOs – that promote disability-led entrepreneurship and share best practice around green jobs accessibility across different sectors, workplaces and adjustment needs.

- **Value the green voluntary work of Disabled people** by supporting sustained involvement and recompensing their time and energy in ways that do not compromise essential welfare payments (e.g. through vouchers, training, food, relevant gifts).



Credit: ShamPhat Photography

Introducing Meryam

Meryam used to work as an arborist in Turkey before she became unwell with lupus, and unable to manage the physical aspects of the work. She is now in the UK to care for her elderly mother, meaning that she is both a caregiver and care recipient when her symptoms flare. She has a rich knowledge of trees, as well as a deep love of sharing her passion for them, and is very well placed to develop an inclusive training programme for future arborists as part of a local green skills hub that is opening. She initially struggled to get the hub coordinators to understand her needs for an accessible work place, particularly around the unpredictability of her lupus symptoms and care responsibilities. However, they have been working together, along with members of the local DPO, over the last year to develop an inclusive training programme with flexibility around her own health needs and responsibilities too.

(Meryam is a fictional composite character taken from the real lived experiences of multiple Disabled people.)



Key questions for planning

- **Have you conducted an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) on your green jobs plans?**

- **If so:**
    - Have you considered impairment-specific effects? E.g. barriers around chronic and long-term health conditions leading to the need for flexible working, barriers experienced by some neurodivergent people to working in offices?
    - Have you taken intersectionality into account? E.g. being disabled and from a global majority background leading to two types of prejudice and unconscious bias from potential employers.
    - Have you worked with a pan-impairment Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) to review and feed into the EqIA to identify potential gaps?
    - Have other organisations fed in from the perspective of communities who may not specifically identify as Disabled but who often experience high levels of impairment or illness? E.g. people who are homeless or van dwellers?
    - Have you set out tangible actions to address any identified gaps in the plans?

- **If not:**
    - Could you resource a DPO to review your green job plans to identify gaps?
    - Could you involve DPO representatives within an equalities partnership to embed such insights and EqIA processes into your long-term green jobs planning and monitoring?

- **Have you designed specific pathways for Disabled people into training and green jobs?**

- **Do your projects have ringfenced budgets to support the access needs of Disabled people?**

- **Are you recognising and affirming the potential of Disabled people in all your green jobs projects and acknowledging them as a key audience? E.g. Does your training for self-employed workers consider the needs of Disabled freelancers?**
  - Do your projects to support people into work, acknowledge and support the needs of Disabled people? E.g. Do your bike-to-work schemes cover the additional costs of adapted bikes?

- **Have you established effective links with other Council departments and agencies involved in green jobs planning? e.g. working with your combined authority for funding?**

Areas to prioritise

- Make sure that Disabled people are a priority community for green jobs.
- Value the work of Disabled people including voluntary work.
- Educate Disabled people about climate change.

Read the full list of actions to consider around disability and green jobs in Bristol's community climate action plan by and for Disabled people.



Further resources

- International Labour Organisation 'Persons with disabilities in a just transition to a low-carbon economy' policy brief: https://www.ilo.org/publications/persons-disabilities-just-transition-low-carbon-economy-1
- International Labour Organisation '"Nothing about us without us" – Realizing disability rights through a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies' policy brief: https://www.ilo.org/publications/nothing-about-us-without-us-realizing-disability-rights-through-just
- International Labour Organisation 'Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the digital and green economy' report: https://www.ilo.org/publications/inclusion-persons-disabilities-digital-and-green-economy
- 'Disability Inclusion in the Green Economy: A Scoping Review of Challenges, Barriers and Opportunities' in Journal of Green Economy and Low-Carbon Development: https://library.acadlore.com/JGELCD/2024/3/4/JGELCD_03.04_01.pdf
- Women's Environment Network report, 'A Green and Caring Economy': https://www.wen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/A-Green-and-Caring-Economy-Report-FINAL-1.pdf

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