



**Midlas**

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**Building Resilient Communities**

## **DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN**

**2015 – 2020**

Upon request, this document can be provided in alternative formats.

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## Acknowledgement of Country

Midlas acknowledges that we are working in Whadjuk country and pay respect to Elders and all Noongar people, past and present.

## Introduction

Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service Inc (Midlas) is a Community Legal Centre based in Midland providing services to people throughout the north east region of Perth. Having supported people in our community for over three decades, Midlas has a long-standing strong commitment to improving lives.

### **Vision**

Building resilient communities

### **Mission**

We partner with individuals and organisations to promote independence, strength and wellbeing in our community through support, advocacy and education

### **Values**

Caring for people  
Developing partnerships  
Supporting our community

## Functions, facilities and services provided by Midlas

Midlas currently offers free services in six key areas: financial counselling; emergency relief; family and domestic violence legal services; tenancy advocacy; disability advocacy; and community education. These services are funded by the State and Commonwealth Government; LotteryWest; and Public Purposes Trust. All Midlas services operate through raising awareness in the community, outreach, and preventative strategies, in addition to one-to-one and family support.

### **Financial Counselling**

Financial Counsellors offer assistance, advocacy and education. The Financial Counsellors help with issues ranging from personal budgeting skills through to debt management and bankruptcy support. They also negotiate with creditors when required and seek to provide options to enhance regulation of finances.

### **Emergency Relief**

As part of the wider financial services, Midlas provides some emergency relief to people in immediate need, including food vouchers and assistance with rent arrears.

### **Legal Service**

Midlas provides a family law service and provides legal advice and assistance for victims of domestic violence and assistance in applications for criminal injuries compensation.

## **Disability Advocacy**

Midlas provides individual advocacy and support to people with disability; their families and carers. Disability Advocates support people with disability to engage in full and equal enjoyment of their human rights and ensure their voice is heard when accessing services, funding and participating in their community.

## **Tenancy Advocacy**

Midlas provides individual and family advocacy for tenants ranging from private and public renters to those experiencing homelessness. Tenant Advocates negotiate with property managers to sustain existing tenancies; help to obtain new properties; and assist in securing emergency and crisis accommodation for people who are, or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

## **Community Education**

Midlas provides community education on financial literacy; domestic violence; family law; the rights of people with disabilities; navigating the support system; tenants' rights and responsibilities. Community education is provided in schools; community hubs; forums; and through local authorities.

## **People with disability within Midlas**

Midlas workers work with a wide scope of people who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. These can include:

- People with disability/health conditions including intellectual, physical, sensory and speech, mental health and neurological disabilities.
- Parents and guardians of people with disability.

Over the period of 1 July 2016 – 30 June 2017, Disability Advocates opened 245 case files for clients with disability or for parents/guardians of a person with disability. On average, most clients lived independently or with a partner and/or children, predominantly in government housing. Most clients received some sort of Centrelink income, usually Disability Support Pension or New Start Allowance.

For this period, the presenting issues that arose most frequently were:

- Discrimination/Rights
- Finances
- Health/Mental Health
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- Services
- Recreation/Social or Family
- Vulnerable/Isolated

## Planning for better access

According to the 2016 Census (ABS 2016) the following statistics are true of Midlas Disability Advocate service areas:

<b>Local Government Area</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>People with Disability</b>	<b>% of Population</b>
Town of Bassendean	15, 092	771	5.11%
City of Swan	133, 851	4, 874	3.64%
Shire of Kalamunda	57, 449	2, 068	3.60%
Shire of Mundaring	38, 157	1, 404	3.68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>244, 549</b>	<b>9, 117</b>	<b>3.73%</b>

## Policy Statement for Access and Inclusion

Midlas are committed to providing an inclusive and accessible service for people with disability, their families and carers. We recognise that in order for Midlas to maximise its effectiveness we must employ strategies to allow potential clients with barriers to access our services. Midlas interprets an accessible service as one that is open and available to all people with disability, allowing them the same opportunities as anyone within the general community to access Midlas services.

Midlas is committed to the seven outcomes set out within its DAIP. These are:

1. People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by Midlas.
2. People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of Midlas.
3. People with disability receive information from Midlas in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. People with disability received the same level and quality of service from the worker as any other client who engages with Midlas.
5. People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to Midlas.
6. People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation run by Midlas.
7. People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with Midlas.

## Development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

### Responsibility for the planning process

The General Manager will oversee the development, implementation, review and evaluation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP). This DAIP has been approved by the Midlas Board of Management.

The General Manager will hold responsibility for implementation of the DAIP. Workers are responsible for ensuring that actions are being implemented, relevant to their service.

### **Consultation process**

Process includes:

- Examination of the current DAIP and reports gathered on what has been achieved and what objectives remain to be completed or altered;
- Consultation with workers;
- Survey\* completed by clients engaged with Disability Advocates;
- Survey\* available through the Midlas web site;
- Survey\* completed by Midlas partnership organisations;
- Public notice displayed in local community newspapers.

\*See Appendix A for copy of 'DAIP Review Survey'

### **Findings of consultation**

The review and consultation found that a number of initial strategies in the previous DAIP still needed to be addressed and a revised plan was required to address access and inclusion barriers for people with disability.

An updated Midlas Policy Manual has been completed to comply with the National Standards for Disability Services and does achieve some of the strategies set out in the previous DAIP. This policy manual contains an 'Accessible Services Policy' which is in line with National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) Standard 5 for Service Access and the National Association of Community Legal Centres accreditation scheme as well as relevant legislation such as the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Disability Services Act 1986*. Staff were involved in the development of the Policy Manual and are aware of the policies related to access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Barriers to access that were identified in the consultation were:

- Lack of privacy in interview rooms and issues around confidentiality;
- Suitability of rooms for people with disability;
- Difficulty in accessing the service - in particular booking appointments;
- Access to building e.g. parking;
- Limited information about Midlas services' publicly available and in accessible easy-to-read formats.

## **Responsibility for implementing the DAIP**

It is a requirement under state government funding that Midlas must implement a DAIP to promote an accessible and inclusive service for people with disability. The Disability Access Inclusion Plan Strategies 2015 – 2020 highlight what strategies are required to improve access and inclusion for people with disability

## **Communicating the DAIP to Midlas workers and people with disability**

On 5 November 2015 the DAIP was approved by the Midlas Board of Management. The DAIP is available on Midlas website and copies are available to the community on request and in alternative formats if required.

The completed DAIP was discussed at Midlas team meetings to ensure that all workers were aware of the DAIP and the strategies that needed to be achieved.

## **Review and evaluation mechanisms**

The DAIP will be reviewed every five years. It will be amended on a regular basis if required to reflect the progress of implementation and in line with any legislative changes.

The General Manager will conduct an annual audit of the DAIP and incorporate information from client feedback and complaints, feedback received from agencies and any other input.

<b>DAIP Endorsement</b>			
<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Ratified</b>	<b>Next Review</b>
5 Yearly	Board of Management	November 2015	November 2020
	Board of Management	Amended September 2017	November 2020

## Disability Access Inclusion Plan 2015 – 2020 Strategies

### Outcome 1

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Clients who cannot call to book appointments to be encouraged to contact Midlas electronically, through the National Relay Service or through a referral from a family member/carer or organisation.	Ongoing
Ensure events that are organised are advertised in a way that is easy to understand and when possible, easy English information can be provided. People with disability are given the opportunity to inform Midlas of any accessibility requirements. Attendees are given clear instructions on how to register their attendance including electronically or over the phone.	Ongoing
Events should be wheelchair accessible with clear entry/exit points, accessible toilet facilities and clients encouraged to bring carers or family members if required. When requested, additional access requirements to be facilitated e.g. hearing loops or Auslan interpreters.	Ongoing
For people with vision or hearing impairments, presenters should ensure that information is widely accessible. If a Power Point or video is used, the speaker should ensure that the information is adequately described.	Ongoing
Use of Disability Services Commission “Accessible Events Checklist” to inform event planning	Ongoing
People with disability are involved in the planning and delivery of events where possible.	Ongoing
Workers to use an interpreting service when required during meetings with clients.	Ongoing



## Outcome 2

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
In conjunction with building management Midlas aims to meet prescribed standards for access requirements for people with disability under “The Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2010.”	Ongoing
New or current developments to the Midlas building continue to provide access to people with disability Any visible access issues such as obstructions to the outside walkway are reported to relevant Council.	Ongoing
Ongoing commitment to providing information to Building Manager as required in relation to identified barriers to access for people with disability	Ongoing
To improve access to reception if needed, receptionist can ask for an Advocates’ assistance to assist the person with disability to book an appointment.	Ongoing
All reasonable actions need to be taken to ensure there are no barriers for people with disability booking an appointment. This can include using the National Relay Service or writing/emailing the appointment information. Advocates are to ensure that when appropriate or requested, clients with disability are reminded about follow up appointments through SMS/email.	Ongoing
Home visits to be arranged for clients who have difficulty in accessing the building due to their disability or unable to use public transport. Taxi vouchers made available to clients who can only access Midlas office via taxi transport	Ongoing.
If available, client interviews can be held in a vacant office to ensure privacy is maintained.	Ongoing
Ensure Midlas workers are aware of facilities available to people with disability including toilets, access ramps and lamps.	Ongoing
Completion of “Monthly Building Checklist” to highlight areas of concern relating to access for people with disability	Monthly
When booking appointments Midlas reception to investigate how many people will be attending the appointment and whether there are any accessibility requirements. This is to ensure that the Disability Advocacy room is not too crowded which may impact easy access in/out of the room.	Ongoing
People with disability have the opportunity to provide feedback about accessibility within the Client Feedback Survey which is completed at the initial appointment.	Ongoing

### Outcome 3

People with disability receive information from Midlas in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Easy English forms are available for clients during appointments.	Ongoing
Information provided during appointments is tailored to the needs of the person with disability. For example – writing documents in easy English and providing them as a Word document that is accessible with a screen reader.	Ongoing
Information presented at front desk reception to be presented in an Easy English format.	Ongoing
If needed, information can be provided at the client’s request to a parent/carer to further understanding of Advocates’ role or actions to be completed.	
Midlas workers are aware of where to access forms in alternative formats.	Ongoing
Ensure website is user friendly and strives to meet the W3C Web Content Accessibility guidelines.	Ongoing
Ensure website is updated regularly with accurate and current information.	Ongoing

### Outcome 4

People with disability receive the same level and quality of service from the workers as any other client who engages with Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Determine training needs of workers and develop Professional Development Plans.	Reviewed during worker annual appraisal
Ensure continuous improvement of workers knowledge and skills in order to provide quality services for people with disability	Ongoing
All workers review and adhere to the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan as stated in Job Description Framework and policy manual.	Ongoing

## Outcome 5

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
'External Feedback and Complaints Policy' is reviewed by General Manager and is accessible for all clients.	Reviewed every 4 years Ongoing
Workers are to be informed of any changes to the complaints and feedback policy. Workers are trained on handling complaints and aware of protocols for delegation.	Ongoing
Midlas fosters a culture in which feedback/complaints are seen as an opportunity for improvement. Clients can easily provide feedback and make complaints using a variety of methods, including through the Suggestion Box in the reception, via verbal feedback or with assistance of a support person/Advocate..	Ongoing
All clients invited to participate in Client Feedback Survey at initial meeting and at close of file. Workers to assist client when appropriate and if needed provide the survey in an alternative format.	Ongoing

## Outcome 6

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation run by Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Involve people with disability in consultation for policy and procedures and relevant submissions.	Ongoing
Workers to use a variety of communication methods for engaging people with disability including online, telephone and post.	Ongoing

## Outcome 7

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Midlas management are aware of additional assistance or reasonable adjustments people with disability may require to ensure they can meet the inherent requirements of their job. This includes JobAccess, Disability Employment Services, the Employment Assistance Fund and the National Disability Resource Coordinator.	Ongoing
When needed, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans are created to ensure employees who require additional assistance due to their disability are supported during an emergency.	Ongoing
Recruitment and retention practices reviewed to ensure that they are non-discriminatory. This includes job descriptions which are easy to read, interview is held in an accessible venue and applicant is asked whether they require any additional assistance.	Ongoing
Workers are aware of the free Employee Assistance Program and provided information during orientation.	Ongoing
Inclusion of an Equal Employment Opportunity statement when advertising positions.	Ongoing
Midlas Policy and Procedure Manual demonstrates commitment to equality and human rights and fair/equitable recruitment and retention practices.	Ongoing
Midlas management and workers are aware of responsibilities under the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (Commonwealth).	Ongoing

## **Acknowledgement**

Midlas acknowledges the input received from the individuals and group within the community that have assisted with the preparation for this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

## **References**

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>

## Appendix A

# Disability Access Inclusion Plan Review Survey



Midlas are updating their Disability Action Inclusion Plan (DAIP) and would appreciate your feedback on accessing our services and areas for improvement.

1. Are you aware that Midlas had disability Access and Inclusion Plan?

Yes / No

2. Are you: (tick that all apply to you)

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> A person with disability | <input type="radio"/> A family member, carer or friend |
| <input type="radio"/> A support worker (paid)  | <input type="radio"/> A member of the public           |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)   |  |

3. Are you aware of any BARRIERS experienced by people with disability engaging with Midlas?  
Yes / No / Unsure

Comments:

4. How would you rate the physical access to Midlas buildings and facilities for people with disability?

Please include suggestions to increase access.



Excellent



Good



Average



Poor



Very Poor

Comments:

5. How would you rate the information that is available about Midlas? (This can include written materials, signage and website)



Excellent



Good



Average



Poor



Very Poor

Comments:

6. How would you rate the overall level of access and inclusion for people with disability by Midlas?



Excellent



Good



Average



Poor



Very Poor

Comments:

7. What do you think Midlas could do to help build a more inclusive and welcoming environment for people with disability?

Comments:

8. Would you like to be consulted in the future about access and inclusion issues for Midlas? If so, please provide your contact details below.