

# Newcastle Street Charter



# Foreward - by Councillor Joyce McCarty



Disabled people face barriers getting around the city. Even in familiar places, getting from one place to another can be a bit like navigating an obstacle course if you are a disabled person.

While some things can be difficult to change, other obstacles can be removed by all of us thinking about what we do, where we park our cars, how we ride our bicycles and if we really need to leave our bin in the street.

Newcastle City Council wants to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels safe, secure and able to participate fully in life in the city.

The City Council is committed to working with disabled people and others to make our city more accessible to all.

I am delighted that together, working with disabled people, I can set out the aim to ensure the council works towards being an accessible city.

The first step is to deliver the Newcastle Street Charter and I hope that residents and visitors will feel they receive a warm and friendly welcome here in Newcastle.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joyce McCarty".

**Councillor Joyce McCarty**  
**Deputy Leader of Newcastle City Council**

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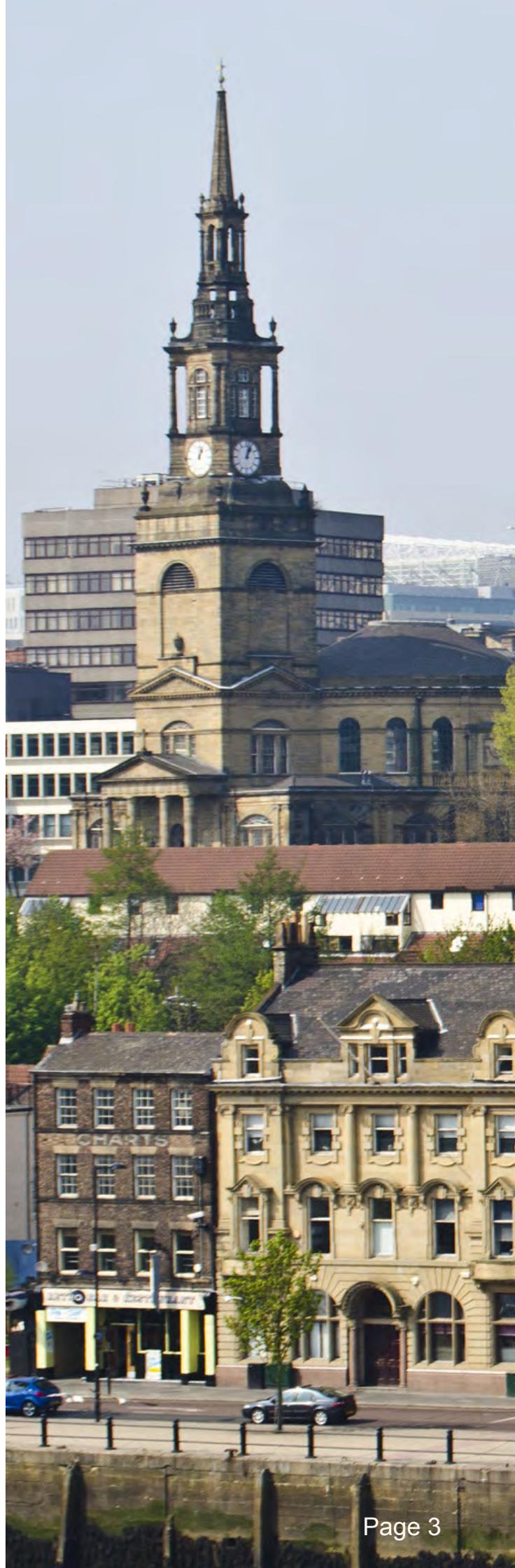
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## Introduction

The Newcastle Street Charter was initiated and led by blind and partially sighted people and local sight loss organisations. It has been developed in consultation and with the support of disabled people and other groups and organisations in the city. These include:

- RNIB
- Newcastle Vision Support
- Guide Dogs for the Blind
- Newcastle Disability Forum
- Newcastle Disabled Employee Network
- Elders Council
- Friends Action North East
- Dementia Care
- Disability North
- UNISON Disabled Members
- Deaflink

Our Street Charter is divided into sections that highlight the main issues disabled people face when negotiating the built environment in Newcastle. It aims to remove or reduce the barriers that disabled people and others with mobility issues face in our city and sets out actions and commitments that everyone involved will abide by.

## Engagement

To help us to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, Newcastle City Council will involve disabled people and other groups and organisations when considering:

- new developments that need planning permission;
- changes to the built environment such as shared space schemes; and
- the design and implementation of street furniture.

We will make every effort to include groups that represent blind and partially sighted people in these consultations and on the city's disability access forum, as people with sight loss face unique barriers in the built environment.



## Reporting systems

Newcastle City Council aims to provide accessible reporting systems so disabled people can report issues such as temporary street obstructions, including street furniture or overgrown shrubbery and broken crossings where audible beeps or tactile cones aren't working.

We recognise that online reporting systems are not accessible to all disabled people so we provide alternative methods to report issues such as telephone and face to face reporting.





## New developments: Shared spaces

Newcastle City Council wants to make our streets safer for everyone who uses them. We recognise that shared spaces can cause difficulties for disabled people.

Sharing a space with a vehicle, when you cannot either see it or the driver, is not only disconcerting but very frightening for blind and partially sighted people.

Disabled people rely on crossings, kerbs and tactile paving to move around the city safely and removing these can have a serious impact.

### Newcastle City Council will work with disabled people to:

- assess existing shared spaces and, where potential issues to safety are agreed, take mitigating action which could include reintroducing kerbs and controlled crossings;
- make sure new developments, including shared space schemes, are safe for disabled people and, where necessary, make changes to the proposed schemes; and
- owing to the specific and significant barriers faced take additional steps to make sure blind and partially sighted people are fully consulted on all shared space proposals.

## Advertising Boards

Advertising or 'A' boards can obstruct the pavement and be a trip or collision hazard, particularly for people with mobility issues who may find it difficult to navigate their way around the city.

Temporary and mobile 'A' boards are potentially dangerous for blind and partially sighted people as it is difficult to know where they are located to avoid walking into them.



## Street and café furniture

Street and café furniture such as tables and chairs, hanging baskets, bollards and lamp posts can be practical and desirable but if they are overused or poorly placed and managed, they can be obstacles to disabled people moving around our city.



## Newcastle City Council will:

- take a robust enforcement approach towards 'A' boards on pavements;
- raise awareness of the issues and our policies relating to 'A' boards and street furniture;
- use the licensing process to make sure all licensed café furniture, such as tables and chairs, is adequately guarded and does not cause a hazard;
- provide guidance for street marketers and street entertainers on how and where they can operate.



## Crossings

Disabled people need to be able to cross the road and move between the pavement and road safely to live and participate in our city.

Disabled people may have different needs at crossing points and good, well maintained crossings can help disabled people maintain their independence.

We aim to improve crossings for everyone in the city by complying with agreed standards

### Newcastle City Council will:

- adopt and enforce national guidance on the use of visual displays, audible beeps, rotating cones, tactile paving, and dropped kerbs;
- consult disabled people's groups before introducing new courtesy crossings; and
- take steps to make sure blind and partially sighted people's groups are fully consulted when introducing new crossings, due to the specific and significant barriers faced.



## Taxis and assistance dogs

Some disabled people need an assistance dog when they are out and about in our city and sometimes they may need to use a taxi or private hire vehicle to get from place to place.

It is against the law for a driver of a taxi or private hire vehicle to refuse to carry a passenger with an assistance dog unless they are exempt on medical grounds. It is also unlawful to charge or attempt to charge a passenger with an assistance dog more than travelling without one.



### Newcastle City Council will:

- continue to have a zero tolerance policy on refusals to carry assistance dogs;
- investigate all reports of refusals to carry assistance dogs;
- consider opportunities for carrying out spot checks with owners of assistance dogs;
- make it a licensing condition that taxi and private hire vehicle drivers must complete a disability awareness training course that includes a section on the law relating to assistance dogs; and
- only issue medical exemptions on receipt of appropriate medical evidence.

## Parking on pavements

Drivers who park on the pavement fail to realise the consequences of blocking the footpath.

If there isn't enough space disabled people, older people or those walking with or pushing children in a pram or buggy could be in danger if they are forced to walk on the road.

Blind and partially sighted people are also at risk of colliding with a vehicle if they are unable to see it.



### Newcastle City Council will:

- work with the police to use powers in the Highways Act and other legislation to keep pavements clear of obstructions caused by parked cars; and
- work with the police, disabled people and the blind and partially sighted community to promote awareness of the dangers of parking on pavements



## Cycling on pavements

Cycling on a pavement can be dangerous and is an offence unless there is signage showing it is allowed.

Cyclists may be confident that they won't hit anyone but people with mobility issues including disabled people, older people or those with children can be frightened that they can't move out of the way when they see a cyclist coming towards them.

Blind and partially sighted people are at additional risk as they are unable to see the cycle, while those with dual sensory or hearing loss would not hear a warning bell and could walk into the path of the cycle unaware of the danger.

### Newcastle City Council will:

- make sure that pavements where cyclists can legally ride are clearly signed; and
- raise awareness of the dangers of riding a cycle on the pavement and encourage all road users to respect each other.

## Wheelie bins and recycling bags



Like most other local authorities we ask residents to put their wheelie bins on the highway to be collected but we recognise that when these are left on the pavement this can cause difficulties for disabled people who cannot get along the street.

### Newcastle City Council will:

- encourage residents to leave their bins in an accessible area off the pavement or, if this is not possible, against a wall;
- encourage those with communal bins to dispose of their rubbish in the correct place;
- make sure our bin crews return the bins to a safe place; and
- work with partners to help people understand why it is so important to store bins as safely as possible.

## Overhanging branches and shrubs

Overhanging shrubbery and branches can cause difficulties for disabled people getting around their local area. These can be undetectable to blind and partially sighted people who may sustain injuries from walking into them.

### Newcastle City Council will:

- respond quickly to reports of overgrown shrubbery and branches by alerting the residents or taking action if a property is council owned or managed; and
- run awareness campaigns to inform residents of the dangers of overgrown trees and shrubbery and encourage them to be considerate in their management.



## Monitoring

Newcastle City Council is committed to monitoring the outcomes and impact of the actions in this Street Charter. We will publish this information annually as part of our Public Sector Equality Duty reporting process.

Signed: Joyce McCarty

Date: 18 December 2017

**Councillor Joyce McCarty**  
**Deputy Leader, Newcastle City Council**



