



Lead Toolkit

A guide for employing disabled people



DISABILITY

CONFIDENT

It's easy. Just ask.

Disabled people are a fabulous untapped talent pool of loyal and committed employees. They bring a perspective that can help transform a business' culture, customer relations and performance for the better.



Lead Toolkit

A guide for employing disabled people



Busting the myths about disabled employees



Myth 1

Providing accommodations for disabled people is expensive.



Fact 1

Most disabled people don't need anything different to perform their jobs, and for those who do, the cost is usually minimal. Only 10% of disabled workers under the age of 65 reported that they had modifications or specialist equipment in their workplace. The most common reasonable accommodation is flexible working arrangements. An Australian study found that accommodations for disabled people are financially cost-neutral or cost-beneficial to the business as a whole.¹

Technology has also removed many barriers faced by disabled people, enabling more people to reach their full potential.



Myth 2

Disabled employees are a greater health and safety risk than employees without disabilities.



Fact 2

Evidence shows that disabled employees have fewer health and safety issues, because in managing their impairment they have developed strategies to address health and safety risks. In fact, the Australian study found that disabled employees averaged one-sixth the recorded occupational health and safety incidents of non-disabled employees. They were also cheaper to maintain in employment (because of lower recruitment, safety and insurance costs).

1. Graffam, J., Smith, K., Shinkfield, A. and Polzin, U. (2002). *Employer benefits and costs of employing someone with a disability*. Melbourne: Institute of Disability Studies, Deakin University. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 17, 251-263.

**Myth 3**

Disabled employees have a higher absentee rate than employees without disabilities.

**Fact 3**

Studies show that disabled people actually have lower rates of absenteeism, with the Australian study finding that they were absent from work 85% less than their colleagues without disabilities.

**Myth 4**

The Human Rights Act 1993 forces employers to hire unqualified disabled individuals.

**Fact 4**

An individual must first meet all requirements for a job and be able to perform its essential functions with reasonable accommodations. Support Funds can be used for reasonable accommodation and training. If at any point in the selection process it becomes apparent that a candidate cannot perform the core requirements for the job, then, regardless of whether they are disabled or not, the business is under no obligation to hire them.

**Myth 5**

Under the Employment Relations Act 2002, an employer cannot terminate the employment of a disabled employee.

**Fact 5**

Employers can terminate employment of disabled employee under three conditions:

1. The termination is unrelated to the disability, or
2. The employee does not meet legitimate requirements for the job, such as performance or production standards, with a reasonable accommodation, or
3. The employee poses a direct threat to health or safety in the workplace because of their disability.

Contents

1	About this Toolkit	5
	What is disability?	6
	How this Toolkit can help you	8
2	Employing disabled people - committed leadership	11
	A 5-step plan for becoming an inclusive business	12
	Buy in	14
	Understand	14
	Develop	15
	Identify	16
	Monitor	17
	The benefits of employing disabled people	18
3	The Employment Cycle – advice for hiring and people managers	25
	The Employment Cycle – for hiring and people managers	26
	Recruitment	28
	Induction	33
	Development	34
	Performance management	35
	Retention	36
4	Advice for people managers	39
	An inclusive workplace	40
	Reasonable accommodation	42
	Useful tools to assist managers with creating an inclusive workplace	46
	Health and safety tips	49
	Technology tips	51
5	Conclusion	53
	Checklist	56



About this Toolkit



1.1

What is disability?

**Nearly 1 in 4
New Zealanders
identifies as
having a disability.**

There are many different kinds of disability – including physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health related.

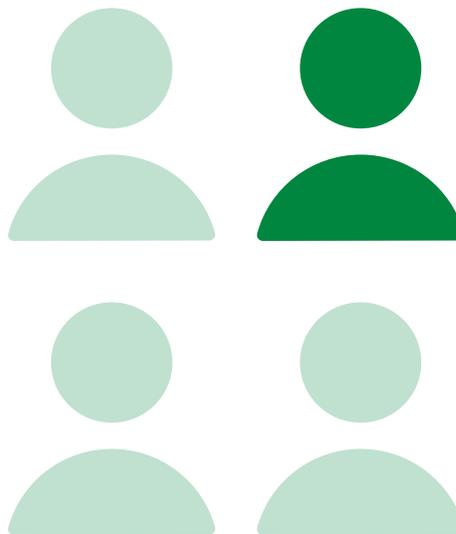
A disability may be visible or hidden, permanent or temporary and could have a minor or major impact on a person's life. A disability may affect mobility, ability to learn, ability to see or ability to communicate easily.



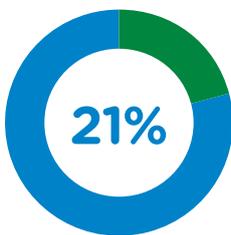
Who are disabled people?

Disabled people are throughout our community: men, women, and children; employers and employees; students and teachers; people of all ethnicities and religions; customers and citizens.

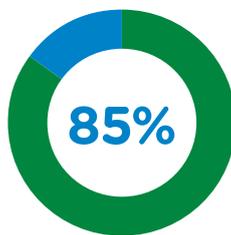
No two people are the same, and no two people with the same disability experience it in the same way.



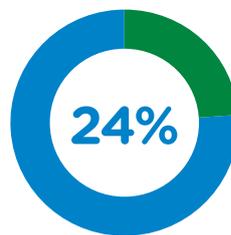
The facts



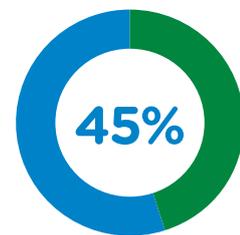
21% of people aged 15 to 64 years are disabled.



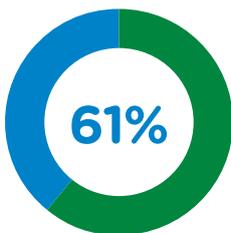
85% of disabled 15 to 64 year olds are not disabled at birth.



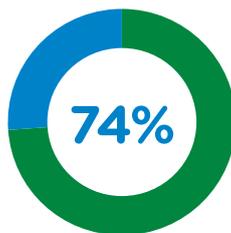
24% of people in New Zealand are disabled.



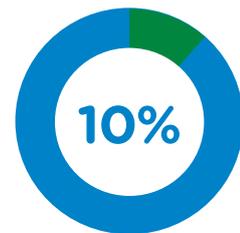
45% of disabled adults are employed compared with 72% of non-disabled adults.



61% of disabled people aged 15 to 64 were working in paid jobs in 2013.



74% of those who weren't employed said they would like to work if a job was available



Only 10% of disabled staff require modification to their work area or equipment to help them do their job. (Labour market findings from 2013 NZ Census)

1.2

How this Toolkit can help you

This is a 'how to' Toolkit for employing disabled people.

Disabled people are a fabulous untapped talent pool of loyal and committed employees. They bring a perspective that can help transform a business's culture, customer relations and performance for the better.

This Toolkit contains a range of information and resources for business owners, leadership teams, managers and human resources teams to help them employ disabled people within their businesses.



Leadership

Disabled people account for 24% of the New Zealand population.² Taking the lead in increasing the number of disabled people employed will enhance your reputation and assist you to be more customer-centred.

This Toolkit explains how management teams can drive the change within their own companies, as well as the benefits for why they should.



Employers

Employers have a responsibility to attract the best possible candidates, including disabled people, for roles within their businesses. This Toolkit provides advice about how to ensure that your recruitment process provides access to the talent pool of disabled people.



Managers

Managers need to attract the best people to their teams. Disabled people are a fabulous pool of untapped talent of loyal and committed employees. An important part of any manager's role is getting the best from all employees, including disabled employees.

This Toolkit builds managers' confidence to recruit the best people for their jobs, including disabled people. It also helps managers to work effectively with all employees by using an adaptive and flexible management style, so all staff can reach their full potential.

2. this information is sourced from stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/health/disabilities/DisabilitySurvey_HOTP2013.aspx



2

Employing disabled people - committed leadership



2.1

A 5-step plan for becoming an inclusive business

1

2

3

4

5

This 5-step plan outlines a framework for how to become an inclusive business

This section provides employers and business owners with important tools on how to provide a clear commitment to employing and retaining disabled people. It outlines both how this can be achieved and why it is beneficial for their business.

This 5-step plan³ outlines a framework for becoming an inclusive business. It has been written with large companies in mind. However, smaller business can modify this to suit their needs.

- 1 Buy in**
- 2 Understand**
- 3 Develop**
- 4 Identify**
- 5 Monitor**

3. This was originally developed by the Employers' Disability Network.

Step 1

Buy in



A successful business owner has a strong and clear approach to increasing the employment of disabled people. Such an approach should be reflected throughout the business.

This approach should include:

- Developing a business case for employing disabled people. (Full details about building a business case is set out in section 2 of this Toolkit.)
- Amending the business's diversity policy to include disability. (The Ministry of Social Development's diversity policy is a good example to refer to.)
- Developing an accessibility plan as part of your diversity framework. Westpac have a great example of an accessibility plan.

westpac.com.au/docs/rtf/about-westpac/2013_AAP_RTF_FINAL.rtf

Step 2

Understand



Identify what progress your business has made in creating an inclusive environment for disabled people and which areas require further development, using a checklist. You could use this checklist to rate the organisation's ability to attract and retain disabled people.

Get the "Checklist for assessing an organisation's ability to attract and retain disabled people" at:

ssc.govt.nz/Lead/Checklist

Step 3

Develop



The information from the checklist can be used to develop your action plan:

Accessibility – Make your environment accessible, including facilities, information and IT

Disability responsiveness training – Build your understanding of disability

Recruitment – Recruit more disabled people

Retaining your existing employees – Keep your disabled staff, including those who acquire a disability while working for you

Data on the number of disabled employees – Measure how many disabled people you already employ by conducting a confidential staff survey.

Step 4

Identify



A number of organisations can provide support and assistance to disabled employees or can help you recruit disabled people for available positions:

Workbridge – is a not-for-profit organisation that can assist you with finding disabled employees, providing you with advice and support on recruitment and follow-up support after hiring. They also administer Support Funds which can help with additional costs. workbridgeincorporated.virtuozzo.co.nz/

Supported Employment agencies – are organisations that can assist you with finding disabled employees, providing you with advice and support on recruitment and follow-up support after hiring. The list of Supported Employment agencies in your region can be seen at nzdsn.org.nz/directory/

JobCafe's Possibility website – has an 'available now' section where employers can view profiles of disabled people seeking employment. For a fee organisations can also become recruitment partners allowing them to advertise jobs and access a talent pool and other tools on the JobCafe website. jobcafe.co.nz

ACC – can help with modifications and provide advice about how to assist employees who have acquired a disability return to work. acc.co.nz

Work and Income – can provide a modification grant, work brokers to help you find employees with the right skills, or provide wage subsidies. workandincome.govt.nz

Other information resources are also available to employers, such as help from other employers. Your organisation could learn from others' successes by:

- reading other employers' success stories about how they have successfully employed disabled people.
- joining employer networks for employers who share the vision of improving the use of the resources offered by disabled people. beaccessible.org.nz

Step 5

Monitor



The Checklist will provide the business with a tool to monitor improvements. This information can be used to update your Action Plan.

One important measure in the checklist is knowing how many disabled employees are in your workforce. If you conduct a confidential staff survey, you can use the result as a benchmark. By conducting regular surveys, you can then track your progress at increasing the number of disabled employees within your business.

How you measure the number of disabled people employed in your organisation is a challenging question. The Australian Disability Network has developed a report which includes a survey that can be used with employees.

below are links to the report and an associated video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1-0Mz1i4_k

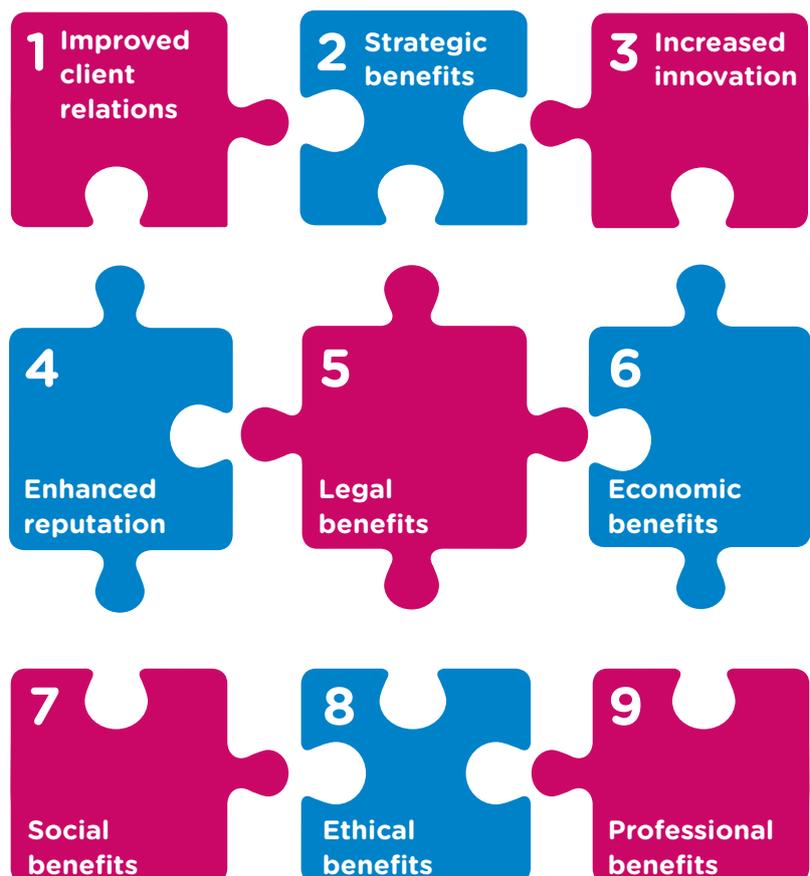
<http://www.and.org.au/pages/sharing-and-monitoring-disability-information.html>

2.2

The benefits of employing disabled people

Employing disabled people allows businesses to attract new skills and gain new and valuable perspectives.

Employing disabled people not only increases the level of talent, but gains loyal and committed employees. There are many ways in which businesses can benefit from employing disabled people.



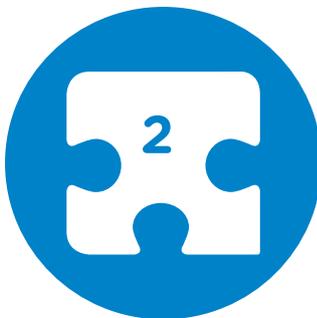


Improved customer relations

A workforce that better reflects New Zealand's diversity provides a 'real' perspective of what services meet a wide spectrum of needs. Disabled customers and their families/whānau, friends and colleagues want services that meet their needs. All customers prefer to deal with staff who genuinely understand their situation.

Employing disabled people will help your business to:

- understand their customers
- mirror your market
- build positive relationships with customers
- respond appropriately to disabled customers' needs
- design and deliver appropriate services for all customers.



Strategic benefits

By employing more disabled people, businesses will:

- make the most of the available talent
- gain more diversity of perspectives
- understand how disability affects people and their interaction with their world
- create products and services which are responsive to their disabled customers' needs
- develop new strategies to attract and retain qualified staff.



Increased innovation

Disabled people bring unique experiences and understanding which can transform a workplace and enhance customer services.

Benefits include:

- more efficient and effective business processes
- the use of talent in innovative ways to increase productivity
- a broader range of perspectives leading to an increased flow of ideas.



Enhanced reputation

Employing disabled people also enhances a business's reputation. This is because New Zealanders recognise and appreciate that the business understands and represents the full diversity of the New Zealand population.

A failure to represent this diversity may lead to a business being viewed as 'out of touch'.

Legal benefits

Legal compliance is a key aspect of responsible business.





Economic benefits

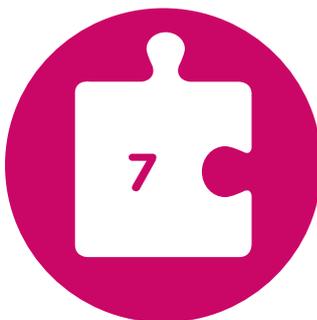
Employing disabled people will help a business to manage costs and optimise productivity.

Employing disabled people helps a business to:

- improve productivity through innovative and effective ways of doing business
- minimise hiring costs by accessing untapped talent
- increase retention – particularly because studies have shown that disabled people are loyal employees with higher retention rates⁴
- reduce induction and training costs.

Benefits to the New Zealand economy include:

- disabled people contributing to the economy through taxes
- ensuring greater economic equality.

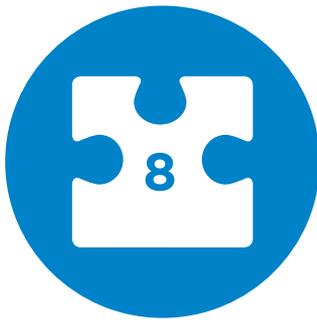


Social benefits

Including disabled people in the workplace benefits New Zealand society by:

- lowering the tax burden on businesses
- improving New Zealand's economic productivity, competitiveness and growth
- ensuring greater social equality
- providing opportunities for disabled people to contribute significantly to the economy as employees, entrepreneurs and consumers.

4. Unger, D. D. (2002). Employers' attitudes towards persons with disabilities in the workforce: myths or realities? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 17(1).



Ethical benefits

Disabled people are no longer isolated or seen as 'special'. They are an important part of the diversity of society. By employing more disabled people, the business community can:

- take an ethical stance that reflects society's changing values
- help improve the lives of disabled people
- tackle discrimination – disabled people should not have to accept inequitable and unfulfilling opportunities in the workplace
- create a culture of inclusion.



Professional benefits for people managers

Disability directly affects colleagues at work and in their personal lives. Taking a leadership position on disability:

- helps to develop technical skills in change management, people management, job design, accessibility and useability
- helps managers recognise and enable human potential
- builds flexible management skills
- enables managers to make reasonable accommodations that allow disabled employees to contribute.



Additional resources - why employing disabled people makes good business sense

The price of exclusion: The economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work

A report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which provides an international perspective on why employing disabled people is a smart business decision.

ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/working-papers/WCMS_119305/lang--en/index.html

EmployAbility

A resource guide on disability for employers in Asia and the Pacific.

ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_BK_PB_98_EN/lang--en/index.html

State of the Nation report: Retaining and developing employees with disabilities

A report from the UK's Business Disability Forum including information about the business benefits of employing and retaining disabled staff.

businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/about-us/news/state-of-the-nation-report-retaining-and-developing-employees-with-disabilities/

Building the Business Case

A short video illustrating the case for inclusion of people with disability in Australia. Over four million people in Australia have some form of disability, so it makes good business sense to make recruitment, products, services, and premises accessible to everyone.

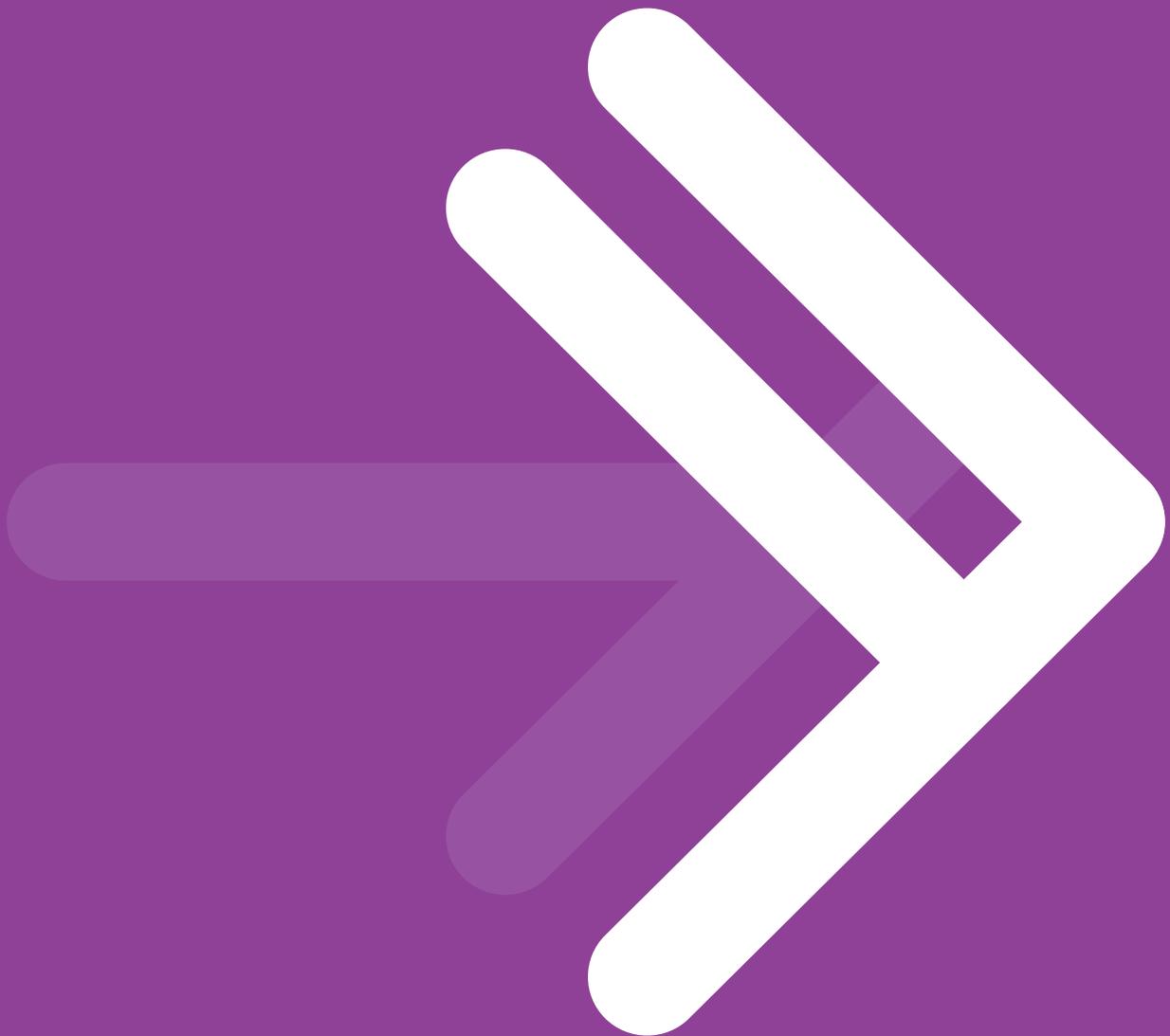
www.and.org.au/pages/and-video-access-and-inclusion-is-good-for-business.html

The value of building accessibility

Over 80% of organisations surveyed from across both the private and public sectors agree that their accessibility strategies have helped them build a more diverse workforce from a broader talent pool, or retain employees who have gained a disability.

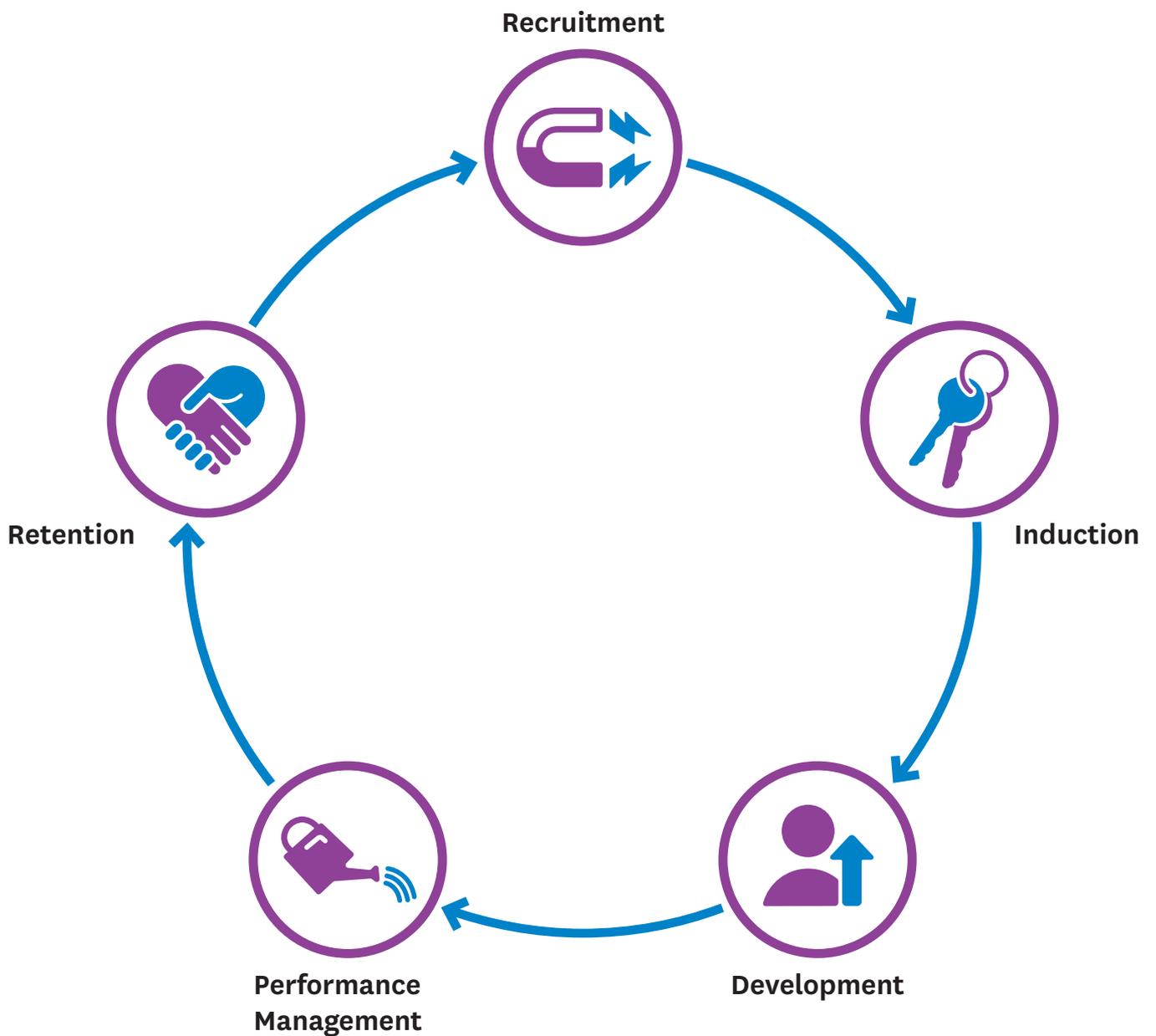
https://mscorpmedia.azureedge.net/mscorpmedia/2016/06/Microsoft-TEI-Accessibility-Study_Edited_FINAL.pdf

3 The Employment Cycle - advice for hiring and people managers



3

The Employment Cycle - for hiring and people managers



Confidently recruit and maximise the potential of disabled employees.

This section of the Toolkit provides advice to hiring and people managers to ensure that they can confidently recruit and maximise the potential of disabled employees throughout the employment cycle.

**This can involve:**

- having an equitable and accessible recruitment process where disabled people are encouraged to apply
- having job specifications that focus on the core requirements of the role and do not specify the methods the candidate should use to fulfil these
- providing disabled employees with the same opportunities for training and development as everyone else
- knowing if employees need reasonable accommodations
- being flexible and responsive to the disabled candidate or employee's needs; simple things like having a buddy for new employees or allowing an interviewee more time to answer a question can make a huge difference
- not making assumptions about what a person can do.

For quick answers to a number of commonly asked recruitment questions, human resources teams should see [Recruitment FAQs](#).

odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/making-it-easier-to-employ-disabled-people/index.html

3.1

Recruitment

The pool of talented disabled people is large, as disabled people make nearly a quarter of New Zealand's working-age population.

Failing to attract disabled candidates for job vacancies means missing out on talented potential employees.

Consider whether any of the following aspects of recruitment might be acting as barriers to the employment of disabled people in your business.



Job descriptions and candidate specifications

The first step in any recruitment process is to understand what is required of the job. This information is then translated into a job specification.

Job descriptions and candidate specifications may needlessly exclude or discourage a highly qualified disabled candidate.

To make sure all qualified candidates have the opportunity to highlight their relevant skills and expertise:

- group job criteria into 'essential' and 'desirable' aspects
- rank criteria in order of importance, and consider whether minor tasks could be reassigned to another person
- don't include blanket requirements or exclusions in relation to health or disability
- specify qualifications only where there is a genuine occupational requirement
- focus on objectives rather than methods.

This approach allows both disabled and non-disabled applicants to discuss how they can meet the requirements of the job.

A small wording change could result in a wider pool of applicants. For example:

- Instead of specifying a 'minimum typing speed', the job criteria could include 'produce quality documents using a word-processing program'.
- A job is advertised which entails visiting older people in the local area. Instead of specifying that a full driver's licence is required, consider other ways of achieving the objective (such as using the bus).
- A receptionist's job description could include making coffee as an additional task rather than an essential one.



Job descriptions and candidate specifications should be reviewed each time they are used to make sure they are still relevant. This is critical in the rapidly changing global environment in which we live.



Advertising jobs

All job advertisements should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that disabled candidates are not excluded. The majority of disabled people prefer to apply for jobs through mainstream application routes. Employers should also encourage disabled applicants by specifically inviting them to apply. An example of such text could be:

XYZ is committed to equal opportunity in all our employment policies and procedures. All staff – regardless of gender, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious or ethical beliefs, political opinion or union affiliation – have access to equal employment opportunities, particularly recruitment, training and career performance management and conditions of employment.

Application form

When developing an application form, make sure that the information being gathered determines whether the person can perform the job essentials and that the application form is available in alternative formats.

Online recruitment

To ensure that your online advertisements and recruitment websites are accessible to disabled people:

- frequently test websites for user accessibility
- include html email in online communications
- create job alerts or job talent pools for unsuccessful candidates
- make sure people who have vision impairments can access the site using screen reading software
- create text labels for images and non-text items

- advertisements should ideally include welcoming messages and demonstrate a commitment to employing disabled people. Some examples include: “We welcome enquiries from everyone and value diversity in the workforce” and “We are willing to consider flexible working arrangements”
- have flexible automated scanning.

When candidates submit online applications, make sure that sorting software, such as spell-checkers, does not discriminate against disabled people.

If you find that your online recruitment process has accessibility problems, ensure that there is an easy alternative for potential employees to apply for positions whilst you address these problems.

Recruitment agencies

It is the employer’s responsibility to check that the recruitment agency they use does not discriminate against disabled candidates.

Check the following aspects with the recruitment agency:

- Have you told your recruitment agency that you want to recruit disabled people?
- What disability awareness training have the agency’s staff undertaken?
- What are their disability and equal opportunity policies?
- Are they aware of the hiring business’s policies, and are they compatible?
- How have they ensured that the mechanisms they use to advertise positions are accessible?
- How accessible are their premises?
- Do they understand and practice reasonable accommodation?
- Will the agency ensure that a disabled candidate who meets the core requirements will be granted an interview?

Selection

At each stage of the selection process, it is important to ensure that no barriers are placed in the way of qualified disabled candidates.

The selection process includes:

- deciding on a shortlist
- arranging interviews
- interviewing candidates
- deciding on a preferred candidate
- giving feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

One simple thing that can help to increase the number of disabled people employed in your business is to include all disabled candidates who meet the core requirements for the job on the shortlist.

Interviewing disabled candidates

When arranging interviews, ask all interviewees whether they have any specific requirements. These could include:

- a wheelchair-accessible interview room
- a New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreter
- longer time to answer questions
- a hearing loop.

If an applicant declares a disability:

- contact them as soon as possible to make sure any accessibility requirements are met
- brief the receptionist and interviewers on the candidate's specific requirements.

When interviewing disabled candidates, only ask questions that would be asked of a non-disabled person. For example, most employers would ask “What support would you need to be effective in the role?” The Australian Network on Disability have a helpful factsheet about interviewing disabled people.

<http://www.and.org.au/pages/tapping-into-talent-employing-people-with-disability.html>

Adjustments to tests

When aptitude and other tests are included in the selection process, ensure that any assessments are in an accessible format and relate to the requirements of the job.

Adjustments to tests may be reasonable, but this depends on how closely the test is related to the job and what reasonable accommodations you might have to make if the applicant was given the job.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments to tests are:

- allowing extra time to complete a test
- allowing an oral test where a candidate has difficulty with manual dexterity
- using technology for blind people
- letting a reader or scribe help with reading or writing during a test.

Feedback

Whenever possible, employers should give feedback to unsuccessful applicants. This is particularly important where there have been discussions about reasonable accommodation.

It must be made clear to disabled applicants that the decision has been based on their level of skill or experience, not on issues related to their disability.



Additional information

Employment New Zealand has some helpful information on recruitment

www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employment-for-disabled-people/

3.2

Induction

A quality induction is important for all employees to be successful. Everything will be unfamiliar to new employees and unexpected issues could arise. Assigning another staff member to support a new employee for a specified time helps build confidence and make their entry into the new role more successful. This is good practice for inducting both disabled and non-disabled employees.

Any reasonable accommodation required would ideally be identified before the person started working, including making sure the environment was accessible.

If unexpected issues concerning accessibility or reasonable accommodation arise, discuss and resolve them as soon as possible, to enable all employees to be successful.



3.3

Development

To make the most of people's talents, we develop our high performers, including disabled people.

It is easy to make courses and training fully inclusive. Usually it does not take much to plan courses and training for disabled people:

- Ensure venues are accessible and training material is appropriately presented – the Accessible Meetings and Events checklist can assist.

odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/disability-perspective/resources/running-accessible-meeting.html

- Offer open and flexible learning as an alternative to venue-based learning.
- Be flexible about timetables, especially breaks.
- Provide participant with written materials prior to the training so they can familiarise themselves with the content.
- Offer precursor training.
- Check that the trainers are aware of the needs of disabled people.
- Vary the learning methods, as different people learn in different ways.
- Use a mentor or buddy system.



3.4

Performance management

Job performance for disabled employees is the same as for all employees – some meet expectations, some exceed and others don't meet expectations.

Managing the performance of disabled employees will therefore use the same policies and processes.

However, it is important that a disabled employee:

- is appropriately supported to participate in the performance management process
- has the right workplace adjustments (reasonable accommodations) in place.

Reasonable accommodation could include:

- flexibility around breaks and timeframes
- assign extra time for meetings
- use of NZSL interpreters
- additional training or coaching
- reallocating work that is not a core requirement.

Core requirements are activities and tasks that are:

- essential
- cannot be changed or allocated
- lead to significant consequences when not performed.

Moving work that is not a core requirement could be a reasonable accommodation. Remember that activities and tasks do not need to be undertaken exactly the same way – it is the results that matter.

If you identify difficulties that result from an impairment, whenever possible discuss these separately from any discussion of performance issues.



3.5

Retention

Being proactive about retaining disabled staff has a number of benefits for your business.



For example:

- **Adaptability:** by learning to manage their disability or health issues, disabled people have learned problem solving skills that are readily applicable to any modern workplace.
- **Increased staff morale:** By treating all employees fairly, including disabled people, you demonstrate that you are a good employer.
- **Lower costs:** improving retention through providing reasonable accommodation always costs less than having to recruit and train a new employee. It also increases the number of employees returning to work after a short- or long-term absence and reduces the costs associated with absences in the workplace.
- **Public reputation:** Being recognised as a good employer enhances your reputation with the New Zealand public.

Feeling valued is important to all employees. Ensuring that training and career development opportunities exist is one way to demonstrate how you value all employees, including disabled employees.

Likewise, with the right help, people experiencing mental health problems can continue in their role. This may involve agreeing to a 'return to work' plan that gradually increases the hours a team member works after being off work. It may also require a little more flexibility in terms of hours worked or support offered to them.



Supporting the retention of disabled staff can involve:

- encouraging and supporting an early return to work
- developing flexible working conditions
- providing disability responsiveness training for managers and immediate colleagues
- ensuring managers are aware of their obligations to provide reasonable accommodation
- providing specific information to colleagues and managers, with the agreement of the disabled employee, where reasonable accommodation requires the co-operation of others
- showing pride in the achievements of disabled staff, for example by:
 - including photos of disabled people on your business's website
 - referring them to training and career development opportunities
 - publicising success stories.

Specific disability organisations, can help employers understand their employee's situation better, and help develop their work as a better 'fit' for their evolving abilities.

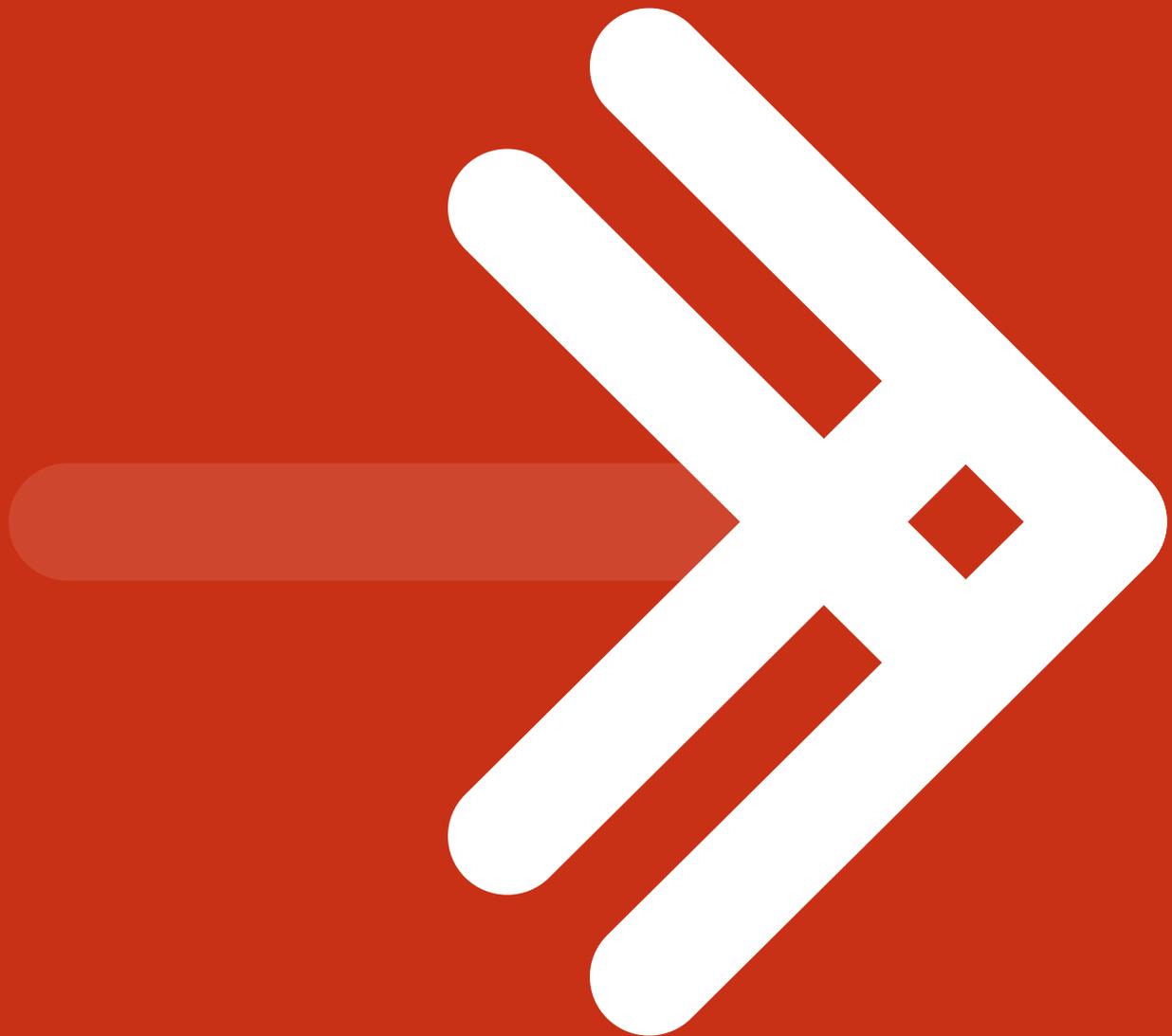
Have a look at the employer section of the JobAccess site.

<https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/>

Alzheimer's is often seen as an older person's disease but we know it can impact younger people. The attached link provides some advice and information to help a person continue to work for you.

<http://www.alzswisc.org/employer%20guides/Employer%20Guide.pdf>

4 Advice for people managers



4

An inclusive workplace



All employers benefit when their business invests in more skilled and confident managers through guidance and training. Managers often set the tone for the team and drive team culture.

➔ **An inclusive workplace is one in which:**

- policies are in place to ensure everyone is included, including disabled people
- managers recognise the importance of a diverse workplace that includes disabled people
- managers and staff understand what disabled people can do
- managers develop all their staff, including disabled employees, to their full potential
- managers and staff address barriers to employment, retention or promotion for all.

Managers who take a leadership position on disability play a crucial role in creating an inclusive workplace for disabled employees, and can help transform the management style within a business.

Flexible management allows disabled employees to contribute fully to the business. Many of the adjustments made for disabled people are also needed by other employees, so adopting more flexible employment practices can help all employees.

Learning how to effectively manage disabled people will also have professional benefits for managers, such as having an increased ability to recognise and enable human potential (see section 2, professional benefits for managers).

This section includes advice for direct managers about:

- reasonable accommodation
- disability responsiveness training
- useful tools to effectively work with disabled employees (including those with mental health issues)
- some health and safety and technology tips.

➔ **Additional information**

Here are five top tips for ensuring that disabled people are included in your events and meetings.

<http://www.ai-media.tv/the-top-five-mistakes-that-exclude-people-from-your-event-and-how-to-fix-them/>



4.1

Reasonable accommodation

The creation of an environment in which employees' specific needs are met.

The term 'reasonable accommodation' describes the creation of an environment in which employees' specific needs are met, allowing equal opportunity and enabling all employees to do their jobs as well as possible.

Employers already provide reasonable accommodation for many employees, including:

- parents caring for young children or other relatives
- people with religious or ethical beliefs
- disabled people.

Reasonable accommodation for disabled people could include:

- making physical adjustments, such as ensuring access to a building
- modifying the way a job is done, for example by allocating aspects of the job to another employee
- allowing flexible working hours
- giving instructions in writing as well as verbally
- showing people how to do a task.



Most reasonable accommodations cost very little or nothing.

Successful managers will get the best out of all their employees, including disabled employees, if they identify what will assist employees to do the best job possible. A reasonable accommodation may be a part of that. Most accommodations are low or no cost – for example flexible hours, instructions in writing as well as verbally and showing people how to do a task.



What is considered reasonable?

The Human Rights Act obliges all employers to take reasonable measures to meet employees' needs. Factors to take into account when considering what is reasonable include:

- how effective the adjustment is in assisting the disabled employee to perform their job
- whether it is practical to make the adjustment
- the financial or other costs of the adjustment
- the extent of the business's resources
- how much disruption, if any, will be caused to the business or other people
- the size and nature of the business.



Providing reasonable accommodation for disabled employees

All employers should develop written policies on accommodations and flexible work practices. Written policies:

- ensure consistent decision-making
- help all staff know what the guidelines are and how to request an accommodation
- help to document your business's efforts to provide accommodations.

Don't make assumptions about what a disabled person needs. The following process will help with identifying disabled employees' specific needs:

The starting point for any discussion about reasonable accommodation should be the working conditions provided for all employees.

Before the disabled employee starts work, ask them what accommodations they would find useful. A variety of organisations can provide expert advice.

Where costs are involved, extra support may be available (for example, through a Workplace Modification Grant or the Job Support Fund).

workbridgeincorporated.virtuozzo.co.nz/

Provide the required accommodations and check with the employee that the accommodations are meeting their needs.

Talk with the employee regularly to check whether the accommodations are still meeting their needs. This is especially important if the employee's needs change or if there are changes to the workplace or the job.



When to use Support Funds for reasonable accommodation

Workbridge is the provider contracted to administer Job Support. Employees must apply to Workbridge for Job Support.

Workbridge administer and pay the Job Support Funds on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development. There are two types:

- **Job Support** – provides financial assistance for people with a health condition or a disability so they can gain or retain open employment by removing barriers incurred because of a disability.

Job Support grants and subsidies cover additional costs incurred because the person is disabled or has ill health while they participate in employment.

Any business that makes necessary accommodations for its employees will quickly become an employer of choice for disabled people.

- **Training Support** – provides financial assistance for disabled people or people with ill health so they can gain or retain open employment through participation in training and other activities.

Training Support grants cover additional costs incurred because the person is disabled or has ill health while they participate in training, work experience, education or capacity assessments.

Training must be consistent with realistic and reasonable outcomes for the individual. Training Support will only be granted if the applicant is considered capable of undertaking the training. A clear link between the training opportunity and the employment goal must be established.

Any business that makes necessary accommodations for its employees will quickly become an employer of choice for disabled people. Many of these accommodations can be provided by employers at a very limited cost.

Where support or modified basic equipment is provided to all employees this will be funded by the employer. Where the support covers specialised equipment, such as a CCTV reader or NZSL interpreters is required, talk to your employee about seeking funding from ACC or Support Funds administered by Workbridge. If the employee receives specialised equipment through Support Funds, they own the equipment and can take it with them should they move jobs.



Additional information

Information about reasonable accommodations for employees with a mental health issues:

<https://employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employment-for-disabled-people/reasonable-accommodation-measures>

Factsheets on reasonable accommodation for both the employer and employee:

odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/making-it-easier-to-employ-disabled-people/index.html

4.2

Useful tools to assist managers with creating an inclusive workplace

Managers play an essential role in creating an inclusive environment.

A fully inclusive environment ensures that both managers and their staff treat disabled employees fairly, as disabled employees' colleagues also need to feel comfortable and confident working with them.



Disability responsiveness training

In building an inclusive workplace, providing disability responsiveness training is an important first step. It can help staff feel more comfortable with disabled colleagues. It helps them understand their own values and how they affect decisions to employ disabled people. The following resources will help create a disability responsive workplace.

An example of disability responsiveness training

odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/index.html

Disability etiquette

odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/index.html

Working with interpreters

odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/disability-perspective/resources/nzsl-interpreters.html

odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/disability-perspective/resources/running-accessible-meeting.html



Working with disabled employees

Manager's Guide – A best practice approach to working with disabled employees

This guide shows how to treat disabled staff fairly and give them the same opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues. The guide has been developed by Workbridge in conjunction with the UK Employers' Forum on Disability:

workbridgeincorporated.virtuozzo.co.nz/?page=1

phone: 04 913 6422.



Working with employees who have mental health issues

The following resources can help build managers' confidence in working with staff who have mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety.

Mindful Employer publications

Tools and resources to help managers support employees who are experiencing mental health issues, including:

- Mindful employers – Line Managers' Resource
- Making work work
- Feeling stressed: keeping well.

www.mindfulemployer.net/support/publications

Time to change

Advice about talking to people who have mental health issues:

time-to-change.org.uk/talking-about-mental-health

Mental Health in the Workplace – Employee

Provides employees with basic information about mental health problems in the workplace, and their rights and responsibilities.

mentalhealth.intuto.com/public/course/784686/

Mental Health in the Workplace – Manager

Provides a learning resource for managers to help them deal positively with mental health issues that arise in the workplace.

mentalhealth.intuto.com/public/course/786014/

➔ **Mental Health in the Workplace – Organisation**

Provides information and resources for creating a positive and inclusive workplace for all workers, including those who have mental health problems.

mentalhealth.intuto.com/public/course/793999/

➔ **Working with employees who have mental health issues**

A practical guide for supporting people with mental Health conditions in the workplace.

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/LSEServices/healthAndSafety/pdf/SHIFTpracticalGuideToManagingPeopleWithMentalHealthProblems.pdf>

➔ **Working with anxiety**

Mindful Employers UK have a video – Working with anxiety. It explains what anxiety is and has some practical tips for employers to help employees deal with anxiety.

<https://vimeo.com/172389393>

4.3

Health and safety tips

Managers need to look after the mental and physical well-being of all staff, including disabled employees. Creating a workplace where staff feel supported and are healthy can help to improve productivity and retention.



Work-related stress – together we can tackle it

Tips for more effective management of work-related stress:

[hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm)



Case study

British Telecom developed a three-tiered mental health framework to improve the health, safety and well-being of their staff:

- **Level one** – promote employee well-being and prevent mental distress, for example through tips on the intranet and management training around softer skills.
- **Level two** – identify distress and intervene early on to prevent it from escalating, through an online stress risk assessment for employees and companion training for line managers.
- **Level three** – support and treatments for people experiencing mental health problems. Employees are encouraged to work with their line manager to produce an ‘advance directive’ to identify early warning signs and establish a plan of action for if they become distressed.

As part of this framework, British Telecom have also recently launched a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy service for staff experiencing mild-to-moderate mental health problems that do not need to be diagnosed by a doctor. Around 200 employees have used this service so far, and satisfaction rates have been very high.

[hse.gov.uk](https://www.hse.gov.uk)



 **Working Well**

As an employer or manager, you know it's your people who provide the greatest potential for success in your business. Maintaining optimal mental health at work is too important to be left to chance: employees and employers will benefit from an active approach towards mental health in the workplace.

mentalhealth.org.nz/home/our-work/category/27/working-well

4.4

Technology tips

Advances in technology have made it possible for many disabled people to participate in the workplace. The right technology can be an enabler while the wrong technology can create barriers.

The right technology can be an enabler while the wrong technology can create barriers. Modern computer hardware and software can be adjusted to meet the needs of many disabled employees. For example, Microsoft Windows has 'Ease of Access' tools which include several options for screen magnification and contrast, adjustments to mouse and keyboard, screen reading, speech recognition and visual alternatives to sounds. Modern telephones are also generally compatible with hearing aids and will have adjustments for volume and screen brightness.

Employees may need assistance to set up these options correctly.

A number of employees will need more specialist options.



Specialist options:

- computer monitor
- keyboard or mouse
- headset with hearing aid connection
- screen magnification (higher than 16x)
- screen reading software
- electronic magnifiers (CCTV readers)
- speech recognition software
- access video remote sign language interpreters
- Braille printer.

It's best to get specialist advice to select the right options for a particular employee. Advice is generally available from the relevant specialist service providers. Contacts for many of these can be found on the WorkABLE Disability A to Z list (see section 3.5, Retention).



Funding may be available for high-cost IT modifications (see Support Funds earlier in this section).

It's also best to work with your IT support early in the discussions to ensure that the identified solutions will work within the particular environment.

It often takes time to implement alternate technology as IT needs to learn about the tool(s) and maintain security of their network. In addition, they may need to work outside the normal agency policies. Ideally, an IT department should have a single point of contact for implementing IT solutions for disabled employees.

Microsoft Office 365's new accessibility features

Microsoft has recently updated Office 365 with three main new features that enhance accessibility for users with vision impairments. Here is an overview of the new updates.

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Accessibility-features-in-Word-Online-96a970f4-ee66-480d-ad12-52968c42dadb>

Accessible and Affordable IT solutions

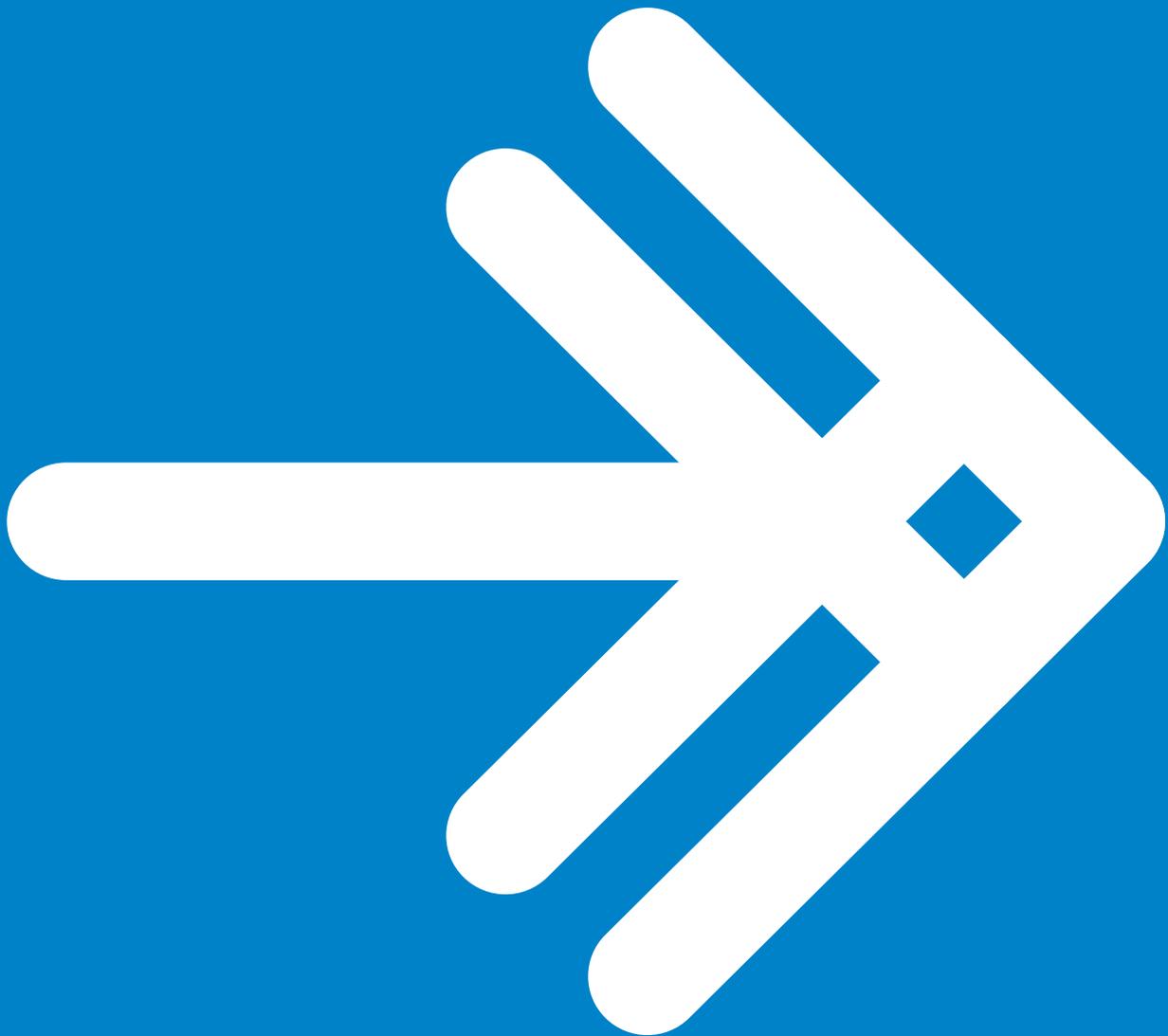
 There are lots of great products on the market that contain accessibility features, yet it's often hard to work out which ones are well suited and which options are best on a limited budget.

This resource has been created to help you make educated choices on options priced up to \$250. You'll find useful information on the specific accessibility features that are in popular devices such as tablets, smartphones, desktop computers, TV media players and telco plans that provide the best deals for the average user on a budget.

<http://affordableaccess.com.au/>

5

Conclusion



Most disabled people don't need anything different to perform their job, but for those that do, funding is available to provide workplace modifications, adjustment and support.

5

Conclusion

Disabled people are a fabulous untapped talent pool of loyal and committed employees.

Nearly a quarter of the working aged population lives with disability, so not tapping into this talent pool means missing out on skilled people who can make a valuable contribution to your business.

Most disabled people don't need anything different to perform their job, but for those that do, funding is available to provide workplace modifications, adjustment and support.

A diverse team provides better customer service because they represent and understand the communities they serve. An inclusive workplace also demonstrates a culture of respect, improving the morale of your employees and leading to improved profitability.

By using this toolkit you will be able to champion the creation of more inclusive workplaces for disabled New Zealanders.

Checklist

Here is a check list for assessing an business's ability to attract and retain disabled people.

	High	Medium	Low
There is internal top-level support for the employment of disabled people in our business			
We have a good understanding of the benefits for including disabled people in our workforce			
We have a reputation as being an employer of choice for disabled people			
We have implemented an Accessibility Plan			
We know how many disabled employees are in our workforce			
Disabled people routinely apply for positions			
We have reviewed our recruitment processes to ensure they are barrier-free to disabled people			
We have policies and procedures for making reasonable accommodations for all employees, including those who are disabled			
Our human resources team/hiring manager know how to make reasonable accommodations for disabled candidates and employees			
We offer flexible work conditions			
Our employees know the procedure when an employee tells us they have a disability			
Disabled employees participate in training and development as frequently as other staff			
When redundancies are made, we review the demographics and ensure that disabled people are not over-represented			



www.msd.govt.nz/Lead

Anne Hawker

Principal Disability Adviser
Ministry of Social Development
(04) 978 4142

Published November 2016
Ministry of Social Development
on behalf of the New Zealand Government

ISBN: 978-0-947513-62-7 (print)
ISBN: 978-0-947513-63-4 (online)