What we heard about disabilty and employment in New Zealand

A summary of the public consultation between November 2019 – February 2020 on the Draft Disability Employment Action Plan

New Zealand Government

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Introduction

On 25 November 2019 the Minister for Social Development opened public consultation on a draft plan to help disabled people and people with health conditions find and stay in work. The consultation closed 28 February 2020.

The draft plan was developed across various government agencies that have a role to play in improving employment outcomes for disabled people or people with health conditions. We also built on a rich set of insights gained in previous consultation and research. The purpose of the further public engagement was to check back with key stakeholders and validate or improve the proposals in the draft plan.

Various methods of consultation were used

The consultation was available to the general public, but also targeted groups that have expertise, influence and may be impacted by issues related to disability and employment. An online survey was provided as well as an opportunity to make submissions by email or phone.

MSD also partnered with non-government organisations to organise face to face workshops or meetings and ensure the views of diverse disabled people, whānau, support providers and employers were captured. These included:

- Enabling good lives leadership

- The MSD Pacific Reference

ProCare -primary health care

group

Group

Deaf Aotearoa

organisation

Meetings with:

- the Auckland Chamber of Commerce Autism New Zealand
- the Coalition of Disabled Peoples' Organisations
- Business New Zealand
- The CTU including various unions
- The National Beneficiaries Advocacy Consultative Group
- MSD work brokers in wellington

And workshops/ hui organised by:

- NZDSN with employment support providers
- Accessibility Tick with large employers
- CCS Disability Action with a focus on Māori stakeholders
- the Mental Health Foundation with people who experience mental health distress
- i-lead and Yes with a focus on young disabled people.

People First also reported on face to face meetings with their local groups.

We heard from a wide range of people

Many people gave time from busy lives to be part of this consultation, demonstrating the priority they place on improving employment outcomes for disabled people. We heard from over 385 people and many representing the views of organisations or wider membership groups. This included:

- 152 online survey responses
- Over 200 people face-to-face during in-depth workshops and meetings across Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and Whangarei
- 33 detailed written submissions.

We heard from all the key stakeholders, including:

- disabled people and whānau
- employers (including large private employers, representatives of smaller employers, District Health Boards and local government)
- unions
- employment and disability support providers
- over 85 different non-government organisations (see Appendix A).

Survey respondents were able to provide **demographic information.** Of the 152 survey respondents almost 70% lived with some kind of disability or health issue, about 60% were aged between 40 and 65, and 25% between 25

and 39. About 80% of survey respondents identified as NZ European, 8% Pacific, 6% Māori and 5% Asian.

We would like to **thank** everyone that generously contributed their time and experiences. The ideas, suggestions and stories we heard were invaluable in developing the final action plan.

Top ten key messages

Overall, the feedback reinforced the importance of having a cross-agency disability employment action plan. The following ten themes came through consistently and strongly in the consultation. However, we recognise that the respondents' contributions provided far richer knowledge and diverse experiences than this summary can provide.

1. Recognise diversity with tailored responses and options

Investment in intensive individualised support is needed for some but not all. Employers are also very diverse, with big differences in what is effective for small employers compared to large employers.

- "Stop putting people in boxes it is unhelpful to target support by diagnosis type."
- "People with learning disabilities are our most vulnerable citizens and need a focus. We should look at overseas models that provide ongoing support in open employment (Washington State)."
- "Partner with groups doing good work in the mental health area, fund them or scale up integrated support options (such as Individualised Placement Services (IPS)".
- "Having bottom up (employment support) mixed with top down (good employers) is key".

- 2. Anyone who wants support to work should be able to access it including people over 65 years of age and people not on a benefit. People should be able to self-refer.
- 3. Employment does not sit in isolation in life accessibility and inclusion in education, transport and the built environment all impact employment.
 - Pathways to work and transitions to and from education are a priority - "Transition from school is a major area of failure" – "we need to build from what's already working (here and internationally) and work with families/young people from year 9".
 - We also need access to support for transition or re-training at all stages of life.
- 4. **Raising expectations and public education is a priority** for disabled people, families, community, workplaces and employers.
 - "We need strong campaigns similar to the 'Like Minds, Like Mine' programme."
 - Surveying employer and the broader population was proposed to benchmark and measure the impact of any campaign on unconscious bias or discrimination.

5. More and better employment support is a priority

- Improve referral, eligibility and contracting industry partnerships are not getting enough referrals and at the same time some people who want access can't. Meanwhile employment services find 'onboarding' clients hard as they have too many checks to complete.
- Job Support funding needs review (what about part-time and selfemployment assistance for disabled people - it is too hard to get the support people need).

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- People wanted positive strength-focussed experiences when accessing the Ministry of Social Development or contracted employment services, but this does not always happen.
- Employment support needs to be more customer (employer) centric
 employers want better collaboration between employment support agencies.
- More industry partnerships they work.
- The impact of employment on net income for people with high support and/or a health condition should be addressed – 'don't penalise people for getting work' (means testing for the Community Services Card and home support were mentioned as examples).
- 7. Partner with employers to promote inclusive workplaces where people thrive – employers said "while toolkits are OK" we need practical tailored support on how to improve recruitment and provide flexible in work arrangements." - "Pay attention to large and small employers (listen to what they say they need to know)."
 - Provide incentives for employers to employ more disabled people examples provided by some respondents included wage subsidies, tax incentives and targets for affirmative action.
 - Some common recruitment and hiring practices cut disabled people out at the first hurdle these should be stopped across many sectors including the State Sector.
 - Employ experts with lived experience to help employers.
 - Bullying is a big problem in work and education.
- 8. The State Sector should lead by example as an employer and with procurement practices "Central and local Government should be exemplary employers. They need to be accountable with reporting requirements, part-time work options and proactive recruitment.

Disabled staff should have input on how and we need an incentive structure for inclusive cultures and flow this through to procurement."

9. Fund and enable innovation and business development

- There are opportunities to embrace and risks to address in new labour markets created through online platforms. It's also important to recognise low internet access in rural areas as a challenge.
- Co-design innovation with Māori / Iwi, disability groups, employers and support providers.
- "Relook at employment products and services disability employment support is distinctly old fashioned, we have inflexible rules that don't adequately support part-time work, progression, inwork support or self-employment."
- 10. **Monitoring should make the plan happen** respondents wanted to see timeframes and how the plan will be resourced. And they wanted to see it work for sub-groups:
 - Monitor progress for all priority groups break down data to track progress for people with learning disability; Māori and Pacific peoples; and those accessing mental health and addiction services.
 - Monitor progress with employers i.e. research employer attitudes.
 - The principles and framing in the draft are good but some want more visibility of the kaupapa e.g. international human rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The following more detailed summary of the feedback is organised around nineteen themes that arose in the consultation under each of the four objectives. Some verbatim and paraphrased quotes from the survey, submissions or from workshops are included as examples of what was said.

Feedback on Objective 1: Disabled people steer their own futures

- 1. Pathways and transitions to and from education are critical Related views expressed by respondents include:
- Build expectations and aspirations by starting access to work young.
 "Conversations about careers need to start as soon as the young person enters secondary school."
- Work with families and teachers and connect with service providers and employers early to ensure work experience.
- Better information and mentoring about opportunities.
- More access to internships many respondents thought the 'Project Search' model should be expanded.
- "Access to NZSL interpreters is vital for Deaf students. A Deaf tailored transitions programme needs to be established for Deaf students."

"...when I was a student it would have been hugely helpful to have more hands-on support to identify what I could do and what I could train for. Exposure to different work environments and technologies would have helped..." "Support disabled people and their families to be aspirational when it comes to their employment future, imagining what their future looks like".

"Whereas the current system is often driven by the tyranny of low expectations for people with health conditions and disability. The system expectation should be that everyone gets employment."

- 2. Accessible career guidance or re-training support is needed at all stages of life Related views expressed by respondents include:
- Some people need tailored support to navigate career pathways.
- Career and transition support is important for disabled people at all ages of life including for those who develop a disability later in life.
- "Ensuring all career information is easily accessible to all people is the first step to ensuring everyone has the chance to realise their own potential."

"I am an intelligent, single, adult and I have no guidance on how to deal with my own degenerating health and increasing disability, especially in the realm of employment and housing."	"We strongly recommend making resources and services such as paid internships available for anyone at any age, not only as transitional support from tertiary education.		
	"There is a lack of career guidance which can lead to people taking the wrong courses and acquiring a lot of student loan debt - they come out with nothing and become depressed".		
We need "roadshows" targeting disabled people e.g. in the Far North to assist people to make good transitions to work or training.	<i>"Use local industry leaders to highlight future employment opportunities."</i>		

Feedback on Objective 2: Back people who want to work with the right support

3. Anyone who wants support should be able to access it Related views expressed by respondents include:

- employment services should be accessible for all disabled people that want to work including people over 65 years of age, young people still in education, people who want part time work and people not on a benefit.
- "self-referral options should be available without labelling people..."
- "undertake marketing campaigns to get self-referrals for people who require and want tailored employment support..."
- "it is unhelpful to target support by diagnosis..."

4. The interface with Work and Income is important Related views expressed by respondents include:

- The Work and Income experience needs to be supportive of disabled people's employment aspirations.
- Strong support for the proposal to allow Supported Living Payment recipients to work longer and remain eligible for the benefit.
- Some people feel they cannot risk going into employment where it would mean they have an unstable income.
- Improve the information about income calculation and benefit abatement to provide confidence to people to be self-employed.

"...There are insufficient "... whānau and disabled people were case managers with the apprehensive about attending appointments... appropriate skills and considerable planning is required such as understanding of health organising support workers... arranging and disability issues... transport and making decisions ... Some "the ideal would be case people found that after doing all this they managers who have a were told to look online for the information disability." they required."

5. Mixed views on involving whānau

Some respondents emphasised the importance of whānau involvement in the referral process, whilst others noticed that some whānau tend to speak for the disabled person or have low expectations of them.

"Recognise the important part whānau and carers play in supporting people to get into work."

6. Recognise diversity with tailored responses

Related views expressed by respondents include:

- We need explicit investment and prioritisation of tailored approaches for those who experience multiple disadvantages, people with high and complex support needs, people with learning disability, Deaf people, people who access mental health or addiction services, and people with criminal convictions.
- Employers are very diverse, there are big differences between approaches that work with small employers compared to large employers.
- More culturally appropriate employment services should be an option for disabled people rather than universal employment services.

"We need customised supports it is	"Encou
crazy to have rules that you can only get	service
support for a specific period, or for a	local m
specific thing. Each person is different	on disc
and will have different needs, but it	them.
must be better for someone to be in	that te
work then staying home on a benefit,	valued
even if there is a cost to supporting	
them to work."	"There

"Encourage employment services to take their services to local marae rather than relying on disabled people coming to them. And create a programme that teaches disabled people valued roles on the marae."

"There is not one silver bullet"...

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- 7. More and better employment support is a priority Related views expressed by respondents include:
- People need more choice in support options.
- Scale up access to integrated support (e.g. with health, addiction or other services that may be in a person's life).
- Build on what works at local levels extend pilots that work.
- Ensure contracted Employment Services have the skills and funding to allow them to cultivate strong links with employers that get results.
- Employment support needs to be more customer (employer) centric.
- Sector development and qualification development is important "there needs to be an investment in capability building of employment support practitioners."
- "Local partnerships are incredibly important and needed to be better supported through policy and commissioning."

"Employment services should b based in employment expertise in disability."		"People with lived experience of disability and work should train work-brokers."	
"There is a gap with those who look at employment positively but also think they are not ready to engage in it. Bridging this gap requires	gettin	nployment services should not stop with ting a job –progression within ployment is also important"	
services that work to prepare people to enter employment."	"People often don't realise they have a choice of provider."		
		s should be assisted to get a second assist a person in this situation.	

- 8. Make eligibility, administration systems and contracting of employment services more fit for purpose Related views expressed by respondents include:
- Life-changing initiatives fall through the cracks because of arbitrary boundaries we need a seamless system.
- Job Support funding needs to be more flexible, have a higher cap and cover a wider range of work- situations e.g. part-time employment.
- Job Support funding does not work well for Deaf people, for example the application process is difficult and the funding is insufficient for adequate NZSL interpretation services.
- Trust is important, but contracts are based on distrust (avoiding fraud.)
- Competitive funding systems do not incentivise cooperation and can lead to cherry picking with less support for people who need it most.
- Employment services find 'onboarding' clients overly complex and timeconsuming. This reduces success.

"Application forms for Job support are very repetitiveyou have to prove you are Deaf every year, send the same drivers licence etc" - "the complicated application process assumes fluency in English"		"The funding model for employment support providers should incentivise providers to focus on those with the most significant barriers."	
The process around applying for Job Support can be hard to navigate and clunkythe pay rates for the support people are too low the requirement of audited	In-work support is vital and important to maintain meaningful roles within current employment.		
the requirement of dualted accounts can be very difficult for self-employedit is not joined up with other support funding.		wage is administratively nsome and difficult to stand".	

Feedback on Objective 3: Grow employment opportunities for disabled people

9. Public education that raises the visibility of disabled people as a talent pool is a priority

Related views expressed by respondents include:

- Develop a multi-media campaign to inform employers about the benefits of employing disabled people and to address unconscious bias, discrimination and bust myths.
- Public education is needed for the whole workplace and community in addition to employers.
- Promote success stories to normalise employment for people with disability, but ensure it is not done in a patronising way.
- Improve awareness and understanding of how employers can help disabled persons overcome barriers.
- Focus on career progression not just entry level jobs.

"Campaigns and initiatives	"We support a multi-media campaign
should be co-designed by people	but believe this must be employer led to
with lived experience of	reach the right people and have
disability".	greatest success."
"Women have been hitting the	"In order to target and change these
proverbial 'glass ceiling' for	harmful biases, we need to better
years and are still fighting to	understand them. We need regular
break down the stereotypes.	research into employer attitudes. This
The ceiling is almost completely	will also allow us to track changes
concrete for people with	overtime"
disabilities or with health	"Employers can be unaware what
conditions. Role models are	reasonable accommodations are and
important if we want people to	this lack of understanding results in
believe in themselves"	employers not hiring disabled people."

10.Partner with employers and industry

Related views expressed by respondents include:

- Employers want joint ventures and collaboration with government to improve disability employment.
- We need incentives for employers government and wage subsidy schemes and social procurement with targets - these are all are important affirmative actions.
- Small businesses can struggle to hire disabled people if they do not have the right incentives as they have less resources to offer support.
- Subsidies can give the wrong message i.e. a way of compensating an employer for taking on an employee who may not meet their needs.
- Wage subsidies can help people with more significant disabilities get work even for a few hours per week. This small start can make a big difference in their lives and improve their wellbeing.
- Toolkits are OK but many employers need tailored practical support to help create more inclusive human resource practices and systems.
- Implement social procurement as this will reward industries that achieve better employment outcomes for disabled people.

"There is great value in	"Accessibility Tick should be supported by the	
having a Disabled	government and we should attempt to get	
Workforce Coordinator	more more employers to join this	
position within Chambers	programme."	
of Commerce to actively promote employment of people with disability to employers in their region."	"Right now, we need to incentivise employers to get the shift going and then once it becomes standard, there will be less need for subsidies."	

- 11.Fund and enable innovation and business development there are opportunities to embrace Related views expressed by respondents include:
- Customised job design for disabled people should be funded.
- Micro business opportunities need support e.g. funding for purchasing technology (smart phones/ computers) where it assists employment.
- New labour markets such as online platforms and the gig economy need to managed very carefully to prevent exploitation and dead-end jobs.
- Low internet access in rural areas is a challenge to innovation.
- Co-design new innovative solutions with industry, providers, disability communities, whānau and Māori.

"This is the area I'm most excited about. Support disabled people with their own business ideas, or social enterprise start- ups. There are already some good examples of people doing this well, and it is working."	"The risks and opportunities created by an increasingly automated, global, and digital future need to be set out and actions built on our best understanding of what the future of work looks like need to be included."
There are new ways of getting a job, eg online gaming, You-Tube – keep this in mind and support people to follow their passions in lots of different ways.	Think about how things could be in an ideal world rather than improving what we have. We need to think about things in a completely different way.

Feedback on Objective 4: Create inclusive workplaces

 12.Promote inclusive and flexible workplaces for sustainable employment where people thrive Related views expressed by respondents include: Flexibility in work options (including part-time and remote work) is a key way to improve outcomes and keep people in work. The focus should be sustainable and decent work where people have a 	"Encourage people with disabilities to apply for flexible hours as per the Employment Relations Act 2000. The Act allows for an independent review of an employer decision."	"Its not just about stopping people from losing jobs but retaining, retraining and upskilling people. People should be able to progress and develop in a career if they want to "
 chance to progress. Inclusive workplaces need to consider the attitudes and support of the entire workplace and other employees in the business. Employers need to understand cycles of wellness and unwellness. Bullying is a problem for many disabled people in work and education. "Having disabled people's voices heard is key to an inclusive work environment." 	"Organisations are required to have health and safety policies, the same should exist for accessibility and wellbeing" "Inclusive and mentally healthy workspaces should be viewed as essential for all employees"	There is a need for greater recognition of the difficulties people with significant disabilities face in employment. Often, they need to rely on carers and their care arrangements need to go according to plan. It's about putting all the pieces of the puzzle together and having flexible working arrangements that take account of these constraints.

13.The state sector should lead by example as an employer and through its procurement practices

Related views expressed by respondents include:

- The state sector (or subcontracted consultants) should lead by example in terms of recruitment of disabled people and people with health conditions.
- Government targets or quotas for employing disabled people.
- "Government should procure goods and services from businesses that employ people with disabilities."

"Aotearoa should	"require any use of public money to include the
aim to be the most	wider view about the wellbeing of the people doing
inclusive state sector	the work and ensure that it supports the
employer in the	advancement of safety, equality, and opportunity
world".	for disadvantaged workers."

14.Some common recruitment and hiring practices cut disabled people out at the first hurdle

Related views expressed by respondents include:

- Discriminatory hiring practices need to be stopped across many industry sectors, e.g. improve the way employers screen applicants
- Advertise all jobs as fulltime and part-time if part-time hours are possible.
- Make all application websites accessible for all.

Don't ask people to disclose that they have a disability on an application. Instead employers should state the things they have in place to support people with disabilities" "...some firms are increasingly seeking a lot of information at the pre-recruitment stage which can filter out disabled people, e.g. asking if the person has ever had a claim with ACC, if they have any ailment or are taking medication." "Research highlights that when disclosing disability, a jobseeker is 26% less likely to be given an interview than those who do not disclose (Ameri et al 2018)...."

15.Employ experts with lived experience to show employers how to create inclusive employment Related views expressed by respondents include:

- Mentors, buddies and ongoing pastoral support all have a place in helping employers recruit, retain and progress people in employment.
- Someone with lived experience is best positioned to mentor other disabled people and advise employers.

"Big employers need to look
at who they have in manager
positions and their HR
practices to support diversity
in their workplaces"

- 16.Enforce human rights, anti-discrimination and accessibility Related views expressed by respondents include:
- There needs to be stronger mechanisms for enforcing human rights related to discrimination by employers in hiring practices.
- There is a need to both encourage and enforce employers' engagement in inclusive, accessible and safe workplace practices.
- "We need legislation that says all workplaces have a policy for the employment of disabled people."

Inclusive workplaces can only be fully	Have a 'mandated inclusive
realised with the introduction and	workplace officer' similar to
implementation of Accessibility	Privacy officers and Health &
Legislation – this is urgently required."	Safety officers"

General feedback

- 17.Employment does not sit in isolation of wider life issues Related views expressed by respondents include:
 - Accessibility and inclusion in education, transport and the built environment all impact on employment.
 - Inappropriate hours for medical appointments and health services creates barriers to getting or retaining jobs.
 - The impact of employment on net income needs to be managed better for people with high health or support needs (e.g. reconsider the income thresholds for accessing home support).
 - Strengthen school based mental health and addiction services.
 - Broad issues with the education system were raised. "If equitable schooling is not achieved its over before we have started."

"There is a lack of appreciation of the challenges	
particularly around transport,	
cost and organising carer	
support. These challenges were amplified within rural,	

"Attitudes in schools are one of the biggest barriers – education is needed for the educators". If young disabled people feel beaten down at school, then it is too late. UK Research found that inspiring teachers can make a huge difference – 30%. Imagine the reverse when teachers are not inspiring disabled young people."

19. Monitoring and measuring progress is key

Related views expressed by respondents include:

- Indicators should be able to desegregate data by ethnicity and impairment type.
- Accountability is important need specific timeframes and responsibility for actions.

18.Broad support was expressed for the principles and framing with some additional ideas

Additional ideas expressed by respondents include:

- Some wanted to see more visibility of the following kaupapa:
 - o Te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - o the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
 - o the social model of disability and inclusion.
- Language was proposed for how to refer to disabled people and people with health conditions in a respectful way. There was no consensus on this language.
- The interests of carers are closely woven with the interests of disabled people – and we should support their employment needs
- Unions and collective bargaining can play a key role in improving employment and protecting the rights of disabled people.
- Intersectionality i.e. those who experience disability alongside cultural and language diversity, gender and/or sexuality diversity.
- Disability enterprises have an important and valued role.

"We would also like to
see data relating to"The overall success of the plan needs to be
measured in changes to the inequitablewaitlist for employment
support, and the
number of people
denied access to these
programmes and why""The overall success of the plan needs to be
measured in changes to the inequitable
employment outcomes ... The plan should signal
(and monitor progress towards) an ambitious
equity-based goal – for example to double the
employment rate of disabled people over the
next 5 years."

Appendix A: Organisations and groups we heard from

- 1. A Supported Life (Kotuku Trust Inc)
- 2. Accessibility Tick Employers Network
- 3. Achievement House
- 4. Air New Zealand
- 5. Alzheimers New Zealand
- 6. AMP Workcare
- 7. ANZ
- 8. APM Workcare
- 9. Arthritis New Zealand
- 10. ASB
- 11. Asian Family Services
- 12. Association of Blind Citizens
- 13. Auckland District Health Board
- 14. Autism New Zealand
- 15. Balance Aotearoa
- 16. Bay of Plenty Inclusive Employment Task Force
- 17. Blind and Low Vision New Zealand
- 18. Brackenridge Estate Ltd
- 19. Canterbury District Health Board
- 20. CCS Disability Action
- 21. Child Advocacy New Zealand
- 22. Choices New Zealand

- 24. Community Living Trust
- 25. Consumer Advisory Waitemata DHB

23. Community Corrections

- 26. Counties Manukau Health
- 27. Deaf Aotearoa
- 28. Disability Persons Assembly
- 29. Disability Resource Centre (HB) Trust
- 30. Drive Consumer Direction
- 31. Earthlink Incorporated
- 32. Emerge Aotearoa
- 33. Employee
- 34. Enabling Good Lives Leadership Group
- 35. Enrich +
- 36. Equitas Care
- 37. E Tu
- 38. Evaro
- 39. Explore Organisation
- 40. Geneva Elevator Ltd
- 41. Hamilton City Council
- 42. Hohepa Canterbury
- 43. Hohepa Hawkes Bay
- 44. Horizons Day Options Trust
- 45. I-Lead

- 46. Imagine Better
- 47. Independent Living Service
- 48. Kapo Māori
- 49. L'Archhe Mount Tabor Trust
- 50. Laura Ferguson Trust Canterbury
- 51. Mental Health Foundation
- 52. Meridian Energy
- 53. Multiple Sclerosis New Zealand
- 54. Muscular Dystrophy Association
- 55. National Beneficiaries Advocacy Group
- 56. New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
- 57. New Zealand Disability Services Network
- 58. New Zealand Education Institute Te Riu Roa
- 59. New Zealand Nurses Organization
- 60. New Zealand Post Primary Teachers Association
- 61. New Zealand Spinal Trust
- 62. NZ Care Disability
- 63. Office of the Ombudsman

- 64. Options (Tautoko Services)
- 65. Parent to Parent
- 66. People First
- 67. Poly-Emp Employment & Advisory
- 68. ProCare Primary Health Care organisation
- 69. Public Services Association
- 70. Ricoh
- 71. Spectrum Care Trust
- 72. Standards and Monitoring Services
- 73. Te Roopu T5aurima
- 74. Tertiary Education Union
- 75. The Supported Life Style Hauraki Trust
- 76. The Warehouse
- 77. Vector (VC)
- 78. Walsh Trust
- 79. Westpac
- 80. Whānau Hauā Hui CCS Disability Action
- 81. Work Brokers Wellington Group
- 82. Work Counts /Platform
- 83. Workbridge

Note this list does not include survey respondents or the central government agencies that were consulted