

Working Matters

An Action Plan to ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have an equal opportunity to access employment

July 2020



Ministers' Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed things for the whole economy and for all communities. However, it has not changed Government's commitment to improve employment outcomes for the many people in New Zealand who have disability or health needs. It will help ensure an inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19 where disabled people and people with health conditions can participate as they want to, on an equal basis with others. Through this and the broader kaupapa in this plan we recognise international human rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Early in 2020 we asked stakeholders about this plan, including representatives of disabled people and people with health conditions and their whānau as well as employers, unions and service providers. We heard about their priorities and how important the plan is to them.

While action details have needed adjustment to address a post-COVID-19 economic context, the agreed objectives and priorities remain relevant and important. This plan will provide critical guidance for all agencies and industries currently working on employment initiatives. It will help to ensure opportunities to improve outcomes for disabled people and people with health conditions are sought, recognised and prioritised as new ways of working are developed across all of New Zealand.



Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Minister for Social Development

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Note: This Action Plan is available in a range of formats (HTML, braille, audio, large format) to ensure it is accessible to everyone with an interest in it. A summary is available in Easy Read and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL).

Working matters for all people and I welcome this Action Plan to support our disabled whānau, where they are able, to access employment opportunities and sustainable work. Work can be an important way in which we contribute to our communities, make social connections, learn new skills and support our health and wellbeing. Work is also key to transforming our economy and we need to ensure all people, including our disabled whānau, are supported to realise their full potential in order to build a successful and inclusive economic future.

This all-of-government action plan is one of several plans that will support the Government's Employment Strategy. We want everyone working together to deliver a productive, sustainable and inclusive New Zealand. This is the promise of our Government's Employment Strategy and of this underpinning Action Plan.



Hon Willie Jackson
Minister for Employment

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Section one:

Introduction

Who this plan is for

This plan is for all of us

All of us have a right to equal opportunities to get a job, stay in work and reach our career aspirations. And any of us have our employment affected by issues related to disability access needs or disability support options, or our health status, during our lifetime.

This plan sets out actions to improve employment outcomes and wellbeing for people who experience disadvantages in labour markets due to disability or health issues (including physical, sensory, learning, neurological, and mental health related issues) that may be visible, hidden, permanent, temporary, acquired or experienced from birth.

This plan also relates to people who experience multiple disadvantage in labour markets. To address this, the plan will align with employment action plans for Māori, Pacific People, refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities, older people and young people.

This plan is for New Zealand businesses

Businesses benefit from employing and retaining people with diverse life experiences. And employers benefit from creating inclusive workplaces that help to attract and retain disabled people and people with health conditions.

Demand is changing for workforce and workplaces. On one hand we need to increase workforce participation to support a larger, older population. On the other hand, there are increasing numbers of older workers and with this an

increasing number of workers and jobseekers living with health conditions or disability. We are also rapidly adjusting our ways of working and business models to accommodate new health and safety conditions, new technological opportunities and new economic demands in a post COVID-19 world.

It is ever more important for businesses to be equipped to offer flexible working arrangements and support the upskilling of workers as circumstances change. This will help businesses retain effective workforces and stay relevant with new technologies in a rapidly changing world of work.

There is an untapped talent pool amongst disabled people that can be harnessed to meet increasing workforce demands. There are some businesses and entrepreneurs who make good use of this potential and who have grown work opportunities for disabled people. We need more.

74%

of disabled people not in paid work would like to work if a job was available.

Employers benefit from having a diverse workforce that includes disabled people and people with health conditions. Evidence shows diversity increases business performance and sustainability. A pro-diversity attitude can help businesses to:

- access untapped skills and talents
- gain new and valuable knowledge and experience
- get the best person for the job
- show customers and other staff that diversity is valued
- mirror the market
- improve workplace culture
- capitalise on improved accessibility and an inclusive workplace culture for all employees.



Why this plan is important

Equal access to good work matters

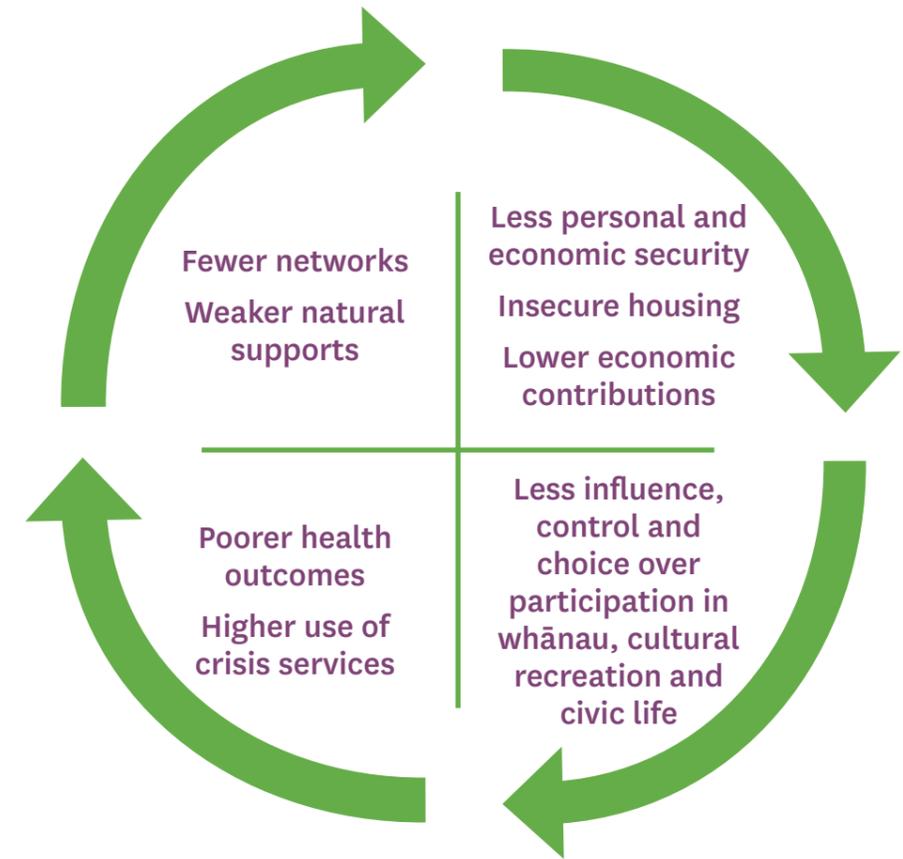
Being employed or owning a business offers financial benefits, a sense of purpose and social connection. Not only is employment good for the economy, it also lifts the wellbeing of people, their families and their communities.

When consulting on this plan people told us...

- “promoting inclusive and diverse workplaces where people thrive is a priority”
- “how important it is to support disabled people and their families to be aspirational when it comes to their employment futures”
- “we want an opportunity to try work and to show employers our value”
- “to innovate and do things differently”



Unemployment can be part of a cycle of disadvantage



Employment can be part of a cycle of wellbeing and productivity



What success looks like

Good employment outcomes are diverse

All of us, including people living with disability or health issues have varied skills and work aspirations and the employment outcomes that suit us will look different for each person.

Good employment outcomes that this action plan is aiming for can include part-time work, full-time work, intermittent work, self-employment, business ownership and other work arrangements. A range of different approaches are required to achieve these diverse outcomes – this is not a ‘one size fits all’ plan.

To ensure the plan is working for all people and their diverse aspirations we need to measure success carefully. We especially need to check progress for people who experience multiple disadvantage and people with high disability support needs.

Closing the gap in labour market statistics

There is a large gap in employment outcomes between disabled people and non-disabled people. Disabled people are more than twice as likely to be unemployed and young disabled people are more than four times as likely to not be in employment, education or training as their non-disabled peers. We will know the plan is succeeding when these gaps start to close. However, this will take time and we need to measure progress along the way to be sure we are on track.

Indicators that show progress along the way

A first step to implement this plan will be the development of a concise set of indicators of progress, in consultation with stakeholders. These need to include the immediate outcomes from

actions (such as participant numbers in services) as well as the longer-term wellbeing and employment statistics.

These indicators should drive, measure and inform us about progress as we collectively implement the plan. They will sit within a monitoring framework that helps government and other stakeholders to improve the plan and refresh the kaupapa as we learn more about what works.

Based on our initial consultation we know that these indicators will:

- draw on annual Statistics New Zealand surveys that show the gap between disabled people and non-disabled people for:
 - labour market participation rates
 - employment rates
 - unemployment rates
 - utilisation rates
 - income
- aim to break down some outcome data for different groups:
 - people with higher support needs (including people with intellectual disability)
 - people who access mental health or addiction services
 - Māori
 - Pacific People, refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities, older people and young people
- aim to draw on or develop broader data sets that measure:
 - wellbeing
 - vocational education participation and outcomes
 - sense of belonging
 - employer attitudes.

How we implement the plan

A call to action – this is a joint venture

Employers, disabled people and people with health conditions told us they want this action plan to be a joint venture with government. It is very clear that we must work together on the actions in this plan to create more inclusive labour markets. Each objective and priority in the plan has a role for all stakeholders to do their bit in making it happen. Whether it be improving funding, adjusting systems (e.g. referral or human resource systems), providing information, busting myths, testing new approaches, taking a chance, monitoring and advocating for progress, learning new skills or taking up a great job to reach your potential.

Cross-government teamwork that fosters and builds on progress

This action plan does not act alone. It is a part of the Government’s Employment and Disability Strategies. The plan identifies actions in several other government priorities including: the Reform of Vocational Education; the Welfare Overhaul; the Careers System Strategy; the Learning Support Action Plan; Transformation of the Disability Support System and the recovery and revitalisation of our economy in the post COVID-19 world.

The fast pace of change in economic, social and health circumstances in 2020 has been met with a swift Government response and many new policy and service settings are emerging. These changes create both challenges and opportunities to progress employment priorities for disabled people and people with health conditions.

Continuous improvement – a ‘living plan’ in the post-COVID-19 context

The role of the plan, and of monitoring processes, in the context of on-going change is to ensure new opportunities are recognised and progressed and potential new barriers prevented. The plan will provide a disability employment lens across government’s work programme.

Monitoring processes will offer a constructive and ambitious focus for regularly reviewing how to best address the priorities identified in the plan across government.

The key mechanisms for this monitoring include:

- regular reporting to Ministers by the agencies with responsibilities outlined in the plan
- a dashboard of indicators of progress to check whether the actions and outcomes are on track
- regular review to allow the plan to evolve as opportunities arise
- coordination and synergy with monitoring of the Government’s employment strategy implementation
- contributions to regular reporting to the Disability Ministers group and the Independent Monitoring Mechanism (which includes Disabled People’s Organisations, the Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman).



Section two:

The kaupapa guiding this plan

The following insights and principles shaped the plan. Some are longstanding principles that reflect and drive change across government such as those found in **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** and the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. Others are insights that strongly resonate with the goals and circumstances of disabled people, people with health conditions and employers.

When consulting on this plan people told us...

“a whānau-centred approach requires more than looking at the person as an individual, it is about understanding the person in their whole context”

“we must ground the plan in a rights-based approach”

“to recognise the diversity of disabled people”... and to “have both bottom up (employment support) mixed with top down (good employers) actions”

Guiding insights from research and consultation:

- **Raising expectations and visibility of success is critical.** Seeing more disabled people in work improves expectations and understanding about what is possible and builds employer and employee confidence.
- **Timely, personalised and flexible employment services** are effective, especially when it is easy to talk about what people and their whānau can do with support (a strengths focus).
- **Place-based and community or industry driven initiatives and partnerships are often effective** as they can link with local resources and employers. Strong local relationships between various service sectors and labour markets are key.
- **Paid work is a good way to gain and improve skills.** A focus on employment and further education early on in life contributes to good employment outcomes later in life.

Guiding principles include:

- **Mana motuhake:** supporting self-determination.
- **Equity:** which means an equal opportunity to thrive consistent with the core principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Strategy.
- **Diversity:** acknowledging and addressing diverse circumstances and need. Some groups need targeted ongoing support, others only need freedom from prejudice.
- **Mana manaaki:** building the mana of others and uplifting them in a way that honours their dignity.
- **Whānau-centred:** seeing the person in the context of their whānau – a culturally-grounded and holistic approach.
- **Whole of life:** seeing the whole person in the context of all areas and stages of their life – accessibility in all domains.
- **Kotahitanga:** partnering for greater impact – unity, togetherness, solidarity and collective action – joint ventures.
- **Kia takatū tātou:** supporting long-term social and economic development.

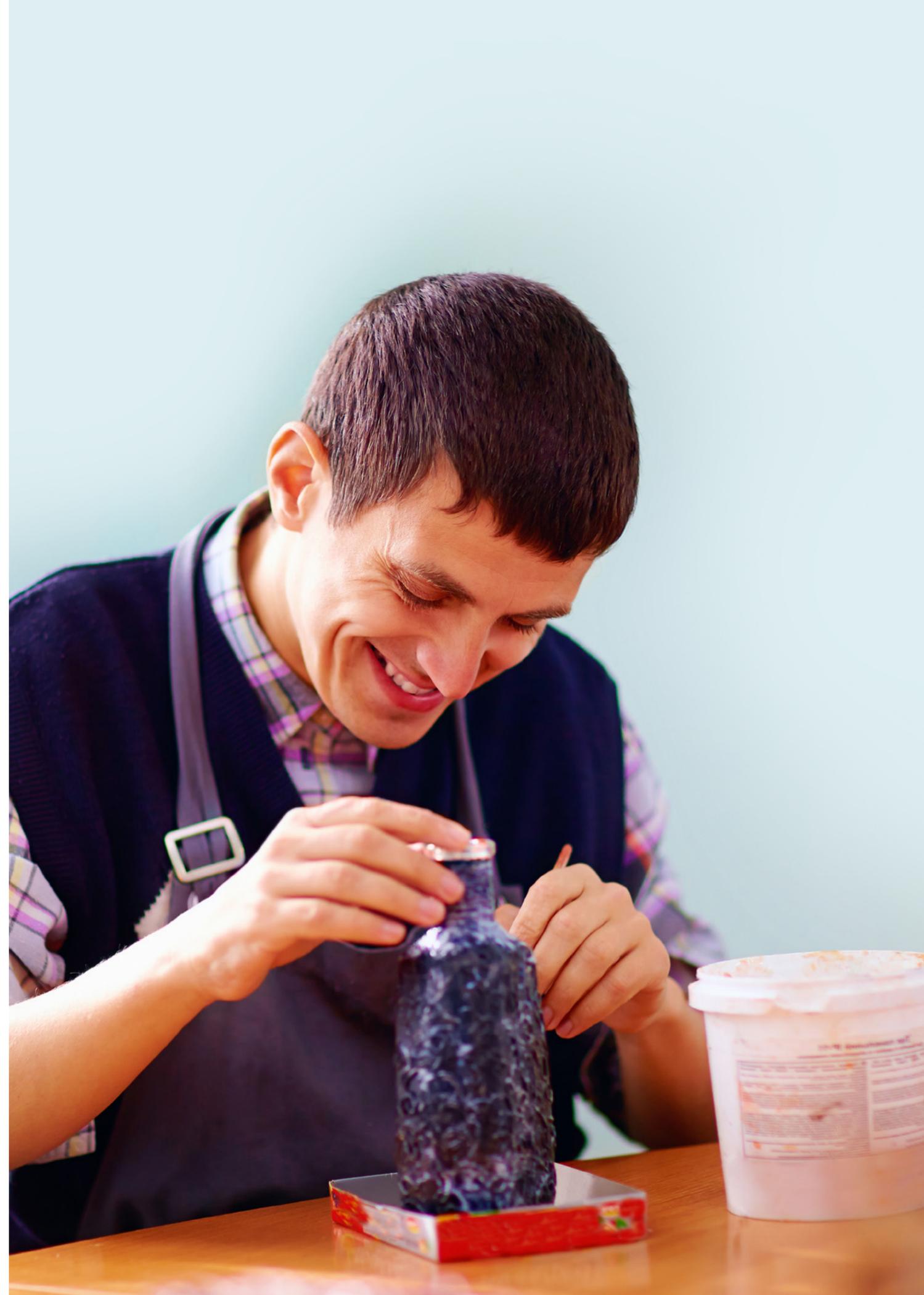
Section three:

The Action Plan

An overview of the action plan

The long-term aspiration of this plan is to help ensure disabled people and people with health conditions **have an equal opportunity to access good work**. The plan is organised around three objectives that address both sides of the labour market and the kaupapa guiding the plan.

Objectives	Areas of action	Priorities	Kaupapa
Supply			
1. Support people to steer their own employment futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and training Apprenticeships and internships 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Positive expectations for disabled school leavers Career pathways at all stages of life and for diverse needs and aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mana motuhake – self determination Equity Diversity Whole of life accessibility
Match			
2. Back people who want to work and employers with the right support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral pathways Employment services Partnerships with employers Information 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> More and better employment services Information and support for employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mana Manaaki – Mana enhancing Strengths-focussed Whānau-centred
Demand			
3. Partner with industry to increase good work opportunities for disabled people and people with health conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workplace health and safety State sector exemplars Future of work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive and wellbeing-enhancing workplaces Innovative labour market support and business development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kotahitanga – partnering for greater impact Kia takatū tātou – supporting long-term social and economic development



Objective 1:

Support people to steer their own employment futures

All people and their whānau can benefit from an equal opportunity to pursue their aspirations for earning, learning, caring and volunteering – on their own terms.

To support people to hold ‘the reins’ in their own working lives they need equal access to quality and life-long education and training alongside diverse career pathways and work opportunities.

Priority 1: Positive expectations for disabled school leavers

Kaupapa: Low expectations about the lives of young disabled people is identified as a major barrier to building positive futures.

Many young disabled jobseekers lack the work experience that many of their non-disabled peers gain through an after-school or holiday job. And we know that early work experience and on-the-job training significantly improves education and employment outcomes.

Another barrier, particularly for people with learning disabilities or autism, is low expectations of their ability to work. Yet we know that many can thrive in open employment with good support. Transitions from school for these students are most successful when started by age 14; where their goals are at the centre of decision-making; and where whānau are included in these decisions and in building confidence and aspirations to work.

Building on existing services the government is progressing the following actions:

Initial actions 2020–2022	Links	Responsibility
Support young people who live with significant disability to access work experience while still at school (This action involves access to employment services that work alongside the young person with families, schools and employers)	Youth Employment Action Plan	Ministry of Social Development + Ministry of Education
Start career building support including whānau-centred education at year seven	Learning Support Action Plan	Ministry of Education
Explore work experience, shadowing options and pathways into employment for young people who live with significant disability and learning disabilities in particular. (This action will be informed by an evaluation of the ‘Project Search’ pilot)	Disability System Transformation	Ministry of Education + Ministry of Social Development

This plan is a living document and new actions will be developed that address this priority alongside Government’s broader work programme, guided by the kaupapa and informed by monitoring.

Priority 2: Career pathways at all stages of life and for diverse needs and aspirations

Kaupapa: We know that successful participation in post-school education is a strong predictor of improved longer-term employment outcomes. We also know that a range of personal circumstances require a range of support and education approaches to ensure successful pathways into work for all abilities and at all stages of life.

People often seek guidance and ways to explore career options in situations when they move into work following education; return to work after time away; seek to progress in a career; or when they need to adapt the way they work because of acquiring disability or health needs.

Guidance tools are particularly important for disabled people who may face additional career challenges related to their support networks, discrimination or simply not having enough relatable role models.

Also, we know that there is likely to be an increasing need for tools to help all people manage their careers or career change and labour market risks in the post-COVID economic recovery, and as the nature of work transforms.

Building on existing services the government is progressing the following actions:

Initial actions 2020–2022	Links	Responsibility
Explore how to ensure more disabled people and people with health conditions access career transition initiatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships and related support such as Mana in Mahi • He Poutama Rangatahi • Re-training options (This action will consider access to new initiatives designed to assist with the post-COVID economic recovery)	Reform of Vocational Education + Welfare Overhaul	Ministry of Social Development + Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment + Ministry of Education
Offer more paid internships to assist with transitions from tertiary education and training in diverse sectors	Welfare Overhaul	Ministry of Social Development
Ensure the refreshed careers.govt.nz website and related tools and products are accessible to disabled people (From mid-2021 ‘Tiro Whetū’ will replace careers.govt.nz. This is a personalised and targeted system to support all New Zealanders to build a fulfilling career. The system will ensure that everyone, including disabled people, is able to use and get value from the site. It will be accessible by design, ‘mobile first’, and bilingual wherever possible)	Career System Strategy + Tiro Whetū	Tertiary Education Commission

This plan is a living document and new actions will be developed that address this priority alongside Government’s broader work programme, guided by the kaupapa and informed by monitoring.

Objective 2:

Back people who want to work and employers with the right support

Effective employment services are different for different groups, different individuals in those groups and different employers.

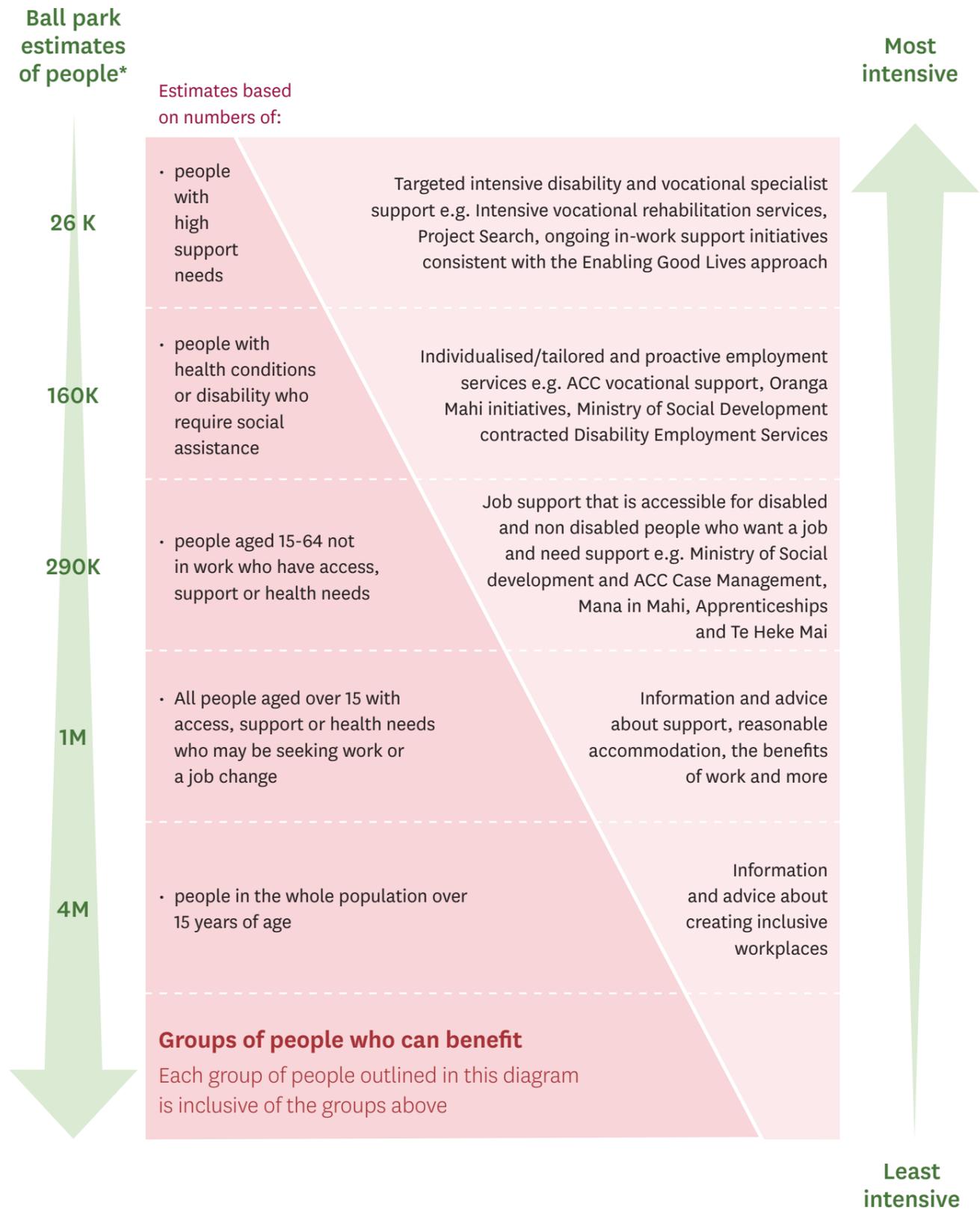
Some people need personalised support to help them find a job, or to stay in work due to an array of complex barriers that may be in the labour market and/or in their personal circumstances. Others only need for their employer to receive good advice to support them better. Everyone can benefit from more inclusive workplaces.

The range of employment services available in New Zealand are not currently accessed by all disabled people or people with health conditions that could benefit from them.

This action plan aims to improve both the coverage and take-up of effective employment services at all levels of intensity.



Figure A: Types of disability employment services, support and information



* The 'ball-park' numbers are rounded estimates and indicative only. They are based on a mix of 2018-19 administrative data, the 2013 Disability Survey, the June 2019 Household Labour Force Survey and 2018-19 population estimates from Statistics New Zealand

Priority 3: More and better employment services

Kaupapa: It makes social and economic sense to invest in support for people who want to work. In particular, services that have the flexibility to tailor their support, and have a ‘do what it takes’ approach, are known to be effective at supporting people with significant barriers into employment.

To ensure that people who can benefit from these services can access these services, we need to ensure referral and eligibility systems are mana enhancing and promote positive work aspirations. It is particularly important that systems do not mistakenly create barriers to employment or to employment support through a focus on the severity of an impairment, rather than strengths and the potential to fully participate with reasonable accommodations.

Whānau-centred coordination between different service systems also needs to be managed carefully and recognise strengths in natural support networks or other existing support arrangements. It is important to acknowledge that many disabled people and people with health conditions and their whānau have significant concerns about the potential loss of financial assistance, or other support they rely on.

Building on existing services the government is progressing the following actions:

Initial actions 2020–2022	Links	Responsibility
Extend the period Supported Living Payment recipients can work more than 15 hours a week from 6 months to 2 years (this action involves changes to legislation)	Welfare Overhaul	Ministry of Social Development
Value diverse work outcomes and pathways to work within MSD systems (including part-time and intermittent work)		
Expand specialist disability employment services		
Scale up integrated health and employment services (developed by MSD in partnership with health sector organisations such as District Health Boards or Primary Health Organisations, including Individualised Placement Services for people who access mental health and addiction services)		
Develop a Diploma in Employment Support (building on Employment Support Practice Guidelines)		+ Careerforce
Explore opportunities to strengthen integration between primary mental health and addiction services and employment services	Government response to <i>He Ara Oranga</i>	Ministry of Social Development + Ministry of Health

This plan is a living document and new actions will be developed that address this priority alongside Government’s broader work programme, guided by the kaupapa and informed by monitoring.

Priority 4: Information and support for employers

Kaupapa: A multi-pronged approach will be adopted to build employer confidence in recruiting and retaining disabled people and people with health conditions, including:

- disseminating knowledge of successful work arrangements, busting myths and revealing the potential and talent amongst disabled jobseekers
- disseminating knowledge of appropriate and lawful hiring and recruitment practices
- offering industries recruitment and training support where there are opportunities to match skill shortages with the talent amongst disabled jobseekers
- promoting ‘social procurement’ options where purchasers ask suppliers to support employment for disadvantaged job seekers in their tenders for work.

Building on existing services the government is progressing the following actions:

Initial actions 2020–2022	Links	Responsibility
Disseminate information that raises the visibility of disabled people and people with health conditions as a talent pool	Disability Strategy and Action Plan	Ministry of Social Development + Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Disseminate good practice stories		
The Public Service leads by example with the recruitment and retention of disabled people, and improved data collection on disabled employees across the public sector to support inclusive workplaces		
Development of regional employer hubs with a focus on improving disability employment		
Develop and expand partnerships between employers and Government with a focus on improving disability employment. (This action will include employer-led initiatives such as:	Industry partnerships Skills for Industry Te Ara Mahi	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of pipelines for jobseekers with disability or health needs into recruitment and training • tailored practical support for employers to help them ensure their Human Resource systems are inclusive) 		

This plan is a living document and new actions will be developed that address this priority alongside Government’s broader work programme, guided by the kaupapa and informed by monitoring.

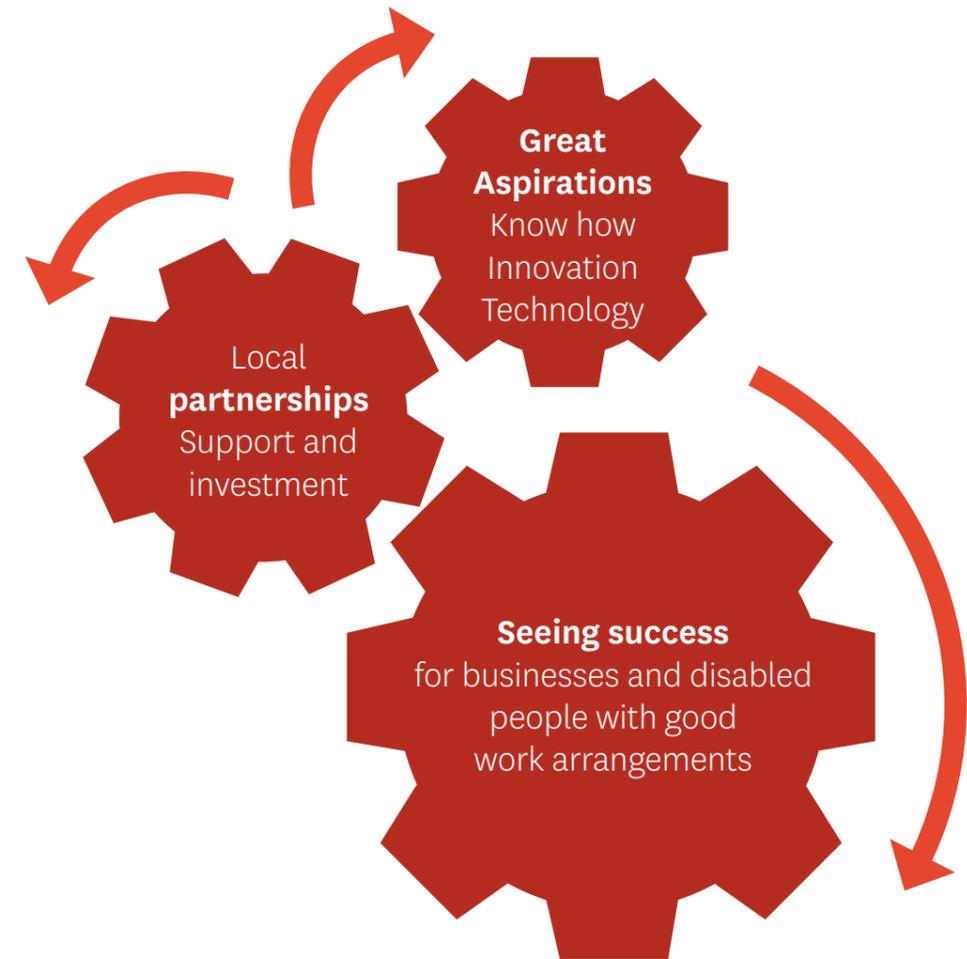
Objective 3:

Partner with industry to improve work opportunities for disabled people and people with health conditions

The Government will partner with businesses and innovators to grow employment opportunities (including part-time, full-time and intermittent work) for people with diverse support, access, or health needs.

This is critical to *kia takatū tātou* – supporting the long-term social and economic development of New Zealand because:

- businesses need know-how and networks so they can benefit from recruiting, retaining and working with disabled people and people with health conditions – particularly as the population ages
- it is important to support good employers with the information and tools that will allow a fully inclusive labour market to thrive, and to stop people from falling out of work when they acquire support, access or health needs
- the economy needs new businesses (including self-employment) that respond to new post-COVID-19 economic drivers, take advantage of new technologies and future work trends and that offer new opportunities for disabled workers
- local employment initiatives are known to be effective where they build on high-trust relationships and strengths amongst local businesses, education and support providers and other community organisations such as iwi trusts, councils or churches to respond to local needs. These partnerships or ‘place-based’ initiatives are an emergent and unique sector that needs nurturing and development.



Priority 5: Inclusive and wellbeing enhancing workplaces

Kaupapa: Growing numbers of employers want to foster disability-inclusive and mentally healthy workplace cultures to capitalise on employment practices that benefit everyone. This includes health-promoting practices as well as accommodating the individual needs of people with diverse support, access or health needs.

There is also a role for health services alongside employment services and employers to help ensure that employers and workers are better equipped to adapt appropriately when an employee becomes ill or acquires disability support or access needs.

Building on existing services the government is progressing the following actions:

Initial actions 2020–2022	Links	Responsibility
Promote accessibility, including in workplaces as well as to and from workplaces	Accessibility + Disability Strategy + Better Later Life Strategy	Ministry of Social Development
The Public Service leads by example with inclusive and wellbeing enhancing workplaces (This will include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing SSC flexible work guidance to support employment accessibility • Giving effect to SSC guidance on addressing bias in the Public Service • Supporting the refresh of the government jobs website to ensure it attracts and is accessible to diverse communities • Supporting the refresh of Public Service online induction module to reinforce diversity and inclusiveness) 	The Public Service Legislation Bill creates an obligation for Chief Executives to promote diversity and inclusiveness + The State Services Leadership Team’s work programme to ensure discrimination is eliminated; and the Public Service is fully accessible, with everyone able to participate	State Services Commission (SSC)
Promote the health benefits of good work to health practitioners	Royal Australasian College of Physicians Consensus on the Health Benefits of Good Work	Ministry of Social Development
Clarify guidance on lawful hiring and recruitment practices and promote lawful and best practice	Human Rights Act	Human Rights Commission

This plan is a living document and new actions will be developed that address this priority alongside Government’s broader work programme, guided by the kaupapa and informed by monitoring.



Priority 6: Innovative labour market support and business development

Kaupapa: Self-employment, micro enterprises, co-operative or social enterprises and customised employment are all business models that can make good and safe use of emerging labour market opportunities as well as assistive and digital technologies, such as:

- remote work options for people who cannot travel easily
- gig economy platforms for people who need to, or want to, work flexibly or intermittently
- job platforms that provide easier and more accessible ways for disabled people to match, showcase or develop talent
- specific tasks in a business where an individual worker with unique strengths can be most productive, and which capitalise on niche markets, often operating on a global rather than national scale (e.g. software bug checking).

Care needs to be taken to harness these new options and business models while also protecting workers.

There are also opportunities to co-design innovative approaches to labour market support and business development with Māori and iwi, disability groups, employers and support providers.

Building on existing services the government is progressing the following actions:

Initial actions 2020–2022	Links	Responsibility
Policy work on employment products and services, will include consideration of support options that promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • micro enterprise and self-employment • new businesses that promote disability employment • disabled people to take up work opportunities created by new assistive and digital technologies • innovative job design including customised employment 	Welfare Overhaul + Future of work	Ministry of Social Development + Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment + Ministry of Education
Explore the use of digital platforms to support disabled people and people with health conditions to get employment and to support them while they are in employment		
Policy work on the first principles of the active labour market policy system will include consideration of the needs of disabled people and people with health conditions		
Explore social procurement options as a mechanism for government to support disadvantaged jobseekers in partnership with employers	Procurement for broader outcomes	

This plan is a living document and new actions will be developed that address this priority alongside Government’s broader work programme, guided by the kaupapa and informed by monitoring.



