

Disability workforce training needs and barriers

Workforce training ultimately contributes to safe and high quality care for disabled people (Ministry of Health, 2009). To support access to workforce training, Te Pou's Disability Workforce Development (DWD) service was contracted in 2010 to administer training grants on behalf of the Ministry of Health.

Key report findings

To assist future planning and prioritisation, sector feedback about disability support workforce training needs and barriers were gathered by regional workforce facilitators. A comprehensive review of earlier workforce surveys was also completed. Key findings are summarised below.

Training needs:

- short courses to develop minimum knowledge and skills (such as first aid, fire safety, emergency procedures) required in different service settings (such as home and community support services and new models of service delivery)
- formally recognised qualifications to develop core skills and those for specialist areas
- improved disability knowledge and awareness (such as autism spectrum disorders and behaviour support)
- cultural responsiveness to meet the needs of Māori, Pacific and other ethnic groups
- consumer leadership and development (such as self-advocacy training).

Organisational training barriers:

- an ability to support and encourage staff (for example, funding and providing time off)
- responding to diverse workforce characteristics (such as literacy issues, adult learning needs, English as a second language, and preferred learning styles)
- awareness of learning programmes and activities available
- the availability of relevant courses and programmes (such as access to training in local area co-ordination and individualised funding)
- developing a sustainable workforce development infrastructure (for example, accessing suitably qualified and skilled trainers and assessors and dedicated learning support).

Other workforce training challenges include:

- staff confidence, skills and motivation (for example, literacy issues and previous learning experiences)
- staff time and resources (such as computer access and other commitments).

Recommendations

Based on evidence available a number of suggested actions for improving access and overcoming training barriers have been recommended as outlined below.

Ministry of Health grant funding

1. Continued for formally recognised qualifications and non-NZQA short courses.
2. Continued for leadership development with a key focus on workforce development.
3. Continued for consumer leadership development.
4. Prioritising home and community support services and new service delivery models for non-NZQA grants.
5. Using evidence to review Ministry of Health grant criteria.

Workforce development infrastructure

6. A central disability training directory is developed collaboratively by DWD.
7. Successful tools and initiatives shared with the sector by DWD and Careerforce (for example, learning support and profiling sector workforce development initiatives)
8. Services supported to network and share resources by DWD and Careerforce (for example, forums facilitating greater service collaboration and efficient resource use).

Training delivery

9. Disabled people are included in relevant programmes and courses.
10. Programmes and courses reflect the diverse characteristics of the workforce.
11. Making this report available on the DWD website to gain feedback, including:
 - a. What training needs or barriers are not captured by this report?
 - b. Which potential solutions offer the greatest benefit and should be prioritised?
 - c. What additional strategies would support future workforce training?

DWD 2011 work plan

Actions in the DWD 2011 work plan to strengthen workforce training and address barriers include:

- developing a disability workforce training directory to increase access and awareness of relevant learning programmes and activities
- promoting resources that support sustainable workforce infrastructure development (for example, learning support and needs analysis tools)
- holding forums to support workforce learning and development and the sharing of workforce development initiatives
- sharing training stories to recognise learning and increase workforce motivation
- improving that quality of workforce data available to inform future planning and decision making, by gathering information about grant recipients, the impact of grant funding, and areas for improvement
- sharing report findings with the sector and developing a tool to continue monitoring current training needs and barriers.

DWD also plans to:

- make the report available on the website to gain sector feedback on priorities
- review report findings against the NZDSN Careerforce survey once they are available.