

# The employment of disabled people in disability support services

## Research report

Disability Workforce  
Development o Te Whakaaro Nui

The NATIONAL CENTRE of MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH,  
INFORMATION *and* WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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o Te Whakaaro Nui

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# Executive summary

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## Background

It has long been known that people with disabilities do not fare as well in the employment market as their able-bodied peers. Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed, or employed in poorer paid or low status jobs than their able-bodied counterparts. The need to increase the number of disabled people working in disability support services (DSS) has been identified in the Ministry of Health's *DSS Workforce Action Plan* (Ministry of Health, 2009). Using questionnaires adapted from those used in previous New Zealand research focused on the employment of disabled people in general workplaces (EEO Trust, 2005a; Woodley & Metzger, 2012), this project interviewed 10 DSS employers<sup>1</sup> and 12 disabled employees. The research aimed to develop a better understanding within DSS of (a) career pathways and the motivation of disabled employees to work in disability services, (b) barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people, (c) supports required for disabled employees, and (d) factors associated with the retention of disabled employees.

## Career pathways and motivation of DSS disabled employees

The current research has contributed to a better understanding of the career pathways and motivation of disabled people working in DSS, and can help inform future strategies and actions aimed at increasing the number of disabled people employed within the sector. Similar to research on disabled peoples' employment in the wider general workforce (EEO Trust, 2005a), findings indicate:

- a range of strategies were used by disabled people in gaining employment within DSS, such as responding to job advertisements, volunteering, seeking a trial period within organisations, and being shoulder tapped

all disabled employees interviewed had experienced difficulties in the past applying for jobs in both DSS and general workplaces;<sup>2</sup> this was due in part to discrimination and not getting interviews – a lack of self-confidence and low expectations from others were also mentioned the majority of disabled people thought their skills and abilities were a good match to their job.

Within DSS specifically, findings also indicate:

- that prior to their current role, many disabled people interviewed had worked in non-DSS workplaces
- disabled people were most likely to be motivated to work in DSS because they wanted to work with disabled people
- disabled people thought they brought unique attributes to the role, such as their lived experience of disability and their knowledge of the disability system
- some disabled employees thought the skill set of lived experience of disability could be better acknowledged and utilised within disability services.

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<sup>1</sup> Known to employ disabled people.

<sup>2</sup> While the EEO Trust (2005a) survey found less people had experienced difficulties getting a job (61 per cent), this may be due in part to the characteristics of disabled employees in the current study.

## Employment barriers and enablers for disabled people in DSS

The identification of barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people within DSS has helped identify strategies and actions that can aid the future recruitment of disabled people to the sector. Findings indicate:

- that while only half of the employers interviewed specifically sought to employ disabled people, others said they would lean towards disabled candidates if they had the required skills
- disabled people did not want to be singled out and thought policies and practices should be inclusive of all employees
- some of the key skills sought among disabled and non-disabled employees alike, included enthusiasm and willingness to learn, relationship and communication skills, being self-directed, and having a can-do attitude
- all employers tried to ensure a good fit between the person and job, regardless of disability
- disabled employees can add diversity to workplaces and contribute to more cohesive, tolerant, accepting, and empathetic teams.

When attitudes towards employing disabled people were investigated, the attitudes of DSS employers were found to be more positive than general workplace employers (see Woodley & Metzger, 2012). For example, more than two-thirds of DSS employers believed disabled employees were at least equally productive and did not require big disruptive or expensive workplace changes. DSS employers also thought the attitudes of co-workers and consumers to disabled staff members would be more favourable. Moreover, none of the DSS employers interviewed said employing disabled people was a hassle. These findings are in line with expectations given all employers interviewed in the current study were known to employ disabled people within the disability sector.<sup>3</sup>

While all employers said they were open to employing people with all types of impairment, in line with earlier research (Woodley & Metzger, 2012) the likelihood of employment appears to be greater for people with physical or sensory impairments, rather than intellectual disabilities or cognitive impairments. This was primarily due to their perceived ability to carry out specific roles within DSS.

## Supports for disabled employees in DSS

The research has identified supports required by disabled employees working within DSS. Findings can be used to inform future strategies aimed at addressing perceived barriers to the employment of disabled people, and in improving workforce retention. Key findings were:

- that the types of supports most commonly offered by employers to disabled people included communication support during a job interview; use of support services (such as Workbridge and supported employment providers) to provide ongoing support; and flexible starting and finishing hours
- most disabled employees had received on the job training, including disability awareness training
- most disabled employees had had a mentor at some point in their career<sup>4</sup>
- the formalisation of informal supports was considered important by disabled employees.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The views of DSS employers who do not employ disabled people were not examined and may vary more. In addition, research by Woodley and Metzger (2012) examining employers in general workplaces found only about half had employed disabled people. Prior contact with disabled people increases the likelihood that an employer will employ someone with a disability.

<sup>4</sup> While mentoring was not necessarily provided by the employer, five of the eight people who received mentoring were mentored by a disabled person.

The majority of disabled employees interviewed required adaptive equipment in their role (such as adapted telephones, computer or software). Physical building adaptations were also commonly required. The need for these supports appeared to be higher for disabled people employed in DSS than general workplaces (EEO Trust, 2005a). While this may be due in part to the characteristics of disabled people surveyed,<sup>6</sup> the need for flexible working practices was similar to that reported by disabled people in other workplaces.<sup>7</sup>

## Retention of disabled employees in DSS

Factors associated with the retention of disabled employees within DSS were investigated. The study found:

- that in line with other research (State Services Commission, 2006), the retention of disabled employees was generally good, with an average length of time worked in their current DSS role of 10 years (range <1 to 22 years)
- most disabled employees interviewed said they would recommend working in DSS to other disabled people
- about two-thirds of disabled employees believed it was easier to work in DSS than in other areas, and a similar proportion of those who had worked in non-DSS workplaces thought they were better supported in DSS
- generally disabled people were nervous about moving jobs due to previous difficulties in gaining employment
- some of the reasons reported for difficulties remaining in DSS roles included the increasing effects of impairments with age, harassment by co-workers, the impact of being disabled within a disability service,<sup>8</sup> and other external responsibilities.<sup>9</sup>

## Recommendations

A number of recommendations are outlined below to support increasing the number of disabled people employed within DSS.

- The Ministry of Health:
  1. works with DSS employers to showcase examples of good practice on the employment of disabled people and to describe the value of disabled employees within DSS
  2. considers undertaking research in collaboration with disabled people and other key stakeholders to describe the lived experience of disability as a workplace skill-set
  3. considers mechanisms to support an internship programme for disabled people within DSS upon contract renewal, considers the inclusion of positive discrimination policies within DSS contracts, and mandating the accessibility of DSS provider premises, even when they are not providing services to the public
  4. provides templates for DSS employers to support the development of equality and diversity policies that are inclusive of all employees

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<sup>5</sup> This was reiterated by one employee who believed it was important to establish a clear pathway and timeframe in which support would be provided at the outset of employment.

<sup>6</sup> The disabled people interviewed may have had different types or more severe impairments requiring a higher level of support.

<sup>7</sup> Research by the State Services Commission (2006) also indicates the need is similar for non-disabled employees.

<sup>8</sup> For example, not being able to switch off from the impact of disability in one's personal life, and putting aside individual beliefs to represent those of an organisation.

<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the EEO Trust (2005a) survey found the main reasons for leaving included the attitudes of employers and other staff members.

5. helps facilitate peer support and/or mentoring for disabled people, for example by supporting the development of DSS disabled employee networks
  6. includes in its commitment to workforce data collection in the revised *Disability Workforce Action Plan*, a dedicated focus on disabled employees.
- The Ministry of Social Development:
    7. considers the lived experience of disabled people in the development of any future productivity measures.
  - Employment and recruitment agencies:
    8. encourage disabled people to seek positions both within and outside DSS
    9. support non-DSS employers in developing increased disability awareness and understanding.
  - DSS employers:
    10. continue to develop the skills and knowledge of leaders and staff to create supportive work environments for disabled people, for example by providing disability awareness training
    11. formalise agreed support plans at the commencement of employment, including the consideration of flexible working hours
    12. continue to offer opportunities for disabled people to gain work experience, such as internships, work placements, and volunteering opportunities
    13. promote characteristics of the role that attract disabled people to work in DSS, such as working within the disabled community, having a lived experience of disability and knowledge of the disability system
    14. consider the exchange of workforce quantitative information relating to disabled people employed in DSS.

# Background

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## Policy

The *New Zealand Disability Strategy's* (Ministry of Health, 2001) vision is for a society that highly values the lives, and continually enhances the full participation of disabled people. One of the strategy's key objectives to support an inclusive society is the provision of "opportunities in employment and economic development for disabled people" (p. 2). The need to improve the work prospects of disabled people is also identified in the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Human Rights Act 1993* makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability.

Workforce development is one of the four priorities for the Disability Support Services (DSS) Group in the Ministry of Health as set out in their *DSS Strategic Plan 2010 to 2014* (Ministry of Health, 2012). Increasing the number of disabled people working within the disability sector is also a priority in the *DSS Workforce Action Plan* (2009, and revised draft).

The DSS Group within the Ministry of Health manages supports to approximately 33,000 disabled people (including 4500 Māori) and families/whānau, through over 1200 contracts with service providers (Ministry of Health, 2012).

## Disabled people employed within DSS

While a goal of the *DSS Workforce Action Plan* is increasing the number of disabled people employed in the disability sector, it is not known how many disabled people are currently employed within disability services. As discussed in the literature review undertaken to inform this project (attached in Appendix A),<sup>10</sup> there is presently a lack of accurate baseline data available. One estimate of disabled people employed in intellectual disability residential support services, suggests around 10 per cent of this workforce may have a disability (Higgins et al., 2009). This is in line with other estimates of disabled people working in the public service (Statistics New Zealand, 2008).

Disabled people made up around 17 per cent of the working age population in New Zealand in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2007).<sup>11</sup> Disabled people are expected to reflect an increasing proportion of the workforce in the future as the population ages. Despite many legislative and policy changes over the last 20 years, the position of disabled people in the labour force in New Zealand remains poor.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore important to develop a better understanding of factors supporting the recruitment and retention of disabled people within DSS.

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<sup>10</sup> The literature review examined national and international literature on the proportion of disabled people employed in DSS and the general workforce, barriers to the recruitment of disabled people and supports required by disabled employees. While the initial scope of the review was focused on DSS within New Zealand, the scope was broadened to include general employment given the paucity of literature available.

<sup>11</sup> This equated to around 539,000 people but only 45 per cent were employed. If 10 per cent of the DSS workforce were disabled this would be higher than in the general labour force. The labour force includes all people aged 15 years and over who regularly work for one or more hours per week for financial gain, or as an unpaid worker in a family business. Also included are those people who are unemployed and actively seeking either full-time or part-time work

<sup>12</sup> Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed, or employed in poorer paid or low status jobs than their able-bodied counterparts. This is as true in New Zealand as it is in other developed countries (see Appendix A).

## Barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people

Research suggests that the key barriers to employment for disabled people include stereotypes and poor attitudes of employers and co-workers towards disabled people (see Appendix A). Employers may have negative attitudes and beliefs about the costs of hiring disabled people, their level of productivity, and the reactions of co-workers and consumers to disabled staff members. Negative attitudes among co-workers may include thinking disabled people will get special treatment or will not be as productive. Between 2005 and 2010, employment/pre-employment discrimination complaints to the Human Rights Commission were most likely to be related to disability issues and reflected 25 per cent of overall complaints.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the key enablers to supporting the successful employment of disabled people identified in the literature (and outlined in Appendix A) include educating employers and the wider workforce about disability, ensuring physical access is available for disabled workers, and working with employers to ensure the best fit between employees and employers. Prior contact with disabled people also increases the likelihood that an employer will employ someone with a disability.

## Supports for disabled employees

The *2006 Disability Survey* (Statistics New Zealand, 2007) found most disabled New Zealanders (75 per cent) do not require any additional equipment, modifications or support to work. Where supports are required, they are most likely to be simple and incur low or no cost. The most common requirements include flexible working conditions and support, more supportive managers, and greater understanding from colleagues.

## Research aims

While some information is available on the barriers and enablers to employment for disabled people in the general population, and the supports required by disabled people, little is known about these factors within DSS specifically. To support increasing the number of disabled people employed within DSS, this research aims to develop a better understanding of:

- career pathways and motivation of disabled employees to work in DSS
- barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people in DSS
- supports required by disabled employees working in DSS
- factors associated with the retention of disabled employees in DSS.

A better understanding of career pathways, disabled peoples' motivation and barriers to their employment within DSS can aid the development of future strategies aimed at improving the recruitment and increasing the number of disabled people employed within the sector. The identification of supports required by disabled employees and factors associated with workforce retention may help address some of the perceived barriers to the employment of disabled people and help identify factors that enhance job performance and satisfaction.

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<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.neon.org.nz/trackingequalityatwork/disabledpeople/employmentcyclefordisabledpeople/>

# Method

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## Participants

Given most research questions focused on disabled people currently employed within DSS, those services that were known to employ at least one disabled person were invited to take part in this study. Disability services employing disabled people were identified by Te Pou and approached by Te Pou's Regional workforce facilitators to be interviewed. All but one organisation approached agreed to be interviewed. Organisations then asked their disabled employees whether they would like to volunteer to be interviewed. Organisations also nominated the people they thought would be most appropriate to take part in the employer interview, all of whom had a recruitment role. In total, 10 DSS employers and 12 disabled employees were interviewed.

Due to pragmatic and time constraints, the organisations interviewed were neither randomly sampled nor intended to be representative culturally, geographically or across impairment types. Although there is a spread in terms of organisation size, gender, age and ethnicity, this was accidental rather than intentional.

## Procedure

### Data collection

Interviews were conducted over three weeks during May and June 2013. All but one interview was conducted by telephone. One disabled employee was interviewed face-to-face to enhance communication. The interviewees were offered support to take part in the interviews such as New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreters and a support person being present if required.

### Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as the basis for telephone interviews and are attached in Appendices B and C. The questionnaires were adapted from those used in previous New Zealand research and were informed by the literature review undertaken as a background to this study (see Appendix A). The questionnaires were chosen given the studies were conducted in New Zealand, had similar research aims, and would allow for some comparability of issues faced by disabled people in the DSS and general workforces.

The disabled employee questionnaire was based on the EEO Trust online survey (EEO Trust, 2005a). Some additional questions were added specific to the DSS sector. During the interview disabled people were asked about their employment history, the supports they had used to obtain and retain their current role within DSS, and any employment barriers they had experienced. They were also asked about the skills and attributes they brought to DSS and any differences in their experiences of working in DSS and other workplaces. Data on the demographic characteristics of the disabled people interviewed were also collected.

The employer questionnaire was based on a survey conducted by Point Research on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development, *Employer Attitudes Towards Employing Disabled People* (Woodley & Metzger, 2012). Employers were asked about the skills and qualities they thought disabled people

brought to their workplace, supports they had in place for recruiting and retaining disabled staff, as well as questions about their attitudes towards employing disabled people.

All interviewees (employers and employees) were asked what their top three priorities would be if they were charged with increasing the number of disabled people employed within DSS.

## Analyses

Qualitative analyses were undertaken to identify key themes emerging from the responses of DSS employers and disabled employees.

In attitudinal questions, responses indicating agreement or strong agreement to each statement investigated were recoded as having agreed. Similarly, negative responses were grouped together.

As a result of the changes made to the original questionnaires and the qualitative approach used to gather data,<sup>14</sup> comparison with the original surveys by the EEO Trust and Ministry of Social Development was possible only in broad terms.

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<sup>14</sup> Rather than the quantitative approach used in previous surveys.

# Results

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## Participant characteristics

### Employers

The 10 DSS employers who participated in this research varied in size from 5 to 356 employees. There was a mix of local, regional and national organisations, with six organisations having a national spread.

Organisations represented a range of Ministry of Health contracted DSS<sup>15</sup> and supported people with a range of disabilities.<sup>16</sup> One organisation provided services specifically for Māori. Many organisations provided other non-Ministry of Health funded services.

Estimates of the number of disabled people working within organisations were unreliable. Most of the larger employers did not know the exact number of disabled people employed within their organisation. Smaller organisations generally knew this by counting through their employees during the interview. One organisation did not collect this information. Estimates of the number of disabled employees ranged from between 1 to 43 per cent of all staff.

### Disabled employees

The characteristics of the 12 disabled employees interviewed are summarised in Table 1.

#### Impairment type

The impairments reported by disabled employees included physical/mobility (seven), blind/vision impaired (three), Deaf/hard of hearing (two), and cognitive impairment (one). Seven of the people interviewed were born with an impairment and five had acquired impairments. Some people born with an impairment reported that they had not become disabled until later in life.

#### Role

Nearly all disabled employees interviewed had some direct contact with clients. For 10 people this was a large part of their role. Two disabled people interviewed were in managerial positions and six had clerical elements to their roles. One person was in an ancillary role as a cleaner.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Services included those providing information, advice, advocacy, needs assessment and service co-ordination, supported living, residential services, supported employment, retail, habilitation and rehabilitation, day services, respite, youth and early intervention services.

<sup>16</sup> Some were disability specific and some provided services to anyone with a disability.

<sup>17</sup> Note, the total is more than 12 as some had dual aspects to their roles.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the 12 Disabled Employees Interviewed

Characteristic	Details	Number
Gender	Female	6
	Male	6
Ethnicity	NZ Māori	5
	NZ European	10
	Samoan	1
	Other Pacific	1
	Disability as a culture	1
Age	26-35	3
	36-45	1
	46-55	4
	56-65	4
Education	None	1
	5 <sup>th</sup> form/secondary school	1
	Trade or diploma	9
	Post graduate	1
Schooling	Mainstream throughout	10
	Special school throughout	1
	Mixture	1
Location	Auckland	5
	Wellington	1
	Palmerston North	1
	Christchurch	3
	Invercargill	1
	Dunedin	1

## Career pathways and motivation of DSS disabled employees

In order to inform future strategies aimed at better attracting disabled people to work in DSS the career pathways and motivation of disabled people to work in the disability sector were investigated. Findings are presented below and are based on responses from both disabled employees and DSS employers where appropriate.

### Career pathways

Only 3 of the 12 disabled people interviewed had obtained their current job as a result of replying to a job advertisement. One had directly approached the organisation and persuaded them to give him a trial which resulted in a permanent role. Three people had volunteered in the organisation first, three were already working in the organisation when they applied for their current role, and two had been shoulder tapped to apply.

Prior to working in DSS, 10 out of the 12 disabled people interviewed had worked in non-DSS workplaces, including roles in a laundry, law practice, laboratory, taxi dispatch, teaching, farming and fisheries.

## Employment supports used

Disabled employees had used a range of supports to obtain their current role including training support, adaptive equipment, travel and modifications. Five had used Job Support.<sup>18</sup> No-one interviewed had utilised a minimum wage exemption.<sup>19</sup> Several people had used Workbridge and most had found this service to be very helpful.<sup>20</sup> One person said it was his personality and attitude, coupled with the support received that had enabled him to get a job. Interestingly one person did not want to go via Workbridge because they thought being identified as a disabled person may mean they would not get the job.

## Motivation to work in DSS

Six employees had chosen their role specifically because it was in DSS. Most said this was due to a desire to work with other disabled people or that they felt they brought unique attributes to the role because of their own disability. Those who did not choose the role specifically cited reasons such as “I wanted a job and this came up”, or “It came up and it was something I could do”.

When employers were asked what they thought motivated disabled people to work in DSS the most common answer was cultural values. Cultural values referred to Māori, Deaf and general organisational cultural values and was mentioned as a motivator by five employers. Four employers said they thought the supportive environment they offered was a motivator. Other attributes mentioned included “making a difference” or “supporting others to achieve their goals”. Financial reasons and “the same reasons as everyone else” were also cited. A desire to work in their own community was mentioned by one organisation.

## Knowledge, skills and attributes

### Knowledge, skills and lived experience

When asked what qualities, abilities or skills disabled people brought to their current role, 11 out of the 12 disabled employees interviewed mentioned their lived experience of disability as a key attribute. The one person who did not mention this specifically was working in an ancillary role and did not have direct contact with clients. Nine out of 10 employers also mentioned lived experience when asked what they thought disabled employees brought to the workplace and two employers mentioned disabled people’s knowledge of services.

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<sup>18</sup> Job Support helps people moving into employment as well as assisting people who are in employment to stay in their jobs when they have an onset of a disability or a worsening condition. Funding is available for equipment, job coaching, transport, NZ Sign Language interpreters, a support person or a range of other disability-related needs. It is limited to a maximum of \$16,900 per year. There is also a Modifications Grants Scheme that can provide funding for workplace modifications and a Productivity Allowance which is designed to provide maximum support at job commencement then gradually fade out.

<sup>19</sup> The *Minimum Wage Act 1983* provides that Labour Inspectors from the Department of Labour may issue minimum wage exemption permits to workers who are limited by a disability in carrying out the requirements of their work. This means a lower minimum wage rate is set for a particular person in a particular job for the period in the permit.

<sup>20</sup> Workbridge is a professional employment service, which administers funds on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development, for people with all types of disability, including people who have lived with the long-term effects of injury and illness. One person said you needed to know what you wanted before you went to them in order to make best use of their services. It was also mentioned that you might use Workbridge when you first entered the workforce but would use them less and less as your career progressed.

Some employees raised the idea of lived experience of disability being a skill set in its own right and did not think this was fully acknowledged, appreciated or utilised in their own organisation. Others were clear that this was fundamental to their role and enabled them to not only fulfil their role but to also understand and carry out the role more effectively.

Seven of the 12 disabled employees mentioned their knowledge of the disability system as a key attribute they brought to their role (linked to lived experience). Other qualities mentioned were general personal qualities such as people skills, communication, competence, motivation, organisational skills, common sense, honesty, commitment and reliability. Only one person specifically mentioned their qualifications as a contribution to the workplace. This is perhaps not surprising given this employee was the only person interviewed who had a tertiary qualification.

Nine disabled people thought their job was a good match to their skills and abilities. One did not think their job was a good fit as they had changed roles after acquiring their disability and were no longer able to do their previous job. Two people were neutral about this and cited reasons such as not feeling that their skills were well utilised and that job carving<sup>21</sup> would allow them to better utilise their skills.

## Job application experience

All 12 disabled employees had found it hard getting a job either in DSS or generally. Discrimination was mentioned in nine cases. Not getting interviews was mentioned by seven people and a lack of self-confidence by four people. Low expectations came up in different contexts. One person with high support needs had been told by their Workbridge employment consultant to give up looking. Another had been told by his school not to bother looking for work. One person had advanced skills and experience in her voluntary work, having been chair of a national disabled person's organisation, but had limited paid work experience and felt this meant potential employers did not fully acknowledge her skills and experience. One person said generic recruitment agencies had been hopeless and had an appalling attitude towards disabled people.

## Employment barriers and enablers of disabled people in DSS

To better inform future recruitment strategies aimed at increasing the number of disabled people working in DSS, barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people were investigated. This included employment policies and attitudes towards disabled people and are discussed further below. The findings from both the DSS employer and employee interviews are reported where appropriate.

### Employment policies

Only half of employers interviewed believed that DSS employers had an extra obligation to employ disabled people (see Figure 1). This question raised the most comments from employers. Views ranged from “everyone has an obligation [to employ disabled people]”, through to extending an obligation out to government departments as well as DSS, to lead by example or set the standard in the employment of disabled people.

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<sup>21</sup> Job carving is a process of breaking a job down into its tasks and identifying which tasks can be carried out by a disabled person. It may involve carving more than one role.

There was an even split between those organisations which specifically sought to employ disabled people and those that did not. Of those five that did, only one had an action plan for this that was informally monitored. However, even those who did not formally seek to employ disabled people said they would lean towards disabled candidates as long as they had the skills required. Three organisations said they would always seek to recruit by advertising in their networks first, which would increase the chances of disabled people applying for the role. Two said they positively discriminated towards employing disabled people.

### Characteristics employers seek in employees

There was a common feeling that disabled people need to have the right skills to do a job and should not be employed within DSS just because they are disabled. Also, disabled employees did not want to be singled out in policies and work benefits due to a disability (such as extra leave), or only having disabled staff networks (and not networks for other groups). Disabled people thought these should be part of a wider inclusive workplace so that disabled people were not seen as receiving special treatment.

Four employers said they looked for the same attributes that they would look for in someone who was not disabled. Several attributes mentioned were applicable equally to non-disabled people such as enthusiasm, communication skills, self-directed, “can do” attitude and relationship skills. Several attributes were also mentioned which related to lived experience such as diversity, modelling what disabled people could do, and demonstrating positive discrimination.

Some employers said they would take on a less skilled or qualified disabled person over a more highly skilled able-bodied person as long as they thought the disabled person had the ability and willingness to learn the necessary skills or competencies to do the job. Some organisations that did seek to employ disabled people said they did not always look for the most qualified person for the job but rather for the best “fit” with the organisation and the role. Three employers said they tended not to focus too much on formal qualifications when recruiting disabled people but rather their willingness to learn and pick up the necessary skills for the role.

### Ideal employees vs disabled people

Employers were asked what came to mind when they thought of an “ideal employee”. The most commonly identified attribute of an “ideal employee” was a good work ethic, which was identified by seven employers. Skills, experience and knowledge were identified by five employers, and the willingness and ability to gain the competence identified by four. Other attributes identified all fitted into generic skills sets such as communication skills, interpersonal skills, accountable, team player, motivated, and being able to ask for help before things hit a crisis. One employer said it was important disabled employees were aware of their own limitations. Only one employer said the ability to work with disabled people was a key attribute they would seek.

When asked what came to mind when the interviewer mentioned “disabled people” employers mentioned many different things. Some were conceptual such as “excluded”, “minority”, “lack of opportunity”. Other comments were more positive such as “inclusive”, “nothing different”, “inspiring”, “can do anything”. One employer said they thought “able-bodied people are disabled” in relation to their attitude. Another employer thought of people they knew and one person who had worked in DSS a long time said they saw “a tapestry of faces”.

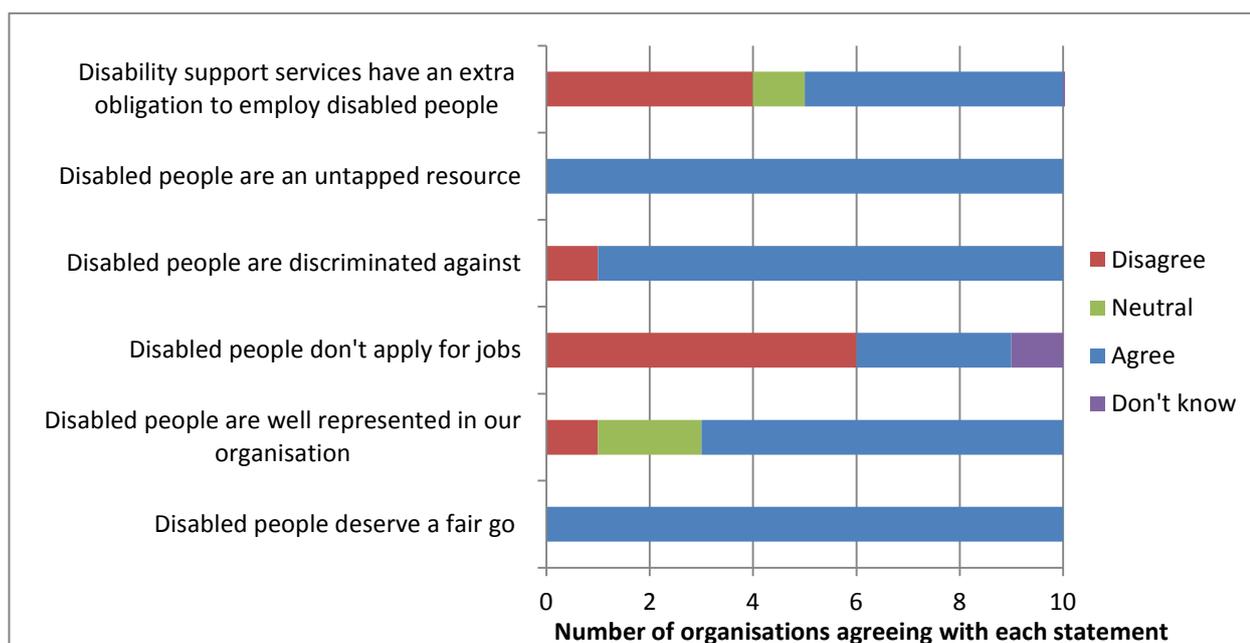
When asked whether the two concepts matched – an ideal employee and a disabled person – seven employers said they did match and three said “in part”. Of those that said “in part” it was not so much that there was a mismatch but more that they considered disabled people could match the ideal employee concept if they had the right support to do the job.<sup>22</sup> All employers said they worked hard to ensure the right fit for the job, regardless of disability. One employer believed it would be an advantage to be a disabled employee within their organisation.

### Diversity

Employers thought that diversity in the workplace made their teams more cohesive and taught tolerance, acceptance and empathy. It also modelled to non-disabled staff and clients just how much disabled people could do. This was perceived to add value to the delivery of services to clients. One employer said having a disabled person in their organisation with many years of lived experience meant that “he sees it with a different lens”.

### Attitudes towards disability

Negative attitudes among employers and co-workers have been identified as one of the key barriers to the employment of disabled people in the literature (see Appendix A). The current study investigated various attitudes that have been identified among employers and employees in the general workforce to see if they also applied within DSS.<sup>23</sup> Some of the key findings among DSS employers are summarised in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Employer attitudes and beliefs about employing disabled people within DSS.

<sup>22</sup> Two organisations that said “in part” said that they thought there could be more of a mismatch if the person had a cognitive impairment and this was related to the perceived ability to do the job.

<sup>23</sup> Employers were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements as well as whether they thought their colleagues would agree or disagree. This question design was aimed at reducing social desirability bias by asking what the interviewer thought colleagues might think. Social desirability bias is the tendency of respondents to answer in a way that will be favorably viewed by others. In response to all statements, almost all of the employers’ responses matched exactly what they thought their colleagues would also think. This suggests that this type of bias is not strong in this group. That is, they genuinely hold positive and realistic views towards disabled people.

Figure 1 shows that all employers believed disabled people deserve a fair go and that they are an untapped resource. Most employers also indicated that disabled people are discriminated against. Other key types of attitudes towards employing disabled people in relation to their cost and productivity, type of impairment, and co-worker and consumer reactions are discussed further below.

### Cost and productivity of disabled employees

Only 3 out of the 10 employers interviewed agreed that disabled people were less productive.<sup>24</sup> However, disabled people interviewed also highlighted the need to develop a different way of measuring productivity among disabled people as they may have additional skills that were not being properly acknowledged.

Eight employers interviewed did not believe employing disabled people involved big disruptive or expensive changes for their organisation. Four employers agreed that it costed more to employ disabled people. Seven employers did not believe disabled people take more time off work. All employers disagreed with the statement that employing disabled people was a hassle.

### Impairment type

Research suggests the likelihood of employment for disabled people depends in part on the type of impairment they have (see Appendix A). Employers were therefore asked a series of questions specific to different impairment types (such as wheelchair users, people with sensory impairments or intellectual disabilities). In all instances employers said they would be just as likely to employ someone with a physical or sensory impairment compared to a non-disabled candidate with similar skills. Employers were more split when it came to employing someone with a moderate intellectual disability or moderate-to-severe cognitive impairment. Around half of employers said they would be less likely to employ someone with these impairments compared to an able-bodied candidate with the same skills. However, employers were keen to make it clear that they were not saying they would not employ someone with a cognitive impairment or intellectual disability, but that it would be much more dependent upon the tasks required and the nature of the role. Each of the employers said in general they were open to employing people with any type of disability as long as they were right for the job and supported to carry out their role.

### Reactions of co-workers and consumers

When asked if they thought disabled people would not fit in, unsettle existing workers, or pose a health and safety risk, none of the employers interviewed agreed with these statements.

Employers thought that staff members would generally be quite comfortable working with another staff member with an impairment. The only exception to this was two employers who thought staff may be uncomfortable with another staff member who had a moderate intellectual disability. They commented that while there might be awkwardness at the beginning they may need to support staff through this. One employer thought staff may believe they would have to carry a greater workload if a person with an intellectual disability was employed, and that they might need to do their role for them.

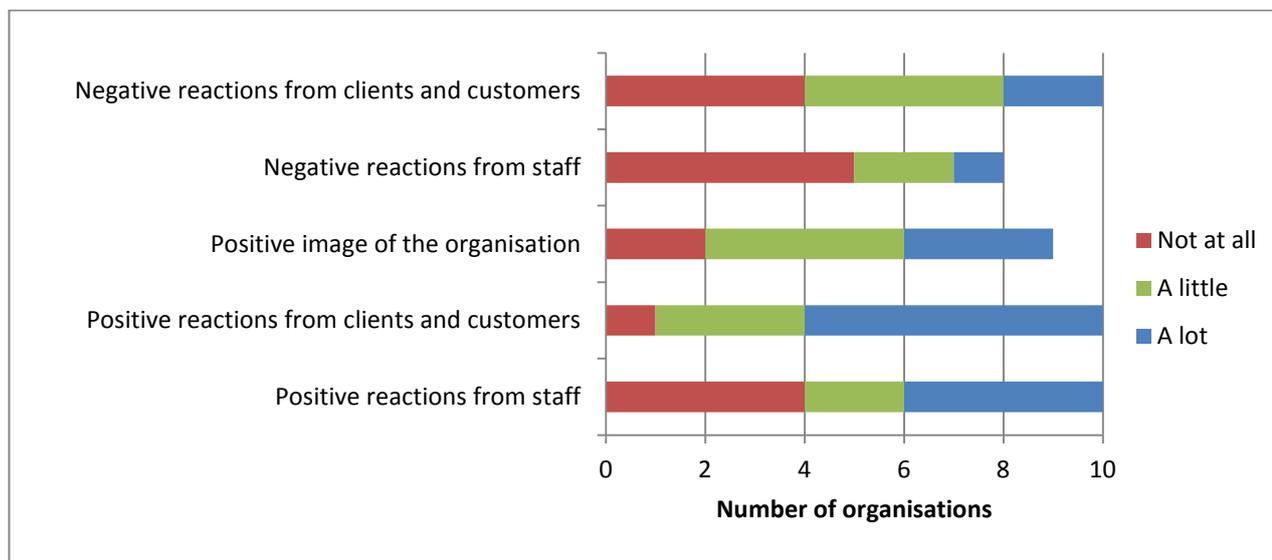
When employers were asked about the level of comfort that consumers/clients might have if a staff member with a disability was supporting them, nine employers thought they would be comfortable with someone who used a wheelchair, or who had a moderate-to-severe sight or hearing impairment.

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<sup>24</sup> The other employers either disagreed or strongly disagreed that disabled people were less productive.

There was a spread of views regarding staff members with intellectual disabilities, disfigurements, speech or cognitive impairments. Again employers were keen to stress that they worked hard to match the right support person to clients, and this was more important than the nature of any impairment staff members may have. Employers also said that some clients would feel completely fine being supported by a disabled staff member, whereas others might not.

Figure 2 shows that most employers interviewed would not to be heavily influenced by potential or perceived *negative* reactions from others in their decision to employ disabled people. Where they would be influenced a lot, is in the *positive* reactions of others, particularly clients and customers.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 2.** Factors influencing decisions to employ disabled people among employers.

## Supports required by disabled employees working in DSS

Supports required by disabled employees were investigated to develop a better understanding of how some of the perceived barriers to the employment of disabled people may be addressed. To also gain a better understanding of factors supporting enhanced job performance and satisfaction amongst disabled employees.

### Supports needed by employees

Supports required by disabled people working in DSS were investigated. Most disabled employees felt well supported working in DSS (see Figure 3). One person said having a clear pathway to getting support in place would help as it had taken three months to get all the supports required when they started working for a new organisation. Most disabled employees thought employment practices, such as senior management commitment to employing disabled people, training and disabled staff networks were important. Formalising support was also considered important as informal support may be dependent upon a particular manager’s attitude and if they left, the support may be withdrawn.

<sup>25</sup> Some employers did not respond to these questions as they found the structure of the questions confusing. Nevertheless, finding employers would be most influenced by the positive reactions of clients/consumers is in line with earlier research and the extent to which decisions would be influenced by the positive image of the organisation was similar (Woodley & Metzger, 2012).

The majority (10 out of 12) of disabled people interviewed needed adaptive equipment (such as adapted telephones, computers or software), seven required physical adaptation of the building they worked in and ongoing support. Six said they required flexibility in their hours or days worked and always or occasionally worked from home.<sup>26 27</sup> Formalisation of flexible working hours was also mentioned as an improvement that would help disabled employees.

When asked if all the supports needed by disabled employees were provided in their current workplace, five said they were not. There was concern raised by one person that the expectation of Workbridge that informal or “natural” supports be explored in the first instance could be perceived as a drain on resources by management and restrict career advancement. Workbridge acknowledges this difficulty and aims to work with employers to put the needs of disabled employees within the context of supports offered to all staff. Job Support is then explored if a gap in support remains. The level of support funding available came up several times particularly in relation to people in more senior roles, those with higher support needs, and those needing NZSL interpreters. The fact that unused Job Support funds cannot be “rolled over” was also cited as a block to career advancement. For example, if someone needed an expensive piece of equipment but no other support, they would not get any more than the maximum of \$16,900 per annum available through support funds. Conversely, if someone needed ongoing support they would be entitled to this amount every year.

### Hours worked

Nine of the 12 disabled people interviewed worked full-time. Six of the people working full-time would prefer to work fewer hours. Three full-time workers and one who worked 12 hours a week were happy with their hours. The two interviewees who worked 10 hours or less a week would have preferred more hours. People who wanted to do less hours mentioned money, and the effects of ageing and health status as reasons for having to maintain their hours or wanting to reduce them. Of those who would like to do more hours, funding for their role was the main barrier.

### Support offered to employees

A range of supports were examined based on those identified in the literature as important in the employment of disabled people. The types of support offered by organisations to disabled employees is summarised in Table 2. The most common types of support offered included communication support during an interview; use of support services (such as Workbridge and supported employment providers) to provide on-going support; and flexible starting and finishing hours. These supports were offered by all employers interviewed.

While only three organisations had disability advisory groups, four other organisations said they had disabled board members. When asked if there were other supports offered, these ranged from a mentoring programme, flexibility, individualised support according to the person’s need, and training on employee’s industrial rights. Several organisations also said they offered some of these supports to all staff members (disabled and non-disabled alike), for example career advancement.

In spite of these supports, three employers felt disabled people still faced barriers to working in their organisation. Transport was mentioned twice as a barrier, along with accessibility in both physical and

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<sup>26</sup> Six people never worked at home, this was generally related to the nature of the job.

<sup>27</sup> One person also mentioned that informal support from colleagues enabled her to work, which she said was also reciprocated.

IT contexts. Four employers believed disabled employees did not face any additional barriers to working within their organisation.

**Table 2.** *Type of Support Offered to Disabled Employees by DSS Employers*

Type of support offered	Number organisations
Communication support at interview e.g. New Zealand Sign Language interpreter or hearing loop	10
Support services to provide on-going support, for example Workbridge, Supported Employment providers	10
Flexible hours for starting and finishing	10
Career advancement/mentoring for disabled staff	9
Working from home where appropriate	9
On-line recruiting processes	8
Work placements for disabled people	8
Allow special leave needed because of disability	8
Equal Employment Opportunity statement/logo on job advertisements	7
Financial support available from Ministry of Social Development for adaptations and special needs	7
Harassment training	6
Volunteering opportunities to disabled people	6
Disabled person on interview panels	5
Disability advisory groups	3
Membership of the Employers' Disability Network	3
Disability impact assessments on staff policies	2
Network for disabled staff	1

### **Mentoring and training**

The capability of all employees can be enhanced by mentoring and training and contribute to improved workforce retention. Ten of the 12 disabled people interviewed had received on the job training. Eight people had mentors (either formal or informal) at some point in their careers, five of whom also had a disability.<sup>28</sup> While five disabled people had not been encouraged to apply for a promotion, six people had been promoted within their organisation.

Seven of the 10 employers interviewed said they provided disability awareness training to all staff. Two employers had offered this to some staff and one said it was offered through more informal role

<sup>28</sup> Note, however mentors were not necessarily formalised or offered by the employer.

modelling. In most organisations (7 out of 10) disability awareness training was compulsory for all staff.<sup>29</sup>

### Other supports

Disabled employees generally agreed that various approaches could be used by employers to help create more supportive work environments, such as making use of financial or employment supports available, reviewing employment policies and practices, and offering training to all employees. Perhaps more informatively, employers provided some of their own ideas to support this.

One disabled employee believed organisations should be clear why they are employing disabled people and treat lived experience of disability as a skill-set in its own right. Another mentioned that it was important to have a clear pathway of how support would be provided at the outset or even prior to employees starting their job. This would mean a disabled person could approach the employer/interview with the knowledge of what support would be funded by government agencies and what they could expect of the employer. It could also help establish the timeframe in which support would be put in place. As one disabled employee said, having that information available at the outset means the interview can focus on their skills and attributes.

...having the information on job support funds available and all that stuff not being a big deal whether you need support or not. It is focused on what you are bringing to the organisation.

Disabled employees said a number of the supports investigated during the interviews were provided by their employers, such as equal access to training, equal pay, and flexible working practices.<sup>30</sup> One person said their organisation had individual annual reviews but that she was nervous about mentioning her impairment in case it was perceived as a weakness. Another person suggested it was equity, not equal opportunities that was needed and that this may only be achieved via positive discrimination policies. Disabled people also stressed that any awareness raising needed to be across society, not just within individual workplaces.

### Support for employers

When asked what would be the one thing that would help organisations increase the number of disabled staff they employed, funding to support employees was mentioned by seven employers. Assistance with getting through the red tape of support funding was mentioned once and education was mentioned twice. Transport was raised as an issue both regarding lack of accessibility and as a funding issue as the cost of mobility taxis is prohibitive if someone worked in an outreach role. One employer who employed staff members with funding via the Ministry of Social Development said that if they were not financially supported they would not be able to afford to continue employing them. This role was perceived as “nice to have”, and without funding “those roles are always the first to go”. The need for more NZSL interpreters and increased funding for interpreters was also raised.

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<sup>29</sup> One said it was compulsory to some staff and one organisation did not mandate this training. Of those that provided disability awareness training, six had disabled facilitators. The organisations which were disability specific tended to provide awareness just for their target consumers.

<sup>30</sup> As mentioned previously, six disabled employees said they required flexibility in their hours or days worked and always or occasionally worked from home.

## Retention of disabled employees in DSS

Factors associated with the retention of disabled workers were investigated.

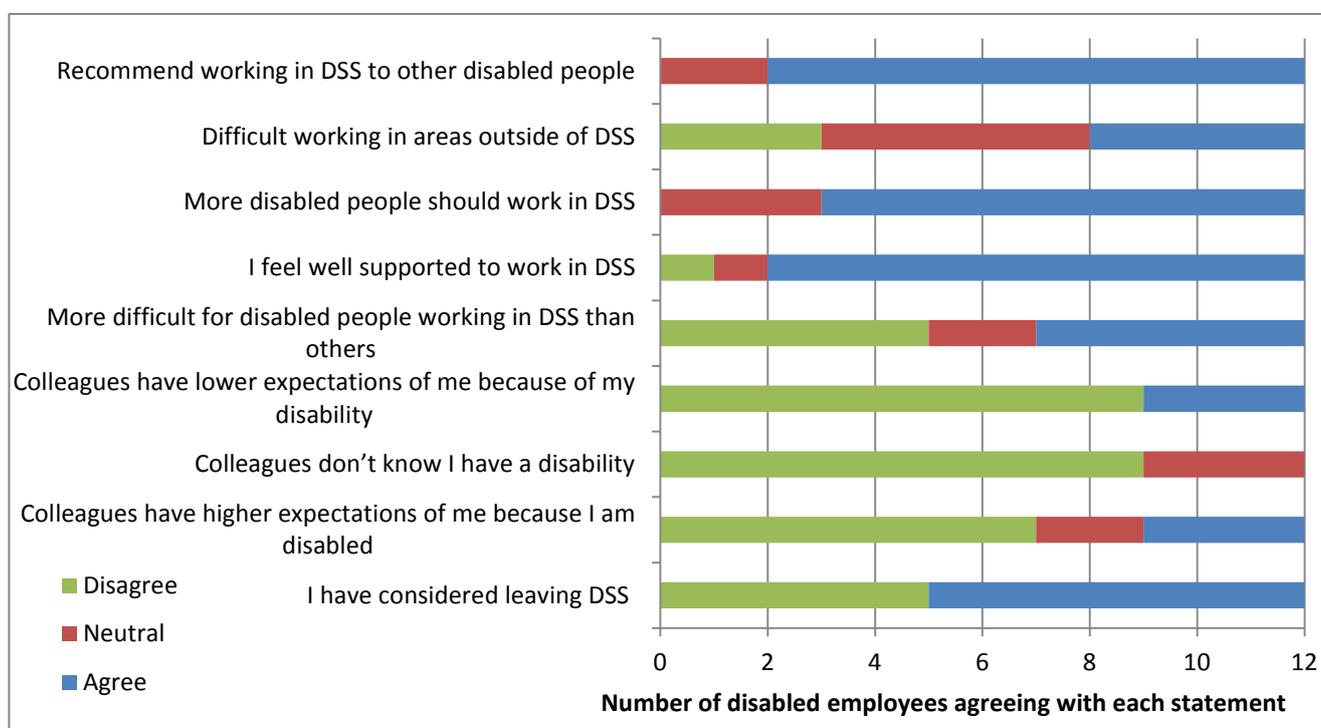
### Length of time in role

Some disabled employees had worked in DSS for a long time. Six people had worked in DSS for over 10 years and one for more than 20 years. Most had been with the same organisation for the whole time they had worked in DSS.

The average length of time that disabled employees had worked in DSS was 12 years (range 2 to 25 years), and 10 years within their current role (range <1 year to 22 years).

### Experience of working in DSS

Disabled employees were asked about their experiences of working in DSS compared with general workplaces. Key results are summarised in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Experiences of disabled people working in DSS.

As previously noted, 10 out of the 12 disabled people interviewed had worked in non-DSS workplaces. Of those who had worked in non-DSS workplaces, six believed they were better supported in DSS and three said the support was about the same. Two-thirds of disabled people interviewed said it was easier working in DSS than in other areas. For example:

Because of the type of organisation everybody, staff and residents, have a rapport with my physical condition and how I manage.

There was however, a strong sense from disabled people that they should not receive special treatment. They believed some disabled people came to the job with a chip on their shoulder or had

experienced everything being done for them (for example, at school), so their attitude towards employment wasn't as good. For example, one disabled employee in a managerial position said:

Rights and responsibilities [apply to] any employee, disabled people included. Using disability as a reason not to be able to get to work on time... if I have to get up and be on time then so should they.

One person who said he was better supported to work in DSS indicated he was pitied by previous colleagues who "overpowered" him and did his work for him.

I know they were only trying to help but they over-powered... cos you were a wee bit slower than the average person so they tend to say "we'll finish it for you". That's what's good about working in the disability sector, they put steps in place where you can work at your own pace. You feel more comfortable.

## Reasons for staying

Most disabled interviewees had not moved jobs or roles much during their careers. One described this as disabled people having "stickability" and had seen a number of able-bodied staff come and go in his 20 years within the same organisation (as had his two long-serving disabled colleagues).

Some people had stayed in the same organisation because they were happy and felt supported. However, generally disabled people were nervous about moving jobs. This was because of previous experiences in trying to get a job and the perception it was too hard getting interviews.

## Reasons for leaving

Eight disabled people had experienced difficulties remaining in a job within DSS at some point. This was not always related to their disability. Reasons included being a parent or having other external responsibilities. People also mentioned the increasing effects of their impairment as they got older. Three people said they had difficulties remaining in a job due to harassment either by a colleague or manager. Another person mentioned the impact of being disabled and working in disability services. This meant she was unable to "switch off" because she was dealing with the impact of disability in her personal life, as well as her professional life:

It is your whole life, the issues are your whole life... You can't switch off, if you are not thinking about the person you are supporting you may be thinking about yourself.

Similarly, another disabled employee mentioned that working within her own community and having at times to effectively put aside her own disability and beliefs to be representative of her organisation made it difficult to remain in her role.

## Recommend working in DSS to others

As Figure 3 illustrates, most people said they would recommend working in DSS to other disabled people. The two people who were unsure about this said it depended upon the fit between the person and the organisation. Likewise, when asked if they thought more disabled people should work in DSS, most agreed. However, one interviewee said:

I'd hate to see DSS as the place where disabled people work. [We]... should be in all workplaces then it sends a good inclusive message to the wider community.

## Priorities for increasing disabled employees in DSS

Interviewees were asked about the top three priorities for increasing the number of disabled people working in DSS.

### Priorities for disabled employees

Several key themes emerged from the responses of disabled employees, including:

- training employers in the benefits of employing disabled people, including identifying gaps in the workforce and providing employers with tools so they are not starting from scratch
- providing support and encouragement to disabled people to apply for jobs, including matching people to jobs, identifying barriers and supporting disabled people to identify their strengths, and getting disabled people “work ready”
- applying positive discrimination policies
- research into how to best measure productivity amongst disabled workers
- publicity or awareness campaigns about disability.

### Priorities for DSS employers

Strategies DSS employers thought would be most effective in increasing the number of disabled people employed within their services were similar to those for disabled people and included:

- education and support for employers, including help with ensuring job descriptions were accessible and to walk alongside the employer for a while, not just “drop in, educate and leave”
- positive discrimination or quotas included within Ministry of Health DSS contracts
- ensuring funding mechanisms are put in place which are aligned for both employers and disabled employees
- DSS being an incubator for disabled talent – as disabled people may not have had many opportunities to gain work experience, DSS employers may have a role in developing disabled people to be “work ready” through work placements, internships or mentoring programmes
- public disability awareness campaigns and increasing awareness of the benefits of employing disabled people.

## Other comments

Both employees and employers were offered the opportunity to make additional comments at the end of the survey. Most comments have been included in the relevant areas of the results section above. However, both groups commented that they had enjoyed taking part in the interviews as it had made them think, and in some cases given them ideas, about policies or changes they could make or suggest in the future to support the employment of disabled people within their own organisations.

# Discussion

To support increasing the number of disabled people employed within DSS, this research project has developed a better understanding within DSS of:

- career pathways and motivation of disabled employees
- barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people
- supports required by disabled employees
- factors associated with the retention of disabled employees.

## Career pathways and motivation of DSS disabled employees

The current research has contributed to a better understanding of the career pathways and motivation of disabled people working in DSS, which may inform future recruitment strategies and actions aimed at increasing the number of disabled people employed within the sector. Findings indicate most disabled employees had worked in non-DSS workplaces prior to their current role. Few disabled people had gained their current employment using traditional routes such as applying in response to job advertisements. A range of other strategies had been used (such as volunteering, approaching organisations to give them a trial, and being shoulder tapped), which suggests networks and volunteering or trial periods are important employment enablers for disabled people. Other research (EEO Trust, 2005a; Woodley & Metzger, 2012) has recommended the use of work placements and trial periods in supporting the employment of disabled people. Eight DSS employers interviewed offered work placements and six offered volunteering opportunities. Encouraging and supporting DSS in continuing to offer these opportunities could be an effective way of increasing the number of disabled people employed within disability services. The Mainstream Employment Programme,<sup>31</sup> as well as the work on internships that is being taken forward by the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues, will also help support this.

While cuts are happening in the public sector, and welfare reforms are encouraging disabled people to come off benefits and enter the workforce, there needs to be a focus on the demand side<sup>32</sup> of the employment equation, which provides disabled people with opportunities and support to enter and remain in the workforce. The move towards “portfolio” careers (rather than jobs for life) means disabled people need to develop transferable skills and experience rapid work placements to become “work ready” (rather than extended training periods). This is an approach which Workbridge and the Ministry of Social Development have already begun. While less than half of disabled employees interviewed had used job supports, those that had had found them very useful. Nevertheless, all employees had experienced difficulties in the past applying for jobs in either DSS or general workplaces, in part due to discrimination, not getting interviews, a lack of self-confidence, and low expectations from others.<sup>33 34</sup> Disabled people with relevant skills or a willingness and ability to learn

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability-services/mainstream/index.html>

<sup>32</sup> Supply side approaches “push” disabled people at work by making them “job ready” – offering support to develop CVs, interview techniques, training and so on. However, there is a move towards impacting on the demand side of the employment equation by working with employers to make them “disability confident”. This is done by targeting employers, supporting and informing them of the benefits of employing disabled people and demonstrating how to support disabled people well in the workplace. In this way they are “pulling” disabled people into the workplace and creating demand for their skills.

<sup>33</sup> While people employed in DSS were more likely to report difficulties getting a job than disabled people in the general workforce (61 per cent), the reasons reported for this were similar. However, interviewers’ attitudes, the expectations of those involved in the recruitment process and not getting interviews were the main reasons given for difficulties getting a job among disabled people in the general workforce (EEO Trust, 2005a).

new skills could be encouraged more by employment and recruitment agencies to seek positions within DSS, even if they do not necessarily have the right formal qualifications.

Similar to previous research (EEO Trust, 2005a), the majority of disabled people interviewed thought their skills and abilities were a good match to their job.<sup>35</sup> Disabled employees were most likely to be motivated to work in DSS because they wanted to work with disabled people or thought they brought unique attributes to the role, such as their lived experience of disability and knowledge of the disability system. Employees' lived experience of disability was also seen as an asset by most employers and could be promoted when advertising positions to attract more disabled people to work in disability services. Lived experience enables disabled employees to, in effect, short cut the trust building process necessary when working with disabled clients. Lived experience means the relationship automatically has an authenticity which could not be demonstrated by a non-disabled worker. As one employer said of a disabled employee with a customer facing role, consumers immediately know that "he gets it". Another disabled support worker had been able to encourage a client to make a significant life change that a non-disabled worker was unable to do, by building confidence and modelling that it is possible to live independently with a significant disability. Nevertheless, some disabled employees thought the skill set of lived experience could be better acknowledged and utilised within disability services. Future research describing this skill set and its contribution to organisations could help support this.

## Employment barriers and enablers of disabled people in DSS

The identification of barriers and enablers to the employment of disabled people within DSS can help inform future recruitment strategies aimed at increasing the number of disabled people employed within DSS. Both DSS employers and disabled employees thought it was important to have disabled people working within an industry that supports disabled people. A number of disabled people mentioned the human rights slogan, "nothing about us, without us". Disabled people should be able to see their lived experiences reflected in the strategy, policy and service delivery of the services they use. Disabled employees can add diversity to workplaces and contribute to more cohesive, tolerant, accepting, and empathetic teams. While only half of the employers interviewed specifically sought to employ disabled people, others said they would lean towards disabled candidates if they had the required skills. Disabled people were also being employed in senior or governance roles within many DSS organisations which can increase the influence of disabled people within organisations.<sup>36</sup> While some employers said DSS should be required to employ a certain number of disabled people, in general there was not strong support for quotas from either employers or disabled people. Disabled people did not want to be singled out and thought policies and practices should be inclusive of all employees.

Both DSS employers and disabled employees generally said that disabled people should not be employed in DSS just because they were disabled. This would be tokenistic, unfair and could set disabled people up to fail. Some of the key skills sought by DSS among disabled and non-disabled employees alike included enthusiasm and willingness to learn, relationship and communication skills,

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<sup>34</sup> The EEO Trust (2005a) survey also found some disabled people had negative experiences using employment support agencies. In addition, disabled people in the public service were more likely to report a lack of self-confidence as a reason for not applying for higher level positions than non-disabled people (23 vs. 17 per cent respectively; State Services Commission, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> The EEO Trust survey found 86 per cent of disabled people thought their job was a good match to their skills and abilities.

<sup>36</sup> Although not specifically asked, around half of the organisations interviewed mentioned they had disabled people on their boards.

being self-directed, and having a can-do attitude. All employers tried to ensure there was a good fit between the person and job, regardless of disability.

When attitudes towards employing disabled people were investigated, the attitudes of DSS employers appeared to be more positive than employers in general workplaces,<sup>37</sup> For example, DSS employers had more favourable beliefs about the expected reactions and level of comfort of staff and consumers to disabled staff members than those in general workplaces (Woodley & Metzger, 2012).<sup>38</sup> As negative attitudes towards disabled people is the main reason disabled people generally find it difficult to find employment this is a significant finding. In addition, most DSS employers believed disabled employees were *not* less productive and did *not* require costly workplace changes. In contrast to employers in general workplaces, none of the DSS employers interviewed believed employing disabled people was a hassle (see Woodley & Metzger, 2012).<sup>39</sup> The perceptions of an ideal employee and disabled person were also more closely aligned among employers in DSS than general workplaces (see Woodley & Metzger, 2012).<sup>40</sup> While these findings may be expected given all employers interviewed were known to employ disabled people within the disability sector, it would seem that some DSS employers could be used as examples of good practice in employing disabled people.

While all employers said they were open to employing people with all types of impairment, there was some evidence to suggest the likelihood of employment was greater for people with physical or sensory impairments, rather than intellectual disabilities or cognitive impairments. This was primarily due to the nature and tasks of roles within DSS. In line with previous research (Woodley & Metzger, 2012), employers also believed their staff and consumers would feel most comfortable with disabled employees with physical or sensory impairments. These findings highlight the need for greater support for employers, particularly in relation to employing disabled people with higher support needs, intellectual or cognitive impairments.

## Supports required by disabled employees in DSS

This research has developed a better understanding of the supports required by disabled employees working in DSS, which may be used to address perceived barriers to the employment of disabled people and in the development of strategies aimed at improving workforce retention. DSS employers generally supported their disabled employees well – using formal and informal supports, as well as government funded support. The types of supports commonly offered by employers to disabled people, included communication support during a job interview and the use of support services to provide ongoing support, such as Workbridge and supported employment providers. The majority of disabled employees interviewed required adaptive equipment (such as an adapted telephone, computer or software) in their role. Changes in technology can also open up the workplace for more disabled people.<sup>41</sup> In addition, more than half of the disabled people interviewed required physical

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<sup>37</sup> The findings of this study and that of Woodley and Metzger (2012) are not directly comparable due to the different response scales used but findings suggest DSS employers have more favourable attitudes to employing disabled people.

<sup>38</sup> However, in contrast to earlier research by Woodley and Metzger (2012), the level of comfort of working with someone with a mental illness was not examined in the current study.

<sup>39</sup> Sixty per cent of employers agreed, at least in part, that believing the employment of disabled people is a hassle could be a barrier to employment in their organisation (Woodley & Metzger, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> For example, 85 per cent of DSS employers said their picture of an ideal employee and disabled person matched, at least in part, compared with 72 per cent of employers in the general workforce (Woodley & Metzger, 2012).

<sup>41</sup> There are however tensions regarding the funding of technology. One vision-impaired employee commented that his software was considered to be specialist and related to his disability but was viewed by Workbridge as a routine piece of equipment and therefore was not funded. As technology advances it is possible that this situation will arise more often. For example, another vision-impaired person said he

building adaptations.<sup>42</sup> In line with other research (EEO Trust, 2005a; Woodley & Metzger, 2012),<sup>43</sup> flexible working practices were required by half the disabled employees. Flexible starting and finishing hours was also one of the most common supports offered by DSS employers. Two-thirds of the disabled people interviewed who worked full-time would have preferred to work fewer hours.<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, only two disabled employees thought DSS would be more flexible employers. This would suggest DSS employers are not widely known for being good employers of disabled people.

Most disabled employees had received on the job training, including disability awareness training. The EEO Trust (2005a) report highlighted the importance of disability awareness training in helping to create supportive working environments and changing attitudes.<sup>45</sup> Mentoring had also commonly been received at some point in disabled peoples' careers.<sup>46</sup> Previous research by the State Services Commission (2006) indicates access to mentoring is key for both disabled and non-disabled staff.<sup>47</sup> In the current study, the formalisation of supports was considered important by disabled employees. This was reiterated by one employee who believed it was important to establish a clear pathway and timeframe in which support would be provided at the outset of employment.<sup>48</sup> Workbridge is starting to roll out "Job Map" which includes a vocational planning tool. When an employer and employee have been matched, a workplace support plan is developed to help the workplace become "disability confident". This will enable the employee to carry out the role and to participate more widely in the workplace (G. Cleland, personal communication). The findings of this research support this approach.

Disabled people with high support needs raised concerns over a "glass ceiling" effect that support funds created. As the funder of Job Support, and as part of the wider work being undertaken to modernise job supports, the Ministry of Social Development is reviewing the criteria for support funds to build in greater flexibility specifically for people with higher needs (G. Cleland, personal communication). Given the philosophical and practical move towards individualised funding for a greater number of health and disability services internationally and in New Zealand, this flexibility should be able to be built into the system including the ability to roll over support funds. Along with transferable skills, transferable support packages will be a key enabler to allowing disabled people to progress in their careers should they want to.

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used an app on his phone to be able to text. This would have been high technology 20 years ago, whereas now it is relatively straightforward. Clear and transparent support funding criteria is therefore important for both disabled people and potential employers.

<sup>42</sup> The disabled people interviewed were more likely to require adapted equipment (83 vs. 33 per cent) and physical building adaptations (58 vs. 15 per cent) compared to disabled people in the general workforce (see EEO Trust, 2005a). This may be due in part to the age and type/severity of impairments of employees working in DSS.

<sup>43</sup> Similarly, flexible working practices were required by 46 per cent of disabled people in the general workforce (EEO Trust, 2005a) and 56 per cent of public servants (State Services Commission, 2006). The latter report found the need for flexible working practices was similar for both disabled and non-disabled employees. The Equality and Human Rights Commission in the UK (2012) recommends flexible working practices be offered to all disabled people.

<sup>44</sup> The disabled people interviewed were more likely to work full-time than disabled people in the general workforce (75 vs. 57 per cent respectively; EEO Trust, 2005a). The EEO Trust survey also found nine per cent of disabled people in the general workforce working 30-40 hours wanted to work less hours. In addition, disabled people in the public service are less likely to want to work additional hours than non-disabled people (33 vs. 19 per cent respectively; State Services Commission, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Of the disabled people interviewed, 66 per cent said disability awareness training for managers and staff was important for creating supportive environments and changing attitudes (EEO Trust, 2005a).

<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, five of the eight people who received mentoring were mentored by a disabled person. In total, 9 of the 10 employers interviewed said they offered career advancement/mentoring to staff.

<sup>47</sup> In total, 63 per cent of public servants said it was highly important to access mentoring and results were similar for disabled and non-disabled staff (State Services Commission, 2006).

<sup>48</sup> The Equality and Human Rights Commission in the UK (2012) also recommends that employers seek information at the outset of employment about job-specific adaptations required for disabled people.

## Retention of disabled employees in DSS

The study has contributed to a better understanding of factors associated with the retention of disabled employees within DSS. The average length of time disabled employees had worked in DSS was 12 years, with over half being employed for 10 years or more. Research by the State Services Commission (2006) also indicates disabled employees in the public service workforce have a longer length of service than their able-bodied peers.<sup>49</sup>

Generally disabled people in the current study were nervous about moving jobs due to their previous employment application experiences. Nevertheless, most disabled employees interviewed said they would recommend working in DSS to other disabled people. About two-thirds of disabled employees believed it was easier to work in DSS than in other areas, and half of those who had worked in non-DSS workplaces thought they were better supported in DSS.

Some of the reasons reported for difficulties remaining in DSS roles included the increasing effects of impairments with age, harassment by co-workers, the impact of being disabled within a disability service,<sup>50</sup> and other external responsibilities. In contrast, the main reason reported by disabled employees for leaving their employment within general workplaces was the attitudes of employers and other staff (EEO Trust, 2005a).<sup>51</sup> While only one organisation in this research had a staff network in place to support disabled employees, there is an evidence base for the value of peer support and mentoring of disabled employees (Greve, 2009). While disabled interviewees mentioned that they had this informally, there would be value in strengthening this.<sup>52</sup> Research by the EEO Trust (2005a) also supports the utility of disability networks in workplaces in general.

## Limitations

What cannot be understood from the current research is whether the more positive attitudes of DSS employers translate into higher rates of employment for disabled people across the disability sector than in the general workforce. While findings suggest disabled people are better represented within the DSS workforce than in general workplace settings (Woodley & Metzger, 2012), there is a need to gather baseline data and monitor change overtime in the number of disabled people working in DSS. Several employers were not clear about the numbers of people in their workforce that identified as having a disability. Contracting mechanisms for the public sector could assist with this by requiring this information to be collected.<sup>53</sup> The Ministry of Health could also investigate the possible collection

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<sup>49</sup> In total, 29 per cent of disabled employees in the public service had been in their current organisation 16 years or more compared to 19 per cent of non-disabled staff (State Services Commission, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> For example, not being able to switch off from the impact of disability in one's personal life, and putting aside individual beliefs to represent those of an organisation.

<sup>51</sup> In total, 63 per cent of disabled people in the general workforce said the attitudes of employers were the main reason for leaving, and 44 per cent due to the attitudes of other staff (EEO Trust, 2005a).

<sup>52</sup> However, disabled people were clear they didn't want to be singled out for a network, or generally as they didn't want colleagues to think they were getting special treatment. Therefore the development of such networks would need to be considered alongside other equality and diversity policies and target groups. Smaller organisations may benefit from a cross-organisational network being established.

<sup>53</sup> In New Zealand the state sector has a duty under legislation to be a "good employer" including operating EEO policies. *The New Zealand Disability Strategy* imposes an additional duty on the public service to operate EEO policies and affirmative action to employ disabled people. The state sector should lead by example. The Human Rights Commission suggested several urgent actions for the state sector in its report *Tracking Equality at Work for Disabled People*. These included adequate data capture, affirmative action programmes, target setting for major public service departments, as well as legislative changes to extend the duty to be a 'good employer' to the private sector. The OECD also raises the lack of data and therefore evidence base of the effectiveness of employment programmes as an issue across all OECD countries including New Zealand.

of this data through wider workforce stocktakes of the DSS sector. However, data accuracy issues need to be considered.

This research was undertaken with a small convenience sample of both DSS employers and disabled employees. This required disclosure or the inability to hide a disability among employees. Therefore disabled people interviewed for this project may be more severely disabled and have a more positive disability identity than those in the general working age population. DSS employers also knew their employees were taking part in this research. This may have subsequently influenced the research results. The views of DSS employers interviewed may also be positively biased (given they were known to employ disabled people) and may not represent the wider views or experiences of DSS. For example, DSS who do not employ disabled staff may experience greater (or other) barriers to the employment of disabled people. They may also believe co-workers and consumers would have more negative reactions to disabled staff members (for example, that they would not fit in, would unsettle existing workers, or pose a health and safety risk). Future research should therefore consider the barriers to employment amongst DSS who do not currently employ disabled people.

## Recommendations

Disabled employees and DSS employers suggested a number of priorities for increasing the number of disabled people employed within disability services. In line with previous research (Woodley & Metzger, 2012), these centred around training and education, positive discrimination policies, disability public awareness campaigns, financial support, and the implementation of work placement or internship programs.

Based on the findings of this research, a number of specific recommendations for the Ministries of Health and Social Development, employment agencies and DSS to support increasing the number of disabled people employed within DSS are outlined below.

- The Ministry of Health:
  1. works with DSS employers to showcase examples of good practice on the employment of disabled people and to describe the value of disabled employees within DSS
  2. considers undertaking research in collaboration with disabled people and other key stakeholders to describe the lived experience of disability as a workplace skill-set
  3. considers mechanisms to support an internship programme for disabled people within DSS upon contract renewal, considers the inclusion of positive discrimination policies within DSS contracts, and mandating the accessibility of DSS provider premises, even when they are not providing services to the public
  4. provides templates for DSS employers to support the development of equality and diversity policies that are inclusive of all employees
  5. helps facilitate peer support and/or mentoring for disabled people, for example by supporting the development of DSS disabled employee networks
  6. includes in its commitment to workforce data collection in the revised *Disability Workforce Action Plan*, a dedicated focus on disabled employees.
- The Ministry of Social Development:
  7. considers the lived experience of disabled people in the development of any future productivity measures.
- Employment and recruitment agencies:
  8. encourage disabled people to seek positions both within and outside DSS

9. support non-DSS employers in developing increased disability awareness and understanding.
- DSS employers:
    10. continue to develop the skills and knowledge of leaders and staff to create supportive work environments for disabled people, for example by providing disability awareness training
    11. formalise agreed support plans at the commencement of employment, including the consideration of flexible working hours
    12. continue to offer opportunities for disabled people to gain work experience, such as internships, work placements, and volunteering opportunities
    13. promote characteristics of the role that attract disabled people to work in DSS, such as working within the disabled community, having a lived experience of disability and knowledge of the disability system
    14. consider the exchange of workforce quantitative information relating to disabled people employed in DSS.

# Appendix A: The employment of disabled people in DSS: A literature review

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## Background

### Policy

The *New Zealand Disability Strategy's* (Ministry of Health, 2001) vision is for a society that highly values the lives, and continually enhances the full participation of disabled people. One of the key objectives in the strategy to support an inclusive society is the provision of “opportunities in employment and economic development for disabled people” (p. 2).

Workforce development is one of the four priorities for the Ministry of Health's DSS Group as set out in their *DSS Strategic Plan 2010-2014* (Ministry of Health, 2012). As a response to the *Inquiry into the Quality of Care and Services Provision for People with Disabilities* (Social Services Select Committee, 2008), a *DSS Workforce Action Plan* (2009, and revised draft) was developed. This supports the increased inclusion of disabled people in the DSS workforce as a medium term goal.

As summarised in Appendix D, key legislation relating to the employment of disabled people includes the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, which protects “...the rights of people with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others...”, and the *Human Rights Act 1993* which makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone based on a disability. The Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues and the State Services Commission have also prioritised action on the employment of disabled people.

### Benefits of employment for disabled people

Work opportunities open the door to wealth, worth and wellbeing. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012, p. 5)

The benefits of being in paid employment have been widely reported (see for example Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2002; Waddell & Burton, 2006). Income from paid work influences outcomes in many areas of life, such as housing, education and health (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Wealth, health, psychological wellbeing, independent living, reduced isolation, and an increased sense of self-worth, identity and social status are all cited as individual benefits of work (Sayce, 2011). Work also promotes participation in society, independence and human rights. The benefits of employment and the desire to work are shared by disabled people as much as their able bodied peers (see for example, Beyer & Robinson, 2009; Meah & Thornton, 2005; Purvis, Lowrey, & Dobbs, 2006; Weston, 2002). Nevertheless, the beneficial effects of work depend upon the nature and quality of the work, as well as the social context.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Physical and psychosocial aspects of work can also pose a risk to health and the benefits of working come with provisos. Waddell and Burton (2006) found that on average work is good for most people but a minority will benefit from worklessness.

There is a strong association between unemployment and poor physical and mental health, and higher mortality (Waddell & Burton, 2006). Long-term unemployment is bad for health, especially mental health, and a return to work is generally associated with improved health.

## Benefits to employers of employing disabled people

The potential benefits of a diverse workforce that includes disabled people include access to a wider talent pool, creative and fresh thinking which leads to market innovation and competitiveness, and strengthens corporate brand and reputation (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). The employment of disabled people also helps to better represent customer/client bases of organisations and sends a message that they are a good corporate citizen.

Employers need to access the best possible talent pool to compete in a global market. By excluding around one-sixth of the population from their recruitment pool they are losing out on the benefits of a diverse workforce, while failing to reflect the society they operate in. In relation to DSS, disabled people should be able to see their lived experiences reflected in the strategy, policy and service delivery of the services they use. As in the well known disability rights slogan: “nothing about us, without us”.

...getting the employment of disabled people right helps the business to get it right for customers too..... [it's a] common sense, business case approach to operating in a very competitive market. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012, p. 62)

## Benefits to society of increased employment of disabled people

The employment of disabled people has wider societal benefits such as productivity, reduced burden on social services and benefits, and contribution to the economy. For example, improving the employment rate of disabled people to the national average in the UK would boost the economy by £13 billion, equivalent to six months economic growth (Evans, 2007). Improving the skills of disabled people to world leading levels by 2020 would give a boost equivalent to 18 extra months of growth over 30 years, worth £35 billion (Evans, 2007). Furthermore, with the rapidly ageing population and the stagnation or decline in the labour supply, disabled people will be one section of the community that will need to be mobilised, along with women and older workers (de Jong, 2010).

## Approaches to increasing the employment of disabled people

Both supply side and demand side approaches have been used to increase the number of disabled people employed in the general workforce.

### Supply side approaches

Historically policy regarding employment support for disabled people has largely been focused on the “supply” side of the equation. Supply side approaches “push” disabled people into work by making them “job ready” – offering support to develop CVs, interview techniques, training and so on. Supply side approaches have achieved limited success given the continued poor representation of disabled people in the workforce.

## Demand side approaches

There is a move towards impacting on the “demand side” of the employment equation by working with employers to make them “disability confident”. This is done by targeting employers, informing them of the benefits of employing disabled people, and demonstrating how to support disabled people well in the workplace. For example, Workbridge have been concentrating on developing strong relationships with large employers where they will be able to place more than one disabled person over time (G. Cleland, personal communication). In this way they are “pulling” disabled people into the workplace and creating a demand for their skills.

## Literature review aims

To support an increased number of disabled people being employed within DSS, a literature review was conducted to develop a better understanding of the proportion of disabled people employed within DSS in New Zealand, and any barriers they face or supports they require to work in DSS. However, due to the paucity of literature available, the review scope was broadened to include international literature and the employment of disabled people within the general workforce. Therefore this literature review examines the:

- proportion of disabled people employed in DSS and the general workforce
- barriers to the recruitment and employment of disabled people
- supports required by disabled employees.

## Method

### Literature search

#### Search Strategy

The literature search was carried out using Google Scholar given it was expected the bulk of literature and research would be available in the public domain. The initial search focused on the employment of disabled people within DSS. Due to the paucity of research in New Zealand and internationally the search was broadened to look at the employment of disabled people generally. Several literature reviews have been published in this area. Therefore the reference sections of previous reviews were also used to identify further research. Mental illness was excluded from the review.

#### Other documents

In addition to the literature search, documents were sourced from Te Pou, the EEO Trust, Employers’ Disability Network, Disabled People’s Assembly, CCS Disability Action, and website of the Office for Disability Issues.

## Proportion of disabled people employed in DSS and the general workforce

### Disability support services

There is no information available on the number of disabled people employed across DSS in New Zealand. A survey by Donald Beasley Institute (Higgins et al., 2009) indicates about 10 per cent of

staff in residential intellectual services have a disability. The main types of disabilities reported included difficulties with remembering, agility and mobility.

Individual government departments collect employee disability data, but often this is upon application or appointment of a candidate and not updated over time. DSS contracts between DSS providers and the Ministry of Health do not routinely ask for this information to be collected. As a result, it is not possible to estimate the number of disabled people currently working in the DSS sector.

## Public service

Following a review by the State Services Commission (2006), there is no longer any consistent data collected on disability throughout the public sector workforce due to data accuracy and collection concerns.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, several earlier reports provide estimates of the number of disabled people employed within the public service. Findings summarised in Table 3 indicate that in the past, about 8-10 per cent of the public service workforce had a disability.

**Table 3. Estimates of Disabled People Employed in the Public Service**

Reference	Key findings
<i>Equal Employment Opportunities Progress Reports (State Services Commission, 2002)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2001 around eight per cent of public service staff employed on merit had a disability.</li> <li>In 2002 this had dropped to seven per cent.</li> </ul>
<i>Career Progression and Development Survey (State Services Commission, 2006)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2005, eight per cent of public service staff identified as having a disability.</li> <li>Six per cent of public service senior managers had a disability.</li> </ul>
<i>2006 Disability Survey (Statistics New Zealand, 2007)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2006, 10 per cent of the “public service proxy group” workforce identified as having a disability (compared with 11 per cent of the total employed labour force).</li> </ul>

### Public service workforce characteristics

The *Career Progression and Development Survey* (State Services Commission, 2006) suggested that in the public service, disabled people tended to be employed in the “associate professional” occupational group (which includes case worker type roles), be older, and have a longer length of service than their able-bodied counterparts. For example, 29 per cent of disabled staff had worked for their current organisation for 16 years or more compared to only 19 per cent of non-disabled staff.<sup>56</sup>

The public service survey (State Services Commission, 2006) found disabled staff were more likely to report they had achieved all they wanted in their career and that they didn’t want a more senior role. The most common reason disabled staff gave for this was a concern about work-life balance (39 per cent), whereas the most common reason able-bodied people gave was not having the necessary

<sup>55</sup> Despite this information being collected for other equal employment opportunities target groups. The Human Rights Commission continues to advocate for data collection on the employment of people with disabilities in the public service. It is seen by the Commission as a first step in providing an evidence base for increasing the number of people with disabilities employed in the public sector including target setting.

<sup>56</sup> Disabled staff in the public service earned similar amounts to their able-bodied peers and also had a similar ethnic and geographic spread.

experience. Disabled staff were also more concerned about the fairness of the process if they sought a more senior role (26 per cent versus 17 per cent of non-disabled staff). When asked about the most important aspects of their work, having a manageable workload was one of the key factors reported for disabled staff.<sup>57</sup>

## General population

### Labour force participation

The most comprehensive statistics about disabled people and their participation in the labour force comes from the New Zealand disability surveys conducted after each census, in 1996, 2001 and 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2008).<sup>58</sup> Findings show the low level of labour force participation among disabled people over the period 1996-2006 has changed little. The *2006 Disability Survey* (Statistics New Zealand, 2007) indicated 17 per cent of working age people had a disability.<sup>59</sup> This equates to around 539,000 people. Sixty-four per cent of disabled people aged 15-64 years were in the workforce in 2006, compared with 84 per cent of non-disabled people. In all three disability surveys across 10 years, disabled people were at least twice as likely as non-disabled people *not* to be in the labour force, and were less likely to be employed than non-disabled people.

### Socio-demographic factors

Labour force participation among disabled people varies according to several socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, ethnicity and education as summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4. Socio-demographic Factors Associated with Labour Force Participation Rates**

Factor	Key findings
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disabled people aged 15-44 years have the highest rate of labour force participation (compared with 45-64 for the non-disabled population).</li> </ul>
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disabled men are more likely to be employed than disabled women in all age groups.</li> </ul>
Ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Labour force participation is much worse for Pacific disabled men than Māori or other ethnic groups.</li> <li>There is much less ethnic variation in non-disabled men's participation rates.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At every educational level, disabled people are worse off than non-disabled people.</li> <li>The widest gap is between disabled and non-disabled people with no qualifications.</li> <li>Disabled people with no qualifications are only two-thirds as likely to be in the labour force as their non-disabled counterparts.<sup>60</sup></li> <li>Disabled people with <i>post-school qualifications</i> were only about as likely as able-bodied people with <i>no qualifications</i> to be in the labour force.</li> </ul>
Un-employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disabled people are more likely to be unemployed than non-disabled people.</li> <li>The unemployment rate for disabled men was five per cent (three per cent for non-disabled men) and nine per cent for disabled women (compared to five per cent for non-disabled women).</li> <li>Similar to non-disabled people, younger disabled people are more likely to be</li> </ul>

<sup>57</sup> Whereas this did not feature in the top five of non-disabled staff.

<sup>58</sup> As the 2011 census was delayed due to the Christchurch earthquakes the most recent data available is from 2006. The 2013 survey was being conducted while this report was being compiled. Given that the survey statistics are significantly out of date, the findings of the 2013 survey will be informative given the legal and policy changes since the last survey. The Human Rights Commission has advocated for more frequent data collection through the inclusion of disability data in the annual labour market surveys.

<sup>59</sup> Aged 15 years and over.

<sup>60</sup> In the UK it is estimated the employment rate for disabled men without qualifications halved between the mid 1970s and the early 2000s.

	<p>unemployed than older people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The rate of unemployment among younger disabled people is almost twice as high as able-bodied peers.</li> <li>• Unemployment rates are about three times higher among disabled Māori and Pacific groups than other ethnic groups.</li> </ul>
<p>Source: Statistics New Zealand (2007).</p>	

## Other contributory factors

### *Disability onset*

Acquiring a disability may contribute to unemployment. For example, the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012) found the onset of disability “is a catalyst for unemployment” (p. 7). Sayce (2011) found 35 per cent of single, employed adults had left employment within a year of becoming disabled.

### *Disability type*

The type of disability appears to impact on employment rates. People with physical impairments tend to be more favourably viewed than people with sensory, cognitive or psychological impairments. In research conducted in 2004, the Ministry of Social Development found that having a hearing impairment impacted much less on employment, whereas people who were blind or visually impaired were thought by employers to be the hardest to accommodate (Jensen, Sathiyandra, Rochford, Jones, Krishnan & McLeod, 2004). In the UK, people with intellectual disabilities and mental illness were found to have much lower rates of employment than other disabled people (Sayce, 2011). The EEO Trust (2005b) also found people with intellectual, brain injury or concentration impairments were less likely to be in paid work in New Zealand.

### *Educational achievement*

Lower educational achievement may inhibit the employability of disabled people. Low expectations at school, as well as frequent absences may mean that disabled people are less well-educated and therefore unable to access jobs that require higher qualifications. As the economy has shifted to compete in a global marketplace, the need for higher skills and qualifications opens up the gap between disabled people and their able-bodied peers (de Jong, 2010). The labour market is also changing towards portfolio careers, short-term contracts, and varying work practices. This means supports to enable disabled people to work need to be able to flex and move with the person.<sup>61</sup>

### *Recession*

Evidence suggests that economic recessions tend to hit disabled people more. For example, a review of 67 studies over 20 years (Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Brooks, 2007) found that in periods of economic downturn, disabled people experience more severe losses in labour force participation than non-disabled people. At times of recession, the number of disabled people in receipt of benefits has also been shown to increase in New Zealand (de Jong, 2010). Conversely, in periods of economic growth, disabled people tend to make less significant gains in workforce participation than their able-bodied peers (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007).

<sup>61</sup> The position of young disabled people entering the workforce, including educational attainment, in New Zealand has been covered in detail by Cleland and Smith (2010) and will not be reiterated here.

## Population projections

Population projections suggest the percentage of people aged over 65 in New Zealand is set to almost double between 2011 and 2061 (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.). As disabled people already make up a higher proportion of the older workforce and disability increases with age, disabled people are likely to make up a greater proportion of the labour force in the future.

## Motivation of disabled people

Disabled people may be motivated to work for a range of reasons. The Human Rights Commission (2010) found as part of their National Conversation about Work, that disabled people liked the social aspects of work and the immense satisfaction of applying their skills. Disabled people also said it gave them something to get up for, kept them occupied, and provided them with dignity. In its *Career Progression and Development Survey*, the New Zealand State Services Commission (2006) also found disabled people valued the feeling of accomplishment their work gave them. In line with these findings, RADAR (2010) found what disabled people wanted from employment and supported employment included a decent pay; the status of having a job; job and career security; opportunities for career development; feeling respected, valued and free from discrimination and bullying; and social interaction.

## Barriers to the recruitment and employment of disabled people

### Barriers

A number of barriers to the recruitment and employment of disabled people have been identified in the literature. Barriers identified in interviews with graduates and university students with significant disabilities in 2001 (Cleland, 2001), included:

- negative attitudes towards recruiting disabled people, especially regarding the cost of workplace support
- staff being inflexible
- departments not “walking the talk” with EEO practices
- disabled staff not getting the support and understanding from managers in regard to advancing their careers
- staff not being sensitive to disabled people’s needs in relation to setting realistic workloads.

It is noted that disability is the lead ground cited in employment discrimination complaints to the Human Rights Commission.<sup>62</sup> In total, 25 per cent of employment/pre-employment complaints to the Commission were based on disability between 2005 and 2010; the next most common was sex at 16 per cent.<sup>63</sup>

### Negative attitudes

From the perspective of disabled people, negative attitudes are the major barrier for both gaining and retaining employment. The EEO Trust (2005) online survey found “different attitudes among management and colleagues, rather than more equipment or technology, was the workplace change most respondents wanted most” (p. 30) This finding is backed up in other research on the

<sup>62</sup> See <http://www.neon.org.nz/trackingequalityatwork/disabledpeople/employmentcyclefordisabledpeople/>

<sup>63</sup> Note these complaints include permanent disability as well as temporary injury or illnesses.

employment of disabled people (State Services Commission, 2002). “Negative attitudes resulting in discrimination in the workplace continue to be a significant problem for disabled people” (National Disability Authority, n.d., p. 8). While many disabled people have noticed an improvement over time in employer attitudes, in its National Conversation about Work, the Human Rights Commission (2010) found that disabled people believed further work was needed to change attitudes.<sup>64</sup> The Commission found there was strong support for awareness raising both within the workplace and wider society.

While most studies tend to report positive attitudes of employers towards employing disabled people (Graffam, Smith, Shinkfield, & Poizon, 2002; Smith, Webber, Graffam, & Wilson, 2004), the reality does not back this up. Disabled people’s position in the labour market remains poorer than non-disabled people. This suggests employer attitudes are not consistent with their behaviour. One explanation for this is that employers are not honest in attitudinal surveys due to a social desirability bias. That is, they tell the interviewer what they think they want to hear. This could be because their actual views do not align with legal requirements or social mores. Another possibility is that employers with good attitudes towards employing disabled people are more likely to volunteer to be involved in such research (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011).

Hernandez and Keys (2000, cited in Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007) reviewed studies looking at attitudes to employing disabled people. They found that while employers may hold generally positive global attitudes towards disabled people, specific attitudes tend to be more negative. They also found a correlation between prior contact with disabled people and favourable attitudes towards their employment. Kaye and colleagues (2011) suggest a “lack of familiarity can manifest itself as reliance on stereotypes”.

In 2012 the Ministry of Social Development (Woodley & Metzger, 2012) conducted research into employer attitudes towards employing disabled people in New Zealand. Nearly all (97 per cent) respondents said they thought disabled people deserved a “fair go” (Woodley & Metzger, 2012). However, there was a mismatch between employers’ perceptions of an ideal employee and disabled people. The study found around one-third of employers thought discrimination and stereotypes created barriers for disabled people in employment. Almost half of respondents didn’t have any disabled employees in their workplace.

There are a number of reasons employers often cite for not employing more disabled people. These are discussed further below and include disabled people being more costly to employ, less productive, and a health and safety risk. That they also require special treatment, won’t fit in or will upset co-workers or customers, and will take more time off work (Kaye et al., 2011; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007). Conversely, as noted above, the main reason disabled people cite for not getting work is the attitude of employers.

### Cost of hiring disabled people

Numerous studies show that providing reasonable accommodation to enable disabled people to work is extremely cost effective, especially when contrasted with the benefits (see for example, Boni-Saenz, Heinemann, Crown, & Emanuel, 2006; Latimer, 2011; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007). For example, looking specifically at the costs of accommodations since the introduction of the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, the President’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities found that

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<sup>64</sup> Such as greater recognition of employers that employ disabled people and greater awareness-raising.

20 per cent of accommodations were made at no cost, and of those that did cost, 80 per cent were \$1,000 or less.<sup>65</sup>

### Productivity of disabled people

There is limited research comparing the productivity of disabled and non-disabled employees but the available evidence (summarised below), suggests disabled people are at least as productive. For example, Swinburne University in Australia (cited in State Services Commission, 2002) found the productivity of disabled workers was not significantly different to non-disabled staff. In addition, Olson and colleagues (2001, cited in Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007) found that in companies which provide excellent employment opportunities for “people with mental retardation” the only additional costs for disabled employees, was in the cost of training. Other research (cited in EEO Trust, 2005b) suggests that disabled people:

- perform as well as, or better, than those without disabilities (Perry et al, 2000)
- have a lower or equivalent level of absenteeism<sup>66</sup> (Brake, 2001; Hall, 2002)
- cost a similar amount to employ
- have lower or equivalent turnover and accident rates<sup>67</sup> (Brake, 2001; ILO, 2003; Perry et al, 2000).

### Co-worker reactions

Fear that co-workers may react negatively to the hiring of disabled employees is cited as a reason for not hiring disabled people. Greenwood and Johnson (1987, cited in Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007) concluded the evidence base for this was mixed but there were continued concerns particularly when considering people with “mental or emotional” disabilities. Co-worker’s fears may include thinking the disabled person may get special treatment or that their own workloads will increase as a result of working with a disabled person (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007). In some circumstances they may fear loss of incentives/rewards in team situations. Co-workers may also feel uncomfortable or awkward around interacting with disabled people (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007).

### Customer reactions

Employers may generally be reluctant to employ disabled people in customer facing roles due to the fear of negative reactions from customers/clients and the attendant loss of business (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2007). This however ignores the increasing importance of businesses demonstrating corporate social responsibility.<sup>68</sup> It also ignores the fact that disabled people are customers too, and with an ageing population this market is only going to grow. Furthermore, *Working Better* (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012) suggests the spending power of the disabled community in the UK is around £80bn per annum.

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<sup>65</sup> See <http://askjan.org/>

<sup>66</sup> For example in Australia, 86 per cent of employees with disabilities had an above average attendance rate.

<sup>67</sup> For example New Zealand research shows the safety rate for disabled people in the workplace was 99.78 per cent.

<sup>68</sup> However, Sayce (Sayce, 2011) reports that enlightened employers do not push the CSR angle as the business case for employing disabled people is sufficient as long as it is backed up by myth-busting about costs and difficulties.

# Supports disabled people need in order to work

## Physical adaptation of the workspace or workplace

The *2006 Disability Survey* (Statistics New Zealand, 2007) found the majority (75 per cent) of disabled New Zealanders did not require any additional equipment, modifications or support to work. Where needed, the provision of appropriate support can however aid the retention of disabled people within the workplace. For example, Williams and colleagues (2008, cited in Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012) found 27 per cent of disabled people who had left a job for reasons connected with their impairment felt they could have stayed with appropriate support, adjustments or adaptations; those on top of the list were simple and low or no cost. Only a small number of disabled people (around 30 in New Zealand) who receive funded support from Workbridge require support in excess of the ceiling funding available (G. Cleland, personal communication). Research conducted by the Ministry of Social Development in 2012 (Woodley & Metzger, 2012) into employer attitudes indicates organisations who employ disabled people often make minimal or no workplace accommodations.

## Flexible working practices

The public service survey (State Services Commission, 2006) found flexible working hours were important to over half of all staff (equally across disabled and non-disabled staff). However, 20 per cent of disabled staff reported that this was poor in their organisation, compared to 13 per cent of non-disabled staff.

Flexibility and innovative ways of working are not just desirable: we know that it is often the prime reason disabled people are able to work. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012, p. 4)

The most commonly reported low cost requirements or supports for disabled people reported by *Working Better* (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012) include:

- flexible working and support
- more supportive managers
- understanding from colleagues.

Virtual working practices also remove the face-to-face contact that could generate stereotypes and could be equalisers for disabled people.<sup>69</sup>

## Management support

Managers need the right skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively manage a diverse workforce (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2012). A survey by the UK Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2012) found senior level ownership/sponsorship and responsibility for delivery was stated as essential for the success of diversity policies. Furthermore, in its guide to public service human resources staff on EEO policy and practice, the State Services Commission (2002) identifies senior manager accountability for a disability action plan as essential to overcoming the barriers to employment for disabled people.

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<sup>69</sup> However, cultural changes in how work is conducted such as hot desking and home working can be both a positive and a negative for disabled people.

## Equality and diversity policies

The Equality and Human Rights Commission in the UK (2012) recommends employers seek information at the outset of employment about any job-specific adaptations required for disabled people. This does not need to be disability specific but is better done within a context of flexible working practices that improve job performance for everyone (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2012). The Commission also recommends flexible working practices be offered to all disabled people, along with a zero tolerance attitude towards hostility and harassment of disabled people.

# Discussion

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To support increasing the number of disabled people working within DSS, this literature review has helped develop a better understanding of:

- the proportion of disabled people employed in DSS and the general workforce
- barriers to the recruitment and employment of disabled people
- supports required by disabled employees.

## Proportion of disabled people employed in DSS and the general workforce

Currently there is no information available on the number of disabled people employed across DSS in New Zealand. Estimates from the residential intellectual disabilities workforce and public service suggest disabled people may reflect about 10 per cent of the overall DSS workforce. The number of disabled people in the workforce is likely to increase in the future as the population ages. Data needs to be collected on this workforce so any improvements in the employment rate of disabled people in DSS can be identified and monitored in the future. This information would be most practically and feasibly collected through existing human resource processes or a broader stocktake of the DSS workforce. Nevertheless, issues of data accuracy need to be considered.

## Barriers to the recruitment and employment of disabled people

From the perspective of disabled people, negative attitudes are the major barrier for both gaining and retaining employment. Employers may have negative attitudes and beliefs about the cost associated with hiring disabled people, the productivity of disabled employees, and co-worker and customer reactions to disabled employees. The literature suggests these stereotypes and negative attitudes are mostly unfounded. While this may be true of general employers, further research is required to investigate the attitudes and barriers to recruitment within DSS for disabled people.

## Supports disabled people need to work

Most disabled New Zealanders in the general workforce do not require any additional equipment, modifications or support to work. Where supports are required, they are mostly simple and incur low or no cost. The most common requirements include flexible working conditions and support, more supportive managers, and understanding from colleagues. However, the supports required by disabled people working within DSS requires further investigation and may differ from those for the general workforce.

# Appendix B: Disabled employee survey

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## Introduction

Welcome to our survey on disability and employment within Disability Support Services in New Zealand. It will take about 45 minutes to complete and your answers will be completely confidential, neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the report. Your answers will not be shared with your employer.

The research will be used to suggest strategies to help support the employment of disabled people within disability support services.

Some of the questions I will ask you will be about your current job or workplace and some will be about jobs or places you have worked in the past. Some questions will be about general workplaces and then the last few questions are about you, such as your age and so on.

The research is about paid work, not voluntary work. In this research disability support services are defined as being organisations which provide support to people with a disability.

The Ministry of Health uses this definition of disability for eligibility to their services: "A person with a disability is someone who has been assessed as having a physical, intellectual or sensory disability (or a combination of these) that is likely to continue for a minimum of six months and result in a reduction of independent function to the extent that ongoing support is required." For the purposes of this research, we do not include people with a mental illness, and we are only including disabled people of working age.

We can stop at any time if you need a break or have any questions.  
Do you have any questions before we begin?

## BACKGROUND

Name of the organisation

No of employees

Location (and whether local, regional or national)

Type of organisation

- NGO
- Private Business
- Government or public sector organisation
- Other please state

What sort of services does the organisation deliver?

## **SURVEY**

**1) How long have you worked in disability support services?**

**1a) And in this organisation?**

**2) Have you always worked in disability support services?**

- Yes – Go to Q3
- No – Go to Q2a
- Don't know

**2a) If No, what other areas have you worked in?**

**3) How many hours of paid work do you do most weeks?**

(includes self employed work and any type of work for money)

**4) How many hours paid work would you like to do most weeks?**

**5) Do you ever work from home?**

- Sometimes
- Always
- Never

**6) What type of paid work do you do most of the time?**

- Managerial
- Technical e.g. computer technician
- Care support worker/direct contact with clients
- Clerical

- Professional clinical/allied health eg nurse, OT

Other please state

**7) What do you think are the main qualities, abilities or skills you can contribute to your current workplace?**

**8) Do you feel your job is a good match for your abilities, skills and qualifications?**

Yes

No

**8a) If “No”, why is this?**

**9) How did you get your current role?**

**10) Did you choose this role specifically because it is in disability support services?**

Yes – Go to Q11

No– Go to Q12

Partly– Go to Q11

**11) If Yes or Partly, why was that?**

I wanted to work with disabled people

I thought the organisation was more likely to hire me, as a disabled person

I thought the organisation was more likely to be flexible and understanding about my disability

I thought I could bring unique attributes to the role because of my disability

I have personal experience of using DSS and have a desire to improve services

Other – please state

**12) Do you require any of these things to help you do your job?**

Can tick more than one

- Special or adapted equipment e.g. phone, computer screen, software, keyboard
- Ongoing support or special assistance
- Special training e.g. job coach
- Physical adaptation of workspace
- Physical adaptation of building
- Special communication needs e.g. sign language, Braille
- Modified duties
- Flexible hours or days
- Other

**13) Are all of those things provided for you in your current job?**

- Yes**
- No**

**14) If “No”, what things are not provided? Do you know why they are not provided?**

## **FINDING A JOB**

**15) Have you ever used any of the following types of assistance to get a job in DSS?**

can tick more than one box

- Training support
- Provision of individual equipment or technology
- Transport costs
- Funding for workplace modification
- Job coaching
- Interpreting service
- Career planning
- Preparation for job seeking
- Work placement
- Job support
- Minimum Wage Exemption
- Other please state

**16) If ‘Yes’, how useful did you find them?**

50

**17) Have you ever found it hard to find a job either generally or in DSS?**

Can tick more than one box

- Yes – in general
- Yes – in DSS go to Question 18
- No – in general
- No – in DSS go to Question 19

**18) What kind of problems have you had trying to get a job in DSS?**

Can prompt with Not getting interviews/Attitude of person interviewing me/Support services not provided at interview e.g. NZ Sign Language interpreter/Job vacancies not advertised in suitable way/Flexible/Part time hours not available/Being steered away from the job I want because of the interviewer's incorrect expectations of my abilities/Lack of awareness of funding and other support available to employers/Lack of physical access to interview location/Employer thought that there were too many issues to deal with (e.g. health and safety)

Did respondent need prompting Yes/ No

**19) How do you think DSS employers could be more supportive when you are applying for a job?**

- Focus on the abilities and the needs of the job rather than the disability
- Offer communication support at interview e.g. New Zealand Sign Language interpreter or hearing loop
- Use Equal Employment Opportunity statement/logo on job advertisements
- Use on-line recruiting processes as much as possible
- Offer work placements
- Have a disabled person on the interview panel

**WORKING**

**20) How do you think DSS employers could make a workplace more supportive for you?**

- Help existing employees who acquire a disability to retain their job with adaptation or support needed
- Offer communication support for training e.g. New Zealand Sign Language interpreter or hearing loop
- Set up disability networks in larger organisations
- Make use of existing support services to provide on-going support e.g. Workbridge, Supported Employment providers
- Make use of existing financial support available from Ministry of Social Development for adaptations and special needs
- Allow special leave needed because of disability
- Other – please tell us about these

**21) How could employment practices in DSS make a workplace more supportive for you?**

- Senior management commitment to employing and supporting disabled people
  - Review all employment practices and policies for impact on disabled people to identify and remove barriers
  - Training for managers and staff to increase awareness and challenge attitudes around disability
  - Training for employers in the business benefits of employing disabled people
  - Training for managers in managing disabled people and the support services available
  - Harassment training
  - Set up disability advisory groups in larger organisations
- Other, please state

**22) What kind of opportunities would make your workplace more supportive for you? (you can tick more than one box )**

- Equal opportunities for promotion/career advancement/mentoring
- Equal opportunities for training
- Equal pay with people doing the same or similar work
- Offering flexible hours for starting and finishing
- Offering part-time hours
- Adjusting job structures to fit the best qualified and experienced employee

- Allowing you to work from home some or all of the time
- Including home based workers in social events and meetings
- Other, please state

## STAYING IN A JOB

### 23) Have you ever found it hard to stay in a job in DSS?

- Yes – Go to Q 24
- No – Go to Q 26

### 24) What kind of things made it hard to stay in a job?

- Harassment by employer/manager
- Harassment by other staff
- Attitudes of employer/manager
- Attitudes of other staff
- Not provided with support needed e.g. New Zealand Sign Language interpreter or hearing loop
- Not provided with special equipment needed
- Physical environment not suitable and the employer wouldn't change it
- Physical environment not suitable and the employer couldn't change it
- Not offered opportunities for a better job or promotion
- Flexible hours not available
- Part-time hours not available

### 25) Did these difficulties lead to you leaving your job?

- Yes
- No
- Partly

### 26) If you have worked in non-DSS roles, do you feel better supported to carry out your role in DSS than when you worked in other areas?

- Better
- Worse
- About the same
- Don't know

### 26a) If Better/worse, in what way is it better or worse?

**27) Since being in DSS, have you ever received on the job training to improve your skills or qualifications?**

- Yes
- No

**28) Have you ever been encouraged to apply for a better job or more senior position in DSS?**

- Yes
- No

**29) Have you ever been promoted to a better job or a more senior position in DSS?**

- Yes
- No

**30) Have you ever had a mentor? (formal or informal)**

- Yes – Go to Q31
- No – Go to Q32
- Don't know– Go to Q32

**31) If “Yes”, was that a person with a disability?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**32) Please tell me whether you agree, agree strongly, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or disagree strongly with the following statements.**

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A	I find it easier to work in DSS than in other areas					
B	I have considered leaving DSS					
C	Colleagues have higher expectations of me because I am disabled and work in disability services					
D	Colleagues don't know I have a disability					
E	Colleagues have lower expectations of me because of my disability					
F	It is more difficult for a disabled person to work in disability support services than a non-disabled person					
G	I feel well supported to work in DSS					
H	More disabled people should work in DSS					
I	I think it would be difficult to work in an area outside DSS					
J	I would recommend working in DSS to other disabled people					

**33) Do you want to say anything about your answers to those statements?**

**34) If the Ministry of Health put you in charge of increasing the number of disabled people employed in disability support services what would be your top three priorities?**

**35) Are you?**

- male
- female

**36) How old are you?**

**37) What kind of impairment or disability do you have?**

**38) Did you acquire your impairment or were you born with it?**

- Born with a disability
- Acquired

**38a) If 'Acquired', what age?**

**39) If 'Acquired' is your disability funded under ACC?**

- Yes
- No

**40) Which ethnic groups do you identify with?**

- NZ Māori
- NZ European/Pakeha
- Samoan
- Tongan
- Other Pacific group
- Indian
- Chinese
- Other Asian group
- Other ethnic group

**41) What is your highest educational qualification level?**

- Secondary school
- Short post secondary school training course
- Trade or vocational qualification – certificate or diploma
- Degree – undergraduate eg. BA BSc
- Post-graduate degree e.g. Masters, PhD
- Other

**42) Did you attend a mainstream school or a special school?**

- Mainstream school throughout
- Special School
  - Primary
  - Secondary

Tertiary

**43) Where do you live?**

**Comments:**

Use this box to make any other comments on the topic of disability and paid work that you would like to add.

Thank you for your time.

We will publish the findings on the Te Pou website and in our newsletter.

However if you would like to receive a report I can send you one if you give me your email address.

Email address

# Appendix C: DSS employer survey

## EMPLOYER'S SURVEY

Welcome to our survey on disability and employment within Disability Support Services in New Zealand that Te Pou is conducting on behalf of the Ministry of Health. It will take about 45 minutes to complete and your answers will be completely confidential, neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the report. Your employer will also not be told your answers.

The results will help us learn more about the experiences of disabled New Zealanders who work in disability support services and their employers. The research will be used to suggest strategies to support the employment of disabled people in disability support services.

The research is about paid work, not voluntary work. In this research disability support services are defined as being organisations which provide support to people with a disability.

The Ministry of Health uses this definition of disability for eligibility to their services:

"A person with a disability is someone who has been assessed as having a physical, intellectual or sensory disability (or a combination of these) that is likely to continue for a minimum of six months and result in a reduction of independent function to the extent that ongoing support is required." For the purposes of this research, we do not include people with a mental illness, and we are only including disabled people of working age. Also, due to the survey design you will hear me use the terms disability and impairment and these are used interchangeably.

We can stop at any time if you need a break or have any questions.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

## BACKGROUND

Name of the organisation

Independent Living Service

No of employees

Location (and whether local, regional or national)

What sort of services does the organisation deliver?

Approximately what percentage, or number, of your workforce has a disability?

## SURVEY

### 1) Do you

- Make the decision to hire people (operational)
- Lead the decision to hire people (Strategic)
- Influence the decision to hire people (eg HR/allied/snr manager)
- None of the above

**2) Do you have a disability yourself?**

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

**2a) If 'Yes', what type of disability?**

**3) What do you think are the main qualities, abilities or skills disabled people can/could contribute to your workplace?**

**3a) What do you think motivates disabled people to work in your organisation?**

**4) Does your organisation seek to specifically employ disabled people?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**4a) If 'Yes', does your organisation have a Disability Action Plan to recruit and retain disabled employees?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**4b) If 'Yes', how is this monitored?**

**5) Without thinking too much about this - can you tell me what comes to mind when you think of an ideal employee?**

**6) Once again – first things that come to mind – can you tell me what comes to mind when you think about disabled people?**

**7) We are trying to understand if there is a difference between what people believe makes an 'ideal employee' and how we picture disabled people.**

**When you think about ideal employees and disabled people, do the two things match up?**

- Yes
- In part
- No

**8) Can you tell me more about this? Which things match and which don't?**

**9) Does your organisation provide disability awareness training to staff?**

- Yes to some staff – go to Q 9a
- Yes to all staff – Go to Q 9a
- No – Go to Q10
- Don't know – Go to Q10

**9a) If "Yes", is this training compulsory for all staff or certain groups of staff?**

- Yes - all
- Yes - certain groups
- No it is not compulsory for any staff
- Don't know

**9b) If "Yes", is it provided by, or does it include, disabled facilitators?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**10) Does your organisation offer any of the following?**

- Offer communication support at interview e.g. New Zealand Sign Language interpreter or hearing loop
- Use Equal Employment Opportunity statement/logo on job advertisements
- Use on-line recruiting processes
- Offer work placements for disabled people
- offer volunteering opportunities to disabled people
- Have a disabled person on interview panels
- Network for disabled staff
- Use support services to provide on-going support eg Workbridge, Supported Employment providers
- Use financial support available from Ministry of Social Development for adaptations and special needs
- Allow special leave needed because of disability
- Disability impact assessments on staff policies
- Harassment training
- Disability advisory groups

- Career advancement/mentoring for disabled staff
- Offering flexible hours for starting and finishing
- Home working where appropriate
- Membership of the Employers' Disability Network
- Other supports, please state

**11) Do you think disabled people still face additional barriers to being employed in your workplace in spite of those supports?**

- Yes
- Not sure
- No

**11a) If 'Yes', what are those?**

**12) What, if anything, do you think could be done to overcome these barriers?**

**13) To what extent do you agree with these statements?**

		Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Agree strongly	Don't know
A	Disabled people deserve a fair go						
B	Disabled people are well represented in our organisation						
C	Disabled people don't apply for jobs						
D	Disabled people are discriminated against						
E	Disabled people are an untapped resource						
F	Disability support services have an extra obligation to employ disabled people compared to other employers						

**14) Is there anything you want to say about your answers to those statements?**

The following questions are about attitudes towards disability. Try to answer them as honestly as you can. Try not to think too much about being politically correct or saying what you think you should say. Remember your answers are completely confidential.

**15) I am going to read out some statements that come from research about the reasons some**

employers give for not employing disabled people. In each case can you tell me if you agree with the statement and then whether you think your colleagues would agree with them?

		Self					Colleagues				
		SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
A	Disabled people are less productive										
B	Employing disabled people can require big, disruptive or expensive changes to the workplace										
C	It costs more to employ disabled people										
D	Disabled people take more time off work										
E	Employing disabled people is a hassle										
		SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
F	Disabled people are different, 'not like us'										
G	Employing disabled people is a step into the 'unknown' or scary										
H	Disabled people won't fit in										
I	Employing disabled people will unsettle existing workers										
J	Disabled people are a health and safety risk										

16) If there was a vacancy in your organisation, and a disabled person with the right skills and qualities applied, how likely would your organisation be to employ them if they:

		Not at all likely	Less likely than if they were not disabled	Just as likely as if they were not disabled	More likely than if they were not disabled	N/A eg they couldn't do the work
A	Were in a wheelchair					
B	Had a moderate to severe sight impairment					
C	Had a moderate to severe hearing impairment					
D	Were moderately intellectually					

	disabled					
E	Were severely disfigured in some way					
F	Had a moderate to severe speech impairment					
G	Had a moderate to severe cognitive impairment					

**17) Is there anything further you want to say about this?**

--

**18) How comfortable do you think your staff would be working alongside other staff who:**

		Not particularly comfortable	Quite comfortable	Completely comfortable	Not sure
A	Were in a wheelchair				
B	Had a moderate to severe sight impairment				
C	Had a moderate to severe hearing impairment				
D	Were moderately intellectually disabled				
E	Were severely disfigured in some way				
F	Had a moderate to severe speech impairment				
G	Had a moderate to severe cognitive impairment				

**19) Is there anything further you want to say about this?**

--

**20) How comfortable do you think your clients would be with staff who:**

		Not particularly comfortable	Quite comfortable	Completely comfortable	Not sure
A	Were in a wheelchair				
B	Had a moderate to severe sight impairment				
C	Had a moderate to severe hearing impairment				
D	Were moderately intellectually disabled				
E	Were severely disfigured in some way				
F	Had a moderate to severe				

	speech impairment				
G	Had a moderate to severe cognitive impairment				

**21) Is there anything further you want to say about this?**

**22) To what extent might the reactions of others influence your decision to employ disabled staff?**

		Not at all	A little	A lot	Not sure
A	Positive reactions from staff				
B	Positive reactions from clients and customers				
C	Positive image of the organisation				
D	Negative reactions from staff				
E	Negative reactions from clients and customers				

**23) What do you think would be the single most useful support for your organisation to increase the number of disabled people it employs?**

**24) If the Ministry of Health put you in charge of increasing the number of disabled people employed in disability support services what would be your top three priorities?**

**25) Do you have any last comments that you would like to make about disabled people and employment? (If you have remembered something about another answer as you have gone through the survey - feel free to add it in here).**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**

We will publish the findings on the Te Pou website and in our newsletter.

However if you would like to receive a report I can send you one if you give me your email address.

Email address

## Appendix D: Policy context

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### UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The right of disabled people to work is enshrined in the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to which the New Zealand government became a signatory in 2008.

The United Nations' Convention protects "...the rights of people with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities."

The New Zealand Government is required to implement and monitor the Convention and its first four-yearly monitoring report was submitted to the UN in 2012. The UN will respond to this in 2013 or 2014.

### Human Rights Act 1993

The *Human Rights Act 1993* makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone based on disability. The act is split into several parts. The first sets out the functions of the Human Rights Commission and the *Bill of Rights Act* non-discrimination standard, dealing with discrimination in the public sector except on some grounds including employment. The second part covers discrimination in the private sector and in the public sector in relation to certain grounds including employment (as well as sexual harassment, racial disharmony, racial harassment, and victimisation). This section also deals with situations where discrimination is lawful. The third deals with redress through the Human Rights Commission and the final part deals with the Human Rights Review Tribunal.

### State Services Commissioner

The State Services Commissioner has a responsibility to "promote, develop and monitor ...EEO policies and programmes for the public service" under section 6 of the *State Sector Act 1988*. Under section 58 of the Act, each public service chief executive is required to develop a programme on EEO, including disabled people, and report progress against that plan. It is the State Services Commission's role to promote, develop and monitor EEO policies and programmes within the public service. In their *2013-2017 Statement of Intent* the State Services Commission identified disabled people as one of its four target groups, along with Māori, women and ethnic or minority groups.

### The New Zealand Disability Strategy

The vision of the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* (Ministry of Health, 2001) is of a society that highly values the lives, and continually enhances the full participation, of disabled people. It provides a framework to guide government agencies making policy and services impacting on disabled people. The fourth of the 15 objectives in the strategy to move New Zealand towards an inclusive society is to "provide opportunities in employment and economic development for disabled people".

Each objective in the strategy has a series of actions. For Objective Four there are 16 separate actions that address both the demand and supply side of employment of disabled people from access

to education and training, educating employers, legislating for equal opportunities and treatment in employment, and increasing the influence of disabled people in the employment arena. In relation to disabled people working in DSS one action is key:

Operate... [EEO] and affirmative action policies in the public sector. (Ministry of Health, 2001, p. 21).

However, all of the other objectives within the strategy are relevant to disabled people's experience of working, as only a fully inclusive society will enable, value and support disabled people's contribution and involvement in the economy and workplace. Government departments are required to report annually on progress on the *New Zealand Disability Strategy*.

## The Office for Disability Issues

The Office for Disability Issues is the focal point within government on disability issues. The Office for Disability Issues promote and monitor implementation of the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* and the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. They report to the Minister for Disability Issues and supports the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues.

## Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues

Since 2009, the Ministerial Committee on Disability Issues has provided ministerial leadership across government on implementing the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* and the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The Committee has responsibility for a programme of work that falls out of its Disability Action Plan. In May 2012, the Disability Action Plan was updated and under the remit of a cross-government shared outcomes framework, three areas where value could be added by agencies working together were identified. One of those areas is increasing the number of disabled people in employment. During 2012-2014 there are three key actions from this work which directly relate to employment:

- connect disabled youth with the labour market through promotion of work experience and easier access to apprenticeships
- improve existing employment support for employers and disabled people
- promote greater coherence in disability-related policy and practice.

## Quality of Care and Services Provision for People with Disabilities

As a response to the *Inquiry into the Quality of Care and Services Provision for People with Disabilities* (Social Services Select Committee, 2008), a *DSS Workforce Action Plan* (2009, updated and currently in draft for 2013-2016) was developed and this supports the inclusion of disabled people in the DSS workforce as a medium term goal. This commitment was reflected in the 2011 *Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Disability Issues*.

## Disability Employment Summit

The Disability Employment Summit was held mid-2011. The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, Work and Income, Employers Disability Network, and the Disability Employment Forum is progressing actions from the summit including:

- work experience and internship opportunities for disabled youth
- engaging with employers to develop a “disability confident” employer market that recognises the talent in the disabled population
- connecting employers with potential employees including information about support and assistance available for employing disabled people.

Budget 2010 provided \$3 million over three years for a programme to promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people.<sup>70</sup> Local and national social change initiatives have been funded and research commissioned. As part of its contribution to the plan, the government funded a \$500,000 Disability Innovation Fund for 2011/2012 to create new and innovative opportunities for disabled people to get into paid work.

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<sup>70</sup> See <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/68-million-improve-lives-disabled-nzers>

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## Recommendation 1

Showcase examples of good practice

Two case studies April 2014

Disability Workforce  
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# Case Study 1

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Karen Beard-Greer, chief executive of Independent Living Service (ILS) in Auckland believes that disability support services (DSS) employers have an additional responsibility to employ disabled people because, like any industry “We need to understand our target market. If we are in the business of disability then we need disabled people as our leaders and front people,” says Karen. The ILS is Auckland’s largest disability information and advisory centre and product showroom.



Tony Howe is an information consultant with the ILS and a part-time administrator for New Zealand Wheelchair Rugby. He says, “I was never encouraged to believe employment was part of my future from the word go.” Tony was told at his mainstream school that his impairment, Muscular Dystrophy, meant he would never work, so he may as well go on benefits and ‘accept his lot’. Tony’s father and grandfather also had Muscular Dystrophy and had never worked, meaning expectations at home were not really any higher than at school.

He jokingly says it was only when, in his twenties, he was ‘coerced’ by a social worker to attend a rehab gym where he met other disabled people, that he started to realise there could be other possibilities for him.

As Tony became involved in wheelchair rugby, his confidence grew, both in his physicality in his chair and generally. When deterioration in his physical health meant he could no longer play rugby, he moved into coaching and as coach of the Wheel Blacks he went on to attend two Paralympics.

Tony’s relationship with the ILS, in Royal Oak, Auckland began as a volunteer in 1992. He credits his colleagues and managers for encouraging him and challenging him to develop his employment skills. “For the first year or so I hid in a corner, but the encouragement I got, especially from management meant they slowly pulled me out of the corner and encouraged me to be part of the team, even as a volunteer.”

However, it took Tony a number of years to see himself as employable or to think an employer would consider him employable. After six years as a volunteer, Tony applied for and got the job as information consultant. Age 29, Tony had his first paid job, the first adult male in three generations of his family to do so.

Karen says that Tony’s wide knowledge of disability information, as both a disabled person and in his work experience, “Brings a unique skillset that we couldn’t get from someone who hasn’t got a lived experience of disability.” She notices that when people come into their showroom they tend to gravitate towards the person whose impairment most closely matches their own. “I would too,” she says, “I’d think that person knows exactly what I need.”

Tony has developed his knowledge and skills over the years and is a Barrier Free Adviser, and a BE Master Coach. These are both functions he carries out within his role with ILS. As a Barrier Free Adviser he assesses buildings to ensure they meet legislative requirements on access. As a BE Master Coach he advises business that want to improve their disability access and become more inclusive.

Tony has attended leadership training on a course specifically for disabled people and says, “You bring a diverse group together and it’s not about what you can’t do - it is what you can. I got a lot out of it. If I could go back and be a coach again I would be a far better coach (after the leadership training). How much more prepared I would be now. The goals you set and handling the physical and emotional strains. It is funny to hear me say it, but I am a lot stronger now, even though my impairment has got worse.”

Karen’s advice to employers who haven’t experienced employing people with disabilities is “Just do it! Even if employers don’t have all the boxes ticked, it’s lovely to have the whole team involved in helping make the place more accessible, it’s great team building and enriches the whole environment. It’s the greatest gift an employer can give to someone who’s had barriers in their way.” She also says employers have lots of tools available to help them to be more disability confident, such as the BE Institute (BE Employed) and Workbridge.

She believes that the benefits of employing disabled staff far outweigh the difficulties. “You have to be mindful that there are times when ill-health means people are incapacitated. But it’s worth working through that with them because of all the gems you get from them. Our organisation’s purpose is ‘making daily living easier’, so we have to live that.”

Karen says if she hadn’t been thrown into a situation of employing and managing disabled staff, she would never have realised how easy it was. “You just find solutions for problems day by day,” she says.

ILS doesn’t have specific recruitment policies in place to target disabled applicants, but it is within their constitution that they employ disabled people. As a result they always have this in mind when advertising a post. Some roles are more suitable than others for a disabled person and they assess this on an individual basis. As ILS runs a product showroom they need to ensure there are enough physically able staff to carry out the heavier physical work. However, someone doing supply chain management can do the job equally from an office chair, or a wheelchair. Karen says, “We are in the enviable position that this is our day to day life. We work in the sector; we take it for granted. They (disabled staff) are just part of the team.”

Tony plans to continue to work for ILS, he says “I am lucky to have a job and I am loyal to a place that has looked after me for 22 years. You reciprocate.” As it turns out, that reciprocation goes for Tony’s family. Tammy, Tony’s daughter, has put her own lived experience of disability from supporting her dad to good use, and has worked for ILS as an information consultant since 2011.

## Case Study 2

An overheard conversation led Ava Thomas to a job with Laura Fergusson Trust Canterbury (LFTC) 12 years ago, and she's still with the trust today. LFTC is a registered charity providing residential and community rehabilitation services. Ava is a disabilities advocate and administrator for an internal trust that funds extra-curricular activities for residents. Ava became disabled in the 1990s following a series of health events including a stroke and resulting in double amputations.



Ava found it difficult at times to find work, "When applying for jobs, I was honest and said I was a double amputee but never had any success. The stone wall just went up." So, during a period of unemployment Ava attended a course on MYOB, (accounting and payroll software) funded by ACC and Workbridge. It was here that Sonia Pratt, then chief executive officer of LFTC, overheard Ava saying she was looking for work. Sonia suggested Ava visited LFTC and took a look around. This led to a part-time position as administration officer, although the role evolved to include accounting and monthly and annual reporting. Ava's position was initially subsidised by Workbridge funding.

Changing health status over time meant the role became too much for Ava and the trust developed another role for her, which she continues to this day. Her work involves advocating on behalf of residents and Ava is also on the health and safety committee for the Trust. She says, "If the residents bring an issue to me, I try and help them solve problems themselves and use the community themselves. Or I will find out how to solve the problem."

Despite her health set-backs, and the need to work fewer hours, Ava continues to work and loves her job. "I like to feel useful and I like helping people, it gives me such a feeling of worth." She is also active in a number of community organisations including the Amputee Society, Kiwi Able Network and the Living Streets Forum. Kathryn Jones, chief executive officer of LFTC says this community activism assists Ava in her work. "Ava's heavily involved in the community, advocating for people with disabilities and she brings that experience, connections and knowledge to the organisation as well as her role. She brings a community of knowledge with her," says Kathryn.

LFTC employs around 120 staff of whom about 4.5 per cent have a disability. Kathryn's experience is that disabled people often don't apply for jobs. However, spurred on by the research carried out by Te Pou into the employment of disabled people in disability support services (DSS), Kathryn says the trust aims to see what they can do to support more disabled applicants. The trust sees the value of employing disabled people, as they can have a greater depth of understanding and "People interact with the most people when they are at work, a big part of work is interaction and socialising. Interacting with people with disabilities increases understanding because they are visible and here."

Kathryn's approach to recruitment starts with being clear about the role itself and the competencies required to do that job. Task-based job descriptions can exclude disabled applicants, such as requiring a driving license when only a small or occasional part of the role is driving. Also, she says that if someone has the competence, energy and ability to learn, then any support they may require to do the job can be structured into the workplace. Depending upon a person's disability they will require different supports. Kathryn says, "You need to be careful in the planning and be open and transparent

about what is required to support someone in the workplace. Focus on the real positives and what they can bring to working in the industry.”

She says it is also essential to have good management and peer support in place. The type of supports required will vary, for example someone with a physical disability may only require physical access upfront, and not require ongoing support. Someone with a mental illness or cognitive disability may require intermittent ongoing support. Kathryn acknowledges it is important to ensure other people in the team understand that at times someone’s disability and how it is affecting them may mean they are not able to work at their usual pace.

Wage funding support from Workbridge makes a huge difference, says Kathryn. “It supports and funds the additional time that staff members need to support employees with disabilities.” However, the wage-funding tapers off over time and, as Kathryn say, some people will always have their disability, and may need more support at certain times in their lives. Kathryn says she has learned a lot about employing people with disabilities and while she is focused on employing the right people for the job, “People with disabilities have as much, if not more to offer in the workplace.”

Ava agrees, she says, “I think most people with disabilities in DSS would have a rapport and understanding. I think it does make a difference. While key workers, coaches and carers understand, because they’ve worked in the sector a long time, there is an understanding and knowing (If you are disabled). Nothing beats personal experience.”

Report of Forum May 2014  
to progress:

Recommendation 2:

Describe the skill set that  
Lived Experience brings to  
Disability Support Services

Recommendation 3:

Explore mechanisms that may  
increase the employment of  
disabled people in Disability  
Support Services

Recommendation 5:

Explore peer support  
mechanisms

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# The Employment of Disabled People in Disability Support Services

FORUM REPORT

12 May 2014, Wellington

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June 2014

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# 1. Introduction

In 2013, Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui, The National Centre of Mental Health, Addiction and Disability Research, Information and Workforce Development published a research report titled “The Employment of Disabled People in Disability Support Services”. Reflecting the literature, the report acknowledged that disabled people do not fare as well in the labour market as others. The research set out to explore the career pathways and motivation of disabled people working in Disability Support Services (DSS) to help inform future strategies and actions aimed at increasing the number of disabled people working in DSS.

Findings of the research prompted a number of recommendations relevant to the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Social Development, employment and recruitment agencies and Disability Support Service (DSS) employers. Several of these were explored in greater depth through this follow-on project. The objective was to identify the next steps from recommendations two, three and five from the original research report.

Recommendations selected for further exploration in this project were based on practicality, and the ability to influence and implement the outcomes within a workforce development context within DSS.

A small group of disabled people who were or had worked in DSS were brought together to provide feedback on the selected recommendations. Despite only a small number of workshop participants, the workshop was very productive and positive. Feedback was also sought from the research participants who were unable to attend the workshop.

## A note about language

The term “Disabled people” has been used throughout the report. It is generally accepted in common use alongside “people with disabilities”. “Consumers” is a term often used for people who use disability support services.

## 2. What we did

All participants in the original research were invited to the forum. Unfortunately, the majority of those who accepted the invitation had changes to their circumstances close to the forum date and were unable to attend. Alternative participants with lived experience of disability who were or had worked in disability support services were then invited.

The final small group, included, one who had been involved in the 2013 research and others who had worked in Disability Support Services.

Although all participants had received a copy of the original research report in advance, the group composition meant that there were some questions about the particular content of the recommendations, and the framing of the questions for consideration, but this did not affect the overall outcomes of the workshop.

The group considered a series of questions to explore the ways the selected recommendations from the research report might be further developed and implemented within DSS.

**The research report recommendations and associated questions explored at the forum were:**

### Recommendation two

*The MOH considers undertaking research in collaboration with disabled people and other key stakeholders to describe the lived experience of disability as a work-based skill set.*

- What are the work-related skills and attributes flowing from the lived experience of disability?
- What do these practically contribute to the disability support sector?
- Having described the skills, how and where do you think they might be used? eg helping disabled people in their careers, influencing employers etc.

### Recommendation three

*The MOH considers mechanisms to support an internship programme for disabled people within DSS upon contract renewal, considers the inclusion of positive discrimination policies within DSS contracts, and mandating the accessibility of DSS provider premises, even when they are not providing services to the public.*

- Which of these would make the most difference?
- How should these activities be progressed?
- What role/s should disabled people take?

### Recommendation five

*The Ministry of Health helps facilitate peer support and/or mentoring for disabled people, for example by supporting the development of DSS disabled employee networks*

- What would peer support and mentoring options look like?
- Who would be best to lead and support?

## 3. What we found

### Recommendation two

The MOH considers undertaking research in collaboration with disabled people and other key stakeholders to describe the lived experience of disability as a work-based skill set.

Disabled people feel their contributions can be less visible in the workplace than those of their non-disabled peers. But believe that living with disability enables them to develop transferable skills which would benefit workplaces generally, and particularly disability support services specifically.

### Question one

What are the work-related skills and attributes flowing from the lived experience of disability?

The skills and attributes identified can be divided into four groups.

#### 1. Disability knowledge and insight

Participants saw this as a highly valuable attribute.

*Disabled people often know how things are done in the disability world. You can challenge the system and suggest solutions on the basis of this knowledge. You can ask the questions that are not part of the standard process. You are not afraid of overstepping boundaries because of your lived experience.*

Participants said because of this knowledge you are freer to take risks that non-disabled people might be less sure of, and have insight they might be less likely to have.

They said rapport is easier to establish with service users because of shared lived experience. Trust will be easier on the part of consumers. They saw this knowledge as a valuable source of cross-pollination of the consumer and the disability staff perspective which adds to the building of the whole community including consumers and non-disabled work colleagues. They understand the expectations of the “system.”

#### 2. Positive attitudes and personal qualities

‘Fire in the belly’ and passion and commitment were thought to be important, along with a “can-do attitude.”

Participants had a strong sense that people can do more than others think they can. This was felt to be particularly true for learning-disabled people where tokenism was challenged.

Participants said that disabled staff would be loyal and hardworking for the right employer. Sensitivity to the views of disabled people could contribute a quality source of feedback to service providers. The development of professional judgement based on lived experience was also valuable

Participants thought that disabled people are prepared to accept challenge. They may be the only one with that particular impairment. They are prepared to lead the way and break new ground

They thought that disabled people bring valuable insights into important issues, such as access, for their employers. This included being able to really test whether there are clear communications, and effective policies

### 3. Management, planning and problem solving

*The lived experience of disability means we often have to think about self- management, work-arounds, problem solve, overcome barriers, managing more than one condition or managing a fluctuating or changing condition – Managing change*

Disabled people were seen as personally resourceful.” We have to be assertive communicators to get our needs met, know how to delegate, and know our limits.”

Planning and strategic thinking were also seen as valuable skills disabled people had developed as a result of their lived disability experience.

“We have to think things through, weigh things up, make a balanced decision, leading to developing good judgement.”

Managing complexity and different roles, such as family care, elder care, personal and professional career responsibilities was also rated.

“Being able to work from a strengths basis rather than a deficit basis,” and “Resilience - struggling well - learning strategies from adversity” were also highly valued

### 4. Connections

*Disabled staff can bring with them a very relevant network, a unique set of resources, knowledge of and connections within the disability ‘system’ and consumers.*

Workshop participants agreed that the range of skills and attributes they identified are transferable to the workplace and are not generally acknowledged or utilised enough. It was also noted that disabled people will often have these skills and attributes alongside the usual range of skills and attributes in the general population.

Not everyone would have all the skills and attributes identified here, or the same mix or level, nor even agree about the value of the skills, but most people would have some, and could develop more if they were supported and encouraged.

While everyone was very positive in their approach to the questions, it was pointed out that disabled people may also have fragile self-esteem and that there is always the possibility of change to an established support which can cause stress.

### Question two

What do these practically contribute to the disability support sector?

***At a macro level if we used all those skills it allows DSS to empower disabled people as a confident, capable, effective workforce for the consumer.***

The skills can make a difference at all levels of a DSS service, client interface, leadership and management, planning and governance, training, media and communications and quality improvement.

Participants saw themselves as a portable free-flowing workforce. They advocated for a mind shift from away from the view of a person needing accommodation, to a highly valued operative, a social change agent from a strengths-based versus deficit model. They said that disabled staff bring legitimacy and authenticity to the organisation's external relationships and that they contribute to better quality services, fewer complaints and generally more receptive DSS organisations.

DSS should be established as a worthwhile career, one that is more professional and a better fit for disabled people who bring expectations of client-centredness and workplace procedures more closely reflecting the philosophy - walking the talk. They also bring an expectation that workplace culture will be open to change and that services reflect the realities of disabled people's lives, both strengths and limitations. They can promote changes in systems and behaviour - breaking the cycle.

### Question three

Having described the skills, how and where do you think they might be used? E.g. helping disabled people in their careers, influencing employers etc.

#### 1. Helping disabled people

Participants thought that the identification of these skills and attributes in themselves would help disabled people with their career development and attaining leadership.

They saw that disabled people working with consumers and influencing their life choices by modelling skills and attributes could help them develop and gain confidence.

Utilising and fostering those skills would contribute meaningfully to the governance of DSS, and they would assist with building better connections and leveraging expertise within Disabled People's organisations (DPOs.)

#### 2. Influencing DSS employers

***Creating dialogue between consumers and DSS employers around training, organisational philosophy, policies, recruitment, employment quotas or targets, EEO programmes management promotion for disabled staff.***

Participants talked about influencing employers to recognise and seek these skills for recruiting disabled people and about improving the profile and awareness of the disabled community within the disability workforce. They also discussed better communication and use of accessibility services to make information more accessible around employment, e.g. People First easy read translation for information such as the easy read employment contract.

They suggested highlighting some models of professionalism and support, such as disability staff networks in some DSS services, and other models where disabled people lead.

They wanted the disability-related skills and attributes identified to be used in training within DSS. Disability-related skills could inform quality improvement and safety within services, going beyond what they saw as the "tick box," as "a critical role in the current safety-focussed climate."

## Recommendation three

*The MOH considers mechanisms to support an internship programme for disabled people within DSS upon contract renewal, considers the inclusion of positive discrimination policies within DSS contracts, and mandating the accessibility of DSS provider premises, even when they are not providing services to the public.*

## Question one

Which of these would make the most difference?

Workshop participants were reluctant to prioritise these measures, believing all of them to have equal, if different, merit and that the necessity of mandating accessibility of DSS premises is self-evident. They gave their reasons for each.

### 1. Accessibility of all DSS premises

***It is a human rights issue, mandated by the UNCRPD, the Disability Strategy and the Human Rights Act.***

Participants pointed out that some buildings must be accessible by law already and felt that accessibility is not just about the public, it is also about disabled staff and visitors. They strongly felt that political reality may mean it needs to be mandated. Inaccessibility may breach the HDC code of rights, dignity, respect and independence, (Right 1: the right to be treated with respect, and Right 3: the right to dignity and independence.)

“Accessibility is a moral obligation.” More than just accessible buildings are needed. They emphasised the need for an accessible journey.

Note - This discussion relates to the building code, NZ Standard 4121, the Building Act and related provisions.

### 2. Internship programme

Participants were supportive of internship programmes, and were keen to see concepts developed and different models researched. They noted that Intern programmes exist in other sectors so are not stigmatised by association with disability services. They saw this as a real advantage.

While such a programme might be paid or unpaid, disabled interns should be able to sustain themselves by either being paid or by receiving a benefit. Workshop participants also thought that there would have to be a clear outcome for each intern and that while a programme could be broad in scope, it should be different from and of better quality than work experience. Such a programme could be more senior than entry level such as a management internship. Such programmes might also include external placement, mentoring, coaching etc.

A flexible internship programme needs to be part of a continuum of other enabling measures, e.g. work shadowing, placements, mentoring, coaching and so on.

### 3. Positive discrimination (or affirmative action)

There was some brief discussion about the meaning of these terms. Participants suggested that these terms need a clear shared understanding and development by human resources specialists. They said that any other options identified should be just as worthy of consideration as those proposed below.

Workshop participants were concerned that “all our legislation is retroactive and we can't rely on it for equity because it relies on proven breaches - after the event.” They wanted positive and proactive action rather than tokenism. It was said that “the argument goes that such action can be tokenism or preventing widespread change but you have to start somewhere and a win for one should be a win for all.”

Suggestions were made of quotas or targets, study leave, varied pay structures, work flexibility, working from home or from different locations, training investment, leadership building, secondment, time banking, job sharing and flexible working hours. The UK double-tick scheme for guaranteed interviews for minorities was cited, as was the Waitemata District Health and Auckland District Health Board Implementation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2013 - 2016 document. Workshop participants also called for experienced and qualified disabled people on appointment panels.

It was acknowledged that some of the above are about good employment practice rather than positive discrimination or affirmative action.

## Question two

How should these activities be progressed?

This was covered in question one as the items were not prioritised.

## Question three

What role/s should disabled people take?

### 1. Leadership

Participants recognised the important role played by DPOs, who need resources in order to work with the MOH in keeping with the UNCRPD implementation processes.

They emphasised the need to resource DPOs to develop capacity to include a wider range of disabled people not currently involved in the monitoring process.

Disabled experts should be involved in leadership roles in recruitment processes (Reference was made to recommendation four of the original report. “The MOH provides templates for DSS employers to support the development of equality and diversity policies that are inclusive of all employees.”)

## Recommendation five

*The Ministry of Health helps facilitate peer support and/or mentoring for disabled people, for example by supporting the development of DSS disabled employee networks*

### Question one

What would peer support and mentoring options look like?

Participants suggested a wide range of options and strategies that would contribute to peer support and mentoring.

- Disabled staff peer network within an organisation can help other staff in their work because of the lived experience of disability.
- Benefits from the Blind Foundation Staff network provides incentives for sighted staff and helps network members feel valued in their roles. Leadership of the network is important and informal mentoring is made easier
- Networks across organisations of people in similar roles can work
- Peer support on interview panels
- Formalised support is important, support that is sustained and lasts beyond the initial appointing manager, for example
- Formalised programmes for individuals. One-to-one professional supervision
- External formal professional supervision
- Using Employee Assistance Programmes in different ways
- Good internal supervision, open and regular communication
- Find the right person for external supervision who could understand your impairment.
- Facilitated networks across like organisations need openness and trust. These networks might be less formal.

### Question two

Who would be best to lead and support?

Like-minded organisations like the NASCs could form a prototype network. Resources would be needed. Disabled employee networks exist within a few DSS and those already active may be prepared to lead or provide support. DPOs and related groups would need to be involved to support and help monitor progress.

Mentoring needs to be part of a coherent workforce development plan in conjunction with a plan for each individual disabled staff member. Mentors in a mentoring programme can be external or internal, voluntary or paid.

Another suggestion was that Information on options could be disseminated to employers and employees through NZDSN.

The MOH might consider investment in developing professional disabled mentors and coaches.

## 4. Conclusions

Participants wanted to reinforce the messages from the original research, the undervaluing and underutilisation of the lived experience of disability in the workplace, and the need for collecting statistical data to help understand opportunities and the challenges.

Despite the small number of workshop participants, only one of whom had participated in the original research, the outcomes for the day were relevant and practical. They clearly articulated that there are many ways disabled people can contribute, and that they do want to.

Participants identified a range of skills and attributes that the lived experience of disability can bring to the DSS workplace. This constitutes a resource for disabled people to help them identify their transferable skills. They also identified tools and strategies which will be immediately available for DSS employers to select from and adopt.

They pointed out that the lived experience of disability can be beneficial for both the individual as well as the organisation. This was evidenced by the number of positive skills and attributes and their practical applications identified.

There was acknowledgement that there has been progress and there are examples to follow and things which can be done now. Although people thought there are still barriers, they provided many suggestions for solutions.

## 5. Where next? Recommendations

The general outcome of the workshop was positive and practical and resulted in some focused recommendations that:

1. Te Pou promotes the outcomes of the original research and this workshop to DSS service providers in collaboration with NZDSN.
2. Both reports are shared with DPOs to promote the findings through the DPO employment forum.
3. Te Pou investigates ways it can incorporate the findings into its own work.
4. The benefits of employing disabled people are promoted at the Careerforce Workforce Development conference and other relevant conferences such as NZDSN. (A proposal has been accepted for presentation at the NZDSN conference in August 2014.)
5. The positive contributions, skills and attributes identified in the discussion on recommendation 2 of the 2013 report are shared with and worked on with Workbridge, supported employment organisations, and workforce training with disabled people leading or co-leading

## Appendix One: Skills and attributes disabled people bring to DSS

Skills and attributes	Disabled People:
<b>Risk Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are calculated risk takers making professional judgments based on their own experiences. Encountering new environments often contains element of risk, and disabled people are required to think things through and weigh options.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are required to think ahead and plan for a range of situations. This involves resourcefulness to meet logistical challenges and knowing when to delegate</li> </ul>
<b>Problem solving</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>resourceful</li> <li>resilient</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>frequently face barriers to participation, so know how to challenge systems and come up with solutions that work for individuals</li> <li>have experience in navigating unhelpful boundaries imposed by others</li> <li>can bring a unique set of resources built up from own experiences</li> </ul>
<b>Change Agent</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>insight</li> <li>clarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can provide real time assessment of the effectiveness of policies, particularly with regard to accessibility, inclusion and responsiveness, both as an employer and service provider</li> <li>are honest about their boundaries and limits, and know when to delegate</li> </ul>
<b>Rapport and Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are able to establish rapport with other disabled people who may more readily trust people with a similar or shared experience</li> <li>are able to offer unique perspectives to disabled people, and through networks and inspiration, able to grow community leadership</li> <li>bring diversity and inclusion to the workplace, which attracts disabled people either as colleagues or clients</li> </ul>
<b>Communication and Connection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have networks and knowledge of the disability system and consumer expectations</li> <li>demonstrate the assertiveness required to get what is needed</li> <li>understand different perspectives, roles and competing demands (for example, family responsibilities)</li> </ul>
<b>Technology skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are often skilled at using technology and adapting to technological change</li> </ul>
<b>Change Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>are frequently required to manage change for example in one's own condition and/or support systems</li> </ul>
<b>Passion, Commitment</b> <b>Striving for justice and equity</b> <b>Loyalty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have a strong 'more than just a job' commitment to work</li> </ul>