Supporting disabled people  
and people with health conditions  
into work

# Analysis of feedback from survey

During April 2014, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) asked a broad group of interested people to provide feedback through a survey on its proposed long term plan to support disabled people and people with health conditions into work.

The proposed long term plan was set out in seven sections in the survey:

1. Implement an individualised approach to involve the client in identifying their aspirations, skills and strengths to work, and the support they need to find and stay in work.
2. Increase the capability of Work and Income staff to work with disabled people and people with health conditions.
3. Provide accessible information, tools and forms.
4. Work with employers to change attitudes, and increase the information and support available.
5. Improve employment services and supports for people with a health condition or a disability.
6. Change the way we work with health professionals.
7. Reduce financial disincentives to working.

Feedback was collected by asking the following:

* Do you agree with what we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years?  
  (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)
* Do you agree with the order we are planning to do them?
* (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree)
* Provide any comments in a free text box.

People were free to answer all or just some of the questions.

The proposed long term plan and the questions asked in the survey are set out in Appendix A.

In total, 414 people completed to the survey. The demographics of the people who completed the survey are set out in the Appendix B.

# General feedback

General feedback on the long term plan as a whole included:

* societal attitudes need to change towards disabled people before the plan will be truly effective
* more jobs are needed for the plan to really work
* the culture of Work and Income needs to move from a medical model to a culture where Work and Income works in partnership with disabled people to develop their strengths and abilities and overcome potential workplace barriers so more disabled people can have successful long-term employment
* the plan needs to be more strengths and rights based and use the social model of disability principles
* the plan needs to be based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* there needs to be more focus on the development of workplaces that are confident to support disabled people
* a continuum of supports needs to be provided – mainstream services through to specialist providers
* the plan needs to outline the roles of government and providers and which one is responsible for taking the steps to compete each section of the plan
* clients with lived experience of health conditions or disability must be central to the development of all changes to ensure changes are having a positive impact on them
* a robust communication plan is needed to ensure all interested people, groups and agencies are aware of the plans being made and the outcomes being achieved
* the plan feels like it is focused on disabled people needing to have adapt. Focus should be on changing the attitudes of society and making the environment more accessible for all people
* Government should introduce legislation to require employers to employ quotas of disabled people
* focus should be on employing the right person for the job and not about employing ‘disabled people’ on the basis a person was ‘disabled’ or had a ‘disability’.

# Feedback on sections of the long term plan

## Implement an individualised approach to involve the client in identifying their aspirations, skills and strengths to work, and the support they need to find and stay in work.

407 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 67 people strongly agreed
* 218 people agreed
* 70 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 23 people disagreed
* 29 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 38 people strongly agreed
* 171 people agreed
* 97 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 67 people disagreed
* 30 people strongly disagreed.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

Multiple people said:

* it was important people knew about the supports and services provided by Work and Income so they could build them in to their plan, so bring forward the work to develop information in accessible formats about all employment supports and services available from Work and Income
* it was important to support people with intellectual impairment to be develop employment plans, so bring forward the work to design techniques to support people making decisions when completing the self-assessment
* staff must collaborate with all other agencies involved with the client when developing the plan, so align the work planned in section B, to provide staff with opportunities and time to work with other agencies involved with a client, with this section also.

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

Work and Income must commit to an individualized approach by introducing a culture that supports clients achieve their employment goals and aspirations. As part of this:

* staff must receive proper training on an individualised approach before using the approach with clients
* the organisation must provide support (ie advocacy and support on how to plan) for clients who need support to develop their plans
* assessment of ability to work must involve others when and if appropriate
* career progression for clients should be part of the plan
* people over 60 years old must be included as many people in this age group can and do want to work
* a communication plan must be developed so other organisations and groups know about the new culture.

### Suggested actions for government agencies

Better collaboration is needed between government departments. Other agencies working with the same people as MSD, (ACC, Education, Health, Transport), need to know about the supports and services provided by Work and Income so they can share that information with their clients.

People need access to good education, training and therapeutic services to develop the skills needed to get into employment.

Agencies need to work better together to prevent duplication of public funding.

## Increase the capability of Work and Income staff to work with disabled people and people with health conditions.

382 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 92 people strongly agreed
* 198 people agreed
* 44 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 26 people disagreed
* 22 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 55 people strongly agreed
* 186 people agreed
* 77 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 35 people disagreed
* 24 people strongly disagreed.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

Multiple people said:

* knowing about the functions of other agencies is an important part of increasing the capability of Work and Income’s staff, so bring forward the plan to provide staff with opportunities and time to work with other agencies involved with a client and opportunities and time to use available networks to coordinate services for their clients
* working with disabled people and people with health conditions requires specialist skill, so bring forward the establishment of mentoring support for Work and Income staff that work with disabled people and people with health conditions.

A number of people said that re-evaluating the capability of Work and Income staff working with disabled people or people with health conditions should be done on a regular basis (yearly and/or as part of everyday practice).

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

To increase the capability of staff, training should focus on:

* the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
* matching people with the right skills to the right job
* understanding the different communication needs of some disabled people and people with health conditions
* strategies to use when working with people who have different impairments
* how work environments impact on people with different impairments (mental health, sensory impairments)
* creating the right job within an existing role (job carving)
* motivational interviewing techniques
* the differences between the medical model and the social model
* strengths based approach
* disability awareness
* involving others when appropriate
* reasonable accommodations
* working with health professionals.

Other points follow:

* Make sure all new staff receive the same training previously provided to existing staff.
* Make sure people employed with lived experience of disability bring a broad focus on health and disability issues, rather than an individual focus.
* All people employed into Work and Income need to have fundamental attributes of integrity, respect and diligence.
* Disabled people need to be employed at all levels of the organisation.
* Make sure disabled people’s organizations and families are involved in any training.
* Contracted providers and other specialist providers have knowledge in this area, so working with them would be beneficial.
* Use Regional Health and Disability Teams for support with training.
* Disabled people’s organisations should monitor outcomes of training.
* Prior experience working in the area of health and disability should be key attributes to look for when recruiting new staff.
* Establish ‘Disability Consultant’ positions in MSD and recruit people with lived experience who can advise on policy, provide leadership and help with training.
* Make sure MSD provides a range of reasonable accommodations and other supports (ie flexible working hours) when employing disabled people and people with health conditions.

## Provide accessible information, tools and forms

364 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 83 people strongly agreed
* 202 people agreed
* 49 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 14 people disagreed
* 16 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 56 people strongly agreed
* 175 people agreed
* 67 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 40 people disagreed
* 21 people strongly disagreed.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

Multiple people said:

* it is important that Work and Income know the different types of formats people need so information is accessible for them, so bring forward the work to design and implement ways for people to specify how they want to receive information and correspondence
* knowing about the rights and responsibilities disabled people and people with health conditions have in the workplace is vital, so bring forward making this information available in accessible formats
* accessible employment contracts are essential to successful employment, so bring forward working with stakeholders, employers and Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment to implement them.

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

Work and Income need to:

* think about offering other ways to make the service more accessible, such as after hour appointments, private meeting spaces and home visits
* keep accessible formats up to date (new technologies and new forms, tools and information)
* make sure forms, tools and information submitted in alternate formats can be interpreted, processed by Work and Income
* provide pictorial cues and reader aides or advocates for people who can’t read.
* ensure the MSD’s and Work and Income’s website is fully accessible and complies with the New Zealand Government Web Standards.

## Work with employers to change attitudes, and increase the information and support available.

352 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 94 people strongly agreed
* 178 people agreed
* 50 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 15 people disagreed
* 15 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 70 people strongly agreed
* 176 people agreed
* 68 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 23 people disagreed
* 16 people strongly disagreed.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

There was varying support for a Disability Confidence conference. Those who supported it said it was a great way to show case success stories. Other ways to do this may include participating in an already established conference. Those that did not support the conference felt there were better ways to encourage a change in attitude of employers (such as meet and greet sessions with disabled people and employers).

A Sector Wide Consistent Workplace Education Pilot was suggested as an alternate to the confident workplaces trial and the Disability Confidence conference involving Work and Income, Business Leader and Employer Networks, the Disability Employment Forum (DEF), employment agencies and other stakeholder representatives.

Changing attitudes is much more than just disability confidence, which should include:

* promotion of the skills and attributes of disabled people
* prevention of injury or onset of common mental health conditions
* early intervention
* effective rehabilitation
* return to work strategies and support.

Work should initially be done with a few employers (including small employers) and then build on the experience and lessons with more employers.

Disabled people should lead this work.

This work should be ongoing into later years.

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

Work and Income need to:

* build on existing knowledge in this area. Contracted providers have been doing this for some time - Be Accessible (Be Employed) is also doing work in this area
* focus on connecting people to appropriate skills training to match employer needs and expectations.
* provide more funding to Supported Employment providers so they can place more disabled people and people with health conditions – this will provide a positive experience for employers and show success.
* Work and Income need to employ specialist staff that can develop long-term effective relationships with employers and promote the employment of disabled people and people with health conditions.
* Work and Income needs to liaise with disabled people and/or their representatives around employment of disabled people. Too much focus is put into liaising with disability employment service providers.
* Need to remember to include older people.
* One person commented that we can over estimate how much employers are really interested in this issue. What employers want is people who can do the job. Instead of doing this work, give more funding to contracted providers so they can support more disabled people into work. This will provide positive success stories which can be shared with employers.

### Suggested actions for government agencies

Employer confidence needs a whole of system approach. Interagency collaboration is required to do this effectively. Government needs to lead the way on the employment of disabled people and people with health conditions.

Expectations that disabled people can work needs to be developed in schools.

## Improve employment services and supports for people with a health condition or a disability

336 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 80 people strongly agreed
* 166 people agreed
* 60 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 16 people disagreed
* 14 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 61 people strongly agreed
* 153 people agreed
* 74 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 25 people disagreed
* 20 people strongly disagreed.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

Multiple people supported the design and trial of a new transport scheme to support disabled people who can’t use public transport or a private vehicle to attend work or training and suggested this work is moved to become one of the top-priorities for the long term plan.

A number of people considered interagency work is needed to successfully support people to work and suggested bringing forward the reviews of:

* specialist supports and services provided by Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment to assist disabled people and people with health conditions find and stay in work, and implement recommended changes
* transition services between the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education, and support greater collaboration between young disabled people, their families/whanau, schools, government agencies and providers.

A number of people said that self-employment was a good employment option for some disabled people. They suggested bringing forward work to provide support and services to assist disabled people to become successfully self-employed (where appropriate). One person suggested including the terms micro business and social enterprise in this section.

A number of people suggested including the review of Minimum Wage Exemption Permits in partnership with the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment in section G (remove financial disincentives to working). Most people agreed this work was a priority and regardless of which section it sat in it needs to be considered a priority piece of work for the long term plan.

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

A number of people suggested that Work and Income need to provide new services and/or funding to support people to find and stay in work. These included:

* advocacy services to support people to work with employers
* home visits by Work and Income case managers
* funding to support people to get their driver’s licence
* support finding suitable accommodation
* additional support for transport of people living in rural areas
* ongoing and long term support for people in work to coach employee and employer and who can go into the work place and sort out any problems early
* work ready programmes to make sure people have the right skills to get employment
* additional support for employers that employ people with intellectual disability
* access to work experience
* a service where employers can liaise with or go visit other employers that successfully employ disabled people to share success stories
* more support to people who work part time
* funding to give disabled people additional sick leave
* a service that assesses the accessibility (physical and attitudinal) of workplaces as part of matching disabled people to jobs
* support to develop interview techniques
* support for people to align their job expectations with the realities of the current labour market.

Other suggestions included the following:

* Make sure work seminars are accessible and are provided in venues that are close to public transport.
* Provide support to all levels in a workplace (managers, line managers and colleagues).
* Focus on improving existing employment services before establishing new ones.
* Focus on younger people before working with older people.
* Provide fair funding to contracted employment services. Fund expertise and services provided, not just outcomes.
* Outsource job seminars.
* Make sure Work and Income staff are properly trained before providing specialist work seminars for disabled people and people with health conditions.
* Quality measures around the services provided by employment support organisations need to be determined, collected and publically reported.
* Incorporate learnings from existing programmes, such as Enabling Good Lives, into the review of transitions services.

### Suggested actions for government agencies

* Better collaboration is needed between contracted providers and government to improve services both ways.
* Include people who do not meet the Ministry of Education’s ORS criteria in transition services
* Better education and more training is required to support people to develop the right skills needed to work.
* Work with NZTA and the Ministry of Transport when developing transport scheme.
* Work with the Ministry of Health to align its disability support services and other health services to ensure a joined up approach to employment outcomes.

## Change the way we work with health professionals.

319 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 73 people strongly agreed
* 156 people agreed
* 57 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 19 people disagreed
* 14 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 58 people strongly agreed
* 159 people agreed
* 67 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 20 people disagreed
* 15 people strongly disagreed.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

A number of people considered that reviewing the medical information Work and Income needs about a person’s health condition or disability was a priority and needs to be brought forward.

There was varying support for the trial of application for benefit without requiring medical certificates in a Work and Income site. Some thought this would be a backward step and strongly supported that doctors maintained a role in identifying fitness to work. Others said disabled people were the experts on their ability to work and the medical profession should not be involved in this type of assessment. A number of submitters felt this work needs to be brought forward earlier in the long term plan.

There was varying support for the review of the types of health and disability professionals who can provide Work and Income with information about the impact of the person’s condition or disability on their ability to work. A number of people said this should only be the person’s doctor. Others supported that range of health professionals should be able to provide this type of information to Work and Income.

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

Work and Income must assure health practitioners that their advice is being taken into account and not over ridden by third parties.

A number of people commented that it was unreasonable to have to produce medical certificates and receipts to prove a medical condition or disability. Clarification is required about the reasons people are required to produce medical certificates is to establish ability to work or to prove costs of disability.

Comments also included the following:

* Replace current medical certificates with forms that objectively and accurately assess ability to work and difficulties to work.
* Privacy must remain a high priority when sharing information (e-lodgment).
* Make sure that information from medical certificates that are electronically submitted in centrally processed. Otherwise information can still get lost or not used.
* Involve disabled people in designing processes and making changes.
* Increase communications and awareness-raising with health professionals so they know what is going on in Work and Income.
* Provide support to health practitioners so they consistently provide honest accounts of people’s ability to work. Some people raised concerns that ability to work is not being properly assessed by doctors. Instead medical certificates are being completed on self-reports from the client.

### Suggested actions for government agencies

The Ministry of Health needs to continue to reinforce that employment is a positive health intervention and outcome.

## Reduce financial disincentives to working.

316 people provided feedback on this proposal.

### Level of support for proposal

What we plan to do in 2014/15 and later years:

* 116 people strongly agreed
* 123 people agreed
* 45 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 19 people disagreed
* 13 people strongly disagreed.

The order we are planning to do them:

* 61 people strongly agreed
* 153 people agreed
* 74 people neither agreed nor disagreed
* 25 people disagreed
* 20 people strongly disagreed.

### Comments

This section was overwhelmingly the most supported section of the long term plan.

### Suggested changes to the long term plan

Include cost of disability in this work.

Include the issue of support not being available to people who are engaged in part time work (less than 15 hours).

### Suggested actions for Work and Income

Make the system easy to understand.

Suggested actions for government agencies

Work with other government departments when completing this work.