



New Zealand Disability Support Network

Statement of Strategic Intent 2019 - 2021

Leading and Influencing Change that Supports Inclusive Lives

NZDSN is a membership network of organisations that provide support services to disabled people and families, mainly through contracts with Government. Associate membership also includes related organisations, individual disabled people and family members with an interest in being part of the network. NZDSN is governed by a Board elected from the wider membership and employs a full time Chief Executive with a small support team based mainly in Wellington.

Vision

An inclusive New Zealand where all disabled people are valued, their human rights are promoted and protected, and they are enabled to maximise their potential as citizens.

Purpose

To lead and influence change that supports inclusive lives:

Objectives

- To provide a strong and valued voice to government on matters of common interest.
- To support strong networks within and across the provider sector and ensure effective communication with all members.
- To keep abreast of and communicate to members and government, emerging trends and issues.
- To promote and support the continuous improvement and innovation of disability supports and services.
- To work collaboratively with disabled people, their families and allied agencies to foster an inclusive society.

Our Values

- The human rights of disabled people must be promoted and protected and that when injustices occur that we have an absolute responsibility as individuals and as disability service providers to intervene and ensure people are safe.
- All people should have the ability to realise their potential in the communities where they live and have equal chances for success in life.
- Diversity must be respected and actively nurtured in disability services.

- While NZDSN is essentially a network of service organisations it must not stand in the way of the aspirations of disabled people and their families.
- NZDSN has a dual role of challenging established consensus where it poses a barrier to the aspirations of disabled people and building a new consensus around policies and practices that move us closer to an inclusive society.
- Strong constructive relationships are the foundation of our work. We are committed to the development and maintenance of collaborative solution-focused relationships with our members, government, and the other community agencies.
- In all our dealings with others we will be transparent, accountable and conduct ourselves with integrity.

The work of NZDSN is informed by 5 core documents:

- The Treaty of Waitangi
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- The Enabling Good Lives Principles
- The Disability Action Plan
- New Zealand Disability Strategy

The Strategic Environment 2020/21

The strategic landscape in front of us is delicately poised as the disability sector grapples with a series of intersecting priorities which have significant interdependencies and challenges, not the least of which is how we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis.

- The system transformation work programme is beginning to unfold, but with an uncertain timetable and growing hesitation from Government around transformative change. A lack of momentum around implementation is a risk
- The impact of the pay equity legislation, while moving us away from a minimum wage labour market, is also exacerbating long standing funding and workforce issues
- Funding concerns centre around the fact that providers have to manage in a contracting environment that is only partially funded and where organisations, not government, bear the majority of risk.
- In the emerging world of personal budgets there are concerns that these risks, while remaining for providers, will also be transferred directly to disabled people and families as they find themselves negotiating an emerging market place without real purchasing power.
- There is renewed focus on workforce development now that qualifications are linked to remuneration – and an urgent need to review the relevance and fit for purpose of the qualifications themselves. The absence of a coherent workforce development strategy is a barrier.
- There is not yet a clear picture of how all stakeholders in a transformed system will be supported to participate with confidence, or of how transformative the changes will actually be.
- There is a level of political uncertainty, not only because of the upcoming general election, but because of the risk that delivery on longstanding disability sector specific

issues will be lost in a suite of broader social policy and economic reform programmes – which of course have the added layer of also responding to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic** has and will continue to be far reaching. However, it is important for NZDSN to re-engage with ongoing government programmes, particularly the work on the RPM and the expansion of FDS contracts along with the broader system transformation work programme. Both the MOH and MSD response to COVID-19 has involved increasing the flexibility of service specifications – something we do not wish to lose in a return to business as usual. The labour market for support workers is rapidly changing as many displaced workers seek alternative employment – this is an opportunity to recruit and then hold on to a younger and more diverse workforce. And finally, the prospect of contract price uplifts in a very different economic and political environment will need some careful thought.

INVESTING FOR INNOVATION AND BETTER LIVES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

A funding regime that offers certainty and sustainability for providers is essential to firstly maintain acceptable levels of quality and safety in current services and secondly to spur investment in the changes and innovations that are required to embed EGL practices - and that are increasingly demanded by a younger generation of individuals and families.

We also need to acknowledge that there is a cohort of mostly aging families who are unlikely to be convinced of the need for any changes to the current models of residential care. Providers are therefore faced with the dual demands of maintaining high quality current service options for some time into the future while at the same time moving towards supporting more personalised approaches to housing, living arrangements and wider community participation, including inclusive employment options.

In order to embark on a programme of change and innovation providers need to do so on the basis of a financial position that enables investment in the change process, its workforce and the innovation itself. The latest iteration of the RPM for example will, in most cases, provide that financial base and the confidence to move in new directions that are consistent with the Enabling Good Lives principles. More broadly, regular contract price uplifts that match cost of living increases will contribute to the ongoing financial sustainability that is a prerequisite to achieving the changes we all want to see.

This change will involve things like:

- Engaging with FDS contracts and the range of opportunities this opens up – both for some people already in residential services and for new referrals
- Engaging with initiatives such as IChoose and FFC
- Investing in a range of new technologies that complement staff support activity and safeguarding
- Investing in workforce development that embeds EGL practice frameworks (as part of a matching workforce development strategy)

- Developing staffing models that shift greater authority and decision making to the front line of organisations – creating a greater range and diversity of support roles – and driving the recruitment of a younger and more diverse workforce.
- Establishing living and community participation options that are more individualised, and enable real choice for people over with whom, how and where they live (rather than the current tendency for cluster housing, larger group homes and facility based day programmes that is driven purely by cost issues)

It has not been lost on any of us that the COVID-19 crisis has propelled funders and providers to explore greater flexibility and approaches that better reflect EGL principles. There is strong momentum to continue in this way and not to return entirely to the way things were before the crisis. Maintaining this momentum will need to be supported by continued flexibility around contracting and sustainable funding to embed new innovations as everyday practice.

A sustainable funding regime enables both providers and the Ministry to realise jointly held goals for disability support services that implement the Enabling Good Lives principles in practice (a key plank of the DDS draft Disability Directorate Strategy 2020). NZDSN understands that implementing the latest iteration of the RPM along with broader contract price uplifts that match cost of living increases in one budget cycle is not possible, but what we do want is a commitment to make a start to close what is now an agreed and very transparent funding gap over time.

In the absence of this we will all get frustrated by a lack of tangible change – providers will be constrained by inflexible contracts and funding shortfalls and the Ministry will not see the outcomes it is seeking for the lives of disabled people and their families. **We must use the COVID-19 crisis as a springboard for the change we want to see, not an excuse to stand still and lose the momentum that has begun.**

There are also a couple of other challenges we need to work on together that rely on the participation of other parts of government:

- **A national affordable and accessible housing strategy** - including a scheme that enables disabled people to acquire equity to invest in housing (Canada has a scheme that is well worth a look).
- **A coherent workforce strategy** that provides consistent qualification pathways that match the future we are all seeking

NZDSN has multiple roles and opportunities to add value in this landscape:

- To keep its membership and the wider sector abreast of developments through coherent analysis, asking searching questions, pointing out unintended consequences and offering evidence based solutions
- To ensure active involvement and contribution by:
 - Participating in relevant working groups and forums
 - Advocating for sustainable funding and researching options
 - Advancing the review and development of relevant qualifications
 - Engaging the labour market to secure the workforce that is needed
 - Supporting innovation and quality among providers and that prepares organisations for system transformation

- Facilitating understanding of system changes with providers, disabled people and families

With increasing demand for NZDSN to expand the range of services it provides the organisation will need to pay careful attention to its own sustainability and balance any growth with new revenue streams that can support any additional activity. An emphasis on a collaborative approach to project work is increasing our direct engagement with disabled people and families. More tailored communications, particularly social media and digital formats are needed to reach out to a network that is increasingly diverse and on line. Our obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi are a work in progress and there is now leadership through a Cultural Advisory Committee of the Board and Kaumatua.

In conclusion, these are the critical factors at work in the strategic environment in front of NZDSN. It is these factors that have informed our strategic goals and our business objectives for the 2020/21 financial year.

Because of the timing of our strategic leadership forum in September 2019 and the onset of the COVID-19 crisis in February 2020 the strategic goals and business objectives outlined in this document are designed to cover the period January 2020 through to June 30 2021.

NZDSN Strategic Goals for 2020/21 are:

- 1. Long term sustainable funding that's enables investment in innovation and better lives for disabled people.**
- 2. Facilitate provider and workforce development with a focus on quality, innovation and networking.**
- 3. Effective and collaborative relationships with key partners and stakeholders.**
- 4. Securing the sustainability of NZDSN as the peak body for disability providers.**