

2025



# Employment Support Practice Guidelines (Revised in 2023-24)

A Self-Review Tool to Assist  
Employment Support Providers  
and Practitioners to Get More  
Jobs for Disabled Jobseekers

# Foreword

## A Word from the Ministry of Social Development

*MSD is pleased to have supported the revision of these Guidelines through the recent sector led review. It was great to see such strong sector engagement and we believe they will contribute to continued strengthening of services for disabled people.*

## A Word from the NZDSN Chair

Employment Support is at the heart of NZDSN's history and continues to play an important part in the range of support services available to disabled people. Gaining paid employment, to the extent one's disability allows, is an aspiration we all have an obligation to support.

Since the 1980s and more recently in 2018, these Employment Support Practice Guidelines have outlined a structure of what good looks like. They have provided a basis for excellent practice by Employment Support co-ordinators and services. Like all good things, it is critical that, from time-to-time, these guidelines are reviewed and improved. This is what led to this latest review in 2023.

This edition is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the Guidelines build on the past achievements of previous editions and the learnings from the sector. Secondly, the Guidelines support the efforts of Employment Support practitioners to secure meaningful vocations and careers at whatever level suits the individual. Thirdly, the Guidelines make a key contribution toward the financial independence of disabled people through the provision of high-quality Employment Support. Fourthly, a framework is provided that is predicated on systematically taking action through the use of a self-review tool.

At a time of rapid change across the disability community, the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Enabling Good Lives Principles, and the UN Convention are all highlighted as the foundations of a rights-based approach to an accessible and sustainable working life for disabled people, along with equitable access to quality employment support services where and when needed. There is a specific guideline that emphasises this.

These guidelines are strengthened by having a specific focus on four areas that have been identified as critical aspects that need more attention: **Transition from school** – an area characterised by patchy coverage, muddled government policy, and a lack of consensus; **Self-employment** – an overlooked response to achieving employment outcomes, particularly in light of changing labour markets; **The needs of employers** – a step change in how practitioners engage with and maintain effective relationships with employers; **Participation in systemic change** – within and across organisations, communities, and with government.

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I want to thank the project team, in particular Grant Cleland and Tony McLean for their efforts in bringing this latest edition to the sector. I recognise that a great many people have given of their time and expertise to bring this edition of the Guidelines to fruition, and express, on behalf of the NZDSN Board, our deep gratitude for this contribution.

**Samantha Lee**  
**NZDSN Chairperson**  
**2025**

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# Introduction

The New Zealand Disability Support Network (NZDSN) published the Employment Support Practice Guidelines (ESPG): How to support disabled people to get the job they want, in March 2018. Two additional documents were also released, (1) The Companion Document – Evidence and Resources and (2) The Self-Review Framework Templates.

The guidelines have been integrated by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) into contracting requirements for Employment Support Providers.

Some Employment Support Providers have voluntarily taken the spirit and intent of the ESPG internally and used the templates and processes as a self-reflective tool. In addition, the ESPG have been used as a training resource by various entities; most notably, they have been incorporated into the Level 5 NZ Diploma in Health and Wellbeing (Applied Practice – Employment Support).

Seven years have passed since the guidelines were first launched. NZDSN, in consultation with other stakeholders, have decided to ‘review and refresh’ these guidelines.

The guidelines have been updated and refreshed, taking into consideration the rich and informative feedback received from various disabled people, their family members and whānau, staff of employment support providers, policy makers, funders, etc. about the current guidelines.

Essentially, these revised Employment Support Practice Guidelines are a self-reflection tool for employment support providers and practitioners, whether MSD funded or not, to review their practice with assisting disabled jobseekers to obtain sustainable employment.

The fundamental aims of the guidelines are for disabled jobseekers to get more sustainable jobs and to receive the right support to do this. The feedback received from disabled people and their family/whānau during the update indicates that we still have a long way to go to achieve these aims. Particularly for those disabled people with complex workplace support needs.

Employment trends over many years have shown:<sup>1</sup>

- Disabled people are more likely than non-disabled people to be unemployed.
- Disabled people are more likely to work part-time.
- Disabled workers tend to have lower incomes than non-disabled workers.
- Many young disabled people are not in employment, education, or training.
- Disabled people are twice as likely to have no formal qualifications.

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<sup>1</sup> 2013/2018 New Zealand Disability Surveys, 2017 Household Labour Force Survey, Ministry of Social Development, 2020.

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- Disabled people have lower levels of labour force participation than non-disabled people, regardless of their level of qualification.
  - People with learning (intellectual) disability often have the highest rate of unemployment.
  - Almost three-quarters of disabled people not in paid work would like to work if a job were available.

If we are to turn these sobering trends around, providers and practitioners, policy makers and funders all need to be prepared to review their practice and take an honest look at what is working and what they need to do differently.

These revised NZDSN Employment Support Practice Guidelines provide a framework to consider how to do this.

For these guidelines, we use this definition of employment: *Work in the open labour market in a job not reserved for a disabled person and paid at or above the minimum wage or being self-employed or creating a small (micro) enterprise/business.*

**Grant Cleland**  
**Creative Solutions**

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# Contributors to the Revised Practice Guidelines

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the updating of these Employment Support Practice Guidelines. In 2023 participants contributed through an online survey, focus groups, korero, in-depth personal interviews, and others who heard about the process as it was unfolding – via unsolicited email and phone calls.

Input was received from disabled people, their family members and whānau, People First members, staff of employment support providers, those with employer experience, policy makers, funders, and other allies.

Your generosity and commitment to the project aim, that more disabled people gain and maintain meaningful work roles and careers, is inspiring and appreciated.

We would also like to recognise the wonderful contribution, expertise, advice, and support of our Project Advisory Group during 2023-24, who at the time represented:

## **Advisory Group:**

- Angela Desmarais – Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA)
- Vaughan Dodd – Whaikaha
- Ann Matthews – Whānau Representative
- Sheila Tippet – Whānau Representative
- Taki Peeke – Tui Tuia (The Māori Advisory Sub-Committee who provide advice to the NZDSN Board) and Idea Services Representative.
- Karen Scott – NZDSN Employment Support Provider Representative
- France Aziz – NZDSN Employment Support Provider Representative
- Selwyn Cook – Employer Advisor
- Keay Bishop – CCS Disability Action
- Lauren Innes-Hill – Ministry of Social Development Policy.

## **Project Co-Leads:**

- Grant Cleland – Creative Solutions
- Tony McLean – Allies Aotearoa

We would also like to acknowledge the significant contribution of Gordon Boxall and the team who wrote the original Employment Practice Guidelines in 2018.



# Acknowledging Te Tiriti O Waitangi

## ‘He ringaraupā, he waituakiri herenga-tāngata whaikaha’

Interpretation: This identifies the use of the word ringaraupā as a sign of a hard worker, but trials and tribulations disabled people and their families face every day are the calluses of life experience on their souls.

<u>Māori</u>	<u>English</u>
He	quantities, a or some
ringaraupā	calluses on hands
waituakiri	spiritual Identity or personality
herenga-tāngata	to be connected
whaikaha	disabled people

In 2023 the Office for Disability Issues reported that at least 32% of Māori have an impairment, the highest incidence of disability across all cultural groups in Aotearoa. This trend has continued with the 2023 Census data. <sup>2</sup> It is therefore essential that we acknowledge the special relationship between Māori and the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi and how this will impact on the implementation of these Employment Support Practice Guidelines.

NZ Disability Strategy (2001) states:

*‘This is NZ’s founding document, and the Government is committed to fulfilling its obligations as a Treaty partner. This special relationship is ongoing and is based on the underlying premise that Māori should continue to live in Aotearoa as Māori. Central to the Treaty relationship and implementation of Treaty principles is a common understanding that Māori will have an important role in developing and*

<sup>2</sup> Office for Disability Issues website, March 2020 and 2023 Stats NZ Census data [www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/disability-statistics-2023](https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/disability-statistics-2023)

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*implementing disability strategies for Māori and that the Crown and Māori will relate to each other in good faith with mutual respect, co-operation and trust.*

*Māori should be able to define and provide for their own priorities for participation and be encouraged to develop the capacity for delivery of services to their communities. This needs to be balanced by the Crown's duty to govern on behalf of the total population. To date, the relationship between Māori and the Crown in the disability sector has been based on three key principles: participation at all levels, partnership in service delivery, protection and improvement of Māori wellbeing.' (pg. v-vi)*

Providers and practitioners of employment support are therefore required to honour their obligations as a partner to the Treaty and this should be evidenced through their practice. This set of resources is offered fundamentally as a self-reflective tool to review their practice as they assist disabled jobseekers (in partnership with families and whānau) to obtain and sustain jobs.

When we talk about disabled people and their families/whānau, we include disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, families, and aiga. It is important that employment support providers and practitioners consider the cultural needs of Māori jobseekers and their whānau. It will also be critical for all practitioners to understand and be informed by Te Ao Māori frameworks and perspective.

## Methodology

In April 2023 we sent out information to the disability community about this project with a google doc link to get involved with the project. We told people we were keen to get their feedback and ideas about the refreshed NZDSN Employment Support Practice Guidelines.

As a result, we hosted during April and May 2023 various special interest groups and individual interviews over zoom specially for example:

- Disabled people
- Whānau of disabled people
- Employment Support Agency Managers
- Employment Support Agency Practitioners
- Other people with expertise in the employment support of disabled people.

Over 50 people were part of these groups and interviews, and some also provided written feedback.

We asked a set of consistent questions to gain their insights and ideas about the refreshed Practice Guidelines. Some of these groups also included Māori and Pasifika, etc.

At the same time, we also established a project advisory group to assist us to review this feedback and key themes from our special interest groups and written feedback.

We also got their feedback about the existing practice guidelines, and they also provided us with advice, support, and guidance about refreshed guidelines and implementation. This Project Advisory Group consisted of stakeholders involved with different parts of employment for the disability community (See page 8).

## Other Policy and Legislation to Consider

It is also important that these guidelines and the implementation of these by providers and practitioners, considers the following frameworks:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- New Zealand Disability Strategy, 2016 to 2026
- Working Matters: The Governments Action Plan to ensure disabled people and people with health conditions have equal opportunity to access employment
- The Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Principles and Approach
- Other legal obligations under the Human Rights, Privacy Act, and Health & Disability Commission Code of Rights, etc.
- Employment Support Research and Best Practice.

The revised Companion Document includes background information on each of these areas. You should review this information in conjunction with the Practice Guidelines.

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# Employment Support

## Research and Best Practice

These Employment Support Practice Guidelines are aspirational, and it is recognised that all agencies using these will be at different stages of the journey towards their implementation.

The development of the 2018 Practice Guidelines acknowledged the role of the former Association of Supported Employment NZ (now part of NZDSN) in identifying and promoting quality supported employment practice. These guidelines were based on local and international evidence of which approaches have proven successful in supporting disabled jobseekers into jobs and careers of their choice. This remains relevant today.

Feedback received from our consultation for this update has suggested that the 2018 Companion Document be updated with a set of electronic resources that are developed, maintained, and updated on an ongoing basis. This would be a great way for providers and practitioners to share resources and examples of best practice, and to support one another.

This could include examples of best practice in relation to each area of the Practice Guidelines to set some boundaries for each of these. It could also include examples of successful or proven processes and practices, stories, videos, etc.

We have recommended that this be part of the next phase of the project, including how this would be funded, who would be responsible for establishing and updating, and where should they be hosted.

It is important that the project advisory group and/or the NZDSN Employment Support Providers Group be engaged to oversee the next phase of the project. These guidelines need to be regularly reviewed and updated.

We also received other feedback about some issues impacting on the employment opportunities for disabled jobseekers particularly with high support needs.

Some disabled people and their whānau described the *'trauma from the employment support system and how this is broken for them'*. Providers raised concerns about how the MSD employment support contracts impact on this.

While these Practice Guidelines don't address these issues, we have summarised the key ones in Appendix 2. These relate to employment support policy, service evaluations, funding, contracting, reporting, workforce development and qualifications.

Most providers felt these issues negatively impact on their ability to work to the spirit and intent of the guidelines, and this needs to be addressed with this update.

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# Review of the 2018 Practice Guidelines and Future Ideas

This update entailed reviewing the 2018 documents and engaging with various stakeholders to establish what aided or detracted from their implementation and determining how the original framework could be strengthened.

Through special interest groups, interviews, and written feedback, we obtained feedback from a wide range of people. This input was received from disabled people, family/whānau, People First, employment support providers and staff, those with employer experience, policy makers, funders, and other allies.

## What Did We Learn?

The original Employment Support Practice Guidelines have been implemented in various ways, including:

- Providing the sector with an agreed and shared framework for looking at some of the core elements of what constitutes good employment support.
- The Ministry of Social Development requiring employment support providers with these contracts to undertake an annual self-review and report on this.
- Being one of the major framework documents used in the NZ Diploma in Health and Wellbeing (Level 5): Applied Practice in Employment Support.
- Some managers and their staff used the guidelines to review their services and practice on a semi-regular basis. Others completed an initial review but have not measured progress across time.
- As a training resource for newly recruited employment consultants during orientation, induction, and early on the job development.
- Some providers actively adopted the guidelines into their policy and practice documents, position descriptions, supervision frameworks, and 'client satisfaction survey' processes.

While acknowledging the advancements brought through the guidelines to date, many providers and practitioners who contributed to the review process were open and honest in their feedback about *not* getting direct input from disabled jobseekers, their family/whānau, or employers with their self-review processes.

This is a key finding of this project.

The self-review processes undertaken by many providers could be characterised, in almost every situation, as being purely a one-sided review. We are not suggesting that an introspective appraisal does not have merit, but we (and many who provided feedback) recognise this as having significant shortcomings.

Overall, we heard that the 2018 Guidelines were a good start at an operational level, but there was a strong sense that the scope of the original guidelines was too wide and the revised practice guidelines needed to have a clearer focus on employer support providers and practitioners.

It was also suggested that:

- There should be a stronger alignment between the Treaty of Waitangi, the Enabling Good Lives Principles and Approach, and a clear set of principles and values that underpin the revised guidelines.
- Having the guidelines built into the MSD contracting process and part of the annual reporting was seen as a strength by many. However, many suggested that there needs to be more follow up by MSD staff, employment agencies; and input from disabled people, their family/whānau, and employers.
- Most disabled people and family/whānau members had not heard of the guidelines until information was sent to them for this update.
- There is a disconnect between the MSD Policy, the contract environment, and the spirit and intent of guidelines. This link needs to be strengthened.
- The practice guidelines should be used for staff training and supported by workshops and resources with examples of how to implement different parts of the revised practice guidelines.
- Disabled people and employment agencies suggested that there needs to be more accountability for the use of these practice guidelines – through contracting, an accreditation process for organisations and/or practitioners, and a moderation process when an organisation uses them for self-reflection.
- There needs to be an easy read practice guidelines that is simpler and not as big as the 2018 version, and a simple video version. This was suggested by People First members.
- The companion document should include a set of examples of good practice that allow providers and practitioners to assess where they are at with each guideline, and to set consistent boundaries for the guidelines. Resources should include examples of good practice and processes, stories, videos, performance measures, etc.

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# Who the Revised Practice Guidelines are for?

The 2018 Employment Support Practice Guidelines were written for a wide audience. The intent was to reach all stakeholders involved in employment support process, including:

- Disabled jobseekers, their family/whānau, and allies.
- Providers and practitioners of employment support services.
- Employers of disabled jobseekers.
- Funders, policymakers, and evaluators of employment support services.
- Trainers and educators working in the field of employment support.

The consultation for this project has suggested that the revised Practice Guidelines need to be refocused.

Many recommended they need to primarily be a self-reflective tool for employment support providers and practitioners.

They should enable employment support providers and practitioners to review their practice, whether the provider operates under contract to MSD, ACC or they are self-supporting.

Many also suggested that the self-reflective process include a more robust process to obtain feedback about services from disabled jobseekers, family/whānau, employers, Māori, etc.

As such, these revised Practice Guidelines (2025) are a self-reflection tool for two main groups:

1. Employment Consultants: the frontline practitioners directly assisting disabled jobseekers to look for, secure, and maintain work.
2. Providers of Employment Support Services: recruiting, training, and deploying the employment consultants.

We have therefore divided each of the eight guidelines into two parts: quality indicators for practitioners and those for providers.

# **Outcomes to be Achieved by the Employment Support Practice Guidelines:**

## **There are Eight Practice Guidelines Outcomes:**

1. Any disabled jobseeker who wants to work receives skilled and competent support to get work.
2. The aspirations of the disabled jobseeker drive the employment support that is provided.
3. Employment practitioners and providers of employment support believe that real work is a basic human right for all citizens, including disabled jobseekers.
4. Employment outcomes are individually tailored to each disabled jobseeker.
5. Employment support practice and outcomes meet the needs of employers.
6. Employment support providers support successful transitions from school to work.
7. Self-employment is recognised as a legitimate form of employment for disabled jobseekers.
8. Employment support practitioners and providers actively strive to continually improve their services and measure their success.



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# Practice Guideline 1

Any Disabled Jobseeker Who Wants to Work Receives Skilled and Competent Support to get Work.

## **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 1.1 I can demonstrate that I believe that every person, regardless of disability and employment barriers, has the right to work in Aotearoa NZ.
- 1.2 I can demonstrate that I accept any disabled jobseeker who wants to work.
- 1.3 My attitude and actions show that a disabled person's willingness and desire to work are the only requirements to access employment services.
- 1.4 I can provide evidence that I understand the areas of my role that I am strong in, the areas where I need to develop, and what steps I am taking to improve my practice.
- 1.5 I successfully assist disabled jobseekers into quality sustainable paid roles.
- 1.6 I can show that I understand the labour market and am well connected to employer and business groups.
- 1.7 I provide information in accessible formats, and the way I interact with disabled jobseekers demonstrates an understanding of the different workplace support needs of people with different impairments.

## **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 1.8 We work with whānau, Hapū, and Iwi to ensure disabled jobseekers who identify as Māori are engaged in a culturally appropriate way.
- 1.9 Our policies and practices provide evidence that we do not screen out jobseekers who have greater barriers to employment.
- 1.10 We can show how we actively work with disabled jobseekers with the highest labour market barriers to gain employment.
- 1.11 We have robust processes that enable us to receive anonymous and other feedback from jobseekers, their allies, and employers, which assists us to reflect on our current processes and practices.
- 1.12 We actively track and analyse our employment successes and failures to enable us to build an accurate profile of how we can improve our service.
- 1.13 We know about changes in the disability and employment sectors & how these impact on employment for disabled jobseekers.
- 1.14 We can give evidence that we are open to new ways of working and incorporating changes in policy and legislation.

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## Practice Guideline 2

The Aspirations of the Disabled Jobseeker Drive the Employment Support that is Provided.

### **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 2.1 I can demonstrate the ways I have listened to the jobseeker and include their hopes and aspirations into the employment processes.
- 2.2 I can demonstrate how I have engaged with the jobseekers, whānau, and allies, such as DPOs like DPA, People First, or Iwi (if the jobseeker wants this), to aid my understanding of the jobseekers' skills, gifts, interests, and strengths.
- 2.3 I understand what an active Discovery Process entails and can demonstrate how I have used this with jobseekers.
- 2.4 I can demonstrate how I have worked with each jobseeker's employment aspirations and customised roles to fit their requirements.

### **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 2.5 We have comprehensive recruitment, induction, orientation, initial, and ongoing training in place for all employment consultant roles. We are committed to building and developing our employment consultants.
- 2.6 Our internal reviews can show a clear link between a jobseeker's 'employment plan,' their desires, employment aspirations, and the role they are supported to secure.
- 2.7 We recognise that the degree of support a disabled jobseeker requires for daily living does not prevent them from seeking work. Indeed, such support should enhance, rather than reduce, their opportunities to get a job, including self-employment.
- 2.8 We can share success stories where we have worked in partnership with a disabled jobseeker to successfully overcome barriers to work.

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## Practice Guideline 3

Employment Practitioners and Providers of Employment Support Believe that Real Work is a Basic Human Right for all Citizens, Including Disabled Jobseekers.

### **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 3.1 I believe (and can evidence) in the right of all people, despite their level of disability, to have meaningful and secure employment.
- 3.2 I can clearly articulate the rights and responsibilities of successful employment to jobseekers, family/whānau, allies, and employers.
- 3.3 My practice and employment outcomes provide evidence that I do not discriminate jobseekers based on the level of their disability.
- 3.4 I acknowledge and take responsibility when my actions fall short.

### **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 3.5 Our policies and procedures show clear recognition of employment as a fundamental human right, and we can evidence our practice alignment.
- 3.6 Our organisation has recognised processes for training employment practitioners around rights and strength-based frameworks; their legal obligations align to employment legislation, including health and safety, privacy, UNCRPD, NZ Human Rights Act, Health & Disability Commission Code of Rights, and other wider employment policy and legislation.
- 3.7 We are aware of and can articulate our responsibilities as an organisation to disabled jobseekers we serve. We actively seek to understand the importance of a person's background and culture.
- 3.8 We are aware of and can articulate our responsibilities as an organisation to the disabled jobseekers, their family/whānau, and employers with relation to their cultural identities.
- 3.9 We are committed to real employment outcomes where disabled employees receive the same wages and conditions as their non-disabled colleagues.
- 3.10 We have a thoughtful and strategic approach to working with employers that ensures the rights of disabled jobseekers are acknowledged and upheld.

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# Practice Guideline 4

## Employment Outcomes are Individually Tailored to Each Disabled Jobseeker.

### **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 4.1 I understand and can articulate what an individualised (person centred) approach to employment is and how my practice aligns.
- 4.2 I have a range of tools that enable the discovery process with each jobseeker to be tailored to their specific needs.
- 4.3 When I am unsure of how to best support a specific individual, I am willing to seek assistance and can show how/when I have done this.
- 4.4 My job search efforts align to the individual preferences of each jobseeker. Evidence of this person/job search match is clear in my records.
- 4.5 I do not disregard the knowledge and input of a person's whānau/allies (if the person wants their input) based on ideology or my personal beliefs.
- 4.6 I know what a reasonable accommodation is and can articulate this clearly.

### **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 4.7 We have auditable internal processes that track how we are providing a person centred/individualised service to each jobseeker regardless of employment barriers.
- 4.8 We have a team that reflects the cultural diversity of our community.
- 4.9 We understand the critical role a thorough discovery process provides in laying the foundation for individualised employment outcomes, and we can show how we support our team to develop these skills and practice.
- 4.10 Our outcomes/service statistics clearly show how we have worked with jobseekers who have multiple and complex barriers to achieving employment outcomes.
- 4.11 Our post-placement support is tailored to the individual needs of each jobseeker, & our records show how we have tailored this to each jobseeker.
- 4.12 We have evidence of individuals advancing in their workplaces & careers.

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# Practice Guideline 5

## Employment Support Practice and Outcomes Meet the Needs of Employers.

### **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 5.1 I can articulate and evidence an understanding of the business needs of employers, including but not limited to their need for new 'talent'.
- 5.2 I can articulate and evidence an understanding of common employer reasons for not considering disabled jobseekers, and I have a robust set of rational and logical responses to offer employers.
- 5.3 I can provide specific evidence of spending time researching and getting to understand the specific needs of different employers in my community.
- 5.4 I can evidence how I am able to customise work opportunities that meet the needs of employers (and meet the employment needs of jobseekers).
- 5.5 I can evidence my understanding of the local labour market and show how this knowledge has been incorporated into my practice.
- 5.6 I have built relationships with local employers and employer networks including Māori, Pacific, and other business networks.
- 5.7 I have performance targets to measure my success with employers.

### **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 5.8 We are able to show how we are strategically building trusting and functional working relationships with local employers and employer networks, including Māori, Pacific, and other business networks.
- 5.9 We have cultivated relationships with at least a small group of employers who are willing to speak to other employers about the successes they have had with our service.
- 5.10 We have active strategies of working with (as opposed to against) other local employment support service providers so that local employers have their needs met and are not 'worn out' by competing agencies.
- 5.11 We can clearly show how our service continues to provide support for as long as is needed to meet the needs of the employer after placement.
- 5.12 We have examples of repeat business with local employers that show a trend of increasing confidence in the service we are providing employers.
- 5.13 We have an active employer strategy for providing ongoing education to employer networks about the benefits of hiring disabled jobseekers and to measure our success with employers.

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# Practice Guideline 6

## Employment Support Providers Support Successful Transitions from School to Work.

### **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 6.1 Whether our organisation has a specific Transition Contract or not, I can articulate and describe what is needed for disabled students to be in a strong position to achieve their work aspirations when they leave school.
- 6.2 Through my practice, I can evidence how I have included the student's family/whānau in our transition and employment planning processes.
- 6.3 I adjust when I am available to enable the family/whānau of disabled students to participate i.e. after hours, evenings, weekends.
- 6.4 I have actively and intentionally built working relationships with local high schools and can link them with employers, internships programmes, etc. that lead to employment opportunities for their disabled students.
- 6.5 I can articulate and describe what the Enabling Good Lives principle of 'Beginning Early' means in this context.

### **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 6.6 Whether we hold a specific Transition Contract or not, our service can show how we have worked to build relationships with local high schools.
- 6.7 We have invested in learning about how schools operate, the pressures they are under, and how our service can most effectively partner with them to get the best employment outcomes for disabled school leavers.
- 6.8 We have developed easy to understand materials on transition and employment support that can be given to local schools for distribution to disabled jobseekers and their family/whānau.
- 6.9 We have developed relationships with local parent/whānau led organisations such as Parent to Parent, etc.
- 6.10 We provide them with resources and stories that they can share with family/whānau on the importance of beginning early in relation to preparing for a post school life and transitioning from school to employment.
- 6.11 Our specific transition service focuses on employment as the main service outcome providing disabled students, their family/whānau, and schools with links with employers, internship programmes, etc. that lead to employment.

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# Practice Guideline 7

## Self-Employment is Recognised as a Legitimate Form of Employment for Disabled Jobseekers.

### **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 7.1 I have taken time to research and understand the concept of self-employment (micro business) and can articulate how this strategy differs from a traditional employment support practice.
- 7.2 I have collected a range of resources, including videos on self-employment/micro business, that I can share with disabled students, jobseekers, their family/whānau, and allies.
- 7.3 I can articulate and describe where a person interested in self-employment can access support, including, but not limited to, financial support.
- 7.4 Ideally, I have formed a relationship with at least one successful disabled entrepreneur so that I can more deeply understand how and why self-employment has been successful in their situation.
- 7.5 I negotiate with my employer to have the space to work with at least one jobseeker who is wanting to create a micro business so that I can build my understanding and competency.

### **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 7.6 As an organisation, we are committed to deepening our understanding of self-employment as a legitimate, well evidenced, and highly effective method of employment for some disabled jobseekers.
- 7.7 Whether we have a specific contract line that includes self-employment or not, we ensure we inform disabled students, disabled jobseekers, and their allies about this option.
- 7.8 If we do not have, or cannot build the internal expertise in self-employment, we know who to contact when a disabled student, disabled jobseeker, or their ally is looking for assistance in this space.
- 7.9 We advocate, at all possible opportunities, with funders for self-employment to be included in our contracts.
- 7.10 We courageously and authentically use our current resources to assist disabled jobseekers who are seeking self-employment as their preferred employment outcome.

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# Practice Guideline 8

Employment Support Practitioners and Providers Actively Strive to Continually Improve Their Services and Measure Their Success.

## **Quality Indicators for Practitioners**

- 8.1 I am committed to accepting feedback from disabled people, their family/whānau, and employers to improve my practice (not to justify my/our current position).
- 8.2 I actively build reciprocating and functional working relationships with other local providers, employer networks, and other allies.
- 8.3 I commit to working to identify and advocate for the removal of systemic barriers that are blocking more disabled jobseekers from achieving their employment aspirations.
- 8.4 I have performance targets to measure the success of my work with disabled jobseekers and employers.
- 8.5 I actively pursue ongoing learning opportunities and professional development to help me become more skilled, competent, and successful.

## **Quality Indicators for Providers**

- 8.6 We lead by example by having accessible and creative recruitment practices that lead to disabled staff being hired in our organisation.
- 8.7 We are committed to publishing our track record for reaching employment outcomes for disabled jobseekers.
- 8.8 This information is disaggregated so it clearly shows the outcomes for disabled jobseekers with the greatest barriers to employment.
- 8.9 We have methods to enable us to seek anonymous and other feedback from employers, disabled students/jobseekers, family/whānau, allies, and schools that will enable us to understand the experience of all.
- 8.10 We participate in research to progress evidence-based practices and to test the effectiveness of new initiatives.
- 8.11 We create resources (including video resources) which provide contemporary examples of successful employment outcomes.
- 8.12 We can provide evidence of our commitment to supporting our practitioners to grow and maintain their professionalism and skills needed to successfully support disabled jobseekers in finding sustainable employment.



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# How to Use These Revised Practice Guidelines

We have updated these practice guidelines to assist employment support providers and practitioners to review their support of disabled jobseekers, their family/whānau, and employers so, as a sector, we can resolve the barriers that are preventing more disabled jobseekers obtaining sustainable employment.

This is particularly for those disabled jobseekers with high or more complex workplace support needs, who are really struggling to get jobs.

These practice guidelines can be used in a variety of different ways:

1. There are eight guidelines, and with each of these we have firstly included an overall outcome to be achieved. This is followed by a set of Quality Indicators, some for practitioners and others for providers, to be considered. These are essentially the actions that need to be completed to achieve each outcome.
2. It is essential that the self-review is in partnership with disabled jobseekers with different impairments, family/whānau, and employers so that they can give their feedback about services they receive from you.

Also consider the treaty partnership and the needs of Māori. Feedback from Pacific and other ethnic groups should also be actively sought.

You can do this by developing an anonymous survey where you get feedback about your services and/or developing a group of these stakeholders to review your practice against the guidelines. Don't just choose people who will give positive feedback. Review your complaints and how they have been resolved.

Think about how you will build a partnership with disabled jobseekers with different impairments, their family/whānau, employers, and other allies to review practice guidelines. Also identify other staff you need to talk to about your services and practice.

3. The information from your self-review, feedback from stakeholders, and your background evidence should identify follow up actions to include in an Annual Action Plan. Remember, no service or practitioner is perfect, so there should always be service improvements to work on, focused on the quality of your service and increasing the number of jobs you get for disabled jobseekers.
4. Your organisation may also have other information including policies, procedures, processes, or systems related to a specific practice guideline, which may help you to decide where you are at with meeting a guideline.

Be honest with your review of this feedback and systems. Look for the gaps, service barriers, and where you can make service improvements.

## Critical Implementation Steps

1. A senior staff member is chosen to drive and promote the review of the practice guidelines at both a practitioner and organisational level.
2. A reference group of key staff, disabled jobseekers, family/whānau, employers, and other allies is established to review the service against the practice guidelines.

If you are an individual practitioner reviewing your own practice against the guidelines, think how you will get feedback from stakeholders to enable a more objective view of your practice. As part of your review process, you will also need to ask a colleague to peer-review your practice against the practice guidelines.

3. Collect your evidence including feedback from jobseekers, family/whānau, employers, policies, procedures, processes, or systems, related to a specific practice guideline to support your decision making on each guideline.
4. Use the appropriate Self-Review Practice Guideline template, there is one for providers and another for practitioners. The reference group or practitioner then reviews their practice looking for successes, gaps, barriers, and improvements.

Get some quick wins. Most people know where the greatest barriers for disabled jobseekers, family/whānau, and employers are, so start there.

There may be some simple things that would make a real difference for them. Ask what would make the biggest difference for them; do some brainstorming about barriers within the service, or with your practice, and possible solutions.

Another option is those responsible for completing the self-review of the practice guidelines delegate parts of the guidelines to other staff responsible for specific activities and they report back to the reference group.

5. A provider or practitioner then develops their action plan with clear objectives and timeframes. Remember, you do not have to do everything in the first 12 months. Prioritise which areas you will do each year.
6. The reference group reports back to board and senior/leadership team recommending the organisations action plan for the following year.
7. Individual practitioners should report back to their manager and even provide a summary of key findings to the jobseekers, family/whānau, employers, and other allies they work with. The provider could do the same to create a level of accountability back to those people using their service.

Remember:

- It is essential that you get feedback from disabled jobseekers with different impairments, family/whānau, and employers using your services as part of your review process.
- Spend time identifying resources that provide evidence of you meeting the practice guidelines and where the gaps and barriers are.
- The Self-Review Practice Guideline template(s) provide a process for employment support providers and practitioners to reflect and evaluate how effective their work is against the Practice Guidelines.
- It is intended that providers and practitioners will look for evidence from within their own experience, as well as their organisation to demonstrate how well they are aligning with the guidelines and what actions they need to improve the quality of their service and practice.

## How to Start

### **Step One: Preparation**

Set aside time to read these Practice Guidelines and the Companion Document.

### **Step Two: Choose a Practice Guideline to Review**

Review this and read the resources provided that set boundaries for meeting each guideline.

### **Step Three: Find Evidence & Choose Partners to Involve**

Gather your evidence for meeting the practice guideline. Think about any aspect of practice that you're unsure about and need more information on. You may have other evidence, policies, procedures, or systems.

Think about how you will build a partnership with disabled jobseekers, family/whānau, employers and other allies to review this practice and other guidelines. Also identify other staff you need to talk to about this.

### **Step Four: Identify Barriers and Solutions**

Highlight any barriers that exist for disabled jobseekers, family/whānau, and employers with your service, identified by the review of the practice guideline you have chosen, and find solutions to resolve these barriers.

### **Step Five: Use the Practice Guideline Template to Record Your Findings**

Go to the template. Determine if you have met, partially met, or not met the practice guideline you have decided to review.

To meet or partially meet a practice guideline, you have to provide evidence that demonstrates completion of the Quality Indicators for practitioner and providers for that guideline.

Record any gaps or barriers to your services that you have identified and determine any actions are required to include in your follow up Action Plan.

### **Step Six: Peer Review of Your Thinking**

Go back to the reference group, other staff, your manager, or colleagues to peer review your findings. Remember to check with disabled jobseekers, family/whānau, and employer reps about whether they agree with your findings.

### **Return to Step Two: Choose Another Practice Guideline to Review**

The review of these practice guidelines should lead to the development of your Action Plan. This should result in your service acquiring more sustainable jobs for disabled jobseekers you work with and more employers willing to provide these jobs. Have some fun and be transformative!

# Appendix 1: Glossary

The following terms are used throughout this document, the Companion Document, and the Self-Review Framework:

- **Aiga** – family (Pasifika).
- **Cultural model of disability** – the cultural model values disability as human diversity and considers the specific needs of Māori and other cultural groups.
- **Employment** – work in the open labour market in a job not reserved for a disabled person and paid at or above the minimum wage or being self-employed or creating a small (micro) enterprise/business.
- **Disability community** – the disability community is a subset of the disability sector. It includes disabled people, partners, friends, families, relatives, unpaid support workers, and others directly involved in informal support as determined by disabled people. This includes advocacy/consumer organisations made up of and representing disabled people.
- **Disability sector** – the disability sector includes organisations and people (disabled and non-disabled, professional, and lay people) who work in support of disabled people and disability issues.
- **Disabled jobseekers** – disabled people who are looking for work.
- **Disabled people** – the term ‘disabled people’ is utilised in the NZ Disability Strategy (NZDS and UNCRPD). The NZDS states that ‘disability is not something individuals have. Instead, disability is the process which happens when one group of people creates barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments that other people have.’ We do, however, recognise that many people prefer other terms including ‘people with disability’ or ‘people with lived experience of disability’. It is therefore important that people take the lead from the people they are supporting and use the terminology they are comfortable with.
- **Employers** – business owners or other organisations who employ disabled and non-disabled staff.
- **Employment consultants (practitioners)** – frontline practitioners directly assisting disabled jobseekers to look for, secure, and maintain work.
- **Employment support providers** – any government or non-government agency (provider) involved in the provision of employment support services to disabled people, who also recruit, train, and deploy employment consultants (practitioners).
- **Enabling Good Lives approach** – the Enabling Good Lives approach includes a vision that disabled children, adults, and their families will have greater choice and control over their supports and lives and make more use of natural and universally available supports. A principles-based approach ensures that Enabling Good Lives stays on track to progress the vision.

- **Enabling Good Lives Principles** – the eight Enabling Good Lives principles are: Self-Determination, Beginning Early, Person Centred, Ordinary Life Outcomes, Mainstream First, Mana Enhancing, Easy to Use, and Relationship Building.

- **Hauora** – health.

- **Impairment** – people with impairments are often ‘disabled by their environment’, rather than inferring that they are ‘disabled’ themselves. According to the NZ Disability Strategy, disabled people include those with permanent impairments, those with impairments resulting from long or short-term injury or illness, the Deaf community, and those with learning disability, neurodiversity, mental health conditions, physical, sensory and hidden impairments, etc.

These impairments often last for 6 months or more. It is important to remember that disabled people are diverse like the rest of our community. They include disabled Māori, people with different impairments, Pacific people, and those from other cultural groups, women, LGBTQIA communities, migrants, at-risk youth, older people, etc.

- **Kawa** – Te Reo Māori for etiquette, protocol.
- **Mana Motuhake** – self-determination, autonomy.
- **Medical model** – the medical model holds that disability lies with the individual and that the disabled person needs to adapt or be cured to fit the environment and society.
- **Neurodiversity** – neuro-differences such as ADHD, Autism, Dyspraxia, and Dyslexia.
- **NZDS** – New Zealand Disability Strategy.
- **NZDSN** - New Zealand Disability Support Network.
- **Rangatiratanga** – authority, ownership, leadership.
- **Rights holders and stakeholders** – a stakeholder is an individual or group with an interest in something, particularly a business, whereas indigenous peoples are rights-holders.
- **Social model** – The social model holds that individuals have impairments, but rather than the impairment disabling a person, the barriers created by an inaccessible society are the disability.
- **Sustainable employment** – disabled people maintaining employment on an ongoing basis.
- **Tāngata Whaikaha Māori** – tāngata whaikaha are Māori disabled people.
- **Tikanga** – generally speaking, tikanga are Māori customary practices or behaviours. The concept is derived from the Māori word 'tika' which means 'right' or 'correct', so, in Māori terms, to act in accordance with tikanga is to behave in a way that is culturally proper or appropriate.
- **UNCRPD** – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- **Waka** – vehicle or mode of transport used to explain a physical and metaphorical journey.
- **Whaikaha** – Ministry of Disabled People.
- **Whaikaha (verb)** – to have strength, be strong enough (modifier) disability.
- **Whakataukī** – proverb, significant saying.
- **Whānau** – whānau is a widely used Māori word that may mean family, spouse/partner, close friends, welfare guardian, and advocates. Whānau should be defined by the person and who they consider them to be.
- **Whānaungatanga** – the interrelationship of Māori with their ancestors – relationship, kinship, sense of family connection.
- **Whānau whaikaha** – Māori families who are living with disability.

## Appendix 2:

# Other Issues to Consider

This review of the Practice Guidelines highlighted contrasting feedback from disabled people, their whānau, and employers about the employment support system for disabled people.

Many disabled people and whānau described an employment support system that is 'broken' and that can be 'traumatising' for some disabled jobseekers, particularly for those with high support needs. They felt this trauma needs to be acknowledged in future policy development.

Some said they have lost trust because of their experiences. Some spoke of the difficulty getting the workplace support that they require to get a job – *'the criteria for support funds is now too hard and not worth applying for.'* Disabled people (and also providers) felt that the MSD contracts were very rigid and encouraged the agencies to go for low hanging fruit.

These stories and experiences are very difficult to reconcile against the positive self-reports of providers and practitioners about their services.

Providers also spoke about various issues with employment policy and contracting that negatively impacts on their ability to work to the spirit and intent of the Employment Support Practice Guidelines.

- There are some unintended consequences and conflicting interpretation of the criteria for the MSD employment contracts and support funds which makes it more difficult for some disabled people to receive the services they require.
- Despite employment contracts trying to encourage employment agencies to work with disabled jobseekers who experience the greatest barriers to employment, various contract requirements inhibit this. One provider said, *'the contracts say that we must get quick outcomes.'*
- Many agencies believe that to be more successful at supporting disabled jobseekers with the greatest barriers to employment, contracts need to be less prescriptive, longer, more flexible, and include a wide range of employment options such as Self-Employment and Micro-business as legitimate outcomes.
- Having a funding incentive in MSD contracts to encourage employment agencies to assist those with the greatest barriers does not appear to work.
- One disabled person, who has also provided services, spoke about the inherent contradiction in the Social Security Act relation to employment for disabled people: *'this has a very deficit model focus where people don't have to work and there is a low expectation for employment of disabled people.'*