

18pt



Community Engagement on the Disability Sector Workforce— Whaikaha Executive Summary

Adapted in 2023 by Accessible Formats Service, Blind
Low Vision NZ, Auckland

TN: Logo at the top of the page is: Whaikaha Ministry of
Disabled People.

Community Engagement on the Disability Sector Workforce— Whaikaha Executive Summary

We wanted to find out what disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, whānau and communities want and expect when it comes to the disability workforce.

Allen + Clarke and All is for All were commissioned to do the engagement and write the report. Whaikaha has drafted this executive summary.

Allen + Clarke and All is for All engaged with a broad range of stakeholders, including disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, family and whānau, members of the workforce, and service providers including Māori service providers to find out what was important to them.

Participants were asked a series of questions about their vision for the future of the disability sector workforce.

Disabled people expressed a desire for freedom, choice, and empowerment from disability support services. They emphasised the importance of having control over support options, personalised and flexible service provision, support staff who understand and can respond to their needs and preferences, and who respect their will and preferences in both big and small matters. They also wanted to see more disabled people in support roles.

Tāngata whaikaha Māori highlighted the importance of being able to choose their support workers and how support is delivered. They wanted to see Māori values incorporated into workforce strategy. They emphasised the need to reflect the voices of tāngata whaikaha Māori with different experiences, such as those living in rural areas.

Family and whānau emphasised the need for well-trained and coordinated carers who understand disability. They stressed the importance of clear communication from service providers and support workers. They want to see recognition of the role played by family members in providing care. Māori whānau specifically called for equal pay for family and non-family carers, accessible employment opportunities, and on-going training to build capacity and capability.

Service providers and support workers identified common goals, including having a robust pipeline of support workers. They want disability support work to be seen as a valuable career choice with growth opportunities. They want more support for staff so they can adapt to new ways of working. Cross-sector competition for workers and comparatively low pay were also identified as issues in recruiting and retaining workers, especially for more technical roles.

Māori disability service providers called for the integration of Māori systems and thinking into the workforce. They want to have cultural competency training and te ao Māori approaches included in recruitment and capability policies.

The report outlines strategic priorities for the future disability sector workforce. It focuses on recruitment, retention, and development.

Some significant barriers to recruiting people into the disability sector workforce were identified. These include negative perceptions of the work involved and barriers faced by people with lived experience.

The need to recruit the right people with the right values and from diverse backgrounds was emphasised. Support workers should understand they are there to give support to another person's will and preference, and respond to that person's individual priorities with empathy, kindness and patience. Disabled people and their whānau want support workers who reflect their background and experiences, including more Māori and Pacific, men, younger people, and people with disabilities or lived experience.

Participants had varying views on the importance of formal training and qualifications. Some stakeholders prioritise values and attitudes over formal training. Others prioritised the need for skilled support workers. The lack of career pathways, limited options for training and development, and barriers to access for both disabled people and family carers were identified as challenges, as well as a lack of funding for providers to invest in workforce training and development and skills gaps that current training provisions don't cover well.

Workforce wellbeing was recognised as an important issue that impacts both workers and disabled people. While some providers offer wellbeing support, independent disabled employers and their whānau would struggle to offer similar benefits.

Family and whānau carers reported the need for better on-going support, reporting a level of mistrust in current service provision based on a history of negative experiences. It was suggested that a range of centralised tools and resources could be developed to support overall workforce wellbeing, and that respite services could be improved to support family and whānau carers.

Overall, the engagement responses highlighted the need for a future disability sector workforce that prioritises choice, empowerment, and respect for individuals' needs and preferences.

They also emphasised the importance of diverse representation, cultural competency, career development and training opportunities within the workforce, and greater support and recognition for family and whānau carers.

End of Community Engagement on the Disability Sector Workforce