## The Whaikaha logo with a tohu design with the words Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People in a light contrast colour against a purple background.

A picture of the Whaikaha Logo with the Words Whaikaha, Ministry of Disabled People

# New Zealand Disability Action Plan 2019-2023: Final Progress Report Summary, July to December 2023

This is the eighth and final progress report on the 2019-2023 Disability Action Plan. It is the final progress report relating to the 2016-2026 New Zealand Disability Strategy (NZDS).

## The Future of the New Zealand Disability Strategy

Over the course of 2025, the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha is developing a refreshed NZDS that focuses on tangible, measurable deliverables or actions which will benefit disabled people over the next five years. The new Strategy is expected to commence in 2026.

Information on the refresh and its progress can be found here: [Refresh of the New Zealand Disability Strategy | Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People](https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/programmes-strategies-and-studies/programmes-and-strategies/new-zealand-disability-strategy-refresh) (and this link <https://tinyurl.com/2ueabfpz>).

## The Disability Action Plan’s purpose is to improve accessibility for, and the wellbeing of, disabled people

The Disability Action Plan (DAP) sets out 29 work programmes aligned with the NZDS.

Six-monthly reporting on the DAP is completed by Whaikaha, in conjunction with the Disabled People’s Organisations (DPO) Coalition and government agencies responsible for the work programmes.

## This executive summary highlights progress made, and ongoing work required to improve outcomes for disabled people

This report covers DAP progress over the period July to December 2023. Agencies were invited to provide an update on their work up 31 August 2024. Where provided, updates are summarised at the end of each outcome section.

Twelve government agencies were responsible for 28 DAP work programmes. One additional work programme is a cross-government commitment to improve disability data and evidence.

## Overall work programme progress ratings

July 2023 to December 2023 reports indicate the progress status in each reporting area (the numbers in brackets refer to the previous reporting period January to June 2023):

Complete: 2 (1), 6.9%.

On track or ahead: 5 (8), 17.2%.

On track, minimal risks: 19 (17), 65.6%.

Off track, minimal risks: 3 (2), 10.3%.

Off track, significant risks: 0 (0), 0%.

Total number of reports: 29 (28), 100%.

Note: Each agency self-rates their progress.

## Outcome One – Education

“We get an excellent education and achieve our potential throughout our lives” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has five work programmes under this outcome area. (although when reporting the Early Learning Action Plan and the Learning Support Action Plan are reported on separately. The projects and how the agency performed are detailed below.

### NCEA Review

Embedding inclusive design into all aspects of the re-development of the NCEA. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Tomorrow’s Schools

Tomorrow’s Schools is not specifically aimed at supporting disabled students, rather the changes impact all students. Status: On track.

### Learning Support Action Plan

The Learning Support Action Plan is made up of several workstreams. Some workstreams directly benefit disabled learners e.g. strengthening early intervention services.

Other workstreams have less direct impact on disabled learners e.g. increasing the level of learning support available in Māori medium education. While this initiative will positively impact Māori learners in these settings, the impact for Māori disabled learners is unclear as no relevant data is being collected. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Curriculum Refresh Progress and Achievement

This programme focusses on ensuring the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum is accessible to all learners including disabled learners. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Early Learning Action Plan

All children are able to participate in quality early learning and have the support they need to learn and thrive. Status: Paused.

### Reform of Vocational Education

The reform of vocational education meets the needs of all learners including disabled learners. Status: On track.

Key highlights from the reporting period include:

* The new Notification Gateway for Schools making applications for reasonable adjustments to NCEA exams is operational. Schools can decide on reasonable adjustments for their own students without having to ask NZQA.
* The Social and Emotional Learning, whānau Guide was launched in October 2023.
* As part of the Learning Support Action Plan, the MoE continued supporting Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust to create practical resources to support the needs of disabled learners.
* The Inclusive Design Modules, to build capacity and capability of teachers to become inclusive practitioners, were published in August 2023.
* A Ministerial Advisory Group was convened in December 2023 for the Curriculum Refresh work. This Group will provide the Minister of Education with advice on the refreshed English, Mathematics and Statistics learning areas.
* The reform of vocational education work programme has progressed. A report *‘*Let’s get accessible: Disabled students experiences navigating the tertiary education system’is underway. The literature review, survey, and focus groups are all completed.

Some MOE work programmes did not progress as anticipated. Changes to government priorities have impacted work, for example:

* the National Curriculum Refresh was replaced with work to implement structured literacy and numeracy programmes into primary schools.
* The Highest Needs Review[[1]](#footnote-1) was replaced with six key priorities: clearer curriculum; better approach to literacy and numeracy; smarter assessment and reporting; improved teacher training; stronger learning support and greater use of data.

Updates on the MoE’s progress during January to August 2024 include:

* Most Learning Support Action Plan priorities are now included as part of a broader Ministerial priority work programme.
* Engagement with the Disability Voices Group on the curriculum refresh has continued.
* Elements of the Common Practice Model have been incorporated into the new draft Mathematics and Statistics learning area for Years 0-8 and the English learning area for Years 0-6.

The Tertiary Education Commission’s DAP work programme enables Tertiary Education Organisations (TEO) and the tertiary education sector to improve tertiary education for disabled people. The success of this work programme will be demonstrated by an increasing number of disabled people accessing, participating, and achieving in tertiary education.

This work programme is on track, with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC making progress on:

* Working in partnership with TEOs to understand how they support the progress and achievement of disabled learners.
* Developing a more accurate picture of the number of disabled learners who access Tertiary Education, through a new disability question on the Single Data Return (SDR) to be rolled out as part of the 2025 SDR process.
* Developing new resources for tutors who support Māori and Pacific disabled learners. These resources will add to other online resources as part of ‘Kia Orite, supporting disabled learners toolkit’.

The TEC reported all work was progressing as expected. They did not provide a progress report for January to August 2024.

## Outcome Two – Employment and Economic Security

“We have security in our economic situation and can achieve our potential” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026).

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) leads four work programmes, with some support from the Public Serve Commission (PSC) and Whaikaha in the Accessible Employment Programme. Whaikaha has sole responsibility for the Government Internship Programme.

### Working Matters Disability Employment Plan

Aims to ensure disabled people have an equal opportunity to access quality employment. Status: Complete due to a shift in government priorities. Specifically, the Disability Employment Action Plan was replaced with a singular Action Plan for all population groups.

### Replacing Minimum Wage Exemption Permits

Aims to ensure that the 900 New Zealanders being paid less than minimum wage due to their disability can be paid at least the minimum wage. Status: Complete due to a shift in government priorities. Specifically, In 2024, government decided to continue the minimum wage exemption scheme.

### National Information Portal and Regional Hubs

This programme examines the feasibility of developing regional hubs across New Zealand to promote and support the employment of disabled people. Status: On track. This work is now considered Business as usual for MSD.

### Accessible Employment

(Lead Toolkit, Government Internships, We Enable Us, disability employment resources).

The Lead Toolkit, Government Internship programme and We Enable Us network and resources are the key pieces of work that MSD and the wider public service are undertaking to promote the employment of disabled people within the public sector. Status: On track.

Key highlights from the reporting period include:

* The Employment Service in Schools (ESIS) programme is continuing to operate in five regions. This programme provides careers and transition advice, work experience and job placements to disabled school students.
* The Lead toolkit refresh has continued with the Public Service Commission taking on this aspect of the work.
* A Disability Awareness training programme for staff in the public service has been procured.
* Role descriptions for future cohorts of disabled interns entering the public service have been planned.

**The National Information Portal and Regional Hubs** work programme has changed and is now MSD’s business-as-usual work. The programme provides information on general and specific employment events for disabled people.

Progress on the MSD summer internship programme for 2023/24 was limited. This is because Whaikaha took over the work close to the summer internship start date.

MSD provided the following updates on their progress during January to August 2024:

* A single Employment Action Plan has replaced all the targeted action plans including the Disability Employment Action Plan.
* Funding for the Employment Service in Schools project has been extended to June 2026.

## Outcome Three - Health and Wellbeing

“We have the highest attainable standards of health and wellbeing” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026).

Five work programmes sit under this outcome area. The Ministry of Health oversees four, and Sport New Zealand oversees one.

### Safeguarding Bodily Integrity rights

Protecting disabled people from unwanted treatment. For example, sterilisation and growth attenuation treatment. Status: Off track, minimal risk.

The DPO Coalition is concerned limited progress was made on the ‘Safeguarding Bodily Integrity rights’ programme, meaning disabled people may be unnecessarily subjected to invasive treatments.

### Health Outcomes and Access to Health Services

Transformative work is required to improve health outcomes and reduce inequities facing disabled people accessing healthcare in New Zealand. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Repeal and replace the Mental Health Compulsory Assessment and Treatment Act (1992)

Develop new legislation that takes a human-rights based approach and promotes Supported Decision-Making. The legislation must align with the recovery and wellbeing model of mental health, and provide measures to minimise compulsory or coercive treatment. Status: On track, minimal risk.

#### Removal of Seclusion and Restraint

Removing the use of all seclusion and restraint, including chemical restraint, from the New Zealand health system. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Sport New Zealand Action Plan

Improve the quality and equity of play, active recreation and sport participation opportunities for disabled children and youth. Status: On track, minimal risk.

Key highlights from the reporting period include:

* The provisional Health of Disabled People strategy progressed.
* Work to collate data on disabled peoples’ experiences with abortions and sterilisations continued.
* The Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO) received instructions to draft new mental health legislation. Proposed changes include placing people seeking mental wellness at the centre of care.
* The Office of the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services Regulatory report identified information on the levels of seclusion and restraint used on disabled people.
* The Sport New Zealand Action Plan “Everybody Active” is inclusive of disabled people.

The DAP Review Group recommended disability community voices should be strengthened across all health reports.

The Ministry of Health and Sport New Zealand provided the following updates on their progress during January to August 2024:

* The Minister of Health approved the implementation of a Health of Disabled People work programme for improving access to the health system and health services.
* A Cabinet paper to repeal and replace the Mental Health (compulsory assessment and treatment Act) was lodged in August 2024.
* The Sport New Zealand Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028 with a stronger focus on diversity and inclusion, was released in March 2024.

## Outcome Four – Rights Protection and Justice

“Our rights are protected; we feel safe, understood and are treated fairly and equitably by the justice system” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026)*.*

Three work programmes sit under this Outcome. The Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Justice and Whaikaha are responsible for the work programmes.

### Implementation of Safeguarding Responses for Disabled and Vulnerable Adults Te Aorerekura Action 28.

This programme is overseen by Whaikaha. Increasing supports for disabled adults at risk of family/sexual violence. Status: On track.

### Department of Corrections Disability Action Plan implementation

Implement the new Corrections Disability Action Plan. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Ministry of Justice (MOJ) work programme

Includes several smaller programmes aimed at making the justice system more accessible to disabled people.   
Status: On track, minimal risk.

Key highlights from the reporting period include:

* A prototype Disability Abuse Prevention and Response team (DAPAR) to support disabled people at risk of family violence/sexual violence was established.
* Information and resources about the family court processes were translated into alternate formats.
* The ‘Young adult list’ neurodiversity project developed a screening tool to determine whether young offenders appearing in court are neurodivergent and require extra support.

The Ministry of Justice’s work to produce Parenting order journey maps has been delayed. These journey maps support parents going through separation and navigating the family court system.

The DAP Review Group recommended more information on the specific impact of initiatives on disabled people was required across all reports.

No agencies provided updates on their work for the period January to August 2024.

## Outcome Five - Accessibility

“We access all places, information and services with ease and dignity” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026).

Work under this outcome is undertaken by the following agencies:

* Better Later Life – He Oranga Kaumātua. Agency: Office for Seniors, MSD. Status: On track, minimal risk.
* Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill. Agency: Whaikaha, Status: Off track, minimal risk.
* Accessible public information. Agency: MSD. Status: On track.
* Accessibility Work Programme. Agency: Kāinga Ora. Status: On track, minimal risk.
* Improving accessibility across the NZ Housing Sector. Agency: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Status: Off track, minimal risk.
* Joint Transport Disability Action Plan. Agencies: The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and Ministry of Transport. Status: On track, minimal risk.

Key highlights from the reporting period include:

* Research on New Zealand’s age friendly cities (which are generally more accessible) was conducted by the Office for Seniors.
* MSD’s Alternate Formats coordination service continued to function well.
* Kāinga Ora conducted an analysis into their clients’ disability status, enabling the organisation to better understand and meet clients’ needs.
* NZTA’s National Ticketing Solution project continued to progress and both physical and digital accessible designs were considered.
* The Ministry of Transport produced draft discussion papers about the Total Mobility review, for circulation to stakeholders.

Work programmes not progressing as expected included:

* The Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill paused prior to the October 2023 General Election.
* HUD paused work on the review of Kāinga Ora’s 15% target for new builds to meet full Universal Design Standards, prior to the General Election.
* Kāinga Ora’s work on their Accessibility Policy was paused due a ministerial review.

The DAP Review Group identified reporting under Outcome Five may not fully reflect the level of actual risk.

Updates between January and August 2024 included:

* The Minister for Disability Issues withdrew the Accessibility for New Zealanders Bill on 14 August 2024.
* The Alternate Format Coordination Service moved from MSD to Whaikaha.

## Outcome Six - Attitudes

“We are treated with dignity and respect” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 - 2026).

Outcome six does not have specific work programmes. All other work programmes contribute towards improving New Zealanders’ attitudes towards disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori.

## Outcome Seven – Choice and Control

“We have choice and control over our lives” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026).

This Outcome has two work programmes led by Whaikaha.

### Disability Support System Transformation

Transform the way Disability Support Services are delivered and ensure services adhere to Enabling Good Lives Principles. Status: On track, minimal risk.

### Supported Decision-Making

Draft guidance to introduce Supporting Decision-Making for disabled people who require this. Status: On track, minimal risk.

Key highlights from the reporting period include:

* Under the Disability Support System Transformation programme – a Transformation Management Board was appointed.
* The Supported Decision-Making Advisory Group completed guidance documents for creating and procuring online resources.

The DAP Review Group was concerned about slow progress to transform Disability Support Services.

Updates between January and August 2024 include:

* The Minister for Disability Issues announced Disability Support Services would move from Whaikaha to a standalone branded business unit in MSD.
* A Māori rōpū to improve te ao Māori perspectives in the Supported Decision-Making project was established.

## Outcome Eight – Leadership

“We have great opportunities to demonstrate our leadership” (New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 - 2026).

One work programme is managed by Whaikaha.

### Nominations Database

Increase the representation of disabled people on public sector Boards. Status: On track.

Key highlights include the creation of an ongoing relationship with the Institute of Directors (IoD). Whaikaha staff will work with the IoD to create more governance opportunities for disabled database members.

The DAP Review Group recommend developing a targeted communications plan to promote the Nominations Database to disabled people.

## Disability Data and Evidence

This cross-government work programme is led by Whaikaha, in conjunction with Statistics (Stats) New Zealand.

The aim of this programme is to make disability data available to ensure the development of sound policy and service delivery, that meets the needs of disabled people. Status: On track, minimal risks

A key highlight of the work programme included the establishment of an inclusive Community of Practice to meet regularly to workshop ideas and learn disability measurement progress.

The report identified all aspects of the work are progressing well. However, the DAP Review Group expressed concerns that the Washington Group Short Set Questions (WGSSQ) used for gathering disability data do not include all disabled people. Therefore, relying on WGSSQ only, potentially underestimates the number of disabled people using a particular service.

In March 2024, Whaikaha established a Data and Insights team to provide robust, high-quality disability data**,** insightsand advice, within Whaikaha and across the data system.

## Conclusion

This is the final progress report for the 2019 – 2023 Disability Action Plan. Of the 29 work programmes 2 were complete, 24 were on track, and 3 programmes were off track with minimal risk.

Several agencies stated their DAP work programmes became part of business as usual. Some work programmes have been impacted by changes in Government priorities.

The New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026, previous DAP reports and executive summaries, including alternate formats,can be found at: [Disability Action Plan reports | Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People](https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/programmes-strategies-and-studies/programmes-and-strategies/disability-action-plan-2019-2023/dap-reports) (and this link <https://tinyurl.com/2sp324jd>). For further information about this report, email [contact@whaikaha.govt.nz](mailto:contact@whaikaha.govt.nz).

**End of information: New Zealand Disability Action Plan 2019-2023: Final Progress Report Summary, July to December 2023**

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1. considered how the education system was enabling disabled children and young people with the highest needs to achieve their full potential in an inclusive education system that delivers fair and excellent outcomes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)