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Visual description: A purple Whaikaha logo with a QR scan for the NZSL name.

Summary

Draft for consultation

New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026-2030

August 2025

Introduction

Nau mai, haere mai. The Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha (the Ministry) is consulting on the draft New Zealand Disability Strategy 2026-2030.

This is a summary of the draft Strategy. It has been developed by the Ministry, working with other government agencies, disabled people and the disability community.

The strategy will set out the Government's commitment to disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori, and their whānau. It is also a strategy to which everyone can contribute. All New Zealanders have a role in making New Zealand accessible and equitable.

Have your say on the strategy

This is a summary of the strategy. You can find the full draft strategy, including in alternate formats, on the Ministry's website at <https://www.whaikaha.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/new-zealand-disability-strategy-refresh> or under the heading 'Read the draft strategy 2026-2030'. The Ministry's website is www.whaikaha.govt.nz.

This summary has the same key parts as the full draft strategy. The key parts are:

- a vision and principles
- five priority outcome areas
- goals and actions under each priority outcome area.

You will also see questions that will help you give feedback on the strategy.

Everyone is welcome to give feedback. There are different ways to have your say. You can:

- complete an accessible online feedback form
- download a Word feedback form, fill it out and email it to the Ministry
- make a 3-minute video with videomail.io and email it to the Ministry
- attend a meeting online
- attend a meeting in person

- email the Ministry for a consultation toolkit you can use at your organisation.

Your feedback will be used to shape the final version of the strategy, which will be considered by Cabinet later this year.

The closing date for feedback is **Sunday 28 September**.

If you have any questions, or want to email us, the email address is disabilitystrategy@whaikaha.govt.nz.

Vision

This is a statement describing the future that disabled people want to achieve through the strategy.

The proposed **vision** is:

New Zealand is an accessible and equitable society for disabled people and their whānau – a place where disabled people thrive, lead, and participate in all aspects of life.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the following statements?
 - The proposed vision is clear and easy to understand.
 - The vision aligns with the values and aspirations of disabled people.
 - I feel confident that the vision will lead to meaningful change.
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed vision and how well it reflects the needs, aspirations, and rights of disabled people in New Zealand?

Principles

The **principles** will help make sure the strategy reflects the things that are important to disabled people.

Seven **principles** are proposed for the strategy. These are summarised below.

- **Accessibility** – fundamental to participation and inclusion. Accessible environments and services benefit everyone, not just disabled people.

- **Choice and control** - recognises that disabled people are experts in their own lives, and have the same right to self-determination as everyone else.
- **Equity, cultural inclusion and intersectionality** - acknowledge that disabled individuals have their own unique identities, and belong to diverse whānau, communities, and cultures.
- **Human rights** - anchors the strategy to international human rights frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **Participation and inclusion** - recognises disabled people's right to be active members of their communities and cultures in all aspects of life.
- **Respect and dignity** - emphasises that everyone deserves to be treated with respect, and acknowledges that societal attitudes can be a significant barrier for disabled people.
- **The Treaty of Waitangi (te Tiriti o Waitangi)** - establishes the relationship between Māori and the Crown, recognising the unique position of Māori as tāngata whenua, and ensuring partnership, participation and protection for tāngata whaikaha Māori.

Questions

- How important is each of the following principles?
- Is there anything you would want to add or remove from the list of principles for the strategy?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed principles?

Priority outcome areas and actions

The strategy has 5 priority outcome areas: education, employment, health, housing, and justice.

Each area has a goal, a description of what success means, a case for change, and a set of actions to achieve success for disabled people.

You can provide feedback on all priority outcome areas or select those of most interest to you.

Education

The goal for education

Every learner is supported to attend, participate and progress in education. There is a high expectation that all learners – including disabled learners – will achieve their potential in the education setting of their choice.

What success in education means

Educators plan for diverse learners to succeed. The education system has high expectations for all disabled learners, focusing on their strengths and aspirations. Learning support is responsive, timely and effective, easy to navigate, and delivered by a skilled workforce. Early intervention happens at the right time and is effective.

Kaupapa Māori education settings have access to the right resources delivered by a capable workforce. Data is gathered to support and understand the progress of learners. Tertiary education providers are supported to implement disability action plans, with progress monitored.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the goal for education?
- How much do you agree with the description of what success in education means?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the goal for education or the description of what success means?

Education actions

1. Invest \$266 million to expand early intervention services to support the identification of learning support needs early in a child's life and reduce wait times for assessments and services.
2. Explore new options for targeted and specialised support and provisions to reduce wait times using private providers and NGOs.
3. Make improvements to the learning support system so it is easier to navigate for educators, families and learners through: funding all schools with Year 1-8 students for a Learning Support Coordinator; and by reducing the complexity and accessibility of the application process.
4. Invest funding in additional learning support classrooms to provide choice for parents.
5. Work with the Ministry of Disabled People - Whaikaha to develop improvements in teacher training and guidance that support teachers to meet the needs of disabled students.
6. Work with the Ministry of Disabled People - Whaikaha to explore opportunities to improve accountability for schools through reporting on learning and achievement outcomes for disabled learners.
7. Support kaupapa Māori settings, within the existing Education budget, to access the resources, knowledge and capability to deliver high quality kaupapa Māori educational programmes that meet the needs of disabled ākonga (students) in a kaupapa Māori setting.
8. Work with the Ministry of Disabled People - Whaikaha to explore opportunities to identify disabled learners in education data collections.
9. Continue implementation of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) mechanism for reviewing provider progress in implementation of disability action plans (which will be integrated into Investment Plans from 2027). The TEC will consult with disabled student representative groups, including the National Disabled Students' Association, on how the mechanism will be implemented.

Questions

- How much do you agree with each action?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed actions?

Employment

The goal for employment

Disabled people will have meaningful career opportunities, equal to non-disabled people, and be valued the same way. Disability-confident employers will recognise disabled people's talents and will provide accessible and inclusive workplaces throughout the employment lifecycle.

What success in employment means

Disabled people have meaningful career, employment and self-employment opportunities, equal to non-disabled people. They have the right resources and support, and confidence their employer can help them, to thrive at work, whether they are urban or rural, in a workplace or working remotely. Better work outcomes give disabled people more economic security, dignity, self-determination and choice.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the goal for employment?
- How much do you agree with the description of what success in employment means?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the goal for employment or the description of what success means?

Employment actions

Enable and support disabled people to thrive in careers that match their interests and strengths, and normalise disabled people as part of the workforce:

1. Work to centralise, and make accessible, information and guidance for disabled people to identify and pursue job pathways matched to their skills and interests.
2. Review specialist employment supports to improve employment outcomes, in consultation with disabled people.
3. Work with disabled people, employers and employer networks to develop mentorship programmes connecting disabled people with successful disabled professionals or employers to provide guidance and support in navigating their careers.

Work with employers and businesses to build disability confidence and capability:

4. Partner with disabled people and support providers to create a centralised, accessible repository of practical information and resources for employers and employer networks so they can support disabled people throughout the employment lifecycle and share knowledge and success stories.
5. Partner with disabled people, employers and employer networks to improve accessibility and inclusion in employment lifecycles for disabled people. This includes promoting and enabling the design of jobs and workplaces to support:
 - inclusion of disabled people
 - flexible working arrangements and reasonable accommodations
 - assessing the accessibility of workplaces.
6. Implement a targeted, ongoing awareness campaign publicising guidance and resources for employers and employees on accessibility and inclusion, relevant data and reports, and highlighting the positive impact disabled people have had on workplaces. This action will support employment action 4.

Questions

- How much do you agree with each action?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed actions?

Health

The goal for health

Disabled people will achieve the highest possible standard of health and wellbeing. They will decide what this means for themselves and their whānau.

What success in health means

The health system enhances quality of life for disabled people. Self-determination means disabled people can make informed choices and have their decisions respected. Tāngata whaikaha Māori are understood as part of a collective, and can involve whānau in their health in the ways they want. Accessibility, equity and inclusion are embedded throughout the health system supported by a skilled and responsive health workforce. This includes disabled people at every level. Better data is collected and used for system improvement.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the goal for health?
- How much do you agree with the description of what success in health means?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the goal for health or the description of what success means?

Health actions

1. Review and improve policies and practices, so the health journey is equitable, accessible and inclusive.

This review will include all interactions with the health system, covering communication, information, technology, decision-making, service design and delivery, and the built environment.

Self-determination should be a key consideration of this review. This includes making tools for self-determination and supported decision-making standard practice in health care – especially for people with different communication, cognitive or psychosocial needs.

2. Build health workforce capability to deliver services that are inclusive, culturally safe, and easy to navigate.

Building workforce capability includes increasing the proportion of disabled people across the health and disability workforce, through recruitment and workplace policies, inclusive and accessible work environments, and career development.

It also includes embedding disability responsiveness and lived experience into health workforce training and ongoing professional development.

3. Create opportunities to build disabled people's skills and knowledge to take up health system roles.

Government agencies will create opportunities to build the capability and capacity of disabled people to carry out health system roles. These roles will include health system design, consultation, monitoring, leadership, advisory and governance roles.

4. Identify disabled people in national health data.

Identifying disabled people in data will make them more visible in the health system. It will enable better monitoring of population health outcomes and patient experiences.

5. Implement systems to enable disabled people to record their accessibility needs against their National Health Index.

Recording people's accessibility needs will mean these needs can easily be shared with health providers. Disabled people will not have to repeat their accessibility needs each time they engage with health services, and health providers will be better placed to plan and meet those needs.

Work to progress this action should be guided by disability community expectations and data sovereignty.

Questions

- How much do you agree with each action?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed actions?

Housing

The goal for housing

Disabled people and their whānau have affordable, healthy, secure and accessible homes that meet their needs.

What success in housing means

Disabled people have a range of suitable housing options in the community, so they can choose where they live. They enjoy secure tenure in housing, can move if they want, and do not experience delays accessing housing when leaving hospital inpatient care. The housing sector meets accessibility needs, and the supply of accessible housing meets demand, with monitoring in place. Urban design and planning create accessible neighbourhoods. Suitable housing improves disabled people's outcomes and protects against harm, neglect, violence and abuse.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the goal for housing?
- How much do you agree with the description of what success in housing means?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the goal for housing or the description of what success means?

Housing actions

1. Develop, consult on, and make publicly available, clear definitions of accessible homes, describing the key features of different levels of accessibility (for example, from basic universal design through to fully accessible).

Clear definitions of accessible homes can support the development of voluntary guidelines for accessibility for residential dwellings (housing action 6).

2. Improve data matching between disabled people and social housing properties with accessible features that meet their needs and ensure disabled people and their whānau are prioritised to accessible properties.

Data matching will identify disabled people's housing needs and social housing that meets those needs.

3. Identify possible barriers to increasing supply of accessible houses in the private market and investigate opportunities to remove those barriers. Understanding barriers to the supply of accessible housing will help target potential interventions to improve supply.

4. Review and explore ways to improve the housing modification system.

Addressing inefficiencies in the housing modification system could reduce current problems: inaccessibility of homes, increased costs, and health and safety issues for disabled people, whānau and carers.

5. Gather annual data on the housing-related needs of disabled people and compare this to what is being built in each region, to influence the housing market to build and make available more accessible housing.

Data will increase developers' awareness of the housing-related needs of disabled people and raise the profile of the demand for accessible homes.

6. Develop voluntary national guidelines on accessibility for residential dwellings.

Guidelines would be based on the definitions for accessible homes in housing action 1 and would set out best practice guidance for how to build accessible homes.

Questions

- How much do you agree with each action?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed actions?

Justice

The goal for justice

Disabled people's human rights and freedoms will be protected, and their disability rights will be realised. Disabled people will be treated fairly and equitably by the justice system. Justice system policies and practices will embed accessibility, inclusion and lived experience.

What success in justice means

Disabled children, young people and adults in care are safeguarded from abuse, neglect and violence. Disabled children and young people are supported to avoid the care and protection or youth justice systems. Disabled people who interact with the youth justice or criminal justice systems have their rights and accessibility needs considered and get support to transition out. Those charged with an offence but unable to stand trial are treated consistently with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act. Justice sector workforces have the skills to uphold disabled people's rights. Disabled parents in Family Court will have equitable access to family justice services.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the goal for justice?
- How much do you agree with the description of what success in justice means?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the goal for justice or the description of what success means?

Justice actions

1. Develop and implement a safeguarding framework for disabled people in long-term detention settings (such as prisons and youth justice residences) and Disability Support Services funded residential facilities. The framework will include preventing, reporting, responding, and safely removing disabled people from abusive situations.
2. Establish a cross-agency project to identify and address gaps in data and evidence about disabled people's experiences of crime, including for

disabled people in residential and secure facilities, and experiences of cyberbullying.

3. Develop a social investment plan for early intervention and support, to reduce the number of disabled children and young people entering the youth justice system.
4. The Law Commission has been asked to undertake a review of the Criminal Procedure (Mentally Impaired Persons) Act 2003 (CPMIP). This review is expected to consider the CPMIP's relationship to other relevant legislation, such as the Intellectual Disability (Compulsory Care and Rehabilitation) Act 2003 and Mental Health (Compulsory Assessment and Treatment) Act 1992.
5. Review, as work programmes allow, the effectiveness of current protections for disabled people in family law, including adoption, guardianship and personal property rights, to identify gaps where strengthened provisions or support are needed. Any review should also consider supported decision-making and use of plain language in key justice sector legislation and processes. Consideration should be given to reviewing human rights legislation, as work programmes allow.
6. Integrate lessons from disability-specific safeguarding approaches into the development of the future state for multi-agency responses to family violence, to strengthen outcomes for disabled people experiencing violence and abuse. This includes supporting workforce capability to ensure a coordinated, safe and disabled-person centred response.
7. Develop and implement a plan to make the justice sector workforce more disability competent, including in the use of trauma and trauma informed practices. This plan would include increasing recruitment and retention of disabled people and should consider mandatory professional standards.

Questions

- How much do you agree with each action?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on the proposed actions?

How we will measure progress

The Ministry will measure progress against the strategy to help inform an annual progress report to Parliament.

We will:

- ask government agencies to report back on the progress of actions they are responsible for
- use system level indicators to show whether the strategy is improving medium to long term outcomes for disabled people
- use indicators for each of the strategy's priority outcome areas, to be published in an interactive dashboard alongside more detailed supporting measures.

Questions

- How much do you agree with the following statements?
 - The strategy reflects what matters most to disabled people and their whānau.
 - I feel confident that the strategy will lead to meaningful change.
- Is there anything else you would like to see in the strategy?
- Do you have any further comments or suggestions on this strategy?