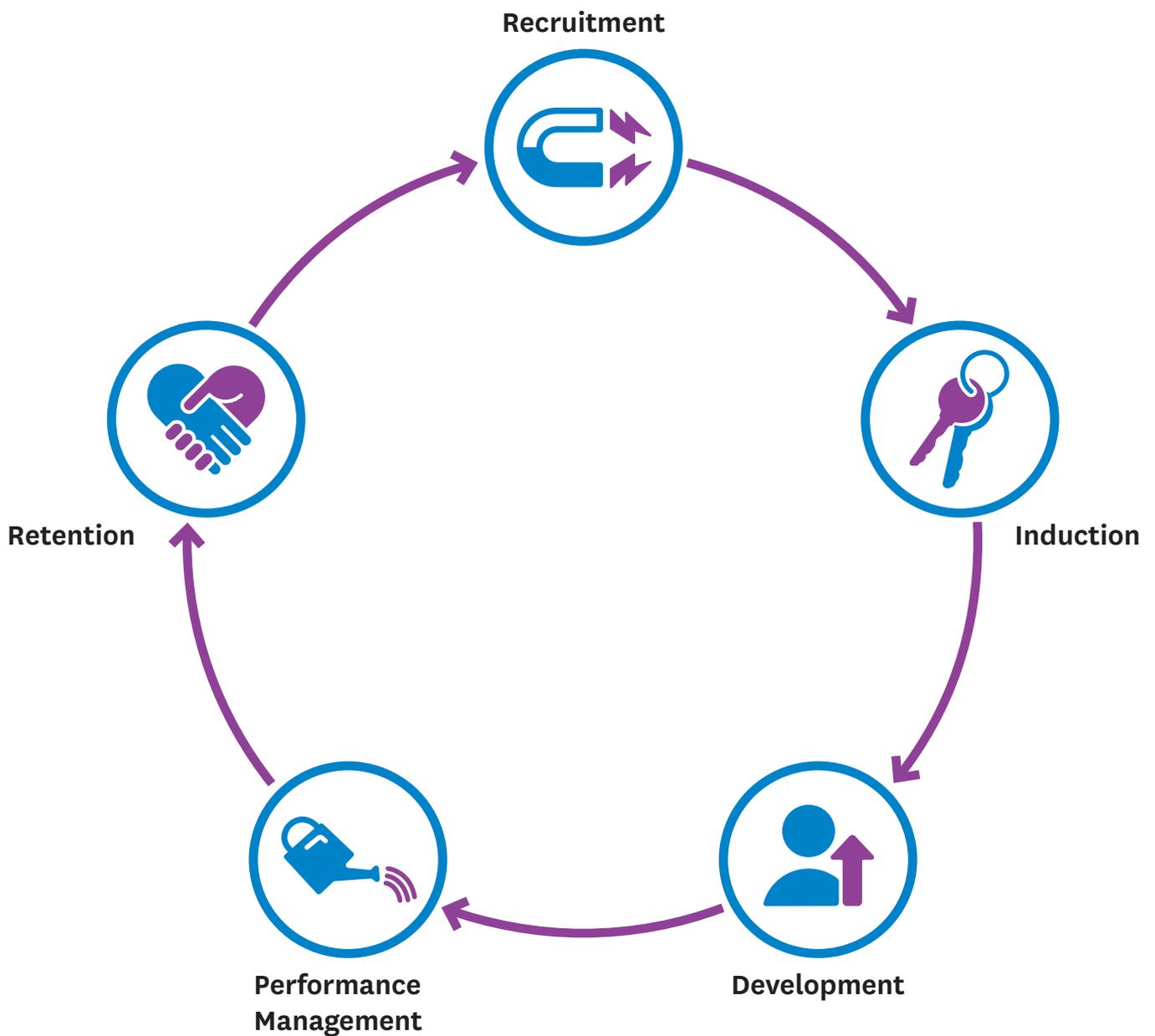


3 The Employment Cycle – advice for management and human resources teams



3

The Employment Cycle - advice for management and human resources teams



Confidently recruit and maximise the potential of disabled employees.

This section of the Toolkit provides advice to management and human resources teams to ensure that they can confidently recruit and maximise the potential of disabled employees throughout the employment cycle.

**This can involve:**

- having an equitable and accessible recruitment process where disabled people are encouraged to apply
- having job specifications that focus on the core requirements of the role and do not specify the methods the candidate should use to fulfil these
- providing disabled employees with the same opportunities for training and development as everyone else
- knowing if employees need reasonable accommodations
- being flexible and responsive to the disabled candidate or employee's needs; simple things like having a buddy for new employees or allowing an interviewee more time to answer a question can make a huge difference
- not making assumptions about what a person can do.

For quick answers to a number of commonly asked recruitment questions, human resources teams should see [Recruitment FAQs](#).

odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/making-it-easier-to-employ-disabled-people/

3.1

Recruitment

The pool of talented disabled people is large, as disabled people make nearly a quarter of New Zealand's working-age population.

Failing to attract disabled candidates for job vacancies means missing out on talented potential employees.

Consider whether any of the following aspects of recruitment might be acting as barriers to the employment of disabled people in your organisation.



Job descriptions and candidate specifications

The first step in any recruitment process is to understand what is required of the job. This information is then translated into a job specification.

Job descriptions and candidate specifications may needlessly exclude or discourage a highly qualified disabled candidate.

To make sure all qualified candidates have the opportunity to highlight their relevant skills and expertise:

- group job criteria into 'essential' and 'desirable' aspects
- rank criteria in order of importance, and consider whether minor tasks could be reassigned to another person
- don't include blanket requirements or exclusions in relation to health or disability
- specify qualifications only where there is a genuine occupational requirement
- focus on objectives rather than methods.

This approach allows both disabled and non-disabled applicants to discuss how they can meet the requirements of the job.

A small wording change could result in a wider pool of applicants. For example:

- Instead of specifying a 'minimum typing speed', the job criteria could include 'produce quality documents using a word-processing program'.
- A job is advertised which entails visiting older people in the local area. Instead of specifying that a full driver's licence is required, consider other ways of achieving the objective (such as using the bus).
- A receptionist's job description could include making coffee as an additional task rather than an essential one.



Job descriptions and candidate specifications should be reviewed each time they are used to make sure they are still relevant. This is critical in the rapidly changing global environment in which we live.



Advertising jobs

All job advertisements should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that disabled candidates are not excluded. The majority of disabled people prefer to apply for jobs through mainstream application routes. Employers should also encourage disabled applicants by specifically inviting them to apply. An example of such text could be:

XYZ is committed to equal opportunity in all our employment policies and procedures. All staff – regardless of gender, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious or ethical beliefs, political opinion or union affiliation – have access to equal employment opportunities, particularly recruitment, training and career performance management and conditions of employment.

Application form

When developing an application form, make sure that the information being gathered determines whether the person can perform the job essentials and that the application form is available in alternative formats.

Online recruitment

To ensure that your online advertisements and recruitment websites are accessible to disabled people:

- frequently test websites for user accessibility
- include html email in online communications
- create job alerts or job talent pools for unsuccessful candidates
- make sure people who have vision impairments can access the site using screen reading software
- create text labels for images and non-text items

- advertisements should ideally include welcoming messages and demonstrate a commitment to employing disabled people. Some examples include: “We welcome enquiries from everyone and value diversity in the workforce” and “We are willing to consider flexible working arrangements”
- have flexible automated scanning.

When candidates submit online applications, make sure that sorting software, such as spell-checkers, does not discriminate against disabled people.

If you find that your online recruitment process has accessibility problems, ensure that there is an easy alternative for potential employees to apply for positions whilst you address these problems.

Recruitment agencies

It is the employer’s responsibility to check that the recruitment agency they use does not discriminate against disabled candidates.

Check the following aspects with the recruitment agency:

- Have you told your recruitment agency that you want to recruit disabled people?
- What disability awareness training have the agency’s staff undertaken?
- What are their disability and equal opportunity policies?
- Are they aware of the hiring organisation’s policies, and are they compatible?
- How have they ensured that the mechanisms they use to advertise positions are accessible?
- How accessible are their premises?
- Do they understand and practise reasonable accommodation?
- Will the agency ensure that a disabled candidate who meets the core requirements will be granted an interview?

Selection

At each stage of the selection process, it is important to ensure that no barriers are placed in the way of qualified disabled candidates.

The selection process includes:

- deciding on a shortlist
- arranging interviews
- interviewing candidates
- deciding on a preferred candidate
- giving feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

One simple thing that can help to increase the number of disabled people employed in your organisation is to include all disabled candidates who meet the core requirements for the job on the shortlist.

Interviewing disabled candidates

When arranging interviews, ask all interviewees whether they have any specific requirements. These could include:

- a wheelchair-accessible interview room
- a New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) interpreter
- longer time to answer questions
- a hearing loop.

If an applicant declares a disability:

- contact them as soon as possible to make sure any accessibility requirements are met
- brief the receptionist and interviewers on the candidate's specific requirements.

When interviewing disabled candidates, only ask questions that would be asked of a non-disabled person. For example, most employers would ask "What support would you need to be effective in the role?" The Australian Network on Disability have a helpful factsheet about interviewing disabled people.

<https://www.and.org.au/pages/interviewing-people-with-disability.html>

Adjustments to tests

When aptitude and other tests are included in the selection process, ensure that any assessments are in an accessible format and relate to the requirements of the job.

Adjustments to tests may be reasonable, but this depends on how closely the test is related to the job and what reasonable accommodations you might have to make if the applicant was given the job.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments to tests are:

- allowing extra time to complete a test
- allowing an oral test where a candidate has difficulty with manual dexterity
- using technology for blind people
- letting a reader or scribe help with reading or writing during a test.

Feedback

Whenever possible, employers should give feedback to unsuccessful applicants. This is particularly important where there have been discussions about reasonable accommodation.

It must be made clear to disabled applicants that the decision has been based on their level of skill or experience, not on issues related to their disability.



Additional information

Employment NZ has some helpful information on hiring and recruitment.

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employment-for-disabled-people/>

3.2

Induction

A quality induction is important for all employees to be successful. Everything will be unfamiliar to new employees and unexpected issues could arise. Assigning another staff member to support a new employee for a specified time helps build confidence and make their entry into the new role more successful. This is good practice for inducting both disabled and non-disabled employees.

Any reasonable accommodation required would ideally be identified before the person started working, including making sure the environment was accessible.

If unexpected issues concerning accessibility or reasonable accommodation arise, discuss and resolve them as soon as possible, to enable all employees to be successful.



3.3

Development

To make the most of people's talents, we develop our high performers, including disabled people.

It is easy to make courses and training fully inclusive. Usually it does not take much to plan courses and training for disabled people:

- Ensure venues are accessible and training material is appropriately presented – the Accessible Meetings and Events checklist can assist.

ssc.govt.nz/sites/all/files/Accessible%20Meetings-Events.pdf

- Offer open and flexible learning as an alternative to venue-based learning.
- Be flexible about timetables, especially breaks.
- Provide participant with written materials prior to the training so they can familiarise themselves with the content.
- Offer precursor training.
- Check that the trainers are aware of the needs of disabled people.
- Vary the learning methods, as different people learn in different ways.
- Use a mentor or buddy system.



3.4

Performance management

Job performance for disabled employees is the same as for all employees – some meet expectations, some exceed and others don't meet expectations.

Managing the performance of disabled employees will therefore use the same policies and processes.

However, it is important that a disabled employee:

- is appropriately supported to participate in the performance management process
- has the right workplace adjustments (reasonable accommodations) in place.

Reasonable accommodation could include:

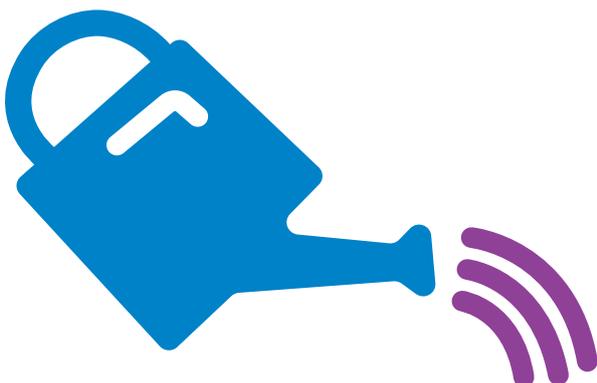
- flexibility around breaks and timeframes
- assign extra time for meetings
- use of NZSL interpreters
- additional training or coaching
- reallocating work that is not a core requirement.

Core requirements are activities and tasks that are:

- essential
- cannot be changed or allocated
- lead to significant consequences when not performed.

Moving work that is not a core requirement could be a reasonable accommodation. Remember that activities and tasks do not need to be undertaken exactly the same way – it is the results that matter.

If you identify difficulties that result from an impairment, whenever possible discuss these separately from any discussion of performance issues.



3.5

Retention

Being proactive about retaining disabled staff has a number of benefits for your organisation.



For example:

- **Adaptability:** by learning to manage their disability or health issues, disabled people have learned problem solving skills that are readily applicable to any modern workplace.
- **Increased staff morale:** By treating all employees fairly, including disabled people, you demonstrate that you are a good employer.
- **Lower costs:** improving retention through providing reasonable accommodation always costs less than having to recruit and train a new employee. It also increases the number of employees returning to work after a short- or long-term absence and reduces the costs associated with absences in the workplace.
- **Public reputation:** Being recognised as a good employer enhances your reputation with the New Zealand public.

Feeling valued is important to all employees. Ensuring that training and career development opportunities exist is one way to demonstrate how you value all employees, including disabled employees.

Likewise, with the right help, people experiencing mental health problems can continue in their role. This may involve agreeing to a 'return to work' plan that gradually increases the hours a team member works after being off work. It may also require a little more flexibility in terms of hours worked or support offered to them.

Supporting the retention of disabled staff can involve:

- encouraging and supporting an early return to work
- developing flexible working conditions
- providing disability responsiveness training for managers and immediate colleagues
- ensuring managers are aware of their obligations to provide reasonable accommodation



- providing specific information to colleagues and managers, with the agreement of the disabled employee, where reasonable accommodation requires the co-operation of others
- showing pride in the achievements of disabled staff, for example by:
 - including photos of disabled people on the organisation's website
 - referring them to training and career development opportunities
 - publicising success stories.

Specific disability organisations, can help employers understand their employee's situation better, and help develop their work as a better 'fit' for their evolving abilities.



Additional resource

JobAccess

The employer section of JobAccess has information to support employers with employing people with a disability.

www.jobaccess.gov.au/

Alzheimer's and Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin

Alzheimer's is often seen as an older person's disease but we know it can impact younger people. The attached link provides some advice and information to help a person continue to work for you.

<http://www.alzwisc.org/In%20the%20workplace.html>