



## Submission on the Draft Disability Employment Action Plan February 2020

1. Imagine Better supports the need for a new approach to ensuring equitable employment outcomes for disabled people.
2. This approach needs to be driven by a sense of outrage and unwillingness to accept a world where unemployment rates for disabled people are so much higher than for non-disabled people, and the poverty and exclusion these rates lead to.
3. Imagine Better supports the goals and objectives in the draft plan and believes that the plan is right to focus on both the supply and demand side of the labour market.
4. The plan is less persuasive when it comes to the proposed action areas. Many of the suggested actions are not clear or bold enough to drive the kind of transformative approach needed to significantly shift the dial on structural unemployment. At the same time the lack of a clear resourcing strategy is a significant weakness. There appears to be an assumption that the plan will be 'fiscally neutral'. There is a risk, therefore, that the plan will just mandate more of the same things that despite significant investment have not led to any real shift in unemployment rates for disabled people. To address this the plan needs to be much clearer about what interventions are working now, and what new approaches are required.
5. In particular:
  - a. The plan needs to address the dramatically changing nature of work and employment. The future of work will be radically different from the present. The risks and opportunities created by an increasingly automated, global, and digital future need to be set out in the plan, and actions built on our best understanding of what the future of work looks like need to be included.
  - b. Transition from school is a major area of failure, especially for young people with learning disabilities. While the plan notes transition as a proposed action area, the plan needs to demonstrate a clear understanding of what's working in transition – including international

- best-practice. A complete re-think and redesign of transition from school is required.
- c. The plan needs to include consideration of both 'carrot' and 'stick' approaches for employers, including tax breaks and requirements to ensure diverse workforces.
  - d. The plan needs to address the specific needs of people with learning disabilities who continue to be excluded from the workforce at very high levels.
  - e. The plan needs to include a focus on the related areas of transport and housing.
  - f. The plan needs more actions designed to ensure that everyone in the work force – employers and employees – understand what's required to create genuinely accessible, diverse workplaces, where everyone feels like they belong and have a right to be there.
  - g. Disabled people currently fare much worse in terms of success in higher levels of education (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/tertiary-education/participation>), and the current main barriers to success should be identified and fully understood (as there is a gap in knowledge of this area). The plan needs to do this and also include more concrete actions to increase successful participation in degree-level education by disabled people.
6. The final plan needs a much clearer and more specific definition of success. The plan should explicitly set out to track improvements in existing indicators like the % of young disabled people who after leaving school are not in employment, education or training, and the overall employment rates compared with the non-disabled population. There should also be some measures specifically about people with learning disabilities.
7. More data is required including:
- a. employment outcomes for people with high support needs
  - b. the levels, success factors, and employment results of micro-enterprise, social enterprise, and self-employment
  - c. the attitudes of employers
8. The overall success of the plan needs to be measured in changes to the inequitable employment outcomes currently experienced by disabled people. The plan should signal (and monitor progress towards) an ambitious equity-based goal – for example to double the employment rate of disabled people over the next 5 years.

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### About Imagine Better

Imagine Better provides resources that help disabled people, their families and whānau, and their allies, take action for a more accessible, fair, and inclusive world. We want to help build a powerful, passionate, growing, well-resourced and effective disability rights and justice movement.

Imagine Better is a charitable company governed and staffed by people with disabilities, family members and allies.