



Disability Recruitment Toolkit

Tips for hiring managers

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1. Introduction

The approach taken in the creation of the toolkit is to provide a useful guide to be used in conjunction with support from the Disability Advisor and HR Advisors. The disability sector can be complex to some people and can change so this toolkit is not designed to be a comprehensive guide, rather provide a general to help recruiting managers and HR advisor. In some cases, this toolkit will form the first step and link to several providers who provide assistance. More information and support for recruiting managers is available from our Disability Advisor and HR Advisors.

Our recruitment policy is designed around the premise of choosing the best person for each role. Where necessary, an applicant with a disability will be provided with all practical assistance to enable the applicant to be successful should they have the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience for the role.

2. Relevant Policies

1.1 Equal Employment Opportunities Policy

Hamilton City Council is committed to equal opportunity in all its employment policies and procedures particularly recruitment, selection and appointment practices, training, performance management, conditions of employment and the work environment.

It is the individual's ability and performance that are the major criteria for success regardless of gender, race, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, family status, religious or ethical beliefs, political opinion or union affiliation. EEO does not assume that everyone has the same abilities, or that everyone will reach the same levels of status, seniority or remuneration. Rather, it requires that everyone be given an equal chance to use their talents and abilities.

All applications for employment from potential employees are assessed on the basis of the applicant's knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. Where necessary, the employee with a disability will be provided with all practical assistance to enable the employee to perform to maximum efficiency. HCC will ensure that so far as is reasonably practicable and within the constraints of existing buildings, the Council premises are accessible and safe for disabled employees.

1.2 Recruitment Policy

The purpose of our recruitment policy and the supporting guidelines is to establish consistent procedures to minimise cost and maximise efficiency and effectiveness in the recruitment and selection of employees. The following principles assist in achieving consistency and efficiency:

- All employment decisions must comply with relevant legislative requirements and be in accordance with the Council's Recruitment & Selection policy (specifically clause 14.4).
- Recruitment is based on Council's staffing needs as approved in staff Establishment Schedules or through an approved business case.
- All aspects of recruitment and selection (advertising, interviewing and testing) accurately reflect the requirements of the position.
- A consistent and fair approach to recruitment and selection is maintained at all times with a view to appointing the best person for the position.
- Confidentiality is maintained throughout the recruitment process.

3. Statistics

Stats taken from disability survey 2013:

- 24 percent of the New Zealand population were identified as disabled, a total of 1.1 million people.
- People aged 65 or over were much more likely to be disabled (59 percent) than adults under 65 years (21 percent) or children under 15 years (11 percent).
- Māori and Pacific people had higher-than-average disability rates, after adjusting for differences in ethnic population age profiles.

Information from the EEO Trust website (citing the Ministry of Health, Living with a Disability in New Zealand 2004):

- Around one in five (19%) disabled people in the workforce needed some form of personal assistance, technical equipment or other workplace modifications to enable them to work in their current job. Modified or different duties, including flexible work hours, was the most common requirement indicated by 9% of these people.
- Alterations to the work area or building were required by 2% of people in the workforce.
- There is funding available to cover any costs which are directly related to a person's impairment.

4. Types of Disability

There are many types of impairments ranging from those that a person is born with through to those, which are the result of an accident. Disabilities can be grouped under a number of descriptive headings:

- **Physical Disabilities:** A disability which affects mobility e.g. Reach, dexterity, locomotion
- **Communication/Sensory Disabilities:** A disability that affects a communication function such as hearing, sight or speech
- **Learning Disabilities:** An impairment affecting a function of the brain
- **Mental Health Problems:** An illness resulting in a behavioural disorder
- **Hidden Disabilities:** A disability that is not obvious or seen at all times such as epilepsy, or diabetes
- **Other Disabilities:** Disabilities not covered by the categories above, such as disfigurement and skin disorders

People with impairments become disabled by barriers in the environment, most of which can be removed. For example, people's vision can sometimes be corrected by prescription lenses; ramps and lifts enable people using wheelchairs to access different levels of a building; well monitored medication can ensure a good quality of life for diabetics or people with mental health issues.

5. Language

There are a number of words and phrases that reinforce a negative attitude towards disability and people with a disability. Words such as 'cripple', 'spastic', 'deaf and dumb', 'handicapped' present an unacceptable stigma of disability and people with a disability. Alternatives such as 'wheelchair user', or 'people with learning difficulties', are more appropriate and less likely to cause offence.

6. The Team

Challenging stereotypes and people's fears is a key step towards creating an inclusive work environment where everyone can be productive. Disability awareness training can make a difference to people's attitudes and enable employers to create an environment which encourages creativity and commitment. Having disabled people conduct the training can help give managers and co-workers some experience of disability and break down negative perceptions based on fear and expectations of incapacity rather than ability.

7. Myths

Receiving an application from a person with a disability should not deter you from short listing and interviewing the applicant if the person has the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience required for the position. There are many myths about the ability of people with a disability to function effectively in the workplace. These are just that – myths.

Myth: Staff with a disability are not as productive, have poorer attendance and are more likely to have accidents than staff without a disability.

Fact: The performance of people with a disability is the same as that of their co-workers without a disability. Workers with a disability have a comparable safety record.

Myth: Workers with a disability cannot be terminated.

Fact: Workers with a disability can be terminated under the same process used to terminate any employee. This includes performance, conduct and medical capacity processes.

Myth: It costs more to hire a worker with a disability.

Fact: There is no evidence to show that this is the case.

Myth: Workers with a disability require special training which is expensive.

Fact: Most workers with a disability can learn a job the same way as a worker without a disability. Where special training or adaptive equipment is required, outside assistance is often available, often at no cost to the employer.

Myth: People with disabilities should be happy with any kind of job they can get.

Fact: Workers with disabilities, like their non-disabled counterparts, want a long-term, rewarding and full-filling job offering financial freedom.

8. Recruitment and Selection

During the recruitment process we can and should ask all applicants if they have any conditions (including disabilities) that may affect how they would do the job. If so, we ask the applicant what specific changes would be necessary for the applicant to be able to perform the tasks of the job (e.g., modifications to equipment).

A number of disability sector organisations support people with disabilities, and they may be able to assist with practical solutions, in some cases meeting the costs of any equipment required. Hamilton City Council's Disability Advisor and your HR Advisor can help.

Some people with a disability face a dilemma when applying for roles. They are concerned if they disclose they have a disability their application may be declined even if they meet the requirements for the role. Alternatively if they do not disclose a disability to a prospective employer, and if the disability is discovered during the recruitment process or when employed, the employer may be upset that the disability was not disclosed earlier and this may sour the employment relationship.

8.1 Creating the Position Description

The position description is critical to the recruitment process and decisions made at this early stage will be flow on to other parts of the recruitment process. Before starting the recruitment process, check the person specification section lists only the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience actually required to do the job.

Some items listed in the person specification such as driver's licences can pose an unnecessary barrier. If the person does not need to drive while at work, and can get to work he or she should be considered. If they do need to travel to other work locations now and then (such as to attend training), they may be able to find alternative means such as taking a taxi or sharing transport with other staff going to the same location are options.

8.2 Application Process

As part of our commitment to making our recruitment process inclusive, we continue to review and improve our job application process. Our focus is to make our recruitment process as accessible as possible.

8.3 Advertising a vacancy

It is unlawful under the Human Rights Act 1993 to advertise a vacancy in such a way to discriminate on the basis of disability. An advertisement must list only requirements relevant to the job.

8.4 Application form

All applicants need to complete an application form. The questions relevant to disability include declaring:

- 1) Any medical condition (physical or mental) or injury that may prevent the applicant from carrying out the duties of the role. If the applicant answers yes to this question, they are able to provide details of the medical condition and any changes to the work environment that may be necessary.
- 2) Any prescription medication or drugs that prevent the applicant from carrying out the duties of the role.
- 3) Agreement to obtaining a medical clearance.

Reviewing the application form prior to the interview is important. If an applicant has declared a disability, it may warrant further discussions with the applicant on what can be done to accommodate them. This discussion could be prior to the interview.

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8.5 Reviewing CVs

The CV review (shortlisting) process is based upon the requirements of the role. If an applicant has disclosed a disability, and meets the rest of the criteria for the role, the applicant's needs to be considered. The applicant with the disability may be the best applicant, and we may be able to accommodate their specific needs.

8.6 Interview preparation

Ensure the interview location is accessible to applicants with mobility, visual, or hearing disabilities (e.g. are there mobility car parks nearby; is there a ramp or flat entrance; are there accessible toilets available; if the interview is not on the ground floor, is there a lift)

When setting up interview times, explain the interview process in detail, giving opportunity for the applicant to request a disability-related accommodation (e.g., interpreter for a hearing impaired applicant)

8.7 Interview Questions

All questions during an interview need to be job-related, open ended and focussed on the applicant's knowledge, skills, and experience. Only ask questions directly relevant to the applicant's ability to perform the job. Ask if the applicant has any conditions that may affect how he or she would do the job.

Where the applicant does have a disability, ask what specific requirements would be necessary for the applicant to be able to perform the role (e.g., modifications to equipment). Should the applicant require some specific resources or support, ask the applicant if the employer can assist with providing the resources required. Ideally the applicant will be aware of the resources required and the best way to obtain any such resources. Ask the applicant what has been effective in previous roles.

You can ask the applicant to undergo a medical or occupational therapist assessment to ensure you have all the information required to assess an applicant's ability to perform the role. Again, we do have a duty to accommodate any disability where practicable.

8.8 Interview Etiquette

When interviewing any applicant with a disability

- Always offer them the same courtesies that would be offered any applicant.
- Always offer to shake hands. People with limited hand function, or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is acceptable. For those who cannot shake hands, a touch on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence is acceptable.
- Do not avoid eye contact, but don't stare at a person's disability or call undue attention to it.
- Do not ask what happened or how long they have been disabled.
- If you feel it is appropriate, offer assistance (e.g., opening a door), but do not assume it will be accepted. Do not give assistance without asking first.
- Expect the same amount of punctuality and performance from people with disabilities that is required of every applicant.
- People with disabilities expect equal treatment, not special treatment.

When interviewing an applicant who uses a wheelchair

- Do not lean on the wheelchair. The chair is part of the space that belongs to the person.
- Sit at the person's eye level to conduct the interview where possible.
- Do not push the wheelchair unless asked.
- Keep accessibility in mind (e.g. remove chairs in the middle of the room)

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- Do not be embarrassed to use phrases such as “Lets walk over to the office”
- Speak to the applicant, not to a companion who may be pushing.
- Never patronise the applicant by patting them on the head, or shoulder.

When interviewing an applicant who is vision impaired

- Vision impairments may range from difficulty reading small print to total blindness
- Identify yourself and introduce anyone else who is present immediately.
- Give specific directions (*‘The chair is one metre to your left’*)
- Speak in a normal tone of voice. Do not shout.
- Do not be embarrassed to use phrases such as “Do you see what I mean”
- Keep doors either opened or closed, but not half open.
- Do not touch an applicant’s cane.
- Do not touch or pat a guide dog, it is working.
- If necessary offer guidance by letting the applicant take your arm, at or about the elbow.
- If written materials will be provided at the interview, find out prior to the interview if an accommodation will be required (e.g., large print, a Braille reader).
- During the interview, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person who is speaking.
- Let the applicant know when the interview is at an end.

When interviewing an applicant who is hearing impaired

- The applicant may request an interpreter. Plenty of notice should be given to secure an interpreter. The employer may be responsible for the costs. Information is available from www.isign.co.nz
- Hearing impairments may range from partial loss to complete deafness.
- If it is necessary to attract the applicant’s attention use a physical signal such as a tap on the shoulder.
- If the applicant is lip reading, speak clearly and at a normal pace. Do not exaggerate your speech. Sit where there is good light. Use a normal tone of voice.
- Keep hands away from your mouth when speaking.
- Communicate by using a combination of gestures, facial expressions and written notes.
- Brief, concise written notes may be helpful.
- If you do not understand what an applicant is telling you, ask them to repeat or write the sentence. Do not pretend to understand.
- If a sign language interpreter is being used, always speak directly to the applicant. Do not say to the applicant “Tell her that...”. Seat the interpreter beside the person conducting the interview, across from the applicant. The interpreter will be a few words behind the speaker, so allow for the extra time it will take for the applicant to respond.
- Speak to the applicant, not the interpreter. Always maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter.

When interviewing an applicant with a speech impediment

- Allow time for the applicant to speak.
- Resist the temptation to speak for the person, or complete the sentence for them.
- If you do not understand what an applicant is telling you, ask them to repeat or write the sentence. Do not pretend to understand.

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8.9 Medical Information

To make an informed choice, you may need to seek medical information about an applicant's disability.

8.10 Referee Checks

As with any part of the selection process, the referee checks need to be based upon the requirements of the role. The questions need to be job-related and focussed on the applicant's knowledge, skills, abilities and experience. Where the referee does declare that an applicant has a disability, ask what changes were made to assist the person in their role.

8.11 Assessment Activities

To identify the best person for a role a range of selection activities can be used, other than interviews and reference checks. Some recruiting managers use personality assessments, ability tests, computer tests (typing) and work based test. Any assessment activity should be based upon the requirements of the role. The best assessment activities are based on actually activities the person would do in the role. Examples of assessment activities are given below:

- Communications role - ask the applicant to write a response to a social media comment
- Role with filing - ask the applicants to file documents in the correct order
- Role with community consultation - ask the applicant to create a consultation plan and present the plan to the interview panel (to emulate a public presentation).

When advising the short-listed applicants of the assessment process, explain the process in detail, giving the applicant an opportunity to request a disability related support (e.g., an interpreter for a hearing impaired applicant).

9. Finding support options

In some cases an applicant with a disability will not need any resources. In other cases the applicant may already have the resources they need (e.g. hearing aid). If the applicant needs resources, they may know if any support organisations can help. The applicant may already work with an organisation and they could help to find workable solutions.

A number of organisations provide services within the disability sector, and several of these are listed below at the bottom of this section. Some organisations provide support in specialist areas. Your HR Advisor and Disability Advisor can help you.

In some cases an occupational therapist could assist with determining the resources required. Where an occupational assessment is required to assess specific job related abilities (e.g. eyesight) this should be limited to the short-listed applicants.

9.1 Agencies that assist in the employment of people with disabilities

ACC

One of its responsibilities is to buy health and disability support services to treat, care for and rehabilitate injured people, including assistance with employment. Further information is available from their website at: <http://www.acc.org.nz> or call free on 0800 101996.

ASENZ (Advisors for Supported Employment in New Zealand) and part of NZDSN

ASENZ was established to offer support, encouragement and advocacy to those organisations providing supported employment services, service users of supported employment and others with an interest in the inclusion of people with disability in the mainstream workforce. <http://www.asenz.org.nz>

BLIND FOUNDATION

The Blind Foundation can provide employer awareness training to you if you have employed or are considering employing a blind or partially sighted person. They can also help you make sure a workplace is functional and safe: <http://blindfoundation.org.nz/learn/information-for-businesses/>

NZDSN (Disability Support Network)

The New Zealand Disability Support network's (NZDSN) vision is an inclusive New Zealand where all disabled people are included and valued, their human rights are promoted and protected, and they are supported and encouraged to maximise their potential. <http://www.nzdsn.org.nz/>

CAREER MOVES

Career Moves provides supported employment services and transition services to the greater Waikato area. Career Moves supports people with all disabilities and seeks to find work and assist those people in work. www.careermoves.org.nz

DEAF AOTEAROA

<http://www.deaf.org.nz/>

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EEO TRUST

The EEO Trust works to increase employer's awareness and acceptance of EEO. They provide [resources](#), produce the [EEO Trust News](#) twice yearly, and conduct [seminars](#). Further information is available from their website at: <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/>

ENABLE NEW ZEALAND

Enable New Zealand, formerly the New Zealand Disabilities Resource Centre, manages health funding designated to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities. They provide access to information, research, funding of equipment, housing alterations, vehicle purchase and modifications, and needs assessment and service co-ordination. Enable New Zealand services are available to people with disabilities, their families, employers, health professionals and disability support organisations. <http://www.nzdrc.govt.nz>

ENRICH +

Enrich+ is a not for profit charitable trust. Following years of growth, services are offered throughout the greater Waikato and King Country. Enrich+ work alongside individuals to develop their skills and abilities and enhance inclusion in the communities of their choice. <http://enrichplus.org.nz/>

MAINSTREAM SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

The Ministry of Social Development provides employment opportunities for people with disabilities through the provision of the Mainstream Programme. This programme facilitates two year placements for people with disabilities in selected State sector organisations and private enterprises through a package of salary and training subsidies, then supports and co-ordinates each placement. <https://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/disability.../mainstream/>

WORKBRIDGE

Workbridge provides a specialist job placement service for employers and for people with all types of disability. They administer support funding on behalf of Work and Income. This funding can be used to help with additional costs directly relating to a person's disability when entering training, a job or self employment. They will organise workplace modifications, job coaches, specialised equipment, and tips on training for people who have certain disabilities (sometimes with financial assistance to the employer). Further information is available from their website at: <http://www.workbridge.co.nz>

9.2 Choosing the best applicant

We need to be mindful when choosing the best applicant for the role, that the decision is based upon the requirements of the role. Should an applicant with a disability require practical and reasonable support to be successful in the role, this should not be taken into account when deciding who the best applicant for the role is.

10. More information.....

For more information contact your HR Advisor or our disability advisor.

11. Acknowledgements

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