

The right to work: maximising the employment potential of young New Zealanders



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Young people are our future wage earners, decision makers and leaders. However, for many young people in Aotearoa New Zealand their right to work is greatly hindered. The risk of exclusion from employment remains greatest for Māori and Pacific young people, for young people in deprived areas including work-poor rural communities and for disabled young people. The Commission has looked for examples of effective solutions that have resulted in increased youth employment for these groups. This online resource shares what we found.

Foreword

In the coming decades, the number of New Zealanders over 65 is expected to more than double. Young people will be increasingly relied upon as wage earners, decision makers and leaders. Maximising the employment potential of young New Zealanders will play a crucial role in our country's future.

Worryingly, for many young people in Aotearoa New Zealand their right to work is greatly hindered.

The Human Rights Commission highlighted youth employment in its *National Conversation about Work* in 2009, and then again in *Tracking equality at work* in 2011 calling it a “ticking time bomb”. The Commission also advocated for a national plan for youth employment – and welcomed steps taken by the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs in 2012 to roll out a national youth to work strategy.

The risk of exclusion from employment remains greatest for Māori and Pacific young people, for young people in deprived areas including work-poor rural communities and for disabled young people. Each of these groups is disproportionately represented in unemployment figures.

The Commission has looked for examples of effective solutions that have resulted in increased youth employment for these groups. This online resource shares what we found. It includes case studies which focus on young people with disabilities as well as youth employment initiatives in South Auckland and the Far North.

We were very impressed by the people we met and their “whatever it takes” attitude to engage and support young people into sustainable employment. They all emphasised the importance of work for well being, health, self esteem, providing income and strengthening communities. Jobs change lives and when young people are in work it not only opens up new opportunities for them, but also for their families.

These case studies highlight the need to focus on ‘work readiness’ and helping young people to gain the confidence, skills and attitudes necessary to find a job and build a career. They also demonstrate the importance of providing ongoing support and pastoral care when a young person begins a new job, smoothing the way for both employer and employee.

The case studies also teach us that getting young people into jobs isn’t just a ‘tick box’ exercise. It is about building the aspirations of our young people and helping them to achieve long-term, sustainable employment. It is also about ensuring that communities and businesses understand and embrace the long term benefits of employing young people.

We hope that these case studies will serve to inspire young people and employers alike.

Dr Jackie Blue
EEO Commissioner

What is the right to work?

Everyone has the right to work.

The right to work is a fundamental human right which is set out in international law.

Work plays a central role in people's quality of life. It provides people with a livelihood to support themselves and their families. Work is also a source of personal dignity, family stability, community wellbeing and economic growth.

The right to work also impacts on other human rights such as the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to education, the right to housing and the right to culture.

The right to work is set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It states that:

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

[The Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(Article 23\)](#)

The [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (Articles 6–8) defines the core elements of the right to work. These are: the opportunity to work; free choice of employment; just and favourable conditions of work; non-discrimination and the right to form and join trade unions.

Other internationally-agreed human rights instruments recognise the right to work for particular groups, including [people with disabilities](#); [women](#) and [indigenous peoples](#).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treaty of Waitangi is our own, unique statement of human rights. When it comes to the right to work, the Treaty provides for Māori to have equal opportunities and outcomes at work as well as for Māori participation and leadership in decisions that impact upon Māori employment.

Unfortunately, the fundamental right to work – whether you are a disabled person, Pākehā, Māori, Pacific, Asian, gay, lesbian, a transgender or intersex person, male, female, young or old – is still not a reality for all New Zealanders.

The domestic and international human rights framework provides an important lever to realise and promote the right to work. Human rights can be used as a tool to:

- 1 Hold decision-makers accountable for decisions, policies and practices that impact on the right to work
- 2 Empower people to use their voice and use rights as leverage for action
- 3 Promote non-discrimination and the equal enjoyment of rights by all people
- 4 Enable participation in decision-making
- 5 Ensure that decision-making is linked to the agreed human rights norms as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights covenants and treaties.

Case studies: South Auckland

CadetMax

CadetMax has helped hundreds of Māori and Pacific **young people into employment, thanks to a focus on** work readiness; job placement and post-employment support.

CadetMax has helped over 600 Māori and Pacific young people into employment since 2008. The initiative, run by the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, supports young job seekers who are receiving Work and Income benefits to enter the workforce. The CadetMax programme includes three key phases: work readiness; job placement and post-employment support.

Finding a job is a very scary experience for a young person, says CadetMax General Manager, Leah Gates. “Most young people that come to CadetMax have never been

employed before. They can be frightened - so the first thing we do is give them a mega boost in confidence”.

“We also help them to develop the skills and behaviours they need to cope in the world of work. That means helping them put together a CV, practice interview skills and learn how to speak to a potential employer. It’s also about learning day-to-day workplace skills like getting to work on time, understanding an employment contract and filling in a time sheet.”

Once a young person is ‘work ready’; the next phase is the job hunt. CadetMax knows that for a young person to stay in employment, they have to be matched to the right job. It asks each young person about their ambitions and goals and encourages them to think about what transferable skills they have. Not just skills they gained at school but also at home, at church or in their sports team. Are they good at relating to people? Do they have good organisational skills?

When applying for jobs, Gates says, young people often end up at the bottom of the pile. “We know that young people do not break down the doors into employment by finding jobs on Seek and Trade Me. Young people find jobs because they are networked into jobs.”

CadetMax draws on the networks and reputation of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce to place young people in employment. “We call on our constituency in the business community to help place young people into jobs in areas such as transportation, hospitality, call centres, distribution and logistics. The Chamber’s reputation helps to get employers onboard, and in return we are able to provide them with a valuable resource – work-ready young employees.”

Placing a young person into a job is not the end of the process. “Young people don’t just need help to find a job, they also need support to stay in work. We know that supporting a young person through their first few weeks on the job is crucial. We make sure that each young person and their employer has access to a mentor. The mentor is an advocate and friend, who is at hand to give positive reinforcement and advice to the young person. Their job is also to iron out any speed wobbles that occur and alleviate any risks for the employer. That could mean making sure the young person is getting to work on time, sorting out transport issues, giving

budgeting advice or finding a second job placement if the first one doesn't lead to a permanent job.”

Michael Barnett, Chief Executive of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce believes that youth employment is a crucial issue for the business community. “Businesses hold the key. We need more business to know that if they take the time and are patient they can change the future of a young person. When a young person stays in work it doesn't just mean a brighter future for them and their family, but also for communities and regions.”

The Heritage Auckland Hotel has employed over 20 young people with support from CadetMax.

“We want to give job opportunities to local young people because we believe in looking after our community, says Human Resources Manager, Kate Waterworth, it reflects our organisation's strong values and family culture.”

“CadetMax has helped us find young people to take on roles as room attendants, food and beverage stewards and kitchen assistants. A young person can learn the skills they need on the job, but what's really important is that they have a positive attitude. CadetMax knows what we are looking for and understands our company values.

CadetMax saves us time and recruitment costs, they also help ensure that a young person is ready to work. Our close relationship means that both sides can be open and frank, and we can work together to sort out any teething problems. And they don't drop everything as soon as a new recruit has started work - they check-in regularly to make sure that everything is okay.

Taking on young people does take some extra effort and we make sure all new staff members have a buddy who will help them to settle in. The effort is worth it though especially when you see young workers develop and progress.

A wide variety of guests stay in our hotel and it is important that there is also variety in our staff. Having young people in our organisation works really well. They bring bright ideas, good IT knowledge and new perspectives. We would

encourage other businesses to do more to tap into the large pool of local, capable young people seeking employment.”

In-Work NZ Limited

In-Work NZ Limited is committed to helping young Māori and Pacific people to find a job and stay in work - 95 percent of its clients achieve the critical milestone of being employed for six months or longer.

In-Work NZ Limited will do whatever it takes to help young Māori and Pacific people into employment, says Managing Director, Adrian Roberts. “Our focus is on preparing people for work, placing people into work, supporting people at work and retaining people in work.”

In-Work uses a welfare-to-work approach, assisting young people on unemployment benefits to enter the workforce. Since 2001 it has supported thousands of young people from South Auckland into local jobs.

Roberts says, “We start by helping them to get work ready. That means looking at everything from their interview skills and job aspirations through to making sure they have a bank account and an IRD number. Some young people we meet have developed bad habits over time and we need to get them to the stage where they can turn up on time, dressed appropriately and with the confidence to knock on doors and put themselves forward.”

In-Work also makes sure that families are engaged in the process. “A big part of our work is making home visits. By regularly meeting with parents and families we can get their buy-in and work together with them to support their child into employment.”

In-Work takes a similar approach with employers too and has developed a strong network of local employers in areas such as hospitality, labouring, transport, logistics, administration, retail and manufacturing. “We have to earn our stripes,

employers need to know that they can rely on us to help them cope with the perceived risk of employing a young person.”

CV Compton Ltd is a transport business that employs young people via In-Work. Jodi Compton says they are often looking for young employees who are prepared to take on entry-level jobs. “Work brokers like In-Work help us to find new young employees that are ready and willing to work – they save us time. In-Work know our business well, so we can trust them to find the right people.”

For In-Work’s youth clients, most of the issues that lead to an employment breakdown occur outside of work. These barriers can range from personal issues such as self-confidence, family pressures and relationship problems through to not having transport to get to work. If something is standing in the way of a young person getting a job, or staying in a job, then In-Work will step in. Their attitude is to do whatever is needed and often what is required is moral support and motivation.

In-Work may pay for a young person to get a drivers license, take them to buy clothes for a job interview or buy them workboots and safety gear so they can start a labouring job. Sometimes a young person needs financial help if there is a gap between when their benefit stops and their first paycheque arrives, or assistance with budgeting. “Most of these things we are not funded to do”, says Adrian Roberts, “but they need to happen if a young person is going to stay in work, so we do them”.

In-Work’s genuine commitment to retaining young people in work means that 95 percent of its clients achieve the critical milestone of being employed for six months or longer. Some of In-Work’s achievements cannot be measured by numbers and placements. “The real results are when you see a young person begin to break the cycle of disadvantage, participate in their community, contribute to their family and be a role model for others. One of the most satisfying experiences we have is when a young person we’ve placed into a job comes back to us years later looking for their own staff to hire.”

Pacific Employment Support Service

In-Work NZ Limited is one of four organisations delivering the Pacific Employment Support Service (PESS), an initiative funded by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs aimed at supporting disengaged and at-risk Pacific youth into sustainable employment and training.

Unlike In-Work's other contracts which focus on young beneficiaries referred from Work and Income, PESS focuses on Pacific young people who are still at school or who are trying to make the transition into work or further learning.

"Young people are coming to us because they want to, not because they are told to, says development coordinator Bobbie Roberts. "Not only that, but we are able to make a difference in a young person's life at an earlier stage, before they are forced to go on benefits and before they have picked up bad habits. In order for youth employment to really grow in South Auckland, we need to be offering support at all stages."

By April 2014, 1263 Pacific young people had been welcomed onto the PESS initiative. So far, 502 have entered employment, with 316 placed into further education and training.

We work in collaboration with families, schools, training providers, businesses and community organisations to get a young person up on that ladder and begin their journey. The power of word of mouth and our strong links with our community mean that we are totally oversubscribed. So many parents want their children to be part of it so that they can gain skills, find jobs, contribute to their families and lead happy lives.

Pasifika Medical Association

Pasifika Medical Association is building the Pacific health workforce by nurturing the aspirations and academic achievement of Pacific young people.

The Pasifika Medical Association is an active forum for Pacific health professionals that is passionate about supporting more Pacific young people to enter the health science workforce.

“We need to change our views on what is possible for our young people”, says Chief Executive, Debbie Sorenson. “Improving youth employment isn’t just about getting young people into jobs, it’s about nurturing our future leaders. It’s about setting the highest possible aspirations for our young people and giving them the support they need to excel academically and in their career.”

“We knew that if we wanted to target our Pacific young people and get them into health science careers, we needed to take the lead ourselves. As Pacific people, we can draw on our own well-established relationships and networks in the Pacific community - and we have the trust of local families.”

The Pasifika Medical Association’s approach starts with raising expectations of educational success. “In order for more Pacific young people to pursue a career in health science, they need to be inspired and supported to get the qualifications they need to enter tertiary education. Once they have that foundation the employment opportunities really open up for them. They can be anything from a health science teacher through to a doctor, nurse, midwife, dietician, physiotherapist or lab technician.”

The heart of the Pasifika Medical Association’s youth programme is the Health Science Academy at Ōtāhuhu College which gives students a unique opportunity to prepare for a career in health science. The Academy provides an intensive learning environment and an academically rigorous curriculum, under the leadership of teacher, Fiona Toloa. Students are motivated to achieve their educational goals and participate in before and after school tutorials, holiday workshops and field excursions.

A strong partnership between home and school is a crucial part of the programme’s success. The Academy holds regular meetings with teachers, parents and caregivers to help families participate in their child’s learning and support them to achieve their academic and career goals.

Academy students are also connected to the Pasifika Medical Association’s wide network of Pacific health professionals and Pacific science students who are on hand to provide inspiration and advice. Not only are Academy students supported

during their time at school but also throughout their tertiary studies, with access to mentoring, career advice, work experience and career shadowing placements.

The Academy's level of science participation and achievement has outperformed national secondary school rates. It has also led to a significant increase in the number of local Pacific young people successfully entering health science training and degree courses.

The Pasifika Medical Association is excited to watch these young people grow and become confident about their futures. "The students know that there are careers out there for them. There is a knock-on effect on our community too, because now we can look forward to seeing more Pasifika faces in our hospitals and health centres".

Alisi Maasi – currently studying at the University of Auckland

"The Health Science Academy is a programme that I was privileged to be a part of. It exposed me to a vast variety of opportunities and experiences which enabled me to learn multiple skills that contributed to my academic success. It allowed me to grow as a young woman and helped me to mentally, physically and academically prepare for university. It also provided extra support from staff, peers, family and faculty. Coming to university wasn't a hard transition, simply because I was prepared. The Academy drilled routines, study habits, methods of avoiding and dealing with stress, content, and many more skills which gave me the advantage and confidence when starting that new chapter of education. If it wasn't for the Academy I would not have the passion nor the drive to venture on with studies to one day become a Paediatrician. The resources, the staff and students have all played a major role in putting all the pieces to my life's puzzle together, which works today as a blueprint for my future. That is the main advantage and blessing of being a part of the Ōtāhuhu College Health Science Academy family."

Youth Connections

Youth Connections works with young Aucklanders to ensure they have a plan for the future and creates connections between young people and employers.

Youth Connections works with young Aucklanders to ensure they have pathways to training, jobs or further education. One of its key aims is to create connections between young people and employers.

Youth Connections is based on the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs 'youth to work' strategy and the successful youth employment work done in [Otorohanga](#). It is supported by [Auckland Council](#), the [Tindall Foundation](#), the [Mayors Taskforce for Jobs](#), the [Hugh Green Foundation](#) and the [Auckland Airport Community Trust](#).

Despite only being in operation since 2012 more than 500 young people are now employed thanks to the collaborative programme.

Youth Connections is a regional initiative, driven at a local level by Auckland Council's Local Boards and other champions. It is all about working with young Aucklanders to ensure they have a plan and direction for the future that connects to the workforce requirement of local businesses.

In South Auckland, Youth Connections operates in Māngere-Ōtāhuhu; Otara-Papatoetoe and Papakura Local Boards to create business hubs of engaged local employers willing to offer employment to young people. It also acts as a link to connect local young people (including those who are participating in employment programmes and those who aren't) with available job vacancies.

In South Auckland there is a clutter of models in operation to support young people into work, says Youth Connections Project Lead, Theresa Rorason. "Businesses told Youth Connections they were sometimes overwhelmed by having to deal with such a large number of employment agencies and work brokers. We knew that having just one point of contact for hiring would work for employers. Youth Connections aims to provide that as well as a framework to aid coordination and cohesiveness."

Some businesses, particularly small to medium-sized employers can be reluctant to take on young workers but often that hesitancy is unfounded.

"There are so many benefits and positive outcomes for employers who hire young people," says Rorason. "Employing young people has many advantages including adding diversity to a workforce and helping grow an employers' business, both of

which make a valuable contribution to the economy. Young people see life through fresh eyes and their energy, enthusiasm and talent should be harnessed and utilised rather than ignored. Employers need to know that they are missing out if they overlook young people for jobs, so we are telling them that.”

Many of the businesses that get on board with Youth Connections have a social conscience and want to make a difference in their communities “They are aware of the problems that youth unemployment presents for our community in South Auckland. It’s important that they are recognised for their efforts, even if that’s simply a pat on the back.

Youth Connections would also like to see greater emphasis placed on post-placement support. “Young people need someone to help them through the hurdles of starting work. Many of our Māori and Pasifika youth are trying to cope with transport issues and tight finances, as well as managing their responsibilities outside of work such as church commitments and caring for family members. They need someone they can relate to and trust, someone who can talk to their employer to resolve any issues that arise.”

Rorason says there are a handful of youth employment programmes which offer great post-placement support, but for many work brokers it’s not a priority. Funding may be part of the problem, with most resources allocated toward getting a young person into employment rather than keeping them in employment. Youth Connections is hoping post-placement support can also be made available to young job seekers not registered with an employment programme.

“Getting young people into work can’t just be about ticking a box on their first day on the job, it needs to be about helping them to achieve sustained employment.”

Quest Highbrook,

Brendan Kelly is Managing Director of Quest Highbrook, a complex of serviced apartments in South Auckland. Several young people have gained entry-level employment at Quest Highbrook, thanks to connections made through Youth Connections.

Brendan is pleased to have given several young people their first ever shot at employment “It definitely gives me the ‘feel good factor’, he says. “These young women are from our local area, Otara and Manukau. They were nervous when they first joined our housekeeping team, but they are doing a great job.”

Brendan admits that taking on young workers can be a risk for a smaller employer. “We employ around fourteen staff and it can be tough to find the extra time and resources needed to support young employees. Some businesses may argue that young people are too costly, and lead to higher staff turnover and lower quality work due to their inexperience, but they are forgetting the obligation we have to support our youth. I would like to see more small businesses take the plunge - they just need some encouragement.”

Case study: The Far North

Community focused initiatives are harnessing the potential of young people in the Far North to ensure the future growth and prosperity of the region.

There is growing confidence in the Far North after industry closures in the early 1990's had a negative impact on the region's economy. Today high unemployment, poverty and welfare dependency remain, however, Far North District Mayor John Carter says the district has a bright future. "Economists predict high national economic growth thanks to a demand for dairy products in China and a national housing boom. This is good news for the district's forestry and dairy sectors which are already enjoying strong growth."

Young people in the Far North experience high levels of unemployment and limited opportunities to enter the labour market. Regent Training in Kerikeri and People Potential in Kaikohe are two agencies wanting to improve the lives of local youth. Both offer a range of programmes that lead to higher education and greater vocational pathways.

Miller Wihongi from Regent Training says, "We get the kids who are kicked out of school. They are in gangs or have been exposed to poverty and abuse." He believes the most important aspect to helping these youth find work is numeracy and literacy training. Gaining these skills "Helps them for the rest of their lives."

Regent, like other youth employment providers, place a great deal of emphasis on pastoral care to prepare young people for work. In their first three months at Regent, youth are exposed to as much manaaki (support), whanaungatanga (family) and awahi (caring) as possible. Wihongi says, "You really see a change in their attitude after this time. They want to learn."

People Potential believes strong community support is essential to help young people prosper. Bronwyn Ronayne from People Potential says, "Being a small community everyone needs to get involved. An example of this is the cadetship programme run in conjunction with the council and Ministry of Social Development in Kaikohe".

The Far North District Council's cadetship programme has been running for 10 years. Up to 12-15 cadets are accepted annually and given work experience, a workplace mentor and post-placement pastoral care. "Cadets know they will be supported by a committed employer", says Ronayne. The success of the programme means it will soon be emulated at other council sites.

The Council is also keen to improve employment outcomes by implementing the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs 'Youth to Work Strategy', aimed at getting all under 25's engaged in education, training or work.

Mayor John Carter says the Otorohanga model under the leadership of Mayor Dale Williams significantly reduced youth unemployment in the town and he is keen to emulate the success of that programme in the Far North.

"Working with Te Hiku Crown Social Development and Wellbeing Accord agencies to set up a Taskforce for Jobs in Kaitaia will address all sorts of social problems for young people once they find work that provides them with a long-term career path."

The Kaikohe Youth Action Plan involving local authorities and the Ministries of Social Development, Justice, Education and Health, and the New Zealand Police aims among other things to increase numbers of youth participating in education, training and employment, leading to improved community outcomes. Principal of Northland High School, Jim Luders says the action plan is a "Good idea" and that "Kids in Kaikohe are really good, we just need to get the right people in front of them, though finding positive role models can be difficult."

There is growing optimism that Treaty of Waitangi settlements in the Far North will also help attract Māori skills and expertise back to the region and redress an imbalance of money and power between Pākehā and Māori. Young people will play an important part in the future growth and prosperity of the region.

Case study: Young people with disabilities

Be.Employed is urging employers not to miss out on the untapped potential of disabled young people.

Employment opportunities for young disabled people are extremely limited. Young people with disabilities suffer a double disadvantage in the labour market and gaining employment for them is a major challenge.

Disabled youth believe changing employer attitudes is the most important factor in helping provide work opportunities with some saying their job-seeking experience was poor or very poor.

Disabled young people the Commission spoke with said that the most crucial issue is “Overcoming the discrimination barrier and proving what you can do rather than what it appears you can’t do.”

One student said, “We all want to go to university to study, but in saying that, when we finish we find it really difficult to find jobs. We want to work but we can’t find work.”

Grant Cleland, chief executive of Workbridge believes one reason why disabled young people are struggling is because programmes and services to get them into employment often don’t consider their needs. One solution he says, “Is to get more employers to offer work experience. We need to be sure disabled young people are not forgotten.”

The lack of disaggregated data on disabled youth employment is also a problem and highlights an absence of policies and programmes to address the issue. It is believed that only 40% of disabled New Zealanders are in the labour force. The opportunity cost of this workforce exclusion is estimated at around \$11.7 billion.

One organisation which aims to help address accessibility issues for disabled young people is Be.Accessible. Be.Accessible is a social enterprise that works across all sectors and communities to make Aotearoa New Zealand accessible for all people.

Chief Executive of Be.Accessible, Minnie Baragwanath says, “Disabled youth are an amazing untapped talent pool many of whom bring incredible creativity, loyalty and

commitment to the world of work when given the opportunity. We run the Be.Employed programme which works with businesses and organisations to enable them to tap into the rich resource of people with disabilities and access needs - people who offer unique skills and perspectives that bring value to the workplace.”

The Be.Employed programme works with tertiary institutes to broker work experience and employment opportunities for disabled students. Minnie Baragwanath says, “We are looking to place university students with disability into paid internships with some of New Zealand’s largest corporates as a way to start to address this issue. The final objective of this programme is that these internships then translate into full paid employment opportunities. This would be a ‘win-win’ because employers will get the kind of talent we all want in our workplaces and our young people will get very real employment and ongoing career opportunities.”

Misperceptions that people with disabilities are costly to employ and the reluctance of employers to hire young people with disabilities is a worrying trend. Disabled groups such as Be.Accessible say there is an urgent need to reduce the fear about what disability means for employers.