

# Summary of the Disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau as kaitūhono/connectors and leaders guide

## Summary

This guide provides information about four areas. These are:

1. Why we need disabled, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau leaders
2. The challenges disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau can face when taking up leadership roles
3. Recommendations about supporting disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau to become kaitūhono/connectors
4. Employment issues and strategies for disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau staff to be successful.

## Why we need disabled people and whānau leaders

Disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau need to be included in the leadership of the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) approach. This follows the famous disability and civil rights quote “Nothing About Us Without Us”, as disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau need to be involved in all planning and decisions that impact their lives. This leadership needs to be at all levels of EGL, including the governance provided by the disability community, Government officials, managers and senior leaders and especially kaitūhono/connectors.

Relationships are central to the way that kaitūhono/connectors work with disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau. A kaitūhono/connector who has a disability can help to build strong relationships with people accessing supports under the EGL approach. This is because disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori experience many of the same barriers in life that the people they work with face. A senior disabled kaitūhono/connector talked about this as *“No matter how supportive non-disabled people are it’s just not the same – it’s not their culture, they don’t have the same understanding”*.

Whānau with experience of supporting a disabled person / tangata whaikaha Māori provide a different but important way of looking at things. This can help to build strong relationships with whānau, as they are described as “getting it”. In short, disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau are more likely to fully understand the barriers that the people they work with are experiencing.

## Leadership and ableism

Disability leadership is affected by *ableism*. Ableism means people are treated unfairly based on assumptions about their impairment or disability. Some people think that people with impairments or disability are of less value than other people, and that they don’t have the skills needed to be a leader. If a disabled person or tangata whaikaha Māori is not considered good enough for who they are, they won’t believe they can be a leader and nor will other people. This guide challenges many of these negative beliefs about disability leadership.

This guide follows a commitment to an understanding of disability based on human rights. This includes a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

### Becoming a kaitūhono/connector

This guide talks about several ways to increase the number of disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau employed as kaitūhono/connectors. We need to have disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau employed as kaitūhono/connectors as one of the ways to move into leadership roles. It's also important that the people in charge of delivering the EGL approach create an inclusive culture that values diversity in its workers. This includes valuing the diversity that disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau members bring to the team. People working as kaitūhono/connectors (and their teammates) should experience the EGL principles for themselves in how they are treated at work.

### Employment strategies

This guide outlines several ideas for how we can increase the employment of disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau as kaitūhono/connectors. The guide takes on some information from a few different resources, including the Ministry of Social Development Lead Toolkit for Employing Disabled People. You can find the toolkit at this website [Lead Toolkit - Ministry of Social Development \(msd.govt.nz\)](https://www.msd.govt.nz/lead-toolkit). As the toolkit says, disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori can bring a new way of looking at things and can help to change the way an organisation works with people for the better.

Some of the strategies for employing disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori and whānau as kaitūhono/connectors include:

- Reasonable accommodation. This means making sure that things work for the disabled person and tangata whaikaha Māori by giving them the things they need to do their job well.
- Being flexible about things like how many hours someone works.
- Making sure people have the equipment they need.
- Making sure information is given in accessible formats.
- Making sure people value and support diversity in the team.
- Making sure disabled people and tāngata whaikaha Māori are given a chance to take on leadership roles.