



**Submission to the Ministry of Education and Tertiary
Education Commission**

Reform of Vocational Education

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1. Key points and recommendations

IHC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the reform of vocational education and makes the following summary points and recommendations.

1.1 Key points

- IHC supports changes to the vocational education system to make it work better for people with intellectual disabilities.
- While there have been some good initiatives, in the main people with intellectual disabilities have not been served well in the vocational education system.
- It is critical that the reform of Vocational Education recognises that improved employment outcomes for disabled people and people with additional learning support needs is reliant on having equitable access to and outcomes from a quality public and inclusive education system from early childhood through to post school vocational and tertiary education.

1.2 Recommendations

- The opportunity be taken for disabled people and people with additional learning support needs to co-design an inclusive vocational education system.
- That the proposed changes are strengthened by the development of a system whereby providers can demonstrate their capacity to provide the individual accommodations required so that a seamless transition is achieved for students.
- The funding system for vocational education includes funding for reasonable accommodations required for disabled people and people with additional learning support needs.

2. About IHC

IHC was founded in 1949 by a group of parents who wanted equal treatment from the education and health systems for their children with intellectual disability. The IHC of today is still striving for these same rights and is committed to advocating for the rights, welfare and inclusion of all people with an intellectual disability. We support people with intellectual disability to lead satisfying lives and have a genuine place in the community.

We support more than 4,000 people in IDEA services (IHC's service arm) that include residential care, supported living, employment and community participation and inclusion, support for families and specialist services, and through Accessible Properties (a subsidiary company of IHC) are New Zealand's largest non-government social housing provider.

Through our charitable arm IHC raises awareness and advocates for the rights of over 50,000 people with intellectual disability at both a national and an international level. This includes an extensive advocacy programme, a one to one volunteer programme and the country's largest specialist intellectual disability library.

3. IHC's overall response

*"The right to inclusive education encompasses a transformation in culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to accommodate the differing requirements and identities of individual students, together with a commitment to remove barriers that impede that possibility"*¹

IHC welcomes the reform of vocational education and supports the strong links being made with the wider education reform process, the updating of the Disability Action Plan and the Manawaikaha, the Ministry of Health disability support prototype based on the Enabling Good Lives principles

3.1 The right to inclusive education

*"I left the (mainstream vocational) course as it wasn't a supportive learning course. People were really hard on me. I didn't know what I was supposed to do."*²

*"We feel helpless and hopeless as far as work options are concerned"*³

The right to inclusive education is set out in Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which New Zealand ratified in 2008. Article 24(5) of the UNCRPD provides:

*"States parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities."*⁴

We recommend General Comment No. 4 guide the design of an inclusive vocational education system, and that particular attention is given to the core features of inclusive education:

- Whole systems approach
- Whole educational environment
- Whole person approach
- Supported teachers, tutors and trainers
- Respect for and value of diversity
- Learning-friendly environment
- Effective transitions
- Recognition of partnerships
- Monitoring

3.2 Enabling Good Lives

We also recommend the Enabling Good Lives principles guide the development of the reform of vocational education.

¹ Guidance on implementing the right to inclusive education is set out in General Comment No.4 (2016) from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

² Quote from polytech student with intellectual disability cited in IHC 'Valued lives: Leave no-one behind', 2017, p12. <https://ihc.org.nz/advocacy>

³ Quote from parent, *ibid*

⁴ Guidance on implementing the right to inclusive education is set out in General Comment No.4 (2016) from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

These are:

Self-determination - Disabled people are in control of their lives.

Beginning early - Invest early in families and whānau to support them; to be aspirational for their disabled child; to build community and natural supports; and to support disabled children to become independent, rather than waiting for a crisis before support is available.

Person-centred - Disabled people have supports that are tailored to their individual needs and goals, and that take a whole life approach rather than being split across programmes.

Ordinary life outcomes - Disabled people are supported to live an everyday life in everyday places; and are regarded as citizens with opportunities for learning, employment, having a home and family, and social participation - like others at similar stages of life.

Mainstream first - Disabled people are supported to access mainstream services before specialist disability services.

Mana enhancing - The abilities and contributions of disabled people and their families are recognised and respected.

Easy to use Disabled people have supports that are simple to use and flexible.

Relationship building - Supports build and strengthen relationships between disabled people, their whānau and community.

3.3 Creating the New Zealand Institute of Skills & Technology

The stated intent of the vocational reform to ensure regional access while removing regional variations to course availability is welcomed.

For disabled people and people with additional learning support it is of critical importance that they are able to be engaged and contributing stakeholders. The “nothing about us without us” disability rights movement mantra is of fundamental importance in this process..

IHC recommends that people with people with intellectual disabilities, their families and disability support providers are included with urgency in a co-design process to further develop the new vocational education system.

3.4 Education providers supporting workplace learning and assessment

IHC supports the need for the proposed changes to result in a system that is simpler to navigate, and where support is better tailored to each learner’s unique needs.

Given that providers will be engaged with and ensuring a personalised approach to learning and pastoral support it will be important for them to demonstrate capacity, knowledge and awareness of how to respond to diverse learning and support needs.

IHC recommends that the proposed changes are strengthened by the development of a system whereby providers can demonstrate their capacity to respond to diverse learning needs. Such a system could also ensure that information from transition and the secondary education providers is considered and included in provider responses.

3.5 Centres of Vocational Excellence

IHC supports the establishment of a Centre for Vocational Excellence to ensure that all providers have up to date knowledge and training about creating an inclusive learning environment.

Clearly it is of critical importance that the Centre for Vocational Excellence

- is linked to the wider education system's learning and evaluation structures so that there is common and shared understandings of inclusive education and how it is evidenced, strengthened and supported.
- connects and responds to the Disability Action Plan and government strategies, priorities and initiatives to improve the employment rates for disabled people.

3.6 Redesigning the funding system for vocational education

"There needs to be a lot more investment in helping people (with intellectual disabilities) find jobs"⁵

IHC welcomes the intent to redesign the funding system for vocational education and the interest shown to understand how the funding system can best support people with additional learning support needs.

The funding system for vocational education will need to recognise and provide for the reasonable accommodations required for individual disabled persons and persons with additional learning support needs. The absence of funding for reasonable accommodations will create serious and discriminatory barriers to people with intellectual disability having equitable access to and outcomes from the vocational education system.

4. Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the Government's proposals to reform the Vocational Education system. IHC has a strong interest in assisting efforts to improve the employment rates of disabled people in the knowledge that education and employment are key pathways to a satisfying and contributing life in community.

⁵ Quote from parent IHC 'Valued lives: Leave no-one behind', 2017, p12. <https://ihc.org.nz/advocacy>