

Nga Kete Matauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust

Diversability

A pilot programme designed to improve its understanding of working alongside whanau living with disabilities has not only extended the reach of Nga Kete Matauranga Pounamu Charitable Trust (NKMP), it has made a significance difference in the lives of staff members.

The trust is a not-for-profit health and social service provider that has been working with communities in Southland for 18 years. More than 50 staff are employed to deliver a range of services including addiction counselling, problem gambling counselling, disability support and advocacy, restorative justice, whanau ora, community nursing services and He Puna Waiora Wellness Centre (a low-cost access doctor service).



Recently, in partnership with AccessAbility's Local Area Coordinator, the trust developed S.O.A.R. – a 10-week pilot programme aimed at increasing the agency's knowledge of working alongside whanau with disabilities. The aim was to better understand their service options and needs.

Hiring Jack Lovett-Hurst was a pivotal part of the programme. Jack, 21, lives with muscular dystrophy and has used a wheelchair since the age of two. While Jack hadn't had a job before, he has impressive social media and digital communication skills that were a valuable resource for S.O.A.R.

During a 10-week placement, Jack worked across three main areas. He managed a S.O.A.R Facebook page, presented a weekly radio show, and helped in the organisation and facilitation of a whanau hui for 16 to 25-year-olds (and their families) living with disabilities.

Jack's role was celebrated by the community. One supporter wrote on Facebook, "Awesome job Jack. I believe that it is possible to refocus our language and talk not of DISability but rather REability. Many people with physical challenges can do much the same as those without those challenges - they just do it differently."

Communications, Media and Marketing Manager Nicci Fowler says Jack learnt many new skills including digital storytelling, and the value of sharing inspirational stories. He also supported NKMP Whanau Ora Navigator (Disabilities) Sandra Stiles at an Invercargill City Council meeting when Sandra presented on access issues regarding disability car parks.

Near the end of the 10-week pilot Jack was offered a contract extension of one year, which was accepted.

"We also aim for Jack to facilitate improved access and understanding for Nga Kete and raise our awareness on how better to deliver services to whanau living with disability, now and into the future, says Nicci. "It is our aim that whanau living with disability and those who care for them have a place they can come that is kaupapa Māori driven, where they can korero freely and with confidence."

NKMP is working on specific goals as part of its commitment to diversity and inclusion. A survey was carried out to assess how staff experienced diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

“The aim of the survey was to understand staff experiences at work, and whether staff felt they were getting the support they needed. The survey also enabled us to better understand the diversity of our workplace.”

Initiatives include a late office opening each Wednesday to allow for staff training. The trust is working towards gaining the Rainbow Tick, and staff have been supported to attend training and events around the country.

“Nga Kete has a diverse and inclusive working environment that is continuing to evolve,” says Nicci.

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YOUR WORKPLACE MORE INCLUSIVE

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