



ELP (English Language Partners) Disability Action Plan – Plain Language Version

Introduction

He waka eke noa. We are all in this together. We leave no one behind.

Who We Are and What We Do

English Language Partners New Zealand Trust (ELPNZ) is a not-for-profit, and we teach English to migrants and people with a refugee background at 21 language centres around Aotearoa New Zealand and online. Our English programmes help people join the community, continue their studies, and find jobs. We look at how well our learners do and improve our programmes based on their feedback.

Supporting All Learners

At ELPNZ, we help each learner based on their needs. We look at:

- **Learner Achievement:** We measure all learners' progress. We don't ask about types of disabilities. We ask if learners need learning support, which we give if needed. We don't record disabilities in academic records. We don't have specific data on disabled learners' achievements yet.
- **Learner Voice:** In 2023, we started having meetings with learners to understand their experiences. We use this feedback to improve our programmes. We ask learners how easy it is to use our services.
- **Teaching and Learning:** We use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to support diverse learners. Our programmes include personalised learning plans based on each learner's needs. Our teaching strategy matches with our values and is used across all centres.
- **Te Ara Ahurea:** We follow the principles of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We do this to meet the needs of Māori learners, volunteers, & staff. Our Te Ara Ahurea (cultural pathway) ensures we uphold our bicultural and multicultural commitments. This work also supports diversity and inclusion in our teaching practices.

Learner Registration

Our registration process is personalised. ELPNZ staff meet with each learner to assess their needs, English level, and availability. We guide learners to the right programme and arrange supports, like home tutoring or NZSL literacy programmes for former refugees.

Strategy

Our reviews have shaped our Disability Action Plan (DAP), which follows the [New Zealand Disability Strategy \(2016-2026\)](#). The DAP has full support from ELPNZ leadership. Our DAP is a plan to achieve goals from the Kia Ōrite Toolkit by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

Our 2022-2024 strategy includes:

- 1.2) Making sure we listen to our learners.
- 1.3) Working with our learners to help them settle in New Zealand.
- 2.1) Increasing knowledge of ELP and what we do.
- 2.2) Improving our work to meet our learners' needs.

In 2024 one important goal is to have a three-year plan that helps disabled learners. Our Disability Action Plan will adapt to changing learning needs and support fair learner outcomes.

Disabled Learners

Introduction

One in six people in the world have a disability according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). This means that at ELP we might have about 1000 disabled learners studying with us each year. Refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants with disabilities face more challenges. The UN Refugee Agency says that people with disabilities who are forced to move are at higher risk of violence and exploitation. They also face barriers in accessing basic services, education, and jobs.

Challenges for Our Learners

ELPNZ's learners may find it difficult using services like banking, public transport, and healthcare because of language barriers. ELPNZ's learners come from many backgrounds and have unique needs. Refugees and migrants face extra challenges when starting and continuing their education. If we miss chances to support them, they might struggle to succeed. This affects their ability to contribute to the economy and society.

Understanding Disability

At ELPNZ, we use the Social Model of disability. This means we believe that society, not the individual, creates barriers for people with impairments. Disabilities are part of human diversity, and our goal is to make sure all learners have equal opportunities to get support.

We understand that disability can be temporary or permanent. Everyone can decide how their own disability is described. We use the term "disabled learners" to show that people are disabled by their environment, not by their personal impairments.

Disability and Culture

We know that learners' experiences with disability vary across cultures. This can affect how much they share about their disabilities. Every culture has varied attitudes toward disability. We aim to understand these cultural attitudes and support learners to understand their rights in New Zealand. Some cultural communities might not acknowledge the Social Model of disability, which can limit the support individuals receive.

Our Approach

We use [The Hassell Inclusion Way™](#) as a framework for our Disability Action Plan (DAP). This framework helps us grow as an inclusive organisation. The steps in this model describe how organisations can work with disabled learners:

1. Expand Awareness (Teach people about disabilities)
2. Embed Strategy (Think of ideas to help disabled learners)
3. Enable Process (Help disabled learners)
4. Measure Effects (Find out how well we are doing at helping disabled learners)
5. Continually Evolve (Get better at helping disabled learners)

Developing the Plan

We started our DAP by forming a working group and getting approval from our Chief Executive. The group's job is to plan and complete activities that help ELPNZ understand the barriers disabled learners face. These activities are from the TEC's Kia Ōrite Toolkit.

Timeframe for the Plan

Creating the DAP is a key part of our business plan for 2024. By July 2024, we aim to have a final plan reviewed by all relevant stakeholders. We plan to complete all activities from the Kia Ōrite Toolkit by December 2025.

Engaging Disabled Learners

Building strong relationships with disabled learners is vital for our DAP. We talk to disabled learners about their experiences and ask them to share their ideas. For example, a blind learner gave feedback on online classes, which

helped us improve our online teacher training. We plan to set up a learner group and translate communications where possible. A plain language version of the DAP will be on our website by the end of Term 4 2024, along with an invitation for feedback from disabled learners and their families. We will also do an engagement survey in plain language by the end of 2024 to understand how our disabled learners want to communicate with us.

Limitations

- We are committed to supporting all disabled learners. We do not receive Equity Funding for them, which affects our ability to provide support.
- We do not own our premises, so we need to work with other providers for accessibility needs like disabled parking and elevators.
- Communicating the DAP so it is understood by every learner is challenging because learners have many different first languages and many have low English levels.

Our Objectives

Success Statement: Disabled learners achieve the same meaningful outcomes as non-disabled learners.

To help disabled learners, we have five key objectives:

Objective 1: Raise Awareness About Disability and Inclusion

Actions:

1. Identify support needs and record disability information in our Student Management System (SMS).
2. Separate data for disabled learners to monitor their outcomes.
3. Continue talking to disabled learners to understand their needs (e.g., through surveys).

4. Train all staff to recognise barriers for disabled learners and use Universal Design for Learning practices.
5. Work with other education providers to raise awareness of disabled learners' needs.

Objective 2: Strengthen and Embed Inclusion Initiatives

Actions:

1. Ensure policies meet recommendations from the Kia Ōrite Toolkit. They should also use feedback from disabled learners.
2. Address any gaps in our current practices with new strategies or policies. These should be based on analyses and stakeholder input.

Objective 3: Empower Staff to Support Inclusion

Actions:

1. Provide information and training to all learners about disability inclusion.
2. Train staff during inductions, professional development sessions, and meetings.
3. Give staff guidelines to meet our disability policies.
4. Integrate Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning into our strategies and policies.
5. Increase the number of disabled learners using our services.

Objective 4: Measure the Effectiveness of Our Processes

Actions:

1. Measure the number and types of outcomes for disabled learners.

2. Work with disabled learners to test the effectiveness of inclusion policies and strategies.
3. Use existing Evaluative Self-Assessment (ESA) tools to evaluate inclusion policies and strategies.
4. Measure the increase in disabled learners using our services.

Objective 5: Continuously Improve Our Disability Action Plan

Actions:

1. Include accessibility issues in the organisation's 2030 strategy.
2. Maintain a Disability Action Group to review successes and opportunities for improvement annually and include them in updates to the Disability Action Plan.

What do you think?

- Do you have personal experience of disability?
- Would you like to tell us something about disability?
- What could we do better to help you?

You can email info@englishlanguage.org.nz or call (04) 471 2382 and ask to speak to someone about ELP's Disability Action Plan.