



# E Tū Ake! Stand Tall and Proud

*a working paper on  
raising the qualifications  
and earnings of low  
income women*

Ministry of Women's Affairs  
March 2014

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The views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this report are intended to inform and stimulate wider debate. They do not represent government policy.

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## Executive Summary

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The Ministry of Women's Affairs has a priority of increasing women's economic independence. Within this broad priority, we have identified the need to improve economic and life outcomes for those women who have low or no qualifications and who are at risk of having low incomes and/or, being dependent on social welfare benefits for extended periods of time. Improving their economic independence presents the greatest challenge.

At the same time, improving economic outcomes for this group of women is also likely to generate the greatest economic return in terms of reduced lifetime benefit costs to the country and the increased positive long-term opportunities for them and their families.

Women make up close to 60 percent of New Zealanders who report that their individual earnings are in the lowest two income quintiles as measured by the New Zealand Income Survey. Although some of these women will have access to other sources of income, such as the earnings of a partner, we are primarily concerned with women who do not.

In particular, sole parent households, the majority of which are headed by women, are at greater risk of being dependent on benefits for extended periods of time. Ninety percent of sole parent families have incomes below the median household income in New Zealand. Women who become parents at young ages, and women who are of Māori or Pacific descent, are more likely to be in this group.

Although on average girls are more likely than boys to leave school with qualifications, a higher proportion of young women than young men are not in education, employment or training (NEET) after they leave school. Māori and Pacific girls are over-represented in this group.

As a result, the Ministry is particularly concerned with improving the economic independence of sole mothers with low or no qualifications, and of young women who are NEET. This will include a focus on Māori and Pacific women who are in these two groups.

E Tū Ake translates to 'standing proud and tall'. In order for these groups of women to 'stand proud and tall', they need opportunities to achieve positive outcomes for themselves, their families, their communities, and wider New Zealand.

For most women, the main route to economic independence is through earning income in the labour market (paid work). They need employment that provides sufficient disposable income, and enables them to shape their lives and their futures, meet their own needs and the needs of their dependents. Paid work has far-reaching and positive outcomes for women and their families, as well as being important for growing the New Zealand economy.

Internationally, there are an enormous number and variety of programmes designed to support people with low incomes and low or no qualifications into employment. We have identified a set of characteristics that are frequently present in the programmes that have been the most effective or promising, with a particular focus on those that are effective for women.

The most effective programmes to support women into sustainable work:

- are responsive to women's specific experiences of the labour market
- are responsive to women's cultural backgrounds
- recognise that jobs must be available for participants and that work must pay enough to support ongoing attachment to the labour market
- address participants' training/education needs, childcare needs and any personal barriers to employment
- partner with local employers to ensure training is aligned with their skill needs (and preferably includes on-the-job training)
- undertake active out-reach to engage women who are furthest from the labour market
- include high quality individual case management
- support job retention and advancement
- are characterised by partnerships between multiple contributing organisations and stakeholders.

# Introduction

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This paper aims to provide government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) interested in the employment and life outcomes of people with low incomes, with information on:

- women with low qualifications who are at most risk of having low incomes over extended periods of time
- what types of programmes work best to support these women into sustainable employment.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (the Ministry) recognises that women have diverse experiences, needs and priorities. Some groups of women, however, continue to have poorer outcomes relative to other groups.

A priority for the Ministry is improving women's economic independence. Women achieve economic independence when they have access to the full range of economic opportunities and resources, including employment, and have sufficient income to shape their lives and their futures, and meet their own needs and the needs of their dependents. Achieving economic independence for women complements, rather than excludes, the importance of interdependence within families, communities and society.

Although the proportion of New Zealand women with tertiary qualifications is high by OECD standards, there are still many women in New Zealand with low or no qualifications who are a long way from being economically independent.

Women who have low levels of qualifications and who are unemployed or who work in low skilled, low-paid employment face the greatest challenges to achieving economic independence. This puts them at risk of being trapped for extended periods in low income work or unemployment, particularly if they have children early and have no access to other forms of financial support.

The reality for most women is that the path to economic independence over their lifetime is through paid work. To be economically independent, women need choices in education, training and work that enable them to build their skills and then to get good returns on their skills, while meeting their care responsibilities.

Most people want to work and can, with the right support and assistance. Improving women's skills and access to quality employment is a sustainable way for them to generate income and improve their well-being and the well-being of their children.

Helping women to increase their skills and incomes will also benefit firms (through a larger pool of labour and talent), the economy (better utilisation of women's skills and talents), and the state (increasing tax revenue while reducing demand for benefits, tax credits, and subsidised accommodation and health care).

## *Defining low qualifications, low income, and NEET*

For the purposes of this paper, when we are referring to people with low incomes we are generally referring to those people in income quintiles one and two as measured by the New Zealand Income Survey run by Statistics New Zealand. People in income quintile one earn less than \$200 per week, and people in quintile two earn between \$201 and \$409 per week.

The 2012 Statistics New Zealand's Income Survey showed that women made up 58 percent of people in income quintiles one and two, which equates to approximately 800,000 women. We acknowledge that some of these women will have access to alternative sources of income, however, the focus of this paper is on women who do not.

When we refer to people with low or no qualifications we are referring to people with either no formal qualifications or qualifications at Levels 1 or 2 on the National Qualifications Framework. Another term used throughout this paper is 'not in employment, education or training', or NEET. This is a heterogeneous group of people, aged 15 to 24, who are neither working nor studying.

Young women who remain NEET for long periods, who have left education with no qualifications, who are sole parents and/or became parents as teenagers, are at higher risk of poor long-term employment outcomes.

The most recent Ministry of Social Development (MSD) actuarial valuation report (September 2013)<sup>1</sup> noted that sole parents spend an average of almost 16 years on a benefit and youth spend an average of almost 19 years on a benefit. Although 70 percent of young women who are NEET are categorised as 'caregiving', this is a broad category that encompasses many different care arrangements.<sup>2</sup>

# Why Action is Needed

Investing in women with low or no qualifications and low incomes, who may be the only adult and income earners within families, provides multiple positive outcomes. Improving the economic independence of these women brings benefits to them, their families and broader society.

It is recognised globally that work is good for people's health and well-being, and that longterm absence from work can have serious negative impacts. People who are out of work and on a benefit have a higher risk of poverty, social isolation and deteriorating overall health.<sup>3</sup> Moreover these experiences for women have negative consequences for their children and are also present when low income is experienced over a long period of time.

We know there is a link between poor early childhood experiences and adult mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, poor educational outcomes and unemployment. Too many children are at risk of poor outcomes because they do not get the early support they need.

Economic independence can also be a protective factor against violence by providing a means for women to leave violent relationships and to achieve better outcomes for their children. Employment, sufficient disposable income, and access to appropriate (safe) services – including at the initial interface with welfare and health systems – allows this to happen.

The New Zealand economy benefits when all the skills and talents of New Zealanders are fully utilised. Improving women's labour market outcomes is needed to ensure strong, sustainable and balanced economic growth in the future.<sup>4</sup>

A 2011 report by Goldman Sachs estimated that improving the workforce participation and the use of women's skills could boost New Zealand's GDP by up to 10 percent.<sup>5</sup> The OECD and the World Bank also highlight women's underused skills and talents as a productivity issue.<sup>6</sup>

Workplaces benefit from access to a wider pool of skill and talent, and greater diversity in decision-making. Women participating at all levels of decision-making, including as managers and leaders, bring a wider set of experiences to problem solving, making choices and identifying direction and strategy. Research has shown that this is associated with better organisational performance.<sup>7</sup>

## Government priorities

Delivering better public services within tight financial constraints is one of the Government's four priorities for this term. Achieving results that make a difference to New Zealanders is at the heart of that.<sup>8</sup> Improving employment outcomes for women with low or no qualifications will contribute to the following key result areas.

### *Reducing long-term welfare dependence*

Women who have children early are at risk of being on benefits for extended periods. Supporting these women to successfully transition from benefits into sustainable work that improves their incomes will contribute to reducing welfare dependence.

### *Supporting vulnerable children*

Women are more likely to take the lead in raising their children and/or to be raising them alone. Consequently by increasing women's employment outcomes and incomes there are benefits for them, their families and New Zealand.

### *Increase the proportion of 18-year-olds with NCEA Level 2 or equivalent qualification*

Young women who do not gain qualifications at level 2 or above before they leave school are at higher risk of being NEET than young men. Supporting NEET women to gain skills and qualifications that are valued and recognised by employers contributes immediately to improved outcomes for them and, if they are mothers, to their children as well.

## Families and whānau

In all of their many forms, families and whānau are acknowledged as social institutions that continue to play a vital role in caring for, protecting and socialising future generations. The wellbeing of families and whānau is crucial for the current and future health of our communities and country.

Despite increases in women's participation in paid work over the last three decades, women remain the primary caregivers in families and whānau. Their personal and economic wellbeing is, therefore, central to the wellbeing of their families and whānau.



# Who We are Focused on

## Women with low incomes

Sixty percent of people whose individual earnings are less than \$201 per week are women.<sup>9</sup> We recognise that some women earn at low levels by choice and are contributing to their families and the economy in unpaid ways. Women who are part of families with adequate incomes are not in the group on whom this work is focused.

We are focusing our work on sole mothers, Māori and Pacific women, and young women (15 to 24 year olds) who are NEET, for the following reasons:

- ninety percent of sole parent families have incomes<sup>10</sup> below the median household income in New Zealand and the majority of sole parents are women
- although on average girls are more likely than boys to leave school with qualifications, a higher proportion of young women than young men become NEET after they leave school
- Māori and Pacific women are more likely than other women to have low qualifications and low incomes, and Māori women are more likely than other women to be sole mothers
- improving outcomes for these groups of women will achieve substantial gains.

## Sole mothers

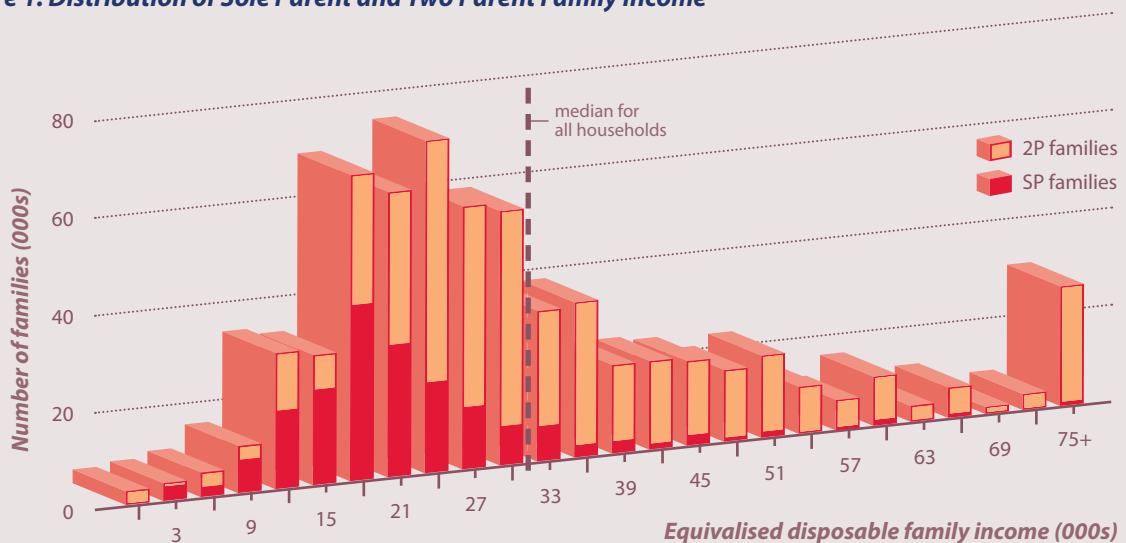
Women with no or few qualifications and who are sole mothers are the least likely to accumulate work experience. They are more likely to take on the role of child caring, as it is often more financially viable for them to do so than to enter low paid work with the associated costs of childcare and travel. This can lead to long periods of benefit dependency.

Sole parent families have lower incomes on average than other family types. Figure 1 shows the distribution of family incomes for sole parent and two parent families. In 2011, around 90 percent of sole parent families had incomes below the median household income for all households with or without children.<sup>11</sup> For two-parent families the proportion was 55 percent.

In New Zealand the rate of sole parent families working full-time is low (35 percent in 2009) compared to two parent families (68 percent where at least one parent is a full-time earner).<sup>12</sup> Sole mothers who have low levels of qualifications and can only command low rates of pay, face high costs of going to work (childcare and transport costs for example) and are likely to experience lower financial returns in working full-time, compared to working part-time and claiming a benefit.<sup>13</sup>

Sole parent beneficiary families are clustered in the lower part of the income distribution. For sole parent families,

**Figure 1: Distribution of Sole Parent and Two Parent Family Income**



Source: Household Economic Survey (HES) 2010

being out of paid work and on a benefit for extended periods increases the risk of poverty, social dislocation and poorer overall health. It can also have negative effects on children, especially when families are dependent on benefits for long periods. Across the OECD, non-employment for sole parent families can almost triple the risk of poverty.<sup>14</sup>

Nearly 90 percent<sup>15</sup> of the approximately 100,000 sole parent beneficiaries in New Zealand are women. Although social assistance policies provide an important safety net when individuals are not in a position to cover their own basic needs, long-term dependence on welfare is not in the best interests of women or their families.

The cost of paying benefits to working-age people is now over \$8 billion a year, with much higher lifetime costs. Figures released by MSD<sup>16</sup> identify lifetime costs for a Young Parent (under 19 years) payment at \$289,000; for a Sole Parent \$234,000; and a Youth payment at \$184,000. These costs alone are concerning, but are only a portion of the entire economic and social price New Zealand pays as a result of lost productivity and negative social impacts.

One of the Government's priorities is to reduce long-term welfare dependence. Reforms to the welfare system introduced from July 2013 will contribute to achieving this priority by continuing the investment approach which targets interventions and support to those most at risk of long-term welfare dependence. This active targeting of support to those who are capable of working but have the highest risk of becoming long-term welfare dependent, will provide more support to sole parents and others who have historically received very little help to get off welfare.<sup>17</sup>

### Young NEET women

Young women who finish their education without qualifications are at risk of being trapped in low income work or unemployment, particularly if they have children early.

Each year up to 10,000 young people in New Zealand leave school with little or no formal qualifications. This is of major concern to a nation focusing on developing a knowledge economy.<sup>18</sup> The Government has a priority to increase the proportion of 18 year olds with NCEA Level 2 or equivalent qualification. A range of actions have been undertaken across the education system to achieve this priority, including the expansion of the Youth Guarantee scheme, and the introduction of Vocational Pathways.

High numbers of young people aged 15 to 24 leaving education without qualifications become part of the group who are NEET. They are considered to be disengaged from both formal learning and work. Being out of the work force means these young people are missing out on opportunities for upskilling and work experience, and this has a long-term negative impact on their labour market outcomes.

The NEET rates vary considerably by gender and ethnicity. The Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) from the June 2013 quarter reports 49,000 young women are NEET compared to 28,000 young men (Table 1).

**Table 1: NEET Rate by Ethnicity and Gender June 2013**  
(Rate per 1,000)

European		Māori		Pacific Peoples		Asian	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
7	12.8	16.3	27.8	10.9	27.3	4.4	8.5

Source: Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) 2013

Although on average girls are more likely than boys to leave school with qualifications,<sup>19</sup> a higher proportion of young women become NEET following their immediate exit from their schooling. Across OECD countries this trend is also evident, with young women consistently found to be more likely to be NEET than young men.<sup>20</sup>

Of the 49,000 young women who are NEET in New Zealand, 71.4 percent are 20 to 24 year olds who are caregiving.<sup>21</sup> When the numbers of those in caregiving are discounted, the numbers of male and female NEET are fairly even. The definition of caregiving used by Statistics New Zealand encompasses a range of circumstances, and information is not available on the proportions of people within this category by their particular care arrangements. It is likely however that a proportion of these young women are caring for their own children, parenting alone, and/or became a mother in their teens.

As the demand for labour with few qualifications continues to fall, improving the skills and qualifications for these NEET young women could play a significant role in reducing New Zealand's growing skill shortage.

## Teen mothers

Research shows that early parenthood increases the likelihood of educational underachievement, benefit receipt and poor economic circumstances in young adulthood.<sup>22</sup>

New Zealand has the second highest rate of teen parenthood among OECD countries<sup>23</sup> with an average of more than 4000 babies born each year to teenage mothers. Teen parents stay longer on benefits than those who become parents at an older age. It is estimated that at least a third of current Domestic Purposes Benefit clients became parents in their teenage years.<sup>24</sup> In 2011 the fertility rates for Māori mothers under 25 years of age were more than double the fertility rates for the total population in the same age group.<sup>25</sup>

As the labour market increasingly requires workers with higher qualifications, the pressure is on students to achieve qualifications at level 2 or better. Teen mothers need extra support to remain or get back onto educational pathways. Addressing the barriers to accessing education for teen parents contributes to the Government's priority of lifting student achievement and decreasing long-term welfare dependency.

## Māori women

Māori women are a youthful population group: the median age of Māori women was 24.5 years in 2006, compared to the overall female population median age of 38 years. In their teenage years Māori women have a higher likelihood of becoming sole parents and recipients

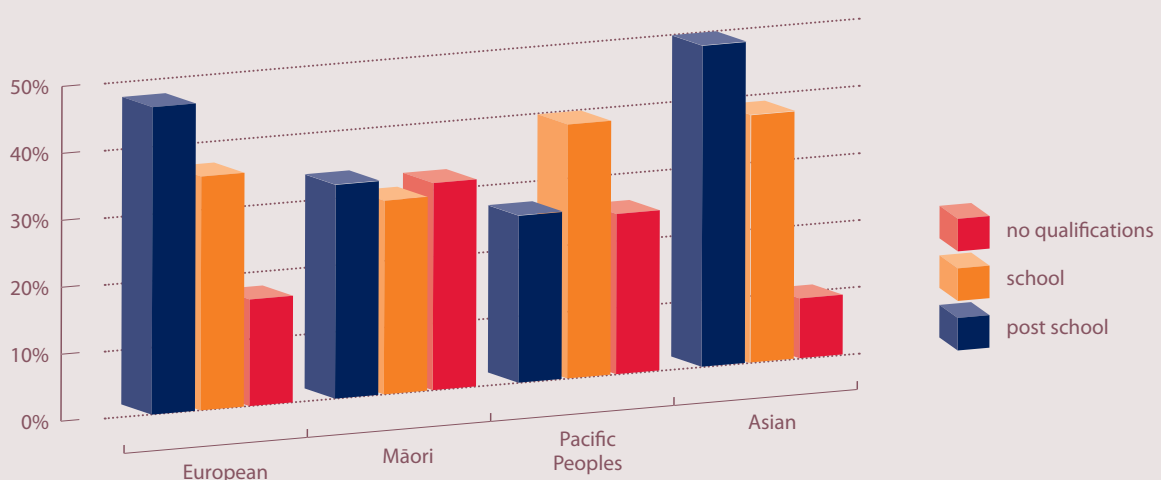
of benefits. In June 2013, 43.3 percent of those receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit were Māori.<sup>26</sup>

Māori women are more likely than other women to have no qualifications, and less likely to have post-school qualifications. In December 2011, 50 percent of European women had post-school qualifications, compared to 41 percent of Māori women.<sup>27</sup> Figure 2 shows the qualification levels of women by all ethnic groups from the 2006 Census. Māori women were the most likely of any group to have no qualifications.

Higher proportions of Māori and Pacific women participate in tertiary education<sup>28</sup> (20 percent and 17 percent respectively in 2012) compared to Asian and European women (12 and 9 percent respectively).<sup>29</sup> However, completion rates are lower for Māori and Pacific women. For example, the completion rate<sup>30</sup> at degree level in 2011 was 44 percent for Māori and Pacific women, compared with 74 percent for Asian women and 66 percent for European women.<sup>31</sup>

Māori women are more likely than European women to have low employment rates. Māori women with no or few qualifications are also more likely than other women to be unemployed.<sup>32</sup> Regions with the highest concentration of low skilled women, especially those with children, are Northland, the Bay of Plenty and Gisborne/Hawkes Bay. Efforts to address employment barriers for Māori women with low levels of qualifications need to consider the circumstances of Māori women in large cities as well as regional areas. Auckland is home to the country's largest Māori population. In 2006, 11 percent of people who lived in Auckland (137,133) identified as Māori.

**Figure 2: Qualification Levels of Women by Ethnicity**



Source: Census 2006

## *Pacific women*

Proportionally more Pacific women have school qualifications than other women, however only 22.8 percent of Pacific school leavers achieve university entrance.<sup>33</sup> Pacific women are the least likely group of women to hold a post-school qualification, they are also more likely than European women and Asian women to hold no qualifications (although less likely than Māori women).

Although there has been growth in the participation of Pacific peoples in tertiary education in recent years,<sup>34</sup> completion rates for Pacific peoples is lower than for other groups. At both diploma and degree level, 18 to 19 year old Pacific students are less likely to complete a qualification than students from other ethnic groups. As shown in Table 1, young Pacific women had a higher NEET rate than European and Asian women, but a lower rate than Māori women.

Pacific women have much lower rates of Domestic Purposes Benefit receipt than Māori women – only 10.1 percent of DPB recipients in June 2013 were Pacific women, compared with 43.3 percent for Māori.<sup>35</sup> However, unemployment rates for Pacific women are much higher than for all other women. In March 2013, Pacific women's unemployment rate was 18.7 percent compared to 14.1 percent for Māori women, and 5.9 percent for European women.

Pacific women are predominantly concentrated in Auckland. Two thirds of New Zealand's Pacific peoples<sup>36</sup> live in Auckland. In addition, of all Pacific peoples in employment, 65 percent live in the Auckland region. A further 25 percent live in the Wellington region.<sup>37</sup>

# Characteristics of Effective and Promising Employment Programmes

This part of the paper presents findings from a review of New Zealand and international literature on programmes designed to support people with low incomes and low qualifications into sustainable work, and lift their income.

These programmes do not necessarily target women, although a number target sole parents who are primarily women. While there are distinct labour market barriers faced by women, there is also an overlap between good practices in programmes primarily aimed at women and those aimed at both men and women with low qualifications and low incomes. Most of the programmes reviewed target beneficiaries but some also involve people working in low income, insecure jobs, with few opportunities for advancement – the type of work in which women with low qualifications are often concentrated.

We have identified the following set of characteristics that are frequently present in the programmes that are the most effective or promising.

- Programmes are responsive to women’s specific experiences in the labour market and are culturally responsive.
- Programmes support women into work that pays enough to support ongoing attachment to the labour market.
- Programmes address women’s training needs, childcare needs and any personal barriers to employment (supply side) AND employer’s skill needs and the quality of jobs available (demand side).
- Training is strongly aligned with the skills needs of specific employers or industries.
- Programmes that want to engage women who are furthest from the labour market undertake active outreach.
- High quality individual case management is central to effective employment outcomes.
- Support for job retention and advancement is viewed as increasingly important internationally.
- Programmes are characterised by partnerships between multiple organisations.

Learnings from Te Puni Kōkiri’s (TPK) ‘Supporting Intergenerational Success’ supports these findings. ‘Supporting Intergenerational Success’ was a pilot programme for young single Māori mothers to engage in meaningful training and employment opportunities. In particular, TPK’s pilot affirmed that effective programmes were delivered by providers who had ‘a wide reach into Māori communities and whānau’ and attended to participants’ training/education needs, childcare needs and personal barriers. They were also characterised by partnerships between education and training providers and others.<sup>38</sup>

Despite commonalities, the programmes reviewed here vary in design, aims, implementation and the needs of participants. They also operate within different social and government policy contexts. In addition, improvement and development of programmes is ongoing and no perfect solution has been found. As a result, the following characteristics provide guidance only and any programmes that are informed by these characteristics should be evaluated for impact.

## 1. Programmes are responsive to women’s specific experience of the labour market

Women have specific experiences of the labour market stemming from social norms that support their:

- participation in a narrow range of lower paid occupations and at lower levels within occupations
- taking primary responsibility for caring for children and/or other family members.

These norms affect not only women’s expectations of, and aspirations in, the labour market, but also the responses of the labour market to them. As a result, programmes need to respond to women’s circumstances, aspirations and service needs.

*“The service needs of women returners and young women who want to engage with paid employment are often quite gender specific, and stem from the nature of women’s family lives, their distinct relationships with labour markets and their labour market aspirations.”<sup>39</sup>*

*"In addition to the influence of social characteristics such as ethnicity and qualifications in determining employment rates, experiences of discrimination, poor health and care responsibilities affect many young women. Occupational segregation and clustering into particular industries are added constraints for young women which are largely ignored in welfare policies seeking to address youth unemployment."*<sup>40</sup>

Many women who are not in work or who are underemployed, want to work or to work more than they currently do.<sup>41 42</sup> Women who want to work, and find themselves unable to do so, express the importance of work for their sense of independence, self-esteem and success in life. Mothers define the importance of work in additional ways. They are motivated to be good parents and to provide for themselves and their children. They also want their children to succeed, and hope that, by working, their children will learn to appreciate that paid work can bring rewards and security.<sup>43</sup>

## 2. Programmes are culturally responsive

A 2001 New Zealand review of evidence about transitioning sole parents off benefits and into work suggests that programmes that consider cultural strengths and diversity, and promote the resiliency aspects of culture for Māori, are more likely to be responsive to Māori needs and are more likely to be effective.<sup>44</sup>

He Toki ki te Rika, a Māori trades training programme in Christchurch, has yet to be formally evaluated. Anecdotal evidence however, is positive about the outcomes being achieved for participants. It operates within a whānau framework, including a Māori support team and Māori trades mentors, with participants learning te reo Māori and tikanga Māori and exploring their whakapapa. It also operates as a partnership between Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, Hawkins Construction (and other employers) and a local tertiary education institution.

A 2013 study of how best to support Māori learners in the workplace identified the following practices as important:

- trainers who offer advice on study-skills, increased contact with advisors, and literacy and numeracy development that is embedded in work-related training
- peer mentoring and role modeling based on traditional tuakana-teina (older sibling/younger sibling) relationships

- employers who provide face-to-face oversight of employees' progress, including clear expectations and positive reinforcement
- trainers and employers who engage whānau to support trainees and employees
- trainers and employers who link with iwi, community and social service providers so that wrap around support can be made available.<sup>45</sup>

International evidence also identifies the importance of cultural responsiveness. Evaluations of Jobs Initiatives programmes, in six cities in the United States, found that programmes need to incorporate the following features to meet the needs of participants from a range of ethnic groups.

- Programme staff should reflect the communities of participants and be able to communicate with them effectively.
- Culturally appropriate forms of job-readiness programmes needed to be available.
- Assistance was needed to help participants and employers to bridge cultural gaps and foster better workplace achievement.<sup>46</sup>

## 3. Programmes support women into work that pays enough to support ongoing attachment to the labour market

Work needs to improve women's incomes and, if they have children, enable them to fulfill their care responsibilities. Women with children (especially sole mothers) face challenges to employment. This is particularly so for women with low or no qualifications and little or no prior work experience.

A 2001 Scottish study of parent's experiences of poverty noted that parents remained in the low-pay/no-pay cycle due to low paid and insecure work, lack of affordable and suitable childcare and the operation of monetary levels of benefits and tax credits. It concluded that to escape poverty, employment must improve parent's financial circumstances (such as the type of higher paid work that requires up-skilling or education) and increase their ability to fulfill care responsibilities.<sup>47</sup> A 2008 study from the United States also concluded that a range of additional supports were needed to ensure work paid for low income working families, such as skill development, access to subsidised day-care and support to address other barriers to advancement in the workplace.<sup>48</sup>

Studies of sole mothers in New Zealand and young workless women in England have made similar points. The New Zealand study found that sole mothers with inadequate and insecure incomes were typically women who had the most limited access to the types and conditions of paid work that would raise their family income.<sup>49</sup> The English study found that the jobs available to young unemployed women were often poor quality, with low pay – the types of jobs known to contribute to the poverty trap many disadvantaged households experience.<sup>50</sup>

Programmes can assist women into work “that pays enough” by:

- helping them calculate how much better off they would be in work (taking into account salaries, tax credits and childcare subsidies) and/or by providing additional financial incentives to take up work
- offering opportunities for them to build the types of skills and qualifications employers value
- linking them to employers that offer better salaries and conditions
- working with women and their employers to help women advance, once they are in work.

#### **4. Programmes attend to women’s childcare needs**

The 2009 New Zealand Childcare Survey noted that sole parents were more likely than partnered parents to resign, turn down or stop looking for paid work, or be unable to change usual work patterns, as a result of childcare difficulties. The main reasons were cost and unavailability on the days or at the times needed.<sup>51</sup>

The previously mentioned New Zealand study of sole mothers also found that women’s experience of paid work was complicated by a lack of acceptable childcare and the difficulty of having welfare benefits reinstated if their working hours decreased.<sup>52</sup>

In 2010 a MSD and Inland Revenue evaluation concluded that, while the Working for Families package met its objective of “making work pay”, some barriers to work still remained for sole parents, namely skill barriers, difficulties finding suitable work with a salary and hours that make it worthwhile, and the cost of childcare.<sup>53</sup>

Most of the employment programmes reviewed here provide different types of support to help ease difficulties presented by childcare access or cost. These include:

- helping women arrange childcare with local providers and/or to access any childcare subsidies available
- helping women resolve problems with childcare that could undermine training completion and/or job retention (especially likely with informal care arrangements)
- providing one-off financial assistance to cover initial costs before participants receive their first pay.

#### **5. Programmes provide tailored support to overcome personal barriers**

Financial, education and childcare barriers are not the only barriers that some women face to employment.

A 2010 MSD study highlights the diversity among sole parents and suggests that different approaches and interventions are needed. For some, ensuring take-up of Working for Families entitlements might be all that is required, while for those facing multiple barriers to employment, a number of different services and interventions are required. For those sole parents with the highest needs, employment may not be a realistic outcome in the short term and the priority may be interventions that improve their quality of life while receiving a benefit.<sup>54</sup>

TPK notes that young Māori mothers and their children have differing levels of need, but without assistance to access the social support available (including specialist services), and education and employment opportunities, these mothers have the potential to further disengage from the labour market and/or education.<sup>55</sup>

A 2012 study from the United States of employment and work retention services for people with serious obstacles to finding and keeping jobs, has concluded that combining work-focused strategies with additional services or treatment may be more promising than using either strategy alone.<sup>56</sup>

Programmes commonly respond to these needs by assessing participants’ individual needs and linking participants with appropriate health and/or social support providers, including specialist services.

## 6. Programmes that engage women furthest from the labour market include active out-reach

Without active outreach, programmes risk excluding those women who may be in most need of support. Evaluations of the United Kingdom's 'New Deal for Lone Parents' programme (NDLP) demonstrated the difficulty of reaching hard to serve populations and the importance of alternative modes of engagement, such as through childcare centres and other service providers. Lone parents seemed to prefer these alternative environments as more friendly and familiar.<sup>57</sup>

Without active outreach, the lone parents most likely to participate in the NDLP had the highest qualifications, the shortest periods on benefits and/or were working or had recently worked. Those least likely to participate had more and/or younger children, health problems or a disability.<sup>58</sup>

## 7. Programmes address both the needs of women (supply side) and the needs of employers (demand side)

A dual supply and demand side approach improves opportunities for low income workers while also helping businesses fill their workforce needs and compete in the marketplace. Over the last 15 years programmes for low income and unemployed workers have increasingly been working with local employers to identify the skills they need and improve the 'fit' between worker's skills and employer's needs.<sup>59</sup>

Combined supply and demand side approaches are seen as a way of addressing increasing shortages of skilled workers in the United States.

*"...workforce development practitioners increasingly recognize that focusing solely on the trainee ignores the essential role of the employer. The comprehensive, long-term, "dual customer" approach that the workforce intermediaries have adopted strives to bridge the gap between what business needs to remain competitive (demand) and where potential or existing workers are in terms of skills and abilities (supply)."*<sup>60</sup>

These dual approaches are also being framed in the United States within the wider context of the need to increase productivity and economic growth.

*"Businesses are seeking higher-skilled workers, greater productivity, increased competitiveness in a global*

*marketplace and higher profits. Meanwhile, job seekers and workers are looking for educational opportunities, better wages and benefits, as well as career advancement opportunities. Meeting the needs of both is critical ... to reduce high unemployment and poverty as well as to better compete with other developed and developing countries in an increasingly difficult global economy."*<sup>61</sup>

By providing prospective employees with support, such programmes also benefit employers. These programmes provide employers with access to recruits, thus helping reduce the cost of recruitment and creating a 'pipeline' of middle skilled workers. They also support employees after their appointment, which can increase retention, thus reducing the cost to employers of staff turnover.<sup>62</sup>

## 8. Programmes align their training with employers' skills needs and include on-the-job training

A 2011 MSD review noted that international evidence shows a mixed record on the effectiveness of training programmes and care should be taken in designing and implementing such programmes. Effective training programmes generally:

- are tightly targeted at groups that benefit
- are small scale
- are tightly targeted to the needs of participants who gain qualifications that are recognised and valued by employers
- have an on-the-job component with strong links to employers.<sup>63</sup>

In the United Kingdom short-term job-focused training has achieved significant improvements in long-term employment outcomes.<sup>64</sup> Similar results have been found in the United States.

*"Pre-employment programmes focused on building basic skills and gaining high school equivalency diplomas but have only limited links to employment and job training have not generated significant earnings gains. They provide too little knowledge related to the job market, and their credentials are often not recognised or rewarded by private-sector employers. Job training, in contrast, has shown somewhat stronger positive effects, particularly on earnings among disadvantaged adult women. ... Training that leads to established credentials that are valued by employers has produced particularly strong results."*<sup>65</sup>



The programmes reviewed here created an alignment between training and employer needs by working in partnership with local employers or industry sectors where there are demands for workers. This ensures that participants gain the skills these employers need and the credentials employers value and that jobs are available to programme participants. Such approaches are often described as being sector-based.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Case study from the United States*

#### **JVS-Boston Medical Office Employment Programme**

*This programme was run by JVS-Boston, a non-profit organisation, as part of a two-year evaluation of sector-based employment programmes. It offered a combination of job readiness training and industry-specific training in medical office skills. Participants were low income people, mainly women, with limited or patchy work histories. Participants were selected based on an interest, and the basic skills for success, in the target industry.*

*The programme provided intensive five-and-a-half-month training and a high level of support during and after training. Support included referrals to outside service providers, for instance, to resolve legal, childcare and other problems. The programme also linked participants with employment opportunities in the local healthcare sector.*

*The programme partnered with employers in its target industry through employer advisory committees and by building individual relationships with local businesses.*

*The evaluation showed that compared to non-participants, programme participants achieved 21 percent earnings gains over a two-year period, largely as a result of their being more likely to find employment than similar people not in the programme. They also worked more hours. Young participants did particularly well, earning almost 50 percent more than young adults not on the programme.<sup>67</sup>*

## **9. Programmes offer quality individual case management**

A 2003 review of international evidence for MSD concluded that a combination of intensive individualised case management, with a flexible range of services to address the diverse barriers faced by long-term beneficiaries, were most effective and long-lasting.<sup>68</sup>

A 2007 report from the United States on employment practices for low income families identified that case management services, defined as “individualised assistance to plan for future activities and address issues that arise in school, at home or on the job”, are an important component in the design and operation of innovative programmes.<sup>69</sup> Case managers can work with clients to develop individualised training and employment plans including:

- identifying their skills, experience and aspirations
- identifying their education, training and work requirements and linking them to suitable training and courses
- identifying obstacles to education, training, or work and linking them to entitlements and services that can help address these obstacles
- advising them about in-work financial incentives that are available.

Another 2003 MSD commissioned report identifies the nature of case management as also important.

*“It appears that if the case management model emphasises building on an individual’s success (i.e. is more strengths-based), then a degree of trust can be established that provides for the potential of lifting self-esteem and confidence, allowing sole mothers to then participate in training/education or employment.”<sup>70</sup>*

A 2007 United Kingdom meta-analysis of the evidence about services for unemployed and inactive benefit claimants also drew attention to both the role and capabilities of case managers or personal advisors (PAs). It concluded that PAs were critical to the success of interventions.

*“The capabilities and attitudes of PAs and the techniques they use have an important bearing on the effectiveness of interventions. This is not just a technical matter of how well a service is delivered but it is also a matter of how well the PA is able to engender a desire amongst*

customers to seek, and accept, employment and to build on the initial engagement by providing support and encouragement of an appropriate type.”<sup>71</sup>

A 2013 evaluation of the delivery of government employment services in the United Kingdom emphasised the importance of participants having an ongoing relationship with a PA and the importance of PAs identifying the complex needs of disadvantaged participants, so that support can be tailored.<sup>72</sup>

### *Case study from the United Kingdom* **New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP)**

*The NDLP is government programme targeting sole parents on income support with the aim of moving sole parents into work or closer to work. It was originally launched in 1998 and has undergone numerous modifications since then.*

*The NDLP is characterised by Personal Advisors who provide advice and information, and selected services to meet participant needs. Services include: supporting job search; helping participants identify skills and build confidence; information on benefit entitlements and a calculation of how much better off participants would be in work; assessment for health problems and support to identify options for addressing these, including seeking support from specialist services; some education and training; practical support and information on childcare. Some work placement opportunities were also offered. Once in work, support continues with ongoing contact with advisors, a telephone helpline, assistance with childcare, access to an emergency fund for the first 16 weeks of employment and financial support for the first year of work (In Work Credit).*

*A 2003 synthesis of evaluations reported that the NDLP roughly doubled the exit rate from benefits to employment. Success was attributed to advice and guidance (especially increased awareness of benefits and tax credits) and the flexibility and customised nature of the programme. Evaluations, however, noted a lack of effective outreach activity and participants tended to have qualifications and be close to being work-ready.<sup>73</sup>*

## **10. Programmes link participants with employers who have jobs to offer with good wages and conditions**

The difficulties people with low qualifications and little or no prior work experience typically face are compounded by the characteristics of their jobs and their employers.

United States writers state that such people are less likely to find employment in large firms, in unionised firms, and in firms paying higher wages and offering better benefits. Those who find employment in higher-wage sectors, such as construction, manufacturing, transportation and health services, have higher rates of advancement, while people with part-time jobs or working nonstandard shifts have higher turn-over rates.<sup>74</sup>

This situation is compounded for women with low qualifications by the gendered nature of the labour market.

*“The gendered nature of labour markets, with women tending to be concentrated in particular occupations and sectors, and the low pay attached to many occupations which typically employ women, and the very low pay associated with the kinds of jobs readily available to women who have taken a break from employment, impacts on women’s ability to transition from benefits into paid work. In addition, the low availability of jobs with part-time or flexible hours of work, can have a significant effect on women’s ability to take paid work.”<sup>75</sup>*

Some programmes address these problems by actively linking participants with employers that offer better wages and conditions, such as on-the-job training and career ladders.

*“Our results imply that job advancement depends not only on the skills that welfare recipients have, but also on their access to higher-wage employers.”<sup>76</sup>*

Other programmes support employers to develop more advanced approaches to workforce recruitment, retention and development. This has the dual effect of improving the quality of jobs available and helping employers address workforce issues that reduce productivity – such as turnover, absenteeism and low skills.<sup>77</sup>

In New Zealand, there is a range of evidence about employer practices and employment environments that support women’s recruitment and retention. In traditional male fields, for instance, recruitment practices should explicitly state that applications

are sought from both men and women. Job expectations should also be explained in detail, as women are less likely to come with knowledge of these sectors.<sup>78</sup>

### **11. Support for job retention and advancement is being viewed as increasingly important**

Research completed in the 1980s and 1990s provided considerable evidence on what works to help low-income individuals become employed. These studies, however, also found that many participants who found jobs were not better off financially. This was in part because the jobs they typically attained were low paying and provided few advancement opportunities. In addition, many participants had trouble remaining employed because of personal problems, situational problems, limited skills, or because the jobs ended.<sup>79</sup>

As a result, traditional approaches that focused on pre-employment training with a goal of job placement are being replaced by approaches that support job retention and advancement. Although to date, the international evidence is mixed on these new retention and advancement strategies, they are considered to have enough promise to continue to be developed and evaluated, within the government and non-government sectors.<sup>80</sup> For instance, in the United Kingdom the Work Programme is a recent government initiative to support longterm beneficiaries to both gain and retain work by continuing to provide support to participants after they have started work.<sup>81</sup>

Further, there is evidence that lone parents, especially those who are low paid, are less likely to retain jobs than other groups, and that the risk of job exit is highest in the first year after entering work. As a result there is potential to target retention assistance to this group.<sup>82</sup>

There is some evidence that job retention rates can, at least in the short-term, be improved by supplementing the earnings of employees and providing wage subsidies to employers, particularly when combined with other nonfinancial support.<sup>83</sup> Wage subsidies for employers have been shown to improve employment outcomes for beneficiaries in New Zealand, with longer-term beneficiaries gaining the greatest benefits.<sup>84</sup> However, the impact of in-work benefits in an economic down-turn, when work is hard to find, is unclear.

Support for women to retain work can take a range of forms. Programme providers can:

- help with childcare or transport or a referral for housing or legal services<sup>85</sup>
- offer a mix of job readiness services and soft skills training (to enable participants to establish an initial foothold in the workplace) and training in “hard skills” valued by employers (to support ongoing retention)<sup>86</sup>
- provide or link participants to in-work income support, such as wage subsidies, tax credits and childcare subsidies.<sup>87</sup>

Employers can:

- help to overcome the isolation women can feel in male dominated fields by recruiting more than one woman and providing opportunities for women to develop peer networks and workplace mentors<sup>88</sup>
- support the retention of Māori and Pacific women, by fostering a whānau/aiga based or inclusive workplace culture<sup>89</sup>
- affirm the benefits of flexible work and adopt new approaches to recruitment<sup>90</sup>
- offer subsidised benefits and wage increases.<sup>91</sup>

In the United Kingdom, and United States, programmes are not only supporting retention but also helping participants advance in work. In the United States those programmes that have achieved earning gains for participants were either:

- sector-based programmes providing training in skills identified by specific employers, or
- combined financial incentives for retention with in-work support from advisors including help with advancement.<sup>92</sup>

## Case study from the United States

### Work-Advance

*This is an evidence-based research pilot project set up in June 2011 under the United States government Social Innovation Fund. It tests a new approach to helping low-income adults prepare for, enter, and succeed in quality jobs in high demand fields with opportunities for career growth. It incorporates promising features from sector-based programs and post-employment programs, and aligns its training, job preparation, job placement and post-employment guidance with the needs of employers. Programmes are located in four cities, with different providers and a focus on different industry sectors, one of which is the health care sector, with mainly female participants.*

*The model is being tested for effectiveness for low-income adults who are 18 years of age or older, unemployed or employed.*

*The model includes: screening participants for potential to succeed and interest in the target industry; training aligned with employers' needs; support to participants to help them overcome barriers to training completion, such as transportation assistance or money to purchase equipment; facilitation of placements into work; in-work coaching and assistance with retention; contact with employers to address any performance issues and identify advancement opportunities; guidance to participants on further job opportunities and training to support advancement. As a result of the screening process participants in this programme are better educated and have more experience than is common in such programmes. A final report presenting findings on programme impacts is scheduled for 2015.<sup>93</sup>*

## 12. Programmes are characterised by partnerships between multiple organisations

From the reviews undertaken here, the most effective and promising programmes that respond to the needs of NEET women, Maori and Pacific NEET women and women on low incomes, offer multiple forms of support and combine the contributions of multiple stakeholders. These programmes include programme case managers/advisors, industry providers, employers, government and non-government social service providers, local education and training providers and community representatives.<sup>94 95</sup>

Such programmes identify the critical role of a coordinating partner to bring these contributions together to:<sup>96 97</sup>

- build and manage relationships with stakeholders and programme partners
- identify job opportunities with employers in high wage sectors
- facilitate the design and delivery of training with employers and education providers
- co-ordinate referrals to, and the contributions of, a range of specialist support services
- link and manage funding streams.

Overall, the evidence here points to the central importance of:

- aligning employment and training programmes to the needs of industries
- actively partnering with employers who have workforce demands and quality jobs to offer
- offering tailored provision to meet the diverse needs of women with low qualifications and low incomes
- drawing on the contributions of a wide range of service providers and stakeholders.

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