# Barriers to employment

Though we live in a more inclusive society and diverse workplace than ever before, many employers still harbour strong misconceptions around hiring workers who are blind, low vision, or deaf/blind. These fears include:

Health and safety concerns in the workplace for the blind, low vision, deaf/blind worker and co-workers.

Loss of productivity due to the blind, low vision, or deaf/blind worker.

Fear of costly improvements to the workplace to accommodate the blind, low vision, or deaf/blind worker.

Often an employer—like many sighted individuals, may have limited or no experience with a blind, low vision, or deaf/blind person and have no idea how they would react to themselves being blind, low vision, or deaf/blind or having a blind, low vision, or deaf/blind employee.

BLVNZ is committed to public awareness, but often it is the job applicant in an interview who has to be comfortable with selling themselves—as not only the best job candidate but as a blind, low vision, or deaf/blind worker.

If you are confident with your ability to effectively perform in a role this confidence will project across to the interviewer. Have a solution based mind-set to potential issues, go in with a ‘can do’ and problem solving attitude and you will immediately alleviate these misplaced fears.

The vast majority of employers want to provide a safe working environment and an inclusive culture, in short ‘they want to do the right thing’. The most common barrier which prevents employers from hiring a blind, low vision or deaf blind person for a role is the fear of getting things wrong or not providing the best experience.

# Transportation

Lack of affordable transportation, public transportation, or unreliable methods of getting to and from a destination are one of the biggest barriers to employment for many marginalised groups of job seekers, including blind, low vision, and deaf/blind. This can be a tough barrier to overcome. The cost of living in areas with good public transportation is higher, and there may be unwillingness or the inability to relocate to such areas on the job seeker’s part, which keeps them unemployed, or under employed. These are tough decisions that you as a job seeker must consider in your job hunt. As much as you might want to work in a certain area, it just might not be feasible from a transportation perspective. Disabled people are eligible for the Total Mobility scheme, which negates some of the transportation costs, and support funds through the Ministry of Social Development )MSD( may be an option, but often workers need to become creative on how they may get to and from work.

One positive side of the global COVID-19 pandemic has been employers needing to have staff work remotely. For many disabled workers this has been the ideal situation—as long as the needed software is accessible. Whether this will continue to be a long-term trend for employers is unknown, but it may be a positive turn for disabled workers who want or need to work outside the traditional office setting.

# Lack of Skills

One of the biggest barriers to employment for the blind, low vision, or deaf/blind is lack of skills or experiences that will fit nicely onto a CV. Many are ready and eager to find employment—full of enthusiasm and motivation, but lack social, work, job readiness, and basic blindness skills to make them successful in the workforce.

The Work Ready team can help clients unpack key skills, identify gaps and provide suggestions relating to ongoing training, workshops, courses and other opportunities that may enhance their employability.

# Technology

Assistive technology often does not work with lesser-known or proprietary software necessary to effectively work in some office environments. Many of these software packages use customized controls that screen readers have trouble interpreting.

Another barrier surrounding technology is the financial expense connected to purchasing and maintaining assistive technology.

Many blind, low vision, or deaf/blind people do not have the resources to purchase devices or software that may get them employed.

There are funding streams that can be explored and free screen readers, which may be an option depending on the employment situation. These include;

Support funds through MSD – link below

[Support funds information and application forms](Support%20funds%20information%20and%20application%20forms)

Blind and Low Vision NZ financial assistance, trusts and grants – link below

 [BLVNZ Financial assistance, trusts and grants](https://blindlowvision.org.nz/how-we-can-help/support-and-community/financial-assistance/)

NVDA (Non Visual Desktop Assistance), this is a freed downloadable screen reader software – link below

[NVDA accessible software download](NVDA%20accessible%20software%20download)