

**SAMS EVALUATION REPORT FOR
THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT ON
VISION EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
SERVICES,
217 GLOUCESTER STREET,
CHRISTCHURCH.**

REPORT STATUS: FINAL

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Standards & Monitoring Services

• evaluation and development of services for people with disabilities

Table of Contents	Page
Overview of Methodology for SAMS Evaluations	3
Groups of People Spoken to During Evaluation	3
Documentation and Records Reviewed	3
Service Description	4
Overview	4
Provider Standards	
1. Organisational Structure /Legal Status	5
2. Financial and Information Systems	5
3. Human Resource Practices	5
4. Governance Issues	5
5. Capability to Report	6
General Report	
Section A: Service Delivery	
1. Respect	7
2. Individualised Approach	7
3. Culturally Appropriate	8
4. Strengths Based	9
5. Safe and Valued Environment	10
Section B: Service Structure and Management	
6. Leadership	11
7. Effectiveness	11
8. Development	12
9. Accountability	13
Section C: Supported Employment	13
Summary of Recommendations	15
Suggested Follow-up	15
Appendix 1 – Documentation Reviewed	16

Overview of Methodology for SAMS Evaluations

The SAMS Multi-Perspective Approach (MPA) primarily uses qualitative methods and a partnership model. The methodology is consistent with principles of consumer focus, partnership, inclusion and equity. The SAMS MPA enables both a process and outcome focus allowing the Evaluation Team to equitably represent the different views of defined groups and compare the outcomes for the differing groups. Evaluations are conducted by teams and normally each team includes at least one consumer or family member as a full team member. Team Leaders and Team Members receive comprehensive training and are accredited by SAMS for a defined period. Information is gathered through observation, individual and group interviews, and review of protocols and procedures. Before departing a service, initial feedback is presented to those involved in the evaluation process. A draft report is prepared on the basis of Evaluation Team consensus and circulated. This draft is then negotiated with the provider to determine a final document, including recommendations for development, which is then returned to the service and the funder (ie, Ministry of Social Development).

This evaluation tool was developed using the following principles as a foundation:

- **informed choice is the basis for all healthy interactions**
- **focus is placed on an individual's abilities and aspirations**
- **partnership enables ethical and effective development**
- **service development is a constant process, eg, plan – act – evaluate – innovate.**

NB, "clients" is the terminology for people using the service.

Groups of People Spoken to During Evaluation:

The Evaluation Team interviewed the Board Chairperson, the Client Representative, six clients, the Service Manager, the Senior Employment Consultant and the Employment Consultant. We talked with a further ten clients and two employers by phone.

Documentation and Records Reviewed:

See Appendix 1 for a list of documentation and records reviewed.

Service Description

Vision Employment Support Services Charitable Trust (Vision Employment) provides a supported employment service for people with disabilities living in the Canterbury area. Currently 82 people (38 males and 44 females) access support for maintaining employment and/or training or job seeking. The age range is 22 to 64 with eight clients identifying as being of Māori descent.

Employers and prospective employers are also able to access information and support relating to employing and supporting people with disabilities in the workplace.

Overview

Vision Employment has been providing supported employment services, under a contract from the Ministry of Social Development, since October 2004. This report does not cover any transition services provided by Vision Employment.

We were impressed by the enthusiasm and support of the service being provided and this was demonstrated by the clients we had contact with. Without exception, we received positive comments and respect for the work being done by the staff team. Clients felt their views were respected and they appreciated the 'holistic' approach adopted by staff to the support they received. The people are working in mainstream positions involving 'real work' with conditions and entitlements the same as their work colleagues. As a result of the clients' satisfaction, we were not given any changes they would like to see to their support. Many individuals did express a desire for more staff so they could refer friends or colleagues seeking paid employment.

The staff team have extensive knowledge of the local employment market. They have established positive relationships with a number of employers. We understand two employers have now identified Vision Employment as their preferred employment agency. The staff project a professional image and all interactions are carried out with integrity. The staff team have good networks in the employment sector and with allied agencies.

We were impressed with the transparency shown by Vision Employment. A large range of information and documents can be accessed on their website, including referral forms, policies, and the Financial Statements. The documentation is comprehensive and easy to understand. Privacy and confidentiality is observed.

We would like to congratulate Vision Employment on providing a service that is individualised and supportive of the clients they are serving. We have no recommendations to make at this time.

Provider Standards

Standard 1: Organisational Structure/Legal Status

The agency has a verifiable and legitimate structure in place that is current in its operating status.

Comment

Vision Employment is registered with the Charities Commission. We sighted the Registration Certificate dated 2 November 2007. (CC11474)

Standard 2: Financial and Information Systems

Management information systems are in place including adequate internal financial controls that enable the organisation to report to a level commensurate with the complexity and turnover of the operation, and clearly show how the Department's money is spent annually.

Comment

Vision Employment has accounting and management systems in place, including financial controls and accountability and cash flow forecasting.

Standard 3: Human Resource Practices

Staff recruitment policies and procedures are in place that reflect fair and equitable employment practices, and meet all mandatory requirements in relation to the hiring, employment and termination of all employees.

Comment

We sighted policies and procedures relating to human resource management. Included were those relating to mandatory requirements covering the employment of staff; the recruitment and retention of personnel; equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities; and career structures and training opportunities.

Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures are in place that meet the requirements of the *Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992*.

Storage of all personal information relating to staff and clients meets the requirements of the *Privacy Act 1993*.

Standard 4: Governance Issues

Management structures are in place which ensure the service is able to function and operate effectively. These make clear the lines of accountability in relation to governance issues (Board/management accountability), staffing issues, and the relationship the provider has with its service users.

Comment

Vision Employment has clear guidelines for accountability between the Board and management. There is documentation showing the lines of accountability. We are not aware of any elected officer of the Board being employed in the organisation in either management or staff roles.

Standard 5: Capability to Report

The organisation must have the capacity to report in oral and written formats, and have developed internal standards for reporting at various levels on a regular basis including establishing internal guidelines on timeliness that at least meet mandatory requirements, eg, for Board reporting, grievance and complaints procedures etc.

Comment

The Vision Employment Board is kept fully informed by the Manager through written reports covering all aspects of the organisation. These reports include all relevant information that would allow the Board to action and manage stresses in the organisation, pre-empt fiscal risks, and investigate all opportunities for growth and appropriate expansion.

Systems are in place which enable the organisation to report on all these Standards and the contract obligations as and when required under the appropriate legislation or contract.

General Report

Section A: Service Delivery

1. Respect

1.1 Vision Employment provides a professional employment service founded on believing in and supporting the client's right to seek and be involved in mainstream employment in an area that reflects their unique preferences, abilities and interests.

It was pleasing to hear about the regular social opportunities provided by Vision Employment for clients and their family/whanau to meet and talk with others using the service. If a client wishes their family/whanau to be involved in aspects of supporting their employment preparation or support, this is welcomed by the Employment Consultants. However, most clients have expressed a desire for family/whanau not to be involved. Their decision has been respected and complied with by Vision Employment.

Clients spoke very highly about their experience and contact with all staff at Vision Employment. The Evaluation Team was told by all clients spoken with Vision Employment provided a holistic service and their Employment Consultant 'went the extra mile' in supporting them. Clients appreciated the additional support they received. They talked about being assisted to access allied services like counseling, study options, Workbridge, and Work and Income. Some individuals were assisted to link with sports clubs and voluntary work as well as receiving their employment support. They reported this assistance had helped them to maintain 'balance' in their lives and keep them well.

Valuing of individuals and mutuality are the basis on which partnerships are formed.

Discussions:

List strategies implemented by the agency to promote partnerships with service users and family/whanau.

Comments:

- Service users involved in all aspects of service delivery and governance.
- Social activities provided for service users.
- Holistic support.

2. Individualised Approach

2.1 Career Plans are jointly developed by the client and their Employment Consultant. Any other party identified by the client, like representatives from the individual's family/whanau, friends, specialist staff or an advocate may be involved in the development of the career plan.

We accessed the Career Plans for 30 clients. The plans clearly outlined each individual's unique aspirations (dreams) and support needs. The necessary resources required to provide appropriate support to maximise the chances of a successful placement were listed. The Career Plans also include the methods for achieving goals, the person responsible for action, time frames for outcomes, and are recorded in the computer using the GEMMA programme.

2.2 All Career Plans are monitored on a regular basis to ensure that the support being provided is effective. The monitoring is carried out by the client and their Employment Consultant. Information used in the monitoring process also can include any employer comments and/or strategies suggested to ensure employment challenges are addressed.

Agency processes reflect themes evident in personal plans. Resources are utilised in the most effective way to meet individuals' goals.

Discussions:

What processes has the agency implemented to link service users' aspirations to service development and allocation of available resources?

Comments:

- Service users identify the support they consider they need and this is reviewed at each contact between Employment Consultants and service user.
- Trends in service user support are analysed and used for service development.
- Resources are allocated on an individualised 'need' basis.

3. Culturally Appropriate (Also refer to section 1)

3.1 We spoke with clients from different cultural groups. They reported their experiences and contact with Vision Employment staff were very positive and sensitive. They felt their cultural differences and needs were respected and understood.

The staff team at Vision Employment has a mix of disabilities, cultures and beliefs reflective of their client base.

3.2 We are unaware of any client who has chosen a tikanga Māori oriented service approach. However we are confident should this be requested Vision Employment would seek appropriate advice and information to make it happen.

Vision Employment has policies and processes in place to ensure the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi is reflected in all aspects of service provision. These documents also acknowledge the cultural diversity of all individuals.

All staff have an understanding of the Treaty and there is an ongoing

programme of cultural awareness training. Local iwi are represented at both management and governance levels. Vision Employment supports the development of services for Māori, by Māori.

Services are aware and responsive to the cultures represented within the organisation and the community. Networks and resources are accessed to ensure cultural appropriateness.

Discussions:

How does the agency interact with the cultures represented within the local community?

Comments:

- Networking according to the cultural requirements of service users.
- Local iwi representation at all levels, including staff team.

4. Strengths Based

4.1 Clients reported a high level of satisfaction with their involvement with Vision Employment. Many had previously accessed other service providers with little success or satisfaction (*see section 7 for client comments*).

The individual's preferred form of communication is recorded and adhered to. We were particularly impressed with the Vision Employment website which is 'user friendly' and contains a large range of information. The service believes in and practises transparency in all aspects of their work. A large range of information is included on the website from services provided, application forms, policies, and allied service providers, to the Annual Financial Statements.

All promotional material is also available in hard copy. All documentation includes and explains the values and practices of Vision Employment, including the mission statement and key objectives.

Vision Employment has a waiting list – approximately 8 to 12 months until new clients can be seen – and this is a source of concern to us as a large number of clients expressed a wish to be able to refer friends or colleagues seeking employment. An increase in capacity of 18 would clear their waiting list and allow more flexibility in staff responsibilities. The entry process is flexible to meet personal circumstances, and individuals are given information and sufficient time to make an informed decision prior to accessing services.

4.2 We were pleased to hear staff talking about the growth and achievements of individuals. Their views were confirmed by the clients we spoke with. Achievements are celebrated, and progress and challenges are recorded.

The organisation identifies its strengths and constructively interfaces with other agencies and businesses.

Discussions:

List the processes used by the agency to identify its strengths and examples of how they interact with other agencies and businesses.

Comments:

- Individualised service delivery.
- Strong staff team with a range of skills.
- Service user and employer satisfaction surveys.
- Formal and informal feedback welcomed.
- Good promotional material and information widely available.
- Representation and networking with supported employment sector both locally and nationally.

5. Safe and Valued Environment

5.1 We sighted the Client Information Pack which contains comprehensive information about the rights and responsibilities of people using the service. This information is also available on the Vision Employment website. The pack also includes information about independent advocacy, the *Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights*, the *Privacy Act 1993*, and promotional material from allied services for training and study.

Vision Employment meets the requirements under the *Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights*. All information is stored and managed in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1993*.

5.2 We sighted risk management policies and procedures in relation to people using the service, staff, and the community. Clients reported they are informed about how to keep themselves safe and are supported to do this.

Vision Employment does not have any involvement with the storage or dispensing of medication. There is information made available to clients stating this.

5.3 The premises are situated in the central business area in a building that is easily accessible. Clients who may be nervous of travelling in a lift can either use the stairs or their Employment Consultant with meet them on the ground level and accompany them in the lift. We asked clients, with varying disabilities, if access was a problem for them and they confirmed it was not an issue. Public transport is close to the building and parking is available.

The physical environment is safe, welcoming, barrier free, and reflects the atmosphere found in equivalent local employment services available to people without a disability. The interiors and exteriors of the building are well maintained. The design and layout of the office is appropriate for the activities undertaken there. Vision Employment and the landlord complies fully with external safety requirements specific to the service and building. Support staff have current first aid training which incorporates CPR. Regular recorded fire and earthquake drills are carried out (these are organised by the building's management company and are at random times).

The organisation has a physical environment that projects a positive image. Strategic Plans detail investment in physical environment and technology.

Discussions:

List the characteristics the agency identifies as being important in projecting a positive image. How does the agency identify their priorities for physical environment and technological investment?

Comments:

- Emphasis on supporting people to achieve their aspirations.
- Regular contact with employers and community services, like Work and Income.
- Professional approach when working with allied services and businesses providing employment for service users.
- Business plan is reviewed annually and new and replacement equipment, technology, and furnishings are identified and prioritised.

Section B: Service Structure and Management

6. Leadership

6.1 Vision Employment Mission Statement:

'To provide an individualised supported employment service for people with diverse disabilities and/or people who have experienced ongoing barriers to gaining employment with an expected outcome being sustainable and long term employment with the same rights, conditions and obligations as other workers'.

As previously mentioned, Vision Employment provide a holistic service that is 'person centered'. All decisions are based on each client's aspirations and choices. Support is individualised and ongoing. Clients are involved in all aspects of the service provision and governance.

The Evaluation Team was pleased to see the range of expertise represented on the Trust Board. The Trust Board Chairman brings many years of business and community experience. There are two employers as Trustees as well as client representation. Clients are encouraged to take leadership roles in both the service and community organisations.

The organisation encourages service users to take leadership roles. The provider takes a leadership role within the sector.

Discussions:

How does the agency support service users to gain leadership skills? List examples of how the agency interfaces in the vocational sector.

Comments:

- Support for service users wishing to take an active role in the governance and/or service development areas.

- Support for service users to gain leadership skills.
- The service is individualised with service users taking the lead role in progressing the employment aspirations.
- Staff actively involved in the supported employment sector both locally and nationally.

7. Effectiveness

7.1 We were impressed with the skills and knowledge of supporting people with disabilities that the staff team at Vision Employment has. We believe they are appropriately trained and experienced. One Employment Consultant recently completed the Diploma in Supported Employment – the first person in New Zealand to hold this qualification. Relief staff are available to cover illness and leave.

Our conversations with clients supported our beliefs. Some of the comments we heard from clients included:

- “Great support.”
- “Can’t believe how wonderful the team has been.”
- “Everyone has been fantastic. Real treasures and so professional but supportive.”
- “Went to extraordinary lengths to support me when I was unwell. Made sure I was safe and had support.”
- “Great support and very approachable.”
- “Wish they had more staff because I could send more people who really want to find work”.

We sighted job descriptions and human resource policies. The policies included recruitment, appointment and retention of staff. Annual appraisals are provided. At this time, staff are able to identify personal development training opportunities. Internal and external training is available. Regular supervision is provided. Clients are involved in the staff selection process.

7.2 We sighted documentation showing communication channels and lines of authority. Clients knew who to contact if they had any concerns.

Records are kept of individuals’ activities. Staff have regular meetings providing opportunities for peer support, brain storming and dealing with any issues relating to their work. Outcomes are recorded and circulated.

7.3 The complaints process is in line with the *Health and Disability Code of Consumers’ Rights*. It is available to clients, families/whanau, and the wider community. A copy of the complaints process can also be accessed through the website. We sighted processes for dealing with areas of conflict. Support people or advocates can be part of any meetings relating to conflict issues. We sighted information about accessing help in crisis situations.

7.4 The Employment Consultants have regular contact with clients, employers and workplaces to provide information and support to all parties. Clients about to enter the workforce for the first time work with their Employment

Consultant to develop a planned transition to work programme by setting goals and/or steps to achieve positive outcomes within a set timeframe.

Vision Employment ensures all activities and workplaces they are associated with promote people with disabilities as being valued members of the community.

The service contributes to social change that improves the quality of life of service users.

Discussions:

What strategies have been implemented by the agency to promote quality of life issues, for people with disabilities, in the local community?

Comments:

- Holistic approach.
- Strong advocacy.
- Service user involvement in all aspects of the service.

8. Development (Also refer to sections 4, 6 and 7)

8.1 We believe Vision Employment has a commitment to being viable, accountable and innovative. Clients and families/whanau can be involved in service development and reviews. The audited accounts are available to all stakeholders. Staff are part of the local and national Supported Employment provider networks.

8.2 We sighted the Vision Employment Business Plan 2008 - 2009. The Business Plan includes quality assurance measures and meets the criteria set out in the SAMS Checklist August 2008.

There are strategies in place that ensure a developmental approach. Service development is responsive to changing expectations.

Discussions:

List the strategies implemented by the agency to ensure the changing expectations of all stakeholders are incorporated in service development.

Comments:

- Service user involvement in service planning and development.
- Staff training.
- Service development planning.

9. Accountability

9.1 We sighted the 2008 Vision Employment Annual Report and Financial Statements (these are also available on the website).

We would like to thank clients, employers, management and staff for their input into this evaluation. We appreciated their honesty, sincerity, and

willingness to share information with us.

Service users and their families participate in the development of the framework used for feedback regarding service effectiveness. Reporting processes reflect priorities identified by service users, their families, providers and funders.

Discussions:

How does the agency involve service users and families in developing an effective and flexible process for feedback regarding service provision? What processes have been implemented by the agency to ensure that the views and priorities of all stakeholders are included in their reporting processes?

Comments:

- Satisfaction surveys and the format to be used has service user input.
- Multi media feedback.
- Website is user friendly and open for all stakeholders to utilise to give feedback.

Section C: Supported Employment Services

10. Supported Employment

10.1 Vision Employment is supporting clients who have no, or interrupted, work histories. These people would generally not access traditional employment services or have been referred by Work and Income Work Brokers. All career planning promotes direct entry into the labour market without requirements for prolonged work readiness or pre-vocational training.

10.2 & 10.3 We did not look at any transition programmes as part of this contract.

10.4 We were impressed with the staff's knowledge of the local employment market including the gaps in the workforce.

All placements are negotiated, by the Employment Consultants, based on good business practices by the employer, and in consultation with the client. As part of the negotiating process all possibilities are explored, including job redesign, job carving, and equipment/workplace modification. Job coaches may be used and workplace support is provided for as long as it is needed. Natural supports are encouraged, and the Employment Consultants are able to provide information and education for work colleagues if desired.

10.5 The clients we spoke with are working in real and valued jobs, like computer operation, market research, food preparation, and retail. Vision Employment ensures clients are working in safe work places (in terms of OSH requirements) and in integrated settings.

We believe jobs are not lost through lack of support by Vision Employment for the individual. We sighted processes for monitoring job retention rates and

evaluating job terminations.

10.6 Vision Employment has gained a positive profile in the local community. They are recognised as promoting and achieving successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities. By providing reliable support, they have established ongoing partnerships with a variety of employers.

Vision Employment has developed a marketing plan with strategies designed to promote positive partnerships with a wide range of employers. They have relationships with providers of disability support services and other community services.

10.7 Staff have defined roles focussing on providing employment support. They do not have multiple roles. All social and public relations activities promote people with disabilities as being contributing and valued members of their community. The image of Vision Employment is one of being a supported employment service operating with professionalism and integrity. There is an extremely positive team climate.

Summary of Recommendations

We have no recommendations to make.

Suggested Follow-up

The SAMS Evaluation Team suggests a follow-up visit occur in three years or at the request of the Ministry of Social Development.

Appendix 1

Documents sighted during the evaluation:

- Advocacy Information
- Annual Report 31 March 2008
- Business Plan 2008 - 2009
- Career Plans
- Client Contact Histories
- Client Survey June 2007
- Code of Ethics – Vision Employment
- Employer References
- Grievance & Complaints Procedure
- Job Descriptions
- Job Seeker Referral Form
- Key Worker Client Summaries
- Mission Statement
- Personal Profiles
- Promotional Material
- Quality Services Criteria
- Risk Management Information
- Service Reports
- Staff Appraisals
- Trust Board Minutes