

Wilson & Dorset

AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Employing individuals
with intellectual disability.

wilsondorset.com



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A bit from us

Wilson & Dorset was founded 18 years ago and specialises in designing and manufacturing beautiful products for the home made from New Zealand sheepskin.

Wilson & Dorset began an employment pilot in April 2023, hiring five individuals with intellectual disability in the role of Warehouse Support Assistant. Four months later, the Warehouse Support Assistants were made permanent employees.

Having the Warehouse Support Assistants as part of the Wilson & Dorset team has been a positive and enriching experience. They are an integral part of our workforce and bring so much to the culture of our company.

We created this blueprint to provide insight for other businesses and individuals, to help open employment doors for individuals with intellectual disability in our communities.

Why we did it

- We had a job to fill
- To provide employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disability in our community
- To diversify our team and create an environment to grow the skills and understanding of our existing staff
- To grow our connection to our community
- To give something a go, with the hope it would encourage other businesses to give it a go too

What we have learnt – Part 1

PARTNER WITH EXPERIENCE

- Partnering with an organisation or individual with experience in the disability sector is very helpful.
- We have worked closely with Mint Charitable Trust (based in Wānaka), and received invaluable support.

PREPARING OUR EXISTING TEAM

- How to adapt our own communication styles, to connect with others.
- Spend time with existing staff, discussing what to expect.
- Meet and greets, allowing time for everyone to get to know each other.

REPETITION OF INFORMATION

- Repeat information and ensure things are done the same way while employees are training; they will get familiar with the task over time, leading to skill acquisition.

VISUAL LEARNING RESOURCES

- Produce a visual guide for how to do the tasks. We used concise, step-by-step instructions.
- Use photos and maps.
- Use of a whiteboard in the workspace has been very helpful.



What we have learnt

– Part 2



A CONSISTENT PERSON AND ROUTINE

- It helps to have one person who manages and supports the employees when they are at work, manages any communications, and runs the meetings. This person needs to be highly empathetic and passionate about the employees' success.
- Consistency in routine has worked well. Same shift times, same meeting spot at the start of each shift, and same task.

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS AND LIMITATIONS

It's important to be flexible and understanding of any individual needs, for example:

- physical needs
- intellectual needs
- social needs
- medical needs.

What we have learnt – Part 3

INTEGRATION CREATES A SENSE OF BELONGING

- Ensure integration within the company culture, including with work events, birthday celebrations, staff morning teas, Christmas parties.
- Introductions to different aspects of the business, tours of company premises, visits to the store.
- Tailor communication so it is understandable and appropriate.

MINDFUL CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- Front-footing change in routine, for example tell the team about a special event the week before.
- Conduct team meetings to discuss change, like a change in work location.
- Advanced notice of change in shift time.
- Give time for questions, and pre-empt any concerns the team might have.

HAVING A RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPPORT WORKERS OR CARERS

- Our Warehouse Support Assistants have benefitted from having a carer/support person with them.
- It is great to get know the support team well.
- Support workers or carers that come to work with the employees are a great source of advice and help.

TOP TIPS



- Treat individuals as part of the team.
- Plan ahead for change.
- One instruction at a time. Give time to process and respond.
- Routine and repeatability of the task is key.


What we haven't nailed yet

- Development Planning: We are constantly looking for ways to expand the Warehouse Support Assistant role and add additional tasks.
- We would like to implement performance reviews and employee feedback sessions.



Examples and Ideas

★ The Warehouse Support Team is moving to the big warehouse! ★



Big Warehouse

Community Hub and Mint Office

New timetable:

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graph LR; A[Meet Harriett at the Big Warehouse] --> B[Do all the filling work]; B --> C[Coffee break in office]; C --> D[Home time]
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VISUAL NOTICE TO AID
DISCUSSION ABOUT
RELOCATION



TEAM MEETINGS



OFFICE VISITS TO SEE
STAFF AND DOGS

Examples and Ideas

Timesheet – Warehouse Support

Date:

Name:

Start Time	Finish Time

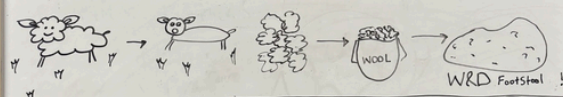

Approval:

Top tips:

1. Break wool into small pieces
2. Push wool into corners
3. Check there are no lumps


You are doing a great job!

★★★★★



Stone set *

Small = 700g
Medium = 2100g
Large = 3400g



Footstool

Small = 2100g
Medium = 1400g

Cushions


Small square = 450g
Large square = 900g
Rectangle = 500g

Top tips:

1. Break wool into small pieces
2. Push wool into corners
3. Check there are no lumps

You are doing a great job!

★★★★★



CUSTOM TIMESHEET
TEMPLATE

VISUAL LEARNING
TOOL

LARGE WHITEBOARD
IN WORKSPACE

Some words from the Warehouse Support Assistants

“I like earning money for music concerts like Six60” – Scott

“Thumbs up”
– Ewan

Emma’s work moto:
“When I’m at work, I am calm and professional”

“I make fluffy pillows in Shay’s warehouse”
– Louis

“When I’m at work I feel happy, independent and like an adult”
– Emma

“Work makes me feel happy and part of a team” – Scott

“Money for Highlanders tickets” – Ewan

“Makes me feel productive, good and fluffy” - Louis

Contact



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