

## Catapult Employment Services

### *Diversability*

Catapult Employment Services' vision for everyone to have the opportunity to participate in paid employment, no matter what challenges they have in life, doesn't just apply to service users, it applies to its own staff as well.

Founder Kevin Blogg has long-held the vision that people with disabilities of any sort - physical, mental, intellectual, social, or psychological - are part of society, and willing and able to contribute by being included in the paid workforce. Since its beginnings in 2003, Catapult has grown from a one-man operation based on that vision, to a successful social enterprise employing 11 full-time staff, and helping more than 200 Cantabrians each year. In total, more than 1200 people have been assisted into paid work.

Services include career assessment and guidance, job search and application support, employment preparation workshops, and support while settling into a new job.

As a direct response to the community's needs following Christchurch's 2010-2011 earthquakes, Catapult also offers a work-focused anxiety counselling service.

Chief Executive Leanne McTear says in the post-earthquake environment, staff noticed many clients were facing more than their usual challenges, presenting with work-related anxiety, post-traumatic stress and other mental health issues.

"In response to these new challenges Catapult developed a work-focused anxiety counselling programme, a 10-week one-on-one programme that provides clients with tools to manage anxiety and increase work readiness," says Leanne.

Common issues the programme addresses include; inability to apply for jobs due to fear of what might happen next, excessive worry about what others think, recurring thoughts about past stressful events, and avoidance of situations that may trigger anxiety.

In the same way it supports clients, Catapult has made staff welfare a priority, and believes its diverse staff is one of the reasons for the organisation's success.

"We hire staff with diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities and past experiences with a variety of challenges, which contributes to their knowledge, empathy and experience," says Leanne. "Catapult offers flexible working hours, particularly for those with children, and pays generous sick leave allowances, as we employ staff with disabilities and staff with young children who may need to have more than the legal minimum requirement of sick leave available.

"Catapult's employees are the number one priority of management. If the employees are well, happy in their work, and able to function at a high level of empathy, as well as being able to bring their collective



extensive knowledge of the Canterbury labour market together, then they are best able to serve the clients we work with.”

Staff are offered frequent opportunities for professional development, and encouraged to contribute to the strategy, direction, operations and processes of the organisation.

Catapult is recognised as one of the leading providers in Canterbury. In 2016 it was awarded the Champion Charity award at the Champion Canterbury Business Awards. Feedback from clients is universally positive, with 100 per cent of those who have used the service saying they would recommend it to others.

The organisation’s work has promoted diversity and inclusion within the local community. “The employers we work with say that working with Catapult has meant a positive change in their workplaces by introducing more diversity and a chance for staff to work alongside colleagues who have different abilities and challenges in the workplace, says Leanne. “ They say it helps their culture become more inclusive, empathetic and understanding of people who may experience great difficulty in obtaining paid employment, something which many of us take for granted.”

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YOUR WORKPLACE MORE INCLUSIVE

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