A Guide to Employing PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PART 2

Health and Welfare Sector
Education and Training Authority
HWSETA

FOREWORD

We would like to introduce you to the second edition of our guide.

As part of the skills development mission of the HWSETA, we see it as our duty to create an awareness of disability and how employing persons with disability could enrich the working environment, as well as the lives of those living with disability and their families.

In life it is often the persons with disabilities who get left behind, ignored and even victimised. Sometimes the classic reaction is "fright or flight". We all fear the unknown. This guide however, intends to dispel the myths and tell you what the various disabilities are and explain how you can manage them within the workplace. This will add value to the lives of people with disabilities who may become your employees. This will mean a return on investment for your business, but more importantly, you will be investing in the development of society by treating persons with disabilities as equally credible members of society.

The National Skills Development Strategy makes particular provision for employers to take persons with disabilities into the workplace and to cater for their needs whilst meeting the objectives of their business. The biggest obstacle for an employer in embarking on such a dynamic path is the stereotypical misinformation that is spread about the challenges persons with disabilities will experience in the workplace. The time has come for this obstacle to be obliterated and so to this end, the HWSETA is making this guide available. Through this guide, we also aim to ensure that the potential working colleagues of an employee with a disability are also informed and thus given the ability to themselves adapt to the needs of their colleague with a disability.

> " *Understanding promotes cooperation. Cooperation is the basis for team productivity.* "

This guide hopes to provide the information and guidance required so that employers will not only be equipped, but also comfortable with placing persons with disabilities onto internships or placing them into permanent employment within their organisations.

> " *Education is the greatest weapon against ignorance.* "

CONTENT

Aligning Disability To Employment Equity

The Employment Equity Act, No.55, 199, outlines the policies that enable people with disabilities to have their rights recognised in the labour market, guarding against discrimination and ensuring equal rights for all.

The Act protects people with disabilities against unfair discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination against people with disabilities can include:
- Unfounded ability and performance assumptions.
- Exclusionary and limited advertising and interviewing arrangements.
- Selection tests that discriminate unfairly.
- Inaccessible workplaces.
- Inappropriate training for people with disabilities.

Contained within the Employment Equity Act is the Code of Good Practice on the Employment of People with Disabilities.
The Code is based on the Constitutional principle that no one may unfairly discriminate against a person on the grounds of disability. It is intended to create awareness of the contributions people with disabilities can make and to encourage employers to fully utilise skills.

As a guide for promoting equal opportunities and the fair treatment for people with disabilities, the Code should be used in the education and training programmes of employers and employer organisations to develop and implement their own equity policies and programmes tailored to the needs of their own workplace.

Through reasonable accommodation, people with disabilities can apply their skills and abilities to provide a mutually beneficial working relationship with their employers and ultimately to contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Policies & Procedures that should Guide Organisational Strategic Objectives with Regards to Disability

An equality policy is the name people give to a written document you can use to set out your organisation's commitment to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity in areas such as recruitment, training, management and pay.

The formal policies and procedures of an organisation can tell a lot about your organisation's views on inclusion, human rights and equality. When reviewing these policies, it would be useful to look at:

- Discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Flexible working arrangements
- Sickness absence
- Health and safety
- Performance management
- Recruitment and promotion
- Training and development
- Procurement
- Service provision and customer equality

Informal and unwritten working practices should also consider:

- Staff attitude and behaviour
- Take up of employee provisions
- Working patterns and segregation
- Recruitment and retention
- Staff consultation and participation

Equality policies

Equality law does not say you have to have an equality policy.

However, having an equality policy shows your organisation's commitment to equality for your workers and, if this applies to you, for your customers, clients, or service users too.

For example, someone applying for a job with you may look at your equality policy to see if you share their values.

Or someone who is thinking of getting you to do some work for them might look at your equality policy to see how they can expect to be treated as your customer or client.

An equality policy should apply to every aspect of employment, from recruitment through pay, access to facilities and employment benefits, discipline and grievance procedures and so on up to the end of the contractual relationship and beyond, for example, when you provide references.

A policy might include:
- Statements outlining your organisation's commitment to equality.
- Identification of the types of discrimination that an employer (and, if this applies to you, a service provider) is required to combat across the protected characteristics of age, disability, etc.
- Statements outlining the type of work environment your organisation aims to create, including what is, and is not acceptable behaviour at work (also referring to conduct near the workplace and at work-related social functions where relevant).
- Information about how policy will be put into action, including how you will deal with any breaches of

Alongside your equality policy, you can have a separate harassment and bullying policy, or you could put both policies together as a 'dignity at work' policy.

To make sure an equality policy is put into practice in an organisation, there should be:
- A demonstrable commitment to the policy from the very top of your organisation.
- The agreement, understanding and support of all your staff and stakeholders (such as trade unions) for the policy's implementation.
- Involvement of your staff and stakeholders in the drafting of the policy.
- Extensive promotion of the policy both within your organisation and to potential workers, contractors and suppliers.
- Training provided to all your staff to explain what the equality policy says and what it means to them.
- Incorporation of the policy into your organisation's business strategy.
- An explicit willingness to challenge and, if necessary, discipline anyone not following the policy.
- Reference made to the equality policy in other policies within your organisation.

the policy by your workers, and how concerns and complaints will be dealt with, whether these come from your workers, or from your customers, clients or service users.
- Who is responsible for the policy?
- How you will monitor the policy and when you will review it.
- Details covering how the policy is linked in with your other policies.

Your equality policy could also describe the type of working environment you want to create.
For example:
'We aim to create a working environment in which: all people are able to give of their best there is no bullying and harassment or discrimination all decisions are based on merit.'

Put an action plan in place that includes a commitment to a regular policy review. Your review should examine your progress in delivering the action plan and ensure that this information is shared with everyone.

Examine HR capacity to implement fair and non-discriminatory employment practices.

Where discrimination can occur

Discrimination can arise in a variety of work-related situations. These include access to employment and to particular occupations, and access to training and vocational guidance and support. Further, it can occur with respect to the terms and conditions of the employment, such as remuneration, hours of work and rest, paid holidays, maternity leave, security of tenure, advancement, social security, and occupational health and safety. It can also arise through harassment and victimization. There are some circumstances where employers deliberately discriminate on inappropriate grounds. However, in most circumstances discrimination will not tend to be overt, but rather the result of prevailing cultural, social or economic norms. Some of the areas where discrimination is most likely to occur, and where companies should exercise care in their policies and actions, include the following:

Recruitment of new workers. Problems can occur as a result of basic prejudice, or misunderstanding on the part of those making the hiring decisions. They can also arise from the application of particular criteria or requirements that are not necessary for the job but negatively impact a particular group. Examples include: unnecessary qualifications, language skills that are not required by the job, or a requirement that recruits must live in a particular area.

The role of employment agencies

Acknowledging the frustrations faced by organisations include:
- A lack of awareness of the required process, resulting in ineffective Integration Strategies and, indirectly, unfair discrimination.
- Difficulty in practically applying the definitions of 'disability' and 'reasonable accommodation' in the workplace,
- A complex labour pool from which to source potential employees,
- The need for a more creative sourcing methodology.
- A lack of resources to action Integration Strategies, with HR personnel being unfamiliar with the dynamics specific to the realm of 'disability.'

(Bradshaw Le Roux website)

Employment agencies can offer insights and services to their clients such as:

- Workshops providing insights and practical skills for employing and working with people with disabilities (integration).
- Assistance with reasonable accommodation policies.
- Sensitisation workshops.
- Disability awareness training.
- Disability equality training.
- Access audits – involving a 'walk through' visit of the premises to identify barriers and recommend reasonable accommodations.

- Strategy and policy review and development – reviewing and amending existing HR strategies and work processes to promote disability inclusion and to ensure compliance with legislature.
- Recruitment and selection processes – including advertising methods, shortlisting, interviewing and assessing people with a disability and involvement in the induction and integration process.
- Disability case management – support in retention and rehabilitation of employees with newly acquired disabilities.

Some employment agencies specialising in disability:

EOH Recruitment   Bradshaw Le Roux   Jobaccess

Nthiro Business Consulting   NAPSA

The role of placement officers at disability organisations:

- Awareness of how people with disabilities are often excluded from mainstream society and employment

- Negative attitudes are the most widespread barrier disabled persons face – disabled people may need reassurance. They can often suffer from low self-esteem and do not always believe they can take charge of their own lives.

- Education and training are essential

- Transport can be an issue, an employment service may be able to provide direct assistance or through employers / community-support groups.

- Information is a vital part of the process of helping disabled people secure employment. This includes information for:

  - The disabled persons themselves (this should be in a format sensitive to the nature of their disability)

  - Those providing employment services to disabled persons

  - Employers and potential employers

  - For co-workers

- Information for non-disabled people should include general information about different forms of disability, as well as on the rights and obligations of employers who engage disabled persons.

As a placement officer, you can assist disabled persons by:
- Understanding their feelings and expectations

- Providing employment opportunities

Accept that:
- they are people first, the disability is secondary

- Individuals with disabilities are not all the same

- They have ambitions like everybody else

- They can make their own decisions and want to be consulted on matters affecting them.

Assisting disabled persons in finding and keeping jobs requires you to:
- Listen to what they need.
- Reassure them of their abilities.
- Provide ongoing support.
- Encourage the formation of peer support groups.
- Raise the awareness of the abilities and rights of disabled persons.

Check sheet for job ads

Are advertisements positively worded to welcome applications from people with disabilities?

Are notices of job vacancies, job descriptions and application forms available in an accessible format for disabled applicants, e.g. available in Braille, or on computer disk for blind and visually impaired people?

Do advertisements state that necessary arrangements can be made at the interview to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities?

Have the appropriate State or voluntary agencies working with disabled people been notified of the vacancies?

Does the employer have links with local disability representative organisations and local agencies?

Does the employer automatically grant an interview to all qualified applicants with a disability and state this in company advertisements?

Does the employer discuss any questions s/he might have about a person's ability to do a particular job/task with either the individual or appropriate agency prior to making a final recruitment decision?

Is the employer aware of the range of employment supports and advice services available and the requirements of Employment Equality legislation?

For most people going to work is central to their lives as it provides structure, a routine and an income. Unfortunately, many disabled people know what it feels like to be unemployed, or to have little, or no job security and experience the worry, frustration and the anger that it brings.

Being without work and money is a daily reality for the majority of disabled people. They may want to work, they may have the skills and abilities required but they are considered 'unfit' or 'unable' because the workplace is inaccessible, or because of negative attitudes towards disability on the part of some employers and co-workers.

Discrimination against any person who wishes to work is unacceptable. We hope you will find the following information and guidelines for action, which you can use to make your workplace more accessible useful.

REMEMBER to listen to employees with disabilities — they're the experts in what they need. You should:

- Listen to what employees tell you about their disabilities and what they need.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Get information to help you understand specific disability issues.
- Be creative, flexible and look for new ways of doing things.
- Get your employees to test any special equipment or device before you purchase.
- The work environment affects the level of independence and equality for people with disabilities.

Access

Outside and around buildings:
- Are pedestrian routes kept free from obstruction?
- Are pathways wide enough for wheelchair access?
- Are pathway surfaces slip resistant?
- Are shallow ramps provided at change of levels?
- Are steps and stairways provided with handrails?
- Parking and moving to buildings:
- Are clearly marked parking spaces available for disabled drivers/ passengers as near as possible to entrances?
- Are parking spaces wide enough to allow wheelchair access?
- Is there a level route, or accessible ramps from parking areas to building entrances?
- Entrance to buildings:
- Is the entrance easily identified?
- Is the access to buildings free from obstruction?
- Are doors easy to open and wide enough for wheelchair access?

Inside buildings:
- Are floor surfaces slip resistant?
- Are ramps provided at change of levels?
- Are lift control buttons, light switches, sockets, heating controls etc., at an accessible height for wheelchair users?
- Does the lift serve all main areas?
- Are amenities such as toilets and telephones clearly signposted accessible?

Visual, Audio and Tactile Aid

- Are signposts legible and well lit?
- Are names and numerals on doors at a level to facilitate people using wheelchairs?
- Are audible signs (e.g. alarms) linked to visual signals (e.g. flashing lights)?
- Are colour contrasts used to distinguish routes or areas of buildings?
- Are changes in floor texture used to warn a person with a visual impairment of hazardous areas such as stairwells?
- Does the employer know that financial grants and expert advice are available to make physical adaptations to buildings for workers with disabilities?

Safety Procedures

- In the event of emergencies or evacuation drills, are specific members of staff designated to assist employees with visual impairments or others who cannot use the stairs?
- Are disabled employees familiar with escape routes and trained in all safety procedures?
- Are visual alarms for hearing impaired workers installed in all areas of the premises, including toilet blocks?
- Are exit routes and procedures designed to cater for the slower movement of people with disabilities
- Are exit routes clearly signposted?
- Is the employer aware that a building which is adapted to meet the needs of workers with disabilities also becomes a building which is safer for all workers and customers?

Workplace Facilities

- Are toilets, restrooms and canteen areas accessible to workers with disabilities?
- Is provision made for special dietary needs?
- Are there no-smoking areas for workers with coronary or chest conditions?
- Are floors non-slip and corridors wide enough to facilitate people with mobility disabilities or people using wheelchairs?

Making workplace accommodations

Examples of accommodation include:
- voice input or speech recognition aids
- voice synthesizer
- TTY telephone service
- computer screen magnifiers
- flexible scheduling and reduced or part-time hours
- a quiet workspace
- written instructions
- self-paced workload
- frequent breaks
- alternate methods of communication (telephone, tape recorder, verbal instructions), and
- larger tasks divided into smaller ones
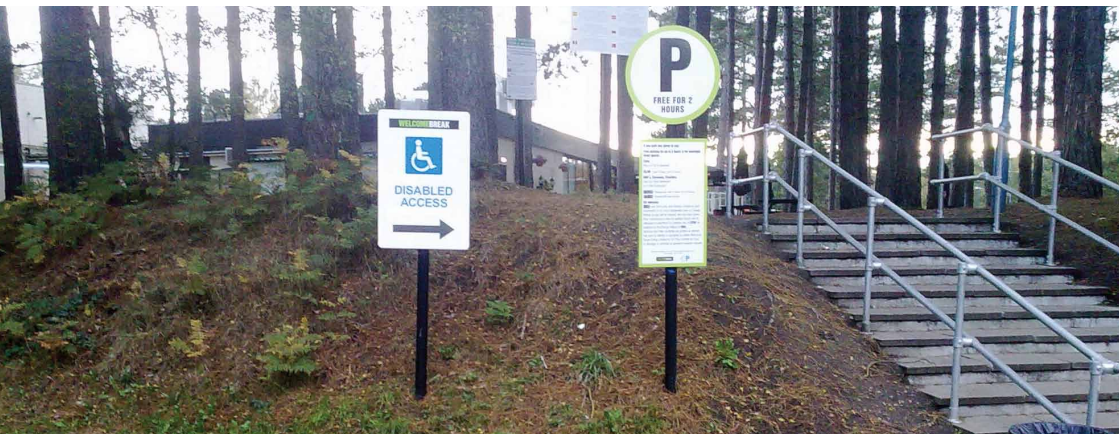
Collaborate with the South African Disability Alliance (SADA) to ensure barrier free environments.

Costs are often cited as the reason for failing to provide a barrier free environment. Yet, when accessibility is incorporated in the original design, the additional cost does not generally exceed 0,2% of the overall cost of development.

JOB ACCOMMODATION STRATEGIES

I have included some practical examples of how a job, or workstation can be made accessible for a disabled worker. There is a belief that all job accommodation strategies are costly. In fact, as the following examples illustrate, this is not always the case.

The level of adaptation required in making a workplace accessible for a disabled worker varies greatly and depends on the specific requirements and needs of the worker. Rather than presuming the costs involved will be high, it is far more important to establish what level of adaptation needs to be carried out and to investigate all possible solutions before making a final decision.

Examples

Problem: A worker had a condition that required two-hour rest periods during the day.
SOLUTION: The company introduced flexi-time for her.
COST = Zero.

Problem: A person with a learning disability worked in the post room and had difficulty remembering which streets belonged to which city area code.

SOLUTION: A rolodex card system was filed by street-name alphabetically with the area code. This helped the worker increase his output.
COST = R300

Problem: An accountant with HIV was experiencing sensitivity to fluorescent light. As a result, she was not able to see her computer screen, or written materials clearly.
SOLUTION: The employer lowered the wattage in overhead lights, provided task lighting and a computer glare screen guard.
COST = R800

Problem: A worker who used a wheelchair could not use a desk because it was too low and he could not place his knees under it.
SOLUTION: The desk was raised with wood blocks.
COST = Zero
How would these costs compare with the costs involved in laying off a disabled worker and losing a trained, experienced and valuable worker?

Non-physical support should also be available for employees with a disability to accommodate their medical and psychological needs.

Employers are not expected to diagnose employees, but managers and supervisors should be aware of changes in employee behaviour and workplace performance. In some cases, managers/

supervisors may need to speak with an employee privately to find out what his/her needs are. If mental illness, or addiction is suspected, the manager/supervisor must support the employee in seeking help and/or putting in a request for accommodation.

An employee seeking accommodation must provide enough information so that the employer can understand the accommodation needed. The employer needs to know how the employee's condition affects their work. The employee does not have to disclose information about the diagnosis, the history of the illness, or its treatment.

It's also okay for an employer to ask an employee to provide supporting documentation from a health care provider. This is so the employer can come up with the best accommodation options.

If an employee is uncomfortable sharing this information with his or her supervisor, it may be useful to involve a third party. A third party could be a member of the human resources (HR) division. The HR person can gather the information and recommend accommodations to the supervisor. Some important points to keep in mind about information shared/asked for:

• Only information relevant to the work situation needs to be shared—the point is to support the employee with appropriate accommodation.
• Medical information shared between the employee and employer is private and must be kept confidential.
• Every person is different, so accommodation requests should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

South African Disability Alliance (SADA) member organisations will advise each individual constituency requirement for accessibility issues and other information that may be necessary.

Assistive devices

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines assistive devices as: "any piece of equipment, or product that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities." These include mobility devices that are designed to assist or improve a user's personal mobility – to change and maintain body position and walk or move from one place to another.

According to the Department of Health's website (www.doh.gov.za), the most common assistive devises are wheelchairs, walking aids and hearing aids.

Examples of assistive devices:

Home/Workplace Modifications
• Structural adaptations that remove or reduce physical barriers: ramps, lifts, bathroom changes, automatic door openers, expanded doorways.

Aids for Daily Living
• Devices that assist in daily living and independence. Examples include modified eating utensils, adapted books, pencil holders, page turners, dressing aids, adapted personal hygiene aids.

Augmentative Communication
• Devices that assist people with speech and/or hearing disabilities communicate: communication boards, speech synthesisers, and modified typewriters, head pointers, text to voice software.

Computer Access Aids
• Headsticks, light pointers, modified or alternate keyboards, switches activated by pressure, sound or voice, touch screens, special software, and voice to text software.

Environmental Controls
• Electronic systems that assist people control various appliances, switches for telephone, TV, or other appliances that are activated by pressure, eyebrows or breath.
• Prosthetics and Orthotics
• Replacement or augmentation of body parts with artificial limbs or other orthotic aids such as splits or braces.

Mobility Aids
• Devices that assist people move within their environments: electric or manual wheelchairs, modifications of vehicles for travel, scooters, crutches, canes and walkers.

Recreation
• Devices to enable participation in sports, social, cultural events. Examples include audio description for movies, adaptive controls for video games, adaptive fishing rods, cuffs for grasping paddles or racquets, seating systems for boats.

Seating and Positioning

- Adapted seating, cushions, standing tables, positioning belts, braces, cushions and wedges that provide body support to assist people perform a range of daily tasks.

Sensory Aids for Vision/Hearing Impaired

Aids such as magnifiers, Braille and speech output devices, large print screens, hearing aids, visual alerting systems, telecommunication devices.

Assistive devices are a necessity, not a luxury for people living with a disability. It is essential to select a device based on an in-depth understanding of the individual's needs, the work environment and the tasks that need to be performed.

Non-Governmental Organisations who supply assistive devices include:
- Rachel Swart Fund (021 689-8376)
- QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA) has various initiatives including: (031 767-0348)
- FL Smidth Rustenburg Assistive Devices Project
- The Wheelchair and Assistive Devices Project
- Project Tshedza
- The National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPPDSA)
- South African Disability Development Trust (SADDT)

- Is there regular consultation with disabled workers or their Union representatives to determine if the employees require assistance to overcome any problems?
- Do disabled workers have the same opportunities to train/retrain and develop their skills as other workers?
- Has consideration been given to varying job content, location or working hours to further facilitate disabled employees?
- Has retraining for alternative work, or re-assignment on equal terms, been considered for employees who have recently acquired a disability, or whose disability is progressive (i.e. becomes more pronounced over time)?
- Is the composition of the workforce reviewed on a regular basis to ensure equal opportunities for all, including employees with disabilities?

Training venue convenience needs

Wheelchair users

- keeping passages, corridors and pavements unblocked and free from obstacles
- leaving space for wheelchairs to move around in areas of lifts, corridors, classrooms, and dormitories
- adjusting the height of the surface of desks
- making the ground skid-proof ▫
- conduct training in classrooms on the ground floor as much as possible, especially if there are no lifts
- keeping distances between classrooms and dormitories short
- keeping the ground from being uneven or slippery ▫
- minimising the number of steps to be taken or crossed

Persons with impaired vision

- convey written instruction and information orally
- keep passages, corridors and pavements unblocked and free from obstacles
- increase lighting
- check for railings along stairways
- installing fixed signs of different shapes on the grounds of doors to
- rooms or floors, and/ or installing Braille signs at passages and doors to rooms
- provide a voice prompt system

Persons with impaired hearing and/ or speech

- convey oral instructions and information in written form
- install flashing alarm lights to complement accoustic fire/ evacuation
- alarms (bells, sirens) of training venues

Logistics

Accommodation

- Consideration should be given to providing commuting services for those trainees with disabilities for whom commuting is a significant barrier to participation in training.
- Trainees with disabilities and their caretakers (often family members) should be provided with convenient accommodation services or accommodation guidance if in need of accommodation.
- consideration should be given to providing temporary rooms for breaks for trainees with disabilities.

*Tea break*s

- One more break can be given as needed.

Contact Details of Disability Organisations

The QuadPara Association of South Africa (QASA)
Tel: 031 767 0352
Fax: 031 767 0584

SA Federation for Mental Health (SAFMH)
Tel: 011 781 1852
Fax: 011 326 0625

National Council for People with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPPDSA)
Tel: 051 436 7497
Fax: 086 504 7138

Epilepsy SA
Tel: 021 595 4900
Fax: 021 595 4901

National Council for People with Cerebral Palsy (NAPCP)
Tel: 011 452 2774
Fax: 011 452 6583

South African National Council for the Blind (SANCB)
Tel: 012 452 3811
Fax: 012 346 4699

Cheshire Homes
Tel: 021 685 6169
Fax: 086 565 1667

Disabled People SA (DPSA)
Tel: 021 422 0357
Fax: 021 422 0389

Deaf Federation of SA (DEAFSA)
Tel: 011 482 1610
Fax: 011 726 5873

DeafBlind South Africa
Tel: 023 342 4092
Fax: 023 342 0088

Down Syndrome SA (DSSA)
Tel: 011 615 9406
Fax: 086 136 9672

Muscular Dystrophy Foundation of South Africa (MDSA)
Tel: 011 472 9703
Fax: 086 646 9117

Autism SA
Tel: 011 484 9909
Fax: 011 484 3171

South Africa National Deaf Association (SANDA)
Tel: 011 492 0094
Fax: 011 492 0094

Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
HWSETA

Vision

The creation of a skilled workforce to meet the health and welfare needs of all South Africans.
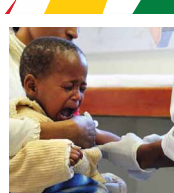
Mission

The Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA) aims to create an integrated approach to the development and provision of appropriately skilled health and welfare workers to render quality services that compare favourably with world-class standards.

Philosophy

The HWSETA espouses the philosophy of a better life for all through people development.

Objectives

- Develop and implement the Sector Skill Plan
- Develop and administer learnership
- Support the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
- Implement ETQA responsibilities mandated by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)
- Disburse levies collected from employers in the health and social development sectors
- Forge links with stakeholders and bodies in the health and social development sectors
- Account for the effective and efficient use of public monies received from levies collected from employers, in line with the provisions of the Public Finance Management Act