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**Media Release**

**‘Accelerator’ increases on-the-job training opportunities for young New Zealanders**

The Warehouse, Ministry of Social Development and Youth Hub launch a digital training environment for young people

A joint-initiative between the Ministry of Social Development, The Warehouse and Youth Hub launched today, called Accelerator, will increase on-the-job training opportunities for young New Zealanders.

The Warehouse’s successful ‘Red Shirts in the Community’ programme will be the first training programme to be made available on the new digital learning platform.

Accelerator will also be the largest public-private partnership of its kind working on social inclusion and youth development in New Zealand.

“We have seen some really positive outcomes for the young people who have completed our ‘Red Shirts in the Community’ programme,” said Pejman Okhovat, Chief Executive of The Warehouse. “Now as part of Accelerator, the programme will have the scale to help even more youth experience work.”

“We understand how important it is for young people to experience work to secure future employment. The Accelerator platform will be made available to other employers from a range of different industries to form new partnerships and this will encourage other large New Zealand businesses to think about the role they could play in helping our young people into work.”

Since 2016, Red Shirts in the Community has helped more than 1100 young people not currently in employment, education or training gain retail skills and experience work. In July 2018, The Warehouse piloted the new programme with SkillsNZ where each participant is mentored by a navigator throughout the programme to support them in their journey in gaining employment.

For the Ministry of Social Development, Accelerator is a good example of the public sector and business coming together.

“It will give young people the flexibility to learn when and where they want, give them access to extra support if they need it and be able to connect with other young people in the on-the-job training programmes,” said Viv Rickard, Deputy Chief Executive of Ministry of Social Development.

“It’s great to work alongside The Warehouse again to expand the success of the Red Shirts in the Community.”

The technology and infrastructure behind Accelerator has been designed by Youth Hub: a platform which helps young people create online profiles to connect with potential employers and service providers as they enter the working world.

“Accelerator makes workplace learning fun thanks to the gamification of the training modules,” says Youth Hub founder Senthil Perumal. “The Warehouse has taken a proactive approach in developing its online training and we’re excited to get more great Kiwi companies onboard.”

“Not only will Accelerator help train future employees, it will also reward their learning with NZQA unit standards. It truly is a win-win platform: employers get skilled workers and employees get personal development which will serve them throughout their lives.”

The first Red Shirts in the Community pilot programme to run on Accelerator will commence in May with 1200 young people expected to complete the programme in 2019.

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## **Background Notes to Editor**

### **Accelerator**

Accelerator is a digital platform for young people to access **on-the-job training** programmes and connect with potential employers in a blended learning environment that incorporates gamification of content and a mentoring component along with the opportunity to experience work. Accelerator will recruit participants through Youth Hub’s online platform and provide access to training modules as well as offering 3 months follow up pastoral care support from an ITO (SkillsNZ) to participants as they complete their training and prepare work-ready documents for themselves such as CVs and references. **Participants are then supported through the Youth Hub website to continue building upon their profiles, upskill themselves and search for employment opportunities.** Red Shirts in the Community will be the first **on-the-job training** programme on Accelerator but once it has been successfully delivered as a digital programme, MSD will extend the programme to other sectors and large employers.

### **The Warehouse Red Shirts in the Community Programme**

The Warehouse Red Shirts in Community programme launched a programme for young New Zealanders aged 16 – 24 not currently in employment, education or training to experience work. More than 1100 young people have been through the programme since its commencement in 2016.

On the Warehouse Red Shirts in the Community Programme participants spend three weeks in a Warehouse store, receiving training in retail customer service, communication skills, personal presentation, stock management and basic health and safety. The programme provides in-store workplace training and credits towards NCEA Levels 1 & 2.

### **Youth Hub**

Youth Hub is an online platform described as “the LinkedIn for youth” where young people can set up profiles to connect with prospective employers, tertiary providers, schools, educators and youth service providers. Their online CVs become their pathway to the professional world beyond school.

Using a familiar user experience, Youth Hub allows young people to create their Personal Brand by allowing them to record their education to employment journey with images, videos, texts and posts. By adding a career wish list, requesting testimonials for soft skills and sharing their interests, they create a dynamic and living CV to be shared with employers.

Youth Hub aims to help sculpt a skilled, informed, and engaged workforce while levelling the playing field for all young people across New Zealand.

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**About The Warehouse:** We are New Zealand's largest general merchandise retailer, known and loved by Kiwis for our wide range of products from clothing, entertainment, technology and music to sporting, gardening and many others. We've been providing Kiwis with "a bargain" since 1982. With over 93 stores throughout New Zealand we employ over 8,500 team members from Kaitaia in the north to Invercargill in the south. To find out more please visit <https://www.thewarehousegroup.co.nz/our-brands/the-warehouse>