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Growing the workforce: Strengthening the pipeline and recruitment into the sector

The addiction workforce has grown little over the last decade, while the demand for services and its subsequent impact on the addiction workforce has grown considerably.

With vacancy rates at around 10% and exit rates of the workforce aged under 50 sitting at 9% among 45-49 year olds, 15% for 35-44 year olds and continuing to track up to 21% for 20-24 year olds, there is a clear need to build a strong workforce pipeline and develop a new approach to recruitment.

The review touched on several areas that might attract new people to the workforce and these recommendations are summarised below.

Pipeline and workplace

- **Strengthen scholarship programmes**

Make available and promote more education scholarships with existing and new partner organisations to support the potential and new workforce to progress towards registration. This includes direct financial support of addiction specific qualifications to attract students into studies.

- **Create more placement and/or in-work employment training opportunities**

Make placement opportunities or apprenticeship-style in-work training for early career professionals more readily available to support new entrants' pathways into the workforce.

- **Develop and promote a sector-wide mentoring programme**

Support new entrants to practice with a coordinated programme to grow practice expertise and navigate the profession.

- **Increase the number of training places available**

There are a limited number of educational opportunities available at both undergraduate and postgraduate level to train the addiction workforce, which means a limited number of graduates per year, well below the forecasted need. Accessibility to training also varies geographically. Additionally, there are a limited number of educators to teach within programmes. Centralised support needs to be provided to bring more accessible training programmes into the pipeline, including within wānanga. Finally, efforts to sustain and grow the educator workforce are crucial.

Professional identity and reputation

- **Promote the profession as a viable career pathway**

Implement an advocacy and engagement strategy for school leavers and tertiary students that underlines the value and rewards of working within the addiction sector and the multiple and varied career opportunities available.

- **Showcase career pathway options**

Profile leaders and managers within the addiction workforce to highlight the diversity and depth within the sector, and the opportunities available to people with addiction sector experience and expertise.

- **Position the addiction treatment profession within the wider health sector**

Position the critical role, expertise and relevance of specialist addiction treatment within the wider health sector.



Intentional planning for priority workforces

- **Highlight Māori, Pasifika and Asian leadership**
Promote the roles of Māori, Pasifika and Asian leaders to grow priority workforces and make the sector more attractive to more diverse candidates.
- **Continue to support consumer, lived experience and peer support pathways into the workforce**
- **Ensure the addiction workforce is prioritised in national health workforce plans**
Current leadership should use networks to position the addiction sector at the forefront of workforce planning and thus in efforts to grow this workforce.



Other snapshots in this series:

1. The addiction workforce in Aotearoa | **1a.** Profile of the addiction workforce | **2.** Unpacking the workforce shortage
3. Why are people leaving? | **4.** Ways to improve workforce retention | **5.** Opportunities for growing the addiction workforce
6. Growing the workforce: Recruitment ideas and challenges | **7.** Growing the workforce: New entrants and early career professionals

About dapaanz and the 2023 addiction workforce review

Dapaanz represents the professional interests of people working in addiction treatment. We are dedicated to supporting our members in their mahi and careers, while fostering excellence in addiction practice.

We oversee the addiction intervention competency framework, which defines the addiction scope of practice, and we are kaitiaki of Tikanga Matatika, the code of ethics for the sector.

Our current focus is ensuring our members feel supported and nurtured so that they are excited about being addiction practitioners today and in the future.

In 2023, dapaanz commissioned a mixed methods review of the addiction workforce in Aotearoa. Drawing on multiple datasets, both published and unpublished, from a range of sources including Te Whatu Ora, Te Pou, and dapaanz, the data were organised into a coding framework and triangulated to identify overlapping patterns. A series of workshops and discussions were undertaken with sector representatives to gather additional insights and further feedback on the data findings. The review also distilled a number of findings from national and international literature.