

## **Psychology Workforce Group**

### **Summary - Psychology Workforce Group meeting, Tuesday 21 February, 2017**

#### **Debrief from Psychology Workforce Task Force Meeting**

The Pipeline Document and the "pithy statements" will help to provide an understanding of how psychology fits into the big picture and to describe what psychologists can do. The goal is to have something that can make sense of psychology for the MOH and other relevant parties. We are fortunate that John Crawshaw is interested in what psychologists do, and he and the HWNZ people were very happy with the Pipeline Document

A summary "pithy" document is to be created, in a brief one page format, illustrating the multitude of ways psychologists can contribute to society. This will cover the entire lifespan and will focus on social determinants, highlighting all the different areas and levels of service provision that psychologists work in, including leadership and service design. Information from the Management Advisory Service report from the '80s will be incorporated along with information in Malcolm Stewart et al.'s *Evidence and Wisdom* article.

It was suggested that we identify "low hanging fruit", or issues that can be addressed immediately, mindful of how best to work with the government's social investment strategy, particularly in respect of the training programmes.

We need to articulate a vision for where are we going to be in five years. The Future of Psychology Initiative has also been working towards this, and it would be useful to look at the issues this group has identified, particularly in terms of the possible threats.

The Workforce Task Force takes a broad approach to workforce issues and a role for the group is to actively shape the workforce. This includes a focus beyond internships and towards how we want to influence new graduates, developing their skills and enabling them to work in all areas (e.g., moving them into primary care) including by supporting post-qualification training.

There was discussion about what people do throughout their working lives and how the Workforce Task Force could shape this in line with the health strategies. The reasons for dropping out should also be examined, however it was noted that psychologists tend not to leave psychology as a career, instead they are moving into or working in different ways, places or roles.

A flexible workforce is needed and the place to address this is early in the career when people are diversifying and moving into specialist areas. We need to identify what the young workforce are looking for now and how to equip these people to be working well, for example with ongoing training/mentorship. While the training programmes could include more information about the different sorts of places people can work, the expectation is that people carry on training and upskilling after graduation once they're working and progressing into workforce, including developing leadership skills.

It was suggested that, although both the College and Society are already providing a lot of training opportunities, perhaps there could be more of a focus on helping people to look more broadly early in their careers.

An additional column will be added to the Pipeline Document, addressing the transition period into the early career years.

It was also noted that there have been further reductions to the number of educational psychologists being trained despite increased demand for their expertise.

#### **Recap of the discussion on Psych training/internships**

The Workforce Task Force is continuing to explore solutions to the issues. It was noted that things could be very different if we didn't have the inconsistent funding and one relatively easy option would be for the Ministry to fund internships.

The problems are all clearly explained in the Pipeline Document and it was suggested that we have (another) discussion with the ACE people, although it was noted that there is a different training model for psychologists.

The option for government departments, the DHBs, HWNZ, Corrections and other employers to give the universities the intern funding was suggested, and the possibility of developing a national process with joint interviews, and setting up systems so that interns would still be employees. However, this would require major changes to the current MECA contracts and the unions would have to be involved, not to mention that there would have to be coordination across the programmes. It was also noted that the DHBs and other employers are particular about who they employ and were unlikely to willingly give this funding over to the control of the universities and that other approaches need to be considered. It was noted that from an Educational Psychologist's perspective, a model such as this would be welcome as Educational Psychology interns are not being paid at all at the moment.

It was proposed that the Workforce Task Force develop a proposal for Treasury for a more robust joined up approach to managing the internships.

**Next meeting is scheduled for 23 May 2017.**