



## Auckland District Health Board SKILLS HIGHWAY FINALIST



### THE STORY

The Auckland District Health Board's (DHB) To Thrive programme supports lower income employees to maximise their income through access to job specific training, financial capability education and career pathways, and to improve their health and wellbeing through access to free health checks and improved work conditions.

The programme directly contributes to the DHB's vision of healthy communities, addressing within its own workplace the link between alleviating poverty and improving health.

At the end of 2017, it started working with key groups of lower paid employees to get a better understanding of what kind of support would be helpful.

The cleaner, waste and orderly roles were selected for the programme pilot as 100 per cent of employees in these roles are paid below \$20 per hour before penal payments, representing 75 per cent of the lower income employee group. As part of its people strategy, Auckland DHB committed to supporting this employee group to maximise its income, with a focus on enhancing support for Māori and Pacific employees, who make up 50 per cent of its lower income workforce.

Career progression was highlighted as an issue in the focus groups. Those who had applied directly for other roles within the DHB often failed to progress through the recruitment process. Feedback from recruitment and supervisors was that numeracy and literacy, as well as digital literacy, was an issue within the group, many of whom have English as a second language. This was a barrier.

HR and Patient Management Services worked together to develop a series of sustainable initiatives and benefits, with the aim of showing employees they were valued, and to create a workplace culture of trust and support, lifting employee engagement and productivity through improved workplace culture.

Over a six-month period, the proposed programme background, overview, eligibility, time/cost investment, initiatives, and implementation timeline were developed.

In June 2018 official launches of To Thrive were held at Auckland Hospital and Greenlane Clinical Centre. These launches were attended by Auckland DHB Board members, the Chief Executive and members of the Executive Leadership Team. Information was shared with employees through a presentation, branded collateral and a small expo which included external vendors and partners.

Implementation of numeracy, literacy and computer skills training as well as HR-led recruitment and career development support has meant To Thrive employees have been able to successfully move to different roles within the DHB, or gain an NZQA qualification within their current role that has been linked to an increase in salary. Other benefits include annual health checks, a life insurance benefit, free gym membership, shoe vouchers and a laundry allowance. All sessions are conducted in paid work time.

Employee feedback has been positive with staff reporting new skills, increased confidence and higher rates of engagement.

An employee named Davis wrote, “The free computer course was good and the skills I learned in this course will go a long way to achieving what I want in life and at my workplace. The money minded course was very good and helped me learn how to budget.”

**“The skills I learned in this course will go a long way to achieving what I want in life and at my workplace.”**

## **THE CHALLENGE**

Numeracy and literacy, along with digital literacy, was a barrier to Auckland District Health Board’s lower-paid employees, including orderlies and cleaners, progressing to other roles within the organisation. Financial capability education and health and wellbeing were also identified as areas where support was needed.

## **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

The implementation of the To Thrive programme included the following:

- Focus groups were held with employees to gain feedback on working conditions and to understand work aspirations.
- Training in basic computer skills, numeracy and literacy, and financial literacy seminars
- Access to computer terminals provided for staff to view timesheets and payslips
- On-site annual health checks and health insurance, free eye examinations (in partnership with the University of Auckland’s Grafton Optometry Clinic)

- Ministry of Social Development (MSD)-delivered sessions on supplements and benefits available for working families and lower income employees



- Facilitated job transitions in a number of areas
- Laundry and shoe allowance

## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- An October 2018 employee engagement survey highlights overall engagement for the group at 80 per cent.
  - 82 per cent felt supported to grow and develop (more than 20 percent higher than the organisation as a whole.
  - 77 per cent felt they had career development opportunities.
  - 77 per cent felt equity and diversity were important to Auckland DHB.
  - 81 per cent felt a sense of commitment to Auckland DHB
  - 78 per cent look forward to coming to work every day.
- More than 100 employees have attended money minded sessions and more than 160 have attended MSD financial education sessions
- The To Thrive programme won an Auckland DHB Health Excellence award in 2018 and there has been much interest in the initiative within both the public and private sector.

“I am loving this course and learning a lot of things, things I didn't know about in this technology world. I have improved my confidence on the computer and I feel more positive about myself and my work.” Tereapi, Auckland DHB employee

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