

## Skills Highway Award Winner:

### Pacific Homecare

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/101046397>

#### Literacy programme - Pacific focus pays off

*A home-based health care provider employing mainly Pacific Island staff has improved performance through its focus on literacy.*

Pacific Homecare is a charitable trust providing home-based health care services primarily to the Pacific elderly and disabled community throughout south Auckland. Home care services include help with personal care, meal preparation, housework and social services.

The Trust was established in 1989 by “two Cook Island Mamas” to care for elderly people in Otara. Today, it employs 240 staff to deliver 5300 hours of service each week to 550 clients.

#### Planning for the future

South Auckland’s population is 37% of Pacific Island descent. A 172% increase in Pacific residents over 65-years-old is forecasted over the next 15 years and a 244% increase in the 85+ age group.

Pacific Homecare’s chief executive Hamish Crooks says the Trust recognised that its ability to deliver quality services and expand depended on the capabilities of its staff.

For 92% of Pacific Homecare staff, English is spoken as a second language. This presented a challenge in communicating the vision and values of the Trust, as well as building consistency and the capability to deliver a high standard of service.

In 2011, Hamish says the Trust prioritised lifting the literacy and numeracy levels of staff to ensure ongoing staff development.

#### Targeting literacy

A literacy and numeracy training programme was set up and divided into three separate initiatives targeting the different needs of staff.

**Pacific Pathways** was aimed at Support Workers. It focused on building confidence, understanding client care requirements and increasing literacy to help complete paperwork.

It was initially delivered to 55 support workers last year and another 50 are looking to complete the 10 half-day workshops this year.

**Every Day Leaders** was more advanced and tailored towards co-ordinators. It focused on more effective management of support workers, improving time management, resolving conflict and writing business reports.

The 10 half-day workshops were delivered to eight staff members in 2011, with a refresher course held last year.

**Driving Excellence** was the third tier of the programme aimed at administration staff. It helped to improve accuracy of communication, understand the impact of errors in payroll, ensure timeliness and improve customer service skills.

This course, in 10 half-day workshops, was delivered to five admin staff last year.

Hamish says the initiatives were designed to lift literacy across the board. They also ensured staff had sufficient foundation skills to obtain industry qualifications, which were becoming essential to work within the health care sector.

### **Initial obstacles**

A number of challenges had to first be overcome:

- Finding a suitable provider.
- Covering clients needs while staff were training.
- Engaging low-paid casual staff to attend.
- Catering to different abilities and expectations.
- Applying the learning at work.
- Covering the cost of training.

To address these, Pacific Homecare enlisted The Learning Wave to deliver literacy initiatives and made course attendance compulsory.

The Trust secured funding from Government agencies in 2012 and this year for the Pacific Pathways course and Everyday Leaders refresher, and planned ahead to cover the additional training costs of \$56k.

A management team ensured the courses were kept on track and supported staff through their learning, as well as in the workplace. A graduation dinner was held to celebrate achievements and to reinforce the importance of upskilling.

Hamish says: "The overriding goal of the programme was to train and develop staff to be the best they could be and this in turn would hopefully improve the quality of service delivered to clients".

The three literacy initiatives were also necessary for Pacific Homecare to reach their strategic outcomes - the Trust's long-term contracts with the Ministry of Health and Counties Manukau District Health Board relied upon staff complying with certain homecare service standards.

### **Results**

In both intakes, participants have improved in each of the three courses. Self-evaluation reports also show huge improvement across the board.

In the workplace, Hamish says there has been:

- An increase in the verbal reporting of client changes.
- Improved observation skills.
- Improved written reports.
- Staff are self-motivated and eager to continue training.
- Better self-esteem and interaction with other staff.
- Increase client satisfaction.
- Staff are becoming more qualified.

### **Future plans**

Looking ahead, Hamish says Pacific Homecare is aiming to have 75% of its staff reach a minimum of Level 2 NZQA by September. It's also on track to have 100 Support Workers certified in the National Certificate in Health, Disability and Aged Support Level 2 by September.