



Business Forum on Mental Health

Nelson/Tasman

Investing in a mentally healthy workplace will contribute to improved productivity, retention, recruitment, and engagement.

Background

The Business Forum on Mental Health was established in Nelson Tasman in 2009. The vision was to develop relationships between local health and employment agencies and the business sector to improve mental health within our community's workplaces. During Mental Health Awareness Week in October 2009, the first Business Forum on Mental Health luncheon was held in partnership with the Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce, with over 90 people from local businesses and health and social services attending. This initiated relationships with businesses, the piloting of a workplace health assessment survey tool and development of workplace intervention packages.

In 2010, again in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, a second luncheon was held. Speakers were Denise L'Estange-Corbet, a leading New Zealand business owner who discussed her own issues of living with mental illness, and Andrew Bridge, Manager of WORKSTAR Nelson. They highlighted the benefits to businesses of addressing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, and raised awareness of the risks that stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness present to recruitment and employment.

In August 2011 in conjunction with HRINZ, The Forum was involved in "Building Strong Workplaces" which included a panel discussion on workplace wellbeing. Relationships are also being developed with the small and medium sized business community to raise awareness around mentally healthy workplaces, and offer support to these businesses.

Project Objective, Outcomes and Principles

Objective: To contribute to a strong local economy through improving the mental health environment within employment for the mutual benefit of business, employees and the community.

The key business outcomes

- Raising awareness to prevent discrimination in recruitment and employment decision making.
- Reduced absenteeism and staff turnover with resultant increased productivity and profitability.
- Nelson Tasman is nationally recognised as providing business leadership for support and recognition of mental health and well being

The key health outcomes

- Increased adoption by employers of policies and practices that support staff mental health and wellbeing.
- Staff experience increased positive attitudes and wellbeing in the workplace through management and understanding of mental health issues.
- Reduced stigma and discrimination within workplaces toward staff with mental health issues.
- Improved employment opportunities for those living with or recovering from mental health issues.

Principles

A number of assumptions, beliefs and principles form the foundations of this project:

- Business and health are co-dependent, and the goals and aspirations for each overlap.
- Partnership and understanding between sectors is crucial for shared activity, benefits and outcomes
- Business leadership is fundamental for health improvements within workplace environments

What's happening in 2011/12

1. Development of business leadership

The Forum currently includes representatives from the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ) and the Nelson/Tasman Regional Health and Safety Committee, along with local business leaders and health professionals. We aim to have The Forum predominantly business-led in overseeing activity by the end of 2011.

2. Resources and evidence for improving mental health through business

The Forum draws on national and international evidence to inform the development of activity with participating workplaces.

3. 'Awareness to Action' – communicating the key messages to the business and wider community

The Forum raises awareness of key issues, such as stigma and discrimination, and mentally healthy workplaces, through business, media and the wider community.

4. Developing the Workplace Intervention Package

Improvement of productivity and profitability within business through improving mental health is our vision. The Forum has developed a comprehensive approach which includes the Workplace Health Assessment Tool (WHAT), tailored workshops, educational and awareness programmes, policies and procedures, and resource development. This can be adapted to suit individual businesses.

Project structure and functioning

The Business Forum on Mental Health is a collaboration between a range of agencies and companies with interests, expertise and work requirements in workplace mental health. The Forum meets approximately every two months to advise on project activity and direction, with working groups meeting in between. The working groups are made up of Forum members and other stakeholders as needed.

The Forum welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining or would like more information please contact us to discuss further.

Supported by

Nelson Tasman Chamber of Commerce, Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ), Regional Health and Safety Committee, Workstar, Health Action Trust, Te Rapuora Health Services, Nelson businesses and businesspeople.

For further information please contact

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