



Case Study: Monitoring, Learning and Continuous Improvement

Fire and Emergency NZ - Whanaungatanga Programme

OVERVIEW

Fire and Emergency New Zealand developed the Whanaungatanga Programme to improve the wellbeing of career firefighters by making organisational changes that promote connection, trust, a strong sense of value and belonging.

It is one of 15 international projects funded by the [Movember Foundation](#) in an endeavour to develop evidence-based mental ill-health and suicide prevention programmes for veterans and first responders.



Key topics

Wellbeing



10 MIN

read



USEFUL FOR:

Practitioners and Leaders




WHAT IS THE WHANAUNGATANGA PROGRAMME

A pilot programme run in Te Hiku (Northland, Auckland) with career firefighters including:

- The Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey of employees
- Organisational change workshops with firefighters and managers
- Focus groups and interviews with managers in Te Hiku and a control district Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington)
- An Intervention Development Team (made up of firefighters and managers working together) using the findings from the survey, workshops, focus groups and interviews to come up with organisational change interventions to pilot in Te Hiku
- Follow up survey, interviews and focus groups to measure the effectiveness of interventions piloted.

WHY WAS THE WHANAUNGATANGA PROGRAMME DEVELOPED?

Research has identified three main factors that contribute to mental ill health in first responders:

-  critical incidents
-  home (personal) stressors
-  organisational (work)

The programme's focus is addressing organisational factors to prevent mental ill health and promote trust and wellbeing.





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THE WHANAUNGATANGA WELLBEING SURVEY

The survey is an essential component of the programme. It helps to identify employees' perceptions of a range of wellbeing and organisational factors. It also investigates the impacts of repeated exposure to potentially traumatic events.

The results of the survey, combined with the focus group and workshop outputs, informed the design and pilot of organisational change initiatives aimed at improving trust and wellbeing within Fire and Emergency.

PRIMARY MEASURES

Mental Health

1 Current levels of mental health - from illness to flourishing. It includes the use of maladaptive coping mechanisms.

Organisational factors

2 Includes a wide range of factors which impact employee's day-to-day including perceptions of accountability and support. It also looks at how these factors impact mental health.

Measuring effectiveness

3 The survey also establishes a baseline to measure the effectiveness of the organisational change interventions piloted.

NEXT STEPS

- Organisational change interventions are being piloted in Te Hiku
- A second Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey will measure against the baseline set in the first survey
- Other evaluation methods will determine:
 - The effectiveness of the interventions
 - The return on investment.

Fire and Emergency provided additional funding to extend the surveys to all employees. This allows for a better comparison between the pilot region and rest of the country.

This programme is about identifying the evidence-based changes that will help to prevent mental ill health and promote trust and wellbeing across the organisation.

It is delivered in partnership with the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) and the Fire and Emergency Commanders Association (FECA). There is a shared commitment to work together and make things better for personnel.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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