

Media Release

From: Jill Stringer

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Subject: Extraordinary demand for training

Wairarapa Community Nursing and Health Services are 'blown away' by the response from Support Workers to an offer of training to build up their skill base.

"We were looking for a qualification for staff which would underpin their knowledge and skill and give them a standard of care which was transferable and recognised anywhere within New Zealand," says Nurse Manager Rob Lewis. "Originally I offered the 9 week course to 10 Homelinks staff, but word got around and I now have 26 wanting to undertake the training!"

Rob's response has been to provide two classes, so that everyone who wants to has the chance get a Level 2 certificate in Health Care. Participants come from a range of care providers, including Homelinks, Access and Healthcare New Zealand.

"It was important to me that there were no barriers for staff wanting to do this – for some it will be the first qualification they have achieved. Creating a positive supportive learning environment is a new experience for some staff, who may have not have achieved in older style classroom battlegrounds."

A gust of laughter rolled out the window of the classroom last Thursday night, as I approached to take a photo. Having fun was clearly on the lesson plan! The 14 students were learning the theory and practice of infection control, working in small supported groups.

"I've been a support worker for 34 years," says Marilyn Pedersen. "I'm probably the longest serving carer here, and there's never been anything like this before."

Timing for this initiative could not have been better for Rob and Homelinks Coordinator Trudy Lamb. "We approached Career Force, who works with many industries and provide unit standards throughout New Zealand," says Trudy. "Two of us from Community Health did a two day course to be an Assessor / Verifier for the course. From this developed an opportunity to be part of a pilot programme fully funded by the Ministry of Health to raise the standard within the health industry of our Support Workers. The Pilot is running in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Nelson, Wanganui and Wairarapa."

The course was developed for Health Workers who came into the industry with sometimes no qualifications and were not encouraged in their school years to progress and come out with some type of qualification. Some Wairarapa residential care providers are also working with Career Force for training for their support workers and both Wairarapa long term Home Based Support providers also provide training, aiming to have all their support workers trained to NZQA Level 2 (Foudation Skills level) in the future.

“There are no barriers regarding literacy skills or physical disability on this course,” says Rob. “Everyone starts at the same place and extra support is in place so everyone develops at a pace. We are providing support for one student who is partially sighted, and another who has a hearing disability. Also, many staff have never had to provide written reports before, but by ‘learning through doing’ we are teaching those skills, because there is a greater expectation that Support Workers can provide valuable information to registered nurses involved in planning the patient’s care.”

So every fortnight for the next 18 weeks, Support Workers will enjoy their classroom experiences, bring their homework, share their experiences, and come out with a recognisable qualification.

“Every student will combine practical skills with verbal and written work, and attain a standard unit which is credited and registered with the NZQA,” says Rob. “There are 9 units worth 6 credits each with topics from infection control to maintaining a safe environment in a health and disability setting. This will give them an insight into further study and could provide a route into other health care courses.”

Ends.

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Attached:

Photo 1: Rob Lewis, Nurse Manager, surrounded by his first class

Photo 2: Rob Lewis and Trudy Lamb go over tonight’s lesson on infection control with Marilyn Pedersen.



