



Home and community health service providers deliver essential support for the elderly and other vulnerable clients every day across Aotearoa.

This workforce provides care that enables over 100,000 people to live as independently as possible, for as long as possible, in their own homes and communities.

The sustainability and quality of this essential home and community service is under threat and action is needed to ensure continued services for generations to come.





Actions the next government must take to strengthen the home and community health services sector (service providers, workers we employ, clients we serve) so we can deliver the care clients need, when they need it, removing variations in equity of access, experience of care, and the quality of service delivery.



Recognise the essential care and support we provide across Aotearoa

We are the workforce in people's homes every day. Our people are our greatest asset, and an integral and important part of the health and disability system. We are an essential workforce, and need to be recognised and valued as such. Our care workers are motivated by their intrinsic belief in the values of their role. They are an empathetic, caring workforce that reflects our country and its people.



Enable services to meet the complex and varied needs of the clients we serve

It is imperative to have sustained investment in technology as a key enabler to meet increasing service demands and the complexity of client needs. Providers need funding to implement better systems and data that informs workforce planning, service design and delivery, client experience of care and outcomes, through a te ao Māori framework and cycle of continuous improvement.



Act to ensure long term sustainability of the sector

Current inconsistent approaches in service agreements and approaches across regions have created unacceptable variations in how services are funded. We need a long-term approach to commissioning by exploring the feasibility of a more integrated service and costing model. Establishing nationally consistent service specifications and a quality and improvement framework will support high standards of care, and increased sustainability of the sector.



Invest to recruit, retain and develop our workforce

Inability to attract and retain support staff continues to be our most significant workforce challenge. Care and support worker roles need to be positively profiled as a pipeline for career growth across the health and disability system. We need support to help attract and retain new and also younger people into the sector, to increase the diversity of our workforce, profile career pathways, and continue to strengthen the national qualification structure.



Recognise the essential care and support we provide across Aotearoa

Care and support workers help people live in their own homes, providing a wide range of support activities largely focused on personal care and support (such as assistance with showers and medical care), sometimes including elements of household management.

They are the eyes in the home, identifying aspects within the home that affect health outcomes, together with mental/spiritual wellbeing, and changes in physical health. This allows our workforce to apply an integrated wraparound whānau ora approach to service delivery.

Although clients of community support are generally older people they can vary in age from the young through the life course, and require rehabilitation from injury, assistance in managing their long term conditions, disability support, or palliative care for example.

This is a significant part of Aotearoa's health sector, with community support services provided to well over 100,000 New Zealanders every year.

The community support workforce comprises approximately 18,500 support workers and 750 nurses, with the majority being female.



Enable services to meet the complex and varied needs of the clients we serve

Little knowledge, at a national level, is known about the composition of our workforce, the capability, the diversity and how it is being deployed.

Lack of comprehensive workforce data, and analytical commentary on a regular basis, is an impediment to effective workforce planning, and will continue to inhibit the sector to meet the changing demands on our workforce and the physical and cultural needs of our clients.

It is essential our home and community care providers have better systems and technology. We need to drive the development of a coherent national workforce dataset, which has been highlighted in many past reviews and reports, with little tangible action to date.

To do this, a shared responsibility for ongoing investment and development is needed to ensure improved data and information for the sector and for funders, and to ensure te ao Māori concepts are a central focus to informing delivery of high quality care for the clients and the whānau we serve.



Act to ensure long term sustainability of the home and community care sector

Ongoing, open and transparent dialogue between all parties is needed to agree a way forward and to co-design a long-term commissioning approach for a more integrated service and costing model.

Establishing consistent and standardised service specifications, shared goals, outcomes, measures and data, aligned to a te ao Māori framework, will maximise governance, benchmarking and inform cultural safety and ongoing quality improvement.

A quality and improvement framework, to complement Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Services Standard, will ensure high quality care that is achievable and balanced with managing costs.

This will ensure the sustainability of the sector and improved equitable access, experience of care and outcomes for our clients.



Invest to recruit, retain and develop our workforce

Support staff recruitment and retention remains an area of significant concern across the sector. Latest estimates show vacancies for care and support workers in Aotearoa sit close to 2,500.

While we recognise and value our workforce, and their tremendous commitment, it is traditionally an invisible workforce and is generally considered low paid, under-valued and not recognised or well understood within the wider health and disability sector.

This can lead to a negative perception attached to the sector, causing it to be an unappealing career choice or place to work, especially to our younger people.

National effort must be given to valuing this sector, concluding pay equity and pay parity initiatives, profiling career pathways and strengthening the national qualification structure.

Attracting and retaining a more diverse, culturally aware workforce is particularly important from a whānau voice perspective. With appropriate training and development, our workforce can help to identify changes in health needs of the client and whānau from a Te Whare Tapa Wha perspective.