

Ministry of Justice

Emerging Diversity and Inclusion

In April 2017 the Ministry of Justice began a journey to build a wellbeing awareness and education programme for its employees.

Since then, employee engagement scores have lifted by nearly nine per cent, the perception that the ministry cares about the wellbeing of its people has increased by 16 per cent since 2016, and 15 per cent more employees feel their work contribution is valued.

The Ministry of Justice is the lead Government agency in the justice sector and is also responsible for Crown/Māori relations. The agency's responsibilities include administering the court system, the legal aid system and the Public Defence Service. It negotiates the settlement of Treaty of Waitangi claims against the Crown and provides policy advice on matters related to justice and the administration of the law, and on Crown/Māori relations. The agency employs more than 3,500 staff across 120 work sites.



The wellbeing programme involves seven topics - mental health, family violence, harassment, suicide awareness, disability, chronic health and addictions. Each topic centres around an online learning module, supported by policy, communications, tools, resources, and integration with ongoing awareness activities (such as White Ribbon Day and Mental Health Awareness Week).

Each module is focused on equipping staff with knowledge and understanding, including addressing stereotypes and stigma. A key goal is for leaders and employees to feel competent and confident managing their own wellbeing and assisting others.

The wellbeing modules have been developed in-house, drawing on external expertise in family violence, mental health awareness and unconscious bias. The agency has partnered with Vitae, a provider of workplace wellness services. For the family violence module the ministry was able to tap into its own specialists and co-design with Shine (a national domestic abuse charity). The ministry was the first Government agency to be awarded the DVFree tick from Shine in April 2018.

The programme is sponsored by the Ministry of Justice's strategic leadership team, with each member sharing their perspective with employees and being videoed for a module. This reinforces that it is a priority for all leaders in the ministry, all of whom are also expected to complete the modules.

The wellbeing programme was launched at the agency's annual Leaders Forum in October last year. It included an excerpt from a video from the mental health module where the Ministry's Deputy Secretary Corporate and Governance talked about her own mental health challenges.

Organisational Development Manager Helana Taylor says the programme has provided an "anchor" that takes the commitment from a strategy or words on a page to something real.

One of the ministry's managers reinforces Helana's thoughts. "Being a manager and having issues at the moment within my team, this has come as a huge benefit for a better understanding of what expectations and avenues are available, not only to the team member but for myself."

Another employee said: "The MOJ making it ok to talk about mental health, at any level of stress/distress, makes it more likely people will feel safe to share and deal with issues that arise."

Since the introduction of the family violence policy and manager training more people have come forward to disclose issues impacting them.

"You have trust that your team and manager will be able to support you if need be," says one employee.

Other comments include:

"The programme values the mental health of a person - as to what may be happening at home/personal life. Hence it's not only about health and safety at work - which is perfect."

"It gives me great comfort knowing I have options should I need to confide in someone or look at booking an appointment through EAP. This module provides an opportunity to consider your own mental health journey and provides practical responses to assist your team and create a healthier environment."

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YOUR WORKPLACE MORE INCLUSIVE

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