

Consultation on e-learning for support workers in primary care settings

Summary survey findings



Background: Integrated primary mental health and addiction (IPMHA)

In 2020, the Ministry of Health began funding the IPMHA programme roll out across Aotearoa, which involves integrating health improvement practitioners (HIPs), health coaches and support workers into primary care settings. It was recognised that many support workers in these roles may have mostly worked in mental health and addiction and are new to working closely with primary care. It is based on the [Skills for integration](#) for working in primary and community health settings, and helps bridge the knowledge gap by enhancing support workers' understanding of the practicalities and skills required.

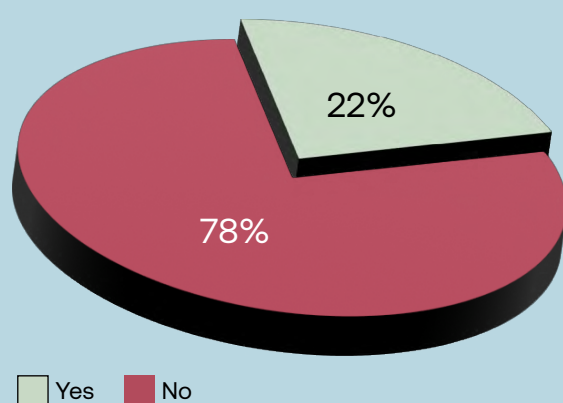
Te Pou were tasked with creating a new e-learning package for support workers who are new to working in primary care. With guidance from an advisory group of NGO leaders and employers of IPMHA support workers from around Aotearoa, and consultation with a focus group of current IPMHA support workers, a survey was designed to inform the content of this new e-learning resource.

The survey was sent to members of the advisory group and the IPMHA leads of regions that employ support workers and dual support worker / health coach roles; they were asked to distribute the survey to support worker staff within their region.

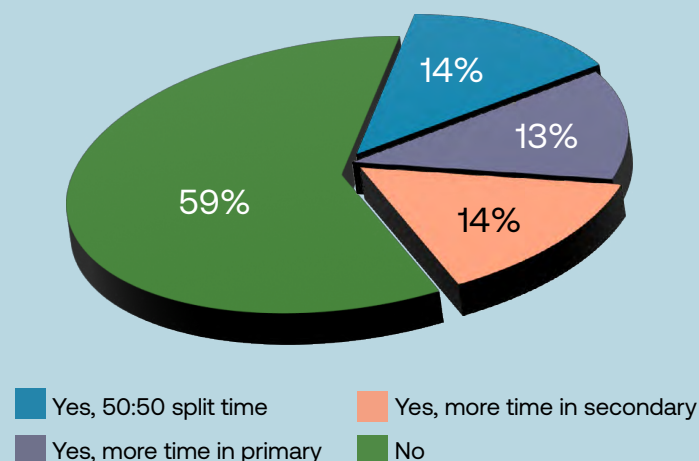
The questions were structured to better understand the various backgrounds and how the support worker role is structured across different regions; to gauge their understanding of the IPMHA approach; and to identify barriers and enablers encountered in primary care settings so the e-learning would be useful.

Key findings

Split role as a support worker and health coach



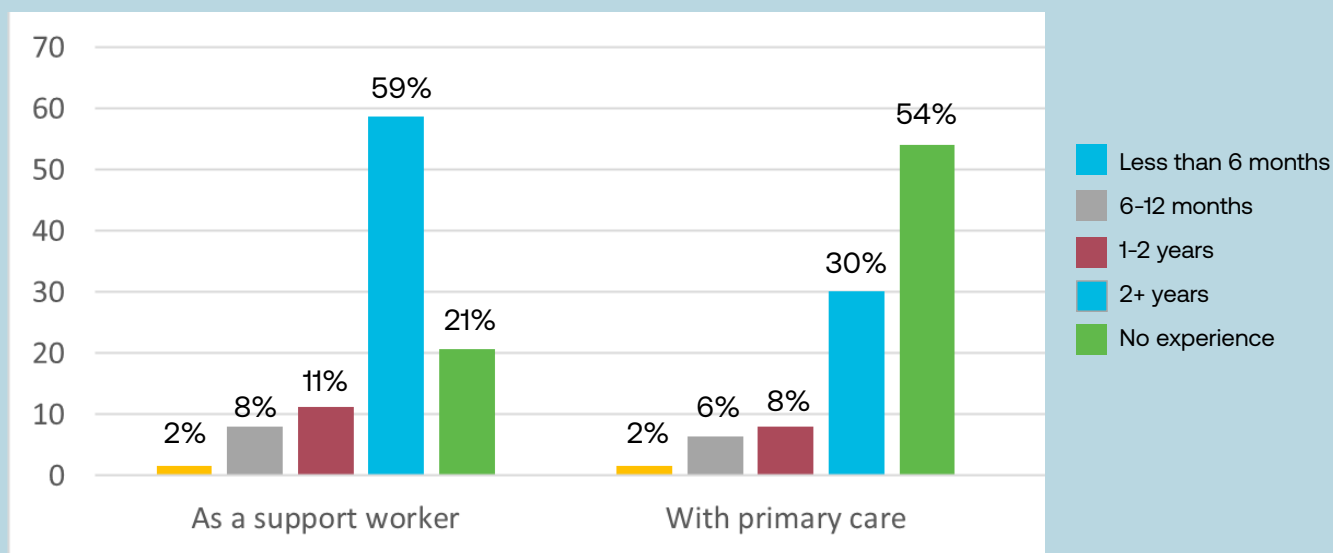
Work in both primary and secondary mental health and addiction services



Overall, 63 people completed the online survey. While the survey was designed for support workers working in primary care the people who responded were in varying roles from community support workers, health coaches, mental health team leaders and service managers.

The primary employer were non-government organisations (92 percent), followed by primary health organisations (5 percent), district health boards (3 percent) and iwi providers (3 percent). The respondents were also from various regions, such as Auckland (49 percent), Southern (19 percent), Wellington (13 percent), Canterbury (10 percent), Northland (6 percent) and Waikato (3 percent). The charts below describe the survey respondents' current role and previous experience. The majority of respondents (59 percent) had worked as a support worker for longer than 2-years, yet the majority (54 percent) had no previous experience working within primary care settings.

Previous work experience



Respondents were asked to identify both the challenging and positive aspects of working in an integrated primary health role. These helped to inform the e-learning content by identifying the areas that ought to be included.

Challenges	Positives
Lack of support and knowledge by others in the primary care setting of the support worker role	Helping others
Recording case notes	Building connections with clinical staff and the community
Limited resources such as rooms to work in	Seeing people grow, achieve their goals and be happier and more confident
Communication problems with clinical staff	Using brief interventions and community initiatives
Managing referrals	Continually learning
Role limitations and difficulties	Meeting new and different people
Difficulties in integration and switching between dual roles in both primary care and secondary care	
Lack of continuity between clinics and services	
Covid-19 restricting meetings with people accessing the service	

"It is important to spend time in the primary setting, but most of the time there isn't space for the support worker." — Senior support worker

"It is important to spend time in the primary setting, but most of the time there isn't space for the support worker." — Community support worker

Finally, respondents shared that they would like further training (in the areas listed below) to assist them in their role as support workers in an integrated primary care setting

