

Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures

Case Study: Hutt St Centre

Hutt St Centre, a work of the Daughters of Charity, is a place of hope and opportunity, helping people facing homelessness to rebuild their lives, with care and without judgement. Each year Hutt St Centre serves around 50,000 meals and offers social work and support services to nearly 2,000 people.

The Approach

Each day the 200 or so people experiencing homelessness who visit Hutt St Centre are provided with a range of services including showers, laundry facilities, visiting health professionals, an aged city living program for older clients, recreation activities, education and training, legal aid and assistance with finding housing. Hutt St Centre employs 50 staff and 165 volunteers across a variety of programs.

Hutt St Centre has been smoke free since World No Tobacco Day, 31 May 2011. Initial discussions with the Leadership Team and Board led to a commitment to offering a supportive and health promoting environment for clients and staff. We also recognised smoking as a social justice issue – vulnerable groups face additional barriers to quitting and are less likely to be offered the opportunity and support to quit. A working partnership was developed with RDNS and Quit SA, who provided support throughout the process of introducing a smoke free workplace. Extensive consultation periods with staff and clients leading up to the change meant that everyone was aware of the initiative, how they would be impacted and what support was being offered to smokers who wanted to quit or cut back.

Massages are available to staff fortnightly at no cost. These are provided by a volunteer physiotherapist who supports the Centre. Up to 5 staff members receive a massage each fortnight through a rotating roster.

In 2014, Hutt St Centre introduced a City to Bay team, which is open to staff, volunteers and supporters of the centre, as a mechanism to raise money for the Day Centre and Education and Training programs. Participants received a healthy breakfast at the end of the event. “Walk a Mile in My Boots” is an annual fundraiser open to anyone who supports the centre.

In early 2014, Hutt St Centre engaged in the Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Project (HWHF) and the SACOSS Healthy Workers Adviser presented to the Work Health & Safety Committee. The committee was provided with a copy of the Healthy Workers Healthy Futures (HWHF) Toolkit and resources including a needs analysis, audit and information on possible grant opportunities.

A needs analysis was undertaken in early 2014 and this was used to drive the wellbeing initiatives undertaken by the WHS committee. A fruit bowl is provided and a walking group for clients, and staff massages commenced as a result of the survey. The organisation participated in activities through Life Be in It, including the Corporate Cup and Dragon Boat Racing. The costs for staff to get involved in these are covered by the workplace.

In February 2014 the committee applied for a grant through the Department of Planning Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI). The application was successful, allowing the organisation to purchase two commuter bikes and provide bike safety training for staff. Fourteen staff undertook bike safety training through Bike SA. Informal feedback

from the training showed that staff found the training to be beneficial particularly in building confidence in city riding, and understanding bike safety measures for riding on city streets. A bike policy was developed and the bikes have been operational since September 2014 with a second bike safety training planned for 2015.

In November 2014 the Centre was one of the winning teams in the HWHF Workplace Physical Activity Challenge, which challenged workplaces to promote physical activity during November. Hutt St Centre's 'Biggest Healthy Winner Competition' encouraged staff to choose from six challenges over a six week period, including walking during lunch breaks, bringing healthy lunch, increasing daily water intake, quitting or reducing smoking, swapping the morning coffee for a pressed juice or herbal tea, and attending activities such as meditation/yoga, or walking groups. The Work Health & Safety Committee provided a registration & tracking sheet, weekly motivational updates. More than 20 staff enrolled in the challenge, including the majority of the senior leadership team. The challenge was fun and engaging and encouraged staff to support each other. Several walking groups were started and these will continue beyond the duration of the challenge. As one of the winning teams the Centre received \$300 prize towards their next wellbeing initiative, another physical activity challenge, which will be run internally and will be a celebration for all the staff that have been involved.

A Wellbeing Day in 2014 was held as part of the annual Staff PD day. This included talks from RDNS, the EAP, and the wellness & resilience program coordinator from the SA Health & Medical Research Institute. The day included a staff walk and healthy lunch and morning tea.

Overall catering is relatively healthy, although there is no formal policy. In 2014, a nutritionist worked with the Meal Centre Manager to analyse the nutritional content of the meals provided for clients. Recommendations were made by the nutritionist to improve the nutritional quality of the food provided, which have since been implemented by the Meal Centre Manager.

The Rationale

The nature of the work at Hutt St Centre can be highly stressful with clients often presenting in crisis. A wellbeing program is a great way for the organisation to show staff that they are valued and the work they do is appreciated.

A health and wellbeing program that promotes and supports wellbeing of staff and clients acknowledges the importance of employee health in maintaining a cohesive, engaged and productive workforce.

Fit with organisational core values

Hutt St Centre's vision is a society where everyone is respected and encouraged to reach and sustain their full potential in a healthy, safe and inclusive community. It is important that the organisation demonstrates this by offering a supportive and health promoting environment in the workplace.

Hutt St Centre believes in a society that provides all humans no matter their race, status, or conditions, equal opportunities in order to live a full life. Inadequate employment opportunities, lack of affordable housing, poverty and inequitable access to health care, are just some of the structural factors which marginalise homeless people in society.

A health promoting work environment and health promoting services are important aspects of demonstrating that the centre philosophy believes in the right to health, wellbeing and a full life to all people.

The Process

The process of gaining leadership commitment, consulting with staff (and clients where appropriate), developing an action plan, implementing and evaluating has been the usual process for most of the health and wellbeing initiatives on offer at Hutt St Centre. Some activities have followed a more formal process than others.

Positives and Achievements

Biggest achievements include a 100% smoke free workplace. This has been widely recognised across the community services sector and has been presented at a number of forums including at HWHF smoke free workplaces education events.

Another key achievement has been ongoing commitment and support from senior leaders and the proactive commitment from the Work Health and Safety (WHS) committee to take a preventive health and wellbeing approach.

While data hasn't been formally collected, anecdotally, worker engagement and morale have noticeably improved over time, particularly as a result of the HWHF Workplace Physical Activity Challenge, staff wellbeing walks and healthy lunches. This has encouraged staff to take the time out of their busy schedules to get to know each other better.

Overcoming the Challenges

There have been a number of challenges including working out what motivates staff and getting buy in for activities.

There has been some resistance along the way to change processes such as going 100% smoke free.

However, the organisation and its dedicated staff and leaders have worked through this to ensure positive outcomes for all involved. They also ensured supporting programs were in place to initiative this change, such as Quit SA being present in the workplace to support people who wanted to quit smoking.

Undertaking risk assessment and developing appropriate policies for the commuter bikes was also a challenge, particularly in relation to the amount of time and effort required by committee members to complete these tasks. However, the result has been positive and the bikes are being used by staff.

The Future

The staff survey from 2014 revealed a number of clear directions for the WHS to focus, including resilience and gratitude, and this will be included in the 2014 WHS action plan. Staff are keen for the 'Biggest Healthy Winner Competition' to be repeated in 2015.

Duration and resources

There is a small WHS budget and Hutt St Centre covers the cost of some initiatives such as the Corporate Cup and Life Be In It registrations. Some of the opportunities, such as City to Bay, are run as fundraisers, and the centre receives support through donations, on line sponsorships and from volunteers, such as the massage therapist.

In conclusion the health benefits gained through participating in and a focus on healthy workplace practices have been seen across the organisation as a positive and beneficial part of working at Hutt St Centre. The effects are felt physically and mentally and further opportunities are being investigated.

This case study was prepared and submitted, in collaboration with Hutt St Centre, by SACOSS under the Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Initiative

Find out more about how you can create a healthy workplace; find a Healthy Worker Adviser for your sector, or submit your own case study:

Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Initiative
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