



VALUING EXPERTISE

PSYCH  LOGY PRODUCTIVITY

Improving the productivity of the psychology workforce

APEX asked psychologists across the public sector at the end of 2024 to tell us how their employer can help improve their productivity.

Responses highlighted six keys to unlocking higher levels of productivity from the psychology workforce. These include:

1. Support flexible working arrangements
2. Better clinical and office spaces
3. Proper admin support
4. Updating our technology
5. Balance workloads & caseloads
6. Reduce managerialism

Support flexible working arrangements



Around 20% of psychologists mentioned flexible working arrangements, or hybrid working arrangements as a key ingredient in assisting or improving productivity.

This is particularly true for psychologists who have a high degree of assessment and report writing as part of their role.

“Support regular work from home days to catch up on paperwork and write reports (I am at CAMHS, and an increasing percentage of our psychology caseload is neuropsychology assessments).”

“I believe clinicians should be allowed to work from home, particularly if patients on their caseload request telehealth visits, and especially because Counties is currently facing a massive problem regarding office space.”

“Allow work from home approximately once per fortnight. This would certainly support report writing and other admin, especially as we move toward open plan offices.”

“A work from home arrangement (one day per fortnight) to write up assessments and reports.”

“Work from home flexibility to escape the demands in the office in order to concentrate.”

Better clinical and office spaces



Buildings and facility issues were referred to by about 15% of psychologists. The most frequently mentioned problems were overcrowded, hot or unsanitary office spaces, and not having sufficient clinical spaces to meet patients.

“Working in the public health sector does not mean that we go without the basics required to be productive. More recently, it has been noticed that these basics are lacking (e.g., good working conditions such as appropriate consulting rooms with sound proofing, easy access to required space, poor hygiene - lack of paper towels in the bathrooms, etc.). This is important for both staff and whaiora.”

“Improving workspaces - many Te Whatu Ora offices are run down, not soundproof, over capacity. There are times when I have had to cancel appointments with clients because there is no space in our office to see them.”

“Therapy rooms in the hospital where I work have been turned into staff offices and we have to kick out other staff to use the therapy space.”

*“Suitable rooms to see clients (air con, soundproof, available).
Appropriate IT equipment and systems. Air con for our office would be great too (we currently have no air con, stifling hot in summer, and also our toilets are out of order. My clients have complained about struggling in the heat.”*

“Get rid of hot-desking! Allow people to have their own, settled workspace with the resources they need to be calm, engaged and productive. If they can't provide this allowing more working from home.”

“Ensuring enough clinical and workspace that is fit for purpose. We are about to move from having our own office where we can see patients flexibly at any time in our work hours, then complete paperwork, phone calls etc in private to sharing two bookable clinical spaces between at least 9 clinical staff and working in an open plan space where there aren't enough desk spaces for everyone. There is no way this won't impact productivity, let alone our current very whānau-centred approach”

Proper admin support

Around 17% of psychologists stated they need better administrative and clerical support to free up more time to see patients.



“Many psychologists in our district do not have adequate administrative support. They have to book and attend clients into their clinics (unlike doctors) and are responsible for setting up and administering accounts for psychometric tools, which does not require the expertise of a psychologist beyond being named as the responsible clinician on the account.”

“No more threats of redundancies of our valued admin staff.”

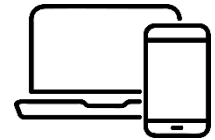
“Give us access to admin support. Too often I am doing administrative duties which take over my clinical time.”

“Less administrative work so that more people can be seen.”

“Provide proper administrative and secretarial support - in Te Whatu Ora we are waiting (on average) 5 days for dictation to be returned for checking and sign-off.”

“Less administrative work so that more therapy can be done, possibly hire a receptionist that can do all the calling, cancelling, appointments etc.”

Updating our technology



Over 20% of psychologists talked about not being able to access the 'tools' or the technology they need to do their job efficiently.

Psychologists most frequently requested better access to IT, including technology like laptops, tablets and phones; AI scribe tools, voice to text software, and access to clinical software such as assessment tools and electronic clinical notes. Some mentioned not being able access pool cars or basic stationery to do their jobs.

"Vastly improve the IT systems, technology, devices etc Voice to text software e.g. Dragon"

"iPads/tablets, ePencils, smartphones that are up to date, dictation software."

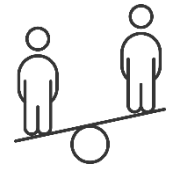
"The IT systems in the DHB are ancient and prevent us gathering client data online due to "privacy concerns", whereas all our clients live on smartphones."

"Give me the basic tools to do my work. I can't even order special markers for our whiteboard which I frequently use in my therapy sessions. It's just ridiculous, or a special diary I like to use as it's not in the catalogue. These are just basic stationery items to do my daily work. It would also be great to have a work laptop so I can work from home if needed."

"Ensure all psychologists have access to up-to-date IT tools and secure telehealth platforms to support hybrid and remote work models. Provide funding for additional technical support and software to improve efficiency and reduce technical issues that impact productivity."

"Having a laptop allocated to me."

Balance workloads & caseloads



Psychologists who referred to workloads and caseloads often commented on the need to balance quality and quantity of interventions, as well as the multiple demands on the time of psychologists, such as case management and crisis work.

“Bigger caseloads does not equal productive, having smaller caseloads the allow for quality interactions overall improve productivity, and reduced time in service. If there is a need for such high caseloads then consider increasing FTE.”

“Make recruitment more attractive so we have more resource and I don't have to manage such a long waitlist. Also, in our older adults service, on top of psychology work we are expected to keywork, and do triage and crisis days. This takes away considerable time for our psychology specific work. Again this would require the service recruiting more nurses to keywork so that we would have more availability.”

“Support Psychologists to not be called into crisis/duty roles in small teams.”

“Increase FTE to allow us to supervise the extra new grads coming and the assistant psychologists.”

Recognise the role of a consultant is more than just seeing clients one to one. Make it easier to do teaching and research.

Reduce managerialism



Many psychologists mentioned the need for an end to 'bureaucratic nightmares', including a reduction in form filling, micro-management, and more empowerment of frontline psychologists.

“Reducing the processes and the amount of admin (filling out forms, gathering signatures) to apply for professional development courses. expedite the approval process so we can take advantage of early bird rates.”

“Allow us to continue working as autonomous adults - suddenly they've become micromanagers. They think for psychologists it's about quantity (one on one client appts), not understanding the whole picture of the profession and the importance of systemic impact.”

“Reduce micromanagement and increase autonomy. Not require recording of all components of one's day but have some general expectations of client contact and consultant level tasks, then leave psychologists to do that work.”

“Streamline processes affecting psychologists like management of therapy referrals and take case management out of our hands.”

“Ensure access to quality, service, appropriate supervision (i.e. supervisor's skills/ knowledge relevant to supervisee's specialty). If an appropriate supervisor is not available internally funding for external supervision should be provided.”



APEX
ALLIED SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL

WE ARE HERE TO HELP!
CONTACT US

PHONE: (09) 526 0280

EMAIL: psychologist@apex.org.nz

WEBSITE: www.apex.org.nz

ADDRESS: PO Box 11 369, Ellerslie, Auckland 1542