



# Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace

## Autonomy

Positive mental health and wellbeing leads to positive life outcomes for staff and better results for your workplace. Staff who are mentally healthy have higher job satisfaction and self-esteem. They are more likely to be engaged with work tasks and the workplace, be more creative, make better decisions, problem-solve more efficiently and effectively, experience less stress and take fewer days off work.

The workplace can have a big influence on the mental health and wellbeing of staff while they are both present and away from work. One way of influencing the mental health and wellbeing of staff is by contributing to the following mental wellbeing component:

### Autonomy

This is measured in the WorkWell Staff Survey through the statement:

*“I am satisfied with the amount of control I have over my work”*

#### How autonomy contributes to mental health and wellbeing

Autonomy is about having some control over how we live in the world. Self-determination is about the ability to make decisions. Autonomy and self-determination are key influences to our overall mental health and wellbeing.

#### How autonomy affects the workplace

The ability to have some control over our work, and the ability to make decisions over aspects of work, is a protective factor against stressors and results in staff having a higher chance of flourishing in their work.

#### Take action: ways to improve autonomy in your workplace

##### Organisational

- There are systems in place for staff to have the opportunity to provide input and opinions about their work and the general functioning of the workplace.
- A flexible working hours policy outlines the process for changing the, hours of work, days of work or place of work. This can help staff have autonomy to manage domestic responsibilities (e.g. childcare or caring for elderly parents).
- There are effective systems and channels for two-way communication.
- Staff have clear job design which gives them sufficient authority to do their job well.
- Staff have clear job design which gives them control over aspects of their job.

##### Environmental

- A supportive work environment is fostered and staff feel supported to:
  - Share ideas
  - Influence decisions



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- Make suggestions for improvements.

### Individual

- Staff have some freedom to organise their own work, apply their own ideas and influence decisions.
- Staff are confident and trust their suggestions will be handled appropriately.
- Staff are provided with opportunities to learn new skills.

### Find out more

#### Spotlight Work Skills

Spotlight is a skills recognition tool. It is designed to help all staff, including managers. It helps identify the skills being used when human services are being performed. The Spotlight tool identifies important skills that might otherwise be overlooked and helps staff and managers more accurately describe and measure these hidden skills to help them do their work effectively:

[www.spotlightworkskills.com/](http://www.spotlightworkskills.com/)

#### The Workplace Wellbeing Project

A collaboration between the New Zealand Council of Social Services, Social Development Partners, Community Waikato, the Service and Food Workers Union Nga Ringa Tota, and the Public Service Association. Information to support the development and maintenance of good employment practice and relationships: <https://manamahi.wordpress.com/>

#### Employment New Zealand: Good communication

Good communication is the basis for positive relationships between staff and their supervisor or manager: [www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employee-performance/growing-performance/good-communication/](http://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/employee-performance/growing-performance/good-communication/)