

Upskilling the staff

Māori mental health provider Rau O Te Huia Community Trust is looking to ensure its 10-plus staff can become qualified in the field they are already highly skilled in.

Manager Kessie Kohu says those who work in the mental health field are crying out for staff with lived experience.

"But getting those staff who have experienced mental health issues themselves to gain qualifications is more difficult."

Rau Ō Te Huia's mission is to cultivate wellness and self-reliance in a kaupapa Māori environment. It has plenty of highly qualified staff in its psychiatrists, social workers and clinical nurses, but about half of those who work most closely with tangata whaiora don't have the "piece of paper" - such as a Level 4 Certificate in Mental Health.

"This is now called the Level 4 Health and Wellness Certificate, which marginalises somewhat kaupapa Māori mental health."

SocialLink has helped the Trust by providing digital training for staff, assisted with successful ongoing funding applications, implemented a succession plan for the Board of Trustees and Trust, and mentoring for the manager.

SocialLink is also now working on other training that could assist the Trust's staff.

Kessie says she has been impressed with The Kollektive offices and what SocialLink can offer to the agencies it helps. Rau Ō Te Huia is also looking to start more programmes for tangata whaiora to "normalise" their lives as much as possible.

One thing that works well is for tangata whaiora to learn traditional arts and crafts, such as harakeke (flax work), taniko (weaving), tukutuku (woven panels) and whakairo (carving), and it is looking for instructors who want to work with those with mental health issues.

Kessie has been with the organisation for more than 20 years, and has taught Te Reo, computer literacy, literacy and numeracy, waiata and kapa haka.

"Rau O Te Huia now needs to focus on getting staff qualified so they can serve their whānau whanui (extended family), including themselves and tangata whaiora.