



The New Zealand Psychological Society

Te Rōpū Mātai Hinengaro o Aotearoa



NZPsS and NZEI Joint Media Release

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Nurture young people's mental health earlier, say education groups

The number of educational psychologists employed in the public sector needs to double if the Government is to meet its goal of improving the mental health of young people, education groups say.

Half of all lifetime cases of mental disorder start before the age of 14.

Psychological health needs to be nurtured in young people from an early age. This involves all the people who are significant in children's lives such as parents, whānau, schools, and others in the community, says a New Zealand education group.

Quentin Abraham (President of the [New Zealand Psychological Society](#), NZPsS) and Michele Blick (Chair of the Institute of Developmental and Educational Psychology, (IEDP) Paul Goulter (National Secretary, New Zealand Education Institute, NZEI), Bella Pardoe (Executive Officer, NZEI) met this week to discuss ways that educational psychologists can support young people in schools.

The groups agreed that the educational psychology workforce needs urgent attention. Mr Goulter reported that "principals and teachers are crying out for help with young people with mental health difficulties."

Government advisers agree that schools and early childhood centres are vital to ensure young people have a 'good start' and develop resilience to difficulties in later life.

Mr Abraham meets regularly with the Ministry of Education to discuss the need to increase the number of educational psychologists.

Under the previous National Government, a cap on staffing in the state sector led to a nine-year freeze on the number of specialist staff. The freeze, which included psychologists employed by the Ministry of Education, was implemented despite more children presenting with more

complex needs. The Ministry currently employs 172 full-time-equivalent psychologists. It has been estimated that NZ needs to double that number to meet its needs and provide an equivalent standard of care to Scotland, which has a similar population.

“Psychologists not only need to be on hand when there is a crisis but also available to help schools develop their skills and resilience in these situations. Prevention and early intervention is beneficial and cost effective. Educational psychologists have skills to help schools prevent mental health difficulties develop,” he comments.

Minister Phil Twyford acknowledged in the media recently that the mental health system is a ‘mess’ (in terms of timely access to services). He says his government is committed to listening to experts and properly resourcing mental health.

NZPsS and NZEI say they will collaborate to make recommendations to the government’s Mental Health Inquiry and other practical interim measures.

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Blick, M. (2017). Briefing to the Incoming Minister of Education 2017 On behalf of The New Zealand Psychological Society, Institute of Educational and Developmental Psychology. Retrieved from http://www.psychology.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-to-the-Minister-of-Education-Dec-2017_.pdf

Photo caption: Pictured at this week’s NZEI/NZPsS meeting (left to right): Michele Blick (Chair of the Institute of Developmental and Educational Psychology, (IEDP), Paul Goulter (National Secretary, New Zealand Education Institute, NZEI), Bella Pardoe (Executive Officer, NZEI), and Quentin Abraham (President of the [New Zealand Psychological Society](http://www.psychology.org.nz), NZPsS).

New Zealand Psychological Society

The New Zealand Psychological Society is the largest professional association for psychologists in New Zealand. It has over 1200 members and 600 student subscribers and aims to improve individual and community wellbeing by representing, promoting and advancing the scientific discipline and practice of psychology.

NZEI Te Riu Roa

NZEI Te Riu Roa is the union and professional organisation for teachers, support staff and Ministry of Education field staff (including psychologists) in the early childhood and primary sector. It has 45,000 members and is the biggest education union in New Zealand. NZEI members work in every community in New Zealand, leading and advocating for quality and well-funded public education.

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