

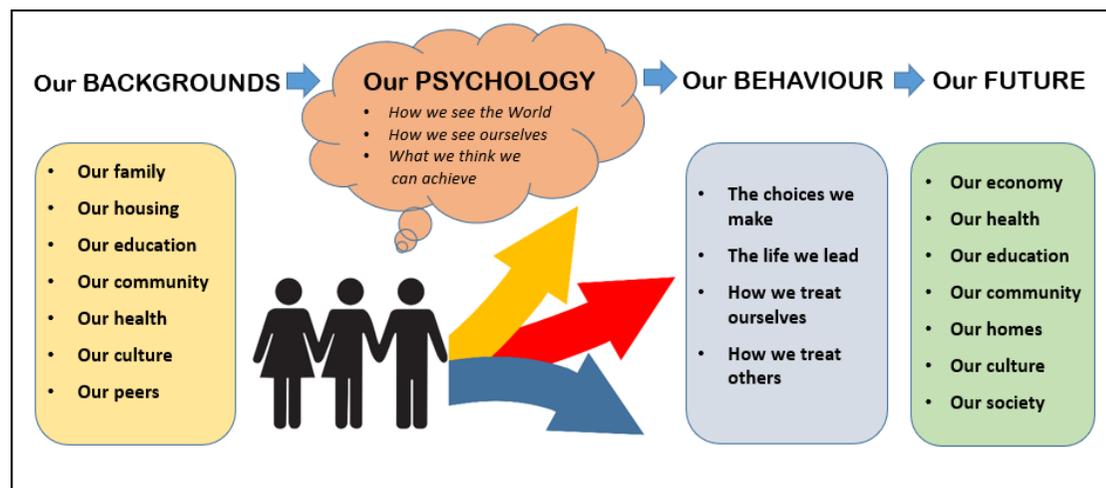
The New Zealand Psychology Workforce Task Group

‘Our Psychology Shapes Our Future’

-The Case for Psychological Approaches to Public Policy, Planning & Delivery

There is increasing recognition worldwide that psychology- that is, the scientific study of how individuals and groups think, feel and behave- represents a vital, if often neglected, element of public policy planning and implementation¹. Public policy in any area- health, economics, education, environment- is written by people, for people and is put into practice by people.

Psychological science has shown that our life experiences, and our life opportunities, profoundly influence the ways in which we think, feel and behave (our psychology) throughout our lives. In turn, how we see the world, ourselves and those around us, will influence the choices we make and the success that we experience in areas such as education, relationships, health and work (Figure A). It is the contention of Applied Psychology that the ways individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities think and behave, can be changed to improve all of our futures.



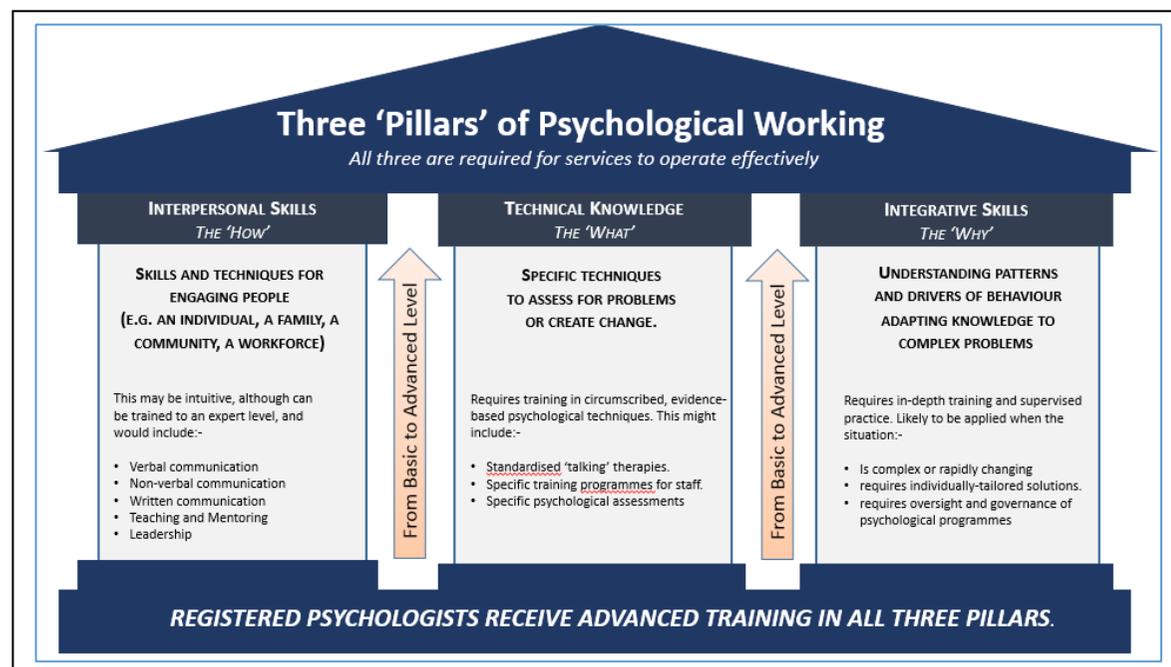
Psychological approaches have proven to be some of the most effective (in terms of both improved outcomes and cost-effectiveness) across a wide range of major public policy areas including Health^{2,3,4,5}, Education⁶, Corrections⁷, Business and Organisations (including public services)⁸ and in Community Development⁹.

How Psychologists Deliver Positive Futures.

There is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that psychological approaches can significantly improve the functioning of individuals, families, teams, organisations, and communities. However, qualified psychologists remain in limited supply in New Zealand¹⁰, with just 2793 psychologists holding current practising certificates in 2018.¹¹

Whilst basic psychological approaches can be taught to and utilised by almost anyone, psychologists have identified three levels or ‘pillars’ of psychological working, all of which are required for services to operate effectively (Figure B). Whilst the first two ‘pillars’- *interpersonal skill* and *knowledge of psychological techniques*- are not exclusive to psychologists, the third- the ability to *integrate complex psychological information*- requires advanced psychological study and training to acquire and is often considered to be almost exclusively held by psychologists¹².

Where large-scale psychological interventions have been implemented, without leadership and oversight from psychologists, the outcomes have been shown to be significantly poorer¹³. Where psychologists are employed as leaders, supervisors and educators in delivering services, ‘stepped’ approaches to psychology delivery have been found to be highly effective¹⁴.



The Roles and Skills of Psychologists

All psychologists registered under the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act (2003), require training to a minimum of a Masters'-level qualification (or equivalent), with a minimum of 1500 hours of supervised practice prior to qualification. All psychologists hold a core set of values and skills, including a commitment to scientific and evidence-based approaches, to collaboration and client-centred care, and an ability to work with complex psychological issues.

Since psychology can be applied across multiple areas of public policy and human behaviour, the specialties of psychologists can vary considerably and a number of defined 'scopes of practice'¹⁵ have been defined by the New Zealand Psychologists Board. Of the 2793 psychologists holding current practising certificates in 2018¹¹, 1608 were registered as Clinical Psychologists², 222 as Educational Psychologists⁶, 91 as Counselling Psychologists, and 46 as 'Neuropsychologists'. 865 APC holders were registered under the 'Psychologist' scope of practice- which includes a number of other specialisms, including 'Health' psychologists⁵ (currently under consideration by the Board for a scope of practice), 'Community'⁹ psychologists and 'Organisational'⁸ psychologists.



Figure C describes the key skills and a number of the specialisms amongst psychologists and more extensive descriptions of each professional group can be found in the references/links below.

References and Useful Reading

(Please click on links or icons below to access the supporting documents)

- ¹ Halpern D (2014). [Applying Psychology to Public Policy](#). Observer 27(1). Washington DC, Association of Psychological Science.
- ² The Role of Clinical Psychology in the Health Sector. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ³ The Role of Clinical Neuropsychology in the Health Sector. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ⁴ The Role of Psychology in ACC. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ⁵ Health Psychology. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ⁶ The Role of the Educational Psychologist. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ⁷ The Role of Psychologists Employed by the Department of Corrections. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ⁸ The Role of Organisational Psychologists. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ⁹ The Role of Community Psychologists. Psychology Workforce Task Group, Ministry of Health 2017 
- ¹⁰ Immigration New Zealand Long-term Skill Shortage List 2018
- ¹¹ NZ Psychologists Board Data, 31 May 2018
- ¹² Stewart *et al.* (2014). [Evidence & Wisdom](#). The role and value of psychologists in healthcare. Journal of the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists 24(1): 3-14
- ¹³ Clark *et al.* (2018). [Transparency about the outcomes of mental health services](#) (IAPT approach): an analysis of public data. The Lancet 391: 679-686
- ¹⁴ Te Pou (2015). [Let's Get Talking](#): A Stepped Care Approach to Talking Therapies. Te Pou o Te Whakaaro Nui. Auckland
- ¹⁵ [Scopes of Practice](#) and Qualifications for Psychologists Registered under the HCAA 2003. NZ Psychologists' Board.

Source: Prepared by participants in the Psychology Workforce Task Group, convened by the Ministry of Health. Published in 2019