

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

Retaining the Psychological Workforce

Reasons for leaving and strategies for retention

Analysis for the Oranga Tamariki Workforce

**Derived from data collected for the
MoH/HWNZ Psychology Workforce Task Group
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Introduction: Retention of Psychologists

At its August 2017 meeting the Psychology Workforce Task Group proposed that a study be conducted to explore the reasons why psychologists leave roles and to identify strategies that may assist in improving retention of psychologists, in particular within the health and social services workforce.

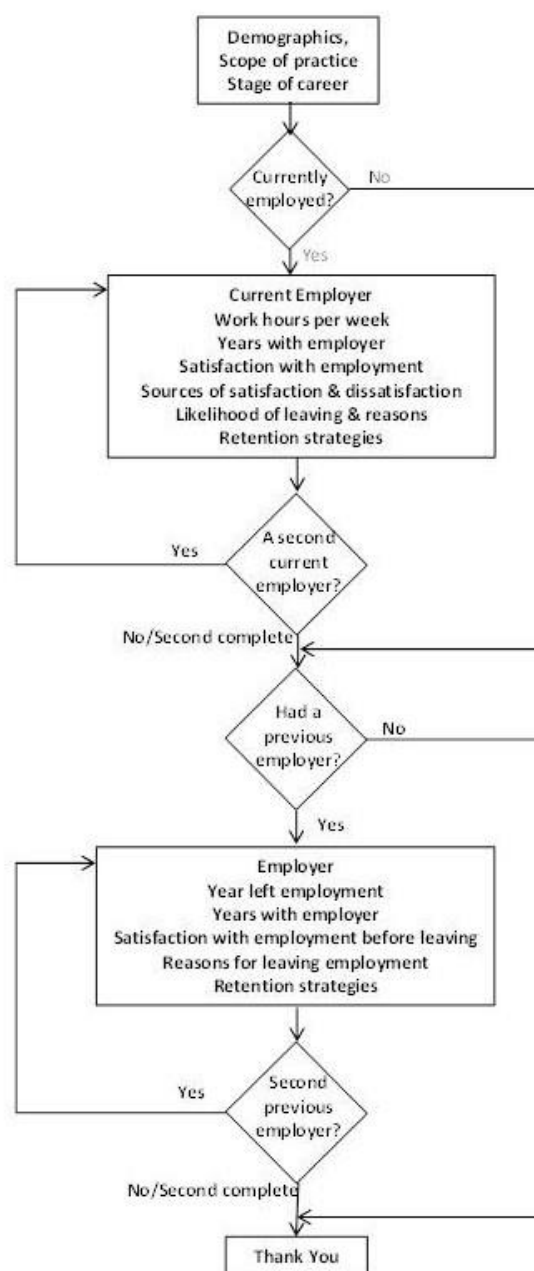
To undertake this study a survey was designed with the following aims.

1. Identify issues that lead to psychologists leaving jobs, particularly with government agencies
2. Identify strategies that could improve retention of psychologists in job roles
3. Assess baseline satisfaction levels for psychologists within current job roles

The survey was developed as a Survey Monkey survey. The logic and content of the survey is summarised in the diagramme to the right. All participants were invited to provide some basic demographic data (gender, age, up to two ethnicities) and information regarding their career as a psychologist (Scope of Practice, years since graduation), and then answer a range of questions regarding up to two current positions and up to two former positions that they have worked in within the last ten years. This data included the type of employing organisation, hours worked, years employed by the organisation, level of satisfaction with employment (using dimensions and items derived from the Stress Scale for mental health professionals: Cushway, et. al, 1996), sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, reasons for leaving, and potential strategies that could assist retention.

All registered psychologists were sent the survey by the NZ Psychologists Board and were invited to participate.

As this yielded a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data, this report describes a range of quantitative analyses covering all sectors and some qualitative analysis related to the data for the positions with Oranga Tamariki.



Results

Participants

A total of 634 psychologists responded, of which 588 (93%) reported on at least one current job role and 338 (53%) reported on at least one previous job role that they had left within the last ten years. As some participants reported on more than one current and/or former job role, a total of 732 current positions and 431 previous positions were reported on by participants. The following table shows the demographic and professional data for all participants.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender	Female 77%	Male 23%										
Ethnicity*	Caucasian NZ 62%	Caucasian from Europe 20%	Caucasian from Southern Africa 9%	Caucasian from other places (e.g., USA, Australia), 8%	Maori 7%	East Asian (China, Korea, Japan, etc.) 2.4%	West Asian (India, Pakistan, etc.) 1.4%	Pasifika 1.3%	Latin American 1.1%	South East Asian 0.6%	African 0.6%	Other 2.2%
Age	20-29 years 9%	30-39 years 23%	40-49 years 28%	50-59 years 24%	60-69 years 14%	70+ years 2%						
Scope of Practice	Clinical 49%	Psychologist 33%	Educational 11%	Interns 4%	Counselling 2%	Other 1%						
Years since Qualification	Intern/Trainee 4%	0-2 years 12%	3-5 years 15%	6-9 years 16%	10-19 years 30%	20-29 years 15%	30+ years 9%	(Early-career 31%)	(Mid-career 46%)	(Later-career 24%)		

Notes: Up to two ethnicities per person recorded

The following table describes the sector and employer for current and previous positions reported on by participants in this study. The number of current and previous positions reported for Oranga Tamariki /CYFS is shown on this table. Amongst respondents reporting on current positions, only 3 participants clearly identified themselves as working for Oranga Tamariki, but 6 others described themselves as working of a government agency that could have been Oranga Tamariki. Therefore, 3-9 participants may have worked for Oranga Tamariki. Seven participants reported on positions at Oranga Tamariki they had previously left. These samples are too small for reliable quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis of the results will be reported below, although the small sample means that the results will not comprehensively reflect a broad range of the experience of Oranga Tamariki staff.

Sector and Employer for Current and Previous Positions Reported On

Sector	Employer Type	Current Positions		Previous Positions	
		N	%	N	%
Other Government	Corrections	44	6%	35	8%
	Other	21	3%	33	8%
	Oranga Tamariki	3-9	0.4-1.2%	7	1.6%
Health/Disability	DHB/Secondary Health	185	25%	149	34%
	ACC	44	6%	11	3%
	NGO	33	5%	44	10%

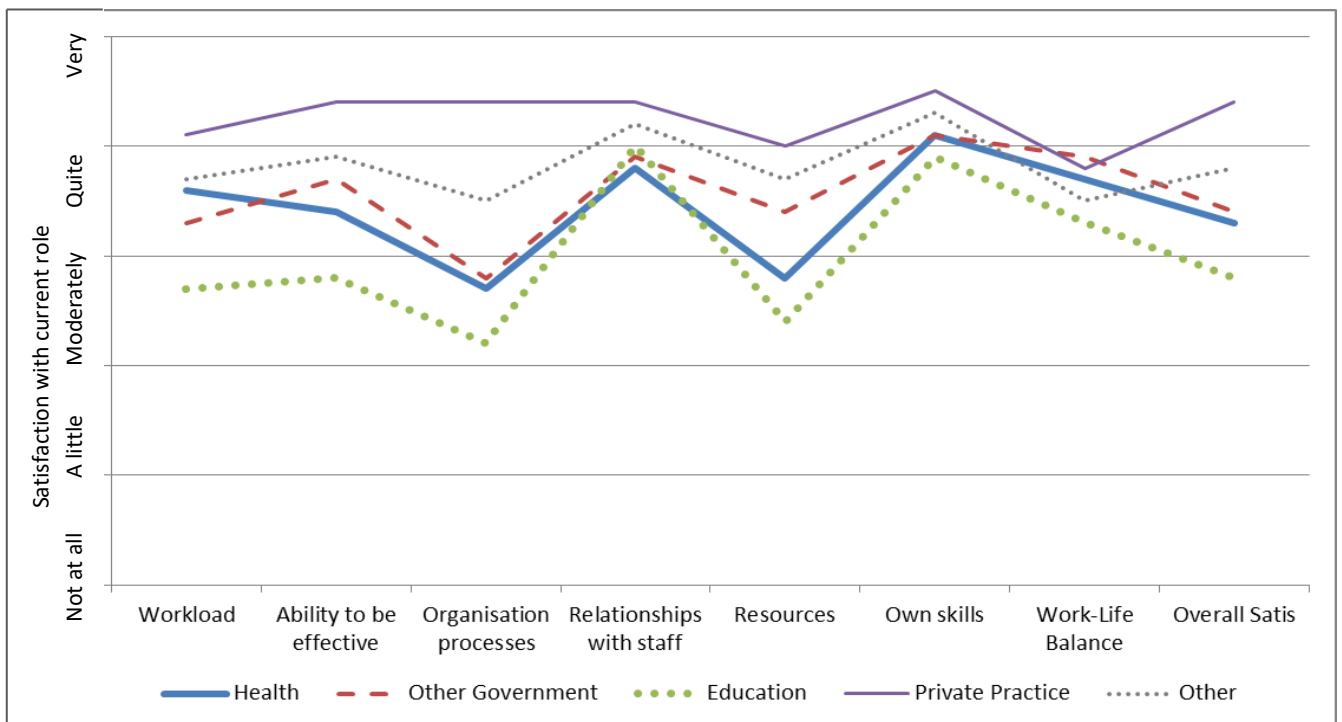
	Primary Health	16	2%	23	5%
	Other	3	0.4%		
Education		115	16%	49	11%
Private Practice		185	25%	33	8%
Other	University/Academic	35	5%	21	5%
	Non-Health NGO	31	4%	21	5%
	Commercial/Industrial	12	2%	12	3%
	Volunteer	8	1%		
TOTAL		732		431	

Satisfaction With Role: Current and Former Roles

Current Levels of Work Satisfaction: All Sectors

Participants who reported on current roles were asked to rate how satisfied they are in relation to eight different aspects of their working life at present. The following graph shows the mean satisfaction on each of these aspects for participants leaving roles in different sectors. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction for all items. The data set for Oranga Tamariki was too small for separate quantitative analysis and was included in the data for “Other Government” in all following graphs, constituting approximately 22% of this data.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Work in Current Role: By Sector

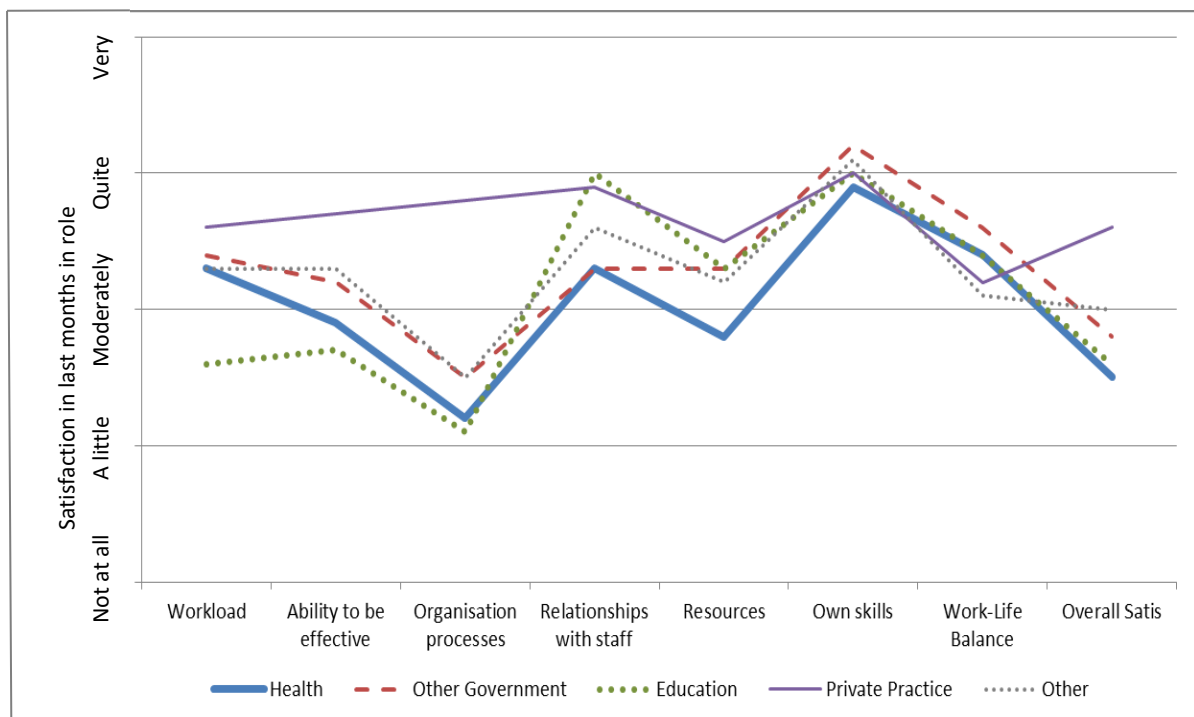


As would be expected, the level of satisfaction is substantially higher than satisfaction prior to leaving former roles (see next graph). It is notable that the satisfaction of Education staff, Health staff, and Other Government (including Oranga Tamariki) staff is lower on most scales than for the Private Practice and Other (primarily academic, commercial, and non-health NGO) sector, with this trend being statistically significant for many of the comparisons. Education consistently reported the lowest satisfaction with Health staff typically being second lowest.

Work Satisfaction in Months Prior to Leaving Former Roles: Different Sectors

Participants who reported about previous roles were asked to rate how satisfied they were in relation to eight different aspects of engagement in the months prior to leaving that role. The following graph shows the mean satisfaction on each of these aspects for participants leaving roles in different sectors. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction for all items.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Work Prior to Leaving Former Role: By Sector

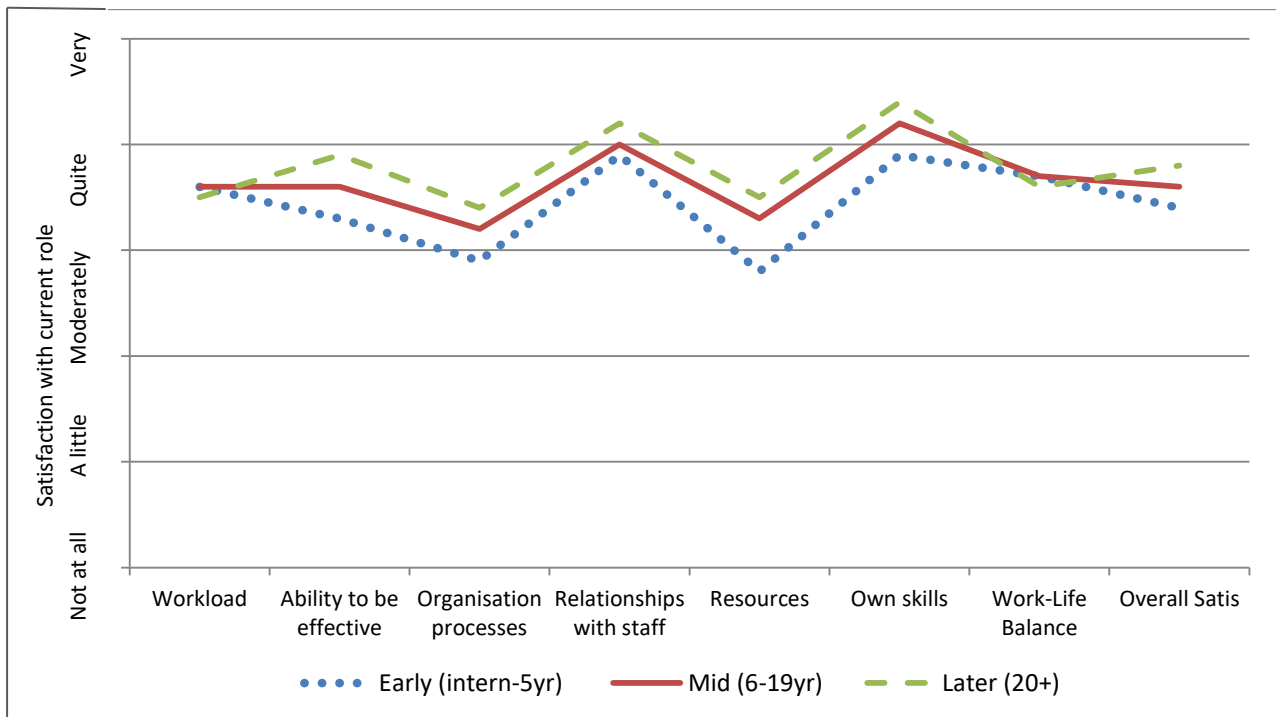


Many statistically significant differences were found between the groups. Psychologists who left health sector positions consistently reported amongst the lowest average ratings in almost all aspects. The pattern for Education was more mixed than was found for current positions. Significant differences were found between the sectors in all variables except “Own skills” (belief that have skills and training needed to do the job) and “Work-life balance” (satisfaction with work-life balance). The Other Government group, including Tamaki Oranga showed a pattern of satisfaction that was similar to, or slightly higher than, health services.

Satisfaction With Role: Career Stage

Satisfaction with current role was also assessed by the respondents' stage in their career. Mean satisfaction levels on the different measures are shown on the following graph. This graph does not present the data for different employer types.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Work in Current Role: By Career Stage

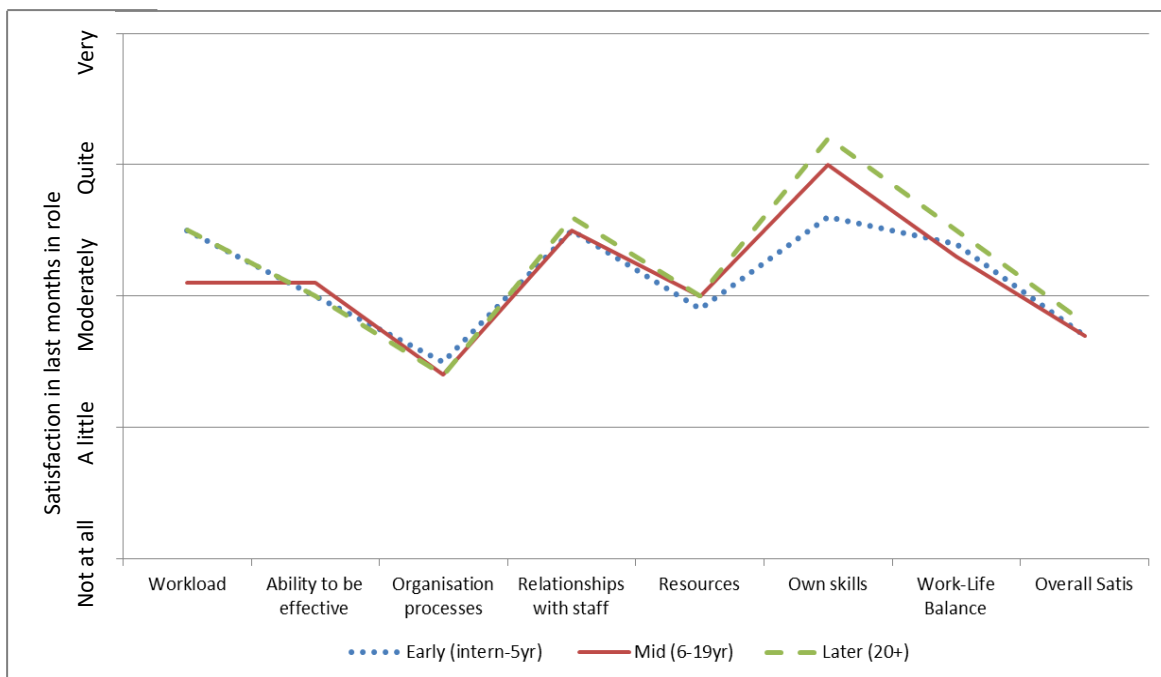


Early career psychologists typically showed somewhat lower levels of satisfaction across most aspects measured, many of these differences being statistically significant. Satisfaction with most aspects appeared to rise over the career, although satisfaction with workload and work-life balance in particular did not improve. Satisfaction with relationships with other staff was consistent throughout the career also.

Satisfaction in Months Prior to Leaving Former Roles: Stage of Career

Satisfaction with aspects of former roles was also analysed for participants who were at different stages of their career (Early = internship to 5 years post-qualification, Mid = 6-19 years, Later – 20+ years). The following graph shows the mean engagement on each of these aspects for participants at different stages of their career.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Work Prior to Leaving Former Role: By Career Stage



Satisfaction with level of own skills and training were significantly different between the different career stages. Post-hoc analysis showed that Early Career psychologists were somewhat less satisfied with their skills than Mid- and Later- Career psychologists, with no significant difference between the Mid- and Later-Career psychologists.

No other variables showed significant differences, indicating similar levels of satisfaction on different aspects of working life in the months prior to leaving a role for people at different stages of their career.

Barriers to Retention: Reasons for Leaving Roles in Oranga Tamariki

When reporting on current roles, respondents were asked to rate how likely it is that they would leave their position in the next five years. The following table shows these results for respondents for participants definitely currently working for Tamaki Oranga and possibly working for Tamaki Oranga.

Likelihood of leaving current role	Definitely TO N	Possibly TO N
Not at all	2	
Slightly		2
Moderately	1	
Quite		2
Very		2

There is too little data from which to draw firm conclusions. There was also too little data to reliably analyse trends in the likely reasons for leaving current positions.

Barriers to Retention of Oranga Tamariki Staff

To explore the kinds of difficulties that encourage psychologists to leave their current employer, an open ended question “What are the biggest barriers to you continuing to work in with this employer” was asked of respondents.

Analysis of this data was undertaken using the inductive categorisation method of content analysis¹ to identify major and minor themes emerging from this data. This method involved systematic categorisation of data into themes by reading through the interview responses, identifying the distinct ideas that emerged, grouping related ideas into thematic categories, and then naming the categories to best reflect the theme that unifies their content. The number of comments related to each distinct idea and category were recorded to assess the relative salience of the idea across the group of respondents, but this should be taken as indicative only because a particular person not spontaneously raising an idea does not mean they do not regard it as important.

The themes emerging from the actual and possible Oranga Tamariki staff are shown below. The comments in black are from definite OT employees, and those in grey are from possible OT employees.

Barriers to Oranga Tamariki Staff to Continue Working for Oranga Tamariki

Service Limitations

- Lack of ability of OT to pay for ongoing therapy
- Social workers lack of understanding of children’s needs
- High threshold for OT to provide intervention
- Insufficient psychological work provided by organisation

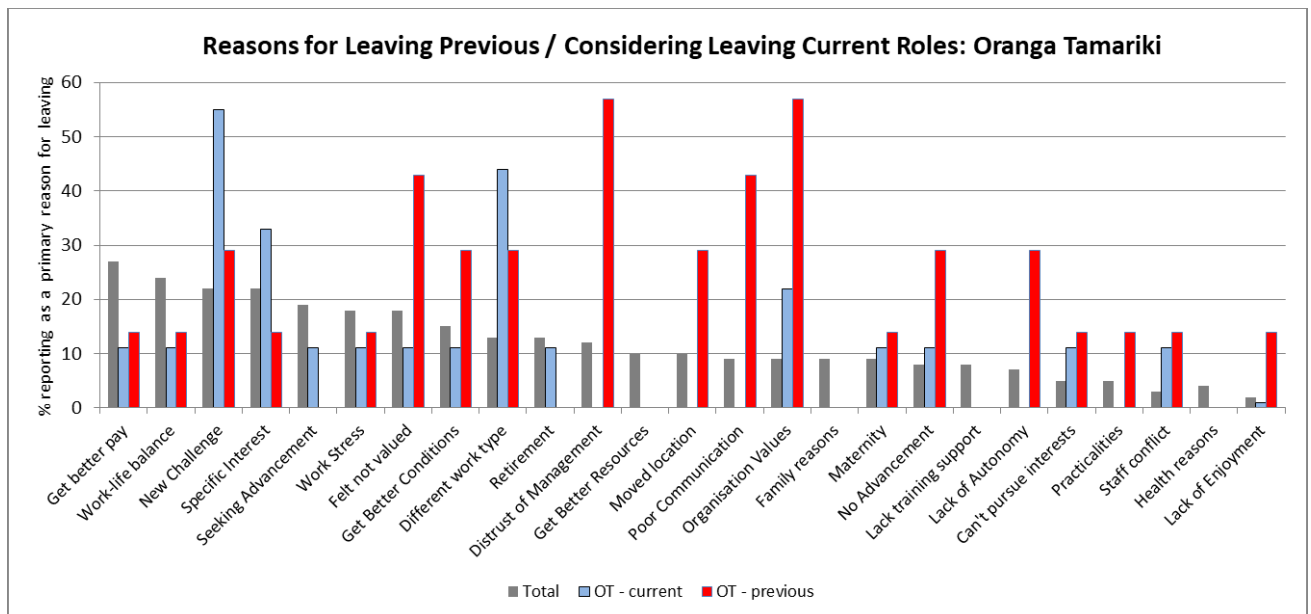
Stressful working Conditions

- Short staffed
- Insufficient support for staff

Organisational Factors

- Organisational restructuring and uncertainty
- Unnecessary work and meetings limits time with cliets

To explore factors that had led psychologists to leave former positions, psychologists were ask to choose four reasons from a list of 25 reasons that best described why they left. The following graph shows how frequently different reasons were cited as one of up to four main reasons for considering leaving a current job or having left a previous at Oranga Tamariki. The reasons are organised by the frequency that they were reported for the whole sample of all participants describing reasons they may leave their current roles.



The small numbers of participants who reported current or previous roles with Oranga Tamariki means any interpretation of these results should be regarded as very tentative. The results show quite a different pattern from the total sample of participants across all employers and sectors. The most common reasons cited for having stopped working for OT previously related to dissatisfaction with management, including distrust of management, believing that organisational values were not consistent with their values , poor communication, and not feeling valued. Reasons for considering

leaving their current job with OT was primarily due to seeking new challenges in a different kind of work or interest area.

Strategies for Enhancing Retention in the Health System

To explore strategies that may improve retention of psychologists with this employer, an open ended question “what could have been done differently that would have encouraged you to stay?” was asked for each previous position reported on, and “what could be done to make sure you stay in this job for a long time” was asked for each current position reported on.

Analysis of this data was undertaken using the inductive categorisation method of content analysis, as described earlier in this paper.

The following table outlines potential retention strategies indicated for current and previous positions with Oranga Tamariki. The individual strategies are organised into similar themes. The themes are presented in decreasing order of the frequency of associated suggestions.

Retention Strategies Suggested In Relation to Oranga Tamariki Positions (Previous and Current)

Organisational Culture

- Change organisational culture
- Less office politics and drama
- Modernise management thinking
- Don't start new clinically oriented projects without consulting/involving staff first
- Promote teamwork within the organisation

Clinical Process

- Keep focus on whanau and tamariki
- Decisions not to be heavily influenced by cost/budget.
- Environment where can spend more time with clients
- More freedom with how I do job.
- For management to be trauma-informed.

Staff Conditions

- Increased pay
- More support for staff
- More training
- More realistic workloads

Staff-Management Relationships

- Improved staff/management relationship - less punitive & increased sense of being valued.
- For there to be mechanisms to deal with dysfunctional management.
- Different boss

As previously discussed, the small amount of data available means that these results should not be taken as comprehensive, but may provide useful insights into the types of issues that could make a difference to staff retention in Oranga Tamariki.

Cushway, D., Tyler, P.A., & Nolan, P. (1996). Development of a stress scale for mental health professionals. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 35, 279-295.

ⁱ Greene, J.C., Whitmore, E., & Sappington, H. (1987). The craft of evaluation: Strategies for qualitative data analysis. *Evaluation Practice*, 8, 5-11.

Notes: Shows category title then representative examples of the specific strategies suggested by participants. Categories in decreasing order of how commonly suggested. Examples in approximately decreasing order of frequency. Blue/shaded area of box represents proportion of strategy suggested compared to the most common retention strategy (Enhancing Management/Leadership Approach).