

Pacific Health Navigator Team



The Pacific Health Navigator (PHN) team are employed by Compass Health PHO and based in the PHO offices in Porirua and Wellington. The service was formed in 2012 as a result of a review of the Pacific services provided in Wellington Region.

The team is made up of 4 Community Health Workers and 3 Pacific Navigator Outreach Nurses. All team members have Pacific ethnicity and between them speak a range of Pacific languages – including Tongan, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tuvaluan, Cook Island Maori, and Kiribati. The PHNs also have access to the interpreting service when needed.

The team works with Pacific people and their families. They support people to better look after themselves through a holistic approach. The community health worker members of the team actively support the nurses by providing navigation and negotiation support to other services such as WINZ or Housing NZ. They liaise with Social Workers in schools and mental health agencies and always try to help people to do things for themselves. The PHN team actively support people to engage with their GP, check that they are taking their medications correctly, keeping hospital appointments and following hospital discharge instructions.

Team Leader

Barbara Vardey is the Team Leader. Barbara has a nursing background and provides leadership, mentoring and support to the PHN team members. Barbara has overseen the establishment and ongoing development of the PHN service. Barbara manages the referrals into the PHN service including the daily review of Pacific patients discharged from Wellington Hospital and liaising with the hospital's Pacific Unit.

Overcoming Challenges

Establishing a new team posed many challenges in the beginning.

- **Finding appropriate training and development** opportunities for the Community Health Worker team members. They now participate in a diverse range of options where they acquire skills and knowledge as well as a grounding in health service protocols, guidelines, and personal attributes. Many of these training programmes offer useful transferable skills such as motivational interviewing and managing difficult conversations.
- **Being clear about boundaries when working within a community** that one is part of or may hold a leadership role within is important. There are specific issues, at both a community and personal level, that relate to the teams' way of working within a Pacific cultural paradigm. A structured mentoring and support arrangement is in place where all members of the team can safely discuss and be supported to manage some of these challenges.
- **The service must be viewed as credible and legitimate** by both consumers and other clinical service providers. Being able to clearly articulate clinical boundaries and manage professional expectations proved to be very challenging when the service was first established. This has become easier now that competency is being assured via professional development planning.
- **Personal safety** is an issue given that the Team work with patients and families in the community, mostly in their own homes. They have a safety policy that is strictly adhered to and are currently exploring the use of phone apps and other safety alarm options.

Go to the [website](#) to find out more