

## **Whakamanawa | SSPA Conference, 5 April 2022- Workshop feedback**

***Making Aotearoa the best place in the world for children and young people:***

***Your insights about the COVID-19 responses***

***Led by the Child Wellbeing Unit, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet***

Below are combined themes from our three breakout sessions, where we asked participants to reflect on their experience over the past two years, and how central and local government, NGOs, iwi, communities, whānau, children and young people have worked differently in the COVID-19 environment. We asked you to tell us about:

- What has worked well – what should we do more of?
- What can be built on?
- What needs to be done differently?

### **Collaboration**

- COVID-19 demonstrated what's possible when we have collaborative networks.
- Collaboration and relationships were strengthened through practical and tangible actions – for example sharing resources like kai, masks and other supports with each other as needed.
- By working in a collaborative way, providers could stick to what they do best, and link in with others to enable an integrated, wraparound response to families and communities.
- COVID-19 response should be the norm.
- Community/whānau/hapū are incredibly resourceful.

### **Leadership**

- There was a greater level of care and consideration for NGOs/providers.
- Council support and leadership worked well - local government took an active role and provided solid leadership.
- It highlighted the ability for both agencies and the community sector to be nimble and pivot.
- Agencies took a step back and allowed NGOs and communities to show what they can do.
- Greater willingness from agencies (eg MSD and DIA) to challenge central decision-making and explore options to devolve power to communities and whānau.

### **Funding**

- Funding remains a significant issue for providers.
- Pay disparity is a key issue, making it difficult to attract and retain staff when government agencies are paying workers significantly more.
- There is not enough funding for NGOs to provide and resource communities.
- A lot of funding opportunities rely on dreaming up a new project rather than sticking with what's tried and true in order to get funding. Also, often there is not enough notice/time to prepare a strong application for it.
- It also feels like there's an imbalance in funding – too much aimed at the bottom of the cliff, and not enough aimed at prevention.

- Sustainable and flexible funding is needed, focused on what the whānau needs – putting whānau at the centre and organising around that. Sometimes contracting numbers get in the way – need to fund FTEs rather than widgets.
- Making funding more flexible and less prescriptive will enable more appropriate responses and the best outcomes for children, young people and their whānau.

### **Understanding and responding to need**

- Instagram and Messenger were the best options for connecting with families as this was free – had to be creative in connecting and engaging with young people and families.
- Issues around accessing mental health and addiction services remain very much unchanged (especially in youth services and youth justice space), with long wait times.
- Parents are also having difficulty accessing mental health support.
- Lockdowns and constraints were challenging on relationships, and there was an increase in violence on parents. Need to provide more support for parents.
- There are a lot of disengaged kids out of education, with significant disruption to learning and social supports. There are also more kids in transitional and emergency housing who are harder to re-engage.
- There are more young people that are challenged through the trauma of COVID-19 – the obvious stressors are there, but we've not increased our own capacity to help and assist.
- We need to both understand the stressors and strains of young people, and respond with workforce capacity.
- There needs to be more training around what being 'child-centred' means.

### **The Strategy**

- Participants were keen to learn more about the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and, for example, how parents are supported by it.
- Although participants appreciated the aspirational focus, they don't really see the Strategy being brought to life, or much tangible change for families yet.
- More work is needed to get government agencies advocating for the Strategy in everything they're doing, and then to provide resource for community to be able to 'get on with it'.
- A number of participants expressed interest in being involved in the Strategy review.
- Suggestions for priorities for future Strategy work included:
  - Building positive wellbeing as a preventative measure – focusing on nature and spaces and interactions
  - Provide tools and capacity to parents to support child wellbeing – recognise inherent strengths in whānau
  - Mental health – major issues with accessing support
  - Child poverty – don't see any real change on this
  - Workforce capacity and capability – pay parity and pay equity
  - Connecting NGO funding and efforts towards the Strategy – what would this look like/how could this be reflected?
  - How it's being operationalised – a lot of it comes down to resource and funding

### **Next steps**

- Please contact us if you would like to share additional insights or reflections, or if you feel your contribution isn't accurately/adequately captured in the summary notes above.
- We want to continue the conversation, and keep hearing from people about their ideas, insights and feedback.
- You can contact us on [childyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz](mailto:childyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz), where you can also register for our e-newsletters, to keep up-to-date with the latest news and progress updates.

### **More information**

- [Child and Youth Wellbeing website](#)
- [Programme of Action policies and initiatives](#)
- [How to get involved](#)
- [Tools and guides to support child and youth wellbeing and alignment with the Strategy](#)
- [Child wellbeing and poverty reduction reports](#)