



Proactive Release

Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – Submission Template

This document is intended for individuals or groups who wish to make a formal submission on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Please complete this template and email it to: childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz

A guide to making a submission is available on the DPMC website <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

Submissions will close on **Wednesday 5 December**.

Please provide details for a contact person in case we have some follow up questions.

Contact Name:	Cath Edmonson
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Phone Number:	
Organisation Name:	The Health Promotion Agency (HPA)
Organisation description: (tell us about your organisation – i.e. who do you represent? How many members do you have? Are you a local or national organisation?)	<p>The Health Promotion Agency (HPA) is a Crown entity established on 1 July 2012 under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000. It has a Board that is appointed by the Minister of Health.</p> <p>HPA's key role is to lead and support health promotion initiatives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote health and wellbeing and encourage healthy lifestyles • prevent disease, illness and injury • enable environments that support health, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles • reduce personal, social and economic harm. <p>HPA has alcohol-specific functions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give advice and make recommendations to government, government agencies, industry, non-government bodies, communities, health professionals and others on the sale, supply, consumption, misuse and harm of alcohol as those matters relate to HPA's general functions • undertake, or work with others, to research alcohol use and public attitudes to alcohol in New Zealand and problems associated with, or consequent on, alcohol misuse.

Executive Summary:

(Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)

HPA supports the proposed child wellbeing strategy outcomes framework with the exception of the inclusion of the Treaty of Waitangi as one of seven principles of equal importance. HPA suggests elevating it to an overarching guiding principle that doesn't just underpin the framework, but guides and directs how the framework is implemented.

HPA research¹ tells us that:

- young people experience high levels of isolation
- young people with experience of mental distress are subject to stigma and discrimination
- young Māori were more likely than young non-Māori to rate their last year as being among their most difficult
- mental health outcomes and connection to culture varies considerably within Pacific populations.

In order to improve wellbeing, we need to:

- take a strengths based approach
- enable participation
- facilitate positive connections to social environments
- build the capacity of children and young people to contribute to improved wellbeing
- connect family, whānau, schools and communities
- provide help for the tough times
- tackle discrimination, stigma and social exclusion.

This submission includes practical examples of the above approaches. These approaches support system change but don't require system change in order to implement.

¹ Wellbeing and Mental Distress in Aotearoa New Zealand: Snapshot 2016 (HPA, February 2018)

Submission Content

HPA supports the proposed child wellbeing strategy outcomes framework. The framework aligns well with HPA's wellbeing approach and HPA would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the further development and implementation of the strategy. HPA suggest that the foundational role of the Treaty of Waitangi is an overarching principle that doesn't just underpin the framework, but directs and guides how the framework is implemented.

This submission focuses primarily on wellbeing approaches which HPA believes are central to improving health outcomes and reducing inequities. All of the approaches are supported by good practice examples from HPA and the wider sector. The themes and examples are described at a fairly high level and HPA would welcome an opportunity to meet with the strategy team to discuss them in more detail.

HPA has a specific focus on improving youth wellbeing that is supported by a robust research programme. While HPA's work tends to focus more on young people than children, many of our comments and examples are equally applicable to children in terms of the the approach.

Underpinning this submission is HPA's acknowledgement of the special relationship between Māori and the Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi. Fundamental to the Treaty, are its principles of self-determination, partnership, participation and protection, which have much to offer in promoting the wellbeing of all New Zealanders. Any decisions on the future approach to improving child wellbeing must embrace holistic Māori health models and ensure a commitment to equity of outcomes and the protection of Māori cultural concepts, values and practices.

WHAT WE KNOW

The following is a brief summary of what recent HPA research tells us about young people and wellbeing.

- Young people achieve wellbeing in the following ways²:
 - Small steps - tangible ways to take time out e.g. going for a walk.
 - Connectedness - service to family/community, giving time and effort, and valuing culture.
 - Mindfulness - self-care and importance of mauri.
 - Self-development and purpose - ambition, goals and ongoing learning.
 - Balance - including emotional/physical balance, as well as broader concepts such as Te Whare Tapa Wha.
- People of all ages experience isolation, but HPA research shows that it may be a particular issue for young people (15 to 24 years) with over half reporting some level of isolation. This is significantly higher than all other age groups.
- Many young people (1 in 3) with lived experience of mental distress continue to experience discrimination and/or alter their behaviour out of fear of discrimination.

² Feedback from over 300 young people who attended [Festival for the Future 2018](#)

- Young Māori (38%) were more likely than young non-Māori (27%) to rate their last year as being among their most difficult ever (survey conducted in 2016).
- Young Pacific peoples are a diverse population and mental health outcomes and connection to culture varies considerably within Pacific populations, particularly when multi-ethnic Pacific peoples' identity is considered³.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

The following section summarises a range of practical approaches and examples to improve wellbeing. These approaches support system change but don't require system change in order to implement.

Focus on strengths

A strengths-based approach assumes that children and young people are active participants in their own wellbeing, and it recognises their strengths and interests. It shifts us from a problem focused, deficit based paradigm to one that promotes inclusion, respect, and wellbeing.

Strengths-based programmes and policies build on young people's capacity to enhance protective factors, which improve life opportunities and promote good health and wellbeing.

Strengths-based approach in action – example: *Zeal is a non-profit organisation that aims to positively influence every young New Zealander through creativity. Zeal runs programmes in creative pursuits including art, photography, dance and audio engineering; has a network of youth facilities throughout the country; and runs a youth advocacy and mental health service. Zeal is strengths-based and holistic in their approach, aligning with leading youth development model The Circle of Courage. HPA has worked with Zeal on a number of initiatives including The Great Mental Health Experiment, the Good Vibes Guide, support for Under 18's at Homegrown, and a Smokefree dance academy.*

The Great Mental Health Experiment video series featured young kiwi entertainer Beth Humphrey (20, Māori) road testing mental health and general wellbeing tips including nutrition, physical activity, spreading kindness, and being present. In an online survey of the effectiveness of this initiative, the average rating for the experiment was 8.5/10 and the average rating for positive impact on wellbeing was 7/10.

Enable participation

Participation is about creating opportunities for children and young people to actively participate and engage in wellbeing promotion activities. Effective participation provides opportunities for children and young people to influence, inform, shape and contribute to strategy development and implementation. In addition to improving the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives that target young people, youth participation is valuable because it

³ Wellbeing and Mental Distress in Aotearoa New Zealand: Snapshot 2016 (HPA, February 2018)

can help to cultivate young people's wellbeing, especially their sense of belonging and identity.

Participation in action – example: *Festival For The Future is an annual conference designed for young people. It is run by Inspiring Stories and regularly attracts 1000+ attendees. The conference themes are entirely youth-led.*

HPA sponsored the Health and Wellbeing stream at this years' conference, and worked with conference attendees to find out how they define wellbeing. These findings will be shared with the sector and will help guide the development of HPA's youth wellbeing approach.

Facilitate positive connections to social environments

Positive youth wellbeing is closely linked to strong and healthy families/whānau, schools and communities. Wellbeing is improved when young people have good connections to four key social environments: family/whānau; friends and peers; school and/or work; and the community. By providing support and opportunities for meaningful social engagement, positive connections build resilience in young people and improve their life opportunities.

Facilitating positive connections in action – example:

Smokefreerockquest⁴ is New Zealand's only nationwide youth event focused on live and original music. Now in its 30th year, Smokefree rockquest reaches audience numbers in excess of 10,000 every year. HPA has supported this event through a long-term Smokefree sponsorship and in 2018 piloted workshops helping young musicians with their wellbeing.

In 2017 Smokefree created a new partnership with Hip Hop International New Zealand to sponsor their nationwide events and run free hip hop workshops across the country, More than 1200 dancers participated, with community shows attracting a further 3400 people. Over 70% of the dancers identified as Maori or Pacific and were aged between 13 and 24.

Build the capacity of children and young people to contribute to improved wellbeing

Building connections between young people and organisations who work with young people is an important dimension of improving wellbeing outcomes. Building the capacity of young people to participate, lead, influence and have their voices heard is also critical.

Building capacity in action - example: *Run by Inspiring Stories, Future Leaders⁵ is a year-long programme that backs young people in rural and provincial NZ to build their entrepreneurship and leadership capability to make a difference in their backyard.*

⁴ smokefreerockquest.co.nz/

⁵ futureleaders.nz

Connect family, whānau, schools and communities

Promoting programmes and initiatives that support a whole school wellbeing culture that connects the school environment with young people's family, whānau, and communities is effective in building wellbeing.

Connecting family, whānau, schools and communities in action - example: *HPA have supported Tutura, an interagency pilot, focuses on changing secondary school culture. It aims to reduce alcohol and drug harm through a wellbeing approach. The pilot helps schools to create policy frameworks that are wellbeing-focused rather than punitive. A key part of the pilot is equipping all teaching staff to have positive conversations with young people and build relationships so that teachers can let students know if they've noticed changes (both positive and negative).*

Provide help for the tough times

Children and young people sometimes need additional help and support for the tough times. They need access to a suite of resources, information, self-help tools and sign-posting to support services that are available in the environments and contexts in which they live their lives.

Programmes that promote and teach young people the skills to improve their mental and emotional wellbeing (health-literacy) and increase their ability to weather life's storms (self-care) have been proven to be effective. Creating products focused on wellbeing also removes the need for children and young people to self-identify as help seekers, which is currently a significant constraint.

There is huge potential for digital solutions to enable better reach and engage with young people who are not currently connected with wellbeing messages, information or support services. This means shifting our thinking beyond eg, building a 'wellbeing portal' and expecting young people to go there, to creating a multi-dimensional digital ecosystem with choices and personalised services that can be part of young people's daily lives.

Provide help for the tough times – examples: *Thelowdown.co.nz provides information, self-help tools, and sign posting to support services for 'when life sucks'. The site has been designed to reflect the changing way young people go online so it's fully mobile optimised and promoted through social media channels. On the site young people can find:*

- *information on anxiety and depression (and other issues they may be struggling with like leaving school or getting on with their parents)*
- *videos of young people sharing their stories*
- *practical steps to help build wellbeing*
- *healthy behaviours to build resilience*
- *places to go to get help*
- *information for anyone worried about a friend*
- *A moderated forum for young people to share stories and experiences and provide peer-to-peer support.*

The lowdown.co.nz is proving highly successful, with a recent HPA survey showing that 88% of people (91% Māori and 86% Pacific) who visited thelowdown.co.nz found it useful.

Other opportunities that HPA is exploring in order to increase reach and engagement include digital solutions, such as e-coaching, gateway services, chatbots and virtual advisors that reach young people on the channels they are using every day.

Tackle discrimination, stigma and social exclusion

Work to enhance social inclusion through national efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination is still very much needed. HPA recommends continuing and refreshing of the national *Like Minds, Like Mine* programme⁶ with a significantly strengthened focus on young people.

HPA research has also shown that people were more likely to report experiencing social exclusion if they are younger, female or gender diverse⁷. More targeted approaches to these groups should be considered.

A key component of reducing stigma and discrimination is reframing the language that we currently use. Language is powerful and can inadvertently add to stigma (including self-stigma), discrimination and social exclusion. We have an opportunity to change this and to promote language that shifts us from an illness focused, deficit based paradigm to one that promotes inclusion, respect, and wellbeing.

HPA research suggests that cultural connectedness may be a useful pathway for social inclusion for Māori and suggests investment in Māori organisations and iwi to develop approaches and initiatives to strengthen cultural connectedness⁸.

SYSTEM ENABLERS

While the approaches and examples summarised above can be implemented without system change, a number of system changes will be needed to fully implement the proposed outcomes framework. Government policy and legislation, national and local funding systems, performance measurements and accountability mechanisms will all need to be reengineered to further enable and incentivise a wellbeing approach. This could include:

- Investment in mechanisms that support children and young people to take a formal role in national and local planning, funding and delivery of services, policy development and legislative change
- The development of national cross-agency system level measures and targets for improved wellbeing outcomes
- The requirement for District Health Boards and/or Councils to develop integrated local wellbeing strategies and annual plans
- The development and promotion of language that shifts us from an illness focused, deficit based paradigm to one that promotes inclusion, respect, and wellbeing

⁶ likeminds.org.nz/

⁷ Wellbeing and Mental Distress in Aotearoa New Zealand: Snapshot 2016 (HPA, February 2018)

⁸ Wellbeing and Mental Distress in Aotearoa New Zealand: Snapshot 2016 (HPA, February 2018)

- The development of a health and social sector workforce wellbeing competency framework, supported by training and digital tools
- Further investment in national wellbeing awareness and social marketing campaigns that support local community activity
- Application of the principles and processes of successful cultural models such as tangihanga and pōwhiri
- Further investment in community based youth led social change.

Please note that your submission will become official information. This means that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may be required to release all or part of the information contained in your submission in response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may withhold all or parts of your submission if it is necessary to protect your privacy or if it has been supplied subject to an obligation of confidence.

Please tell us if you don't want all or specific parts of your submission released, and the reasons why. Your views will be taken into account in deciding whether to withhold or release any information requested under the Official Information Act and in deciding if, and how, to refer to your submission in any possible subsequent paper prepared by the Department.