




Te Hau Toka
SOUTHERN LAKES WELLBEING GROUP

Community Mental Wellbeing Co-design Summary

Developed with the communities of the Queenstown
Lakes District, Cromwell and Fiordland



Special thanks to our community listening team, community-based
service providers and experts

 **leadership
lab**



This summary document provides an overview of the findings of a three-month co-design process facilitated by Leadership Lab on behalf of Te Hau Toka Southern Wellbeing Group which was carried out between September and December 2021. It is part of a more detailed recommendations report.

Purpose

The purpose of the community co-design process was to determine the mental wellbeing challenges being experienced by communities in the Southern Lakes region as a result of COVID-19 and to gather ideas from the Te Anau, Cromwell, Wānaka and Queenstown communities about how Te Hau Toka could best help support their mental wellbeing. The findings will help form an action plan for the group to allocate its funding in the most impactful way and in alignment with the three 'Promotion and Prevention' Focus Areas outlined on page 7 of Kia Kaha, Kia Māia, Kia Ora Aotearoa.

This includes:

- A. Understanding the lived experiences of target communities - What are the key issues being faced?
- B. Identifying possible solutions - What might be helpful with this? What help already exists?
- C. Making recommendations about the criteria and mechanisms for allocation of funding.
- D. Forming strong relationships with communities and with community-scale service providers and potential partners - What support do they need to have more impact?
- E. Working in a way that reflects the broader objectives of the funding - aiming to address challenges at hand whilst simultaneously learning more about them.



Methodology

The report findings were informed by three strands of enquiry:

- A Listening Team process aimed at gathering the perceptions of the affected communities.
- Exploring the insights and perceptions of community-based service providers.
- An Expert Design Challenge, drawing on the knowledge of people who have had direct experience of supporting communities dealing with COVID or other relevant disasters.

The Listening Team

A Listening Team of 14 local community members from different geographic and demographic areas was formed and they conducted 267 conversations with individuals or small groups across these communities. These conversations explored challenges to the individuals' mental wellbeing in the COVID-19 context and ideas that they thought would be helpful.

Common themes emerged across all locations and demographics, in addition to more regional and demographic-specific themes. The overarching challenges (key themes) are presented below and Appendix 1 provides a thematic analysis for each demographic and region.

Youth included speaking directly with young people and with people who work closely with young people.

Migrant is a slightly ambiguous term, but generally included people who are not permanent residents as well as permanent residents with ongoing strong/family ties to their home country.

Business included owners, operators, or senior leaders of businesses.

Older People did not have a specific age range because of different cultural realities of what counts as 'older'. Generally grandparent-aged people.

New Parents included parents of young children and/or perinatal.

Number of Listening Team conversations held with each community and priority group

	# Conversations	Youth (14-24)	Migrant	Business	Older People	New Parents
Wānaka	85	36	6	20	14	14
Queenstown	103	15	34	31	22	18
Te Anau	51	14	10	11	10	11
Cromwell*	28	11	2	4	11	3
Totals	267	76	52	66	57	46

*More data about Cromwell was collected after the drafting of this report, hence Cromwell findings should be considered partial.

Community-based service providers

The findings from the survey and one-to-one interviews conducted with service providers are broadly aligned with those of the Listening Team and provided a helpful triangulation point that validated the concerns highlighted through the listening process. The key difference was that providers focused more on the services and structures missing, rather than lived experiences of individuals and their challenges.

A large proportion of the commentary aligned with findings of the **2020 QLDC Social Sector Capacity Report** and highlighted the inadequacy of services for the region across the board. This included comments on a shortage of support for parenting and maternity, general and specialist medical services, respite care, mental health services, immigration and employment advice. This aligns with earlier findings that pre-existing deficiencies in core social infrastructure have been exacerbated by COVID. A number of helpful practical suggestions and recommendations surfaced, each of which have been included in the larger recommendations report where appropriate and aligned.



Expert design challenge

Te Hau Toka recognised that the nature of the challenges being faced in the region are not unique to this time or this place. So while there are absolutely likely to be locally-specific nuances and challenges to address, there are also likely to be a suite of valuable interventions and solutions from other times and places which can be drawn upon.

An expert design challenge was run in parallel to the other work and contributors with experience and expertise in the wellbeing and social change arena ranging from Clinical Psychology, Mental Health, and Population Health, through to Anthropology, Whanau Ora Commissioning, Nutrition and Human Performance, and Disaster Recovery were selected and invited to participate. As well as individual submissions, the participants joined a 2-hour group discussion about each of their findings, commonalities and differences, and general recommendations.



Challenges

The enquiry process clearly indicates that COVID has had a significant, and largely negative, impact on the Queenstown Lakes and Fiordland communities.

The conversations were enlightening and, at times, shocking, and have highlighted needs that are both urgent and systemic. COVID has created a range of challenges that flow from the downturn of predominantly - but not only - tourist-related business and the personal, social and economic impacts of Government-mandated COVID mitigation strategies.

The result has been “constant, extreme and relentless pressure” on many business owners and significant stress, anxiety and exhaustion across all the communities. The stress and anxiety, in turn, are manifesting in a range of mental health and wellbeing concerns and in increased conflict and drug and alcohol abuse in some families.

Limited resources and confusing pathways to find the ‘right’ support, have reduced hope in these regions that the **“tide will turn”**.

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Consequently, there is an urgent need for both immediate remedies and investment in longer term solutions. Without such investment there is a risk to the wellbeing and economic sustainability of the Queenstown Lakes and Fiordland communities. Perceptions of the challenges being faced in the region fall loosely into nine themes. References to lack of positive social connection feature across all regions and cohorts and receive much more mention than the other themes. Generalised feelings of stress, anxiety and pressure are the next most frequently mentioned, followed by references to the financial/

business challenges that have generated much of the pressure. These, in turn, are reflected in frequent references to a range of wellbeing and health impacts, including the inability **“to support themselves and others psychologically”**.

Key challenges identified through community listening process

1. **Lack of Social Connection** (e.g. isolation, loss of connection, separation from family, lack of professional connectivity).
2. **Anxiety/Stress/Uncertainty** (e.g. anxiety, fear, exhaustion, stress, fatigue, uncertainty about the future).
3. **Financial Challenges** (e.g. debt, supply chain issues affecting profit, down-sizing, lay-offs, cost-cutting).
4. **Reduced Wellbeing/Health** (e.g. burnout, drug/alcohol abuse, depression, suicidal ideation, over-eating, deteriorating physical health).
5. **Lack of Counselling/Health Facilities** (e.g. deficiencies in: counselling, 1:1 business coaching, subsidised healthcare, birthing/antenatal support).
6. **Whānau Stress** (e.g. parental stress/drinking, youth worrying about parents, pressure on children impacting parents).
7. **Visa/Employer Challenges** (e.g. fear about work/visa status, abuse/no support for employers, low trust in officials, nowhere to get help).
8. **Lack of Information** (e.g. poor and unhelpful communication, no trusted central source of information).
9. **Vaccination Disputes** (e.g. pressure and prejudice over vaccination status, divisiveness of vaccinations).

Migrants pointed to significant shortcomings in employment practices, cumbersome immigration processes, poor access to health and child care, and relative social isolation. Some of these issues appear to be of long duration, but have been highlighted over the COVID period. Some people observed that the benefits of migrant labour have been extracted without the associated costs of establishing a supportive and welcoming social infrastructure. While many of these infrastructure issues fall outside the scope of this project, they provide an important context.

The historical flow of high volume tourism may have masked significant underlying weaknesses in the social infrastructure of the region. For example, every demographic group referenced a need for activities, services and spaces that could facilitate greater social connection and support - echoing the findings of the 2018 QLDC report “**Our Community Spaces**”.

While there were wonderful examples of positive initiatives in this area, there was less of a sense of a developed infrastructure of roles, facilities and institutions that could foster, support and connect such initiatives. Similarly the interviews pointed to a universal (and frequently unmet) need for more available and affordable wellbeing, mental health, midwifery, birthing, antenatal and general health services.



Ideas for Addressing Challenges

The ideas for addressing the wellbeing challenges in the region fit loosely into eight themes. Of the eight themes, ideas around the fostering of social connection receive the most mentions by far. Social connection is the key theme across all areas and cohorts. Mental health/wellbeing counselling and coaching is the next most mentioned, followed by ideas around providing practical support in the form of subsidies, training, etc. Childcare support could have been integrated under practical support but receives sufficient mention to justify a category of its own. It is mentioned not only by young parents, but also by migrants and business owners/leaders. Ideas around migrant support come from the migrant community and references to physical health care come from both migrant and elderly cohorts.

Ideas from community for addressing challenges

1. **Fostering Social Connection** (e.g. spaces/ places for connection, community events, networks, youth activities, parent groups, communal showcases of local businesses).
2. **Mental Health/Wellbeing Support** (e.g. 1:1 counselling support, people to listen, career coaching, youth counsellors).
3. **Practical Support** (e.g. transport, subsidies for sports, digital support, family funding, tax relief, business coaching).
4. **Childcare Support** (e.g. subsidised childcare, help with child care, home help, “Grandma” service).
5. **More Communication** (e.g. clear, central, trusted communication, consistent messaging from trusted sources).
6. **Birthing/Antenatal Support** (e.g. birthing support, antenatal support, midwife support, hospital facilities).
7. **Migrant Support** (e.g. migrant helpline, employment rights/immigration advice advocacy).
8. **Physical Health** (e.g. health advice/helpline).

While COVID has highlighted shortcomings in the social infrastructure, it has also stimulated a wide range of positive and, in many cases, inspiring responses. People in all cohorts referenced the benefits of more family time and more space for social connection and conversation. They talked about the support they received from whānau, friends, neighbours, schools, counsellors, youth workers, community events and community organisations. Financial stress has been a central issue for many, with the business and migrant communities noting that the COVID relief packages and financial support have been “life-savers.”

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The impact of COVID has also prompted a number of people to “take stock” of their lives and “reset and re-evaluate their future goals and plans”. While many businesses have struggled, some have been able to evolve new and more sustainable business models. There is also an emerging awareness of the need for change in the broader economy of the region. As one business owner observed, “even if we could, we can’t go back to pre-COVID tourist levels that were unsustainable...people should [use] this COVID opportunity to pivot”.

Recommendation framework

Within the challenges that have surfaced during the COVID period, there are emergent threads that provide possibilities both for mitigating short-term psychosocial impacts, and supporting the longer term development of the region. Central to these possibilities are initiatives that continue to foster social connection, support, and broader equity and inclusion.

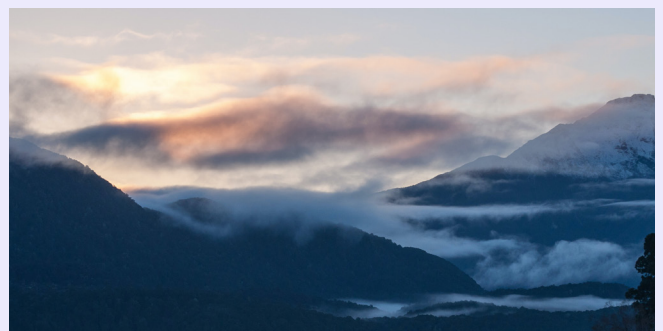
Enhancing wellbeing and mental health is also critical. Support in this area includes the promotion of exercise and social recreation, access to “authentic” peer-to-peer sharing and conversation, and “easier access to counsellors”. Direct one-to-one support for

business owners covering both self-management and business management was also referenced frequently.

The enquiry process suggests that the best way to mitigate the psychosocial impacts of COVID will be to bolster existing community initiatives and support the development of new approaches that communities see as beneficial. Ideally these diverse community initiatives will be supported by an overarching story that “shines a light on the connectedness and togetherness of the people” and celebrates the powerful possibilities that COVID has opened up for the Queenstown Lakes and Fiordland region.

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The following Recommendations Framework has been developed based on the findings of the Listening Team, community-based service providers, and the recommendations and thinking from the Expert Design Challenge. It outlines how Te Hau Toka could best support communities to look after their own, and each others’, mental wellbeing and is informed by ideas sourced directly from relevant communities and experts about how the group could facilitate the maximum impact possible to radically and efficiently implement change. The recommendations fall into two areas: Process and Intervention.

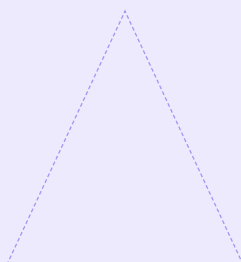


Process

Intervention

We recommend that Te Hau Toka:

We recommend that Te Hau Toka supports interventions which (do any or all of) :



PR1. Support communities to make their own decisions

IR1. Foster social connection, sharing, and the sharing stories

Equip whānau and individuals to look after their mental wellbeing

PR2. Work on trust over accountability and expect some failure

IR2. Prioritise equity-based interventions

PR3. Seek collaboration between and integration of existing initiatives wherever possible

IR3. Support positive pockets of the desired/preferred future

Foster community-led solutions

IR4. Enable peer-to-peer wellbeing support at the grassroots community level

PR4. Seek and celebrate meaningful wins and good stories

IR5. Support and develop existing networks of collaborative leaders

Build the social, cultural and economic foundations for mental wellbeing

IR6. Enable coherence among existing supports

PR5. Embody the better future that communities are already building

IR7. Broker awe, surprise and joy through fostering creative expression

PR = Process Recommendation, IR = Intervention Recommendation.

Queenstown

	CHALLENGES	IDEAS
Youth	Social exclusion & anxiety Lost purpose & feeling like 'world disrupted' Divisiveness over vaccinations Worrying about parents & their stress Cumulative effects of stress Lower participation in 'normal life' Increase in alcohol & drug abuse	Things to do that enable connection & participation Spaces & places to connect Rangitahi-focussed events & facilities Subsidies for sports participation 1-1 counsellor or support (tailored for cultural/ethnic diversity) Access to networks and support groups
Older People	Isolation and loss of connection Support for seniors in community services Technology challenges Anxiety, grief, fear growing - worried and defensive Physical health deteriorating Financial uncertainty & hardship	Matching of grandparents with young people Build a marae Spaces and places for connection More medical facilities Senior programme of events Accessing free or low cost health care services 1-1 in home support
Parents of young children	Work & financial stress Discrimination in workplace Lack of mental health support Stress & anxiety No appropriate birthing support No / low antenatal care Low access to parental support services & networks	Parent Groups Employer support Midwife support & services Hospital facilities Funding for struggling families Childcare services
Migrants	Abuse/no support from employers Anxiety about visa status Separation from family and support network Social isolation & feeling unsupported by NZers Lack of resources & social stigmatisation Lack of healthcare Alcohol & drug abuse	Employment rights advocacy or support Free / cheap immigration advisory Support in different languages Migrant advice line Kiwi Kit Local networks (for different ethnicities) Centralised information Paid / subsidised childcare
Business owners, operators, senior leaders	Business downturn, increased debt Lack of support Govt & landowners Supply chain & logistics issues Constant, extreme, relentless 'pressure' on owners Inability to support themselves + others (staff) psychologically Lack of social & professional connectivity Communication about region poor & unhelpful Lack of coordinated communication in region	Tax / rent relief or cash rebates Leniency on payments eg IRD / banks Resilience training Strategic planning for 'next disruption' Social connection & support eg peer-to-peer Get-togethers with 'people like me' Positive media communication Less consultants and advice, more support to activate change Personal & staff freebies eg vouchers / massages / outdoor sports vouchers

Wānaka

	CHALLENGES	IDEAS
Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased & sustained anxiety Uncertainty about future Lack of personal support Exposure to family stress Disrupted school routines & learning Lack of motivation/routine Lack of information Change in behaviour and lifestyle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social connection & support to interact Spaces & places to go Exercise & outdoor activities Mental Health/wellbeing support Vocation & career planning Practical support e.g. transport
Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation & lack of social contact Lack of support networks No ability to use 'digital' services Mental health - depression, fear, stress Discrimination & sense of de-prioritisation in healthcare services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social interaction - groups and networks Digital support Community events, outings and activities Wellbeing support Health advice & helpline
Parents of young children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pressure & prejudice over Vax status Stress from business Pressure on children affecting adults' MH Changes in community / school / social support Lack of midwife support No general support tailored for new mothers Access to basic birthing healthcare Stress & anxiety during childbirth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support during birthing (safety - physical & psychological) Ante-natal support networks & resources Family support for other children Social connections with other parents Home-help Specialised support groups eg new parent Clear, central, trusted communication
Migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear & uncertainty about work/visa status Low trust in officials and support system Anxiety and stress & nowhere to get help Worried about family back home No subsidised childcare/healthcare Financial struggles and lack of subsidies Drug & alcohol abuse Lack of community networks & connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subsidised childcare Healthcare support and subsidies Migrant help-line Funded support network for migrants 'alone'
Business owners, operators, senior leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress from business downturn Emergence of 'two cultures' - winners & losers Uncertainty about future, difficulty planning Lack of guidance and information Supply chain issues affecting profit Staffing complexities and stress Fatigue, anxiety and burn-out Lack of 1-1 / business support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent & tax relief / rebates Consistent messaging or trusted source 1-1 mental health support Specific networks & support for men Access to outdoor activities & exercise Practical grants & funding for business support (eg Whanau Fund)

Cromwell

	CHALLENGES	IDEAS
Youth	Social anxiety, bullying, suicide ideation Isolation & social exclusion Lack of basic services eg housing Parental stress/drinking Cost of living & expensive activities Disengagement from society & activities Over-eating, drinking, poor sleeping Blame culture emerging	Youth activities that incent participation Youth targeted workshops for wellbeing Coaching & counsellors Education via apps on 'how to help self' Life / work planning support
Older People	Lack of social interaction & activities No technology support through COVID Fear & anxiety, tired and angry No central 'hub' or place to go	Community events to connect Programme of activities to participate Community fun days around food
Parents of young children	Financial challenges Lack of tailored wellbeing support Isolation during childbirth No access to birthing facilities Low family / social interaction	Family services Childcare support group 'Grandma' service Connections to people and resources Community events to gather people
Migrants	N/A	N/A
Business owners, operators, senior leaders	Pressure on business / trying to survive Low support from banks Business owners working 'in' the business Supply chain issues Staffing - sourcing & accommodating, and acting as support person Anxiety, mentally drained, burned out, stressed, fatigued.	Financial support to businesses Business & Leadership coaching 1-1 support to business owners Online training Help with childcare Social connection within business community Support services eg counsellors Physical / outdoor activities more accessible Spaces to 'play' not just gyms

Te Anau

	CHALLENGES	IDEAS
Youth	Social anxiety, bullying, suicide ideation Isolation & social exclusion Lack of basic services eg housing Parental stress/drinking Cost of living & expensive activities Disengagement from society & activities Over-eating, drinking, poor sleeping Blame culture emerging	Youth activities that incent participation Youth targeted workshops for wellbeing Coaching & counsellors Education via apps on 'how to help self' Life / work planning support
Older People	Social isolation Distrust in communication from / with Govt Officials Technology struggles Anxiety & fear (extreme talk / fear mongering)	More communication by mail Informal community events Public transport & outings Elderly support networks Communal area to meet Financial support & hardship grants
Parents of young children	Anxiety & Stress Lack of Birthing Services Financial & Family Pressure Lack of Parental Support / Networks	"Step-grandparents" to help support me Drop-in centres More midwifery services Post-natal networks
Migrants	Employment uncertainty due to visas Financial insecurity Lack of access to healthcare Lack of childcare/family support Exhaustion & anxiety, no one to trust Fearful/distrusting of Government	Subsidised childcare Migrant support line Entity to support migrants
Business owners, operators, senior leaders	Businesses folding or significant down-sizing Cost-cutting and staff layoff stresses Social isolation Lack of networks for support, overwhelmed Division in the community over vaccines No trusted central source of information No access to counsellors Increased cost of living	Specialised, practical, subsidised (easier to access) support to businesses 1-1 personal help Support for child-care Social connection, Community events Communal showcase of local businesses Subsidised wellness / wellbeing support Money into community services People to 'listen' to needs Community sports facilities / gardens Hobbies & art/craft classes

