



A collaborative approach to Good Information Sharing through Communities of Practice

In July 2019, changes to the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 directly impacted the way that members of Social Service Providers Aotearoa (SSPA) deliver their services

In response to changes to the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, and in an effort to enable NGO social services to be able to implement them in practice, SSPA collaborated with the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services to create and deliver a programme about Good Information Sharing for child wellbeing.

The 'train the trainers' approach was used and by August 2020, 16 trainers had been selected and were ready to begin their preparation. Unfortunately, like so many events, this was stymied by the August regional lockdown in Auckland. There was a sense of urgency to continue and the trainers for the Good Information Sharing workshops were successfully prepared through online forums.

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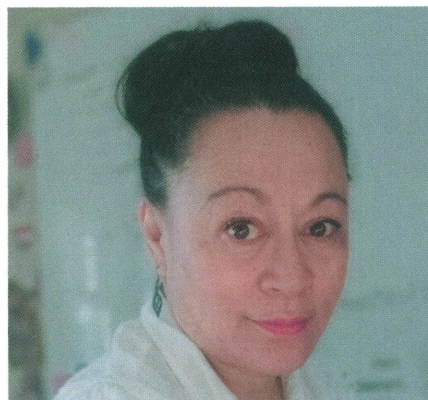
- Ruth Browning

The 22 half day workshops, held throughout 21 regions, started on 9 September 2020 and the response from attendees has been overwhelmingly positive. Nelson trainer, Ruth Browning from Safeguarding Children, believes although the region already had some knowledge, attendees wanted to secure greater understanding about the changes to be able to implement them effectively in their practice.

Elizabeth Walker, from Anglican Trust for Women and Children, the trainer for Auckland Central observed that a contributing factor to the success of the workshops was the wide range of service providers the participants were from. "It wasn't just learning from the trainers, it was learning from each other as well," she says. This has added a richness to the learning experience for participants in the Good Information Sharing programme.

Both Elizabeth and Ruth note that during the programme, participants expressed a lot of hesitation and concerns about breaching the Privacy Act, with some participants desiring ongoing support. "The workshops were just a step in the journey," says Ruth.

In January 2021, more funding was approved through Oranga Tamariki for an additional 13 Good Information Sharing workshops to be held around the motu. These have demonstrated the desire of attendees to learn and gain confidence, with the Blenheim workshop alone attracting 23 attendees. These attendees



Elizabeth Walker has established two Communities of Practice in Auckland Central

developed a shared commitment to continuing their Good Information Sharing journey and have decided to establish their own group using the Communities of Practice model.

Communities of Practice are intended to keep the conversation going by encouraging groups to meet and discuss issues arising in practice relating to making requests for information and driving the change. They are a space to create new knowledge, build practice-based relationships and share knowledge through a collaborative process.

A Communities of Practice approach is not limited to Good Information Sharing. The concept is now also being taken up by groups coming from the Tiaki Tamariki: Whakamana Whānau Programme, also delivered by SSPA and NZCCSS. The



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focus of this programme is on helping kaimahi within NGO social services to understand ways to apply in practice the changes to the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 brought in under Section 7AA. SSPA is looking to continue to encourage the development of communities of practice as a practical way to keep learning going and relationships thriving, following on from future learning and development offerings.

The Nelson Communities of Practice group established by Ruth and participants from their local Good Information Sharing workshop programme will meet monthly, on an ongoing basis. In their first gathering, participants discussed examples of information sharing that they had implemented since participating in the training. Ruth says discussing it in this forum allowed them to gain confidence in what they were requesting from others under the legislation, and what they felt they could share in line with the new



law. This group has also shown through their Communities of Practice meetings a desire for more workshops.

Elizabeth established two groups from her own network. She believes it is important for participants to see how Communities of Practice sit alongside Good Information Sharing. “Communities of Practice create a safe environment, they can discuss situations and scenarios, they are really robust,” she says.

Elizabeth hopes the Communities of Practice will encourage statutory organisations to share information with non-government ones. “If you can get statutory organisations to regularly attend and participate in these hui, it is going to help build more meaningful relationships,” she says.

Both Elizabeth and Ruth agreed the change coming from the learning developed through the Good Information Sharing workshop programme will take time and must be consistently developed. The hope is that more workshop participants continue to maintain their relationships with each other, to tautoko the mahi in this new space as it goes forward.

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