

Summary from NZDSN Regional Zoom meetings 15 April 2020

Issues/Concerns:

- Request to have a more systemic sustainable approach /sector wide response to the questions, it is great to share personal examples, however, as a sector we need to get into the pro-active phase -instead of being reactive.
 - Clear guidance around COVID 19 and different levels, staffing consequences
 - Clarity around Funding/package, situations different levels for providers
 - Infection Control review for residential providers
- Need to share expertise around responding to COVID 19 cases within residential settings
- More providers feel the need to extend the length of the lockdown level 4 to protect their vulnerable people. They would like to see serious lobbying and advocating for the disability sector for extra funding that is needed for extra 'staffing' costs of backfilling for staff over 70 and immune compromised staff.
- Growing anxiety as an employer and the need for more clarity and guidance from Government for managers of residential organisations. Concerns around liability and employee 'Health & Safety' obligations especially with level 3 - when some staff state they are still unable to work due to their personal health or that of a family member.
- Staffing Sustainability – A challenge is to manage staff, back filling and staff fatigue. Fatigue will become a huge issue as a lot of staff are doing overtime. Mindful of the pressure on staff of going down levels 3 and 2, and the impact of staff over 70s coming back on board is well off.
- Questions around how we maintain this over several months needs to be elevated. An example was give that a provider are down 30 staff, we can sustain for a few weeks, but we have got staff working very long hours, as a sector, we need to come up with a plan on how we can tap into people who could turn their skills to supporting disabled people.
- Ministry not releasing information on Respite funding. People have funding but can't use it. Need for clarity around this.
- Transition to Level 3 and what this means for an MSD funded services which is considered an essential service. There is no face to face support, but keeping in touch through phone and text. Have invested in social media, and live streaming. This also came out of the NZDSN forum as far as an expectation the community providers do engage with people. Can we be proactive around what we keep and what we change in the future – opportunities to support people more creatively in a more technology savvy world. MSD has put aside funds for community providers – this hasn't been used.
- Leave subsidy - as they paying for extra sleepovers costs, staff are losing money as they are not getting the sleep over rate they would normally get if they were working.
- Provider accessing the essential worker subsidy for five staff on special leave submitted an application yesterday which was paid out today. Encouraged providers to apply.
- PPE's Still very inconsistent. PPE –have been provided. The number were less than what providers were told they would receive. Came with caveat to be used under DHB guidance. Staff are continuing to be anxious around this. This is not enough to relieve the anxiety of front line staff. Very different experiences for different providers/regions. Many providers have started to buy their own due to lack of PPE supply.
- Concerns about how families with IF will get their PPE's

- Different approaches between the different IF Hosts - some are taking care of all the distribution themselves, some partly.
- Many people with High & Complex Needs struggle without daily visits from relatives, guidance has been sought with MOH on what residential providers are allowed to do at different levels.
- Value and contribution of families. Some people had gone home to families. One provider had spoken to families and forewarned that it could be longer than four weeks that they would have their family member home with them. Another provider indicated families were in contact and some wanted their family member to return earlier. Possibility of seeking an exemption if needed to get people out of the family home if situation was volatile.
- The flexibility of NASC recently to allow people greater independence to manage their supports and how quickly they were able to initiate this. Will this continue after the Lockdown period ends, as this is something many people have wanted for a long time.
- Community & Participation providers would like some more guidance about their role and expectations from Ministry.
- It was noted that some supermarkets were making distinctions between “essential” workers and “emergency” workers, with priority given to emergency workers.

Funding/ Wages:

- Need for residential providers to get clarity around financial assistance package. Costs are starting to escalate.
- Provider currently paying premiums so that staff only will work for them.
- Financial situations for some providers start to become really tense. Unexpected extra costs now really start to become a struggle as some of the saving have gone. Extra costs due to 75% more sleepover costs.

Individualised Funding:

- The Manawanui team has been contacting vulnerable people to check their supports in place. PPE has been sourced for people and distribution is being finalised. There are two live streaming sessions a week to connect with people particularly those in isolation. Many questions received around leave entitlements. The MOH relaxed purchasing guidelines has been helpful. Requests for Enhanced Individualised Funding have increased.
- In relation to the Family Funding package, the Family funding is going under IF from 14 April - a number of people are being supported to transition. This Covid-19 situation lends nicely as people are able to engage family and community for assistance.
- IF guidelines now are extended to an EGL like approach- ie., IF enhanced funding, Flexible budget. People still need to work within their allocated budget but have flexibility around what they use it for. MOH currently has a “no blame” approach until Jun 30. But the message to families has to be clear that this is not going to last.

Staffing - Residential:

- Staff welfare is becoming a concern, especially given that, staff are effected by their partners who have reduced or no work
- Some providers see a sense of calmness after the hectic pace in the first 2 weeks.
- Some tension to keep covering required shifts, the longer the COVID 19 situation will last the more concern if they can keep providing the staff needed.
- Worries about staff over 70 and Immune-compromised staff - it might take a long time before they can go back to work
- Staff trying to protect bubbles, get abused by families dropping off supplies

- Most work with 3 days on 3 off etc rosters, some staff even voluntarily working full month to stay with client
- Providers are including staff in decision making which has been very positively received and helps to get staff on board with new processes that are needed.

Supported employment:

- Some of their clients lost job due to non-essential service
- Finding it hard to get employment opportunities for the people they support
- Can't visit their clients, harder to engage- best contact goes via text messaging
- Concern at the moment is around the anticipated rise in unemployment levels and the impact on both our existing and new clients within our service. Particularly how competitive it will become to secure employment for people with disabilities against the experience, qualifications of people who have lost jobs as a result of COVID 19. Secondly what are the expectations of MSD in the shorter term (next 6-12 months) regarding service providers meeting agreed contract targets?

Day programmes:

- Still going strong with online programmes and delivering resources to families. As they already closed at level 2 not sure when they should open their day centres again.

Support/Resources:

Welfare:

Student Volunteer Army has a grocery delivery service shop.sva.org.nz

Wecare.Kiwi is a joint venture between IHC and Carers NZ

Challenging behavior: Explore Online support (have set up an 0800 number – 0800 000 421)

Employer: www.employment.govt.nz

Specific Cultural support for Maori community:

<https://www.protectourwhakapapa.co.nz/covid-19>

If an essential worker has not been able to access care for their child/children, they can contact the Ministry via ECE.Info@education.govt.nz

IF Covid-19 Guidance:

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/guidance-for-people-on-individualised-funding-3april-2020.pdf>
- There are some wider IF spending guidelines in place until 30 June 2020 on website MOH, however people are still expected to keep within their budget. People need to contact their IF Host for more information.

PPE:

Supplyme.co.nz <https://www.supplyme.co.nz/>

Supply for Reusable face screens: TM Covers: sales@tmcovers.co.nz

Covid-19 Additional Easy Read Links & Resources

- Useful info on the MOH site AND scroll right down to the bottom and there is a link to the WHO re rationale for the use of protective equipment for COVID-19

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-face-mask-and-hygiene-advice>

More Plain Language flyers

- <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0606/1553/files/Coronavirus-Poster-1-Photosymbols-NZ.pdf?v=1584183342>
- <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0606/1553/files/Coronavirus-Poster-2-Photosymbols-NZ.pdf?v=1584183393>
- <https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0606/1553/files/Coronavirus-Poster-3-Photosymbols-NZ.pdf?v=1584183530>

Coping with COVID-19

- https://nziwr.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NZIWR_Real-time_Resilience_Coping_with_Coronavirus.pdf
- <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/supporting-individuals-autism-through-uncertain-times>

There continues to be positive feedback on these meetings although some regions are considering reducing to meeting fortnightly.