

Disability Support Services e-newsletter

Special Edition

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Welcome to this special edition of the DSS e-newsletter.

Here we highlight how people and organisations demonstrate innovative practice in disability support services.

The Chris Ruth Centre – empowering people

At the Chris Ruth Centre we're committed to encouraging our clients to make the most of all their opportunities. As part of this, we've introduced Talking Mats to our staff as a way of empowering our clients.

Talking Mats are designed by speech language therapists to improve the lives of people with communication difficulties. They increase a person's capacity to communicate effectively and make choices in their lives. Staff are trained to use Talking Mats in such a way that, while the clients are making their choices, they are not influenced by the staff's facial expressions or body language – it is totally the client's choice.

Using Talking Mats

For the best outcome when using Talking Mats, it's best to use a quiet area. Talking Mats are available in digital or hard copy, making them more accessible to users in their daily lives.

Staff place a mat in front of the person with three columns.



Yes/Like



Maybe/Not Sure



No/Dislike

We give the client a picture of an activity or place to visit, eg, cooking, movies, meeting friends. The client then puts the picture in one of the columns. This helps to set future goals and aspirations.

Contents

Page 1	The Chris Ruth Centre
Page 2	ConneXu
Page 3	MASH Trust CCS Disability Action
Page 4	NorthAble LYNKX
Page 5	Creative Abilities Brackenridge
Page 6	Ranfurly Care Society
Page 7	Enrich+
Page 8	St John of God Halswell Nga Kete Matauranga Pounamu
Page 9	Ngā Rōpu o Manaaki Tangata Kotahitanga (MTK)
Page 10	Spectrum Care



We then fill out a Client Review listing the goals that the client has chosen. This will be discussed at a holistic goal planning meeting.

It has been great to see our clients making choices that they wouldn't have had access to previously, eg, Lisa has extended herself by choosing a variety of activities, including aspiring to try something new, such as carpentry and four-wheel driving.



Gabbie – living her life, her way

Gabbie has autism and life hasn't always been easy. Although she has a great relationship with her family, living at home wasn't giving her the opportunities she dreamed of.

Gabbie dreamt of independence, friendships and making a difference in the world, but she didn't know how to achieve these things.

By developing a PATH™ plan, ConneXu supported Gabbie to identify her own dreams for life and a strategy to achieve them.



This empowering process, facilitated by Interactionz, helped guide Gabbie by asking her questions to catalyse her thinking as she created her own plan. A visual recorder then captured her dreams and the steps to get her there in hand-drawn pictures. The outcome from this process is a masterpiece outlining her unique vision and plan for her future.

With the extra confidence of knowing that her ConneXu supporter is always there for guidance when she needs it, Gabbie has been able to achieve many of her goals already.

Gabbie now lives with two flatmates, who she also counts as best friends, has a job, is about to start her second qualification at WINTEC, and is achieving things she wants to do in her life.

With ConneXu, Gabbie is achieving her dreams, and living her life, her way.

'If I wasn't with ConneXu I would be spending my whole life wondering what I missed out on. Doing my PATH™ was a different experience for me because everybody was focused on what I wanted to do and what I wanted to achieve. It felt great. When I tick off what I have achieved it makes me feel like I have a purpose in life.'

– Gabbie



See <http://connexu.nz/gabbies-story/> for the full version of Gabbie's story.

MASH Trust – Blair’s basketball dream

‘I decided I wanted to play basketball and asked my support team to help me. Together we found a team called Havoc that I could join. I soon learnt that to be a good player at all positions on the court and being a good team player were two different things.

‘I learnt that we were a team first and to respect it. Trust and friends were just as important and believing in each other on and off the court was one of the best things I took out of the year.

‘It was a good year for learning as a person and a team player. We made it to a tournament in Palmerston North. We played well, winning a bronze medal.

‘The people who support me in my home won the MASH excellence award for the value of “Believe”. They helped me to grow, gave me opportunities to make good choices, not only as a player but also as a person, with words like believe, respect, trust and friendship.

‘To make the rep team was a goal I was keen on. I was selected, and we played hard as a team and won a silver medal. I was named Player of the Tournament. Next tournament we won a Gold medal. At end of year awards, I won the Fair Player Trophy – it made me feel good.

‘We played at the National Summer Olympic Games and we won a Gold medal – wow, how exciting.’
Through choice and supported decision making, positive changes have happened in Blair’s life.



Due to Blair’s dedication and attitude he was selected by his team to be Captain.

CCS Disability Action

Supporting choice – a blueprint for a better life

CCS Disability Action is governed by disabled people and their families, so we know how important it is to be flexible and listen to the people we support so they can make independent choices.

We don’t try and squeeze everyone into the same service box. We are responsive and adaptable and we take direction.

One example of how we innovate is by supporting young people nationwide into employment. Our focus is on achieving both paid employment and vocational aspirations that work for people long-term. Our staff are tenacious with prospective employers and work exceptionally well in cooperation with organisations and educators to achieve meaningful results for disabled people.





When we met Alexander, he was determined to complete a degree in architecture. His passion and his skills were obvious, but being on the autism spectrum made it harder for him to complete assignments on time. So his WelTec tutor supported his abilities by allowing him to sit his exams orally. Alexander passed with flying colours.

Alexander recognised he needed to improve his communication skills if he were to achieve his employment dream, so chose to do an internship at CCS Disability Action’s Library. This, combined with 18 months spent at Te Rito Gardens, a social enterprise cooperative that grows and sells organic plants and focuses on giving jobseekers a purpose and improved skills, led to a huge increase in Alexander’s confidence and ability to communicate.



Tony from Covar Architects (left) and Alexander (right)

At the same time, CCS Disability Action Community Support Coordinator, Mandy, was looking for opportunities to enable Alexander to use his hard won qualification and get a job, which finally led to him working at Wellington’s Covar Architects on contract. Alexander’s role at Covar Architects includes work in architecture and engineering.

NorthAble LYNKX – driving safer solutions

At NorthAble LYNKZ, we held a brainstorming session with our clients, to find out what life skills they wanted to learn. They responded with a list of ideas that we have been working our way through each week.

Knowing that each life skill has been requested by our clients makes delivering them every week fulfilling, and we are privileged to be part of people’s personal development, as decided on by them!

One life skill was around implementing road safety. Our members reported they’d had many close calls with vehicles while walking around Whangarei Central, so a group of LYNKZ participants and some likeminded support workers wrote a letter to the Whangarei District Council informing them of the particular danger areas, and requesting that something be done to reduce the level of risk while walking around town. Following this submission, we continued to record near misses and dangerous encounters while crossing the road on a register.



Last week a representative of the Council, Paras, paid a visit to LYNKZ and accompanied several of our clients on a walk around the area to the places of concern. Paras took on board the feedback our group offered and, in return, gave us some great suggestions to try when navigating crossings. As a result of our clients’ initiative, the Council has put in a request to level off the curbs in front of our buildings and create a designated crossing there so that we can safely cross further away from where cars are turning, on a smooth surface. This outcome has affirmed to the LYNKZ whānau that the knowledge we acquire, when acted upon, has the power to create change in our world!

Creative Abilities – Kimberley’s budget triumph

‘Kia Ora, I’m Kimberley and since my move from Whangarei, I have been living with three other flatmates in one of the of the community houses supported by Creative Abilities on the North Shore.

‘I dearly love my flatmates and staff. I am now a part of the Glenfield local community where I live.

‘During my move to Auckland, due to various factors, I incurred a negative balance in my credit card. The amount quickly increased causing me a great amount of grief and sleepless nights.

‘When I shared this with my support team, they told me about the local budgeting service and gave me some written information to help me decide whether to use this service. They also helped me make an initial appointment. We chose the community library close to my flat for our meeting to avoid any mobility taxi costs. I was initially sceptical, as there was a huge amount needing to be paid off. However, after a few months of hard work with the financial mentors from the budgeting service, I was able to pay off the debt. Everyone remembers the day when I proudly showed off my credit card statement, showing a zero balance.



‘No one judged or made presumptions about my financial situation. I was supported in a way that I was leading the whole process by choosing the right level of support and everyone worked with me only when needed and stepped back and let me take full control. The support I had received from Creative Abilities was mana enhancing.

‘I am now preaching to my friends and families about good budgeting. I wish I had framed the zero balance statement to show them that I’m fully trained to give financial advice. :-)

‘Ngā mihi’

Brackenridge: Todd’s confident communications

Meet Todd. A vibrant 22-year-old who grew up by the beach in New Brighton, Christchurch and loves to explore – the kind of guy who’s almost always smiling. As a young man with autism, Todd has struggled to communicate with people in ways that they are normally accustomed to.

Autism affects the way a person’s brain and body work, and someone with autism might have trouble speaking, make strange sounds or not talk at all. With the help of his support team, Todd has developed a communication method that enables him to make choices about what he wants to do and when. Todd uses a collection of small objects to represent important activities in his life. When Todd wants to go for a walk he signals this by picking up a shoe and handing it to his support staff.





When he wants to get out for a bike ride, he grabs the bike pedal.

Todd's support staff understand the importance of having a consistent communication plan and know that new things need to be introduced slowly. The team working alongside Todd have learnt and adapted innovative ways to connect with people with autism and intellectual disabilities and better support their decisions and needs. Mentoring young people to be able to make informed choices and create lives of their choosing, while breaking through social barriers, takes courage and determination.

Todd's family and support staff have seen a huge shift in his wellbeing and happiness. Todd has more control over what he does in his life and this has reduced his anxiety and frustration. There still are challenges and hurdles with social interactions, but Todd's friends in the community acknowledge his journey and are delighted to be a part of it. By using a self-directed communication method, Todd has made some great connections and has developed more confidence being in different environments. Helping Todd make decisions about what he'd like to do has meant Todd is in the driver's seat for his life and can exercise his individuality and aspirations.



Todd at Jolt Dance Group – August 2018

Ranfurly Care Society – Christie's journey

Christie

'My name is Christie, I live at Ranfurly in Epsom and I have been learning some new things this year. I have moved into my own flat and have been learning to cook and clean and look after my own unit. I like going to the movies and I watch a lot of movies. I have learnt the way to walk to the Lido cinema with a friend. Staff make sure I am safe, they are kind and they make me laugh. I like the way staff are there to do my hair the way I want and can't do myself. I like that someone is there when I am cooking so I do not burn myself and can lift heavy things. I am very happy.'



Ranfurly Coordinator, Jo

'We aim to create a home environment where people simply live their lives the way they wish. They employ us to help them with any personal care, life skills, accessing the community and helping with ideas and goals that they want to realise in life. We like to use technology, previous experiences, family life, examples of what others do, and try new things a lot. Trying things gives people their own feelings and first-hand experience to make informed choices. Through technology such as computers, tablets and phones we can keep informed daily. Residents choose a staff member to be their coach and work with them on a one-to-one basis ensuring their needs and aspirations are met. Everyone has budget training and a money tin. Some are saving for items such as a phone or new coat. Staff track this on an excel sheet, which enables the residents to see how their savings are adding up to that much wanted goal. We are supporting residents to achieve a lot of life skills, independence, accountability, initiative, and personal growth by taking more responsibility in their daily lives.'

Enrich+ – supporting Sam to a bright future

The changes in a young man who began working with Enrich+ 18 months ago have been phenomenal.

Sam joined Enrich+'s Autism Mentoring Service in April 2017, having come from the justice system, with no previous contact with the disability sector. He took part in weekly sessions about things like decision making and future planning, as well as a gaining a greater understanding of autism. He also joined our Youth+ programme for 16-25-year-olds with autism, making friends and learning about communication, career options and appropriate relationships.

He then entered Enrich+'s Supported Living Service. At first, he boarded, but he was limited in his independence and the choices he made for himself. He did not manage his own money or do anything structured during the day.

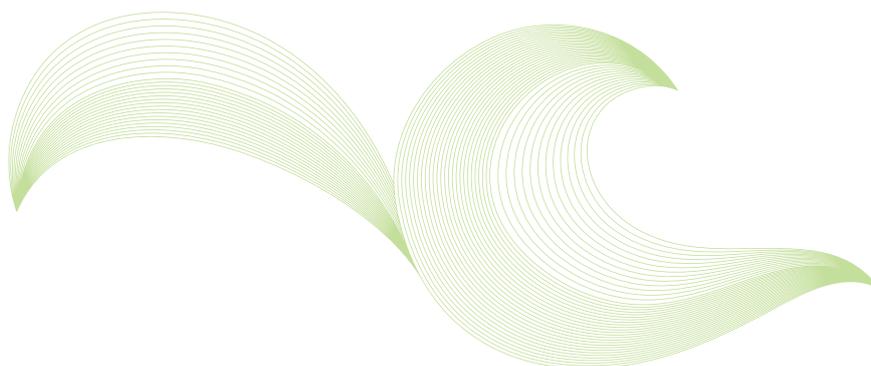
With a few ups and downs, the Supported Living team worked hard with Sam, using a dignity-of-risk approach to increase Sam's independence. They encouraged Sam to make his own choices and decide what he wanted in life. One year later, Sam is managing his own money, flatting, studying, working and making friends. The difference in Sam and his skills is outstanding.

Sam enrolled in the Enrich+ Worx programme, which aims to introduce people to work by developing employment skills over 10 weeks. It is mainstream employment, working for standard wages and conditions.

Sam completed the programme successfully and started getting paid for his work at the Manuka Health Factory and Mystery Creek Events Centre.

Initially, Sam was very shy and limited in his interaction. When spoken to, he rocked and fiddled with his fingers. Six months on, Sam is much more confident. He has made friends and talks with his supervisors if he is unsure about anything. Sam enjoys working and earning money.

Sam makes his own choices about his life now and checks these out with his support people when needed. He plans more study in IT or psychology. He loves flatting and is grateful for his friends and his new independence.



St John of God Halswell – slip, sliding away

St John of God, Halswell is a 60-room specialist service providing residency and support to people aged between 16 and 65, living with physical or neurological impairments.

Virginia, Regional Manager (Southern), Health & Ability Services describes a recent example of ‘making a difference’ in the lives of residents.

‘At St John of God we have a model of care called “My life”. It’s about encouraging residents in as many opportunities as possible. Yes, we can do outings and craft, however, what we want to do is what’s not always easy and what’s unexpected.

‘It started earlier this year when we knew we were going to have a really hot day. You and I would go home or go for a swim or wear something really light to work, but if you’re sitting in a wheelchair all day, it’s very uncomfortable, so we were thinking what can we do that would help people cool down and be quite fun.

‘The team came up with a waterslide on the back lawn. It was essentially polythene, sprinklers and about 10 litres of olive oil.’

Resident, Louise, who is recovering from neurological surgery with a physical disability says, ‘They pushed me and I went flying down the slide. It was the most fun I’d had in years. I loved it!’ She recounts how she could actually swim before she could walk. ‘I love the water, I’m a water baby,’ laughs Louise.

Other initiatives currently underway by St John of God Hauora Trust include tandem quad e-bikes for residents, mini-paintball games, and developing New Zealand’s first, fully accessible tiny home.

Thanks to the generous help of HEB construction, plans for a MKII waterslide are well underway. You can view this at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vb8cH84hSrU>



Nga Kete Matauranga Pounamu - a voice for disability in Southland

Nga Kete Matauranga Pounamu is a not-for-profit charitable trust based in Invercargill that delivers a range of health and social services, including disability support and advocacy and a brand new initiative named SOAR (Securing Our Aspirational Realities).

SOAR is designed to grow our agency knowledge around working alongside whānau with disabilities to appreciate more fully the service options and needs they have. Jack, who has muscular dystrophy and has used a wheelchair since the age of two, has come on board to lead this work.

Jack is working on three key areas: a SOAR Facebook page, a weekly radio show and facilitating a hui for 16–25 year olds living with a disability and/or their whānau to discuss their service requirements.





Jack has organised two meetings, including a workshop on barriers to employment, challenges and successes, what acceptance and belonging means, and how employers can better support employees with a disability. The information gathered at the hui is being published as a handout for employers.

Working alongside Jack is our extraordinary Disability Kaiāwhina, Sandra, who supports people with disabilities and offers information, advocacy and advice and creates tailored plans to meet the client’s desired outcomes.



Sandra says her role is rewarding and she enjoys supporting people and being able to help. ‘I enjoy putting a smile on someone’s face.’

To get in touch with us, phone (03) 214 5260 or free phone 0800 925 242, visit our website www.kaitahu.maori.nz or call in and see us at 92 Spey Street, Invercargill.

Ngā Rōpu o Manaaki Tangata Kotahitanga (MTK) – people helping people, however possible

At the September 2017 Kāpō Māori Aotearoa NZ (KMANZ) biennial conference, a group of tangata whaikaha young adults (aged 21–30 years) came together to discuss how they could support each other, learn more about KMANZ governance and operations, and positively contribute in their communities.

In May 2018 these aspiring tangata whaikaha Māori leaders formally named their group ‘Ngā Rōpu o Manaaki Tangata Kotahitanga (MTK): People helping people, however possible.’

Their vision is to bring the tangata whaikaha Māori community together as one whānau and make Aotearoa more accessible for all those living with a disability, Ngā Tangata Whaikaha o Aotearoa.

‘Since joining MTK, I know I have found and made friends that will understand my struggles in life. Through MTK I have and will experience new things in my life.’ Tash, founding member.

Since the May hui, MTK members have attended and spoken at meetings with the Minister for Disability Issues, Minister of Employment and the Parliamentary Champions for Accessibility Legislation. They have also initiated the activity of ‘shadowing’ the KMANZ governance board, CEO and staff, learning and expanding their knowledge and skills in governance, management and KMANZ operations.



Back row (from left): Gaylene (President KMANZ), Jamus (Tamaki Tours), Tamati, Wiremu.

Front row (from left): Keretina, Natasha, Tamatea and Chrissie (CEO KMANZ).





'Forming MTK has been the biggest highlight of my life thus far. Straight away our group share a bond like no other, we click. I used to feel like a no-hoper. Now I have more belief in myself and what I can do because the support they've given makes me feel like I can do anything. Whānaungatanga is what we're all about!' Wiremu, founding member.

For more information about MTK and the work of KMANZ contact adele.vukula@kapomaori.com, or visit our Facebook page Kapomaoriaotearoanewzealand or website www.kapomaori.com or Phone 0800770990.

Growing the voice of people and their whānau

At Spectrum Care we realised that we needed a different approach to giving people more say in and control over their quality of life.

So we recently launched the 'My Life Survey' tool, which was developed by Dr Robert Schalock in partnership with individuals, families, service providers and sector experts.

The My Life Survey tool is designed so that people with learning disabilities can be the surveyors. We trialled this extensively and found that the information the peer-interviewers obtained was just as accurate as that of the staff-interviewers and people really enjoyed the process. The new survey takes less time and allows people to speak for themselves much more. We get better information and we have more time to spend supporting people to achieve their life goals with a significantly improved foundation for goal setting. Here's some feedback we've received about the 'My Life Survey'.

