

How can government improve results for our most vulnerable (at-risk) children and their families?

A Request for Information – Your thoughts on 4-5 pages

Response template

Deadline: 5pm, 4 December 2014

How can government improve outcomes for our most vulnerable (at-risk) children and their families?

Please write your response in the template below.

Please note:

- you **do not** need to answer all sections – just the ones where you have information you would like to contribute
- please expand or delete boxes as you need to. Please provide no more than 5 double sided pages of text and font size of at least 10 points
- please **do not** send us reports or other documents but **do** include references or links to supporting evidence or information
- please submit your response to socialinvestment@treasury.govt.nz by 5pm, 4 December 2014.

Thank you for your time and effort in providing this information.

Who do we want to focus on?

We want to focus on how to get better results for children and their families *at most risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes*. They will probably have multiple risk factors, including being:

- children vulnerable to abuse or neglect
- unsupported/vulnerable teen parents
- children and young people with conduct problems
- children needing a range of services to succeed in school
- people not in safe, secure housing
- children in families with gang connections
- children in families with prison connections
- violent families, including victims and perpetrators.

Part 1: Your contact details and response summary

Organisation Name:	Community-led Development Learning Collective - Inspiring Communities, Te Ora Hou, Great Start Taita, Good Cents Porirua
---------------------------	--

Contact Person Name:	Megan Courtney
Position:	Convenor
Phone number:	03 545 2056
Email address:	Megan.courtney@inspiringcommunities.org.nz

What geographical location does your response relate to?	National
What group of people or issues is your response targeted towards?	Addressing complex issues through a community-led, place-based lens.
Does your response relate to a new service or modification of existing services?	Both

Part 2: Your RFI response

A: What works best to identify and engage the children and their families most at-risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes?

For example...

- what are successful ways to find and engage the most hard to reach children and families?

The evidence from community-led practice in this country is collaborative working by business, government and local communities can create effective responses to social challenges such as child poverty, violent crime, unemployment and educational underachievement. Examples of locally-led achievements are noted in the table below.

The hard to engage aren't hard to find, we know where they live. Vulnerable children and families live in places. Taking a 'place-based' or neighbourhood approach and engaging local people in ways that collectively build relationships, trust, hope and possibility is critical. 'Place' can be seen as a neutral space around which hopes, dreams and future plans can be gathered. Engagement that builds from strengths and assets (rather than problem fixing) and actively involves local people in both solution design and doing is also more likely to result in locally-led action and positive change.

5 Reasons to Engage and Invest in Place:

1. It's where many quality of life issues are "concentrated" and "reinforced".
2. It's a more manageable scale to deal with interconnected factors underlying quality of life.
3. Underutilized resources, skills, knowledge and networks can be tapped into.
4. It can help kick start a self-refueling process of renewal.
5. Involves the people most affected by quality of life issues.

"The development of place-based approaches has been prompted by a number of factors. These include evidence of the importance of geography, evidence that place matters for people's well-being, and for children in particular, evidence that social networks and social connectedness matter for people's well-being, evidence of growing health and social inequities despite the overall growth in economic prosperity, evidence that locational disadvantages exist and that they lead to poorer outcomes for children, the economic collapse of certain localities, the failure of orthodox approaches to reducing inequalities and prevent problems, the inability of local services to respond effectively to the complex needs of families and communities, the difficulties in engaging vulnerable families, and the push for social inclusion of marginalised members of society."

Moore, T.G. and Fry, R. (2011). [Place-based approaches to child and family services: A literature review](#); Page 62

Communities Face Complex Challenges		What's Changed:	What's Enabled Change:
Small towns in decline		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's readiness for school increased from 20-80% in 3 years Community events engaging 85% of local people 65 families now fed from community garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> honest, open and transparent communication a local task force that set priorities and championed strengths based action new collaboration between residents and agencies/organisations
Mataura		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School roll turn over has dropped from 65% to 10-15% Student achievement and attendance levels have continued to increase 90% involvement by families in 3-way learning conferences 13 new resident-initiated activities catalysed in 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school philosophies of enrolling a family and 'everyone matters' a community hub (co-located school-health-community facility) committed to being 'the first stop' & supporting local families proactively supporting and enabling local residents' needs and dreams. local people believing in their own capacity to better manage health and wellbeing
Breaking poverty cycles		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 150+ low income individuals/families now experiencing a fundamental shift around their money and futures, and leading their own change and transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> helping those with debt own their situation and be their own change agents professionals not problem solving for people intentionally building relationships and having fun
Good Cents Porirua			
Transforming a local economy and community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated planning co-led by iwi and local Council to enable community transformation through economic and social development. Regional partners co-investing locally \$25m in Opotiki Harbour development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> nurturing collaborative cross-sector leadership around a common local vision investing in relationships locally, regionally and nationally persistence, patience & long term commitment
Opotiki			
Creating neighbourhoods that care		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Gonville - half the neighbourhood engaged in locally-run activities, with 1/3 putting their hands up to help organise them. In Kaiti - 100% of residents say they enjoy living there (up from 67%), 31% reduction in local crime in last 3 years. Reduced reliance on outside professionals being paid to support vulnerable families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mobilising resident-led action and leadership intentionally building social capital - trust and relationships in streets, which has catalysed local self help networks accessing statutory agency data at street level
Tiākina ō Tātou Tamariki - Kaiti, Gisborne & Gonville, Whanganui			

B: How could existing services or supports be improved to make the biggest difference to children and their families at most risk of poor education, criminal justice and employment outcomes?

For example...

- how could existing services be better delivered? (this could include services directly provided by government, or by private or not-for-profit providers or other groups)
- what would need to change to improve the effectiveness of services for the most at-risk groups?

Incorporate CLD - understanding the key role that [community-led development](#) approaches can play alongside social services needs to be better understood and integrated into a 'new business as usual' by both Government and social service agencies.

Adopting a community-led lens reframes 'how can agency services for vulnerable children and families can be improved?' into 'how can children, families and communities themselves be empowered to develop, design and deliver the support they need'? This also leads to two further inter-related questions:

- How can we support and grow communities to be places where children, families and whanau thrive?
- How can we support and grow children, families and whanau to enable communities that thrive?

[At the Heart](#), is a series of video based resources prepared by Inspiring Communities, the former Families Commission and Victory Village. This work identified key principles of a family-centred community-led development approach (engagement, empowerment, connection, collaboration, relational and responsive) and the following strategies for success:

- ▶ Building from the ground up
- ▶ Building from assets and strengths
- ▶ Entering from multiple doorways
- ▶ Being intentional
- ▶ Being prepared to change
- ▶ Identifying and growing local leadership

This work reinforces the importance of not what but HOW services and supports are delivered. Key elements of the 'how' include engaging and working with people in empowering, strengths based ways to enable them to become agents of their own change rather than be passive recipients of services.

Sharing Knowledge and Building New Skills - better outcomes for vulnerable families and communities will require more exchanges to share knowledge, practice and ideas between sectors and (government, community and business) and communities. Similarly additional training within the social sector (both central government and contracted service providers) is required to develop new knowledge and skillsets for working with complexity and in ways that enable local people and communities to be their best.

D: What new interventions, services or arrangements could make the biggest difference for at-risk children and their families?

For example...

- what existing models used in New Zealand or internationally could be used in your area?
- how can services respond to the complexity and diversity of family circumstances?
- how can the government better target and measure results for at-risk children and their families? (eg, through outcomes-based contracts)

“The evidence is clear: people in communities with active residents, diverse and vibrant institutions, live longer, are better off economically, are healthier and safer.”

Robert Putnam, [Bowling Alone](#)

Mandate for CLD - there needs to be greater recognition, mandate and investment in community-led approaches. When integrated alongside social investment and social service delivery strategies, community-led approaches can significantly strengthen [social infrastructure](#) and lessen the need for expensive professionalised services

Local innovation hubs - many communities require additional support to strengthen connections, gather local voices and catalyse action at local street and neighbourhood levels. Intentionally investing in local ‘innovation’ hubs with skilled staff who can activate, support and help umbrella a wide range of locally-determined initiatives, programmes and capacity building efforts would make a significant impact on long term wellbeing in vulnerable communities.

Strategic Pipeline - Government needs to work more proactively with philanthropic funders and business to create a pipeline funding approach to better support, connect and learn from locally-led social change initiatives and approaches already happening in NZ.

Small is good - as noted in [our case study stories](#), innovative CLD practice is delivering promising results and there are many ‘bright spots’ in Kiwi communities. We note that changes are often small, but on a wide scale have significant potential. This change is frequently invisible to the main systems or old way of doing/measuring things. It’s locally driven, leverages off connections between people, and yet significantly increases the productivity and effectiveness of existing Government investments in communities. We need to take a broader approach to measurement if we are to notice, leverage and scale these changes. Our CLD learning partners group has prepared a set of Community-Led Indicator Framework. Please contact us if you’d like to know more.

Learn from Promising Practice - we also have much to learn from international experience. For example, we are encouraged by the approach taken in the [“Family by Family”](#) initiative in Australia which seeks to bring together social services, innovation, community development, and developmental evaluation in a place-based way. Canada’s [Vibrant Communities](#) is also currently scaling from 50 to 100 cities working to significantly reduce the human, social and economic costs of poverty. This initiative utilises [collective impact](#) processes to mobilise locally-led action and has potential to be adapted for a New Zealand context as discussed in the [Knowledge Review](#) Inspiring Communities and Tamarack prepared for the JRMckenzie Trust earlier in 2014.