

A Scan of the Local Issues Social Service Providers are observing in Communities & their Organisations during Lockdown 2.0

August 2021

SocialLink asked social service providers via our newsletter and in discussion at the Managers forum to share what issues they are observing in the community and any issues their organisations are experiencing during lockdown 2.0. Here 2 Help U have also begun compiling data regarding the needs being identified via their website and 0800 number. Many of the issues raised have been followed up, where this is the case follow up undertaken to date is outlined. The upside or positives of lockdown are also highlighted.

The number one need identified by those who have responded is consistently identified is access to food, which is consistent with the data compiled by Here 2 Help U. The remaining issues identified are not necessarily trends but observations from a range of social service providers. Permission was not sought to identify the organisations that raised the issues, however if anyone wishes to learn more or can offer assistance please get in contact with Liz Davies, General Manager, SocialLink email liz@sociallink.org.nz or phone 022 4619104 and I can communicate with the relevant provider.

Food

A number of issues or trends were observed with regard to access to food:

- Early demand for food, in contrast to the lockdown in 2020 where it took 3-4 weeks before demand began to rise. It was observed that this could be due to family members now also needing to isolate if someone in the household is awaiting a test result or it could be due to families not having recovered from the last lock down. The Foodbank noted in a BOP Times article on 25 August 2021 that they experienced more demand in the first two hours of Monday 23 August than it would normally would see in a full day. The Foodbank were seeing lots of new faces, including those who did not qualify for subsidies or did not have enough money to pay for food.
- Another factor that two food providers identified that could be contributing to demand, is of families who relied on school lunches and breakfasts to assist with their budgeting now having to find food for these meals.
- Supply of food does not appear to be an issue at this stage for Good Neighbour or Food Bank.
- People with illnesses/disabilities unable to secure priority access to online delivery of food from supermarkets.
- Inquiries for food from disgruntled people who it seems, have to jump through hoops at WINZ to get a food parcel or assistance.

- Food parcels do not appear to cater for people with allergies, so an organisation are having to support people with special food requirements

Follow up to date:

- Welfare Coordinating Committee have advised priority supermarket access to online food delivery for those with illnesses/disabilities has now been activated.
- Age Concern have advised that The Student Volunteer Army grocery service is available nationwide to those in self-isolation or who have no other way to access food. The SVA Grocery Delivery Service Is completely contactless and is for those aged 65+, anyone who may be medically vulnerable, essential workers (and their whānau) and anyone that requires support due to their personal circumstances, such as single parents.
<https://www.newworld.co.nz/covid-19/sva> details on how their service works – Person must have a Credit Card or Debit Card to do online or phone shopping. There is a standard \$15 delivery fee or \$3 delivery fee for Community Service Card holders. Other potential options if required are Red Cross, Neighbourhood Support and/or volunteers from Volunteer BOP
- The Foodbank have confirmed that they do accommodate for food allergies in their food parcels.

Other issues observed in the community

- **Family harm** - Concerns about victims of family harm living with the perpetrator. Domestic violence episodes are not being reported as higher, but they are aware that those in need of help can't make contact/leave the house during lockdown as the perpetrator is always present, so episodes are not reported, but will see a spike once lockdown is over. Unfortunately the only ones they do get to see reported during lockdown are the ones so severe that victim has been left with no choice/injured so badly that agencies respond. Increased demand for support from the Women's Refuge.
- **People with disabilities:**
 - Financial struggles are the biggest issue
 - Mental health – anxiety and loneliness and uncertainty.
 - A couple of families have expressed concern they may be stopped when driving their disabled family member in the community as this is a strategy to calm them down
 - Struggling to support tamariki at home – change in routines, with school work. There has also been feedback that some disabled tamariki are loving not going to school and challenging behaviour has decreased.
 - Lack of support in the home – for support not considered essential (another provider said home care had been reduced to once a week)
 - Transport to have vaccinations
- **Drugs and alcohol:**
 - Not as much alcohol can be bought as liquor retailers are shut so largely only beer and wine can be bought from supermarkets.
 - Drug supply usually decreases during lockdown, though not cannabis this time, as the Police have stopped searching out plantations post the election which means cannabis supply is plentiful.
- **Children and young people:**

- Increased anxiety in children and young people
- Need for activities for children who do not have access to devices.

Follow up to date:

- Forwarded an inquiry for funding for a phone crisis line for men who are perpetrators of family violence.
- Because lockdown is a health led response, it has been recommended that Healthline are approached to see if permission can be given for people needing to drive as a method to calm a family member with a disability.
- BOPDHB are following up about reduction in home care
- Parents are able to go to schools to pick up devices for students (not sure if this is happening for all schools), home packs are also being distributed to ECE's and schools, with priority given to educational institutions in low decile areas.

Organisational issues

- Difficulty in planning longer term given the lack of certainty regarding lockdown duration, organisations are reporting to be financially ok, but this could change if the lockdown continues e.g. reduction in Gaming Trust funding.
- Staff shortages, reliance on staff from areas outside Tauranga no longer possible
- Staff wellbeing a concern for Hauora and BOPDHB staff

Follow up to date:

- Offered to hold a hui to see if there is any opportunity to 'share' staff with organisations who need staff.

The upsides and positives of lockdown 2.0

- For some, lockdown means more time for whanau to connect and enjoy each others company
- As with the 2020 lockdown we have seen marae and communities mobilise to support their community, particularly the vulnerable in the delivery of food etc e.g. Huria and Hairini marae, Katikati community
- People exercising outside – exercise, fresh air, community connection
- Allowing the environment to 'rest'