

# Pacific strategy – This is us (Families)

The Ministry of Social Development have met with a number of Pacific families, providers and staff who currently deliver services to Pacific people throughout New Zealand. They revealed insights that their Pacific people had shared with them in terms of what MSD was doing well and what MSD could be doing better. This is a summary of what we were told.

## Our families want the best service possible

A service that allows you the ability to be safe, strong and independent of social welfare services.

A service that is easily accessible.

A service that looks after your whole ‘well-being’ and does not just focus on a single part (e.g. health versus education versus employment etc.).

A service that is stress-free.



A service that is family and community focused and interwoven with Pacific culture and values.

A service whose staff treat you with respect and genuine kindness and who value the importance of Pacific voices.

A service that is smooth so that you can move from one support provision to another – seamlessly.

You told us that there are a number of improvements that we need to make to the way we engage with you and the way services are delivered to you. You told us that you often don't know who to ask or where to go to for help and that it takes great courage to admit to needing help, especially from the Ministry. This is because it is seen by others that you don't have a job and can't support yourself or your family. We know that this perceived stigma isn't necessarily true as many of you have a job (or multiple jobs), but just aren't paid enough to be able to provide properly for everyone you were needed or expected to. You told us that once you actually made it through our doors you did not always know what services you needed to ask us for, because we don't advertise them or tell you about them upfront. Some of you said the office feels intimidating and you feel reluctant to share your issues because you do not want to overburden our staff. You felt that some of our staff did not understand how to engage with you and it comes off feeling like we don't treat you with respect or dignity. Culture is important to our Pacific people and so we need to look at ways in which we can acknowledge and be responsive to Pacific culture and customs.

## The Ministry could start with a few simple things so that Pacific families feel valued



### Expand Communication Means

We were told that you sometimes don't understand what we are talking about when we are explaining our services to you or when you attend some of the training and courses we put you on. Although you sometimes have someone with you to help, if the Ministry had more services available in your native tongue then they'd be more beneficial for you as you'd get more out of them. Little things such as pamphlets that we hand to you and websites that we direct you to go to, would be more useful and valuable if they were available in Pacific languages.

Having a translator on-site when we know we are due to meet with you in person (or speak to you on the phone) would be another way to show that you that we genuinely want to engage with you. You are always more comfortable being able to talk in your first language (which may or may not be English).



### Develop Pacific Capability

We were told that we need to improve the way in which we work with you – in particular from a cultural perspective. Simple things such as welcoming you with a Pacific greeting (when we know which Pacific ethnicity you affiliate to) and pronouncing your name correctly would show you that we respect you and have taken the time to learn a little bit about you. It is off-putting when we make half-hearted attempts to speak your language and then laugh it off when we know we got it wrong.

We were told that we need to see you as being part of a bigger picture. Although you may present to us as an individual, we have to remember that you are part of a family and your family is part of a community. Therefore, when we work with you we should be thinking about your whole picture and the services we can provide to you, your family and community – a holistic approach.



### Improve Accessibility to Services

We were told that you said access to our services were difficult and sometimes disjointed. While we have on-line tools and resources to help you connect with us and the services on offer, if you're not IT savvy or if you don't have access to devices and systems that enable you to connect to these tools (such as WIFI, tablets and smartphones etc.) then they are a waste of time for you.

We are of the understanding that you don't like to 'burden' us, and that sometimes it is hard for you to come into our office. The more you can do at home or over the telephone is good. You would even be open to having us come to you so that we can talk to everyone you hold dear (and potentially care and provide for you as a family unit rather than just focusing on you as an individual).

We need to be more flexible in terms of how we deliver services to you and consider the time and costs associated to you accessing our services.



### Enhance Profile

We were told that the public stigma associated with the Ministry is negative and so you may not tend to ask for help until your need is dire. This means that we often have to give you more intensive support and help than what you would have needed had you come to us sooner.

We need to look at how we can improve our image in the public eye so that you and other Pacific people do not feel shame or embarrassment when coming to us for help. We need to make sure that all Pacific people (and the general public) know that it is okay to connect with us. We were told that you want to have the confidence to be able to access our services (whether it be for food, housing, education, employment or other reasons) without judgement.

We need to build a profile that is positive, optimistic and encouraging and where you and other Pacific people have no hesitation to come to us for support.

## A little bit about the people who told us what you said

Providers and staff who shared your insights were from all over New Zealand:

**Auckland | Hamilton | Tauranga | Tokoroa | Wellington | Christchurch**

Providers and staff provided services to a variety of people with different Pacific ethnicities:

**Cook Island | Tokelauan | Tuvaluan | Fijian | Tongan | Samoan | Niuean**

As well as: Māori & Pakeha

Staff who shared your insights with us held a variety of different positions within MSD:

**Administrators | Advisors | Analysts | Contact centre reps**

**Case managers | Managers | Support workers | Team Leaders**