

Te Huringa
ō Te Ao

Whānau voice guide

A tool to help you reflect on and embed whānau voice in meaningful and ethical ways



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



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Introduction

This guide is designed to support you to understand what whānau voice is, why it's important in service design for Te Huringa o Te Ao, and how you might go about capturing voice in meaningful and ethical ways.

Whānau voice isn't something new – you probably already listen deeply to tāne and men, whānau and families and your wider community every day in both your mahi and personal life. You hear hopes, challenges and insights through kōrero, relationships, observation and your own lived experience.

This guide builds from those strengths. It doesn't have all the answers, but it offers simple ways to bring more clarity and reflection to your existing practices, and to support a mindset of curiosity about what whānau are telling you and what it might mean for your service.

Adapt these approaches to your own community, tikanga, and organisational policies – especially privacy, safety, and information management policies.

Listening with care

Listening well is an expression of manaakitanga (respect, generosity and care) and whanaungatanga (belonging and relationships). It asks us to slow down, stay curious, and create space where tāne and whānau feel safe and respected. It also means being thoughtful about ethics and tikanga – things like informed consent, confidentiality, reciprocity, and taking care with how information is held and shared. This guide touches on some of these elements and provides prompts to help you explore them further.

Using this guide

Use this tool when you're starting your first steps with Te Huringa o Te Ao and check back in regularly for self-reflection or team discussion. It can support early thinking when shaping a service concept, or guide deeper reflection as your mahi evolves. Treat it as a practical reference you can return to, adapt, and make your own as you learn more from whānau.

Ko te kai a te rangatira he kōrero  Discussion is the food of chiefs

Te Huringa ō Te Ao framework

While services look different in every community, they all align with the evidence-based Te Huringa ō Te Ao framework.

Te Aorerekura moemoeā **People in Aotearoa New Zealand are thriving; their wellbeing is enhanced and sustained because they are safe and supported to live their lives free from family violence and sexual violence.**

Te Huringa ō Te Ao vision **Sustainable behaviour change for men to restore whānau wellbeing through locally-led responses, reflective of the needs and aspirations of men, whānau and communities.**

Service aspirations

Services must align to these evidence-based focus areas to support whānau-led outcomes.



Supporting whānau wellbeing



Safe and healthy masculinity



Responsibility and accountability



Supporting tāne and men as fathers



Supporting healing and connection with whānau



Healthy relationships



Strengthening cultural identity, language and whakapapa

Underpinning principles

Services must commit to and apply these principles at all levels of their organisation.

Enacting Te Tiriti in practice

Whānau-led and whānau-centred

Take an intersectional approach

Skilled specialised workforce to effect change

Free and accessible services

Actively address collusion (condoning or encouraging abuse)

Continuous improvement through evaluation and reflective learning

Culturally, spiritually, and physically safe and responsive

Prioritise safety and wellbeing of whānau impacted by violence

Collaboration and integration with specialist services, iwi and hapū

Whānau voice is at the heart of service design

Service design is about working with whānau, families and communities to strengthen services and improve outcomes. It means listening deeply, building on what's already strong, exploring ideas for change and testing in practice.

The service design approach for Te Huringa o Te Ao puts whānau voice at the centre. Embedding whānau voice is an ongoing practice, at every stage of your mahi. Over time, these insights help you test assumptions, strengthen your service, and stay closely connected to what your community needs.



Design phases

Listen and learn

Understand the needs, strengths and aspirations of tāne, whānau and your community. Explore ideas for change by focusing on what matters most to them.

Design and test

Shape your service concept with a clear focus on the outcomes you want to achieve. Build on what's already strong, or try something new by testing ideas in practice.

Deliver and refine

Put your service into action within your community. Stay responsive by tracking what matters to tāne and whānau, continuously refining as you learn.

Strengthen and grow

Use evidence and whānau voice to strengthen what's working, measure the impact of your service and adjust as needed to improve outcomes for tāne and whānau.



Pause and reflect

What might whānau voice look like in your mahi at each of these phases?



Designing from real voices

Whānau know what works. Their voices are key to designing and delivering services that restore wellbeing and support lasting behaviour change. Listening to whānau means more than asking good questions – it's about understanding who you're hearing from, and what you do with their kōrero.

Who are we listening to?

Whānau voice includes a range of perspectives:



Tāne and men

with lived experience of using violence and seeking change



Whānau and families

who are directly impacted by violence including partners, tamariki and extended whānau



Wider community

who are involved in the journey of change for tāne and men including friends, peers, support people, community members, iwi and hapū

Think broadly to include those most impacted, and those who can help shape change for tāne, whānau and the wider community.

If your organisation doesn't have appropriate kaimahi to safely engage with people impacted by violence, consider partnering with specialist services.



Pause and reflect

Who are the voices you hear from most often?

Who might be missing?

Are we listening to everyone?

Meaningful whānau voice comes from hearing a broad range of perspectives – especially those most affected by violence and those who are often overlooked.

To capture a broad range of voices, you might like to reflect on the following:

- Who is most impacted by violence? Are we honouring their kōrero by creating space for them to be truly heard?
- How are we designing for accessibility so those who are ‘hardly reached’ feel safe, welcome and able to participate?
- How are we hearing from people who sit within multiple marginalised groups, such as Māori, Pacific, migrant, LGBTQIA+, disabled, or neurodiverse communities?
- What contexts, roles, influences, biases and power dynamics shape whānau experiences, and how might these impact their willingness or ability to share?
- Do we have voices from a range of demographics, life experiences, and stages of their change journey to help us understand the issue from multiple perspectives?
- Are we focusing our listening on areas of our service where we know we can make changes, so we uphold the trust whānau place in sharing their experiences?



Pause and reflect

What happens when we reframe ‘hard to reach’ as ‘hardly reached’?



Hearing from whānau

Whānau voice can be gathered in many ways. Start with approaches that feel natural and safe for your community, and build from what already works in your relationships, spaces and everyday interactions.

Begin with what you already hold

Before collecting anything new, take stock of the voice, insights and kōrero you already have – from past interactions, observations, hui, community feedback and relationships. Avoid over-collecting whānau voice, especially if you're not in a position to act on it yet.

Be thoughtful about your methods

Different approaches will work for different whānau, depending on their comfort, confidence, safety and the context they are sharing from. No single method will meet everyone's needs.

Conversational approaches

Many tāne and whānau share more openly in kōrero-based, relational settings such as:

- pūrākau or storytelling
- wānanga, fono or talanoa
- guided conversations
- one-to-one check-ins
- hui in familiar community spaces.

These approaches can feel safer, more culturally aligned, and more mana-enhancing than written tools.

“Not one size fits all, all men are different.
Some talk, some don't.”

– Male research participant

Surveys and forms

Surveys can give a quick snapshot or track change over time, but they're not right for everyone.

Consider:

- literacy and language needs
- survey fatigue
- access to devices or data
- privacy and safety
- whether questions feel relevant.

Surveys are often best used as a supplementary tool, not to replace conversational approaches.

Group settings

Focus groups, men's groups or community gatherings can reveal shared experiences, especially when held in places where tāne and whānau already feel comfortable. Some may still prefer one-to-one kōrero. Offering choice supports safety.

Hearing directly from whānau yourself often leads to deeper insight and change.

Learn from what already exists

Look for research, reports and insights already available in your rohe or nationally – especially those that have heard from Māori, Pacific, migrant or LGBTQIA+ communities. Partner with organisations or practitioners who hold trusted relationships with whānau.

Other places whānau voice already appears

Whānau voice may come through:

- reporting and feedback channels
- trends across case management
- insights from partner organisations
- information from other family violence projects.

These existing sources can provide valuable guidance without needing to ask whānau again.

There are many ways to hear from whānau. The ideas in this guide are just a starting point. Be creative, stay open, and shape your approach around what feels right for your community, tāne and their whānau.

Some ideas for hearing from whānau



Pūrākau (storytelling)



Wānanga, fono or talanoa



One-to-one check-ins



**Visiting whānau spaces
and events**



Small hui or focus groups



Music and poetry



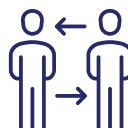
**Getting creative
(drawing, collage, playdough)**



**Digital check-ins
(text, DMs, voice notes)**



Walking and talking



Peer-led conversations



Lived experience roles



**Insights from other family
violence projects**



Guided kōrero



Anonymous drop-boxes



Men's groups



Open house sessions



Photo voice



Storyboards or journey maps



Short surveys



**Quick pulse questions
during sessions**



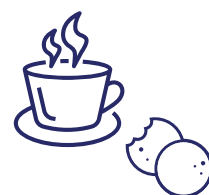
**Existing insights
(case notes, trends, research)**



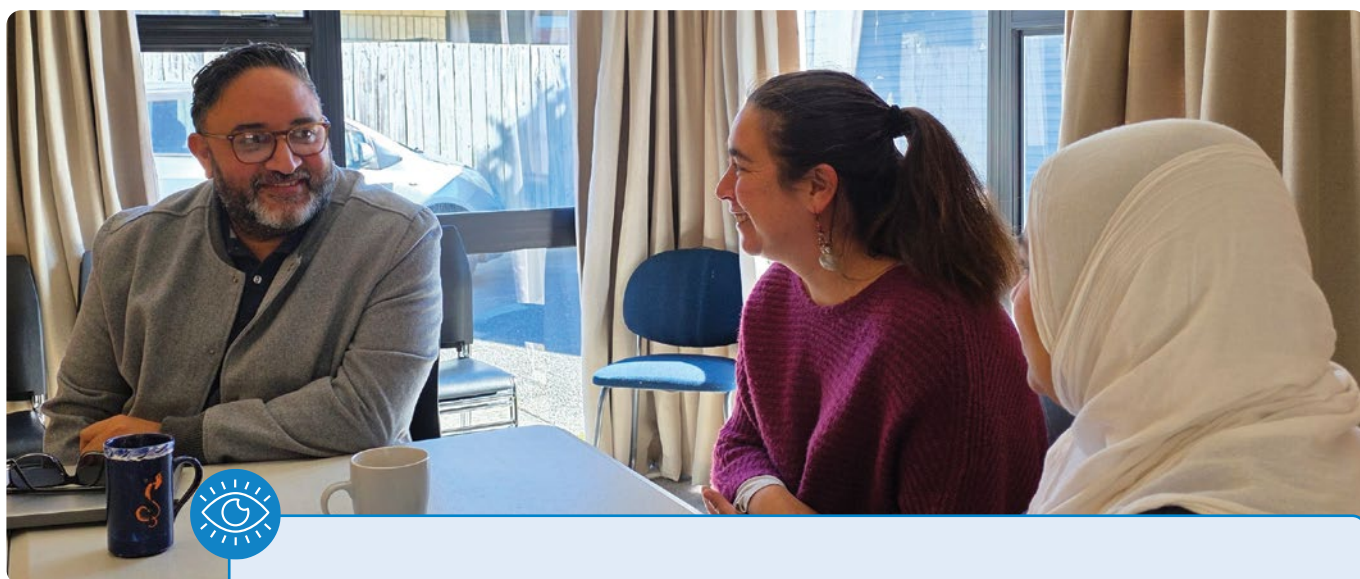
**Partner insights
(iwi, Pacific, migrant, LGBTQIA+)**



**Reviewing previous
feedback or reports**



Kai and kōrero



Gurvinder,
Silvana and Fariya
from Shama in
conversation

Get inspired

“What about us?” Responding to the voices of ethnic men

For the women leading Shama Ethnic Women’s Trust in Hamilton, their core kaupapa has always been to listen. It was a courageous decision for a proudly feminist, women-led organisation to create a service for tāne. The move came in response to men from their communities asking, “What about us?”

The call came from women as much as from men, wanting their partners to have the same kind of support they had found in Shama.

Shama started by creating an Ethnic Advisory Group of men from many cultural backgrounds. This formal structure ensured tāne and community voice guided the design of the new service. The group provides strategic guidance, which kaimahi like Navigator Gurvinder Singh then bring to life through one-to-one relationships built on trust and “cultural humility.”

As Gurvinder puts it, the philosophy is simple:
“The journey is theirs, not ours.”

This whānau-centred approach creates the safety needed for profound change. It’s what allows a father, navigating his own trauma, to finally find the words to tell his son, “I’m so sorry, son, for putting so much weight on your shoulders.”

By creating mana-enhancing spaces to truly listen, Shama demonstrates that the most effective and transformative tool for change is the voice of tāne and whānau. That voice is kept alive through monthly hui with the advisory group, whose diverse perspectives continue to shape and refine the service, keeping it responsive as needs evolve.



**Mā te rongo ka mōhio,
mā te mōhio ka mārama,
mā te mārama ka mātau,
mā te mātau ka ora.**

Through listening comes
knowledge, through knowledge
comes understanding, through
understanding comes wisdom,
through wisdom comes wellbeing.

Centring whānau voice

Centring the voices of tāne and whānau in this kaupapa ensures services are whānau-led and whānau-centred. It keeps your mahi grounded in what truly supports their wellbeing and guides how decisions are shaped and acted on.

Whānau as decision makers

Centring whānau voice means recognising tāne, wāhine and whānau as the experts in their own lives. Their values, goals and lived realities guide how services are designed, delivered and improved. When whānau are centred, the mahi naturally aligns with what truly supports their wellbeing.

Centring whānau voice helps you to:

- Honour whānau as decision makers, determining their own values, goals and aspirations
- Build a deeper understanding of the realities, contexts and root causes of violence for men and their whānau and families
- Design responses that support men to change while remaining accountable to the voices of women, children, whānau and families
- Address individual and collective needs so whānau can thrive as a whole
- Generate new ideas for designing and improving services
- Turn insights into action, strengthening evidence for what works
- Understand system barriers, opportunities and experiences from a whānau perspective
- Clarify where your organisation is best placed to support men and their whānau, and where you may need to partner with others in your community or nationally

Centring whānau voice in your service concept

Whānau voice should guide each phase of your mahi – from early design and testing through to ongoing delivery, learning and refinement. Whānau voice is not a single method or moment, and it's not just part of the listen and learn design phase. It's a continuous practice that shows how well your service aligns with what whānau say they need, what keeps them safe, and what supports lasting behaviour change.

What needs to be reflected in your service concept

Your service concept will need to show that you have gathered whānau voice that is:

- **Current** – collected within the 2.5-year service design period
- **Local** – grounded in the communities and relationships you serve
- **Direct** – hearing from tāne and men themselves
- **Inclusive** – where appropriate, hearing directly from women, children, whānau and families
- **Conversational** – including at least one conversational approach or in-depth method, alongside any surveys or feedback tools
- **Insightful** – offering enough richness to identify themes, patterns and ideas that shape your service model

Whānau voice should also help you identify critical safety information and support robust risk assessment and responses.

There's no single right approach. Each provider will adapt their methods based on their community, tikanga, relationships and aspirations. A mix of approaches across time will help create a fuller, more accurate picture of what's working and what needs strengthening.



Explore more

Service concept template

Download the template and other resources from the 'Service design resources' page on the MSD website.

→ msd.govt.nz

Reflecting on whānau voice

Try this reflection activity in your team wānanga, service design workshops or individual reflection. You might print this page, or draw it on a flipchart or whiteboard and use post-its during a group kōrero. These questions help you stay accountable to the voices you hear and ensure insights lead to meaningful action.

Who did we hear from and why?

Whose voices shaped this insight? Who might be missing?

What did we learn?

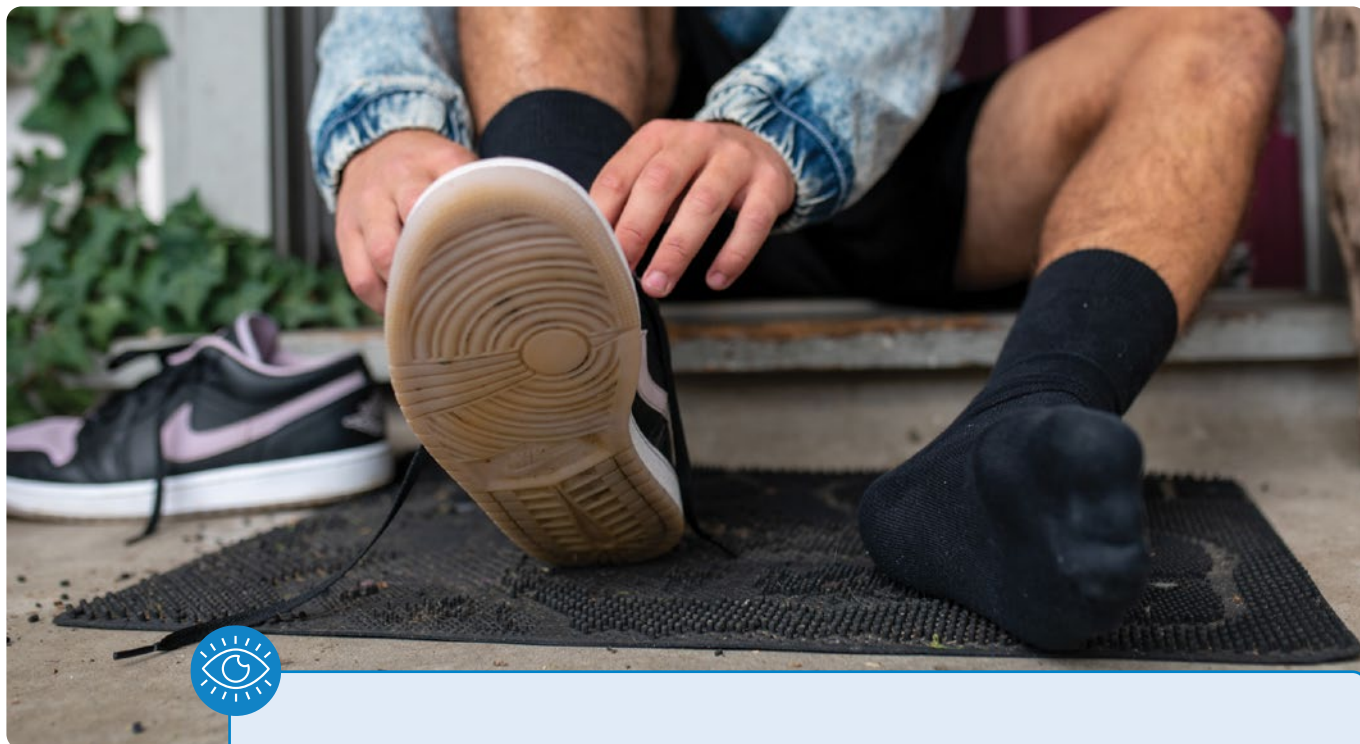
What stood out? What was surprising? What confirmed what we already knew?

What will we do differently?

How will these insights influence our service design or delivery?

How will we give back?

How are we caring for, acknowledging and closing the loop with whānau who shared with us?



Get inspired

First steps toward healing

Waiting for the next intake of a family violence service can often mean losing momentum. But what if that waiting time could be transformed into something that's active and healing? Sometimes the most powerful changes begin with something simple, like lacing up your shoes and taking the first step.

In Tāmaki Makaurau, Fathers for Families heard that many tāne waiting to join their 14-week kaupapa Te Ara Poutama o te Matua Mārama were isolated and without support. So they created walk and talk sessions and gym-based activities as safe, constructive spaces where tāne could release energy, build trust and stay connected. These activities keep tāne joining mid-cycle engaged and supported.

“The idea is that, instead of losing them in the system, they’re keeping busy and we’ve found that to be really, really helpful,” says Fathers for Families manager, Eli Tulafono.

It’s about more than exercise. It’s about identity, preparation and connection. Men are coming into the full course ready, committed and supported.

What began as a way to fill a gap has evolved into a key early step in healing. Alongside the physical activity, Fathers for Families have introduced peer support spaces and a shorter course to help tāne begin addressing trauma they may have carried since their teenage years. By starting earlier, they’re reshaping services around the voices, experiences and needs of tāne.

When to seek whānau voice

Whānau voice weaves through every phase of your Te Huringa o Te Ao mahi. Each phase offers a different opportunity to listen, sense-make, and respond to what tāne and whānau tell you matters most.

You don't need large-scale engagement in every phase – just intentional, meaningful and ethical listening that you act on. Over time, this builds strong feedback loops that help you learn what's working, adapt your approach, and strengthen your impact.



Listen and learn

This is your starting point. Before creating anything new, take time to understand what you already hold:

- past kōrero and relationships
- observations and case notes
- community insights
- existing research
- earlier feedback.

Ask what themes are showing up and what might be missing. Whānau voice here helps you identify opportunities, assumptions to test, and early areas for focus.



Design and test

Whānau voice supports learning throughout the design phase. This is where you:

- fill gaps in your understanding by testing in practice
- test ideas, hunches or specific parts of your service
- explore what feels safe, useful and possible for whānau
- challenge assumptions and strengthen your thinking
- prototype small elements before committing to a full model
- build or refine your theory of change
- involve tāne and whānau so you're designing with them, not just for them.

Capture what you learn and show how your service concept responds to this kōrero, in safe and ethical ways. This builds early learning cycles into your design.

Consider what support you need or who you need to work with to maximise the learning process and create meaningful solutions for and with whānau.



Deliver and refine

Once your service is in place, ongoing whānau voice helps you understand:

- what's working well
- what could be strengthened
- how safe, respectful and accessible your service feels
- where adjustments may be needed.

Regular feedback loops ensure your mahi stays closely aligned with whānau experiences and allows you to make timely refinements. This includes hearing directly from tāne, men, women, children, whānau and families.

This phase is about adapting your practice as you learn, not waiting for formal evaluation before making improvements.



Strengthen and grow

Over time, whānau voice contributes to your long-term learning and evaluation. This phase is about:

- understanding outcomes and shifts
- identifying new opportunities
- spotting system-level barriers and enablers
- deepening collaboration across the wider family violence system
- refining your service based on patterns, themes and long-term insights
- strengthening your learning approach so feedback continues to shape your mahi.

This is where you move from refining your theory of change to growing your impact based on what's working for tāne, whānau and your community.



Explore more

Service design guide

See the full guide for tools, examples and further suggestions for each phase of your mahi. Download it from the 'Service design resources' page.

→ msd.govt.nz



Get inspired

A vehicle for long-term change

“So what, you’re telling me I have to commit a felony to do your programme?” one man asked. His words captured the reality – most support for men wanting to change was tied to the justice system. And for those who’d completed a non-violence programme, there were few safe spaces to keep making progress.

Porirua Whānau Centre saw an opportunity to start fresh. They brought on board facilitator Troy Wairau-Laga, who worked with their team and community to fill these gaps.

Listening came first. From cold calling tāne who’d been through non-violence programmes, to hearing from their Mana Wāhine group who gave “awesome suggestions” for a space where their partners could show up not only physically, but emotionally.

“We decided boxing is the vehicle, healing is the journey, long-term change is the destination,” says Troy.

Now, they run twice-weekly boxing sessions filled with healing ‘open floor’ kōrero, learning, exploring mindfulness tools and sharing experiences. Troy says they “chop and change” according to what tāne need.

“Some brothers want to share, some brothers are like ‘I just need a positive release bro, need a good outlet for tonight’ and that’s cool.”

Tāne say they take the tools back home, share them with whānau and create calmer, more positive spaces. The kaupapa constantly evolves. From two tāne in the first session to now around 8 to 10, more men are showing up not just for themselves, but for their partners, tamariki and whānau.



**Take care of our children.
Take care of what they hear,
take care of what they see, take
care of what they feel. For how
the children grow, so will the
shape of Aotearoa.**

– Dame Whina Cooper

Listening safely and ethically

Hearing from whānau is a process of listening, understanding and responding to people about their personal and sometimes vulnerable experiences. Seek informed consent and be clear about why you're inviting kōrero, how it will be used, and what choice whānau have.

These guidelines aren't exhaustive, they're just to prompt thinking about safety. Always follow your organisation's privacy policies, ethics frameworks and legal obligations.

Consider your approach

Plan your engagement in ways that are whānau-led, violence-informed and trauma-informed. Kaimahi who usually work with people using violence may need support to safely engage with those impacted by violence. Where needed, partner with specialist organisations who hold trusted relationships or cultural expertise to support safe engagement.

Offer accessible support

Sharing personal or traumatic experiences can carry emotional weight. Make sure the right people – with the right skills – are facilitating kōrero.

Consider offering whānau access to support such as counselling, peer support, cultural guidance, or safe debrief options before and after participation.

Give back to whānau

When whānau share their experiences, think about how you can honour that contribution. This might include:

- a koha for participation
- access to training or community opportunities
- invitations to stay involved in shaping your service
- meaningful acknowledgment of their time and expertise.

Participating should feel restorative and mana-enhancing, not an experience of being “taken from.”

Provide feedback loops

Close the loop with whānau. Do this in small ways, it doesn't need to be a 'big reveal' at the end. Share back what you heard, what themes are shaping your thinking, and what will happen next.

Simple updates or reflections build trust and transparency. Hearing back from whānau also helps ensure your mahi remains safe, responsive and effective over time.

Create safe spaces

Choose spaces where tāne, men, women, children, whānau and families feel comfortable, respected and able to participate fully. Consider being part of spaces where whānau naturally go, rather than clinical or business settings.

Consider cultural safety, privacy, accessibility, timing, and who is present. Environment plays a major role in whether whānau feel safe enough to share openly.

Protect whānau privacy

Privacy is central to safe practice. Whānau should know:

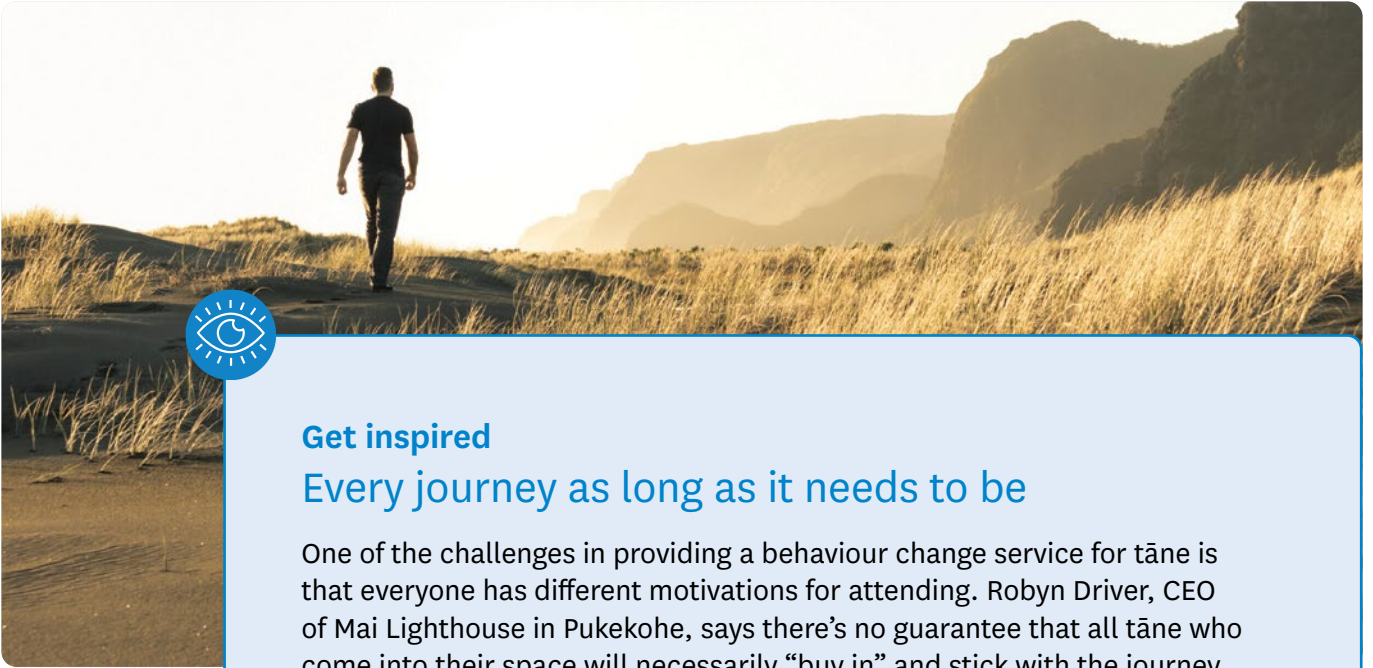
- they have the right not to participate
- what information is being gathered and why
- how their kōrero will be stored, used and shared safely
- who will have access to their kōrero and information
- how long their information will be kept for
- how they can access or correct their information.

Follow your organisation's privacy policies and the core privacy principles so whānau kōrero remains safe, respected and secure.



Pause and reflect

Does our approach reflect manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and safety?



Get inspired

Every journey as long as it needs to be

One of the challenges in providing a behaviour change service for tāne is that everyone has different motivations for attending. Robyn Driver, CEO of Mai Lighthouse in Pukekohe, says there's no guarantee that all tāne who come into their space will necessarily “buy in” and stick with the journey.

“But we go in with the same open heart, open mind. We have to convince them that they have to convince themselves.”

In designing their new initiative, maiTāne, centring the voices of tāne and their whānau was key to understanding what their community needed. What stood out immediately was that tāne had very practical, real-life challenges that needed addressing alongside issues of family harm.

Now, with group meetings over 8 weeks, one-to-one sessions, and internal referrals to other Mai Lighthouse services – such as advocacy, counselling, budgeting and parenting courses – tāne have the wraparound support needed to keep them in the programme.

Robyn's advice to other providers is that going slower during the design phase, built into the journey of Te Huringa o Te Ao, is better for considering how to provide culturally safe, community-specific delivery, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

“Enjoy the process of having been gifted the time to really design something that is fit for purpose, for the tāne in your area, and that will see them be successful, not just in a programme, but with long-term support.”

“Slow down is the fastest way to achieve.”

As for the future, she says that support for tāne continues with one-to-one kōrero sessions after their 8-week maiTāne course finishes.

“Like any of our programmes, you're here as long as you need. We acknowledge that you can't close the door after 8 weeks. And so they are with us as long as they require us, and at the end of that journey, whenever it may be, you start to decide how you can scaffold that person to move them on and allow them to continue succeeding independently.”

“Every journey is as long as it needs to be.”

More resources and tools

These resources offer different perspectives, tools and examples to strengthen your practice. Use what feels relevant and adapt it to your community. These are starting points to help deepen your listening, learning and design.

Incorporating the Voice of Experience

Ministry of Social Development

Guidance on ethical, safe and respectful engagement with people sharing sensitive or personal experiences.

msd.govt.nz

Te Tokotoru – Designing for equity and intergenerational wellbeing

Auckland Co-Design Lab

A systems approach to wellbeing, developed alongside whānau and rangatahi. It provides a different starting point for designing and investing in equity and intergenerational wellbeing.

aucklandco-lab.nz/tetokotoru

Grounding our mahi in Te Tiriti and Te Ao Māori

Tūhono Impact

Outlines how Te Tiriti, tikanga and Te Ao Māori values such as manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and tino rangatiratanga can guide how organisations listen, design and work in partnership.

tuhonoimpact.nz

Research library and learning hub

Community Research

A trusted online hub that supports and champions community-led research. There's a searchable database of community-based research and evaluation from organisations across Aotearoa.

communityresearch.org.nz

Huarahi Ora – Journey to Wellbeing

Health New Zealand

Designed for the health workforce, this website has principles for designing whānau-centred, culturally safe and co-designed services. Includes reflective questions and simple tools to strengthen practice.

journeytowellbeing.nz

Your notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal dashed lines for tracing and writing practice.



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
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