

Recreating recreation post-pandemic

Providing quality recreation in a constantly changing world is challenging. Our traditional delivery systems have been compromised, education and work patterns disrupted and at a personal level we're still concerned for our own and our whanau's health.

What are the longer-term implications, at all levels?

Individuals

'[Long COVID](#)' is not a single condition, and can be accompanied by chronic fatigue. The WHO documents an increase in anxiety and depression [worldwide](#) and reports worsened health outcomes 'for those already disadvantaged in society'. [Decades of progress](#) have been undone in gender equity [for example].

Impact on recreation: Customer experience

As a result of the pandemic and lockdowns, some people have developed [social anxiety](#) or continue to be afraid of getting sick.

But many have discovered different recreation and leisure activities.

Organisations

Negative impacts on our delivery system, and organisations include the ability to plan long-term – a huge challenge in a period of economic and social uncertainty.



Figure 1 Photo: Whenua Iti Outdoors. <https://www.whenuaiti.org.nz/>

Staff wellbeing including team morale

Staff are dealing with their own and their family/whanau's health, the impact of stress and their ability to manage continuous change. Impacts may include lower team morale, having to manage customer anxiety and the pressure of providing quality experiences with reduced staff.

Recruitment and retention

Recruitment and retention continue to be challenges, with changing labour markets including the impact of immigration policies and the pending '[Big Resignation](#)'.

[Staffing numbers](#) may have reduced temporarily or permanently, and some sectors are hiring and training new staff at speed.

Business continuity

There are significant negative impacts on the financial viability of organisations, with reduced memberships and attendees, pressure on revenue streams and increasing expenditure through rising prices and pressure on wages in response to increasing inflation. For many the [loss of qualified and experienced staff](#) is challenging.

Communities

In New Zealand, Māori and Pacific peoples and disabled people have experienced a far greater [impact from COVID19](#). Many migrant communities have been separated by the challenges of immigration policy. We have heard the voice of the dispossessed and alienated, which resonated nationwide via the demonstrations. Wounds from such events will not heal overnight.

What is working well?

Strengths, resilience, creativity and innovation have emerged.

Individuals and organisations have changed the way they [communicate](#) – highly networked, real-time information based on asking questions, providing information and a high level of care.

Decentralised and responsive services are being delivered in different modes – online, in our homes, to our doorsteps, and in our local communities. Delivery systems tailored by individuals ensure that the services meet their needs. Locally led examples include iwi and Pacifica health providers providing [holistic support](#) to communities.

COVID recovery funding has provided targeted resources for a re-start, the model has proven a catalyst for [innovation](#).

To view a discussion about pandemic learning - watch the webinar here.

CASE STUDY

“I am loving this journey. I can see what is happening and feel that you are our cheerleaders spurring us to get over the finish line. Encouraging us with small steps each week, but moving us forward at the same time” [Feedback from a participant in Green Prescription during lockdown]



Figure 2 Green Prescription Newsletter April 2022

In order to keep people engaged in [Green Prescription](#), staff at Nuku Ora in Wellington recognised the need for a change in delivery mode - classes, and home visits were off the agenda for now.

The new model includes a mix of resources and online support. ‘Mystery drop-off’ packages prepared by staff could include a journal exercise, an activity challenge, or a cooking challenge - resources adapted from what was to hand. Weekly online meetings allow for a check in and sharing: how did it go for you? A high level of engagement meant only a 5% drop off rate. It’s been satisfying for staff to see a need met.

Key features of this hybrid of online and personalised delivery are:

- Directly to the people, with no expectations of travel and its costs, AND enabling supervision of kids at home
- Nothing is asked from people, except to connect once a week online
- Participant-centred – can do the activity in their own time, in their own way
- Each participant has their own support person (so one on one)

Staff recognise a need for a staged approach to return to services and classes outside of home, recognising that people need to be ready and feel confident.

Principles to action

Principles	Actions
Build or Rebuild Trust	<p>Communicate – listen empathetically, share information openly and often, seek and provide feedback</p> <p>Acknowledge the impact on staff and customers</p> <p>Develop and deliver with current and potential participants as your focus</p>
Importance of wellbeing and mental health	<p>Support for managers and their teams to be realistic about their own needs and capacity</p> <p>Target isolation and loneliness by building relationships and a sense of connection with organisations, communities, individuals</p>
Be flexible and innovative	<p>Identify cost effective ways of delivering opportunities</p> <p>Continue to build on the year’s insights, and apply in practice – digital, local, outdoor</p>
Recognise different and priority needs	<p>Rangatahi</p> <p>Māori</p> <p>Pacific peoples</p> <p>Disabled people</p> <p>Older adults</p>