

# Story 6: Human Services - Service or Support?

Ahakoā kaore matou i te kite kei te kite - although we cannot see, we have vision (Ngati Kapo whakatauki/proverb)

If disabled people need to be emancipated from the oppressive structures that have restricted the actualisation of their potential

and

If the locus of control within human services is to lie with service users as opposed to service managers

and

If empowerment leading to total involvement of disabled people in all decision-making that effects their lives is to pervade human services

and

If the power base of human services is to change from 'power over' people to fostering 'power within' people

and

If new types of relationships are to emerge between managers and staff and disabled people

and

If the value of living with the experience of disability is to be genuinely acknowledged by the leaders and managers of human services

and

If human service organisations are to align their philosophies, policies and practices with creating valued lives for people

and

If disabled people and those who support them are to be recognised as agents of change and collaboratively involved in the design of services, policy writing and evaluation strategies

and

If the members of the tangata whenua (people of the land) and other cultural groups are to be acknowledged as the people that know what is best for people of their own culture

and

If people with high support needs are to lead self-directed lives

and

If new service forms are to be created where power is shared between people and their assistants and mutuality of relationships strived for

and

If consumers are to become full team members in the management of human services

and

If human service organisations are to become person and principle-centred sharing their leadership with the people that the service has been developed for

and

If Quality of Life is to encompass the subjective perceptions of disabled people

and

If the power differential between service providers and disabled people, their families and advocates is to shift to a paradigm where all people are included and understood to find a 'sense of place'

Is working in human services service or support?

The answer lies in

Support to be other than a service recipient

## **A. Assumptions and responses regarding 2020**

### **Economic**

1. In 2020, the Foundation has rebranded itself as the superlative expert in blindness knowledge in New Zealand, sensory specific and general disability.
2. In 2020, the Foundation is viewed by service end users as the service provider of choice for blindness specific rehabilitation functions.
3. In 2020, the Foundation's service delivery approach is based upon collaboration, shared infrastructure and economies of scale thus providing an opportunity to undertake sustainable joint agreements and development of cluster networks with other providers, mainstream and community.
4. In 2020, the Foundation internal workforce culture is reflective to serving the expectations and best interest of blind, vision impaired and deaf blind citizens of New Zealand.

### **Political/legal**

In 2020, government policy will reflect the premise of individualised funding giving the individual and their whanau the flexibility, choice and control over reaching their potential as a contributing member of New Zealand society.

In 2020, the RNZFB Act 2002 will have been reviewed and amended to reflect the humanistic principles of support

service delivery.

In 2020, the principles of the New Zealand Disability Strategy will be embedded within all government and NGO policy due to an Act of government

### **Ethical/Social**

In 2020, the Foundation's service delivery is based upon the humanistic approach to service delivery reflective of end user expectations, cultural beliefs, principles and practices.

In 2020, the Foundation's commitment to and practical application of Te Tiriti O Waitangi principles and practices throughout all services is globally recognised and attested by academics, governments

In 2020, the country's ethnic mix is more diverse and the RNZFB has developed and implemented a paradigm and system of humanistic support service delivery in partnership with Tangata Whenua, the indigenous people of Aotearoa (Ngati Kapo) which can be adjusted to embrace the diverse cultural needs of each ethnic group in Aotearoa.

In 2020 the RNZFB has reviewed, adjusted and strengthened RNZFB Mandatory Board Policies to reflect:

Tangata Whenua: The relationship with Tangata Whenua and the method by which the RNZFB deliver services to the indigenous people of Aotearoa will be guided by the paradigm and system developed in collaboration with Ngati Kapo o Aotearoa Inc. This paradigm founded upon the core

principles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi of Partnership, Participation and Protection.

Children: The Foundation shall identify and advocate or otherwise provide for the special needs of, and generally promote and protect the interests of, blind vision impaired and deaf blind children who are resident in New Zealand...

Volunteers and Donors: ...Shall safeguard and develop the Foundation's networks of volunteers and donors...

Consultation with Members: shall consult and co-operate with users of Foundation services when planning, and delivering services intended for their benefit, so recognising that users are in the best position to judge which services are suited to their needs and the manner in which services are delivered...

Community Participation: ...shall encourage the establishment of community committees...

## **Technological**

In 2020, the RNZFB has developed technology as a core service indicating the organisation's commitment to ensuring that blind, vision impaired and deaf blind people have access to the most current technology thereby continuing to grow and offer positive opportunities.

## **B. Vision, Mission, Values**

### **Who the Foundation provides services to in 2020**

The RNZFB registration criteria is the same in that the RNZFB provides a range of rehabilitation and support services in accordance with the "Objects" defined in its Constitution.

### **Those eligible to receive services are:**

New Zealand residents who, in the opinion of a registered Optometrist or Ophthalmologist, have visual acuity not exceeding 6/24 in the better eye with correcting lenses or serious limitation in the field of vision generally not greater than 20 degrees in the widest diameter.

All children and young adults (21 years of age and under) who are currently registered with Visual Resource Centres regardless of their degree of vision loss

Other persons who may not qualify for registration to receive services from the Foundation but who may benefit from doing so due to the nature of their disability; such eligibility to be at the discretion of the board through delegation to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive shall be required to report to the board at regular intervals on the number of persons in this category, on what basis it was deemed appropriate to provide services and the types of service being provided (Board Policy Manual)

## **Vision**

Our vision is to be the service and support choice of people who are blind/vision impaired or deafblind and their families in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

## **C. Strategic Options**

### **Blindness Considerations:**

The impact of blindness has implications for blind, vision impaired and deaf blind people that makes aspects of their lives distinct from those of their sighted counterparts. It is in the context of a world designed to cater for the sighted that the Foundation exists and strives to remove or ameliorate the restrictions imposed by blindness. The following fundamental considerations represent the basis from which the Foundation's purpose is derived and which dictate the nature of its work.

- Blindness imposes limitations on an individual's ability to function independently
- The limitations imposed by blindness are, in essence, lifelong
- These limitations primarily affect three areas of activity: the ability to carry out everyday tasks; the ability to get around safely; the ability to communicate
- These limitations have an impact on many aspects of life and particularly on the capacity of a blind person to:

- participate fully in all aspects of family and community life
- develop relationships with other people
- cope in a range of environments inside and outside the home
- access the full range of educational opportunities
- engage in paid or voluntary work
- generate an adequate income in a competitive labour market
- access, store and retrieve information of all kinds
- access the arts and literature
- communicate with others
- take part in sport and recreation

The impact of these limitations can be reduced by greater reliance on the other senses, the development of special skills, and the use of special equipment, and personal support

These limitations are, in essence, lifelong therefore it would seem logical that the existing services remain and that the guiding principles as listed in the Board Policy Manual remain.

RNZFB core focus would be the services that provide the

mechanism for blind and vision impaired and deaf blind people to carry out everyday tasks, the ability to get around safely and the ability to communicate. These services should be provided free (i.e. from government funding) and any other services are paid for by the user.

Some existing services i.e. the library, vocational and counselling need to be out-sourced. Talking books will be available electronically or from public libraries. Community based vocational services can contract the Foundation to provide specialist vision related expertise to enable blind and low vision person's access to paid employment and education. Counselling isn't a specialist service but the way to interact with vision impaired clients may be and therefore the Foundation would provide appropriate training to other agencies

Change can occur and quality of life is attainable, where families are valued and included. This support can be accessed through:

- feeling attached to other people who are emotionally important
- having the opportunity to engage in shared activities
- being part of a network of people who can approach one another for information and assistance
- having a place and playing at a variety of roles in economic and civil life.

## **A change in approach, to supporting whole families (adults and children)**

The RNZFB has nurtured an internal culture that encourages staff to develop relationships with the families they serve - an ally versus an adversary. This culture permeates throughout all levels of the RNZFB - governance, management to field staff personally committed to the humanistic approach of support services.

This approach ensures that the family's needs and views are seen with clarity, and honoured by RNZFB staff. RNZFB staff are trained in how to adjust their delivery style in recognition of the interwoven sub-systems of a family. The RNZFB has also woven the following sets of beliefs and values as key messages thereby consolidating the humanistic approach in relation to families into work systems:

- persons with disabilities make positive contributions to their families and society
- persons with disabilities and their families need support to develop and maintain expectations and dreams for the future
- persons with disabilities and their families have the right to full citizenship
- families and persons with disabilities are capable of making meaningful choices and acting on their preferences.

The RNZFB has been able to, through implementing a structured change process, shift away from traditional roles to those that reflect the humanistic approach. This is demonstrated by the broader range of professional skills introduced to support the respective family. The primary activators of the relationship between professionals being: collaboration, inclusive and meaningful interaction - each understanding and appreciating the role and contribution they make and that their collective role is to the family first. An outcome is that the RNZFB is acknowledged by other service providers and the Crown as a leader in ensuring that the choices and decisions are made by the family and parents are encouraged to use family strengths. Skills adopted include:

- communication skills - that allow non-judgemental listening as well as being able to draw ideas from the family
- knowledge - of service systems and resources as well as a second base of understanding parenting skills, child development, families, and a range of disabilities
- problem-solving ability - that allows the communication of different solutions and support to families to select options
- organisational skills - and the ability to work between systems and professionals to bring about solutions
- advocacy skills - negotiating with and for the family.

Families are encouraged to take the lead in identifying their needs, setting service plan goals to meet their concerns, being actively involved in service evaluation and review and in advocacy for themselves and others. This does place demands and requirements upon the family that may not be routine, however, having a child with a disability is not 'routine' in any respect. Member and whanau/family focus is a model that is relative to Maori culture and is practiced by not only Ngati Kapo O Aotearoa Inc. but other supporting sensory providers.

### **Staff training**

In addition to vision specific training RNZFB staff undertake training in the areas described to become allies of blind, vision impaired and deaf blind people and their families.

Through training staff are able to adapt, and in turn, are well trained, well rewarded and focused on what best suits the individual blind, vision impaired or deaf blind person and their family.

### **Different approach to assessment and service co-ordination.**

RNZFB staff are trained to implement three creative planning tools that are utilised globally to assist people with disabilities to move into more possible and positive futures. These tools are: Circles of Support, MAPS (Making Action Plans) and PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrow's with Hope). These tools are cross cultural in application and place the person with the disability and their family at the

centre or heart of the matter. A Maori proverb that sums up the philosophy of these tools is:

"What is the greatest and most precious thing in the world? I say to you.

Tis people. Tis people. Tis people."

The RNZFB acknowledges the belief system underlying these tools that all human beings are more alike than different and share the common basic needs for love, belonging, meaning in life, fun, dignity and respect. There is no differentiation between them and us. There is simply 'we'. We is all of us. All of humanity. The key is 'we'!

Mobile assessors work with those people who wouldn't or can't cope with the phone system.

Assessments are done for families by people known to them, that they have confidence in, not a one off visit.

Services are delivered in a person's home (seventy plus or older people should not be expected to travel long distances to receive a service) or those living in rural areas. The RNZFB recognises that some people learn better in their own home.

### **Teams:**

Are itinerant. The makeup of these teams is similar to the BLENNZ National Assessment team; physiotherapist, occupational therapist, orientation and mobility instructor, music therapist, speech language therapist, paediatrician,

ophthalmologist, social worker, adaptive technology, functional vision assessor, psychologist, adaptive living instructor, resource teacher vision, early intervention teacher  
....

Some offices owned by RNZFB are leased to generate an income for a three year period at the end of the lease period the effectiveness/ or not of itinerant teams is reviewed.

Staff who deliver services direct to clients have their administrative tasks reduced.

The issue of attracting and retaining 'the right people' to do the job is continually challenged and reviewed by a think tank of participants comprising of RNZFB governance, management , field staff and consumers.

The RNZFB has initiated organisation wide provision of peer support and external supervision for all staff.

### **Alliances with Kindred Organisations:**

The RNZFB actively pursues and engages in meaningful working relationships with other disability service providers so that government funding is not competed with agreement negotiated and the funding pool used to serve this population is utilised to meet members' versus historical building of separate silo bureaucracies.

## **D. How We Achieve All This?**

The keys to the success of adopting the humanistic approach have been:

- Reducing the number of managers and encouraging and training all staff to become 'leaders' and to take ownership of their role, responsibilities and behaviour
- Reducing the cost of expenses involved with office space; staff work in virtual offices
- Utilising Awhina House and leasing some areas; setting up a shop to sell equipment to the wider public; keeping one area aside for meetings
- Reducing the amount of meetings; make meetings more efficient; conduct meetings differently and use the facility of Webex (teleconferencing where all participants can view a presentation and discuss when completed) and other innovative technologies
- Reducing the need for administration staff by contracting this service out and pay for what is used
- Spending less on consultants through developing internal skill base and knowledge capital
- Spending more on marketing and fundraising strategies
- Identifying through annual quality reviews time wasting areas

- Reducing the amount of hardcopy files kept - moving to electronic filing system only
- Building and maintaining open and collaborative relationships with other sensory support groups.
- Collaborating with Ngati Kapo o Aotearoa Inc. to develop the cultural paradigm of support delivery.
- Developing and piloting the 'teams' approach and ensuring that the cultural needs of the individual and family is incorporated through appropriate resourcing of these services e.g. Mana Kapo and Pacific Island services.
- Financial analysts to explore future business/corporate/commercial options for the Foundation
- Running pilot programmes (regionally) and if outcomes (measured by tools sensitive to what is being researched) indicate significant positive results then resource the pilot to continue for as long as is required
- Mentoring options i.e. blind/vision impaired deafblind persons instruct/demonstrate/share their knowledge in the areas of adaptive daily living/communication/orientation and mobility/social networking etc
- The RNZFB requires a two-way focus. The two essential components for its success are a client/family focus and valuing of staff. If this is the basis of all services then the organisation will be a leader in its' field and be the

success it wishes to be

- It would seem that it is not a wise business decision to sell any of the RNZFB assets at this time because of New Zealand's current economic climate
- RNZFB needs a commercial backbone with a charity exterior or focus
- If service delivery is done more residentially through group based programmes then specialist staff are required. For those who receive service in their own homes/environment then a generalist with a well equipped vehicle is required
- Additional training over and above vision specific training so that staff become allies with blind/vision impaired and deaf blind people and their families
- A cost/benefit analysis undertaken to determine whether or not to change the name of the organisation.

## **What is the RNZFB's point of difference?**

Vision specialists adopting a person and principle centred approach (common understanding amongst all staff to what this actually means and how it is implemented)

## **Ka Po Ka Ao Ka Awatea - It is Dark, It is Dawn, It is Daylight**

(This whakatauki talks about transitioning along a continuum from the dark of night into broad daylight, it also relates to the rehabilitation process of a new member, from isolation, through empowerment and education into independence.)