

Fact sheet

16 April 2020

Why was 'Here to help u' created?

On 23 March 2020, when the New Zealand Government moved the country into Alert Level 4 to stop the spread of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus), several Hamilton-based community service providers identified there would be a huge demand for wellbeing support and social services during the crisis. The group of providers were united in their mission to provide local people with an easily accessible and quick way to access support and essential supplies. 'Here to help u' was swiftly and collaboratively developed to serve the community effectively in challenging times.

Why was a special website developed?

Due to COVID-19 community providers had to adapt quickly and prepare to meet a high-level of demand on their services. The pressure to deliver was compounded when many providers, that had been part of the community infrastructure that served vulnerable people, were forced to close or offer reduced services during COVID-19. It was more important than ever before that vulnerable people experiencing hardship had an easy way to request help and get it. At the same time community service providers needed an efficient way to receive and respond to help requests. So the Wise Group, with input from Community Waikato and in collaboration with providers, stepped up and built the 'Here to help u' system.

What is 'Here to help u'?

'Here to help u' is many things. It's:

- innovative,
- pioneering with providers, volunteers, funders and wellbeing organisations all working together for the greater good,
- an online one-stop shop, (www.heretohelpu.nz) where the public can go to for a range of help, and
- a case management system, where trained Connectors receive help requests, validate them, and then assign them to the appropriate provider(s). Providers have restricted access to a portal where they get secure information to deliver the right support to the right people.

Here's what providers had to say during development of the website and portal:

"Here to help u' will be a really useful tool. This will be fantastic to have."

Jenny Collings, Local Charity Director, Salvation Army

**"COVID-19 has brought us together to pioneer a new way of working.
That's a great thing for the sector and for the people."**

Mareta Matenga, Trustee at The Serve and Community Development Team Leader, Hamilton City Council

How does it work?

There are 3 simple steps:

1. A member of the public visits www.heretohelpu.nz, fills out an online help request and submits it.
2. The help request is picked up by a trained Connector who contacts the person requesting help to gather further information about their needs.
3. The Connector then assigns the help request to an appropriate provider(s), who has joined the 'Here to help u' portal and is ready and able to receive requests for help. If the provider is unable to deliver help, they can decline the request. This alerts the Connector to re-assign the request to another provider, ensuring people in need are supported.

What if I don't have internet access?

Freephone helplines have been set up for those who do not have access to a desktop or mobile device. During Alert Level 4, Civil Defence provides emergency support through an emergency helpline (freephone 0800 800 405). When the country moves out of Alert Level 4, 'Here to help u' will offer and promote a dedicated freephone 0800 number people can call for support.

How do I know the information I provide is safe?

'Here to help u' takes the privacy of people who use the site seriously. A comprehensive privacy policy can be found at www.heretohelpu.nz/privacy

Who is it for?

Anyone can reach out at any time for help using 'Here to help u.' Because it's online it's available 24/7. There are no barriers or conditions to receiving help. Initially 'Here to help u' will be launched and trialled in Hamilton. There is interest from other parts of the Waikato region to get involved. We expect to add more areas soon.

What help is available?

When people visit the website they can request free assistance across a number of areas. These include food parcels, prepared meals, collection of items service, general local support, mental health support, and safe social connection. People can select more than one help category. As new providers join 'Here to help u' and new community needs are identified, we aim to add new categories of assistance to the site.

Is there a cost involved?

No. There is no cost for a member of the public to submit a request or receive help. And there is no cost for a provider to be listed on the site to serve the community. The *services listed on the website are provided for free by a range of community service providers to help people in need. Local Waikato funders and funding trusts support the work of many community service providers to make this possible.

** Under the collection of items service, pick-up and delivery of items is free. Payment for the items (such as groceries and medicines) is required and is the responsibility of the person requiring help.*

How long will it be available?

'Here to help u' has been built to serve the public and the sector during COVID-19, through the recovery phase and beyond. Feedback from the public and providers will be used to enhance and improve the system so that it remains an asset into the future. The system is scalable and can be replicated for use in other communities.

For further information please contact:

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