



Breaking the cycle for New Zealand children
Te Roopu Awhi Whanau - www.familyhelptrust.org.nz

December 2017 Newsletter



KAREN BROWN

KAREN LEAVES FHT

Long-serving member of the social work team Karen Brown ended her FHT role in November.

“Being part of FHT has been a great journey for me, and a wonderful place to work. As a Māori woman and a social worker, FHT has enabled me to utilise my Māori approach and whānau ora practices, adhering to my own values and beliefs.

“I have loved being part of FHT,” she says.

Karen started working for the trust in September 2005. Her new role is with another service where she continues her commitment to Māori families, and keeping Māori children safe within their own whānau, hapu and iwi wherever possible.

Thank you for your service to all the FHT families you have walked alongside in the past 12 years, Karen.

EASI COLLABORATION IMPROVING SOCIAL INVESTMENT

FHT’s reporting software, EASI, developed to support the trust’s database and case management, is opening new opportunities. In collaboration with the government’s Social Investment Agency (SIA), EASI is helping FHT pilot new ways to monitor and report on social service effectiveness.



Established this year to help improve social sector outcomes, the SIA is working with FHT to pilot automated contract reporting, as the agency’s Danny Mollan explains.

“Through minor modifications on EASI, and using the SIA Data Exchange, reporting data for FHT contracting agencies can now transfer automatically via the Data Exchange. This means that FHT staff then have less administration each month, freeing them to spend more time working directly with families.”

Danny Mollan says safe and easy opportunities to share data can improve social services.

“Working with FHT to understand how to help them appropriately share data with others assists us to understand the practical aspects of using data to enhance social services.

“We’re collaborating with FHT on other opportunities to develop services to improve vulnerable families’ lives. For example, sharing FHT data with the DHB and other agencies, we can safely and simply ensure the effectiveness of immunisation schedules for all FHT families,” he says.

According to Danny Mollan, safe, controlled and easy data exchange, while protecting personal information, is key for social investment.

“Without the right tools that can be problematic. Working with FHT and EASI enables safe and simple sharing via the SIA Data Exchange, also presenting additional opportunities to improve services for FHT and organisations it works with,” he says.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CDHB EASES DOCTOR ACCESS

FHT families will have easier access to healthcare, thanks to a new joint initiative of the trust and the Canterbury District Health Board.

Wayne Turp of the DHB explains:

“We see the value of partnerships, and are keen to enable the vulnerable families FHT works with to access the healthcare they need. We want to make sure these children have the best possible start to life. The DHB understands how important it is that families are enrolled with a general practice, and that children have timely access to immunisation, and receive their ‘Well Child Tamariki’ and ‘Before School’ checks. Families with FHT social workers generally face numerous multi-faceted problems and although access to a general practice for those under 13 is free, many parents typically struggle to make, keep or pay for family doctor appointments. By working in partnership, we aim to overcome these challenges.”



FAMILY OVERCOMES ADDICTION, AND CANCER

When she first came onto the FHT case list in 2010, Anna's life was barely in control.

Her two eldest children, whose father had been convicted of rape, were in care. Her third child, born when Anna was in prison for offences that stemmed from her drug addiction, had also been removed from Anna's custody.

Anna's drug use began when she was 14. During her childhood, she alternated from being in care, to being with stepfathers who molested her and a prescription drug-dependent mother unable to properly care for Anna or any of her ten brothers and sisters.

By her late 20s Anna had recently started a relationship with Jack, who was a stable influence and was encouraging her to, finally, complete a methadone programme, something she had attempted on numerous occasions since her teens.

Pregnant again, Anna's FHT social worker was Cathie Tatupu.

Anna's fourth child, Melody, is now seven. Anna successfully completed the methadone programme, she and Jack have a handful of cleaning contracts, and all three of her older children have been returned to the couple's care. In the family's tidy three-bedroom unit in the north-west of Christchurch, Anna keeps birds, fish, cats and a dog. She is close to her goal of coming off the benefit, and volunteers at Melody's primary school where she organises a regular sausage sizzle for the PTA.

However, it has not all been easy. When Melody was two and a half years old, and Anna was in the thick of the methadone programme, the toddler was diagnosed with a serious cancer. As well as having surgery that left her with a permanent disability, the little girl had to undergo a course of chemotherapy. Cathie was on hand to make sure Anna and Jack could take Melody for the many hospital appointments, while also juggling the methadone and their care of the other children. Anna says the assistance of the Cancer Society was also critical to help the family through such a traumatic period.

While Melody has recovered from her ordeal, and is happy at school, Anna, who has also lost other family members to cancer, remains vigilant and wary that cancer may return.

Now drug free, Anna and Jack are determined to do the best for their family.

Cathie and FHT are proud to have walked alongside them as they have made such huge progress to overcome such enormous challenges.

Names in this story have been changed to protect the privacy of the family.

FAREWELL LIZ CHESTERMAN

"My initial involvement with FHT, from 2004, was to represent the Rotary Club of Christchurch on the board. Because FHT's mission and values fitted well with me, I was delighted to accept the nomination. Since then, these values have not wavered. I strongly believe the FHT model of home-based, long-term intervention, focusing on the whole family, is the most effective way to break the cycle of abuse.

During my tenure, we have been persuaded to consider our relationship with state agencies and apply for government funding, which is both positive and negative. I am proud that FHT, under a dedicated governance team of trustees and Libby Robins' passionate direction, is held up around New Zealand, and internationally, as a successful model of child abuse prevention, based on professional, reliable outcome data.

Financial viability continues to be of primary concern. Despite the innovative, bold decision to become a partner in the Loft development, funding will remain a major issue for FHT. The Loft offers opportunities to share resources, personnel and sponsorship: a challenge for staff, volunteers and the board.

I look forward to watching the future of FHT, and will continue to staunchly support and advocate for the Trust."

Liz Chesterman recently stepped down as an FHT board member. She chaired the board from 2013 to 2014 and will continue as a Trustee of the Family Help Foundation.

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