



Wesley
Community
Action

community ■ compassion ■ change

Building on strong foundations



Wesley Rātā Village – 2019/2020

Introduction

It is 3 years since we closed Wesleyhaven rest home and hospital. We are continuing to build on our new vision.

This report outlines our mahi over the last year.

We hope it gives readers a good picture of how we continue to build on the strong foundations we have at Wesley Rātā Village.

Our highlights have been to see the new homes sprouting up at the village, and looking forward to welcoming their new residents.

We have also been delighting in the cementing of friendships with the Ageing Well Network. This group is starting to really deepen, with the members supporting each other through some really tough times and starting to realise the power of what they can do together that they can't do alone.

Welcoming our new Community Innovation Worker, Emily Innes, means that we are able to support the wider community much more effectively, and allows us to start designing other innovative approaches to reaching our vision for the village.

We are looking forward to what the next year offers us at this special place.

Our progress last year

We made progress in six areas of mahi during 2019/20:

1. **Kāinga** | Homes – Affordable rental housing in an intentional community

We continued to manaaki the residents of the 30 existing homes at the village

We completed the build of, and welcomed new residents into 4 new homes,

We have made good progress on another 21 homes, into which will be welcoming new residents in November this year.

We have been building up connections with our local networks to support people and whānau into the village.

2. **Mahi** | Jobs skills and support for young people seeking a job

We continued to host Kiwi Can Do job-skills training course in our old hospital building. This has brought many young people through the village, all of whom are putting their energy into the building of the new homes.

3. **Tamariki** | Children – Space for parents, babies and children to play and learn

We continued hosting the Rātā Playgroup which since lockdown ended has grown to a great size

This year, we ran our first 14-week course of Incredible Years.

4. **Kia tūhono ngā kaumātua** | Connecting in ageing – Ageing Well Network

We grew the Ageing Well Network to a group of 29 current active members and supported them to connect with each other and get what they need during Covid-19 lockdown.

We started to prototype 2 new initiatives for the Ageing Well Network – Travel bank, and a community technology connection project.

5. **Wāhi hui** | Gathering space – Hosting community

We continued to host events at the village, for people to connect with their community.

6. **Taiao** | Nature – Restoring the bush and environment so it can help restore us

We started to plan several nature connection projects, an accessible bush track, a community nursery, and a solar energy grid project.

Our focus for 2020/21

We have three focus areas for this coming year:

1. A huge focus for us in 2020/21 will be to welcome the new residents of 21 more homes into the village. By welcoming these new residents well, we can support them to be able to contribute all they have to offer to the village community.
2. We will also be focusing on the growth and development of our community guiding group so that the village can be a resource for the whole community, including having a focus on our taiao initiatives that connect people to their natural environment.
3. Our third area of focus will be to continue to support the development of the Ageing Well Network.

August 2020

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Nā tō kete, nā tōku kete ka ora ai te iwi

With your contribution and my contribution, the community flourishes

Wesley Rātā Village Vision



When we stopped providing residential aged care at Wesleyhaven rest home and hospital in August 2017, the Wesley Community Action Board made the decision to retain ownership of the land. It was gifted to Wesley for the benefit of the community (especially older people) and we are committed to that kaupapa. In the months after closing Wesleyhaven we carried out a whole range of community conversations about what to do next. We have combined what the community told us with our mission and skills to develop a vision for the village.

Across the generations, everyone contributing towards a good life.

Wesley Rātā Village is a place to reweave community and to support wellbeing and resilience. It is a home to enjoy living in and a place to visit for inspiration and strengthening connections. It's a place for all generations, with a special position for seniors/kaumātua.

Gifted 70 years ago to support vulnerable seniors/kaumātua in the Hutt Valley, our 60 hectares of awa (rivers), ngahere (bush), māra (gardens), valleys, homes, and rooms are a significant community asset. Wesley Community Action is privileged to be the current kaitiaki of this site and the holders of the new vision.

The reweaving of community at Wesley Rātā Village will involve many strands all contributing to the overarching vision. The reweaving is shaped by the community of people. Many partnerships and relationships will grow over time out of connections to the Village.

The following touchstones guide our work at the Village:

- **Kia hōnore te Tiriti** | Honoring the Treaty – connections are strengthened with whānau, hapū and iwi
- **Taupuhipuhi** | Mutual exchange – fostering opportunities for people to give and receive
- **Kia haumanu** | Restorative – a place for healing relationships with the land and each other
- **Kia toitū** | Sustainable – enriching the physical, social, economic environment to support future stewardship
- **Mana a-rohē** | Local orientation – local people are active in all aspects and we are connected as part of a vibrant Naenae and wider Hutt
- **Ako** | Learning – knowledge is shared and expanded between generations and cultures

Strategic Outcomes

We have identified six strategic outcomes for our work at Wesley Rātā Village. These outcomes guide our decision-making as we strive to achieve them.

We are building a place that grows:

1. **Takune** | Intention – People plan for their own and their community’s future
2. **Whanaungatanga** | Connectedness – People spark connection to end loneliness
3. **Whakatipuranga** | Generations – All stages of life are celebrated, and generations mingle together to support wellness
4. **Tino rangatiratanga** | Agency – People, especially seniors/kaumātua, are able to actively lead their own lives
5. **Ngākau reka** | Attitudes – A positive attitude to ageing flourishes
6. **Koha** | Contribution – Everyone’s contribution is encouraged and valued

Key strands of activity

1. KĀINGA / HOMES: Affordable rental housing in an intentional community

This year has seen us open four new homes, and welcome their new residents into the village, including our first whānau living here.

It has also seen the Village residents association continue to support each other beautifully, including through the really tough time of Covid-19 lockdown. Wesley was able to provide them some support to get ready for lockdown and keep themselves safe, for example, providing freezer capacity for meals, and helping to distribute food.



It has also seen major transformation of the village environment with the near completion of another 21 new homes. We had a co-design session with Wesley staff and current residents to talk through how best to welcome new residents to the Village and are confident this will continue to be done well. It was important to design the processes we want for welcoming the new whānau without making any assumptions about what part the current residents may or may not want to play in that.

We have been working and connecting with others in the community to make sure that local people and whānau that they have relationships with who would thrive living in the village, have all the information they need to get ready for one of these houses. This way, we can ensure that we have a list of whānau who are on the social housing register and ready to apply for a home in the village when the homes are opened. We prototyped this way of working on the small scale with the first four homes, which has helped us identify ways to improve the process.

Mahi ahead

We will be focused on being ready for the 21 new homes worth of residents, including fostering the social infrastructure needed to welcome them well.

We are planning a summer festival to help welcome the new residents and celebrate with the wider community.

2. MAHI / JOBS: Skills and support for young people seeking a job



We're really pleased to see the continued operations of Kiwi Can Do¹ in our old Hospital building.

Their project has been the main area of activity in terms of mahi / jobs at the village. All of the rangatahi have been working on helping to build the new homes with the support of EasyBuild.

Their work at the Village on our new homes was featured on Seven Sharp, with a particular focus on supporting women into the trades:

<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/seven-sharp/clips/government-targeting-woman-to-help-fill-construction-worker-shortage-targeting-woman-to-help-fill-construction-worker-shortage?fbclid=IwAR2sou949UmbuBpSsJtGvZMhsOlPbhFMd-q-1qr0DZfFQezlf2jTUjjpg0>

Mahi ahead

We need to spend some time growing our relationships with local schools so that they can use our village as more of a resource for their young people. This will mainly be done through the Community Guiding Group. We can see potential to link young people with real-work experience around construction, aged care, conservation, and the arts.

¹ kiwi-can-do.co.nz

3. TAMARIKI / CHILDREN: Space for parents, babies and children to play and learn

This year we ran a successful Incredible Years course. This supported a large group of parents to grow their confidence and skills in respectful parenting. We are starting our next course in August with another full group.

We continue to host the Rātā Playgroup which has grown to a very large size since Covid-19 lockdown ended.

Mahi ahead

We are working with the Rātā Playgroup to see how we can support them more with this large growth. By having our Community Innovation Worker on staff, we are able to provide important support to community groups such as this, by being backup for volunteer organisers if they are unwell or away.

Once the new builds are completed and the wider site is safer, we will be looking to see how we can restart the nature playgroup as well. The development of the “Village Green” area behind our Hall will be influenced by the needs and desires of our youngest residents and visitors, as well as our oldest, creating a rich resource that can be enjoyed by all.

4. KIA TŪHONO NGĀ KAUMĀTUA / CONNECTING IN AGEING: Ageing Well Network

We continue to delight in the Ageing Well Network, and all that this group of amazing seniors/kaumātua bring to the village.

We are currently hosting our 8th Ageing Well Group and since beginning, have had 64 seniors/kaumātua come through the Ageing Well Course. As would be expected we have a lot of members have life events, illness or passing away over the last three years, but we have a current active group in the network of 29, with seven amazing volunteers who support us to run these groups.

This network has been tailored to be welcoming for people who are in the early stages of dementia, or have other brain injuries, or who are experiencing social isolation (loneliness). Our evaluations of the course and network continue to show that it is very valued by the members.

This year, the Network members have been doing some good work inviting and talking with visitors to their group who can share information that they all want to find out. They have also been happy to share their perspectives and experiences with others. This includes:

- A representative from the DHB to answer questions about Advanced Care Planning.
- The members have asked for someone from Life Unlimited to visit and discuss hearing loss and aides.
- They have also asked someone to come and talk about the 2 referendums in the upcoming

election, the legalization of cannabis and euthanasia, so that they can be well informed when making their voting decisions.

- They have shared cards and flowers and gifts with each other during hard times. That support has been so warmly appreciated by people in the group.
- They have talked together about their ideas and perspectives for different projects that we are exploring in the village including transport needs, and planning of an accessible bush track.
- They have also started to talk about issues that they would like to collectively have a voice on. One day during the session, people started sharing ways that they had been let down by their home care help. Tracey spoke with Nurse Maude, who asked that each person contact them individually to share complaints. The group rejected that request and instead have asked that Nurse Maud come to talk with the whole group so they can support each other as a collective.

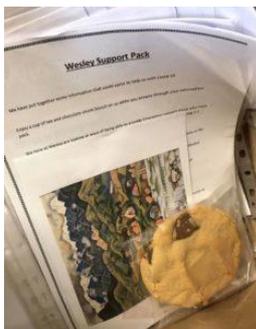
During lockdown this network came into its own. Prior to lockdown, the group was great about coming together to share accurate information and tips about how to keep safe, how to shop online, how to clean. And during lockdown, they stepped into gear calling and supporting each other at this tough time, with the support of our facilitator Tracey.

Forget about video-conferencing apps like Zoom or House Party. A group of Hutt Valley seniors who usually meet at Wesley Rātā Village in Naenae every Monday afternoon are going old-school when it comes to staying in touch during the Covid-19 lockdown, using telephone calls to deepen existing friendships and develop new ones.

The 34 people are members and volunteers of Wesley Community Action's Ageing Well network, which was established in 2018 to provide new ways for older people to maintain their wellbeing while living independently following the closure of Wesleyhaven rest home and hospital in Naenae.

The network includes a weekly coffee group at Wesley Rātā Village, when the group of seniors/kaumātua from the wider Hutt Valley community meet for coffee, sausages rolls and pikelets, laughter and lots of hugs.

"Hugs are pretty much compulsory," says coffee group co-ordinator Tracey Scott.



All of them were disappointed that their physical weekly meetings had to stop once the lockdown started. But old-school technology – the telephone – has turned out to be a good substitute.

On the day before the lockdown began Tracey Scott and community innovation worker Emily Innes headed out in the Village van to deliver a "Support Pack" to all the group members. It included information about Covid-19, an inspirational quote, a home-baked chocolate chip biscuit and an updated phone list for the group.

Phone list encourages Nickie to work her phone

The phone list was all the encouragement long-time member Nickie Preece needed to start getting on the blower. Soon she was having daily calls with her friend and fellow group member Diane Roberts. But she didn't stop there – she started calling a few others from the group who she knew less well.

“Once the lockdown began things got a bit boring at home, so I decided to start calling some of the others in the group. I ring them up and chat to them as often as I can – without being a nuisance!”

Now most of the group – all of whom are graduates of Wesley Community Action's 10-week Ageing Well Course for isolated seniors – are regularly checking up on each other by phone, mostly using landlines rather than mobiles.

Tracey also calls each member of the group at least once a week and encourages them to stay in touch with each other.

“I check to make sure they have food, and that they are making calls as well as receiving them. They have actually really enjoyed getting to know each other better by talking on their phones.”

The more tech-savvy (including Nickie) have even managed the occasional video call, raising the possibility that, with the right support, the rest of the group might be able to start connecting online in the future.

“We're looking at applying for funding to buy tablets and mobiles so they can learn how to do things like Skype each other,” says Tracey. “Some older people find it hard to swipe a smartphone, but tablets are bigger so they are more user-friendly.”



Keep calm and carry on

She has found that most of the group have been around long enough to be able to weather the lockdown storm without too much distress. One member who lived through the air raids on London during the Second World War observed that there was no point in getting too distraught about the situation: “We'll get through it like we did in the war,” she told Tracey. Scott.

Another suggested trying to avoid watching and listening to the news as a way of coping with the situation, while one 90-year-old member is looking forward to opening a bottle of champagne once the group can meet in person again.

We had some media interest in the group during lockdown:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/416307/staying-connected-regular-phone-chats-the->

[answer-for-seniors](#)

We also contributed to the conversation about support for seniors/kaumātua:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/415706/more-support-needed-for-the-elderly-even-outside-lockdowns>

As well as supporting the Ageing Well Network, we have also been planning and working on the early stages of two projects identified by the group to solve some key barriers to inclusion:

- 1) Transport – we have gone into partnership with the Hutt Timebank and the Hutt City Council to design and trial a project called “Travel Bank” which matches timebank members with seniors/kaumātua to make sure that people can get low cost transport to where they want to be.
- 2) Technology – we have set up a community computer in our rooms and will be working with the group and others in the community to establish how they might teach and learn on it, and explore how technology can better connect, instead of further isolate seniors/kaumātua in our community.

Mahi ahead

This year we will continue to support the group to grow their relationships and their work to support each other in their ageing and to contribute to the wider conversations about what ageing is like in New Zealand.

We will also be carrying out the design, exploration and evaluation of our transport, and technology projects with the group and wider community.

5. WĀHI HUI / GATHERING SPACE: Hosting community

This year we have continued to host community and contribute to community building in a range of ways. We have also hired a new Community Innovation Worker, who is able to support the hosting of community.

Food bank

During lockdown, we extended our food bank into the Hutt to be able to support anyone who needed access to good kai. Since lockdown has ended we have partnered with Pomare Community House to provide a temporary space for their food bank, with volunteers pulling together around 200 food parcels each week.

Community Garden

We continue to host the Team Naenae community garden at the Village, providing space for them to come together and grow food and community.



Better community facilities

We have finished doing some significant upgrades to our facilities to make them suitable for purpose for the community to be welcomed in to use them. This includes a new big and beautiful kitchen in the Rec Hall, making the Ageing Well and community rooms safer, warmer and nicer to be in, and a huge new fully accessible deck.

Retreat and hui

Our large Strand building, which used to be one of our rest homes, has hosted several retreats and conferences and groups of people coming to the Hutt. This is an area we can continue to pursue in the coming year.

Arts

We have been building up relationships with local artists and have provided them space for different uses. The local arts school The Learning Connexion now has permanent art exhibition space on our walls and occupied one of our buildings for a whole week to carry out a course on exhibitions and curation, culminating in an amazing art show of a range of local artists.

Monthly community lunches

Our community lunches, in partnership with the Hutt Timebank each month continue to be a hit, with a good solid group of regulars and new people coming each time as well. We often have a range of organisations and representatives coming to lunch, with the Mayor and local councillors being attendees this year, as well as all the local Hutt Kainga Ora tenancy managers. We are happy to be supporting a space where locals can have direct, and casual contact with organisations like this.

Community Cinema

We hosted a lunchtime winter film screening in the main lounge of the Strand building, which was open to onsite residents and the wider local community, for a koha entry fee. We intend to make this a regular monthly event. Community cinema is a great way to bring people together – it is universally enjoyed and brings back many fond memories for our seniors.

Supporting community in the wider Hutt Valley

As part of our partnership arrangement with Hutt City Council, we have been contributing to the work around growing community led development down the road in Epuni – where we can support our neighbouring community in getting the backbone support they need to grow their community themselves.

Mahi ahead

We will keep working with our partners and others to make the Village a vibrant community asset that supports wellbeing and resilience. We will in particular keep hosting and growing the monthly lunches and build up our community guiding group.

We are in conversation with Naenae artists and Hutt Timebank about hosting more workshops, classes and events at the village, and how we might best support these initiatives.

We will continue to experiment with our community about what else people want and will come to, and keep the conversation going about how the different spaces at the village could be used to their full potential.

6. TAIAO / NATURE: Restoring the bush and environment so it can help restore us

We are lucky to be the current kaitiaki of a large piece of regenerating native bush. This secluded patch of bush boarding suburbia provides many opportunities. We this year we have started to develop plans on four new initiatives that contribute to the enhancement of this resource.

Fully accessible bush track



We are working to develop a project plan to create a fully accessible bush track here at Wesley Rātā Village. Our 60ha property incorporates the popular “Rātā Street Loop” but this steep tramping track is inaccessible to many – including small children and those with limited mobility, including most of our current residents. We have a vision of a world-class example of an accessible track. Everyone, regardless of ability, will be able to use it. The track will be wide and gentle enough for the bulkiest wheelchairs, mobility scooters, double buggies, and even stretcher trolleys to be manoeuvred safely along it with ease. This track will enable and enhance a key strand of our vision,

“Connection to Nature,” continuing our partnership with the Naenae Nature Trust and other groups such the Forest Playgroup and local schools. Village residents and locals of every age and ability will be able to fully experience this special place. It will create ongoing social and environmental benefits and become a main feature of our Ageing Well Programme. Here at the village, everyone will have access to nature.

We have also been working this year with the Hutt City Council reserves team to establish what upgrades and signage are needed on the Rātā Street loop to make it safer for people as well.

Community native nursery

We have also started developing up plans with the Naenae Nature Trust to set up a community nursery. We will work with schools, seniors/kaumātua, local marae, neighbours, young people not in work or education, to source seeds and seedlings from the bush, pot them and raise them to healthy size and then plant them back into our piece of bush, or elsewhere in the Hutt. We will also raise the Rakau Rangatira species that are now rare in this corner of New Zealand and which need some help to get re-established into this piece of native bush. We will add to our current pest trapping and run a pest control project to reduce the impact of these pests on our piece of bush. This project will have a focus on working with the part of the community who are not so

easily engaged in Predator Free projects around the country, people of lower socio-economic background, and of a range of cultures.

Biodiversity plan

We have applied for funding to support us to develop a biodiversity plan for the village. This will help us establish how we can best meet our kaitiaki commitments for this precious piece of land.

Solar energy grid

We have been working with Solar City to use the Village as a case study to look at how solar energy grids might work for social housing. We are just in the early stages of this project.

Mahi ahead

We will be continuing to build on our partnership with the Naenae Nature Trust, Hutt City Council, Solar City, and the disability community to take the four of these projects and turn them into reality.

We will keep talking and sharing these ideas with the local community and beyond, to help us grow our partnerships and connections as these projects develop.