

Report

Date: 10 May 2021 **Security Level:** IN CONFIDENCE

To: Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Ministerial Group
From: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for the Public Service

Regional Public Service Leadership: Opportunities to support child and youth wellbeing

Purpose of the report

- 1 You have asked how regional system leadership can support the implementation of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS).
- 2 This report provides an overview of the Regional System Leadership model, including proposed changes to enhance the model which will be brought to Cabinet in June. It describes how the model is supporting child and youth wellbeing outcomes currently and how it can further support the implementation of the CYWS at a regional level.

Executive summary

- 3 The CYWS recognises that to successfully achieve the outcomes it aspires to, and which we all want for children, young people and their whānau, public service agencies need to join-up more closely. This requires the public service to work across the natural silos of agencies to deliver on outcomes, which are hard to shift and measure. The challenge and opportunity of improving the wellbeing of whānau and future generations needs us to define success together, contribute strongly and sustain it over time, particularly locally.
- 4 This focus on collective action is also central to the regional system leadership model which was established in 2019 as part of Joined-up Government in the Regions, initiated through the public service reforms.
- 5 The Regional Public Service Leads (Regional Leads) who were designated in September 2019 to drive this work within their regions have demonstrated their ability to bring agencies together to collectively work on addressing complex wellbeing issues. This is evidenced through examples from:
 - 5.1 Te Taitokerau, where the Regional Lead brought agencies together to establish the Whai Kainga steering group to enable Māori home ownership and address housing affordability, quality and adequacy
 - 5.2 Bay of Plenty, where the Regional Lead brought agencies together to obtain funding to support families with children living in emergency housing to transport their children to school
 - 5.3 Te Taihū, where the Regional Lead brought agencies together to work in partnership with local iwi to provide kai, essential items and support to whānau during COVID-19 lockdown, with agencies working together to secure funding.
- 6 The regional public service priorities being developed focus on areas where we can improve wellbeing at the regional level. These strongly feature actions that will directly or indirectly contribute to improving child and youth wellbeing.
- 7 We have an opportunity to strengthen the regional system leadership model to better support alignment and co-ordination across central government agencies in

regions and improve the way the public service engages with partners, including iwi/Māori, as well as invests in, and delivers services in regions.

- 8 Key changes proposed to the model include:
 - 8.1 strengthened accountability to Chief Executive-level leadership – providing a point of leadership for the model by a senior public servant (Secretary for Social Development)
 - 8.2 an expanded mandate for Regional Leads – recognising that in addition to convening regional partners and stakeholders, the Leads have a role in working collaboratively to resolve issues in their regions and to seek support from senior public service decision makers where necessary
 - 8.3 an expanded scope for Regional Leads – including the economic and environmental sectors as well as the social sector, recognising that regional stakeholders do not organise themselves according to central government agency structures and the most important priorities are cross-cutting
- 9 As it evolves, the regional leadership model will continue to support implementation of the CYWS through:
 - 9.1 Alignment of priorities – ensuring that local plans and strategies are also aligned with national level strategies, such as the CYWS.
 - 9.2 Coordination of implementation activity – coordinating across agencies in the regions, to avoid duplication of effort and funding and collectively work through implementation challenges.
 - 9.3 Conduit to Wellington – continuing to act as a key point of contact for central government in the region, ensuring that messaging to local stakeholders is consistent, and providing feedback to the centre on how initiatives are working and are perceived at the regional level.
 - 9.4 Supporting resolution of issues – escalating local issues where there are points of contention that cannot be resolved collectively in the region. This might include implementation challenges or competing priorities that require Chief Executives and/or Ministers to provide direction and support.

Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **note** that in order to achieve the outcomes we all want for children, young people and their whānau, public service agencies need to overcome administrative barriers to join up and align respective programmes to best contribute to these complex issues
- 2 **note** that Regional Leads are bringing officials together in regions to support collective wellbeing outcomes, particularly where local collaboration is needed to impact
- 3 **note** that opportunities to improve how the public service operates in regions, and how we contribute to wellbeing, including child and youth wellbeing, through the regional leadership model will be presented for Cabinet approval in June
- 4 **note** that proposed changes to the regional system leadership model will support joined-up work by agencies in regions on areas of the strategy that need strong local collaboration, and will support a national level shift in child and youth wellbeing.

Work to join up government in the regions and strengthen regional leadership is progressing

- 10 As part of the Joined-up Government in the Regions work programme, Cabinet agreed to strengthening regional public service leadership through the designation of eleven Regional Leads across fifteen regions based on regional council boundaries [CAB-19-MIN-0290 and GOV-19-MIN-0063 refer].
- 11 The Regional Leads provide a point of contact within the public service in the region who local leaders can engage where an issue cuts across agencies work.. The role includes a convening mandate which, combined with the authority of the Regional Lead's substantive agency position, enables the Regional Lead to bring agencies together. The purpose of the convening mandate is to collectively focus on key complex issues affecting communities, to co-ordinate engagement and activity to reduce duplication, and to support shared prioritisation.
- 12 In line with the Cabinet decision, the Regional Leads' focus has been on the social and skills sector, while strengthening connections to the economic sectors. Since their designation in September 2019, the Regional Leads have worked with officials through COVID and convened public service decision-makers to collectively work on cross-cutting wellbeing issues in their regions. Cabinet asked Regional Leads to facilitate the development of shared regional public service priorities to help Central Government have a stronger view of what is important to communities' wellbeing.

The Regional Lead role and function is improving the coordination and alignment of agencies' support to communities at the regional level

- 13 Although every region organises itself differently and has different relationships, the Regional Leads have been effective in bringing agencies together to collectively address issues to support wellbeing at the regional level, particularly through COVID.
- 14 Collectively working to address issues that support wellbeing is important in the context of the CYWS. This is because in order to successfully achieve the outcomes that the CYWS aspires to, and which we all want for children, young people and their whānau, public service agencies need to work together and overcome the administrative barriers between agencies which have historically led to a siloed approach to service delivery and investment.
- 15 Below are just two examples of how the Regional Lead role has supported collective activity in regions, that also align with CYWS outcomes.

Te Taitokerau

- 16 In Te Taitokerau, the Regional Lead used his convening mandate to bring together key stakeholders and establish the Whai Kainga steering group. The purpose of this group centres around enabling Māori home ownership, and addressing the affordability, quality and adequacy of housing in Te Taiktokerau, which has been a significant challenge for many years; hindered by a lack of local decision rights and a co-ordinated plan. Although only established in late-2020, the group has already made significant progress, including:
 - Creating a partnership framework that reflects the Crown-Māori relationship, local government perspectives and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Maori and Iwi Housing Innovation (MAIHI) framework.
 - Developing a single housing plan for Te Taitokerau that builds on the Public Housing Plan.
- 17 This work aligns with the CYWS outcome that "children and young people have what they need" which includes adequate housing.

Bay of Plenty

- 18 The Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC) requested central government support to collectively address social issues in the region through an inter-agency working group. In response, the Regional Lead convened the Rotorua Collective Impact Group (RCIG) which includes representatives from the Ministries of Social Development (MSD), HUD, Education (MOE), Oranga Tamariki (OT), RLC, and the District Health Board (DHB). The RCIG identified that an initial priority group to focus on was children/tamariki living in emergency housing. In Rotorua, there are approximately 380 children/tamariki living in emergency housing, and many of these whānau need to travel a significant distance each day to enable their children/tamariki to continue attending the school they are enrolled with, which is an additional cost that most cannot afford.
- 19 The group worked together to agree an approach which ultimately saw local schools submit a collective funding application under MOE's Urgent Response Fund to meet the costs of transporting children living in emergency housing to and from school, which was successful.
- 20 This work aligns with the CYWS Outcome that "children and young people are learning and developing" by ensuring children stay connected to school.

Regional Leads helped to co-ordinate engagement and responses during COVID

Te Taihu

- 21 During the COVID lockdown the eight iwi of Te Taihu banded together to provide whānau with access to kai, essential items and support. The collective identified early on that whānau well-being would be impacted post COVID, and that there would be an ongoing need for the provision of support. The eight iwi developed an action plan to provide ongoing support, *Te Kotahi te Hoe*, outlining the key aspects of wellbeing that would be addressed, and the resources that would be required for implementation and delivery.
- 22 In response, the Regional Lead convened a hui in Nelson and presented the idea of seeking putea from across agencies. MSD and Te Puni Kokiri offered to assist with further development of the action plan to support funding bids. In addition, the Regional Lead co-ordinated sources of funding that might fit with the intentions of the iwi action plan, escalating the issue through to the MSD Māori and Community Partnerships team. MSD subsequently confirmed a funding package of \$1.535m.
- 23 This funding is catalyst to something of great significance in Te Taihu. Initial funding enabled the collective to carry out a self-assessment and to develop a set of actions to build organisational capability and capacity.
- 24 An iwi collective entity has now been established to receive and administer funding, Te Kotahi o Te Taihu Charitable Trust. An Operations Manager has been appointed and commenced in the role on 22 March 2021. A programme of activity has been developed for the next six months and a secondary two-year programme will be developed shortly which will address whānau well-being under five key elements:
 - Whāngai – Feeding our People: Whānau will not go hungry on our watch.
 - Tāwharautia – Shelter and Support: Shelter the homeless and keep a roof over the heads of whānau.
 - Whiwhi Mahi – Work and Training: Whānau will have access to meaningful work and or training.
 - Whai Oranga – Holistic Wellbeing: Enhance whānau wellbeing through mental, emotional and spiritual support.
 - Whakawhiti: Communications, co-ordination and advocacy. Our collective voice will be heard and will help guide decision making in Te Taihu.

- 25 Iwi will design and deliver services to whānau with iwi-based Community Connectors, work brokers, and the development of a sustainable and resilient food supply strategy.

The regional public service priorities help to focus collectively on the key wellbeing issues in regions, with many supporting aspirations under the CYWS

- 26 As noted in paragraph 12, Regional Leads have been working collectively with other public service leaders and also iwi and non-government leaders in their regions to agree on regional public service priorities. These priorities align with established regional plans where these exist. The emerging priorities all seek to improve wellbeing, with priorities around employment, housing, mental health, Māori and children all featuring strongly.
- 27 A number of regions have identified priorities that are directly focused on improving child and youth wellbeing, and which will support outcomes under the CYWS. These are set out in Appendix one. However, almost all of the emerging priorities identified across all regions will indirectly improve outcomes for children and young people. This is because priorities that improve housing quality, affordability and access will flow on to children and young people within the whānau we support. Improving employment outcomes for parents and caregivers will flow on to better outcomes for children and young people, and supporting better mental health and addressing addictions such as methamphetamine for whānau will contribute to improved health and safety outcomes for children and young people.

There is an opportunity to improve how the public service operates, and collectively supports wellbeing at the regional level...

- 28 While the Regional Lead role is clearly enabling collective action to support wellbeing in regions, there is an opportunity to strengthen this 'network' leadership role and improve how the public service works together and engages in the region. I intend to present proposed changes to the model to the Cabinet Government Administration and Expenditure Committee (GOV) on 24 June 2021.
- 29 The changes are intended to further address issues with alignment and co-ordination. Key changes include:
- **Chief Executive-level leadership:** the Public Service Commissioner intends to designate the Secretary for Social Development as the system lead for regional public service alignment. The system leader model under the Public Service Act is used to designate a lead for a cross-cutting area where responsibilities fall across a large number of agencies. When acting in a system leader role, Chief Executives are expected to lead with a system perspective as distinct from their substantive agency leadership role.
 - **Providing Regional Leads with a stronger mandate:** this will include a mandate not only to convene public service leaders across the region, but also to work with officials to resolve issues and where this is not possible at a regional level, to escalate issues to Chief Executives as necessary.
 - **Expanding the scope of the Regional Lead role** to include social, economic, skills and workforce, and environmental sectors. Individual agencies would remain responsible for their core work programmes and delivery of portfolio areas.
- 30 This will add impetus to ongoing work to build alignment across government agencies, nationally and regionally, and to work within regions to support agreed plans and strategies to achieve wellbeing outcomes for communities. The model will also provide a more effective avenue for the public service to engage with iwi and other Māori groups. In recognition of the wider remit of the role, the model also proposes a name change to Regional Public Service Commissioner.

- 31 In addition, the model keeps open the possibility of changes in delegations of decision-rights or funding decisions in the future, in response to specific issues identified as regional groups work to make progress on priority areas.

...and this will better support the aspirations of the CYWS through activity at the regional level that is co-ordinated and aligned

- 32 The CYWS acknowledges that success is not within the remit of a single agency to achieve. If we are to be successful, we need to work across agencies, with local government, iwi and Māori organisations, business, non-government organisations and the philanthropic sector.
- 33 The regional system leadership model also recognises this and will act as an enabler within regions to achieve the aspirations under the CYWS. Under the model, and recognising the need for collective action in order to achieve outcomes under the CYWS, Regional Public Service Commissioners will:
- Support prioritisation by ensuring that local plans and strategies are also aligned with national level strategies, such as the CYWS.
 - Ensure activity is co-ordinated across agencies in the region, that efforts and funding are not duplicated, and that challenges are collectively addressed and resolved.
 - Continue to act as a key point of contact for central government in the region, ensuring that messaging to local stakeholders is consistent, and feeding back to the centre on how initiatives are working and are perceived at the regional level.
 - If required, escalate local issues to Chief Executives where there are points of contention that cannot be resolved collectively in the region. This might include implementation challenges or competing priorities that require a Chief Executive to provide direction and/or support.
- 34 Combined, the strengthened and expanded mandate, stronger accountability to Chief Executive level leadership, and where relevant, enabling local decision rights and flexibility of funding will support collective action aligned to the CYWS within regions. Regional collaboration will help drive national child and youth wellbeing outcomes.

Next steps

- 35 Regions are currently in the process of assigning indicators and measures to their regional public service priorities. Part of this process will involve scoping which CYWS measurements can be disaggregated at a regional level. Where appropriate and available, CYWS indicators and measurements will be selected for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. In this way, it will be possible to identify links between the regional public service priorities and the CYWS from an evaluation perspective.

Appendix one: Regional priorities directly aligned to CYWS outcomes

36 The following regions have identified priorities that are directly focused on improving child and youth wellbeing, and which will align with outcomes under the CYWS. Actions to deliver against priorities are still being refined, but the high-level priorities that align include:

- Hawkes Bay and Tairāwhiti have identified a priority focused on Mums and Moko, and ensuring the right supports are provided at the right time.
- Taranaki has identified a high-level priority on children and young people from 0-25 years, with specific focus areas on support for children in care, and on pre- and post-natal care for Māmā and Pēpi up to 6 years of age.
- Manawatu/Whanganui have identified a priority around child wellbeing and rangatahi outcomes with a focus on Māori and Pacific people which seeks to deliver improved outcomes under child poverty, youth NEET, family violence and employment across the region through improved partnerships with iwi.
- Nelson/Tasman, Marlborough and West Coast regions all have a focus on youth NEET and targeting education and training opportunities to available jobs.
- Canterbury has identified a priority focused on improving the wellbeing of tamariki, with a focus on those experiencing the greatest disadvantage.
- Otago and Southland have identified a priority around increasing regular attendance at school, with a focus on Māori, Pacific and other priority students.

37 Once regions have agreed upon actions to deliver on their priorities we will be able to report on how actions in regions are supporting child and youth wellbeing and delivering on the outcomes in the CYWS.

Appendix two: Regional Leads information

- 38 The following sets out who the Regional Lead is in each region, and what their substantive position is. As agreed by Cabinet, the regions used align with the regional boundaries used by the Regional Skills Leadership Groups, which are based on regional council and unitary authority boundaries [GOV-19-MIN-0063 refers].
- 39 The Regional Leads can provide information and context on their region to support you when you are visiting. Any requests for this type of support can be co-ordinated and managed via the office of the Secretary and Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development.

Te Tai Tokerau

- Eru Lyndon, MSD Regional Commissioner

Auckland

- Zoe Griffiths, MoE Deputy Secretary

Waikato

- Te Rehia Papesch, MSD Regional Commissioner

Bay of Plenty

- Ezra Schuster, MoE Director of Education

Hawke's Bay and Te Tairāwhiti

- MSD Regional Commissioner (vacant) – Chair role rotation until replacement decided

Taranaki

- Gloria Campbell, MSD Regional Commissioner

Manawatū-Whanganui

- Katie Brosnahan, MSD Regional Commissioner

Greater Wellington

- Roy Sye, MoE Director of Education

Nelson/Tasman, Marlborough and the West Coast

- Craig Churchill, MSD Regional Commissioner

Canterbury

- Ben Clark, Corrections Regional Commissioner

Otago and Southland

- Jason Tibble, MSD Regional Commissioner