



Hohepa

every life fully lived

Community
Life



Special
EDITION

We have gained positive things from this experience... We can pause, breathe and reflect, and pay attention differently.

Taking a LEAP to the future

Adapting to the Covid-19 lockdown isn't easy, but it's been a positive experience for the learning and activity programme (LEAP) team.

LEAP runs every weekday with around 80 options, shaped entirely by feedback from participants - from craft activities to social walks, performance and music, laughter yoga, mindfulness and meditation, visits to local cafes and businesses and gardening at schools.

Community Participation Manager Mark Unwin says the team have risen to the challenge with creativity and positivity, pivoting from a centralised day programme delivered at the Birchwood campus to home-based activities within each bubble.

"Arnah (Hohepa General Manager) wasn't just on the ball, but ahead of the ball - we had lots of meetings to brainstorm how this was all going to work in lockdown", says Mark. "The biggest challenge is not seeing everyone for our Monday community circles, so we're having a lot more Zoom meetings and phone calls to stay connected. It's really important that everyone feels heard and valued and that we keep up that structure for people."

The LEAP team has designed programmes for every house, providing individual options for the people Hohepa supports, and collaborating with the residential staff in each bubble. The teams have enjoyed working more closely together to deliver the programme in new ways.

New digital tools are helping, like an online activity choice form, ebooks from Christchurch City Libraries, Youtube videos and online games. It's been an opportunity to find more of the "endless resources" available on the Internet, says Mark, and many of these will be here to stay.

One of the most popular offerings is music therapy, now available to all thanks to videoconferencing, bringing connection and music into Hohepa living rooms. Southern Music Therapy have quickly scaled up their programme and provided alternative options using Zoom,



Mark Unwin



recorded sessions, and video or phone calls for individual sessions. Music therapy is bringing great outcomes and joy to people during the lockdown, with everyone enjoying singing and making music together. There's even a group performance in the works.

"It's been a real joy to facilitate and maintain the strong sense of belonging that everyone at Hohepa feels towards each other", says music therapist May Clulee. "Real, significant connections occur as everyone participates together in singing, dancing, sharing about their day and just seeing each other's faces, despite being far apart."

Mark and his team are thinking about how some of these changes to LEAP might shape the future, and they are all feeling positive despite the challenges of working in a lockdown. "When you do what we do, you can't help but enjoy it - feeling useful and helpful, and brightening someone's day, gives us so much joy and satisfaction."



Lockdown life at Lamar House

Life at Lamar House has changed a bit, just like all the Hohepa houses. It's one of seven bubbles across 28 homes, with staff drawing on Hohepa's anthroposophical philosophy to support wellbeing during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Support worker Stephen Roberts says that a framework and routine is essential to provide a sense of security, so they're keeping things "as normal as possible".

Stephen describes their current daily routine as "a Saturday groundhog day - there's no rush to shoot out of bed first thing but there are the daily necessities of breakfast, bed-making, brushing teeth, tidying, preparing meals...there's grounds maintenance to do, so we are going out on walks, picking fruit, and we wave and call out greetings to other houses."

This whanaungatanga or connection is strengthened by daily phone and video calls to other houses, keeping in touch with friends who would usually see each other on day programmes. Staying connected with family using technology has been important while visits aren't possible, and everyone is adapting and learning to use these new tools.

Nourishing the body, spirit and soul is essential to help people thrive, and that's continuing during the lockdown with creative pursuits. Like many Kiwi households this means plenty of baking, crafts and board games, and getting out in the garden. In Lamar Neil has been journaling and working on a series of jigsaws, while in other houses people are knitting, drawing, writing or doing cross-stitch.

A weekly 'Covid Courier' newsletter, described by Stephen as "a whole-of-community effort enabled by technology", is keeping people connected through visual media. The popular photo competition and quiz allows people to participate in a creative group activity, using digital tools to make it happen.

Hohepa has an Easter tradition of a community silent meal to commemorate the Last Supper, an important special occasion that helps mark the

Stephen Roberts. Photo credit Stuff



passage of time. Stephen and the team scrambled to adapt this event for the lockdown, and household bubbles were supported to create the setting for the meal and share it at the same time.

"This meant we could maintain that shared intention and sense of community", says Stephen. "Families were also invited to take part, the first time many have been involved in this event. Of course we also kept up the essential Easter egg hunt – a tradition not to be forsaken!"

Carer and anthroposophy teacher Anne-Odile Roberts says seasonal rituals like Easter are all part of "the background of rhythms that we can experience, giving us a sense of direction through the year and a relationship as humans to the natural world."

The anthroposophical philosophy considers each person as a unique expression of individuality in

body, soul and spirit. At Hohepa this means giving people real experiences that provide meaning, feed and enrich both inner and outer worlds. This approach has been helpful for supporting all aspects of wellbeing during the unique challenges of a lockdown.

Everyone is grateful for the beautiful green space, trees and birds on their doorstep at Birchfield campus, an important connection to the natural world. The transition to autumn, with leaves to be raked and changing weather, provides meaningful experiences and enrichment for the senses.

Anne-Odile says that overall, the lockdown at Lamar House has been quiet and peaceful. "We have gained positive things from this experience. We are discovering that for the people we support, staying in the security and comfort of home can mean a lot less anxiety. We can pause, breathe and reflect, and pay attention differently."



Sunflower Song

It's not forever
It won't be long
We're a bit bored
So we wrote this song


We go for a walk
Then have a sit
If we keep ourselves busy
We'll all get through it

It's nice sleeping in
And being on leave
So enjoy it for now
Both Ann and Steve

Steve likes his music
Ann her Lego
If we keep smiling
There will be much less woe

Stay safe everybody
Be happy and well
At the end of all this
We'll have stories to tell

*Written by the people and staff from
Sunflower House*



We are all in this together is a core message of the Covid-19 pandemic. A foundation stone for Hohepa has always been developing a sense of community and belonging. All of us are now experiencing that differently than before lockdown. As you know we offer support to people with intellectual disability, that isn't something that can be offered remotely for most. We are having to adapt and find ways to keep our organisational spirit thriving.

Thankfully, Hohepa benefits from a highly engaged and skilled team of leaders, managers and administrators who in the few weeks leading up to Level 4 lockdown being announced, took the time to plan for a number of different possibilities. That meant that, when it happened everyone confidently enacted the plan and made an extraordinary number of things a reality in a very condensed timeline.

In the few days prior to lockdown we re-rostered to enable 24/7 support in each of our residential services adding an additional 675 hours of support per week, our LEAP team pivoted to offer ongoing support in the houses, office based team members made arrangements to work from home, we supported people who wanted to, to return to their family home and we enabled more than 100 staff and people we support to have their seasonal flu vaccination. Like everyone, we created bubbles. We also ensured we purchased Chromecasts, Netflix subscriptions and items for 'baskets of fun' that have been deployed over the weeks of lockdown as one way we have been able to keep people's spirits up.

Our direct support staff have been fantastic throughout this time. Their commitment to come to work, dedication to ensure ongoing care for people we support and innovation to ensure that new rhythms and engaging things are happening has been tremendous. They are supporting each other. They are working more autonomously than ever and making good decisions. Our team

are part of the essential workforce and can feel invisible within that. You can read about their great work, and see their photos, in this issue.

We have also been humbled to receive unsolicited donations from our families and supporters. These are being put to immediate good use, we remain unclear where the additional support we are offering will be funded from and we will not compromise on people being kept safe and living good lives.

We are still pursuing our vision that every life is fully lived. Like all of us, that looks different at Alert Level 4, we don't anticipate that will change to much at Alert Level 3 and we are anticipating a new normal. The great news is that we have been inspired to be flexible and innovative in our response, we can see that we will gain a lot of great new ways of working to complement what we are already doing well beyond lockdown life.

We hope you are staying safe, well and happy in your bubble.

Arohanui

Arnah Frelease



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