

To Whaikaha Executive Leadership Team

By email 6 June 2024

Tēnā koutou Whaikaha Executive Leadership Team,

The Waitaha Enabling Good Lives Regional Leadership Group (WRLG) was concerned to hear about some of the staffing changes with our local Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Christchurch operational team. EGL Christchurch are contracted to work alongside Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) funded students only. These students require the highest ongoing levels of need for specialist support especially as they transition from school.

There are a number of Connectors, Senior Connectors and the Practice Supervisor who have left.

We were worried to hear no recruitment process has been started yet, as all recruitment decisions need to be confirmed by the Whaikaha Executive Leadership Team.

While we appreciate there is scrutiny on Whaikaha (and all government departments) at the moment in relation to spending and budget savings, these existing roles are **crucial frontline positions working directly with disabled people who have the highest level of need, their family/whānau** and disability support providers and it is important they are replaced urgently. We understand the EGL Christchurch team are making some interim changes to ensure they can continue to support to the 1000 disabled people (and their whānau) they currently work alongside and the 100 new young people who are eligible for service each year. These measures include increasing caseloads and internal secondments. We also understand, for the first time, there is a waitlist to work with a Connector.

These changes may be a good short-term measure while they await a decision from you, this is not a good approach in the longer term and we are concerned about the impact the delay in replacing these positions will have on disabled people, whānau and providers.

Family/Whānau Reps in the WRLG are concerned that the trust in the Enabling Good Lives (EGL) approach and disability support system is again being eroded by the reduction in the level of service provided. For a range of reasons, many whānau struggle to navigate the extremely complex disability system and rely on the service provided by Connectors to help their loved ones and whānau live their best lives based on their unique circumstances.

Changes in support requirements can happen at any time and support to make this happen is required promptly. Deferral of support negatively impacts disabled children and their whānau and does not meet the Rights as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD). The current situation is also inconsistent with the EGL Principles described in Cabinet papers.

Provider Reps in the WRLG are concerned that disabled people and family/whānau are already struggling with support and funding. Having to wait to engage or re-engage with an EGL Connector will only exacerbate this. Further, Flexible Disability Supports providers work closely with Senior

Connectors - especially to problem solve or work together through tricky situations. This relationship and support are crucial for providers to work effectively with disabled people & family/whānau members with an EGL Personal Budget.

Disabled Representatives in the RLG tautoko all the concerns expressed by their colleagues above, and note it is also important that tangata whaikaha, Pacifica communities, and other cultural and minority groups' specific needs are met as they face additional barriers to achieving good health, education and employment outcomes.

For disabled people to experience mana enhancing, easy to use support, and to continue to exercise choice & control over their lives, it is imperative these roles are replaced as soon as possible. **We ask you to immediately approve the recruitment of replacements for the vacant roles.** We ask that an urgent plan is put in place as to when recruitment can begin.

We would also like to understand why the local Director position is being advertised as a 12-month, fixed-term position? This sends a message to our disability community that the role and service may be temporary. For many years, Christchurch was a "demonstration" site, which caused uncertainty and anxiety amongst our community. EGL personal budgets and Connectors are making a difference in the lives of disabled people, and the Director is crucial in ensuring the staff team and working in an Enabling Good Lives Approach. **We would like assurances that this role is a permanent one.**

Further, the WRLG ask for a commitment from Whaikaha that the Enabling Good Lives Principles remain central to the design and implementation of disability services and an acknowledgement that all decisions must be strategic and made based on EGL, Te Tiriti and the UNCRPD as they are key foundations for both current practice and future changes

Disabled people and families must not 'pay the price' for things that relate to political and bureaucratic actions, inactions and misunderstanding.

We look forward to hearing from you. Our next Regional Leadership Group meeting is on 25 June 2024 and we look forward to being able to discuss your response at that time. We invite you to join us in person or online at any time between 11am and 1pm.

The teams link is [Click here to join the meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 430 699 143 727

Passcode: uj58QU

Ngā mihi

Waitaha Enabling Good Lives (EGL) Regional Leadership Group

Waitaha EGL Disabled Core Group

Waitaha EGL Family and Whanau Core Group

Waitaha EGL Providers Core Group