

# Summary of Productivity Commission session at Whakamanawa 2022



Tuesday 5 April 2022, 10.35-11.20am

## Overview

The Productivity Commission is investigating the dynamics and drivers of persistent disadvantage to advise Government on how to break or mitigate the cycle of disadvantage within people's lifetimes and across generations. This inquiry is building on the findings from the Commission's 2015 [More effective social services](#) inquiry and recent changes to the Public Service Act. It is also taking into account other relevant government initiatives, such as the future of social services commissioning. The Commission ran a session as part of our engagement on the inquiry at [Whakamanawa 2022](#), The National Social Services Conference 2022. This is a summary of the Commission's presentation and the responses received to six questions posed to participants. The six questions (taken in order of preference, as decided by the 51 participants) were:

- What is the most important thing the Government needs to do more of to support people, whānau and communities to thrive?
- How should we think about advantage?
- What is the most important thing the social services sector could do to trigger change?
- What is the most important thing the Government needs to do less of to support people, whānau and communities to thrive?
- What is the role of Government?
- What is the most important thing that the Commission could do to trigger change through this inquiry?

The Commission would like to thank all the participants for their perspectives and feedback during the session. The responses received are feeding into the Commission's [Fair chance for all](#) inquiry into reducing persistent disadvantage in Aotearoa.

## Key links

[About the \*Fair chance for all\* inquiry](#)

[Report - Together alone: A review of joined-up social services](#)

[Summary from webinar on \*Together alone\* report](#)

[More effective social services inquiry report \(2015\)](#)

# Presentation slides



## Towards a fair chance for all

What government needs to hear and act on

SSPA Conference  
05 Paengawhāhā 2022



### What works?

- strengths-based
- flexible
- holistic
- culturally-anchored
- whānau/aiga-centred
- trusted relationships
- empowering and builds capabilities



### What helps?

*“an inquiry into economic inclusion and social mobility,  
focussing on the drivers and underlying dynamics  
of persistent disadvantage”*



- clear shared objectives
- trusted relationships
- sound governance
- adequate staffing
- fit-for-purpose monitoring & evaluation
- adequate & stable ringfenced funding



### What gets in way?

- **Generate new insights** about the dynamics and drivers of persistent disadvantage
- **Develop recommendations** for actions and systems changes
- **Help raise public awareness and understanding** of trends in economy and social mobility

- lack of govt understanding & appetite
- inadequate funding
- workforce capacity and capability constraints
- complex accountability

## Participant contributions

### 1. What is the most important thing the Government needs to do *more* of to support people, whānau and communities to thrive?

#### Behaviours

- Listen
- The government needs to allow for changes of government and be committed to keeping what is working well
- Long term plans for change independent of election cycles
- Have a long-term plan for change not just a reactionary one!
- Encourage and support collaboration
- Keep communicating with the sector.
- Acknowledge and accept the korero that has been shared with them

#### Funding models

- Fund and recognise local
- Review funding models
- Fund for sustainability
- Fund fairly
- Be more flexible with funding – rather than a hard-line contract
- Fund but not dictate delivery models
- Funding that gets straight to where it needs to be
- Fund who has good outcomes
- Support collaboration through funding models
- Invest in organisations for longer term impact
- Acknowledging that hosting a collaboration requires additional funding than that provided to individual agencies
- Join up funding rather than the piecemeal approach
- Devolve responsibility for funding and outcomes to community organisations, iwi, not-for-profits
- Stop competitive funding models
- Stop assuming that NGOs can do things more cheaply
- Priorities need to be fully funded and these need to be determined by communities
- Ensure all opportunities are available to all groups and not only a sector

#### Power dynamics, access, choice and decision-making

- Share power for decision making and commissioning with local communities
- Increase communities' shared data-capturing capacity and capability
- Support Mātauranga Māori

- Have more feedback from people affected by the changes they have implemented
- Empower community organisations by resourcing them to problem solve and provide solutions for the communities they serve
- Give more control to local solutions
- Support choices and options for people to access support that they want
- Equity of access and resourcing for community led partnerships
- Setting up systems to work collaboratively, not having only separate systems
- Working as a partnership in a real way
- Focus on implementation rather than more research, we know enough to be able to take action
- More transition plans
- Open results – more focussed on a person's needs than ticking boxes
- Create community-led initiatives specific for communities
- Remove barriers to accessing support, providing support that is timely and effective and can transition across issues and organisations

#### Support for families

- Support young families to have the best start possible
- Support for families from the start of their parenting journey. Education to support prevention of issues in the first place
- Provide effective and accessible resources to rural and hard to reach whānau
- Increase availability of choice for people seeking support at earliest opportunity

#### Income levels

- Increase in income support as per recommendations of WEAG and/or remove tax on benefits
- Continue creative ways of helping people meet basic cost of living
- Provide more money for people (through single benefits)
- Govt needs to ensure that benefits are liveable and that this will lift the poverty rates. Look at other areas of benefits so that they are not giving in one hand and taking away at the same time

## 2. How should we think about *advantage*?

- Listen to Debbie Hager's earlier session about how we use language
- It's a false binary – creates disadvantage
- Advantage is constructed by systems and structural barriers
- How are others disadvantaged by others' advantage?
- Privileges one group over another, and creates a “default” group, where you're privileged if you're in it, and disadvantaged if you're not
- Advantage is horrible; should not be used because it compares
- How can we highlight systemic disadvantage?
- Taking on Debbie's message, who benefits from the current system ie, advantaged
- It's about the system itself and how that privileges certain people
- Removing system conditions that deny access eg, criteria
- Advantage is prejudice. eg, Plunket services now only available freely in particular areas rather than for everyone. Allows for many to fall through or creates way more issues
- It divides people and we become the category which is defining what and who we are
- Understanding that the system is the problem not the people
- Recognising that advantage has responsibility
- It's hard to see this in our sector as we are on the bottom
- Ease of access
- Go back to 1800s govt acts and policies as they still carry disadvantage, eg, Tohunga Suppression Act of penalising those who practiced traditional Māori healing practices which had a supernatural or spiritual element
- The concept of advantage is inherently competitive... leads to market-based approaches... not great way to deliver social services

## 3. What is the most important thing the *social services sector* could do to trigger change?

- Ensure that NGOs have equal funding for the staff they have – there is no alignment with govt sectors etc
- Collaborate more and break down silos
- Decolonise the thinking that sits behind the sector
- Reflect on the language they use eg, “hard to reach”
- Keeping on top of all the government policy – a necessary evil for NGOs and why such things as SSPA exist
- Share the skills and expertise, collaboration and strength
- Collaboration with NGOs
- Continue to petition for fair pay for NGOs vs govt
- Understanding experiences of people using social services
- The state sector includes both state and non-state organisations
- How are social services actually working in a partnership in honouring The Treaty. Instead of separating systems why are we not combining them in a real way? As we have a load of people who fit in the middle not currently serviced as they do not fit either Māori or mainstream
- Collaboration and working closely together eg, social services/DHBs/iwi providers etc

**4. What is the most important thing the Government needs to do *less of* to support people, whānau and communities to thrive?**

- Fewer restrictions/red tape
- Less working from a deficit model
- Create national solutions and not trusting local
- Adjusting the funding in the sector
- Short term contracts should be removed, and long-term funding introduced to prevent ongoing time and effort placed on reapplying for contracts and doing the mahi
- Less of putting finances before people
- Do all organisations have to provide outcomes and be accountable?

**5. What is the *role* of Government?**

- Coordinate action across all government departments to ensure all related determinants to disadvantage are acted upon
- The role of government to use best evidence and research to really understand the needs of people with no consideration of what it will cost, before designing or resourcing solutions

**6. What is the most important thing that the *Commission* could do to trigger change through this inquiry?**

- Study what makes resilient communities work so well and share helpful ideas
- These questions are not new, and the sector has raised or proposed solutions to them often – but not a lot happens... what are the barriers/vested interests which prevent change? Clearly identify these