



# Merging for More

*Tautoko Services (Neighbourhood Connections)*

## MERGING TO REDUCE VULNERABILITY AND INCREASE SERVICES

Tautoko Services (Neighbourhood Connections), based in Nelson - Marlborough, supports people with a disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder. It enables people to lead valued lives in their community by achieving their chosen goals and improving their quality of life.

Options in Community Living, based in Palmerston North, assists people to “take the lead” in their own lives and develop lifestyle choices based on opportunities available to most New Zealanders. The two organisations approached the WTMF for assistance to merge.

The decision to merge was made for a number of reasons. They wanted to extend their geographical coverage and meet additional identified needs. They were also aware of the increasing vulnerability facing smaller organisations and wanted their philosophically aligned Supporting Living services to become stronger, financially and pragmatically.

Being located in separate geographical areas led to a decision to contract communication expertise and technological help in the development phase as they combined governance, administration and operational functions. This ensured they could share quality and communications systems. They needed to avoid duplication and focus on developing innovative approaches to help people achieve the results they want.

They asked WTMF for a grant of \$16,110 – 75% of the total cost with the balance being met by the organisations. This amount was approved.

Jan Perkins, CEO, said they involved board members, staff, clients, funders and legal bodies and achieved the merger on 1 July 2014. Work to develop and bring systems together continued. Branding changes were made that supported the merger while ensuring their localised and unique identities within their communities were supported.

The necessary legal advice was obtained to ensure a smooth transfer of Options staff to Tautoko Services. The grant also assisted with meeting, travel, accommodation and venue costs.

Momentum was maintained with a post-merger Action Plan for 6 months. All KPIs were achieved. Client surveys continue.

Jan says it was important for all stakeholders to know what was happening, with staff and client forums helping ensure this. A Yammer Group was established for sharing ideas. *(Yammer is a private social network to help bring teams together to hold conversations, collaborate and organise projects efficiently.)*

Asked what did not work well Jan was pleased to report that there were no real sticking points in the process. The key to this success was open dialogue at all levels. This built trust and avoided misunderstanding. “It is important to give time to this while moving at a pace that works for people” she said. “Collaboration is about equity amongst the parties and mutual respect.”

With this well managed merger behind them Tautoko Services continues to embed its Person Centred initiatives and practices across all their functions. All entities making up the organisation work together on projects with service users and their families to develop and review the range of support options they provide.

Jan says “we are interested in working with other like-minded organisations to develop and further promote our work of delivering personalised services.”

WTMF says this sounds like a great opportunity which may even lead to a need for more WTMF assistance with new collaborations.



For further information about this merger (or to take up on Jan’s invitation) contact her at:

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