

How a Unique Community Mental Health Project Collaborates with Community Resources to Improve Health and Wellbeing of Whaiora, Local School Children and Local Community

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The Cookease project is a self-determined and person-centred (i.e. based on group members' ideas, members and staff work in partnership and seen as equal) project based in Auckland that enables people experiencing mental health distress to volunteer their time for the benefit of their community in a safe, empowering and supportive environment. The group's mission is to provide healthy and nutritious school lunches for hungry children in low decile schools. In order to achieve this mission, members prepare and sell nutritious community lunches, grow vegetables in community gardens, hold sausage sizzles at a local community market and sell worm juice from their worm farms. The group has a strong focus on health and wellbeing by emphasising the link between mental health and nutrition and physical activity. The project collaborates closely with several health and non-health related community resources such as Kelmarna Gardens in Herne Bay, Wesley Market in Sandringham and May Rd primary school in Mt Roskill. Therefore, the project is a great example of inter-sectoral collaboration.

Take home messages

The audience will go home informed and inspired from hearing about the unique ways the Cookease project not only aims to enhance project members' health and wellbeing but also support the community. This presentation will also help people in the audience to understand how people with experiencing mental health issues connect with their community and support each other's recovery journey and wellbeing.