

The 2005 New Zealand Post Management Excellence Awards

Project overview:

New Plymouth District Council is responsible for delivering a wide range of services to a district community of around 70,000 people. A large proportion of our population is aged over 65, with unique requirements for housing, health, transport and social services.

*In 2003, New Plymouth District Council became the first local authority in New Zealand to commit formally to the principles of the Government's Positive Ageing Strategy. In 2004, we developed an innovative and forward-thinking policy that identifies and responds to the needs of our older people, with a vision of ensuring that 'within New Plymouth District, older people will be active participants in improving their quality of life and will experience and enjoy positive ageing'. The **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** project has been implemented in line with this vision because it has been developed in partnership with local older people through an innovative structure that enables older people to be active participants in developing solutions and projects to meet their needs.*

*The development and implementation of **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** have attracted widespread acclaim from within the community and from peer organisations such as the Office for Senior Citizens. We believe it is a worthy entry for the 2005 New Zealand Post Community Relationships Award.*

(1) Demonstrate the need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the Council's vision and strategic direction

The Need

- With the launch of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2001) it placed a need to develop a local response to local issues to ensure positive ageing occurs in the New Plymouth District.
- There was a need for a co-ordinated approach with genuine community buy in
- Need for good local information and research
- Local Framework required to progress
- Commitment from key stakeholders required
- Planning body to respond to the changing and ageing population and social impact
- Issues identified by older people themselves to be addressed (see appendix 2)

Expected Benefit

Four elements were chosen to successfully addressing the needs as described above:

Element 1: The establishment of the Positive Ageing Group (now The Positive Ageing Trust)

Benefit to the Community:

- Community relationships-developed/strengthened
- Communication improved-flow of information
- Community participation increased through monthly meetings, working groups, workshops and forum.

Element 2: NPDC Community Development Plan 2002 -2012

NPDC's Community development team adopted a 10 year CD plan Social and Community Well being to run from 2002-2012.

Benefit to the Community:

- Long term commitment by Community Development to work with older people to develop initiatives that continue to build community relationships and quality of life.
- Dedicated staff member who holds the PA portfolio
- Dedicated budget to ensure community well-being enhanced for older persons

Element 3: Partnerships- Local and National

From the outset it was important to build relationships with groups in the community, but it was also important to develop partnerships that would increase the knowledge of the group through their expertise and sharing of good information.

Relationships were developed with:

1. **Western Institute of Technology** at Taranaki (WITT) and the Positive Ageing group have worked together to develop Positive Ageing Centre of Excellence (PACE). PACE is a research centre that will conduct research into issues that have been identified as important by our older people.
2. **Taranaki District Health Board** (TDHB).
3. **Accident Compensation Corporation**
4. **New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing**
5. **Office for Senior Citizens**

Benefit to Community:

- Positive Ageing is dependant on 'good information' and developing key relationships with experts in their field is going to benefit the development of initiatives.
- Likewise the flow of information from the community to the 'experts' is equally valuable

Element 4: Positive Ageing Policy:

The Positive Ageing Policy provides the framework within which initiatives can be developed to meet the needs of older people within the New Plymouth District.

Benefit to the Community:

- Provides an expression and mechanism through which the National Strategy can become a reality for our local community
- Provides the framework to look at the 'big picture'
- Provides a framework that enables the community to understand how PA will be achieved
- Enables new relationships/partnerships to be developed
- Ensures that PA is a living process that changes and updates in order to meet the future needs of new generations by addressing the specific local needs and setting of local goals.

Furthering the Council's Vision and Strategic Direction

Positive Ageing New Plymouth makes an important contribution to the vision and strategic direction of the council, which are expressed in the council's **Long-Term Council Community Plan** (LTCCP) and is available online at www.npdc.govt.nz. At the heart of the Community Plan are the seven Community Outcomes which form the council's strategy and programme to improve on the good quality of life in New Plymouth District. Three of these outcomes directly relate to **Positive Ageing New Plymouth**, they are:

- **Secure and Healthy** (A district that is a safe, healthy and friendly district)
- **Together** (A district that is caring, inclusive and works together)
- **Vibrant** (A district that provides high quality cultural and recreational experience and where independence and creativity are encouraged)

The Positive Ageing New Plymouth Trust is identified in the LTCCP as a key partner and is supported by the council to help deliver on these outcomes. The development of **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** has meant there have been significant increase in consciousness amongst stakeholder and the community through collaborative activities and information sharing. Secondly, the provision of a framework for positive ageing to progress is pro-active and effectively addresses the changing needs of the community.

The strong community relationships that have been formed have in turn supported the achievement of the above mentioned community outcomes.

(2) Demonstrate effective project management techniques to achieve results

Effective communication and relationship management were identified as pivotal to the success of the project. The steps along the project path were as follows:

- Research and develop a project scope – this document identified the project's aims in broad terms and the stakeholders to be consulted. It also identified assumptions made, the risks faced and the management structure for the project. This scoping document was distributed widely among stakeholders to obtain feedback.

- Identification of project tasks – once the scope of the project had been agreed, the individual tasks and resource requirements were identified.
- A dedicated Community Development staff member was to facilitate consultation Hui with internal and external stakeholders. Careful steps were taken to ensure that all groups were invited to participate in the development of the project.
- Project planning and budgeting – a project budget was maintained and monitored using Microsoft Excel. Reports were created in Word and PowerPoint.
- Reporting – project status reports were prepared and circulated on a regular basis. A monthly meeting was held with the Positive Ageing Group and working party. Minutes of all meetings were kept. A series of internal and external presentations were given to various stakeholder groups before and during the implementation.
- A full report was delivered to the council and was adopted in 2003

Ongoing project management includes The Positive Ageing Trust and the Community Development team to:

- Develop annual projects that form part of and contribute to the national Positive Ageing Action Plan (the core implementation document for the Government's Positive Ageing Strategy) (Appendix).
- Ongoing relationship building and networking within the community- particular focus on building stronger ties with Tangata Whenua
- Develop key performance indicators to both evaluate the success of the projects and provide foundations for future initiatives.
- As part of this management process the council has committed to surveying its positive ageing partners and achieving a satisfaction rate of at least 95%.

(3) Demonstrate a participatory approach to communicating with and 'buy-in' from stakeholders associated with the project

From the outset, New Plymouth District Council recognised that 'community buy-in' to Positive Ageing would require:

1. Building of quality relationships
2. Effective communication and consultation
3. Participation of older people and key stakeholders
4. Connectedness (across social and geographical contexts)

- In combination, these principles led to a very powerful means to achieving ownership of the Positive Ageing Project. Ownership has essentially meant community buy-in throughout the two years of consultation to the present day. Central to the success of this project was the establishment of the Positive Ageing Group with the facilitated support of Community Development. (see appendix 3)

How was 'buy in' and 'ownership' sought?

Building Quality Relationships:

The key to building quality community relationships was the establishment of the Positive Ageing New Plymouth Group, which is a representative body of older people's service providers and older people themselves. The identification of key individuals is required when wishing to consult and engage effectively across all communities. Promoted as:

- 'Grass roots' opportunity for people to contribute their ideas
- Opportunity to work collaboratively- sharing goals and values
- Gain appreciation of differing world views and connectedness
- Sense of contributing something of value to the community
- Feeling of having choices about the future

Effective Communication and Consultation:

The Trust and the council continue to work together in a constructive working relationship based on mutual respect and a commitment to effective, two-way communication. Dissemination of information and feedback throughout the network means that stakeholders are informed.

Increased Participation:

The sharing of ideas and values by members has meant that it is community driven and reflects (and meets) the priority needs of older people in the district. Participation has increased in all areas:

- Increased Membership of Positive Ageing Trust
- Information forum
- Positive Ageing Events
- Consultation Hui

Connectedness

There is an understanding that Positive Ageing cannot occur without consideration of the wider context in which people live. Sharing the goals of Positive Ageing and highlighting the 'positives' for the wider community is vital to gaining buy in and shared understanding.

(4) Demonstrate innovation and originality in building Community Relationships

Leadership:

New Plymouth District Council was the first local authority in New Zealand to formally commit to the principles of the Government's Positive Ageing Strategy. This is reflected in the fact that we were the first local authority to adopt a specific Positive Ageing Policy. We were also the first local authority to be included in the Strategy's *Positive Ageing Action Plan*. (See appendix 4)

Recognition:

Our proactive and innovative approach to positive ageing has been recognised by a number of individuals and organisations. They include the Minister for Senior Citizens, Hon Ruth Dyson, who praises the council in her introduction to the 2003/04 *Positive Ageing Action Plan*, and again in a letter to congratulate the Mayor of New Plymouth in June 2004, and the Office for Senior Citizens (part of the Ministry of Social Development), which supports the council's approach as a model of best practice. (see appendix 5)

Connectedness in context:

Our definition of positive ageing - *older age should be both viewed and experienced positively* – is also innovative because it reflects the fact that in New Plymouth, positive ageing is not just about older people, it is also about working holistically. It is also about acknowledging that people age in the context of their whanau/family and wider social environment. It is envisaged that all people in New Plymouth share positive attitudes towards older people. **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** therefore commits to engaging with all groups within the community in order to improve the connectedness and quality of life of older people.

Meaningful Participation

More than anything else **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** demonstrates an innovative and original approach to working with a section of the local community. The council established the Positive Ageing Group (now Trust) to act as a key partner in the project. This was a deliberate decision to ensure that older people's needs were accurately determined and that older people were themselves the leaders in addressing these needs.

Collaboration & Partnerships

The project also provides the backbone to a number of innovative community activities. These include PACE – the Positive Ageing Centre for Excellence – which is a unique research and education partnership between New Plymouth District Council, WITT and the Positive Ageing New Plymouth Trust. The Centre was established to:

- Be a centre of excellence in undertaking research into issues affecting the quality of life of older people
- Present evidence to appropriate agencies and act as a catalyst for positive change
- Develop sufficient calibre to be able to contribute to the work of other national and international centres.

PACE has developed a successful relationship with the Wellington based New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing that provides an invaluable national-local balance to research projects. Working together, these research organisations will provide results that reinforce and contribute to **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** – enabling us to ensure the policy remains relevant, up-to-date and responsive to older people's needs. PACE has already produced a detailed research report into the quality of life being experienced by older people living in their own homes which offers valuable information to many agencies and support services in the area.

(5) Demonstrate successful results in both financial and non-financial terms

Improved community relationships

- Collaboration between individuals, groups and agencies are a 'working reality'
- Communication and relevant information sharing is improved
- The council's adoption of Positive Ageing New Plymouth and the collaborative approach taken in this project has improved community relationships

Improved Community Participation

- Decision Making
- Project Innovation (PACE, and Events)

- Positive Ageing Forums. More than 100 have attended each forum to date, to learn about and contribute ideas to issues such as the older driver licensing regime, rest home care, transport options, falls prevention, health, and charges facing older people.
- Advocacy and participation in submission processes

Improved Customer Service

We have recently completed a research project on the living conditions of older people living on their own. The results indicate that older people believe they are well supported by support services in the district – which may explain why the average age of entry to rest homes in New Plymouth is 88, compared with the national average of 82. (see appendix 6)

Financial

The annual budget of \$2000 New Plymouth District Council contributes to the Positive Ageing Trust is minimal to the amount of *social capital* that the project has engendered. The Positive Ageing Trust is an entity of its own and seeks funding from numerous sources to meet community need.

(6) Represent to the Judging Panel a 'good, sensible and right thing to do'

If our older people are to live with dignity and respect and feel they are contributing to the society in which they live, they must have the support of the entire community. By taking a lead role in ensuring this happens, the council has indeed done a 'good, sensible and right thing'. This is amply demonstrated by the support that **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** has received, and continues to receive, from organisations and individuals in the district and around the country.

What's more, we are confident **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** will prove its worth for many years to come, as evidenced through ongoing research and the visible role of older people in our lives and in our community. **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** provides a lasting framework through which older people can become active partners within the council's LTCCP. This level of organisation and sustainability will ensure that older people's needs continue to be addressed effectively by the council.

For the future, we will continue to refine and adapt **Positive Ageing New Plymouth** so it continues to meet older people's changing needs and lifestyles. We want New Plymouth to remain a place where they will always be able to achieve and enjoy positive ageing.

