



Thrive

Your impact on the future of
New Zealand whānau | Summer 2026



whānau āwhina
plunket

Kia ora,

It has been a really tough summer. We're sending aroha to the many communities who have struggled with the severe weather recently, and especially to those who have lost loved ones in the disasters that unfolded. My various teams are touching base with the whānau they see and will support them as best they can during this deeply unsettling time. It can be very overwhelming for our little ones, and their caregivers.

Our local clinics share helpful updates about their hours and services as needed on our regional Facebook pages. Parents and caregivers can find out about our hours and services via our website or on social media. For those who are struggling, and just need a friendly person to talk to at any time of the day or night, our 24/7 helpline, PlunketLine, is a great support.

My hardworking teams here at Plunket achieved lots of mahi over the summer. A huge milestone was opening the last of our immunisation clinics. These final additions in Napier and Hastings mean that all 24 locations are up and running. We have now delivered over 6,000 vaccinations, with the recent measles outbreak showing just how important it is to make immunisation more accessible for whānau where rates are low.

In this issue of *Thrive*, we have an update on our Christmas appeal which featured strong māmā, Tupou, and her three tamariki. Tupou's brave story about her mental health struggles was a timely tale; we have an exciting announcement about a brand new service in the mental health space – keep reading to find out more.

We also have news about some advocacy work around life jackets and spotlight our injury prevention work, like car seat clinics. Both are particularly important with so many families enjoying the water and road tripping around the holiday season.

Thank you so much for your generosity over the holidays and for your continued support as we head into a new year. I look forward to sharing more important news with you from the frontline about our incredible kaimahi and the beautiful tamariki that we aim to help in as many ways as possible.

Ngā mihi nui,

Fiona Kingsford, Chief Executive.

P.S: Stay tuned for our Tax Appeal. In it, we tell the story of Jess and how Plunket helped her in the first few months of motherhood while struggling with her mental health after the stress of IVF and a premature birth.



Your support these holidays will help Plunket keep going strong in 2026 and beyond.

Your support is amazing, and thanks to you we were able to raise over \$114,000 in our recent Christmas Appeal. These funds go to continuing our wraparound services for parents like Tupou so that their children – and whole whānau – can thrive.

We checked in with Tupou to see how the family has been. Thankfully, her husband Jay was able to return home from his project with the NZ Army in Fiji to celebrate the holidays with Tupou, Tiare, Monria and little Joshie. “We’re doing well and it has been such a blessing to have Jay home again,” she told us. “Being reunited over the Christmas and holiday period meant a lot to our whānau after time spent apart. The children were over the moon to have their dad back. We’ve been enjoying simple family time – camping, extra beach days, and getting a little sun in preparation for an upcoming wedding.”

She then reflected on their journey with three children and the year ahead. “As parents, Jay and I are doing all we can to create opportunities for our children to have a strong and successful start in life. We’re feeling grateful, refreshed, and hopeful as we step into this new season.”



Injury Prevention Team: Keeping tamariki safe on and off the roads this summer

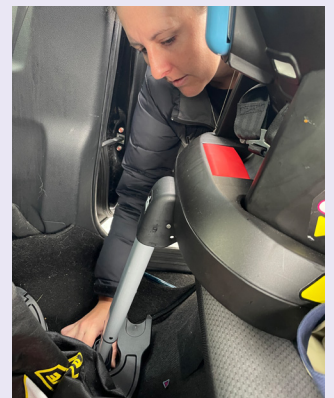
The warmer months see whānau hitting the roads more often to escape to the stunning beaches, bush and lakes of Aotearoa for some adventure. That of course means more tamariki travelling in car seats, which are often not fitted correctly. In fact, at a recent car seat clinic run by Plunket’s Injury Prevention team in tandem with the local Police, every single car seat they checked had not been placed properly for safe travel.

Considering New Zealand’s reliance on their cars instead of public transport to get from A to B on a daily basis, car seat safety is a huge focus for our Injury Prevention Team. And generally speaking, according to National Injury Prevention Manager, Kathryn Impelmans, “preventable child injury is the second leading cause of tamariki death every single year.”

Kathryn has worked with Plunket in a variety of different roles for 32 years, originally as a nurse, then moving into car seat rentals, which was the initial spark of her interest in childhood injury prevention. Over more recent years, Kathryn has been Plunket’s subject matter expert on preventable child injury across the whole organisation.

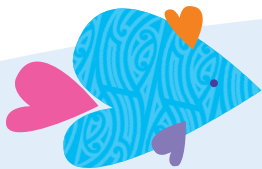
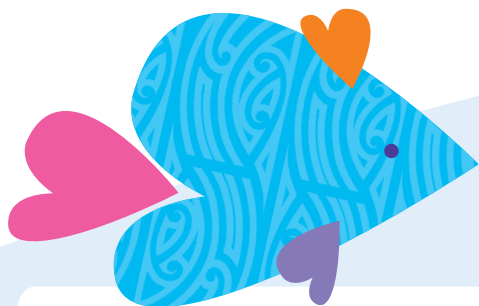
We now have an established group of specialist injury prevention and child safety kaimahi who offer services beyond car seat clinics. These include home visits, in-clinic and virtual appointments, group education and collaborative community-based programmes to help keep tamariki safe. This year, the small but mighty team were able to see more than 1,400 individual whānau, provide over 600 child restraints, checked installation and use of more than 440 child restraints at roadside checkpoints and clinics, and reached around 3,000 families at education groups.

With the statistic about preventable childhood injury being a leading cause of child death in Aotearoa, Kathryn says, “it’s been important to make injury prevention important again.”



A safe and happy little boy after a car seat check / Community Services and Injury Prevention Coordinator, Amber Hallamore-Russell, correctly installing an infant’s car seat.





Our Partners embraced the spirit of giving this Christmas

Doing more in the mental health space for whānau

At Plunket, we see a strong demand for accessible mental health services for whānau with young children in Aotearoa. Our Plunket kaimahi have seen the increasing need for affordable and tailored mental health support for parents who are struggling in some way.

That's why we're incredibly excited to announce that we're getting started on an online wellbeing service to provide free mental health support to families who are experiencing difficulties adjusting to parenting or mild to moderate levels of distress, depression or anxiety during the perinatal period (that is the antenatal period and/or having tamariki under 5 years old).

The new Whānau Mental Health service will focus on the Waikato region, supporting parents early in their perinatal mental health journey and reducing the need for crisis-level support later on.

The new service is fully funded for its first year through a combination of Health New Zealand's Mental Health and Addictions Innovation Fund, and support from the Wright Family Foundation and the Masfen Foundation. With their generosity, we will start in the coming months.

The new initiative builds upon the success of two of our programmes in the maternal mental health space in Canterbury and Dunedin (PPNAP and PPAIRS), which have been running for over 20 years. Our upcoming Tax Appeal story about Jess, husband Daniel and their pēpi Lachlan is a beautiful example of Plunket's PNAP service helping a new māmā in a dark place.

While Year 1 of the new Whānau Mental Health initiative is about to roll out, we are seeking philanthropic support for Year 2. Any support we can receive for this will help us shape a future where families in Aotearoa can access the mental health support they need to thrive.

You can find out more about this project by emailing our Philanthropy Manager, Loren O'Sullivan at: philanthropy@plunket.org.nz



A big shout-out to some generous Christmas elves, JB Hi-Fi, Whitcoulls, Giving Machines New Zealand and Footprint.

JB Hi-Fi once again supported us with their funky wrapping paper. Aside from making their customers' pressies standout under the tree, \$2.50 from each sheet sold went to Plunket and other JB Hi-Fi Helping Hands Charity Partners - over \$2,000 was raised in support of our services!

Meanwhile, Whitcoulls continued their amazing annual Christmas card sales. The beautifully designed greeting cards have become a staple with shoppers and raised an impressive \$5,000 this season for Plunket.



A Giving Machine in action – a vending machine for good.

New to holiday support this year is LightTheWorld Giving Machines. Located at Sylvia Park and Lynn Mall in Auckland, and Riccarton Mall in Christchurch, the premise is a stroke of creative genius: instead of swiping your card at a vending machine for a cheeky snack of chips or chocolate, a Giving Machine is your chance to buy life-changing items for those in need. In this case, practical things to help a whānau through Plunket, like a water safety bathmat or an infant first aid course. This brilliant idea meant more than \$3,000 was raised.

We also received some surprising, good news from one of our online Will partners, Footprint. They generously shared \$5,000 of their annual profit with us as a one-off donation to keep our various services running in the new year and beyond. A true Christmas gesture, Footprint!





Russian playgroup weaves Christmas traditions into summer fun at holiday party

Our Community Services team offer amazing playgroups across Aotearoa in response to the ever-changing needs of tamariki and their whānau.

We recently caught up with Community Services Coordinator, Justyna Szarek, after Plunket Meadowbank's Russian playgroup's lovely holiday party. It wove Russian Christmas traditions in with summer fun for the little ones and their caregivers, and is a great example of a supportive playgroup for young families.

Tell us all about the Russian Playgroup!

Justyna: It started nearly two years ago in response to the growing community of young Russian-speaking families in the areas I look after (basically Ponsonby to a little past Meadowbank).

I was already running a Japanese group and a few baby and toddler groups in the area, and it was during one of those baby groups on a Monday that two Russian mums came in. They said how they would be interested in meeting more, because they would like to preserve the language. It's especially great for children who may have a mother who is Russian and a Dad who's a Kiwi (or the other way around) – they would love for their child to learn both languages.

So, it started from there and has really evolved. People travel from all over Auckland to Meadowbank for it. One family drives 45 minutes one way from Pukekohe each week.

How was the Christmas party? The kids must have loved it!

Justyna: It was a lot of energy! Lots of celebration! And probably more than some of my other playgroups' Christmas parties because my volunteer, Daria, had such an organised event schedule. The families came in, sang some songs and did some activities, then it was time to do a sort of prayer or blessing together before a lot of delicious food, and then presents for the tamariki. It felt like a really special occasion, very different to the other days of playgroups during the year, so the excitement was quite intense!

Is being able to offer a cultural playgroup like this unique to Plunket?

Justyna: Yes, definitely – and the fact that Plunket is so supportive of it. And I can see the difference it is making, especially for new mums who want to connect with other new mums in their language and with a similar background.

So you organise the groups, but your volunteers are the ones on the ground running the playgroups each day – are they easy to find?

Justyna: My ad for volunteers is always up, if that answers your question! But in all seriousness, I always prefer to have two volunteers per group so that if one is sick, the other can cover and the playgroup can still go ahead that day for the parents who really come to rely on them for connection and support. But it's also good for the volunteers, so they can build a friendship with one another, especially if they are new to New Zealand.



If you would like to volunteer with Plunket, feel free to contact us about opportunities in your area.

Enquire today





Run or walk Round the Bays with us this season!

It's not too late to sign up to Round the Bays Auckland, taking place on Sunday March 8!

Round the Bays is a classic city event and a healthy way to fundraise for your fave charities (like Plunket, of course!). So far, we have a team of 18 local Plunket kaimahi lacing up and hitting the streets themselves: across all three Round the Bays locations. We'd love for you to sign up and get in touch so we can see you at the start and finish lines, or even stroll along together and catch up about all things Plunket.

And if you're participating in next week's Round the Bays Wellington on February 15, or Christchurch's event on February 22, we'll see you there too!

[Sign Up](#)



Some of Plunket's fundraising team with their medals at the Round the Bays finish line last year.

Other Plunket news from across the motu

- ♥ In late October we held our first Super Saturday event in Gore. Super Saturdays allow families to access a range of services in one location, including their Well Child Tamariki Ora checks, but also immunisations, oral health checks, car seat safety checks and injury prevention advice. The Gore team also ran a fun craft station, gave away some free pre-loved clothing and added extra fun with a bouncy castle and ride-on toys. There was even a magic show to entertain the littles in the crowd!



- ♥ In November we took part in Toy Safety Week, a campaign helping caregivers with important information about toys that are safe for tamariki at lots of different ages and stages. This was well-timed after the recent kinetic sand recall and with Christmas shopping underway.
- ♥ Also in November, our Advocacy team made a submission to the national Transport and Infrastructure Committee about life jackets for tamariki. As New Zealanders hit the water in all sorts of boats over the warmer months, making sure our children are safe onboard is never more important. There have unfortunately been 11 deaths of children under the age of fifteen since 2000, so we need to normalise life jacket use and build a safe habit in the early years to help prevent more of these incidents.
- ♥ In tandem with Hāpai Te Hauora (Māori Public Health), Plunket's Chief Nurse, Dr. Zoë Tipa has helped develop some new Safe Sleep messaging for more robust (SUDI) prevention. There are four simple prompts to ensure pēpi are put safely to sleep to guide caregivers in what baby should wear, how they should be positioned, what they should be sleeping on and how the whole family can be involved. "Whānau want the very best for their pēpi, and our role is to walk alongside them with guidance that is clear, practical, and culturally safe," Zoë says.
- ♥ In December, RSM Law's annual Plunket Art Show in South Canterbury raised \$30,000 for Plunket! Sponsors were RSM Law themselves, Forsyth Barr, Lena Transport, Corporate Print, Petronellas and the Aigantighe Art Gallery, meaning that the local community could enjoy some stunning artwork and Plunket could be supported at the same time. [Read the article.](#)

The 2025 Annual Report is ready!

In case you missed it, we recently released our 2025 Annual Report. It is jam packed with stories from the frontline, interesting data about our various services across the country, and gives a really good overview of the year that was, which is in large part thanks to our donors and funders. Thank you for all of your support!

[Read the Report](#)



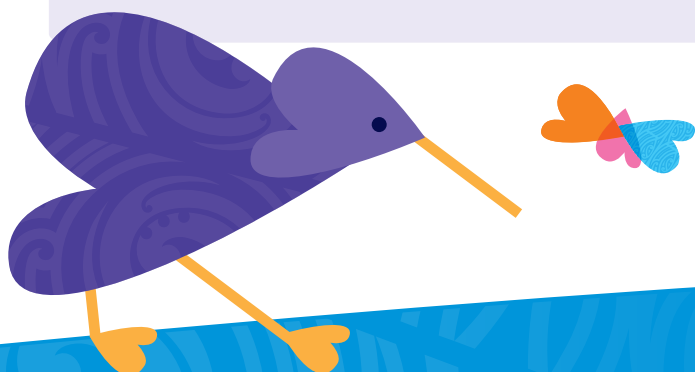
Tamariki Tidbits:

The summer is all about getting outdoors and enjoying some fun in the sun. For some, that includes exploring New Zealand's world-famous scenery and ticking off some Great Walks.



Did you know that the youngest person to ever walk the 3,000km Te Araroa Trail from Cape Reinga to Bluff was just five years old when she and her whānau set off on their ambitious hike? Goldie apparently walked about 2,300km of the unbelievable route, which took the family of 5 just over six months to complete.

We'd like to say that her resilience and physical health was all thanks to Plunket checks and support, but it's probably more thanks to some adventurous parenting and luck with the weather!



If you would like more detail about these news stories, please contact the Fundraising team supporters@plunket.org.nz or call 0800 20 55 55

Words from whānau that you help by supporting Plunket:

"A few months ago, when my baby first started solids and became constipated I called a Plunket nurse for advice. She was so kind and explained everything to me in such detail, really helping me stay calm. In the middle of our conversation, she asked how my baby was doing. I said, 'perfectly alright,' and right at that moment my baby suddenly made the cutest little sound almost like she was saying, 'I'm fine'.

By the end of the call, I was about to hang up when my baby chimed in again with a happy 'bah bah' just like she wanted the last word. What started as such a tense moment surprisingly turned into one of the sweetest, happiest memories."



whānau āwhina
plunket