

Thrive

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

whānau āwhina
plunket

Kia ora,

Thank you. As the days grow longer and summer edges closer, I've been reflecting on all the ways you've shown up for pēpi (babies), tamariki and whānau this year. A shared cuppa, a donation that arrived just when it was needed, a playgroup that welcomed a family in, someone who made time to listen. I've seen so many of these wonderful moments over the past few months, and behind every one of them is a kind and generous friend like you.

In this issue of *Thrive*, I'm delighted to celebrate you, and the generosity you've shown through Dunk it for Plunket and our very first Giving Day. To everyone who hosted, dunked, donated or helped spread the word: thank you. Because of you, our vital wrap around care in the community and mental health support will continue in the year ahead.

We're also celebrating a renewed focus on preventing childhood injury, a refreshed clinic in Westport and a brand-new hub in Papakura where whānau can come together locally and access the amazing services and support that Plunket is able to offer.

With warmer weather on the way, I hope you're able to get out and about to connect with the people and places that matter to you. For families navigating the early years of parenting, your kind support means so much. You help provide the connection, community and wrap around care so whānau feel less alone and children get the best possible start. I am so grateful to have you alongside us.

Ngā mihi nui,

Fiona Kingsford, Chief Executive.

P.S: Because of the incredible people who supported my not one but THREE dunks this September, I raised just shy of $10,000 and am so grateful! Check out the photo above of me and Plunket's leadership team doing a 'dunk in the sea'!

P.P.S: Keep an eye out for our Christmas appeal. Our wish is to make sure no whānau feels alone this season. What's yours?



Look at what we achieved together!

What a difference a day can make! In just over 24 hours, kind supporters like you from across the motu came together for Plunket's first ever Giving Day, raising more than $144,000 to help struggling parents access vital mental health support.

Thanks to the Wright Family Foundation, every gift was matched dollar for dollar, which helped your generous gifts go twice as far. You helped keep Plunket's free online mental health service available for another year so more parents can find support when everyday life with a new pēpi feels overwhelming. Intervening early, catching them before they fall.

It was so lovely, too, to read some of the messages that came through from our donors. Your reasons for supporting Plunket are so heartwarming! My personal favourites include "You were there when I started my family. You are a lifeline to new mothers." And this lovely, detailed anecdote:

"I have been involved with Plunket all my life. My mother was Secretary for both Sub-Branch and Branch and was still involved when I was a teenager, so I also helped out at collections and fundraising events. I have raised my family with Plunket's help and now have 3 grandchildren of my own. Keep up the good work."

To everyone who donated, shared our appeal or encouraged others to get involved: thank you. To our kaimahi (staff) who helped bring the day to life, and to the Wright Family Foundation for standing alongside whānau, I am deeply grateful.

Behind every gift is a powerful, united message: parents shouldn't have to struggle in silence because stretched public services can't reach them – we can make sure Plunket's help is there. Thank you for supporting this mahi.

Plunket's Giving Day

Catch Māmā Before They Fall

Wright Family Foundation

A big, warm 'thank you' for your Giving Day support from some of our Fundraising team at the Constellation Drive hub in Auckland.



Support for the parent, a difference for the whole whānau

When a parent is struggling, being able to talk to someone who understands can make all the difference. Thanks to your wonderful generosity during Giving Day, Plunket can keep offering free mental health and wellbeing support to parents before they reach crisis point.

Like through our newest mental health programme, the Online Perinatal Wellbeing Service (OPWS). It provides free, online support for parents and caregivers in the Waikato region experiencing mild to moderate distress, anxiety or depressive symptoms while caring for children aged up to five. It helps fill the gap for parents who may not meet the threshold for specialist public services, but still very much need support.

"Suicide is the main cause of maternal mortality in New Zealand. So we know what can happen when mums don't get the support they need," says OPWS Practitioner, Alex Murray.

For mum Ali'sha, anxiety overshadowed the months after her baby was born prematurely. She was constantly worried about his every breath while sleeping and whether he was getting enough milk. Her Plunket nurse referred her to the online mental health programme, where a trusting connection with her practitioner helped her work through her birth experience and understand the thinking patterns fuelling her anxiety.



Kelsi and baby Ardie, who were able to enjoy free mental health care sessions with Alex M online.

For another mum, Kelsi, the sessions offered practical ways to manage anxiety and rebuild confidence after a difficult start to motherhood. And being able to attend online from home helped her feel more relaxed going into those sessions. She has been able to find joy in motherhood with her little one, Ardie, which she says, "once felt impossible to imagine."

The early results are encouraging, and parents in the programme are finding more confidence, stronger connections and practical tools for everyday family life. Your amazing support is helping that continue.

If you'd like to learn more about how you can keep this service going, please contact Philanthropy Manager, Loren O'Sullivan by email at loren.osullivan@plunket.org.nz, or by phone: 027 4059 442

Email Loren



Mum Ali'sha says life would have looked very different if it wasn't for Plunket's maternal mental health support.

A Northland hub is rejuvenated

We recently had the privilege of welcoming Irene Rosser from the Rosser Foundation to our Morningside Plunket hub in Whangārei. It was a special opportunity to show Irene how her generous support is helping to create a more welcoming, practical space for local whānau.

The Rosser Foundation first began supporting renovations at the hub in 2021 and has generously contributed to several stages of the project. Most recently, this has included improvements to the kitchen and immunisation room. The space is now more comfortable and functional for Plunket staff and the families they care for.



Irene Rosser (left) with Trish Beresford, Plunket nurse in the newly-spruced Morningside hub kitchen.

During the visit, Trish Beresford, a Plunket nurse in Whangārei, shared what this support means in everyday practice: "The Rosser Foundation's support is invaluable. Having a newly renovated hub gives us a warm, welcoming space to immunise tamariki, talk with whānau, and offer support early — before small concerns become bigger issues. It also gives our team a place to come together and debrief after long days helping families with complex needs."

Our heartfelt thanks to the Rosser Foundation for their continued generosity and commitment to helping make Plunket spaces welcoming, practical and supportive for the staff and whānau who use them.

To find out more about getting involved with other property projects, email Philanthropy Manager, Loren O'Sullivan at: loren.osullivan@plunket.org.nz

Email Loren

A cuppa, a bickie and a whole lot of aroha

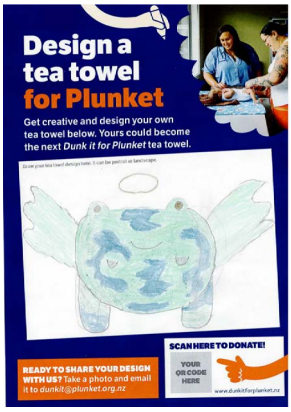
You dunked bickies. You gathered friends and colleagues to fundraise over a cuppa. Some of you even dunked yourselves! However you joined in, thank you for making Dunk it for Plunket 2026 such a wonderful celebration of people and our shared interest in helping little lives thrive.

So far, the amazing dunking community of 1,282 Dunkers has raised $153,657 with more events planned still to come! It's set to be our biggest Dunk it for Plunket year ever. Your generosity helps keep Plunket's wraparound services going strong, particularly parent groups and play groups that enable learning and exploration for pēpi and tamariki but also, importantly, foster like-minded connections for their caregivers.

There were lovely moments right across the motu. Plunket playgroups hosted get-togethers over Arnott's bickies and hot cuppas while little ones played, and parents could donate to go in the draw for a year's supply of Huggies nappies. In Wellington, our Community Services team got fundraising at the airport, inviting travellers to 'dunk a dollar' (or more!) and share their own heartfelt Plunket stories. And others hosted biscuit dunk tests, or got dunked in everything from the sea to tea (dunk tanks of rather questionably-coloured water!).

To every dunker, donor, playgroup and kaimahi who got involved: thank you for every dollar raised and every bit of aroha shared.

Already dreaming up your 2027 dunk? Join our VIP list for early news and inspiration. We'd love to have you back!



P.S: We're also on the hunt for our next tea towel design! Sketch something up, take a photo of it and send it to dunkit@plunket.org.nz like the example above! Whoever wins will be world famous in Dunkville!

Some of our partners can't resist a dunk!

A good morning tea starts with a cuppa and something delicious to dunk. This year, our amazing partner whānau brought all that and more to Dunk it for Plunket, from bickies and brews to dunk tanks, donation drives and some friendly competition!

Our naming partner, Arnott's, filled our Dunk Kits with bickies and supplied extra treats for dunking events. Managing Director, Mike Cullerne even joined our CE, Fiona Kingsford, for a dip in a giant cuppa! JDE supplied Bell Tea and Moccona Coffee for the Kits for another year, and Huggies included their wipes once again, helping hosts bring friends, whānau and workmates together over a fun box of treats. Huggies also raised an amazing $3k with their own Dunk it for Plunket event!

Baby Bunting shoppers helped raise more than $3,500 with their 'dunk a dollar or more' at till, while Haven Financial Advisers brought their team together for a morning tea and a Plunket pop quiz. Our Star Partner, BestStart is always one to jump aboard Plunket's fun ideas, inviting Fiona Kingsford to decorate bickies with their CEO Fiona Hughes at their newest centre in Pukekohe, with two tiny judges taste-testing of course!

JDE also teamed up with NXP again for Sip & Support, with $2.50 from every 500g jar of Moccona Classic ordered online going to Dunk it for Plunket fora total over $2,800. NXP also helped print colouring sheets for tamariki at playgroup fundraisers and bring a new Dunk it for Plunket mug to life.

To all our partners and everyone who joined in: thank you so much. Your support helps keep Plunket's wraparound community services there for pēpi, tamariki and their whānau in the year ahead.



Fiona Hughes, CE of BestStart (left) with our Fiona and two tiny taste testers!

Meet Annah: helping families find their village



Sometimes connection begins with simply turning up to a playgroup. For Annah, that first step led to three years of volunteering with Plunket in Christchurch and finding a community for both her and her daughter.

After attending a local playgroup, Annah was encouraged to get involved by long-time volunteers. Today, she helps run two playgroups, supports a clothing exchange and co-facilitates an intergenerational playgroup at Burlington Retirement Village.

That intergenerational group brings children, caregivers and residents together through music, stories and play. It's one of Annah's favourite parts of volunteering: a chance for different generations to share everyday moments and build connections.

"Volunteering for Plunket has helped me heal a lot," says Annah. "It has given me confidence in myself and helped me build my village around me and my daughter. It has given my daughter and me lifelong friends."

Annah's story is a lovely reminder that community grows when people have opportunities to come together, share what they can and support one another.

Thank you to Annah and all our volunteers for helping create welcoming places for whānau. Interested in getting involved? There could be a place for you, too.

Find out more about volunteering

Other Plunket news from across the motu

A warm welcome back in Westport:
Local whānau celebrated the reopening of our refreshed Westport clinic with a blessing on September 4th, bringing local community organisations together. The next day, more than 30 whānau explored the space, enjoying a sausage sizzle, face painting, music and a haka from Westport Kindergarten. The clinic will offer a welcoming place for families to receive vital health checks, wrap around care and make connections.



Local children were able to celebrate Westport's re-opening with games and facepainting.

Room to grow together in Papakura:
A new purpose-built Plunket hub, Whare Kahikatea at 28B Wood Street, was blessed in September in a dawn ceremony led by Ngāti Te Ata and Ngāti Tamaoho. Its name reflects the kahikatea tree's intertwined roots — a fitting symbol for whānau growing strong together. The hub brings together Well Child Tamariki Ora checks, B4 School Checks and community services under one roof, making support easier for young whānau to find in this growing community.

Little imaginations, big community spirit:
Bubbles, playdough and a box obstacle course sparked plenty of fun at Ōamaru's Let's Play expo in October. Plunket joined 15 other local organisations to share easy, low-cost play ideas with more than 200 visitors, encouraging whānau to enjoy time together away from screens. With support from Stronger Waitaki, Te Awhi Rito, Fire and Emergency New Zealand and a local youth group, it was a lovely celebration of community and little thinkers.



Local team members Louise Haley (left) Megan Phillips (centre) and Annabel Kuzma running the inspiring Plunket stall.

Helping little explorers grow up safely:
Every year, too many pēpi and tamariki are hurt in accidents that could have been prevented. Plunket's new Injury Prevention Strategy is about changing that, so little ones can explore their world safely. Thanks to your support, our teams can talk with whānau about everyday risks, share simple and practical safety advice, and run community programmes that reach families who need it most. We're also working with partners to speak up for safer homes and communities across Aotearoa. Your generosity helps make sure every family, wherever they live, has the knowledge and support to keep their children safe.

Tamariki tidbits:

Children really do say the funniest things and keep Plunket staff on their toes! Here's a great story from one of our nurses:

"I was just out with a nurse today visiting a whānau at home. After a conversation with the child telling us about dad going off to work for the day, the nurse asked what dad did for a job. He said, 'my dad goes to work to eat his lunch!" **- Anita, Clinical Leader, B4 School Checks Waitemata.**

Words from Whānau:

"Becoming a dad for the first time was one of the most exciting and emotional experiences of my life. At the same time, like many first-time parents, I had so many questions and moments where I wasn't sure if I was doing things right.

Our experience with Plunket has been a really important part of our journey. Sometimes you don't know what questions to ask until you are actually faced with a situation. The guidance we received helped me better understand my son's development, wellbeing, feeding, sleeping and the many little changes that come with having a baby. What I appreciated most was having a supportive person who listened to our concerns without making us feel like we should already know everything.

For me, Plunket has been more than just a service. It has been a source of reassurance, knowledge and support during a completely new chapter of my life. As a first-time dad, I am grateful that we didn't have to navigate that journey alone."

Donate

If you would like to get involved, make a donation or to talk to our friendly Fundraising team, please email or call: **supporters@plunket.org.nz** or **0800205555**

whānau āwhina plunket