



Media Release

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Nurses and healthcare worker pay gap means whānau missing out

Whānau Āwhina Plunket says it is struggling to keep and attract its essential nursing and healthcare workforce due to the pay gap and whānau are missing out.

The country's largest health and wellbeing support service for tamariki under five is part of a collective of primary, community and telehealth organisations calling on political parties to commit to pay parity.

There is currently a 15-35 percent pay gap for its nurses and healthcare workers compared to those employed by Te Whatu Ora, impacting its ability to provide essential healthcare services.

Whānau Āwhina Plunket Chief Executive Fiona Kingsford says the organisation is short of 35 nurses and 9 kaiāwhina or community Karitāne.

“With these vacancy rates, the reality is we are potentially missing 140 visits to whānau every day.

“Our kaimahi are essential to ensuring pēpi have the best start in life and our māmā are supported. We are there to identify health issues early, and ultimately keep them out of our overrun hospitals. We need 100% pay parity with Te Whatu Ora nurses and healthcare workers.

“Right now, in South Auckland we are short eight nurses and three healthcare workers. Multiple teams across the region are pitching in to cover gaps. They are doing the best they can, providing alternative ways to support whānau such as video calls and drop-in clinics if they can't see whānau at home or the clinic,” says Mrs Kingsford.

Plunket nurse Aileen Clark has been supporting whānau in Mangere for more than eight years and has never seen the staffing shortage this bad.

“I'm carrying a double caseload supporting around 1000 whānau. It's a constant juggling act, trying to catch up. We've had three nurses leave in the past five weeks. The pay gap is just too much, with the cost-of-living people don't have any choice.

“With limited staff, we have to prioritise seeing babies and our most vulnerable whānau first. That means sometimes, we can't get to whānau with older tamariki on time and sometimes they miss out,” says Aileen Clark.



Pictured: Mangere Plunket Nurse Aileen Clark



ENDS

About Whānau Āwhina Plunket

Pēpi, tamariki and whānau are at the heart of Whānau Āwhina Plunket. The charity is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest health and wellbeing support service for tamariki – seeing around 290,000 under-fives. About 80% of newborns are enrolled with Whānau Āwhina Plunket each year.

Our nurses provide clinical assessments, and along with Kaiāwhina and Community Karitāne, support whānau and families, through home and clinic visits, as well as PlunketLine 0800 933 922, a free 24/7 telephone advice service for parents.

Our website plunket.org.nz is one of the country's most widely read digital child health resources, with 1.8 million visits each year. It is available data-free through the Zero Data portal at zero.govt.nz, and you can choose to view it in English or te reo Māori.



- Primary, Community and Telehealth Care -