



Annual Report

1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025



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Welcome Kia ora koutou

It is a privilege to present CARE Waitakere Trust's Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2025.

Since moving into our new and much larger premises in early 2024, we've experienced a noticeable increase in demand for our services. Our West Auckland communities are still navigating the impact of rising living costs, housing challenges, and the strain on mental wellbeing.

Despite these realities, CARE remains a trusted and responsive presence in West Auckland, and we are honoured to serve those who trust us with their stories and look to us for support.

This growth reflects both the increasing needs out there and the incredible dedication of our team. Over the past year, we've welcomed several new therapists and support staff, helping us to meet the rising demand for our services. We've continued to build strong relationships with local schools, health providers, and iwi partners, and we're proud to offer care that's holistic, culturally grounded, and mana-enhancing.

Inside the organisation, we've been just as focused on looking after our people—our team. We know that when our staff are supported and thriving, they're better able to support the whānau who walk through our doors. Everyone here is part of CARE because they believe deeply in what we do and the difference we can make together.

I am deeply grateful for each team member and I want to make a special mention of our dedicated Management Team and Team Leads who, I know, do over and above what could reasonably be expected every day. It's exciting working and dreaming with you, as well as seeing your deep commitment to our māhi!

My next debt of gratitude is to our faithful, wise and committed Board of Trustees who are always close to support and guide us as we navigate challenges and celebrate with us when share stories of success and hope. I hope you enjoy getting to know them a little as you read their bios on the next page - they are amazing people!

Ehara tāku toa i te toa takitahi,
engari he toa takitini.

Not by my strength alone,
but by the strength of many.

Kathy Clist

- Co-Founder and CEO

Meet our Board of Trustees

CARE Waitākere is guided by a dedicated and experienced Board of Trustees who bring a wide range of skills, insights, and community connections to their governance role. Their leadership ensures that we stay true to our mission, operate with integrity, and respond effectively to the needs of the Waitākere community. We are grateful for their time, wisdom, and commitment to the values that underpin all aspects of our work. The following pages introduce each of our board members and the background expertise they bring to CARE.



Richard Charmley

Chairperson

I have been involved with CARE since the early 2000s. When I joined the board we were meeting in the original very old house on Waipani Rd, Te Atatu Peninsula. I chose to be involved with CARE as it fitted my personal and professional values and was such a committed caring group of people who welcomed me and valued what I could bring. My background as a nurse, nurse educator, counsellor and supervisor seemed helpful to the role of board member.

Being on this board is a unique experience of doing the business of leadership of CARE but, in a deeply human and relational way. As the board is a very established and stable group our ability to be transparent and honest with each other is very high and the decision making ability and process is a rigorous and honest process, where integrity and consensus are the norm. I still attend board meetings with a sense of expectation and some excitement and quietly wonder what might evolve. I have the deepest respect for each of my colleagues on the board. It is lovely to spend time with people whom I like so much.

I am privileged to be able to play a small part in helping to work with people of integrity to help lead an organization that has come of age and can stand tall.



Gail Bond

Trustee and Board Treasurer

I've been connected with CARE since 2008, marking 17 years of involvement. Growing up in Te Atatu North, the Te Atatu Bible Chapel played a significant role in my life. I was fortunate to have Lynn Goold as a mentor during my teenage years, which was personally very beneficial. Although I moved to the other side of Auckland after getting married, the opportunity to contribute my finance skills to the CARE Board was very appealing. My long history with the Chapel made it a natural fit.

For the past 25 years, I've run my own business providing financial services to schools, a profession I've enjoyed and continue to be passionate about.

Being part of an organization that genuinely cares for the community and offers a welcoming and supportive environment is a privilege. It has been particularly exciting to witness CARE's growth and expansion over the years, especially the significant undertaking of relocating. The incredible new space we now have far surpasses what I had envisioned.

I believe CARE will continue to be a vital source of care and support for everyone who seeks our help. It's important that we always stay true to the foundational principles upon which we were established.



Lynn Goold

Co-Founder and Trustee

Working with CARE Waitakere has been such a privilege; a huge challenge that has given great joy. I've been part of CARE since the time it was just an idea forming in the hearts of a few people as we became increasingly aware of a growing need in the community for somewhere that could provide people with compassionate affordable professional counselling. I had trained as a counsellor and supervisor, with previous experience in pastoral work. I was part of a church who supported people to follow the dream they believed God had given. In 1999 the church gave us a long term lease for the old house next door in Waipani Rd and the dream began to become a reality. I have been part of the board since the beginning, serving in a number of roles. I am retired from client work but continue to support the CARE Board and staff in any ways I can.

The biggest highlight for me is meeting former clients and hearing how the help they received has transformed their lives.'

I am thrilled to see CARE move forward with increased staff and services whilst still holding to the values we held dear at the beginning.

We have always been a team and that team is thriving under the leadership of our current CEO, Kathy Clist, who has also been a vital part of the vision since the beginning.



Stu Sutherland

Trustee

I've been involved with CARE Waitākere since its very beginning.

I was drawn to CARE Waitākere because of its powerful vision—to walk alongside individuals facing hardship and help restore hope, dignity, and direction. Whether someone is struggling financially, emotionally, or physically, having a supportive community around them can be truly life-changing. CARE exists to do just that: to empower and uplift people in practical, compassionate ways, and that's something I'm proud to be part of.

I bring a background in people management, health and safety, and leadership. I'm also passionate about community development and working with organisations that create lasting impact.

One of the greatest joys has been watching CARE grow—from offering a single personal development course to becoming a trusted organisation that has supported thousands from all walks of life. Seeing that growth and the lives changed along the way has been incredibly fulfilling.

I want to see CARE continue to grow its reach while keeping its culture of empathy, support, and transformation at the centre of everything it does.



Nick Mulqueeney

Trustee

I have been on the board for over 8 years.

My background has been in the public sector space. Firstly as a Counsellor and Play Therapist, then later as a Practice Manager and Director of a NGO social service provider.

Over the last 4 years I have been a part of Aroturuki Tamariki - The Independent Children's Monitor and have a passion for children's rights and wellbeing. Recently, I completed a Certificate in Advanced studies in Children's Rights.

A highlight for me has been seeing the expansion of our ACC work and our counselling in schools - I believe that anyone, no matter what situation you are in financially, should be able to access free services that support their well-being, especially for children.

My aspiration for CARE is for it to continue on its bi-cultural journey, while also becoming financially self-sustainable so we can continue to offer the services the community needs.

Our Kaupapa

Our vision is that our community is safe, connected, resourced and thriving.



Paramountcy of Children
In all aspects of our work, the welfare and interests of a child or young person are the first and paramount consideration.



Honouring Te Tiriti
We recognise the unique cultural identity of Maori as tangata whenua, and seek to honour the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi



Honouring Diversity
We celebrate the diversity of our society and promote respect and inclusivity.



Respect
We acknowledge the importance of all aspects of being human including spirituality, and we respect the right of every person to choose their own path.



Professionalism
We provide a working environment which supports personal and professional growth.



Holistic Health
We nurture wellbeing in all aspects of personhood.



Manaakitanga
We provide a welcoming and safe space for our clients and our staff.

Our Mission & Services

Our Mission is to meet the needs of our community, Waitākere City, by delivering compassionate, affordable and professional services which enhance the wellbeing of children, adolescents, adults and families.

The people we serve are empowered to live healthier and more fulfilled lives. Injustices are challenged, people who are disadvantaged have hope.



Family Support

By Lauren Godsiff

“Kaua e mate wheke mate ururoa”

Strive for your goals by being strong and resilient like a hammerhead shark. This whakataukī is commonly used to encourage someone not to give up, no matter how hard the struggle is.

It has been a challenging past 12 months as we have witnessed the impact of this tumultuous financial time. Not only on the clients who have accessed our service, but also on our fellow external social support providers. We have seen several services close to our hearts struggle to fund services and lose funding that they rely on to meet the needs of our community. We wish to acknowledge this and send aroha to all that have been so heavily affected by this financially difficult time.

Words from a poet John O'Donohue come to mind:

“Thresholds”

“Within the grip of winter, it is almost impossible to imagine the spring.

The gray perished landscape is shorn of colour. Only bleakness meets the eye; everything seems severe and edged.

Winter is the oldest season; it has some quality of the absolute.

Yet beneath the surface of winter, the miracle of spring is already in preparation; the cold is relenting; seeds are waking up.

Colours are beginning to imagine how they will return.

Then, imperceptibly, somewhere one bud opens and the symphony of renewal is no longer reversible. From the black heart of winter a miraculous, breathing plenitude of colour emerges.”

Mindful of the challenging year, our mahi continued and we are grateful to have been able to:

- Accept and work with 45 new referrals
- Provide 216 social work sessions by our two-part time registered social workers.

There have been a myriad of issues presented to our service. To name a few, we have:

- Provided couple therapy and family therapy to whanau struggling with internal and external stressors.
- Supported parents through Care and Protection services along with Oranga Tamariki.
- Supported ACC Sensitive Claims kiritaki in accessing services, supports and entitlements.
- Helped parents learn to better care for neurodivergent children.
- Provided external professional supervision for social workers across West Auckland.

Along with our direct support for individuals and whanau accessing our service, we have also worked on other ways to provide services and be the best kaimahi (worker) we can. We have connected with the WAVES (Waitakere Anti-Violence Essential Services) network and hosted a hui at CARE on Financial Harm. This was well attended by public, private, government and non-government services. We have provided groups and are preparing for a new ACC group to start soon for ACC Sensitive Claims using Mindfulness alongside Tukutuku Toi.

A project close to our hearts has been the development of, and commitment to our Bi-Cultural Rōpu. This is a collective of staff and contractors at CARE who (as Margaret so beautifully surmised)

‘acknowledges the impact of colonisation on Tangata Whenua and seeks to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We are committed to working in partnership with Māori to improve our services and cultural competency. To tautoko this kaupapa, the Bicultural Rōpū offers a safe and open space to kōrero and share ideas on how to enhance cultural sensitivity for clients and cultural awareness and confidence for staff.’

This rōpu (group) met regularly through the year and have put into place several resources, activities and learnings for clients accessing CARE and for those who work within it. [#toitutetiriti](#)



“ We struggle as a family to communicate, especially when it comes to navigating conflict in a healthy way. Given our two boys (7 and 10) are very different, they require very different approaches to parenting. The dynamic we share is not always positive, and we particularly struggle with meeting the emotional needs of our high-anxiety eldest child. Additionally, as a couple my husband and I tend to value family time above all else and feel resentful of the fact that we have little family support in caring for the kids / getting time out for ourselves and each other.”

– Rebecca

Client Story

Manaia (In her own words)...

My CARE story starts with therapy with Susan (CARE counsellor). I found her online during a particularly dark time in my life and I applied for funding. I have never before felt a need to speak to someone but I really thought if I didn't, I'd be stuck in an abyss with little to no hope of ever getting out again. That sounds dramatic but it is 100% my truth. I still continue therapy, as well as DBT (Group) and I, as well as my family and closest friends, have seen a difference particularly in relation to my emotional awareness and wellness and while there's still a lot of work to be done, I, for the first time, feel supported.

Susan connected me to a DBT group and Lauren (a CARE Social Worker).

My view of social workers was that, if I need one, I was broken. However, meeting Lauren was so refreshing and eye-opening. Being broken was never the focal point of our sessions but being capable and she did so without invalidating my feelings or mental illness. I felt very understood and seen.

She was very hands on too, taking me to apply for my driver's licence because she had an inkling, with good reason, that I wouldn't do it myself etc.

I am starting to care for myself for the first time in my life and while I still have a long road ahead of me, that road would be non-existent if not for Susan, Lauren and DBT.

In conjunction with therapy and DBT (also through CARE) Lauren has given invaluable insight and advice as to how best manage my social anxiety and how I can still live in spite of the things that I find extremely debilitating at times.

(The most helpful thing was ...) the total non-judgement and the big tasks being broken into tiny little ones and drip fed to me so I don't feel overwhelmed. Lauren always seemed genuinely happy to see me and even when I didn't do

something we had planned, I sensed absolutely no judgement or exasperation which I had come to expect in my everyday interactions with people. I can't tell you just what that means to me.

To be offered tea or coffee every time I came in honestly made me feel special. Although if it's on the table, Lauren's savoury scones at every appointment would make things exponentially better.

I have learnt to just take my days one at a time and practice mindfulness.

By encouraging me to pursue study, to get my licence and to sign up to be a volunteer at a charity, she showed me that I am able. I was nudged out of my comfort zone and it was ultimately the best thing for me and she coached me through my discomfort totally judgement free.

My home and relationship with my family improved as my self-confidence improved and each little thing I did gave me confidence to do the next slightly bigger thing. It was, whilst uncomfortable at times, these little victories that demonstrated to me that I am capable.

I'm now studying my BA majoring in Psychology and Social Anthropology. I originally set up an interview to study ECE, and I was accepted but the fact that I, firstly, turned up to a 3 hour interview of my own volition, and secondly, was accepted, made me wonder if maybe Lauren's view of my potential, was in fact, true. So I pivoted and applied for a Major in psychology which is truly a miracle in itself and something I have genuine interest in.

There's no scenario without Lauren that I would have had the confidence to pursue higher education.

"I'm overwhelmingly grateful."

THIS 'TANGLE' has been provided by Manaia –Tangle art – or tangling – is a relaxing, meditative fun art style that Manaia engages with for her mental health.

Financial Mentoring

By Dean Edwards

The financial mentoring team has seen first-hand the effects of the cost of living crisis on our clients over the course of the year.

While headline inflation has thankfully fallen, the crisis has seen a permanent shift up in prices to a “new normal” which is leading to ongoing financial stress for many, particularly as wages and benefits have not increased at the same rate.

We are seeing more complex cases, “head in the sand” behaviours where financial hardship has become overwhelming, and a worrying increase in clients still struggling to get by financially despite being in full employment.

The work required to unravel and understand our clients' finances, formulate a “plan”, and walk alongside them to improve their financial capability is often extensive and in many cases entails a number of meetings with the client over weeks and months.

Our clients are very grateful for the free service and support we are able to provide. The Pak n Save Gift Cards are also invaluable in providing food support for in-need clients who are fully engaged in our financial mentoring service.

Financial Mentoring Team

This year saw Fiona Halliwell leaving CARE and Dean Edwards joining to work alongside Deidre Doyle. Fiona supported hundreds of clients over many years working at CARE and her knowledge and experience are very hard to replace.

However, the “new” Financial Mentoring team is working well. Between the two of us, we have a Financial Mentor available to meet with clients each working day. On Wednesday's we are both working, and this provides us the opportunity to discuss our challenges, celebrate our successes, and share our learnings.

“I started working with my client 2 years ago and her financial situation had improved to the point that she had a small weekly budget surplus. However, in 2024 she received a demand from IRD for \$3250, for overpayment of the Family Tax Credit (FTC), which she could not afford. Working as a nurse with penalty rates and variable hours, her fortnightly income varied, which made it very difficult to estimate an annual income amount for IRD to calculate her weekly FTC entitlement. I helped her put together a hardship application, including a support letter. The application was approved and IRD wrote off the full amount, which was a huge relief for the client.”



Client Successes

It is always gratifying to walk alongside our clients and see their financial situation improve. We have had considerable “wins” over the year including successful negotiations with government agencies and lenders, debts waived, repayments reduced, successful KiwiSaver withdrawals, successful insolvency procedures, and much more. We have helped many clients reach a balanced budget position with some simple but effective guidance on planning for weekly, monthly and annual costs.



“ My client, a beneficiary with long term medical conditions requiring frequent showers, was struggling to afford food and had a huge power bill arrears. We provided the client with Pak & Save gift cards for immediate relief and negotiated with the Salvation Army for 3 weekly food parcels. We accompanied the client to WINZ and were able to reduce her WINZ debt repayments. We contacted Mercury and were able to secure \$410 of credits, move the client to a cheaper plan, and organise “bill smoothing” so she can budget for power. Through these actions we have helped the client address her financial crisis and move to a sustainable financial position going forwards.”

“My client had returned from living in Australia to be with her son who had a terminal illness. During the course of the illness the client got herself into huge debt. We agreed together that an insolvency procedure was the best option and assisted her to apply for a Debt Recovery Order (DRO). We worked alongside the client to complete the DRO application. This was approved and means the client will make a single affordable weekly DRO payment and not have to deal with 7 individual creditors chasing her. The DRO agreement provides for our client to pay 20% of her debts over a 3 year period and then the remaining debts owed will be cancelled. This allows her to make a fresh start and work towards being debt free.”

Counselling Services – A Year in Review

By Maxine Finlay and Kathy Clist

2024–2025 has been a busy and impactful year for CARE’s Counselling Service. In response to rising demand, we’ve focused on growing our team, extending the range of therapeutic options we offer, and deepening support for whānau across the community. Some key highlights from this year include:

Welcoming Sacha Kronfeld, Arts Therapist

This year we were excited to welcome Sacha Kronfeld to the team. Sacha brings a wealth of experience in creative art therapy, supporting both children and adults to explore and express their experiences through visual and sensory-based modalities. Her addition has broadened the therapeutic approaches we can offer, especially for clients who may not respond well to talk-based counselling alone.

Sustaining Our Work with Vulnerable Whānau

We were pleased to retain our Oranga Tamariki funding, which enabled us to support over 70 children and their families this year. This work has continued to play a vital role in strengthening wellbeing and resilience for tamariki and whānau facing significant adversity.

Expanding Support for Whānau with Complex Needs

We’ve continued to work with whānau experiencing high and complex needs, including family violence, trauma, grief/loss, parenting struggles, and hardship. Our counselling team have provided tailored, ongoing support to help 13 whānau navigate multiple challenges and access pathways to healing.

Providing Accessible, Funded Counselling Across the Community

With support from multiple funders, we delivered fully funded or subsidised counselling to a wide range of clients, including:

- Children and young people with mild-to-moderate mental health needs
- Bereaved individuals and whānau, including those affected by suicide
- Families under financial and social stress
- Clients accessing Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) sessions
- People referred through their GP
- Individuals reaching out for support through self-referral

Offering Relationship-Based Support

In addition to individual counselling, we continued to offer couples and family therapy, recognising the importance of relational wellbeing in mental health and recovery.



Strengthening Cultural Safety and Responsiveness

All of our clinical staff participated in regular cultural supervision with Liesl Niania-Sharples, our Māori cultural supervisor. These sessions ensure our work is informed by Te Ao Māori and attuned to the cultural identities and experiences of our clients.

Responding to High and Ongoing Demand

Demand for counselling at CARE has remained high and continues to grow. This confirms the importance of early, accessible support to prevent escalation into crisis. By staying responsive and adaptable, we’ve helped hundreds of individuals and families take steps toward recovery and wellbeing.

“ We are incredibly proud of what has been achieved this year and grateful to our skilled team, our funders, and the community for making this work possible”

ACC Sensitive Claims

By Kathy Clist

This year marked a significant milestone for our ACC Sensitive Claims Service with the successful tendering for and transition to the new ACC Sensitive Claims contract. Through focused planning, collaboration, and a commitment to client-centred care, we have not only maintained service continuity but expanded our capacity to meet the growing needs of survivors of sexual abuse and assault.

Successful Tender for New Sensitive Claims Contract

In early 2024, we submitted a comprehensive response to ACC's tender for the new Sensitive Claims contract, reflecting our deep commitment to trauma-informed care, bicultural practice, and holistic, wraparound support for survivors. Our successful bid confirmed ACC's confidence in our service model and positioned us strongly for the future. We are grateful for the support of our staff, contractors, and community partners who contributed to the success of our proposal.

“ (At CARE) I am in a completely safe environment where it is safe for me to ask for help for myself and my family. I didn't feel judged and I know it's completely safe for me to embrace all I am going through as an individual and a mother. I love coming to my appointments”

Managing the Transition

Transitioning to the new contract required careful coordination, clear communication, and ongoing support for both clients and providers. We established a dedicated transition team to oversee implementation, which included:

- Updating policies and procedures to reflect new service requirements.
- Training sessions to familiarise staff and contractors with updated processes and reporting obligations.
- Enhanced data and privacy systems to align with ACC's evolving expectations.
- Regular communication with clients to reassure them of continued care and inform them of any changes.

We are pleased to report that there was no disruption to client care during the transition period, and client feedback remained consistently positive throughout.

Expanding Our Team and Services

In alignment with ACC's shift towards more integrated and holistic services, we expanded our multidisciplinary team to better support the complex needs of our clients. This year, we welcomed:

“ I had such trouble with anxiety that I couldn't breathe properly and it was affecting my physical health. Through my counselling journey I have received so much clarity about myself and my needs and discovered the simple yet useful tool of deep breathing. Combined with someone to talk to and process my thoughts - I feel I have regained control over my mind and my life!”

- Registered Nurses who provide assessment, management, education, and support to kiritaki and their whānau for injury-related health conditions, including self-care strategies and other healthcare needs aligned with their recovery goals.
- Occupational Therapists (OTs) to support clients with sensory regulation, daily functioning, and return to work or study.
- Registered Dietitians to support kiritaki and their whānau with personalised nutrition advice, education, and specialised dietary planning to improve lifestyle, manage medical conditions, and enhance overall health and wellbeing.
- Additional Counsellors, Psychotherapists and Psychologists, including practitioners with specialist skills in working with tamariki, rangatahi, rainbow communities and more.

This expanded team reflects our holistic approach to trauma recovery, recognising the interconnectedness of mental, physical, emotional, and cultural wellbeing.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward under the new Sensitive Claims contract, our focus remains on:

- Onboarding new providers, so we can continue to grow our service and reduce wait times for kiritaki
- Continuing to build our team of Service Providers (social workers and allied health practitioners) and fostering strong collaboration across roles.
- Monitoring and evaluating the service to ensure we deliver safe, effective, and meaningful support to all survivors.
- Reducing wait times for kiritaki to enter the service, to ensure that everyone can help access the support they need when they need it

We remain deeply committed to ACC's vision of enabling recovery through high-quality, survivor-led services and thank all who have supported and contributed to this year's achievements.

Child Therapy & School Counselling



This year, CARE's Child Therapy team has expanded to 15 therapists, many of whom work with young people, adults, and whānau as well. We have added a specialised Art Therapist to this team this year, and we are very excited to offer art therapy as a modality.

Child Therapy in School

CARE has continued to provide vital counselling support to children by sending counsellors onsite to offer sessions at local schools. These students are often facing complex challenges such as family stress, grief, trauma, and life transitions, and may be unable to access support elsewhere. By delivering counselling directly in schools at no cost to the schools, CARE ensures that children receive timely emotional support in a safe and familiar environment. We work closely with school leadership and teachers to identify needs and collaborate on strategies that help children feel safe, supported, and able to thrive at school.

Our school-based child therapy service includes art and play therapy, which are especially effective for children who struggle to express themselves through words. These creative, child-centred approaches help young people process difficult emotions, build coping strategies, and strengthen resilience. By offering this support within the school setting, we reduce barriers to access and contribute to a more positive, inclusive learning environment for vulnerable children.

CHILD FEEDBACK:

“(I learnt that) I matter in this world, and everyone cares about me”

“(I feel) much better than ever now I have gotten the help I have needed”

“(I feel) able to sleep and go to the beach again”

“(I feel) less nervous and less scared”

Child therapy is a specialised form of counselling that supports children and young people to express themselves, process emotions, and build healthy coping strategies. Many children face challenges such as anxiety, grief, trauma, family breakdown, behavioral problems, or difficulties at school. Without support, these experiences can impact their emotional development, relationships, and learning. Therapy helps children make sense of what's happening in their lives, increases resilience, and supports mental and emotional wellbeing.

At CARE Waitākere, we believe every child deserves support to thrive. Child therapy at CARE may involve talking, creative activities like drawing or sandplay, mindfulness, storytelling, and play-based approaches. It can help with building self-esteem, improving behaviour, processing trauma, reducing anxiety, and strengthening relationships at home and school.

Client & Community Voices

Gottman Couples Therapy Group

This year, CARE Waitākere responded to the growing demand for relationship support by offering a Gottman Couples Therapy Group at our Henderson site. Facilitated by two trained relationship therapists, the programme created a safe, supportive environment where couples could focus on strengthening their connection and communication.

Each session began with a group introduction to key relationship tools and ideas, drawn from the Gottman Method. Afterward, couples were given dedicated time to step away from the group and work through guided exercises together—practising listening, compromise, trust-building, and meaningful reflection in the privacy of their own conversations.

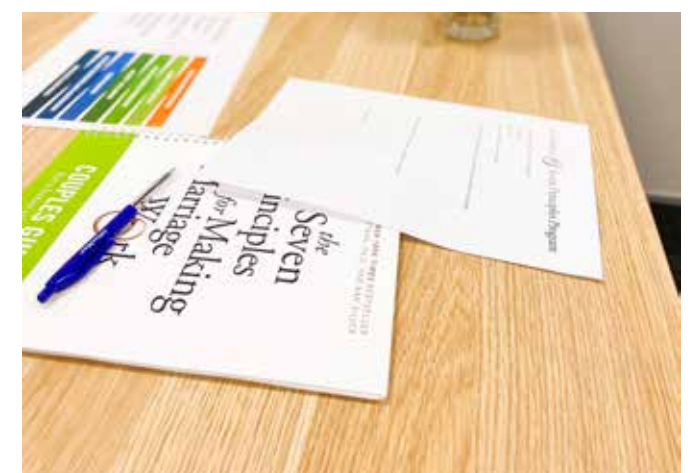
Participants deeply valued this format, describing the experience as “a wonderful experience for such a large topic.” Many appreciated having uninterrupted time to talk and reconnect—“having time together to discuss, resolve, trust”—while also feeling a sense of connection with other couples who were navigating similar journeys.

“It has been a safe space to work through our issues... a major breakthrough for us.”

— Participant, Gottman Couples Therapy Group

The skilled facilitation by the two CARE counsellors was frequently praised, with couples saying they “felt welcomed and quickly at ease,” and were “very well looked after”—even enjoying thoughtful touches like shared lunches that helped create a warm, relaxed atmosphere.

The positive impacts extended beyond the group itself. As couples strengthened their communication and relationship health, many experienced flow-on benefits in their parenting, whānau resilience, and overall wellbeing. Supporting couples in this way is just one of the ways CARE Waitākere works to nurture strong, connected communities.



Play & Art Therapy

DID YOU KNOW?

Art speaks volumes — even simple drawings can reveal how a child feels about their family, school, or themselves.

A child might draw a floating island to show feeling disconnected, or use only one color to express a mood without words.

Play therapy uses toys, games, and stories to help children express feelings they may not be able to say out loud.

A child might use superhero figures to act out feeling powerless or needing to protect others. Another might set up a doll family where the smallest one is always hiding.

Sand tray therapy allows children to create three-dimensional scenes that reflect their experiences, relationships, and inner world using miniature figures and symbols.

One child might build a chaotic jungle full of animals to show confusion or fear, while another creates a tiny house with a fence to show a need for safety.

Masks and puppets: Some children open up more when “speaking” through a puppet or creating a character with clay.

A puppet might “say” things a child isn’t ready to say themselves, or a clay creature might take on the feelings they find hard to talk about.

It’s evidence-based: Studies show play and art therapy can reduce anxiety, improve behavior, and help with trauma recovery.



Photos from Mindful Creativity Group

“(I learnt that) I am very loved and not everything is my fault and it’s okay to have sad days”

Mindful Creativity

In 2024, CARE Waitākere again partnered with The Recreators to run a series of Mindful Creativity workshops, combining mindfulness practices with upcycling and DIY skills. The programme was designed for people who would benefit from social connection, creative expression, and practical skill-building—particularly those with experiences of mental health challenges, trauma, or isolation.

Participants engaged in hands-on projects using repurposed materials, while also learning mindfulness techniques to support emotional regulation and wellbeing. The workshops encouraged creativity, built confidence, and offered tools for sustainable living, with a focus on reducing waste and reusing everyday items in useful and meaningful ways.

The group created a safe and welcoming space where community members could connect, reflect, and share, and the beautiful creations produced showcase the value of combining creativity, sustainability, and mindfulness.

DBT Group

It is a very rewarding experience to be able to offer Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) groups at CARE Waitakere Trust. This year we have witnessed the transformative power of the skills facilitating positive change and fostering a sense of community among participants. Meeting weekly over the span of the year (excluding school holidays), CARE Waitakere has offered five DBT Groups to around 50 ACC Sensitive Claims clients. This year an evening online group of mixed gender participants was offered for the first time. Facilitators involved in delivering the DBT programme include Susan Fuhrer, Kathy Bennett, Cathy Dodd, Elaine McConnell and Shikha David.

“I have been receiving support from CARE Waitakere for a while now, and couldn’t be any happier with their services.”

One of our creative participants penned her DBT experience:

The Balance Within B DANIELLA PESUNA

In storms of thought, where tempests rage,
A battle fought on mind’s own stage.
Emotions swell, then crash and break,
Like tidal waves that leave heartache.

Yet in the chaos, light appears,
A whispered truth to calm our fears.
A path of wisdom, strength, and grace —
A steady hand in time and space.

Acceptance first, though pain is near,
To face the now, embrace what’s here.
No fight, no flight, just breathe, just be,
And meet the world with clarity.

Between the dark, between the shine.
Distress may call, but we decide —
To let it pass, not run or hide.

New skills arise, like seeds we sow,
To build a life where healing grows.
With every choice, each mindful act,
We forge the peace we once lacked.

So here we stand, both strong and free,
Embracing change, embracing me.
A balance found, a heart set free —
The gift of dialectical therapy.

CLIENT STORY

On the day of my first appointment, I remember the feeling of safety and care was palpable...as soon as I entered reception!

The lovely receptionist put me at ease immediately with her sunny, vibrant personality, and gorgeous smile.

Then, I met (my counsellor)...and it's been a long time since I have felt so comfortable, safe, and cared about...like visiting a close friend...and the impact her work has made on my life is enormous!

She has supported me in every way possible, from suggesting courses which may assist me on my journey forward...to financial and transport assistance via the Budgeting Service at CARE.

(My counsellor) is a veritable font of knowledge, coupled with a caring, loving, empathic, and 'down to earth' way of being.

She is simply the best!!

The Budgeting Team at CARE are equally as awesome!

They have both been a massive help with various financial aspects of my life... including budgeting advice, applications to WINZ, and being there to support me at WINZ appointments when needed.

Both (financial mentors) have also instilled much needed confidence in me, for which I am very grateful.

**“Thank you so much
CARE Waitakere, for
taking such great care
of me...you truly live up
to your name.”**



Our Impact

In 2025, CARE Waitākere provided over 17,500 individual sessions across our core service areas, continuing our commitment to support the mental, emotional, and practical wellbeing of individuals and families in West Auckland. This included:

13,376

ACC Counselling
Sessions

709

Financial Mentoring
Sessions

216

Family Support
Sessions

3,241

Counselling Sessions



In addition to one-on-one support, our therapeutic and wellbeing groups continued to make a significant impact, offering safe, shared spaces for healing, learning, and connection. In 2025, a total of 140 participants took part in group programmes, including:



These group offerings provide vital opportunities for people to build skills, regulate emotions, and strengthen relationships in a supportive, trauma-informed environment.

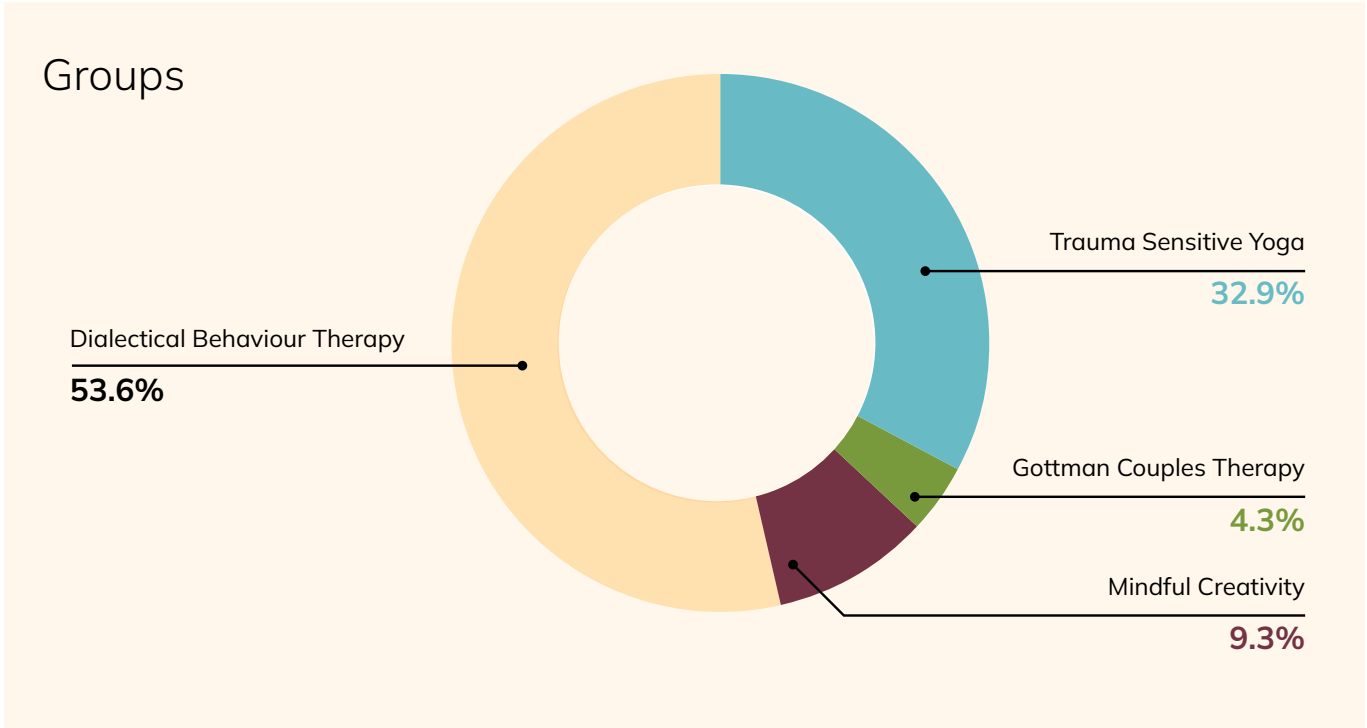
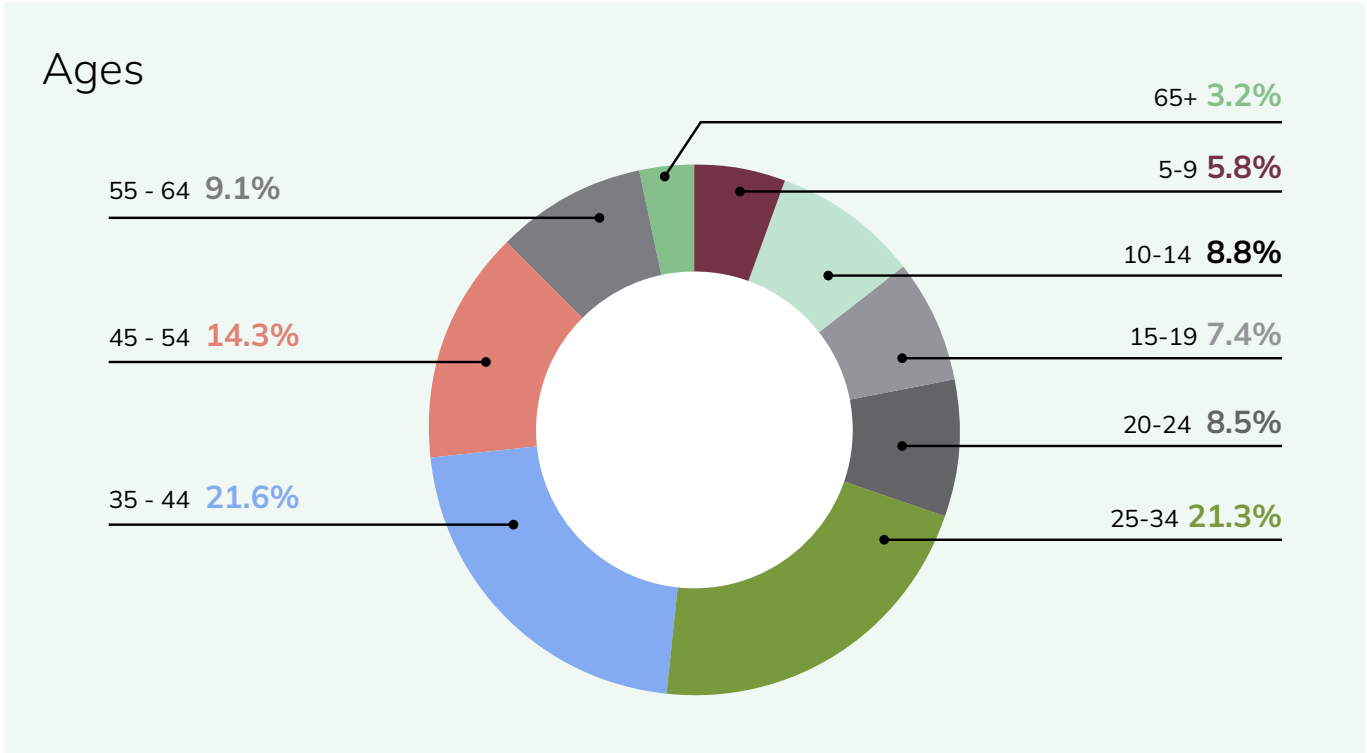
These numbers reflect both the scale of need within our community and the vital role CARE plays as a trusted provider of accessible, professional, and compassionate support. Whether through trauma-informed counselling, advocacy and navigation support, or practical financial guidance, CARE continues to walk alongside clients facing complex and often compounding life challenges.

Our services reached people across the lifespan, showing the breadth of our impact. A significant

number of our clients were **children and young people**, with **79 aged 5–9**, **119 aged 10–14**, and **101 aged 15–19**. This reflects the importance of our work in schools and with families, particularly in addressing childhood trauma, anxiety, grief, and family transitions. The largest proportion of clients came from the **25–44 age range** (289 aged 25–34 and 294 aged 35–44), which is often a time of high stress due to parenting, financial pressures, and relationship challenges. We also provided steady and consistent support to older adults, with **194 clients aged 45–54**, **123 aged 55–64**, and **44 aged 65 and over**, many of whom face isolation, loss, or long-term mental health needs.

CARE is committed to culturally responsive, equitable service delivery. In 2025, **19.5% of our clients identified as Māori**, **7.7% as Pacific**, and **5.6% as Asian**, with **44.2% identifying as New Zealand European/Pākehā**. These figures show that our services are reaching a diverse range of people and reflect our strong focus on bicultural practice and cultural safety. Our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi remains central to our mahi, with a continuing emphasis on supporting Māori clients and whānau in ways that are respectful, relational, and culturally competent.

Together, these demographic and service delivery figures tell a powerful story. CARE is more than a service provider—we are a steady presence for people navigating hardship, trauma, and change. We walk alongside individuals and families from all walks of life, helping them to find safety, stability, and hope. The impact of our work is visible not just in numbers, but in the strengthened lives and whānau we support every day.



Team and Partnerships

By Maxine Finlay

This year has been one of growth and collaboration. As we reflect on the past 12 months, we're proud of the dedication and professionalism shown across all areas of our work. Our team members have continued to deliver high-quality support and services, adapt to changing needs, and strengthen the values that underpin everything we do. In this section, we share some key updates, milestones, and highlights from our team's journey over the year.

Administration Team

The lovely Sana Wilson has now moved into a permanent full time role as the Front Desk Administrator at CARE, and we are incredibly glad to have her welcoming our clients and caring for our team.

We were also thrilled to welcome Maria Thompson to CARE this year. Maria has taken up a newly created Sensitive Claims Contract Coordinator role. This role is full time, and reflects the increase in work associated with the ever-growing ACC Sensitive Claims contract.

The rest of our administration team remains the same, and has worked together in a beautifully supportive and caring way to keep CARE running smoothly through some very busy periods.

Financial Mentoring Team

This year, the wonderful Fiona Halliwell left CARE to begin a new chapter in Whāngarei. Her absence has been deeply felt. Before she departed, we shared a special evening together—an opportunity to reflect on the incredible impact she made during her time at CARE. We have been thrilled to welcome

Dean Edwards into the Senior Financial Mentor and Team Lead role. Dean has a wealth of experience in finance and management, and has flown through his financial mentor training. CARE is very lucky to have him on board!

Bicultural Rōpū

CARE runs a Bicultural Rōpū which actively progresses bicultural competence in our organisation. This group meets once a quarter to discuss CARE's bi-cultural practice and our role as Tangata Te Tiriti (partners of the Treaty of Waitangi). This year, the group has led a few exciting initiatives, including Monday Morning Karakia and Waiata, and the setting up of our new Whakanoa station.



"I like the laid back atmosphere of CARE... Love the warm inviting feel of the place"



"Kia ora Whanau, At CARE you are treated with dignity and respect. Just like on a Marae. The services and help that you need is right there. The people are very friendly and very good at what they do.

Make sure that you have any paperwork available for them. This will assist in finding specifically what help you need. Whanau, there is somebody out there to help with your needs, at CARE they have the good people to be the "Engine" to locate this help for you. Arohanui"



He Mihi Nui

With Deep Thanks

At CARE Waitākere, we are deeply grateful for the support, collaboration, and trust of our stakeholders, who make it possible for us to walk alongside individuals and families in Waitākere during times of challenge and change.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our funding partners, donors, community collaborators, and supporters—each of whom plays a vital role in helping us deliver compassionate, professional, and accessible services to those in need.

A special acknowledgement goes to our Government Contract Partners, **MSD** and **Oranga Tamariki**, whose ongoing investment enables us to provide high-quality Financial Mentoring and Counselling services. This support ensures that we can uphold our commitment to safety, equity, and meaningful outcomes for individuals, whānau, and our wider community.

We also recognize our partner schools, community organisations, and volunteers who enrich and extend the impact of our mahi every day. Ngā mihi nui for standing with us.

Together, we are able to fulfill our vision of restoration and empowerment.



Totara Fund



Auckland Founda+ion



Support CARE

At CARE Waitākere, we walk alongside people through some of life's hardest moments—grief, anxiety, trauma, relationship breakdowns, and the lasting impact of past harm. For many, our counselling services are the first step toward healing, safety, and a renewed sense of self.

Counselling helps children understand big emotions, supports parents to reconnect with their tamariki, and empowers survivors to rebuild with strength and dignity. This kind of support changes lives—and your help makes it possible.

Our Food Assistance Fund provides emergency support to individuals and families who are working with our Financial Mentors and are facing immediate food insecurity. This fund helps to ensure no one goes hungry during difficult times. Donations directly enable us to offer this vital lifeline to those in urgent need.

We believe everyone deserves access to quality, compassionate care—regardless of their ability to pay. As a community-based, not-for-profit organisation, we rely on donations to keep our services accessible for those who need them most.

Your support helps us:

- Provide free or low-cost counselling for children, young people, and adults
- Deliver school-based counselling to tamariki
- Run therapeutic groups that build resilience and connection
- Support families in crisis with wraparound services
- Advocate for those facing hardship, housing stress, or family violence
- Offer emergency food assistance to families in urgent need

Together, we can make a lasting difference.

Donate today

carewaitakere.org.nz/donate



Email: admin@carewaitakere.org.nz

Phone: (09) 834 6480

Care Henderson
199 Universal Drive
Henderson
Auckland

carewaitakere.org.nz