

L.I.N.K [Life Skills | Information | Networks | Knowledge]

A Tauranga-based volunteer project where people who care can support others in need.

Catholic Family Support Services (CFSS) is commencing a pilot of “L.I.N.K”, a home-based mentoring programme that provides one-to-one peer support for families and individuals. The programme has three broad aims: to help participants become more confident in themselves; realise personal potential; and enable personal and family progress. It will benefit those who are looking for positive change in their life and who would welcome a mentor to support them to make the changes.

Why the programme was created

Research into childhood trauma (such as ‘ACE’, see www.acestudy.org) has added to a growing awareness that negative experiences in childhood have a profound and widespread impact – not only on those years immediately following the event (as you would expect) but also on the person’s ability to function well throughout their entire life.

The situations that have negative impacts for children can include abuse or violence, deprivation, having a parent who is dependent on alcohol or substances, or other family dysfunction such as a parent in prison. The child who has experienced these conditions often grows up struggling to deal with life’s challenges and has a higher likelihood of becoming a user of the social service, health and even justice systems.

While some of these people will need professional services, there are others who would benefit from support from their communities – such as a peer mentor working alongside the family for a period of time, to find pathways and solutions.

Mentors can be a great help with

- finding specific information,
- providing skills, knowledge, or helpful strategic tools
- planning e.g. for establishing a vegetable garden or a household routine
- advocacy for an appointment with a Government department
- increasing support circles or friendship networks
- locating specific resources
- role modelling
- confidence building

How it works

A registered social worker provides oversight for the programme and a full social work assessment determines the participant’s suitability for programme entry, matches participants with mentors, assesses risk to all parties throughout the term of engagement, and is a central point for the participant or the mentor to refer any issues that have arisen.

Mentors are recruited according to CFSS’s normal recruitment process and the requirements for volunteers in the community. Training, guidance, structured supervision and ongoing support are provided. Mentors can choose the period of time they wish to commit for and the amount of time they can spare e.g. 2 hours per week for six months.

Who can be a mentor?

Any socially minded, kind and stable person who holds strong Christian values and is able to give a regular commitment of time over a fixed period. In line with current volunteer employment processes for the social services, prospective volunteers will be willing to complete a recruitment process including providing referees and consent to a Police check.

This role is a wonderful opportunity to provide a social service ministry to someone in need, and CFSS is currently seeking expressions of interest from people who might be willing to take on a mentoring role. Could this be you? If you want to find out more please contact Sharon 021389847.

