

Families Panels- What's the difference that's making a difference, and for whom?





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Introduction

This report outlines the key elements of implementing the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, a qualitative participatory monitoring and evaluation tool. It was envisaged that this technique would provide some pointers as to the impact and the sort of change occurring with the critical voices within the Families Panels themselves- panel members and panel facilitators from the community coordinating organisations.

The report is structured in five sections:

Section 1: An overview of the Families Panels, the process and structure and a highlights tour of the last four years.

Section 2: An overview of the Most Significant Change Technique and why it was selected to use as an evaluation tool for this initiative.

Section 3: An in depth description of the process of gathering, selecting and analysing the stories of change and of the key participants involved in the process.

Section 4: The key benefits, achievements, and outcomes identified by the participants invited to analyse the stories of change and the recommendations they developed for the Families Commission to consider for the future.

Section 5: This section presents the four stories chosen as the key stories of change with the reasons why these stories were chosen.

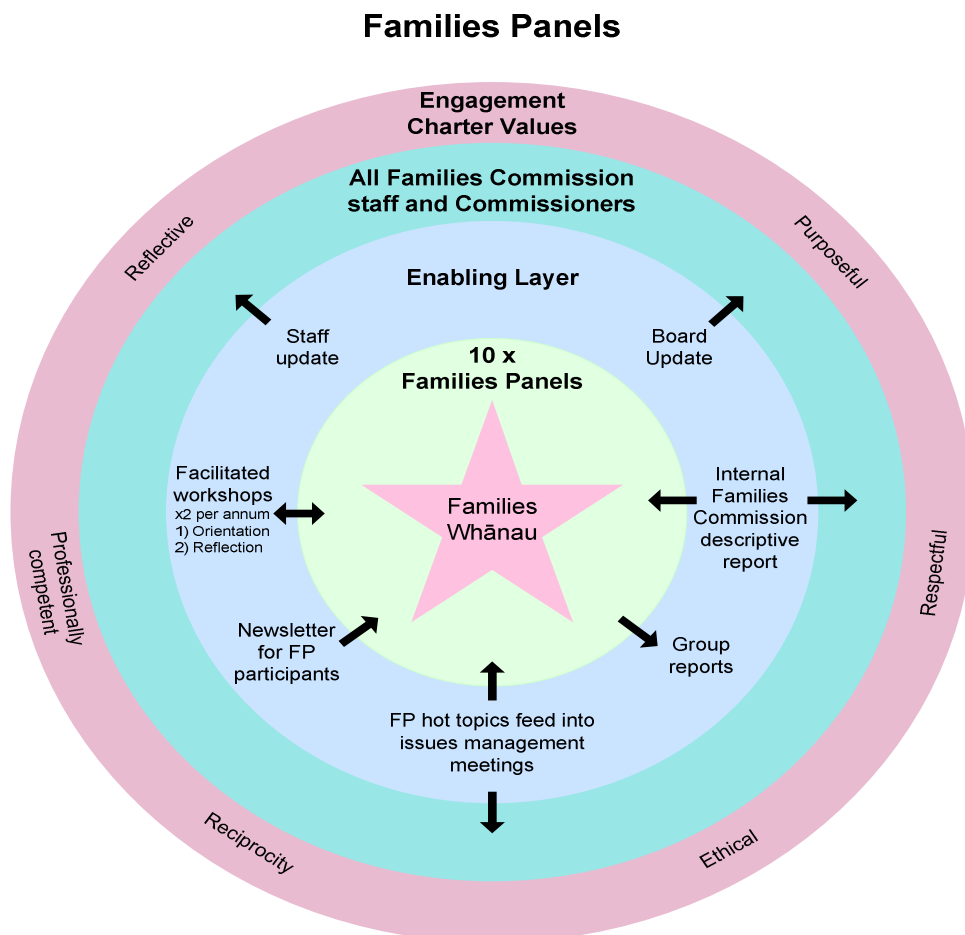


Section 1 Overview of the Families Panels

The Families Panels were established in March 2008 to help the Families Commission access the voices of families on a range of topics relevant to the Commission as well as to gauge trends and issues of importance to families. This is central to the Commission's engagement with families under the Families Commission Act.

An important underlying philosophy of the Families Panels approach is that they are discussion groups. This enables participants and group facilitators to conduct the gatherings in a way which meets their needs.

The following diagram illustrates the structure and process of the Families Panels.





A 'Highlights Tour' of the Last four years

The Families Commission has set up the Families Panel Discussion Group initiative to help it keep in touch with the views of families in diverse situations. This is central to the Commission's engagement with families under the Families Commission Act.

Over the last four years there have been 24 Families Panels (see table below) come together to discuss a wide variety of family/ whānau topics with approximately 240 panel members participating. Each panel comes together three times a year over a two year period.

Each Families Panel discussion group includes eight to twelve participants in similar circumstances. The group meets three times a year for two years to discuss anything that affects families in circumstances similar to their own.

The initiative is designed to generate in-depth, reflective dialogue directly based on the experience of participants and their peers, thus contributing to the Commission advocacy position. While each round has a theme, often a topic of current interest to the Commission, a key purpose of the project is to hear news of emerging issues and promising solutions.

Each group is co-ordinated by a community organisation selected for their ability to connect with local representative families and whānau. These organisations are contracted to do the work of recruitment, meeting organisation, facilitation, recording and reporting. The community organisation receives a fee to cover administrative costs, facilitator time, and the cost of a voucher of thanks for participants. Participants are briefed about forthcoming meetings and, receive a report that combines results from all groups and notes action taken as a result of information provided by participants.



March 2008 – June 2009

- Teen mothers
- Rural families with young children
- Pacifica families
- Mortgage belt families

July 2008 – June 2010

- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Families with a child with a disability
- Fathers and grandfathers

July 2009-June 2011

- Rural families
- Single parent families
- Families with young children
- Urban Māori families
- Whanau/whanui from Ngati Hauiti
- families with teenagers

July 2010-June 2012

- Chinese migrant families
- Families that include parents with a disability
- Pacifica Families
- Somali refugee families
- Teen fathers
- Urban middle income families

July 2011-2012

- Rural Māori families
- Same sex parent families
- Single parent families
- Urban Māori families



Section 2 Introduction and Overview of the Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique

This section provides an overview of why the MSC technique was selected as being an appropriate Families Panel evaluation approach to utilise, how the story gathering process occurred as well as the review process to select the stories of change.

Why the Most Significant Change Technique?

The Most Significant Change technique was judged appropriate and useful to evaluate the difference the Families Panels were making (or not) in people's lives, practice /organisation /community for those involved directly as a member of a panel or as a facilitator /manager of the community organisations hosting the panels.

The MSC technique is well suited to initiatives such as the Families Panels where the underlying character and philosophy is one of reciprocity and participation and where the interest is in the effect of the intervention on people's lives. This monitoring and evaluation technique mirrors that underlying philosophy by also focusing on participation and ongoing learning rather than just on accountability.

Other reasons for using the technique were, it:

- Is a good way to clearly identify the values that prevail in an organisation and to have a practical discussion about which of those values is most important?
- Is a good means of identifying unexpected changes.
- Is a participatory form of monitoring/evaluation that requires no special professional skills... everyone can tell stories about events they think were important.
- Encourages analysis as well as data collection because people have to explain why they believe one change is more important than another.
- Can build staff/participants' capacity in analysing data and conceptualising impact.
- It can deliver a rich picture of what is happening, rather than an overly simplified picture...It can be used to monitor and evaluate initiatives that do not have predefined outcomes against which to evaluate. ¹

¹ Davies, R., Dart, J (2005), The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique: A guide to its use. Version 1.00



Section 3: Stories of Change: Gathering, selecting and analysing the stories

This section focuses on the process used to gather stories of change, create vignettes, select and analyse the stories.

Gathering Stories of Change

In 2010, the Families Commission engaged *patillo* to assist them to implement the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique. The process involved the collection of significant change stories at the field level and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories.

Domains of Change

For the Families Panels initiative, the emphasis was to evaluate the difference the Families Panels were making (or not) in people's lives/ practice /organisation /community who were directly involved as a member of a Families Panel or as a facilitator of a Families Panel or manager of the community organisations involved in facilitation and coordination of the Families Panels.

Pattillo and field staff identified four areas, one in the North Island and three in the South Island, where the stories would be collected by the Families Commission Engagement Advisor as part of her annual visits to regions. These regions were chosen because they were nearing completion of the two year cycle.

Key interview information was prepared and invitations sent to interviewees with background information, an informed consent form and the interview question sheet in preparation for the interview – see Appendix 2 for samples.

The Question

The MSC question is designed with a specific time period; it asks respondents to exercise their own judgement and asks them to be selective about the most important aspect of their experience on the Families Panel. The story teller is also asked to explain the significance of the story from their point of view.

This helps people reading and discussing the story to understand why the story was significant to the storyteller.

The MSC process begins by searching for the answer to a simple question. Interviewees were asked:

- a) (*Families Panel members*) What differences or changes has being involved in the Families Panels made to you? Thinking about these changes –which do you think has been the most important change? (choose one)
- b) (*Families Panel facilitator/organisation managers*) I am interested to talk to you about the changes you can recall in you, your practice and your organisation since your involvement in the Families Panel. Thinking about these changes – which do you think is the most important one? (Choose one)



Collecting and reviewing the stories of change

Eight interviews were carried out in May /June of 2011. Each interview was transcribed and returned to the interviewee for verification and any changes.

Pattillo and the Families Commission Engagement Advisor selected the vignettes from each of the transcribed interviews. This involved searching for the elements of a structured story that consisted of a beginning, middle and an end. Any identifying people or place names are removed and each story was given a catchy title that captured the essence of the story and lets the reader know what the story is about.

Ethics of collecting stories

Attention was paid to the ethics of collecting stories from individuals by developing a process to track consent right from the outset. Interviewees were sent a copy of the informed consent form and the interviewer then went over the form at the beginning of the interview. It was explained how the story would be used and a check was made that the story teller was happy for the story to be used in that way. The Families Commission holds a record of this which includes the signed consent forms.

Selecting and analysing the stories

With respect to the selection and analysis of the stories, a Families Panel reflective forum was held in December 2011. This brought together nine people either directly involved in the Families Panel initiative or in other family related projects within other agencies. Brief biographies the people participating in the reflective forum are included in the Appendix to this report.

One of the challenges is how to measure the impact of participatory projects in a way that is aligned with the philosophy of these projects. Therefore the reflective forum used a further participatory process “The Evaluation Summit Technique”², which aligned with the underlying philosophy of the Families Panels initiative by recognising the importance of participation by stakeholders in the decision making process and takes into consideration the following three questions: i) whose reality counts? ii) Who decides what is measured in the evaluation? And iii) who should be making the evaluative judgements?

The process ensured that the story selection and analysis process was structured so the participants were involved in the interpretation and judgements of the stories presented.

² Dr Jessica Dart [The evaluation Summit Technique](http://www.clearhorizon.com.au/our-company/flagship-techniques/evaluation-summit-technique/) (<http://www.clearhorizon.com.au/our-company/flagship-techniques/evaluation-summit-technique/>)



Story selection

The story selection began with 12 vignettes distributed among small groups of 3 - 4 people. The task of selecting the most significant change story is to reduce the number of stories to one or 2 stories per group. The process begins by small group members reading each story aloud followed by in depth discussions about which ones should be chosen. The reasons why choices are made are documented by the group.

The vignettes, like stories, make the information more accessible and personal. On a practical level, the use of vignettes engages participants in a much deeper way than presenting the key findings from a series of interviews in a power point presentation. Instead the participants are presented with narrative stories that they themselves interpret and draw meaning from.



Section 4: Benefits/Outcomes/Achievements

Drawing from the story selection process described above, this section presents the benefits and key achievements identified by the reflection forum participants followed by recommendations for the Families Commission to consider.

Analysis of key outcomes and discovery of key themes emerging

Process

As each story is read aloud, participants listen and record the ‘instances’ or examples of significant change from each story. At the completion of each story, participants engage in conversation searching for meaning and place post-it notes on the story highlighting the outcomes and themes emerging from the stories.

The key significant change stories are chosen and the reasons why they were chosen are recorded (full vignettes and the reasons why they were chosen are presented in **Section Five**). Following the discovery of the key outcomes and impacts, all the post-it notes are gathered from all the stories presented and cluster coded followed by a full group discussion of the key themes and outcomes emerging.



Results

The following Table clusters the benefits/ outcomes with brief quotes to illustrate the four key vignettes chosen. Each group chose a Families Panel participant and Families Panel facilitator story and noted the reciprocity of the connection between the two roles.

Benefits /Outcomes	Quotes to illustrate what we discovered
<p>Panel member</p> <p>Personal empowerment Being heard Gaining knowledge</p>	<p><i>“For example, one of our hot topics I think we decided to talk about government agencies. ‘...And yeah, the amount of people that would have similar experiences was just unbelievable. And it also helped me in a way to become more assertive.”</i></p>
<p>Panel member</p> <p>Sharing knowledge and taking action Early identification of issues emerging</p>	<p><i>“...down there there’s....new dairy farms, with a lot of migrants coming in from the Philippines, and South Africa, Zimbabwe and sometimes ...these women don’t have cars and they’ve got kids but no one’s ever seen the kids.... (as a result) ..we [Plunket] have expanded and we have a new baby pack and we have a list of our services, and we have expanded that and made it a bit more in detail, for possibly for someone new to the area who doesn’t understand exactly what’s going on. Little things like that, that I can’t think of but we have taken things away from those meetings....”</i></p>
<p>Families Panel facilitator</p> <p>The value of bringing together participants with different awareness leading to conceptualising change for individuals, whānau and communities</p>	<p><i>“...I just found it personally rewarding that some of these people in this group offered support, just by the fact that they had been through those things themselves and survived, I guess. Like one lady in particular ... and she talked about her time when she had a breakdown and mental health in the family issues, you know - I could almost see their little eyes popping out as if to say “OMG you work in a government organisation but you really, you’ve been through the same things we have, so in a way I was hoping that it would give them hope I guess - hope....”</i></p>
<p>Families Panel facilitator</p> <p>Being present as a facilitator, letting go Having empathy and understanding Creating a safe place for the conversation and dialogue The depth of feedback received</p>	<p><i>“...Well, revealing in terms of the things that come out and come up in that discussion, in that time, that special place that you have set aside, are much deeper and more meaningful than what you’d get from any other form of – like we’re constantly asking people what they think about things and what they would like and what’s worrying them, that sort of thing, but we don’t get that sort of feedback. So the whole system of actually doing the Parent [sic] Panel I think that has been very, very useful...”</i></p>



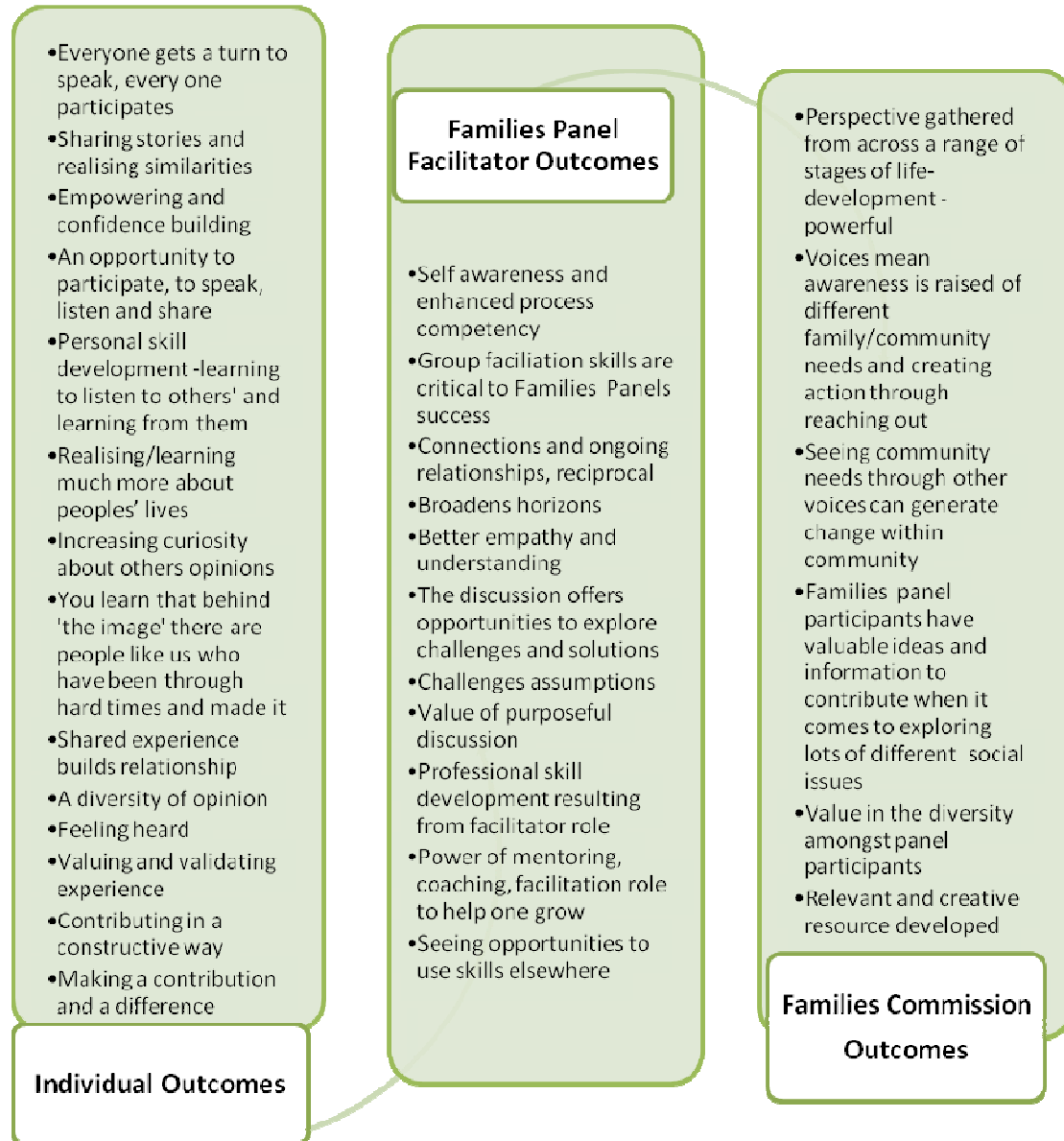
These are the further outcomes identified from across all 12 vignettes with quotes to illustrate

outcomes	Quotes to illustrate what we discovered
Understanding the bigger picture	<p><i>"The amount of grandparents out there that are raising their grandchildren. It blew me away. Totally blew me away..."</i></p> <p><i>"Knowing that there were other people out there, well, other people in the group that either had similar stories, the same stories, had the same experiences or similar experiences..."</i></p>
Action following the panel meetings	<p><i>"...Probably, just thinking a bit more with the topic on the recession and things like that - just ways to slightly pull back and budget a bit better, or you think more about going in and out to town about four times a day. Things like "Oh, the kids can go on the bus..."</i></p>
The value of the coordinating organisation	<p><i>"Yeah. Without them, I don't think I'd still be here. They've been a rock.If I had gone to see them a lot sooner, ...I probably wouldn't have had so much debt"</i></p>
Families Commission follow up	<p><i>"just knowing that the information that you're giving over is actually going to be heard by hopefully people that can make the changes. Or at least suggest what should happen..."</i></p> <p><i>"..It's more the what's being done with it side of it. I know last time xxx brought a little pamphlet that came out and it was like 'Oh wow, let me see - I remember these ones'. And that was great, and it was proof that something was being done because sometimes you just wonder is it going into airy-fairy netherland..."</i></p>



Emerging themes

The following table presents the key achievements and outcomes identified from all of the stories in three categories: Families Panel members, Families Panel Facilitator and Families Commission





The outcomes resulting from the in depth discussion and dialogue of the participants across the stories identified plausible evidence of:

- The value of the engagement and contracting of the coordinating organisations selected for their expertise in a particular field, or ability to connect with local representative families and whānau.
- The importance of the face to face conversations over a two year period developing trust and a panel structure that helps create a positive and constructive environment for conversation. Stories indicated that the Families Panels were a safe place to connect.
- The facilitation was powerful to include all voices and different perspectives.
- That shared experience builds reciprocal relationships and connections that supported ongoing action to support communities. Stories included examples of how Families Panel members found the conversations and connections meaningful and real.
- There were examples of the growth in confidence of Families Panel members which was empowering and how meeting diverse people with different perspectives assisted in community building and action through better understanding.
- That connections occurred across and between different groups and projects facilitating integration of services.

Areas for strengthening

Participants were presented with key findings /themes with quotes from across all of the interviews and asked to consider and note down any areas that they really thought needed addressing in an ongoing Families Panel initiative.

Results

1. Highlight relationship via stories of change.
2. Show the commonality of experience despite the diversity of families.
3. To clarify the intentionality of the Families Panels –to hear voices of families/whānau.
4. How to communicate the value of the Families Panels , to highlight the ‘feeling level’.
5. How to show the Families Panel process supports the relationship backbone.
6. Using the MSC process as an ongoing approach in measuring change or impact.
7. Celebrating the individual and community actions from the Families Panels.



Synthesise – Keep, Drop and Create

Participants were invited to continue synthesising the information by asking them to work in groups and discuss the key areas to keep, drop, and create that would improve the Families Panel initiative into the future, based on the information produced during the session. The key areas are outlined below.

- Keep**
- The diversity of the groups and locations and the different perspectives and experiences within each group.
 - Facilitators connecting at biannual meetings.
 - The face to face relationship with the Families Commission through the Engagement Advisor role.
 - The contracting process with community providers – worked well.
 - \$75 resource to support Families Panel member participation values their contribution.
 - Keep the Families Panels as discussion groups.
- Create**
- Create the link between Families Commission and other national level policy conversations occurring.
 - Create a clearer feedback loop from the Families Commission back to Families Panels

Probe

As one final step before asking participants to develop recommendations, they were asked individually to write down any questions that remained unanswered through “what if” questions. This activity encourages participants to consider areas beyond the current structure and process of the Families Panels.

Participants considered the following:

What if ...

- The money dried up completely?
- What if the Families Panels really influenced policy?
- What if all the Families Panel organisations over the last four years were brought together?
- What if the process was picked up across government?
- What if we took Families Panels out of the Families Commission?
- What would happen if the Families Panel initiative ceased?



Recommendations for the way forward

As the final part of the reflection forum process, participants were asked to draft recommendations for the Families Commission to consider. These were:

1. Retain the Families Panel process to capture the voices of families (exploring both issues and solutions) this is a cost effective and “rich” as well as responsive research method.
2. Ensure that the Families Panels feedback is prioritised by the Families Commission and linked in to policy deliberations across sectors with results being fed back to Families Panel communities.
3. Recognise the Families Panels cost effective contributions to:
 - Confidence building individuals and families
 - Capacity building organisations
 - Connecting communities
4. Recognise the Families Panels are strategically contributing to the sector around families
 - Knowledge
 - Policy
 - Practice



Section 5: The Stories of significant change

The following four vignettes were chosen by the participants as representing the key stories of change with the reason the participants chose these particular stories.

Key informant – Families Panel Participant

Learning to be assertive

“...I suppose the main one for me personally was knowing that I wasn’t the only one. Does that make sense? Knowing that there were other people out there, well, other people in the group that either had similar stories, the same stories, had the same experiences or similar experiences. I mean, the list just goes on and on...And it was really good to be able to bounce ideas off other people as well. If you suggested something then they’d go ‘oh, yeah, that would be so cool’.

..For example, one of our hot topics I think we decided to talk about government agencies. ‘Cos that’s not a popular topic. And yeah, the amount of people that would have similar experiences was just unbelievable. And it also helped me in a way to become more assertive. To sort of know that okay, well, like – ‘cos we’d talk about some things that some people would get and (then other) people would miss out on other things. For example, Work and Income. And then having a discussion you know that next time you go in there you can go ‘well, hang on a minute, I’m entitled to this...and this. You’ve never told me, and I’ve got a right to know’.

... I mean, we may sit there and criticise a government department for five or 10 minutes but then we go ‘well, how can this change? Why is it like this?’ And in our opinions, and that would often be asked, what do you think should happen or what could happen or what would you like to see changed? And that was a good way of being able to express ourselves, to say ‘well, hey, look, this is what we think. This is what we think should happen’. And knowing that that information was going to a place where there could be change made. And not just for people in the now, but for future generations. I think that’s really important.. So that’s what I mean about being more assertive, especially with government departments, and that’s one of the reasons why I carried on the fight with ACC”.

This vignette was chosen because...

It represented the personal empowerment that occurred through:

The validation of sharing each other’s experience, being heard, and gaining knowledge that resulted in being more informed and assertive about where and how to go about accessing information, and

The reciprocity of the connection with the facilitator role in encouraging dialogue and connections.



Key Informant - Families Panel Facilitator

Listening, learning and connecting

“... locally it has been awesome to actually go out and spend some time participating...sitting there listening to the perspectives and views from those people, because you’re often busy in your everyday life. You go to visit them in a different context. You don’t get time to actually sit and have a conversation about what’s happening in that community. It’s been really revealing and I really see the value of doing that as a research tool. It’s far more effective than bits of paper.

Well, revealing in terms of the things that come out and come up in that discussion, in that time, that special place that you have set aside, are much deeper and more meaningful than what you’d get from any other form of – like we’re constantly asking people what they think about things and what they would like and what’s worrying them, that sort of thing, but we don’t get that sort of feedback. So the whole system of actually doing the Parent [sic] Panel I think has been very, very useful.

Because of the time and everybody feeding off each other, you did get deeper I think than you would just on a one-off.

... but to sit down and talk about a bigger topic and the future and I think some people probably hadn’t thought about, sit there in a group and think about that. But the same as in that some in the group didn’t know each other, and I just enjoyed seeing them connect and actually that has helped out in the community for them as well, because they know other people. And it was good the two Playcentre Presidents were there, and they’d never met. And that was good too. And sometimes it’s hard to think that you’re all in the same community. You don’t see each other. I don’t know about yours, but ours is quite spread out. You tend to get in your own groups.

And it was good for me too, because there was a couple of people I hardly knew but yeah, you seem like when you see them again you’ve got this other connection with them. And it’s made that relationship easier. A lot of women go and live in the country and they’re very intelligent, they’re professional women, and that’s how they’ve got there through teaching or something like that, or whatever, and then they’re quite isolated and as you said, talking about your babies all the time, you know, so they don’t get the opportunity for that higher level discussion. So that was a privilege to be together.

...but that face to face is so valuable, isn’t it - for human connection.”

This vignette was chosen because...

It reflected the benefit of the time and space provided in the Families Panel discussions that enabled deeper and more meaningful discussions through the skill and effort of the facilitator role in being present, having empathy and understanding, letting go and creating the connections to enable Families Panel members to have deeper conversations and connections .



Key Informant - Families Panel Participant

Sharing knowledge and taking action

“... the people that were in our group, say if there were 12, three would come from other areas which is quite a long way from here, but I do have connections with those people but not in that sort of forum.

So we would have people from other regions and towns, you know, they came from reasonably wide areas because of our situation. No, it brought everyone together, and we talked about the same sort of things, how you know, like especially one area was really interesting - because I'm involved in Plunket here, a girl from another area who's involved in Plunket came and spoke about their different issues.

Around here we've got sheep and beef farms and our population is very stable and we don't have a lot of people moving in and out whereas down there, there are dairy farms but new dairy farms, with a lot of migrants coming in from the Philippines, South Africa and Zimbabwe and sometimes they don't even know that they're there. But then they find out that they're there, and these women don't have cars and they've got kids but no one's ever seen the kids. And even little things, like there'll be an open fire in the house that they have to live in but they've never had to deal with a fire before. They've got no idea how to light it, or organise themselves to get wood.

So it was really interesting to hear her issues down there as to how they are to ours, and maybe take you know, we can prepare ourselves - not that we're going to get dairy farms here - but we can listen to their problems and see how they're dealing with them so people don't fall through the cracks in our community, which they can do.

... we [Plunket] have expanded and we have a new baby pack and we have a list of our services, and we have expanded that and made it a bit more in detail, for possibly for someone new to the area who doesn't understand exactly what's going on. Little things like that, that I can't think of but we have taken things away from those meetings.



Key Informant - Families Panel Facilitator

Giving back

"..I've had, it's quite an interesting split (panel members) - there was like one half was health professionals... Now whilst I say they had less challenges, they had all gone through challenges in their lives so they'd all worked themselves through those challenges and they were now working for NGOs and government organisations which means that you get a different perspective from those who were still in those challenges.

So these ones can remember vividly, like quite vividly, all those experiences. These ones were still living in so I was hoping that they could influence each other.

I just found it personally rewarding that some of these people in this group offered support, just by the fact that they had been through those things themselves and survived, I guess. Like one lady in particular ...and she talked about her time when she had a breakdown and mental health in the family issues, you know - I could almost see their little eyes popping out as if to say 'OMG you work in a government organisation but you really, you've been through the same things we have', so in a way I was hoping that it would give them hope I guess - hope.

...And I think they just enjoyed telling their story, because sometimes you just don't have a voice if you're stuck in this, and this I guess allowed them to have a voice and it's like someone was listening. And they're all good kids with challenges. I mean, I had challenges when I was growing up and I got through them at times but I had parents and their support. Some of them don't have it..."

These two vignettes were chosen because ...

They best represented the value of bringing together Families Panel member participants with different awareness, leading to conceptualising change for individuals, whānau and community.



Appendix 1

The appendix presents the bios of those attending the workshop together with a reflection on the workshop or the MSC technique.

Carmen Payne - Research and Practice Development Coordinator, Barnardos – Community Development Stakeholder

I have a background in social work and I am currently the Research and Practice Development Coordinator at Barnardos. I have an interest in participatory and dialogic evaluation approaches that focus on people's lived experiences and the meanings they ascribe to them.

I found the MSC evaluation summit to be a very effective way for the group to surface a range of outcomes, both intended and unintended, arising from the Families Panels. The value of this I think was in having a range of perspectives included through the analysis process. The discussions of what stories were significant and why meant we had to be explicit about our expectations for the Families Panels initiative and what we valued about it. That we could then make decisions about what parts of the initiative we would keep, change or drop, as well as recommendations about future action meant the process felt very focussed and efficient. As well, it was a useful way of enabling people to build professional relationships and further their own learning about the MSC process.

Gill Pirikahu – Researcher, Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development - Families Panel Facilitator

Ko Ruapehu te maunga
Ko Whanganui te awa
Ko Ātihaunui-ā-Pāpārangī te iwi
Ko Ngāti Tuera, Ngāti Pamoana, Ngāti Pareraukawa ngā hapū.
Ko te awa ko au te awa

My name is Gill Pirikahu and I am a researcher with Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development an Iwi Research Organisation which was established by Ngati Hauiti in 2005. The aim of Whakauae is to develop Ngati Hauiti's research capacity and to offer a broad range of Māori centred research services both nationally and internationally.

Whakauae focusses primarily on Māori public health research, health promotion evaluation, primary care research, health services and health policy research. We utilise largely kaupapa Māori qualitative research methodologies however, through research partnerships we are able to offer a mixed method approach if the research requires this. We have strong community linkages with whānau, hapū and iwi. We also partner with academic institutions such as Otago, Victoria and Massey Universities as well as with health services in the development and implementation of research.

Whakauae has been involved in facilitating a Families Commission Families Panel (made up of Ngāti Hauiti whānau and whanui) for the last two years. This has contributed both to furthering our own research interests and to iwi participant capacity building. Iwi Families Panel participants have gained an increased awareness and knowledge of the Families Commission role and services.



I have enjoyed facilitating and participating in the Families Panel as there have been some interesting and thought provoking topics particularly the session on resilience. I personally found interaction with participants invigorating and enjoyed reporting on their responses.

I found the MSC training very interesting which has added to not only my kete of research tools but increased my networks.

Jean Sims – Early Years Coordinator, Central Otago REAP - Families Panels facilitator

I live in the Ida Valley in Central Otago famous for dramatic weather and big skies. My husband runs an irrigation scheme and we have a life style property which keeps us busy. Our daughters are now grown, with one living in the UK and one settled near to us.

What I enjoy is 'being in the moment', being with family and friends, good food and wine, plants, music, animals, reading and sunshine. I find working with children an absolute joy. I like to support people going through change and to learn new things so I can keep up to date with research and strategies. What makes me angry is violence - in its many forms.

I have worked for Central Otago REAP Inc, which facilitates rural education for all ages, for the last 25 years, specifically in early childhood education, parenting education and careers facilitation.

I found the workshop very stimulating both meeting with interesting people and learning the MSC process which I am using now in my work. I was delighted that the information from the Families Panels, and in particular our rural voice, is being analysed and will be used in decision-making.

Justine Pivac-Solomon – Senior Advisor, Family and Community Services, Ministry of Social Development – Community Development Stakeholder

As a Senior Advisor at Family and Community Services (FACS), I work on community development, supporting community organisations and collaborative initiatives such as the Community Response Model. Before FACS, I worked in research and evaluation, health promotion and community provider development. I enjoy working with communities and organisations to look at innovative ways of working and improving service design to better meet the needs of families.

The MSC workshop was useful in itself to practice the technique, but it also provided a useful insight into how the Families Panels were run, what information came out of the panels and how the information could be used in other areas.



Lynda Murray – Engagement Advisor, Families Commission staff

I have worked in many different fields and positions, the common theme of all my roles has been the importance of relationships – taking the time to build rapport, gain a little bit of insight into the people you are working with and alongside and building and maintaining trusting relationships. I am absolutely privileged to have been holding the Families Panels for the last three years to have the flexibility to work with different people in different organisation to ensure a win-win for everyone. I continue to be inspired and in awe of the people who facilitate the groups and the families who share with honesty, integrity and humour their experiences, views and hopes for the future with us.

In many ways it was a humbling experience to be able to share the stories of these families and organisations and to have others acknowledge and appreciate the uniqueness and contribution the Families Panels make to the lives of families and development of the host organisations and their staff. The workshop was full of positive energy, good will and enthusiasm and I thank the participants for donating their time, insights and aroha.

Lynley Cvitanovic – Research Practitioner, Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development - Families Panel Facilitator

Along with Gill, I am also a research practitioner with Whakauae Research for Māori Health and Development based in Whanganui. Born and raised in Whanganui, I am fifth generation Pākeha, on the sides of both parents, and am of Croatian and English descent.

My work with Whakauae largely involves contributing to programme evaluation activities including undertaking provider evaluation training and collaborating with stakeholders to design and implement their own evaluation research studies. I also contribute to the various investigator initiated research projects undertaken by Whakauae’s senior research team members, Dr Heather Gifford and Dr Amohia Boulton.

The Families Panel sessions facilitated by Whakauae offered our participants a unique opportunity to have their voices heard in a wider forum using an approach responsive to their needs.

The Families Commission hosted MSC Story Families Panel evaluation session contributed to extending my understanding, and appreciation, of this qualitative evaluation method. As a result of this, Whakauae staff will be participating in further MSC Story method training in the near future with a view to implementing aspects of this in our work.



Maree Maddock - Possibility Leader *pattillo* – Facilitator of the MSC process

My work at *pattillo* is a natural progression from the community learning and participation work I have been involved in for more than two decades. I have extensive experience designing and managing services and programmes in the health sector and in the not-for-profit sector. I understand the demands of responding to challenging services in a cost effective and ethical way. In the mental health sector I have a track record of designing and developing new services, working directly with those responsible for making the services happen.

I bring to any project the ability to work with people to embrace the challenges they face with confidence to develop learning and solutions that they may not have initially thought possible.

I am *pattillo*'s Possibility Leader and Senior Consultant. Specifically I bring my expertise to clients through skilled facilitation, process design and learning through participatory evaluation. I have worked across a broad range of sectors in New Zealand and Australia as well as continuing the work I love with major organisations in the government and non government sectors.

I am experienced in engagement processes, in obtaining information from participants through mixed approaches such as interviews, focus groups and workshops. I have undertaken a range of action research projects. Most recently, I have been using real-time evaluation techniques and performance stories which focus on the participation of stakeholders both in evaluating projects and in the design of frameworks that best suit their circumstances.

I hold a Post-Graduate Diploma in Not for Profit Management,

Mary-Jane Rivers - Inspiring Communities – Community Development Stakeholder

My deep interest in resilient communities started with my work in local government. The importance of communities was reinforced in senior management roles in central government, especially leading social impact assessment work in the late 1980s. I have been CEO of the NZ Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and run my own business. I feel privileged to have been involved with international development work in several Pacific countries and in Eastern Europe for the World Bank, UNDP and NZAID. I have seen the lasting and far-reaching impact of many community development initiatives based on community leadership working hand-in-hand with government, business, NGOs and funders.



Sue Copas –Engagement Advisor, Families Commission Staff

Who I am...

Like many women I straddle two worlds. Firstly, I am part of a family - a wife and mother of four with a lived understanding of many of the challenges facing New Zealand Families today. I am also an organisational sociologist, with a professional background in action research and organisation development.

During my time with the Families Commission I have worked alongside staff from a number of innovative and exemplary social service organisations to learn more about family whānau centred practice in action. During a two-year action inquiry we gathered practiced-based evidence about the effectiveness of working in authentic collaboration with families whānau and each other, distilled three key principles of family whānau centred practice, and created two resources to share the process and knowledge widely.

Thriving: Connected-Reflective-Effective, Sue Copas and Action Inquiry Contributors, 2011. Families Commission and Action Inquiry Partner Organisations, Auckland.

Thriving in Practice: Connected-Reflective-Effective, Huia O’Sullivan and Action Inquiry Contributors, 2011. Families Commission and Action Inquiry Partner Organisations, Auckland.

I found the Most Significant Change (MSC) workshop valuable. It enabled a group of knowledgeable and experienced practitioners from diverse backgrounds to work interactively with the stories of change gathered from the Families Panels. Via a structured process, we were able to discern and distil important outcomes and changes occurring for the families and organisations involved in the families panel process.

Families Panels are another example of family whānau centred practice in action. Using a series of critical questions and a process of iteration I found the MSC process was able to capture the relational depth and multidimensionality involved in this way of working. Through well facilitated and focused conversation the workshop participants refined the stories of change. This created clarity, and enabled robust outcomes, benefits and impacts to emerge across a range of factors and levels.



Appendix 2

Purpose of the interviews

Thank you very much for participating in this process of gathering information from a variety of people who are involved in the Families Panels; including participants, facilitators and Families Commission staff. We are gathering information by collecting experiences of “Most Significant Change”. This information will contribute to the monitoring, evaluation and ongoing learning of the work of the Panels.

The experiences collected will be used for a number of purposes. These include:

- Finding out what changes people are experiencing through participating in the Panels.
- Finding out what changes facilitators of panels are experiencing through being involved in the Panels.
- Finding out what changes Family Commission Staff are experiencing as a result of the work of the Families Panels
- Identifying emerging issues and opportunities
- An opportunity for the Commission to show evidence of the contribution of the work of the Families Panels to the broader outcomes of the Commissions work.
- To share results with participants, partner organisations and other key stakeholders

Our consultation process will be based on a series of one-on-one semi-structured conversations. The interviewer will ask a few questions, where you will be invited to share your stories and experiences about your involvement in the Families Panels.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Any personal details will be protected according to the principles of the Privacy Act, 1993.

You can choose to remain anonymous. If you want the stories to be attributed to you, you can consent to the publication of your name. We have attached a consent form which the interviewer will go through with you at the start of the interview.

If the Families Commission wishes to use any story for any purpose, we will contact you to ask for your permission which you are entitled to deny.

Some quotes and stories may be used for reporting purposes without identifying the source of the quote.

We may like to share these stories with other people in the sector and community through websites, local newsletters and media.



Consent to publication

Do you, (the interviewee/storyteller):

Consent to the Families Commission using your story for publication (tick one)

Yes No

Want to have your name on the story (tick one) **

Yes No

Signature and date of interviewee/storyteller

Date

Contact details

Email

Phone

Name of interviewee/storyteller

Name of interviewer

**If interviewees want to remain anonymous, their names or contact details will not be recorded – write participant or similar description