



Western Bay of Plenty
Primary Health Organisation

TŪNGIA TE URURUA KIA TUPU
WHAKARITORITO TE TUPU
O TE HARAKEKE

Te Rerenga

NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2025

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With a new year on the horizon...

A thank you note for our partners and provider network.

As we reach the Christmas and New Year period, we want to acknowledge the year you have navigated. Primary care has continued to respond to change, shifting funding models and growing demand. Through all of this, you have cared for whānau with consistency, aroha and whanaungatanga. You have helped keep equity present in the everyday work of our rohe, and that has mattered.

As we look back on this year, one stand-out is clear. Strength comes from working together. Every time our network is united and moves with shared purpose, whānau feel that connection. This sense of unity has helped guide our mahi, and it remains the foundation we return to as a GP and iwi-owned, local community focused PHO.

We also want to recognise the impact of your genuine engagement. Thank you for the kōrero in meetings, forums and education sessions, and for the time you give to new projects and shared planning. Your openness guides our decisions. Your teamwork and manaakitanga have supported many whānau to receive the care they need. Your efforts have made a real difference.

"Every time our network is united and moves with shared purpose, whānau feel that connection."

As we look to the year ahead, our focus stays on stability, collaboration and community-led care. We will keep working alongside you to strengthen general practice, increase access for

whānau, improve equity and Māori health. Our commitment is to keep services, funding and decision-making local. Together, we will continue to build care that is connected, trusted and grounded in our communities' needs.

For those able to take a break, we hope you can rest and spend time with your loved ones. For those who will continue to work through the holiday period, we acknowledge your commitment and the care you provide at a busy time. We wish you and your whānau a safe Christmas, a refreshing summer and a hopeful start to the New Year. ▲

Ngā mihi nui,

Sarah Stevenson,
Interim CEO, WBOP PHO



Farewell to CEO Lindsey Webber

On 28 October, WBOP PHO gathered to farewell CEO Lindsey Webber after six and a half years of service to the organisation and the community.

The event brought together current and former kaimahi, partners and providers, who shared stories and acknowledged the care and commitment Lindsey brought to her role. A pounamu taonga was presented as a symbol of respect, gratitude and ongoing connection. One of the organisation's founders, Aunty Tuki Te Arihi, also attended the occasion.

In her final kōrero, Lindsey noted that the decision to move on had been difficult, but the timing felt right. She thanked kaimahi for their mahi and said she was proud of WBOP PHO's work, especially how "the community is always at the centre of everything we do." The Board and kaimahi thanked Lindsey for her leadership and wished her well as she begins a new chapter in her career.

During her time with the WBOP PHO, Lindsey led the organisation through some of the most transformative years

in New Zealand's health system, from the COVID-19 response to the transition into the new national and regional frameworks, ensuring our organisation remained connected, collaborative and community-centred. Her commitment to equity, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and partnership strengthened relationships across general practices, iwi and community providers.



Interim CEO appointed

After a period when the Executive Leadership Team guided the organisation collectively, the WBOP PHO Board has appointed Sarah Stevenson as interim Chief Executive Officer on 25 November 2025.

Sarah leads the Community Services and Innovation team and joined WBOP PHO in May 2024. With 20

years of experience in public health, system change, health leadership and service design, Sarah says her role now is to ensure momentum remains strong for the community, general practice, iwi partners and the wider health network.

"My priority is to offer clear direction so our people can do their best mahi. This is an important time for primary care, and I look forward to showing the value of our work as a GP/Iwi owned, place-based PHO, committed to improving access and outcomes for whānau," she added. ▲



Newly-opened Palm Springs Medical Centre joins WBOP PHO

Palm Springs Medical Centre has joined the WBOP PHO provider network. The newly established general practice in Pāpāmoa officially began operating on 20 October 2025. The nurse and GP-owned practice offers a modern, friendly environment and focuses on continuity of care. Although the clinic is new, the team brings decades of clinical experience and a strong commitment to patient-centred care. ▲



— Left to right: Admin Lindsay, Registered Nurse Bronwyn, Dr Holman, Nurse Practitioner Michelle, Registered Nurse and Director Tash.

Let's Talk Screening training now ready to access online

Building on the successful full-day wānanga held in July 2025, Let's Talk Screening is now accessible as a free online training. This resource supports non-clinical staff to engage in culturally safe and respectful conversations about breast, bowel and cervical screening with Māori and Pacific whānau.

All training materials – including video modules, slide decks, handbooks and supporting resources – are available on the dedicated webpage. Participants who complete the modules can request a certificate of completion.

Adapted by the Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP

PHO) into a flexible, self-paced format, the training is now open to the wider sector. You don't need to register. Simply access the webpage and begin. While grounded in Bay of Plenty realities, the content is relevant for anyone working in primary or community care across Aotearoa.

Modules overview



▲ Engaging with Tangata Whenua

This module explores Aotearoa's history and its ongoing impacts on Māori. It encourages reflection on wellbeing through Te Whare Tapa Whā, strengthens mana-enhancing communication and highlights the value of lived experience in culturally respectful kōrero.



▲ Engaging with Tangata Pasifika

Through Pacific families' stories, history and wellbeing models, this module shows how Aotearoa's events shape Pasifika experiences with health services. It includes interactive activities to strengthen culturally sensitive screening practices and understanding of factors that affect participation.



▲ Technical Skills: Breast, Cervical and Bowel Screening

Led by experts on national screening programmes, the session builds confidence in culturally responsive conversations, covering national screening pathways, equity priorities and practical strategies to support engagement.

Co-design and partnerships

Let's Talk Screening was co-designed by WBOP PHO, AvaNiu Pasifika, BreastScreen Midland and Te Whatu Ora | Health NZ – Hauora a Toi Bay of Plenty, with support from Pacific Island Community Trust (PICT) and Waiariki Whānau Mentoring. The rōpū played a central role in shaping every aspect of the training, bringing lived experience, cultural expertise and community voice to the table.

Bringing the kaupapa to life

A special acknowledgment goes to the facilitators, who contributed not only to co-design but also to bringing each module to life. Their cultural leadership, lived experience and deep community relationships ensured the training reflects the realities of whānau and supports kaimahi to have confident, mana-enhancing conversations.

- Sēnae Mitchell (WBOP PHO) – Engaging with Tangata Whenua
- Sameli Tongalea & Sela Tu'uholoaki (AvaNiu Pasifika) – Engaging with Tangata Pasifika
- Mary Ann Nixon (BreastScreen Midland) – Breast Screening
- Chrissy Paul (Hauora a Toi Bay of Plenty, Te Whatu Ora | Health NZ) – Bowel Screening
- Gemma Pearson (WBOP PHO) – Cervical Screening

This kaupapa was funded by Te Aka Whai Ora Māori Health Authority as part of its final funding round before disestablishment. ▲

Scan or click to access the training



Health talk

WBOP PHO hosted Your Health Journey, an online session on 19 November 2025 to help people understand how the New Zealand health system works. The webinar was designed for people who are new to the country, those who support new arrivals and anyone wanting to learn more about how to navigate care.

The session covered how to use general practice, pharmacy and hospital services, what to do after hours, free or low-cost options, how to access language support and more. ▲

Scan or click to watch webinar



Local leader wins national award

Keren Hoogwerf



Keren Hoogwerf, Practice Manager at Katikati Medical Centre, has been named New Zealand's Practice Manager of the Year by Practice Managers and Administrators Association of New Zealand (PMAANZ).

The award, announced on 24 October, recognises Keren's contribution to her team, her commitment to learning and the strong culture she helps foster at the practice.

More than a decade ago, Keren joined Katikati Medical Centre as a receptionist. Her dedication and steady leadership soon saw her move into the Office Manager role, and four years ago she stepped up again as Practice Manager. Since then, she has been guiding the team with skill, kindness and professionalism.

She describes the recognition as overwhelming at first but deeply meaningful, both personally and professionally. "This recognition reflects the amazing people I work with and everything we've achieved together. This honour represents not only three years of study alongside full-time work and time away from family, but also the belief and support shown by my board and whānau," says Keren.

As her team shared when celebrating the news, Keren's leadership, kindness and integrity help shape the caring culture of Katikati Medical Centre. Keren also credits the board for creating an environment where people feel valued and supported. "Good culture starts at the top, and their passion for providing excellent healthcare for our community, along with their genuine care for the wellbeing of our team, is awesome," she concludes.

INTERVIEW

Keren Hoogwerf, Katikati Practice Manager

Why do you think you won the prize?

My goal has always been to lead with kindness and to support our team in every way I can. I do not think that sets me apart from other practice managers as we all know we are only as good as the people around us. If anything made the difference, it is my incredible team and how we all work together.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

The laughter, the support and working with a team that picks one another up when needed because they genuinely care. Everyone at Katikati Medical Centre is so talented and brings something unique to the team, it really is a privilege to work alongside them all.

What are you most proud of when you look back on the past year?

It has been a massive year, filled with both triumphs and challenges. What I am most proud of is how my team has handled it all. Their resilience and care for each other is inspiring.

When you're not at work, how do you like to unwind or recharge?

I have an amazing husband who is my rock. His continuous support of my career has been unwavering, and I am so grateful for him and my two boys. Spending time with them is my priority. I also enjoy cooking and a good glass of red wine.

What's one fun or surprising fact your team might not know about you?

My great, great, great (and I think one more great) uncle was the captain of the Titanic. ▲



Celebrating 20 years of service

On 1 October 2025, School Health Nurse Vicki Keenan completed 20 years of service with the Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO). She has been a steady presence at Tauranga Boys' College, supporting young men who often find it hard to seek help.

Vicki says the biggest change over the years has been the growing support for nurses to work more independently. "We have better systems and clearer records now. It means we can give care that feels more complete and valuable for students."

She also acknowledges people who shaped her journey. "In the early days, Philippa Jones helped set up the infrastructure that made our work more effective," she says. She also credits Dr Séan Barklie, the school doctor she has worked with for two decades. "His confidence in my practice has been huge."

For Vicki, the highlight of her work is the trust students place in her. "It's a privilege when boys walk through the door and talk about things that are sensitive or hard to say," she says. "I pride myself on creating a space where they feel safe to seek help." ▲



— Members of the Hāpainga team at the awards night. From left: Sharlene Maru-Habib, Kerri Natana, Candy Black, Emma Walker and Glennis Tupe.

Hāpainga receives sector recognition

The Bay of Plenty stop smoking service Hāpainga has been recognised at Te Whakanuia i a Auahi Kore national awards held at the Auckland War Memorial Museum on 13 November 2025. Hosted by Hāpai Te Hauora Māori Public Health, the event celebrated the people, organisations and initiatives contributing to Aotearoa's Smokefree goal.

Hāpainga received Te Tohu Mauri Ora, a recognition that acknowledges stop smoking providers showing leadership and impact in supporting whānau to become smokefree. The honour also highlights the contribution these services make to the wellbeing of their communities.

The awards evening brought together the tobacco control sector, whānau and hāpori to reflect on collective progress and acknowledge the dedication of those working in this kaupapa. The event was part of the National Tobacco Control Summit 2025, where the sector gathered in Tāmaki Makaurau to share research, celebrate decades of advocacy and shape the vision for what comes next beyond the Smokefree 2025 goal.

Lizzie Spence, team leader at Eastern Bay Primary Health Alliance (EBPHA) who established Hāpainga, says the recognition is meaningful. "These are the first awards in nine and a half years, so it is an honour to have our work recognised at this level."

Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) supports

the delivery of Hāpainga in the region. Emma Walker, WBOP PHO Quit Coach at Hāpainga who attended the ceremony, says the recognition reflects the work of many across the sector. "There are so many amazing kaimahi who have worked tirelessly in this smokefree space for so many years. From trailblazers Dame Tariana Turia, Hone Harawira and Shane Kawenata Bradbrook, to all the stop smoking services in New Zealand."

She also acknowledged the contribution of WBOP PHO colleagues who shaped the service locally. "I especially would like to acknowledge the contribution that Tiana Bennett and Kate Banuve have made over the years, along with our WBOP PHO smokefree champions past and present. There is still much mahi to do."

What is Hāpainga?

Hāpainga is the regional stop smoking service for the Bay of Plenty. It is led by EBPHA, and WBOP PHO supports delivery in the Western Bay. The service is free, mobile and offers practical support, personalised coaching and access to stop smoking tools, including nicotine replacement therapy and carbon monoxide monitoring. People can self-refer or be referred by general practice and community providers. ▲

Scan to learn more



Improving access to services

A new collaboration between BeingWell and 'Here to help u' is helping bridge the gap for people who need wellbeing support but aren't currently connected to a general practice. The partnership means a Health Coach is now available two days a week to offer free support to anyone accessing 'Here to help u' services.

"We're committed to making support easy to reach, wherever people are on their health journey," says Sarah Stevenson, interim CEO and General Manager of Community Services & Innovation at WBOP PHO. "This partnership is one way we can meet people early and offer care that feels safe, local and relevant. And in doing so, we hope to support a positive reconnection with general practice when the time is right."

Making support easy to reach

"Many of the people we work with are going through a tough time and may not be linked in with other services," says Amanda Gabb, Team Lead at 'Here to help u' Tauranga. "This partnership removes barriers. We can connect them straight to someone who listens and walks alongside them. It's about creating a safe space to kōrero and a positive pathway forward."

BeingWell health coaches offer practical, confidential and non-judgemental support to help people navigate life's challenges and set meaningful health goals at their own pace. They can help with stress, parenting, housing pressure, lifestyle change or connecting with other services. Sessions are flexible to meet patient needs and can be held in-person, by phone or online.

How to access the service

People can learn more about BeingWell or book an appointment at wboppho.org.nz/beingwell. ▲

New chapter for Tāpiri Mai

Diabetes sessions on Matakana Island mark the project's next phase, focused on building whānau health literacy.

Tāpiri Mai, a project co-designed with the community to improve access to healthcare for whānau on Matakana and Mōtītī Islands in the Bay of Plenty, has entered a new phase focused on building health literacy. This next step follows over three years of work to strengthen infrastructure, systems for telehealth and expand access to services.

Project Manager Moira Lomas says the shift reflects community aspirations. "Our focus now is helping whānau feel capable in managing their own health needs. They want to make informed decisions and take charge of their wellbeing."

To plan this phase, the team reviewed local health data. Diabetes stood out as a clear priority. On Matakana Island, 24% of patients are diabetic or pre-diabetic, which is 2.4 times the rate across the wider Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO).

Whānau had been invited to WBOP PHO diabetes self-management groups on the mainland, but limited barge times

made attendance difficult. The solution was simple: take the sessions to the islands. Thirteen people attended the two Matakana sessions, and seven joined remotely from Mōtītī using the Wi-Fi infrastructure installed for telehealth.

Community Nutritionist Amy Allport, who facilitated the sessions, says tailoring the discussions to whānau was essential.

"We shaped each part of the information around what life is like on the island. We had a lively discussion about kai, focusing on meals those in the room enjoyed preparing and eating. We looked at simple ways to make boil ups healthier and how to plan healthy kai with access to stores being so challenging."

WBOP PHO Clinical Services Lead Sarah Johnson says the sessions were lively and grounded in whanaungatanga.

"There was lots of interaction, strong engagement and some good belly laughs. Co-design made the difference." She says the energy in the room carried into the following days. Whānau

▲ WHĀNAU VOICE

"Wish this was around 20 years ago."

"We have a big whānau history of diabetes where many have died. I don't have diabetes but I'm here to learn so I can share the information with my whānau and mokopuna."

"After the food label reading session, I will be taking things out of my pantry and not letting my mokopuna eat some foods."

were soon using their exercise bands, restarting their walking group and asking about gym memberships.

What comes next

The project team now plans further wānanga on gout, HPV, asthma and smoking cessation, while keeping support from the first sessions strong. Sarah explains that whānau who need extra help will be linked with the right services. "This may include one-on-one time with dietitians, ongoing nutritional sessions or medication support with our diabetes team."

Moira notes that the direction continues to come from whānau. "This work shows what is possible when services are designed with communities and not for them." ▲

Kiri's Kōrero

Celebrating 20 years of Kaupapa Māori leadership in our community

This year we proudly marked a special milestone: 20 years since WBOP PHO supported its first Kaupapa Māori programme, a groundbreaking initiative led by Te Puna i Rangiriri Trust that continues to flourish today. What began as a vision to uplift rangatahi Māori through the traditional discipline of mau rākau has grown

into a living taonga of how culturally grounded approaches enrich wellbeing across generations.

Entrenched in Mātauranga Māori and delivered in te reo Māori, the programme weaves together cultural identity, confidence, resilience and a strong sense of belonging. Through the teachings of our tūpuna (ancestors), rangatahi (youth) learn self-awareness, discipline and pathways that support positive life choices for themselves and their whānau.

In today's ever-changing primary care environment, programmes like this are more important than ever. They show how meaningful, culturally aligned initiatives can enhance health and wellbeing in ways that complement the work of healthcare providers. As the

sector adapts to new pressures and expectations, strong partnerships with trusted community services help ensure care remains holistic, accessible and grounded in what matters to whānau.

Today, Ngāi Te Rangi and Ngāti Ranginui iwi continue to deliver a wide range of Kaupapa Māori services. These include wellbeing initiatives, mobile outreach, whānau ora support, cultural development, health navigation, social services and community-led programmes for all age groups. These services ensure that culturally appropriate care is accessible for whānau and responsive to the realities of our communities.

Kiri Peita – General Manager – Māori, Population Health & Equity

Strong rise in childhood immunisation across the WBOP PHO network

The Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) is preparing to release its annual report, which brings together key numbers from the last financial year (2024-2025). One of the results that stood out was the rise in childhood immunisation across our network. More tamariki received all their vaccinations by two years of age, rising from 77.5% to 85.1%. This is an overall increase of 7.6 percentage points.

KEY ACTIONS BEHIND THE OUTCOMES



Re-established **cross-sector partnerships** between WBOP PHO, public health teams and outreach providers



Enhanced data systems and the Childhood Immunisation Dashboard to help practices monitor progress, identify tamariki needing follow-up and better track equity gaps in real time



Introduced **Immunisation Champions** in practices to strengthen accountability and leadership for timely whānau engagement



WBOP PHO Outreach Immunisation Service managed high referral volumes by **prioritising equity** and addressing barriers to immunisation



Embedded **whānau-centred, culturally grounded** approach and tools, such as Pīwari Kaitiaki resources and Maramataka calendars, to promote trust and respectful engagement

The strongest progress was for Māori tamariki. Their immunisation rate increased from 57.3% to 78.5%, a 21.2 percentage-point rise or a 37% improvement. The equity gap reduced by more than three times. This shift reflects the effort across our network to reach whānau earlier, stay connected, and remove barriers to immunisation.

Tori Macartney, Network Support Team Lead at WBOP PHO, who works closely with practices on immunisation, says the gains reflect consistent work across the sector. "Practices, outreach teams and the WBOP PHO have pulled in the same direction. Better data, earlier follow-up and stronger relationships with whānau made a real difference. These results show what happens when everyone works together for tamariki."



– Home visits play an important role in helping families overcome barriers to immunisation.

Impact beyond the numbers

Behind every number is a real whānau. Earlier this year, one family reached out to share how the right support helped them feel safe engaging with immunisation again. They had avoided the health services due to past negative experiences, especially when seeking care for their autistic son. They felt the system was not built for them and had lost trust as a result. With their consent, WBOP PHO is sharing their story here anonymously, slightly edited for length. ▲

“

When it came to immunising our youngest son, we were initially hesitant. Our past experiences with the healthcare system had led us to avoid engaging with services whenever possible. The system had never felt like it was designed for us and as a result we had lost trust in it. But Donna Moon (WBOP PHO outreach vaccinator) changed that.

From our very first interactions with her, Donna took the time to sit with us, to explain things in a way that respected our whakaaro (thoughts), and to engage both myself and pēpi's Pāpā, who held strong views on immunisation. This made us feel heard and valued. What made the biggest difference for us was that she always came into our home with an open heart.

She understood our autistic son, she respected the dynamics of our whare and she recognised the importance of te reo Māori in our home. She made a conscious effort to use kupu Māori with our tamariki, celebrating them with little kiwaha after their immunisations were done. These may seem like small gestures, but they meant everything to us.

It is people like Donna who transform the system, who take something that was never built for whānau like ours and make it work for us. Because of her we have started to regain trust in the health system in small ways, but those small things matter deeply. Building trust with Māori whānau is not about policy alone. It is about the relationships, the respect and the recognition of who we are as tangata whenua. ”



Encouraging words to carry forward



This season often brings a pause for reflection. The WBOP PHO whānau would like our general practice and community providers to remember that...

You make care possible every day.
Your work helps whānau feel safe and supported.

Your patience changes lives.
Many people take their first step because you listen.

Your knowledge guides whānau through hard moments. Thank you for showing up with clarity and calm.

Your teamwork shapes better care. Every connection you build helps someone find the right support.

Your commitment matters.
Small actions in your day make a big difference for others.

Your care helps people feel hope.
Thank you for supporting our community with kindness.

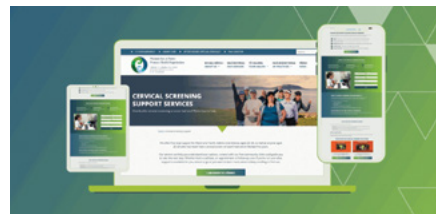


Cervical screening support made easy

Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation (WBOP PHO) has launched a webpage for the Cervical Screening Support services on its website. It provides information for wāhine and whānau across the Bay of Plenty, creating an online hub to connect our community with local care.

Cervical Screening Support is a free service for Māori and Pacific wāhine and whānau aged 25 to 69, and for anyone aged 30 to 69 who has never had a cervical screen or hasn't had one in the last five years. The team can help people understand screening options, connect eligible patients with free community clinics or book an appointment. Help is also available to support appointment attendance.

The main feature of the new page is an online form that offers eligible people a new way to self-refer for support with cervical screening. Gemma Pearson, WBOP PHO's Support to Screening Nurse, says the page is about making the first step simple. "We wanted a place



where wāhine and whānau could find the right information and an easy way to get started."

The new page also provides clear information for anyone wanting to learn more about cervical screening in the Bay of Plenty. It covers what screening is, how it works, who needs it and who can get it for free, as well as what to do if you are not eligible. Extra resources, including videos and guides in different languages, are also available. ▲

Scan to visit the webpage



Final Forum & Expo 2025

The WBOP PHO held its annual Service Expo and final Provider Forum on 5 November 2025, bringing general practice and community providers together to share updates, build connections and focus on how to strengthen support for our community. Teams met with a wide range of services, gaining insights into local support and ways to collaborate.

A year with 10+ events

WBOP PHO's workforce development programme offers providers periodic opportunities to learn, connect and build

capability. In addition to the regular meetings for practice teams across equity, immunisation, management, nursing and clinical leadership, this year's calendar included:

- **4 CME/CNE event (RNZCGP accredited)**
- **1 Seminar**
- **1 Webinar**
- **5 Provider Forums, including the annual Service Expo**

These activities are funded through the WBOP PHO flexible and management funding. ▲



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