

S.K.I.P. has engaged with the Hurunui community in a co-design process to better understand how to support families with children aged 0-5

Who lives in the Hurunui?

36.8% of the population are farming, many for generations.

There is a large community of migrant people.

There is a growing number of Maori. The Maori population increased by 35.4% between the 2006 and 2013 census.

The region is sparsely populated, compared to other districts of New Zealand with an average of 1.33 people per kilometre.

The median age is higher than across the rest of New Zealand, as is the percentage of people aged 65 and over.

The percentage of children under the age of 15 is slightly lower than the rest of New Zealand, but for Maori it is slightly higher than the average across the country.

“I love knowing people I have known for years. I love knowing people that my grandparents have known.”

Who did we hear from?

- 35 interviews
- All communities
- 45% Town, 55% Rural
- 15% Maori
- 25% Migrant
- 60% NZ European
- A mixture of nuclear, blended and one-parent families

What do parents love about the Hurunui?

Parents love living in the Hurunui. They love that their children are playing outside so closely connected to nature, the feeling of belonging, the feeling that their children are safe and that they will grow up in a community where people look after each other. Families have lived here for generations which has created a strong sense of belonging. Some have moved here from across the country and throughout the world to be part of this community. That is what we want for our children’s future.

“It is safe, fun. They can be country kids and totally different from city kids.”

What do parents find hard about parenting?

The Hurunui is a region of North Canterbury that prides itself in being a community of helpers. In the interviews with families this was often cited as a reason that parents stay, return to the area, or move here. And yet, regardless of age, ethnicity, length of time living in the area, socioeconomic status, or whether you have family / whanau nearby – parents told us that they don’t like to ask for help. This was a strong theme that wove its way throughout all of the insights.

The reasons given vary from feeling like a failure, feeling judged, feeling vulnerable or feeling stigmatised. Even admitting you are tired or stressed feels like a cry for help and can leave parents with a sense of failure.

Where help was accepted by parents, whether through formal supports or through family and friends, it was based on a trusted relationship with that person.

This insight is made more complex by a view that there is plenty of help available for people who need it, but many can’t be bothered.

What can we do about it?

If we considered every application and referral to services as a request for help, how might we extend that offer differently, knowing parents’ reluctance to ask for help? If a support is universally available is there less stigma? How can we offer something without having parents ask?

Parents suggest that offers of help from friends and family not come as a request. “I’m going to pick up your kids on my way to town” rather than “Would you like me to pick up your kids on my way to town?”

If we considered joining a parenting group as a request for help then what might we change about those groups to make them more appealing and inviting for parents who are stressed? Parents feel like they are failing when all the mothers in the group seem to be happy and to be coping so well. Parents want to go to groups who are ‘like me’.

“There’s nothing better than hearing happy kids outside getting up to something”



Themes are drawn out from across the interviews and insights are gathered which consider the connections between themes. Each of the four insights below has implications related to 'helping'.

"I have learnt not to need help."

Offering help is a lot easier than asking for it

Families move to the Hurunui because it has a reputation as a close-knit community where there are always people willing to help. But asking for help leaves me feeling like I'm not good enough if I can't do it myself and yet I'd happily help someone else. Asking for help makes me feel judged, vulnerable and like a failure.

"I am a person who does everything and don't like relying on other people. I could do it until I am dead. If I am half dead I still keep doing it. For so long I have done it but I will ask for help when I really, really need it."

"Going somewhere without my husband I feel guilty. He works hard so I don't want to leave him behind because he deserves to go away as well. It's hard when you are starting a business because you have to give everything."



"With farming, you are working 7 days a week. His work life balance isn't that great."

Securing the future leaves no time for the present

As dads we work 7 days a week. We are caught between needing to work hard to secure a future for our children and wanting to take time away from work to spend time with them. We have been in the Hurunui for many generations and carry a love for the land and an overwhelming sense of responsibility to look after it and everyone connected to it.

"We look into the future seeing the business succeed. Who are we doing this for? It is the kids."

"If something needs to happen with my child I need to know who to contact and where to go. Just getting that support would be brilliant. I have to go all the way to Kaiapoi. I just wish they could come here."

I need to be superwoman

I am mum, wife, career woman and critical farming partner. I'm exhausted, There seems to be no end to the day to day things. The endless chores compete with finding the energy to manage our kids behaviour. Finding 'me time' will often be about grabbing moments of peace and quiet when the kids are asleep.

"It is hard because they aren't family so you can't say 'I am going to go do this, so can you look after the kids', as I would with my mum."

"I'm tired. I don't want my kids to remember me this way."

"There is nothing worse than when you have people around you that are having loving engagement with their kids and happy times when every day is difficult for you."

"Sometimes it's hard to have the energy to get tea on but I do it anyway. I have to, as nobody else is going to do it."

"There are plenty of activities for kids in this community. If I have the time and energy to drive them there!"

"A really great day was when I got all the washing done."

"Plunket in those first few weeks was good but I don't know if I got a lot from it because it was just ticking boxes – how heavy is he? How long is he?."



"I guess the best information is my parents. I just get on the phone if I need to know something."

Connecting with supports

There is inconsistent information across the district about supports and the path to access them. It's important for us to have local supports. We often miss out because we don't have transport. Needs are expanding and becoming more complex and supports are constricting. We turn to family and friends first for parenting advice. If we don't have family available finding help is even more complicated. The supports we connect best with are those we trust and that have a personal, not just a clinical connection. Communities are small and it's hard to share our problems if we're not sure we can trust that service. Everyone knows each other so we need to feel that confidentiality is a priority.