
In The Zone: Keeping hope alive through shaky times

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Abstract

Social service organisations exist to provide help and support when life is difficult. Maintaining this through the crisis and long recovery from significant natural disasters requires purpose, resources and care full attention to staff. Presbyterian Support Upper South Island (PSUSI) had a pre-earthquake focus on activity that supported community connectedness. The need for this type of work has become more pronounced during the two years since the September 2010 earthquakes. This article explores from a management perspective what it has taken to keep the organisation running and the challenges of flexing from core activities through the ever changing and shaky reality known as the new normal. The way the value dimensions of the organisation have been tested is canvassed as is the way they have provided an enduring capability platform. A conceptual model encompassing community needs during the quakes and for the future is developed.

A cameo

Not long after the city rocked from the rupture of the Greendale fault early on Saturday September 4th 2010, PSUSI's accountant/IT Manager popped into the office to check that the servers were operational. The sleepover staff at our residential home for teen parents shuffled anxious residents back to bed. Before long there were various texts and phone calls between managers expressing relief that no one was hurt and about what actions might be needed over the weekend and on Monday. The familiar tug between duty and home nagged, albeit with an unfamiliar sense of something fundamental having been shaken up.

PSUSI's management did not realise this routine would become all too familiar. We did not realise it would become a lot more difficult with more dangerous and damaging earthquakes to come. We did realise our organisation's expertise would be in demand and that natural disasters, like social disaster, or trauma, create need and emotional damage long after the event. We also realised that trusting staff to use their judgement relies on them feeling well supported and secure through uncertainty.

Introduction

The difference between natural disasters and social disasters is the cloak of community. Natural disasters like the Canterbury earthquakes highlight our precarious perch between order

and disorder. Those not directly involved have a sense of the chaos, distress and despair, particularly when web, phone and media communicate events as they occur. Everybody pitches in and wants to help, even from a distance, with situations that are clearly out of control and not caused by human error or frailty (Padgett, 2002; Roney, 2011).

Community social service agencies caught up in natural disasters face many challenges. These challenges range from deciding how best to contribute to wider crisis and recovery efforts, through to dealing with matters of agency survival. In Canterbury, PSUSI, like other agencies, had to respond to the emergency while keeping the long haul in mind.

This article reflects on what happened and associated organisational challenges from a management perspective. Some analysis of learnings and longer-term needs is developed, drawing on ideas about community capacity building, in the context of a home-grown model of organisational capability. The complex interaction and mirroring of community and organisational life is explored. Above all, the article aims to make some sense of a difficult time through PSUSI's story. In the words of the poet Roethke, 'I know the purity of pure despair, My shadow pinned against a sweating wall. That place among the rocks – is it a cave, Or winding path? The edge is what I have ...'

Our place and space

PSUSI operates from the Rangitata River in Mid Canterbury through to Cook Strait. In September 2010 we had a workforce of about 320 people, including administrative and accounting staff, a researcher, community support workers for older people, nurses, occupational therapists, social workers and counsellors. Approximately 110 of these staff worked out of sites in Bealey Ave in central Christchurch, Riccarton, Linwood, Maireahau and Rangiora. Another 20 Canterbury staff were based in Ashburton.

Our main services in Canterbury were Family Works school and community-based social workers, community development staff and counsellors; Holly house a residential home for at-risk young parents and their babies; and Enliven community support, counselling, social work, day activity and Falls Prevention programmes for older people.

Our Bealey Ave site housed both service delivery staff and the corporate 'head office'. The building also provided meeting spaces for a variety of service delivery networks such as Right Services Right Time (a multi-agency collaborative initiative), Strengthening Families, and Elder Care Canterbury (a consultative network of agencies and people involved in services and initiatives related to the care and wellbeing of older people). Individual agencies also regularly used rooms for meetings or training events.

The right frame

Around about 2006/07 PSUSI developed a set of values or organisational dimensions. The values are connectedness, cohesion, coping and capable, sustainable and, creativity and hope. These dimensions were based on attributes essential to resilient and functional families and communities. Our aim was to have an organisational ethos and internal environment that reflected and modelled these qualities and enabled a differentiated organisational strategy (Ozanne and Rose, 2013, p. 73). We did this in the knowledge that the result would be an

adaptive, innovative and capable organisation that staff enjoyed working for and, equally importantly, delivered results on the ground in local communities in a developmental way. (Milner, 2008, pp. 3-13; Morgan, 2006).

Events since September 2010 have tested these values. The earthquakes have put a huge strain on staff as we live and work through the same trauma as those we serve. As well as the emotional effects of the earthquakes we have operated from a main office that was just inside the central city red zone cordon for months and is battered and scarred with about \$1.8 million worth of damage. We have also embarked on two significant organisational change processes at the beginning and end of 2011 because of funding pressures.

Throughout this we have maintained service delivery and flexed our approach particularly to respond to the initial crisis and now the long recovery. In some ways this is not anything to remark on, as the earthquakes simply involves a wider demographic in what has always been our core business. A remarkable aspect is that staff have done this while being caught up in the disaster and its aftermath themselves.

Staff had to juggle their own situations and worries, and persevere through a backdrop of constant change and uncertainty both at home and at work. Some staff lost their homes; for some their communities were decimated; some lost relatives and friends; all lost the fabric and continuity of their daily lives for varying periods. Similarly the Board, with the same range of personal situations, has had to maintain a focus on the long-term sustainability and strategy of the organisation while allowing for unprecedented short-term resource demands.

The reflection on this situation in this article draws out that PSUSI's mission, culture, strategy and structure were right for the shaky times (Ozanne & Rose, 2013, p. 295.)

The organisational impact of the quakes

Following the September 2010 quake, a co-ordinated social service earthquake response was developed in Christchurch by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and community agencies. This was based around an 0800 help line, then referral to either phone or on-ground support and co-ordination teams of staff from partnered community agencies. There had been a natural platform for this activity through what was known as the Right Services Right Time (RSRT) initiative – a pre-quake collaborative and co-ordinated response to families involving more than 20 community agencies. Prior to the February quake the co-ordinated earthquake response had about 200 referrals and was settling in operationally.

After the February 22nd earthquake the Civil Defence Welfare Advisory Group established a sub-committee for the psychosocial response. Agencies such as PSUSI were then involved by this committee at both a leadership and delivery level in activity to plan and support the greatly enlarged, ongoing co-ordinated psycho-social response. The scale of need was massive and complex. At the same time as contributing to the crisis and later recovery services, PSUSI also had to attend to its own needs and operations.

The February 22nd quake had the most dramatic impact on the organisation. One staff member was seriously injured with a broken back at Bealey Ave when she was thrown to the ground. The infant son of a recently discharged Holly House resident was killed by a

falling television. Transportation of elderly clients from day programmes to their homes after the February 22nd event took many hours. Two staff had lucky escapes from a collapsing city building they were in during the quake. The Regional Manager's car was trapped in a central city garage where it had been for a routine service. Like many Christchurch residents, a number of staff had seriously damaged homes and most took many hours to get home because of clogged roads, liquefaction, or rockfall blocking access. Two staff (one at management level) moved permanently to other cities soon after the February quake because of major issues. Many staff saw and experienced events and trauma they never expected to. Everyone was shaken and stirred.

Communication was difficult over the first 48 hours post quake because of power outages, uncharged cell phones, and travel generally being discouraged round the city. By nightfall the next day most staff had been advised by texting and email to look after their own situations first. If all was relatively ok and staff wanted to work then they were dispatched, through a co-ordinated plan developed by Regional Manager Penny Taylor with MSD, to welfare centres around the city. Those who did not want to be formally involved with the welfare centres were able to help around their own neighbourhoods. This was the approach for the rest of that week with a management and then staff meeting held at our Rangiora site on the following Monday February 28th. That meeting confirmed our strategy would be to support the crisis response in collaboration with MSD and other agencies and in the background to be working to reinstate our own client services and sites as quickly as possible. This was informed by our view that we were in a situation that would play itself out over a long period and that 'social service business as usual' was an essential pathway to recovery, both for clients and staff.

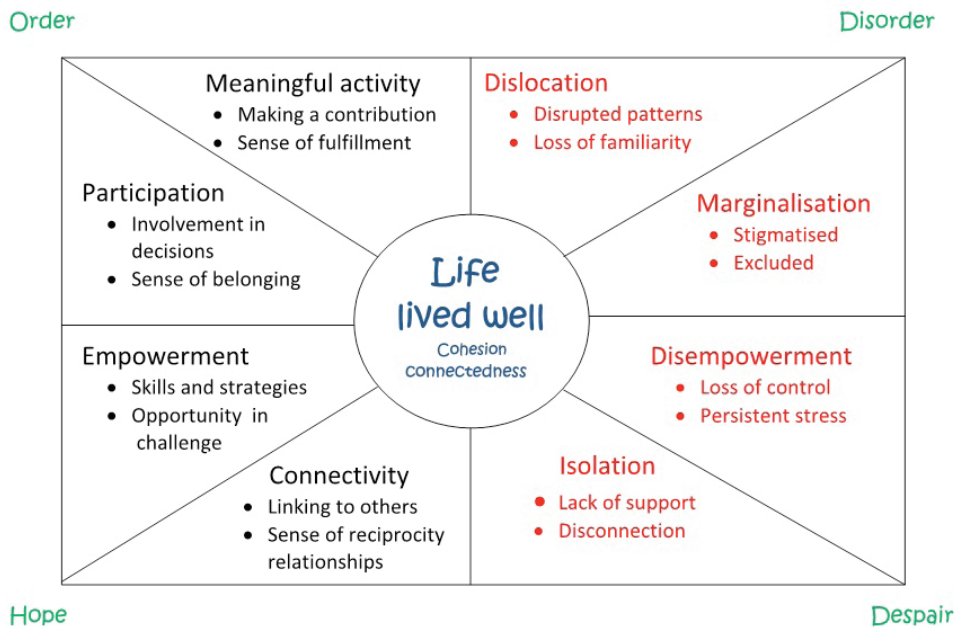
Organisationally there were major staffing, logistical and regulatory challenges that needed to be sorted over the first few weeks following the February quake.

Figure one outlines our overall disaster management framework for this phase. This framework was developed following a review of our procedures after the first quake in September 2010.

Within two weeks of the February 2011 earthquake, specialised counselling and social work staff were deployed as part of crisis response teams providing support to families of those killed or missing. This initiative was led by MSD, PSUSI and the Methodist Mission, in consultation with the Police, and later capacity added by a few other agencies. Other PSUSI professional staff were engaged in welfare centres and others in general support to clients referred through 0800 MSD lines. The Christchurch Regional Manager worked tirelessly in numerous collaborative meetings to ensure a service response was co-ordinated across the NGO sector. This response complemented that of Government agencies and the DHB, and the practical help and support occurring at neighbourhood level and through groups like the Salvation and Student Volunteer Armies and a large group of farmer volunteer helpers, known as the 'Farmy Army'.

Communication through late February and March with staff was by texting and emailing. Daily briefing and debriefing meetings were held initially to provide support and keep in touch. These gatherings were then stretched to twice weekly 'company' meetings and briefings.

Figure one.



Behind this service response there was a complex raft of work going on round buildings and liaison with groups across the country wanting to help. There was also a sub-strata of work supporting staff to keep themselves well and to deal with their own situations.

So, how did our organisational framework and ethos help in all of this?

Connectedness

Well-established internal respectful and reciprocal relationships provided a steady platform and emotionally safe haven for staff through the crisis phase.

Externally, there are several dimensions of connectedness that have been critical since the quake. One is connectedness between the organisation and other local service providers; another is between the organisation and other regional or national bodies or agencies; another is between the organisation and constituent supporters; and another is the interface with informal and neighbourhood activity.

Christchurch had a number of well-established interagency networks and alliances prior to the earthquakes such as Right Services Right Time, Strengthening Families, NZ Council of Christian Social Services Christchurch Managers' Group, and Elder Care Canterbury. These networks and the associated relationships across community agencies and with the MSD all contributed to early and relatively trouble-free communication, mobilisation and coordination to support the welfare effort.

On March 1st 2011, exactly a week after the quake, a group of community agency CEOs and senior managers met with MSD to plan a community agency meeting and to discuss the longer-term response. This larger whole-of-sector meeting occurred two days later and was attended by several hundred local agency representatives. Subsequently MSD has continued to host ongoing meetings at regular intervals.

PSUSI's Christchurch Regional Manager, Penny Taylor, estimates she has spent just over 50% of her time in meetings with other agencies since the quakes. These have been meetings of several different inter-agency governance groups overseeing co-ordinated activity related to crisis and recovery efforts; meetings of a smaller collective of Christian agencies; or general meetings of sector groups related to earthquake recovery. The emphasis has been on sharing information and co-ordination of activity with a general aim of working collaboratively both in respect of work with individual clients and broader initiatives.

Pre-existing relationships between organisations provided a platform for working together through chaos. Similarly, agencies leveraging round their core expertise and geographical areas of interest has enabled more widespread development of things like support to schools or to isolated older people.

Within this overall fabric of co-ordination and collaboration there has been an inevitable underlying shadow from time to time of tension and 'small p politics', particularly as tiredness and stress rippled in and out of individuals' lives. Possibly one of the unintended advantages of the fabric of coordination is that the whole system has remained relatively strong and viable even when individual organisations and players have gone through their bad patches.

Connectedness beyond Christchurch was critical in the month or two after both the September 2010 and February 2011 quakes. Our relationship with other Presbyterian Support regions resulted in funds being donated, staff assistance and, out-of-Christchurch holidays for clients and our own staff being made available. Presbyterian Support Northern donated \$250,000 of staff expertise and cash with a small group of very experienced staff coming down soon after the February quake. These staff relieved some of our staff and helped out in Welfare Centres and with internal staff support. They became fondly known as the 'aunties' (plus one man!). One of this group went to Ashburton to work with quake refugees as backup to our staff, spending most of her time at the Work and Income offices there. The cash funds from Northern enabled us to increase our community support in East Christchurch and Selwyn through until June 2012.

At a wider national level I was involved in a teleconference on February 25th 2011 with a range of senior officials from various Ministries, some leaders of national community organisations like Relationship Services, Barnardos and the Salvation Army, and the Ministers of Finance and Social Development to talk about emerging psychosocial needs, likely longer-term issues and what resources might be needed for local agencies.

The NZ Council of Christian Social Services through its executive officer, Trevor McGlinchey, was also active in networking nationally to mobilise support.

All of these local, national and international connections added to the web of help and support that stood behind local staff and volunteers. It also needs to be acknowledged

that local MSD Family and Community Services staff, Denise Kidd and Maria McEntyre, worked tirelessly to involve local agencies in a coordinated way and to channel resources from Government.

Another aspect of connectedness was the depth of informal neighbourly and volunteer help that emerged during the crisis. Stories abound of neighbours helping each other out, of households accommodating friends or relations, and of volunteers pitching in to provide food, transport or shovel silt. Because the MSD-coordinated response was in place, a continuum from practical help and advice from volunteers and informal networks, through to intense and specialised counselling was quickly available across the city. Subsequently this interface with the activity of professional agencies has emphasised the value of neighbourly support networks and the way professionals can support and complement these networks and vice versa. This was no surprise to PSUSI because of our pre-existing community engagement focus. Most interestingly though are the longer-term possibilities and how to nurture and develop this sense of community.

As time has gone by the amount of low-level practical help has reduced and demand for more specialised services increased. This reflects the pendulum swing from ordinary crisis-related stress and distress to onset of more deep-seated anxiety and relationship issues requiring a more complex response. It also reflects the scale of the disaster and the slow pace of resolution for householders of issues about their living situations.

PSUSI is currently (in October 2012), experiencing increases in demand (compared with 2011) for work with children, particularly in school settings, families experiencing anxiety or relationship distress and for elders experiencing social isolation. There is also a more apparent need for facilitating establishment or re-establishment of relatively informal community support networks as neighbourhood and school demographics change.

Cohesion

An important aspect of cohesion for organisations is having a base and maintaining strong policy and administrative infrastructure. Many other social service organisations in Christchurch were in a worse position than PSUSI with offices destroyed or inaccessible and client records destroyed.

Our main office building in Bealey Ave stood up to the quakes but within a day or so was cordoned off just inside the CBD red zone. While the cordon stayed in place for several months we were able to resume operating 'unofficially' from Bealey inside the cordon within 10 days, thanks to some initiative from staff, and commonsense from army and police on the barriers who let us enter and exit the cordon. Efforts to get official exemption from the cordon through the Prime Minister's and Minister of Social Development's offices were fruitless despite our argument that use of the building was critical to supporting the welfare effort. In the context of the overall scale of the disaster and the blunt instrument of a civil defence emergency, the machinery associated with getting a decision about flexing the red zone was neither important nor possible.

In the end once we located an engineer and he had inspected the building on March 8th we simply took the approach that it was easier to beg forgiveness than get permission

and used the building as a base for operations but did not permit entry by non-staff. The morning of March 9th was spent picking up computer screens, righting filing cabinets and generally clearing critical work areas.

From then on, as we had an entrance off Bealey Ave that was halfway between two cordon checkpoints we could enter and exit discretely. This use of the building enabled managers, and accounting and payroll staff to keep wider organisational infrastructure operational, as well as providing a central point of contact for staff. In this respect, our use of the building was important emotionally as a familiar constant in shaky times.

Holly House, our residential home for young parents, was undamaged but without water for several days and had unusable toilets. While we managed to source some portaloos from Ashburton the water supply issues created a major health hazard. Consequently the young mothers and their babies were relocated to community placements for about three weeks. This created an unintended bonus in that Holly House was used for part of that period as accommodation for a team of PS Northern staff who came to help.

Our Linwood and Riccarton day activity facilities were relatively undamaged although part of our Riccarton facility required repairs. The Linwood facility took longer to reopen because of the difficulties of transporting clients through liquefaction and damaged roads in the east of the city. Equally many clients in the eastern suburbs simply stayed at home rather than risk falls on broken or liquefied paths.

During this early period of checking and readying buildings for re-use in a practical sense, there were also emotional and health and safety needs to be sure all our buildings were safe to occupy. Apart from the legal and moral requirements about safety, many staff were understandably worried, particularly about our Bealey Ave building. Some staff had fears of being injured, trapped or killed at work as aftershocks continued. We responded to these concerns by allowing staff to work from wherever they felt comfortable. Some staff chose to work from our Rangiora and Harakeke Street sites or from home rather than re-enter Bealey Ave. Arrangements were made for laptops with connection to the internet to support changed locations where that was necessary. Staff subsequently reported this flexible approach enabled them to continue to make a contribution.

Meeting legal requirements regarding buildings being fit to use required an engineer to inspect and certify all our buildings. As well as satisfying health and safety requirements the engineer assisted staff to have confidence in the buildings. The engineer we worked with twice came and talked at staff meetings in the March/April 2011 period. This was arranged to provide full information about what had happened to the buildings, to ease emotional concerns and enable staff to make informed choices about coming into the building or not. As time has gone by and we have carried out further Detailed Engineering Evaluations we have made reports and other building information available to staff.

Coping and capable

The major resource of any social service is its staff. Like all agencies in Christchurch our staff were (and still are) caught up in the disaster, both personally and professionally, in a variety of ways. This has required a delicate balance between requiring and supporting

staff to get on with their work and recognising the complex psychosocial demands facing staff because of the ongoing uncertainties of daily life particularly repetitive aftershocks and family concerns. Our immediate approach with staff was to encourage them to look after their own situations first then to provide adequate information, direction and support when they were able to work. Being a larger organisation was an advantage in this scenario particularly as the scale and duration of the disaster played on. While staff came and went to deal with personal business, particularly over the first months, we always had enough staff on the ground. As well as letting staff work as their circumstances permitted we provided ongoing access to special leave on pay so staff could take short breaks to refresh after periods of intense activity. We were also able to divide responsibilities amongst senior staff. The Regional Manager took responsibility for operational direction including liaison with other local organisations. I focused on moral support to staff, building and workplace safety, and liaison with those outside the region wanting to help. The Finance Manager oversaw building operations, logistics, maintenance of essential payroll and IT services, and insurance and repair matters.

In the weeks after the February quake we purposefully encouraged staff to regularly sit and talk about how things were. I also spent much more of my days than usual dropping in and out of our various sites, particularly after any large aftershocks.

As well as maintaining our usual external Employment Assistance Programme (EAP), we had engaged a counsellor to be available to staff in-house on a half-time basis. Initially most of her work was to help with anxiety and distress related to the quakes. As time has gone on her work has become more to do with personal issues staff are facing, and around workplace relationships and organisational change.

Two years later, as with the broader population, our staff group are working through many issues in their own lives. Workplace miscommunications and tensions are not necessarily more prevalent but there is less tolerance because people are tired. Where disputes or differences arise they need more careful management. The autumn and winter of 2012 were particularly demanding in this respect, and not helped by a restructuring.

Sustainability

Government has committed significant sums to social service activity since the quakes, as well as contributing its own departmental staffing resources. Similarly, philanthropic trust funds and public donations have generously been channelled to a variety of agencies. This flow of funds has ensured social services have been accessible and able to respond to the various needs from the quakes. The funds have also supported specialised recovery co-ordination services to provide system navigation and advocacy for those caught between insurers and the Earthquake Commission (EQC).

However, one of the debatable points over the past two years relates to the artificial distinction between funding earthquake-related needs and not putting that funding into activity described as business as usual. This short-term focus on earthquake-related needs by funders has meant some juggling of service orientation and workforce as agencies try to attract funding and retain staff. Paradoxically, many agencies have essentially been carrying out an enhanced form of their usual activity at a hectic pace in a chaotic environment.

For an agency like PSUSI the earthquakes have increased demand for our core services – community social work for young and old, day activity programmes for elders, residential and other parent support services for vulnerable young parents, and group and individual programmes that help with behaviour and anxiety, particularly for children and their parents. Referrals are up by an average 25% compared with 12 months ago, and are likely to stay that way.

Similarly we are concerned at the gaps in social infrastructure as the population moves across an east / west arc in the city, and into rural Waimakiriri and Selwyn Districts.

Our agency has for years subsidised government-funded contracts with our own investment returns and generous support from individual donors and trusts.

Prior to the earthquakes we had begun to reduce expenditure, as our Canterbury services were running at a deficit in June 2010 of \$995,000 per annum. Additionally the DHB had advised us they were going to withdraw funding from June 2011 from a pilot community support programme for people with dementia and their carers. This led to 20 social workers, nurses and community support workers being made redundant. Some were subsequently re-employed on time-limited MSD earthquake funding. Most of this re-employed group are again facing job loss if that MSD funding finishes in June 2013. Arguably this will happen at a point where demand for their services is higher than ever.

In our Family Works area our strategic focus on community-based social work rather than counselling has also faced funding difficulties. This prompted an organisation-wide review in early 2012 and our Christchurch and North Canterbury Family Works team was reduced by four full-time equivalent positions in June 2012. While we have subsequently attracted some earthquake funding to keep pushing work at a community capacity development level, the funding is time limited.

At the same time there is now the wider reorientation of Government funding likely in response to the white paper on Vulnerable Children and Investing in Service Outcomes. In the medium to long term these ongoing changes and uncertainties of Government funding add to the tension of sustainability in the face of increasing demand.

Two sustainability challenges now face Government and its departments from a community agency perspective. One is to recognise that integrating the one-off injections of funding with a coherent long-term funding plan is essential. This will require agreement between Government and community agencies about the outcomes required, funding levels and the niche role of each agency in a networked psycho-social response to the evolving new normal. The second challenge will be to ensure siloed thinking and activity is not perpetuated across Government departments and the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA). This potentially wastes funding on duplicated bureaucratic effort, time in bureaucratic politicking and disempowers community. Such a scenario also increases the risks of actions for political appearances rather than results.

Creativity and hope

Part of our value dimension of creativity and hope is a 'can do' ethos. We expect and rely on staff to get on with their work autonomously and to exercise their professional judge-

ment to support the organisation’s mission and goals. We also expect staff will manage their workloads responsibly with balance between working hard and pacing themselves sustainably. This ethos was particularly valuable in the crisis phase and has proven its worth since then as staff respond alongside other organisations and volunteers, more and more in community settings.

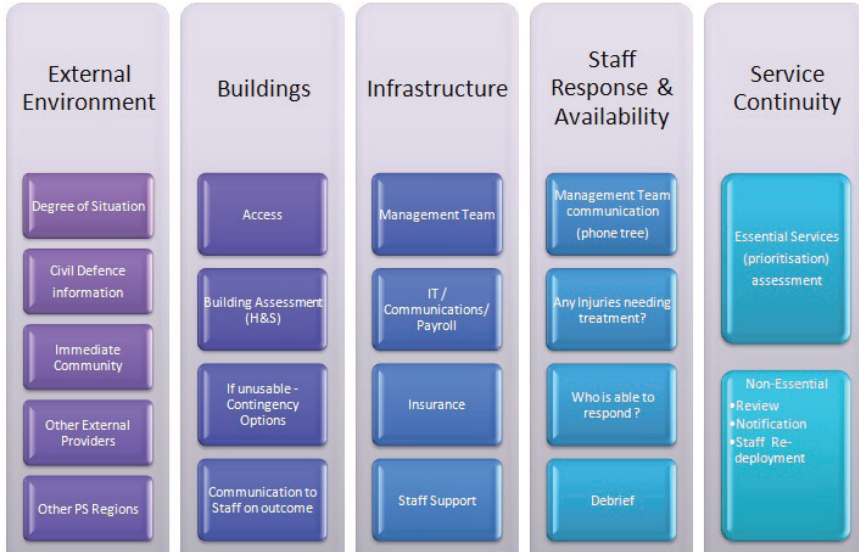
Like much of the work done day in and day out by social services, the skill and level of contribution post quakes is not well known or acknowledged. Staff have dealt with varying challenges and achieved much in the face of uncertainty. The ongoing dedication and efforts of staff since the earthquakes is awe-inspiring.

There are however some new paradigms emerging and some flex of our current model is evolving to meet the demands of the developing new normal.

Figure two conceptualises some dimensions that come out of our organisational model and community capacity theory applied in the light of community needs apparent during and since the earthquakes. A response-able flexing of our approach and thinking reflects SMART strategies (Chan & Sha, 2011, pp. 52-55), and a community capacity focus on renewing resilience and strength (Beddoe & Maidment, 2010, pp. 101-113; Winkworth, Holly, Woodward, & Camilleri, 2009, pp. 5-12) both within PSUSI and in our work in communities.

Figure two.

PSUSI Emergency Management Plan (figure 1.)



The thin space between hope and despair mirrors the fine line needed to balance social and emotional order and disorder at both individual and community levels. Having meaningful activity, participation and connectivity is central to community development, and communi-

ties being in control of their circumstances. A life lived well relies on being part of community. Disorder and despair are contributed to by dislocation, marginalisation and isolation.

The earthquakes gave a wide demographic a taste of disorder and despair.

The prolonged delays in sorting householders insurance, escalating housing rental costs, proposed school closures and population transitions erode wellbeing. Added to this is the constraint on civil participation and loss of say in civic affairs through the wide powers of CERA and Government-appointed regional council. These combinations are ingredients of a social disaster in the wings unless a concerted and hope-full community effort is nurtured.

Managing changeability

This article has focused in a narrative way on how a differentiated organisational strategy provided the right frame for operating through a crisis. From a theoretical perspective the complexities and paradoxes of organisational life were heightened through the earthquakes. While the type of work done by the organisation was pretty much unchanged, the networked approach, environmental influences and pace were significantly different. Managing changeability has been the norm, a unique dimension of managing change. Our Manager's primary role has been to provide stability of place and support and linkages with others that enables workers to operate sustainably in flux. Politics between organisations and through heavy involvement of central government has been a major factor. Collaboration and networked services have relied on finding common language, high sensitivity to diversity and building on local responsiveness.

Conclusion

The quilt of community has taken many shades and shapes since the earthquakes. Civil defence, emergency services and relatively informal neighbourly supports dealt reasonably well with the crisis. The role of community agencies during those phases was to deploy staff where required to support that effort. The habit of co-ordination across agencies is well ingrained, but relies on much time and energy in supporting relationships, with a good faith approach to collaborative effort. Subsequently, demand for more usual core social services and community capability activity is increasing. Continued Government financial support for community agencies is now critical for effectively responding to the medium to long-term impacts on individuals and neighbourhoods. There are also emerging issues in the loss of democracy, particularly as to how communities can participate in decisions that affect them.

Ongoing help and support for staff has been vital to PSUSI being able to maintain and flex services. This has been underpinned by an organisational values ethos that supports capability, and sets a developmental and responsive frame, even in chaotic internal and external environments.

The earthquake response demonstrated the value of the continuum of specialised professional services, volunteering, and neighbourly help and support. A changing interface between professionalised volunteering and people simply helping, with little or no red tape, has been apparent since the quakes. This notion of people helping people is compelling. The trick, of course, is for that to be sustained, and to occur through good times as well as

bad. In the face of all this PSUSI believes that community connectedness combined with practical help and support are vital, and give hope.

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