

COMMUNITY
LINK TRUST

Annual Report 2023





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CommunityLink Trust
Whānau & Youth Support Services

BRINGING HOPE, TRANSFORMING LIVES, CHANGING THE FUTURE

Chairperson's Report

Kia ora,

It is a pleasure to present our Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2023. Community Link Trust (CLT) is passionate about bringing real transformation into the lives of the people we work with, with a predominant focus on helping at-risk youth and their whaanau.

While 2023 was an incredibly challenging year, especially financially, we established a new significant programme that is making a real difference in the lives of at-risk youth in our city.

The financial pressure included one of our largest backers significantly reducing our grant funding due to their own financial challenges. This was coupled with Oranga Tamariki closing off nearly all fee-for-service funding for youth mentoring, which was one of our core services. At the same time, we were frustrated with the lack of lasting results that the traditional approach to Alternative Education was bringing, and chose not to continue that contract.

Instead we decided to back ourselves and create a new programme to support disengaged teenagers which we called The Phoenix Project. We ran a pilot of the programme for the first term completely unfunded. And the risk paid off, because the wholistic and trauma-informed approach of the programme was incredibly well-received by the youth and their whaanau.



Photo courtesy of Adam P. Photographer

With the results of the pilot proving its ability to shift the trajectory of the young people we work with, it was obvious The Phoenix Project should become a new core programme for CLT. We received partial funding for the programme in the second half of the year and chose to continue running it (even at a deficit), to enable us to continue helping young people make positive lasting change.

Thankfully, our social enterprise PropertyLink had one of its most profitable years yet, which helped to decrease the deficit. Our other programmes during the year included In-School Mentoring, Parent Mentoring, Financial Mentoring and a small amount of one-on-one Youth Mentoring. (These ceased to be called 'links' at the end of 2023).

Due to the tough financial situation, our team got smaller through the year. We are extremely thankful to our General Manager, Astra Patmore, who led valiantly in the midst of these challenges.

In addition to creating The Phoenix Project, another significant highlight in the year was our first From the Streets fundraising event. This saw approximately 2000 people from the community and hundreds of classic cars descend on our campus at Activate Community Park, with everyone having a fantastic time raising funds for CLT and building our profile. We look forward to growing this event in the future and continuing to establish stronger partnerships and awareness in the community.

A special thank you to our donors, our funders and our key stakeholders who continue to support the work we do. We feel we have come through one of our toughest years yet and look

forward to a brighter year ahead. The need is great, but we see real change in the people we work with. I want to particularly acknowledge Nicole Domett, who finished on our board this year. She served as a trustee for many years, having joined the board within the first year of CLT being founded. Her contribution has been significant.

Finally, thank you to our board and staff, and to all who continue to get behind the vision and mission of Community Link Trust – to bring hope, transform lives, and change the future of our community. Thank you for journeying with us as we build a thriving hub of hope and transformation for our community.



Josh Moore
Chairperson

General Manager's Report

Bringing Hope, Transforming Lives and Changing the Future in 2023

2023 was a year that challenged us, grew us, and stretched us - both as an organisation and as a team. We had seen the writing on the wall for reduced funding as 2022 was ending, but the stretch was more than we anticipated. Coming back from our Christmas break we saw a massive reduction in the numbers of rangatahi (young people) we were funded to mentor. In April 2022 we averaged 150 one-on-one youth mentoring hours per week, and by April 2023 we were funded for only 5 hours per week. This significant drop meant we had to operate in a deficit to pay our wages and keep our lights on. By the middle of the year, the need for youth mentoring remained critically high, but the funding had not improved so we needed to find new ways to generate income and fast.

One solution was to partner with Adam P. Photographer to put on a community event to



Photo courtesy of Adam P. Photographer

raise awareness and much-needed funds for our youth mentoring services. "From The Streets" was a wonderful demonstration of the local community getting behind a good cause. We were extremely grateful for the support, aroha and generosity of the community and businesses that were involved.

A highlight of the event was seeing our Phoenix Project rangatahi take the initiative to run their own burger stall and raise funds for their end of term excursions. They designed the stall, showed up on the Saturday in their own time to cook and sell burgers, and they absolutely loved it! They were so proud of what they achieved and left at the end of the day beaming with pride. Through this real-life experience they learnt many valuable, tangible skills, and discovered what it feels like to be part of something bigger than themselves. A number of youth from our other programs served as volunteers too, joining in with parents and community supporters who helped on the day. It was a fantastic display of community engagement, and one that our young people have etched in their memory. With our organisation focused on changing life-trajectories and building stronger communities, our team were super proud of the positive outcomes we achieved through this event. It was also a much-needed morale boost in what had been a very challenging year.

Another highlight for the year was the opportunity to partner with Oranga Tamariki,

New Zealand Police, and the Ministry of Education to deliver a new programme supporting high-risk, 10 to 13-year-old serious offenders. The aim was to support these rangatahi onto pathways out of the youth justice system and into positive ways of engaging with the community and education. Establishing new programmes can take a lot of focused commitment, even more so when it is for high-need, high-risk youth with some highly challenging behaviours. However, we were excited for the opportunity to support more rangatahi in dealing with their trauma, making more positive life choices, and reducing their offending. While this intensive work requires extremely high levels of support, we were committed to help the rapidly increasing number of at-risk youth in our community, and to help reduce their offending. In the most challenging times, we chose to remind ourselves that whenever a young person takes a small piece of hope, or a small step towards restoration, it is a huge win to be celebrated.

I am very proud of how our team pulled together in 2023, innovating and collaborating in what was such a difficult year on so many fronts. They developed solutions and strategies to bring us through an incredibly rocky time, and still got on with doing the mahi of supporting youth and whaanau in our community to deal with their own difficult circumstances. So, Thank You to our incredibly talented, and highly valued staff.

A sincere thank you to the Community Link Trust Board for their unwavering support and

wisdom as we navigated such significant financial challenges.

To our funders, partners, donors, and supporters - we are so very grateful for your continued support. We quite literally cannot do this without you, so Thank You!

As a stronger, more resilient, more innovative, and more focused organisation now, we look ahead with excitement to a new season of bringing hope, transforming lives and changing the future within our community.

Astra Patmore
General Manager



Rangatahi Support



Intensive Mentoring

Previously known as TeenLink

Witnessing the progress our young people made during their time with us was one of the key highlights of 2023.

One of many notable successes last year was when a young man who had been struggling with severe anxiety and anger, began to demonstrate a vast improvement in his social skills and emotional regulation after two months of intensive mentoring.

Young people often come to us with significant anxieties, anger issues, uncertainties, insecurities, and disengaged behaviour. Our first goal is to make them comfortable enough to gain their trust, as without it, we can't make progress. Once trust is established, we focus on encouraging positive behaviour, teaching the importance of following instructions, learning appropriate behaviours, and fostering respect. A key part of our work involves integrating our rangatahi into various life situations to build confidence and re-establish family connections that help them feel valued within their own families.

One of many notable successes last year was a young man who demonstrated a vast improvement in his social skills and emotional regulation after only two months of intensive mentoring. This rangatahi had come to us struggling with severe anxiety that prevented him from feeling safe in crowded areas, especially around his peers. He often felt anxious, frustrated, and sometimes argumentative, which drew negative attention. With our support and the strategies we taught him, he began to manage his behaviour without prompts, engaged better in conversations, and his disruptive behaviours began to reduce. He learnt to practice techniques like using safe words and emergency exits. He started greeting people warmly, handling crowds confidently, and he began showing respect, compassion, and empathy.

The significant progress this rangatahi has made affirms our purpose at Community Link Trust. Our dream is to see young people achieve their goals, find their identity and place in the world and be excited about their achievements. Whether their success is personal growth, obtaining a driver's license or returning to school – it is such a pleasure to celebrate their hard work and success, and it's why we do what we do.

Our first goal is to make them comfortable enough to gain their trust, as without it, we can't make progress

The Phoenix Project

As an Alternative Education (AE) provider, we knew the importance of trying to support disengaged young people back into mainstream education, but we also knew it was a huge struggle for these taiohi (young students) to be able to focus on education when they were dealing with so many other difficult factors in their lives.

During the first term of 2023 we created and trialled a self-funded programme focused more strategically on activating change to restore identity, confidence and hauora to these taiohi. The holistic lens of the new programme was designed to reintegrate disengaged taiohi into education by creating a safe space to explore who they uniquely are, to reaffirm that they belong and have significance, and to then journey with them to restore their relationship with learning. We believed this new approach would help taiohi who were struggling to engage with the traditional AE model, and the successes we saw in the initial trial encouraged us to extend the trial for a further 10 weeks.

The Phoenix Project launched in August 2023 as a pilot programme with ten taiohi. Eight out of those ten graduated what we called the Phoenix Hauora Module, and advanced to their next learning module in 2024. The next stage focuses on expanding the literacy and numeracy skills needed to achieve their future pathway goals. Two taiohi and their whaanau were transitioned to services that could provide more specialised support that falls outside of the AE scope.

By the end of 2023, our taiohi had improved their prosocial skills, improved their ability to regulate emotions, had new understandings of themselves, and had begun to redesign their futures with a strong, positive outlook. Activities such as nutrition, horticulture, meal planning, and cooking fostered manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, and taught them how to care for their own physical well-being. The Phoenix Project also helped them improve

their emotional intelligence and provided tools to help them succeed in their future endeavours.

Taiohi who couldn't sit still for more than five minutes when they started were able to focus for an entire session and apply themselves to the various activities in the programme. Those who arrived with a determined defiance not to participate were integrated into a close-knit whaanau where they took advantage of every opportunity provided to learn and grow. Whaanau reported significant improvements in their taiohi at home with feedback like: "I thought I had lost my boy for good", "This is the first course that I have been able to get him to attend" and "Keep doing what you are doing because you're doing something right".

Whaanau have reported significant improvement in their children with feedback like: "I thought I had lost my boy for good", "This is the first course that I have been able to get him to attend" and "Keep doing what you are doing because you're doing something right".



Te Huringa Mauri Fast Track Programme

We started the Te Huringa Mauri programme in November 2023 to help rehabilitate high-risk 10 to 13 year-old serious offenders referred by Oranga Tamariki and the Police. With offences ranging from ram-raids and car theft, to aggravated assaults and serial shop lifting, these rangatahi were potentially on a path to prison.



We started with five rangatahi, and four more joined the programme in December. By supporting these kids in a safe, whaanau-focused environment to work through their trauma and identify what is behind their behaviours, the programme aimed to put these rangatahi on a more positive path and prevent further offending. We also worked with their parents to help them understand how best to support their child's journey and recovery. Some of the rangatahi were successfully reintegrated back into mainstream education.

By the end of 2023, 8 of our 9 Rangatahi in this programme had not reoffended.

The young people we work with often make impulsive choices and can be very volatile and unpredictable in their emotional displays. However, with love, appropriate support and nurture, they can learn to make better

choices. One example of this was when a young person got very upset and left the room during a staff meeting with his parents. Before he started in the programme this would have signalled the end of communication, however this time he went into another room for a few minutes and returned to the meeting when he had calmed down. This incident demonstrated his significant growth in emotional regulation and maturity. We count this, and every other small change as a win.

The highlights of the 2023 Te Huringa Mauri programme included:

Regular Attendance Despite concerns at the start of the programme that our rangatahi may not come, they turned up almost every day.

Reduced Reoffending By the end of 2023 8 of our 9 rangatahi had not reoffended. That is a huge win for us and the community.

Positive Relationship with Parents We established high trust and engagement with parents and supported them through some very tough and traumatic situations.

Learning to Serve One of the ways our programme teaches our rangatahi to serve and take responsibility is to take turns preparing lunches for the group. On one occasion they proudly prepared a meal for a group of staff and young people from another programme.

In-School Mentoring

Our In-School Mentoring Programme successfully engaged with 32 young individuals in 2023, delivering a total of 320 sessions at their respective primary and intermediate kura. Of these participants, 22 reported a significant reduction or complete cessation of offending behaviour. In addition to supporting struggling rangatahi, we assisted several of their whaanau with resources like food parcels throughout the year to ensure they received comprehensive support.

One of the consistent highlights of our programme... is the strong desire from the young people we work to have our mentors return year after year.

The independent mentoring we provide helps young people facing challenges to feel safe, listened to and cared for. Our well-trained youth mentors are very experienced in supporting tamariki and rangatahi with emotional and behavioural challenges to be able to engage with education, and improve their social skills, self-esteem and school attendance.

One of the consistent highlights of our In-School Mentoring Programme is the strong desire from the young people we work to have our mentors return year after year. Again in 2023, we had numerous requests from whaanau for their rangatahi to continue participating in the programme.

Hope brought to **130 individuals** supported through our programmes

IN 2023



Whaanau Support

Parent Mentoring

Previously known as ParentLink

In 2023 we made a transition from supporting parents in groups, to more intensive one-to-one mentoring for parents in their own homes. This mentoring supported single mums, solo dads, grandparents, and caregivers of varied ethnicities and family situations. They included Oranga Tamariki clients, community whaanau that we assisted pro-bono, and caregivers of our Phoenix Project taiohi.

We saw some incredible shifts within the family dynamics of the different whaanau we journeyed with last year, and positive changes for the individual parents and tamariki involved.

We saw some incredible shifts within the family dynamics of the different whaanau we journeyed with, and positive changes for both the tamariki involved and their parents. With a focus on quality over quantity, our parent mentoring intentionally focused on offering wraparound support. In some cases this included financial mentoring to help them find breathing room and a strategy to manage the household funds. In other cases it involved supplying beds, blankets, curtains and other necessities to whaanau who had been in emergency housing so they could furnish their new homes.

During the pilot of The Phoenix Project, we provided support to the parents and caregivers of our new students. We offered guidance that empowered them to reinforce in their homes the same positive changes that were taking place within class. One of our greatest highlights was seeing so many whaanau attend the Phoenix Project Graduation celebration. There were parents, aunties, uncles and grandparents, all showing up to support their rangatahi, sharing kai and celebrating their progress and success. To see such an intentional level of engagement and aroha from the whaanau highlighted the strengthening of families that our Parent Mentoring is all about.



Financial Mentoring

Previously known as BudgetLink

Throughout 2023 our financial mentoring brought hope to disempowered families and fostered financial stability within our community. We worked with 24 new families and extended our support to their 80 dependent children. We made financial mentoring more accessible by providing online and phone sessions in addition to in-person meetings. This increased continuity for many, especially mothers with several young tamariki and for those working part-time. It also increased demand for our financial mentoring, resulting in a four-to-six week waiting list for appointments.

Our client base increased in diversity over the past year. Ages ranged from 18 to 77, with the majority aged from 26 to 35. Our clients identified with seven ethnicities, with Maaori representing 46%. Referrals for our financial mentoring services came from other Community Link Trust services as well as community organisations we have developed connections with over the past year. These included the Salvation Army, Te Kohau Health, and MoneyTalks.

Financially, our clients presented \$639,665 of debt and \$25,009 of arrears. The majority of this was attributed to credit card debt. Despite the challenging landscape, we successfully established financial pathways with seven whaanau, aiding their movement from transitional housing to stable rental accommodations. We also helped 21 clients craft debt payment plans and identify ways to increase their incomes and decrease their expenses, leading to the retirement of debt and payment of arrears. Learning how to regain control of their finances has given our clients a sense of hope and shifted their focus from subsistence living to creating an enjoyable future for them and their whaanau.

We crafted debt payment plans with 21 clients... Learning how to regain control of their finances gave them a sense of hope and shifted their focus from subsistence living to creating an enjoyable future for them and their whaanau.

Our funding application to MSD for Building Financial Capability advanced to Stage 2 but was not successful due to significant government funding cuts for this sector. Nonetheless, we remain committed to helping transform the lives of our community through financial freedom and continue to seek alternative funding avenues to sustain and expand our financial mentoring services.

Food Support

Previously known as FoodLink

In 2023 we provided food support to the families we work with by distributing 93 food parcels and serving 2176 meals to young people in our youth programmes. Giving wraparound support to the whaanau of the youth under our care is vital. It fosters strong relationships with parents and caregivers and shows our commitment to supporting not just their young ones, but their entire family unit.

A highlight for 2023 was seeing the rangatahi in our Phoenix Project cook meals for both themselves and the staff each Thursday. Along with learning practical skills in shopping, meal preparation, and cooking; this initiative boosted their confidence and improved their interpersonal abilities through interaction and service.

Our annual Christmas Hamper project (made possible through the generous support of our Activate Church community), was another high point in the year. Every year we provide food hampers to families connected to our services, to celebrate with them and encourage them over the Christmas season, which is often marked by financial strain and anxiety.

One of the highlights for 2023 was seeing the rangatahi in our Phoenix Project cooking meals for both themselves and the staff each Thursday.



Social Enterprise



PropertyLink

Our social enterprise PropertyLink continues to play a vital role in helping us fund our whaanau and youth support services. 100% of the profits made by PropertyLink are used to fund our community work. This internally generated funding allowed us to successfully pilot and launch The Phoenix Project, and offset the initial set-up costs.



One of PropertyLink's biggest highlights of 2023 was realising our long-held vision to provide job training and opportunities to the people we support in the community.

The PropertyLink team also provided valuable support for our From The Streets and annual community Light Party events in 2023 by building stands and helping on the day as volunteers.

2023 was one of the most profitable years for PropertyLink. We secured numerous new clients, for both residential and commercial property maintenance and building services, and additional staff joined the team. Even though pre-election nerves caused work to slow down for a few weeks in the third quarter of the year, business quickly bounced back and we ended the year well.

One of PropertyLink's biggest highlights for the year was realising our long-held vision to provide job training and opportunities to the people we support in the community. One example is when we were able to employ a person we were assisting through our parenting programme as a cleaner. PropertyLink not only helped transform lives by helping to fund the programme, but also helped directly support one of the families involved with paid employment.



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to our
sponsors**

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of Hamilton
is becoming
safer,
healthier
and stronger
thanks to
your support.**

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PRINCIPLE ACTIVITY

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Food bank
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TRUST ESTABLISHED

4th of Oct 2010

TRUSTEES

Josh Moore
Kit Buckley
Rachel Afeaki
Anna Ho

IRD NUMBER

105-791-024

BANKERS

ASB

SOLICITORS

Norris Ward McKinnon

AUDITORS

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CHARITIES COMMISSION**REGISTRATION**

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Whānau & Youth Support Services

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