

Improving attitudes and behaviours  
towards disabled people

Making it work. Mapping the Change.



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"More often than not, 'barriers' are man-made out of people's ignorance towards something different."

"I see people walk away from me because they don't want to spend time with a cripple or to modify their social plans to include my needs."

From: Ministry of Health. April 2001. A Brief Summary of the Analysis of Submissions to the New Zealand Disability Strategy Discussion Document. Making a World of Difference: Whakanui Oranga. P3

## 1 Introduction

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Disabled people have advocated for a long time for an education campaign to improve attitudes and behaviour towards them by non-disabled people.

The MSD has contracted AccEase to map out activity in related areas of social marketing and social change for the changing attitudes towards disabled people campaign.

The mapping project is part of a wider campaign to improve attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people, run by the Ministry of Social Development, (MSD), and the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) working with disabled people and their organisations

The campaign supports the inclusive and valuing vision of Whakanui Oranga, the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

Key outcomes of the campaign are:

- To increase the participation of disabled people in all aspects of community life
- To change social attitudes and behaviours that limit opportunities for disabled people.

The key objectives of the campaign to change attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people are:

- To increase knowledge and understanding of disability
- To increase the personal relevance of disability for all New Zealanders
- To mobilise personal and community action for positive change
- To address the social environment that tolerates or accepts exclusion of disabled people.

### 1.1 The Mapping Project

The mapping project set out to add value to the campaign by considering a variety of successful social change activities, not necessarily related to disability. We wanted to explore the success factors, to find out what works and what does not, and gather any useful learning from some of those people who had taken part in them.

## 1.2 Methodology

We did not have resources for a large survey so we carefully selected a small group of people with considerable expertise, knowledge and experience in social marketing campaigns and in leading social change.

Interviewees were chosen for their experience in social marketing where attitudes and behaviour change was sought. They included people involved in a variety of attitude and behaviour change. In selecting people for interview greater emphasis was placed on the views of those who had worked on campaigns to change attitudes and behaviour towards other groups of people since their experience had greater relevance to the disability campaign.

The ten questions we asked each of them in face to face interviews were designed to draw on their practical experience. We sought their views on what they thought might be useful in this particular context. Each interview took approximately an hour, several took a little longer. Handwritten notes were transcribed.

Originally we planned to interview ten people but only interviewed eight as two were unavailable for a variety of reasons. A full list of the eight interviewees is included in appendix one. The questionnaire is included in appendix two. Full notes taken at each of the interviews is included at appendix three.

I also drew a little on some of my personal experience of creating social change, and have included that in a separate section at the end of the report.

The interviews were designed to

- Identify success factors, positive learning and outcomes.
- Explore the reasons behind those positive outcomes, and
- Consider how they might be applied in the disability context.
- Make recommendations on how these might be successfully included in the campaign.

The quotations in the results section of the report are from individual interviewees

## 2 The results

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### 2.1 Interviewees' Experience

"Like Minds is a social movement of people who wanted change around inclusion"

The interviewees had experience in a wide variety of campaigns. They had all worked in campaigns or projects where they were attempting to change attitudes and behaviours in some way. Some changes were about personal behaviour, e.g. safe drinking, stopping smoking, sunsmart, injury prevention, water safety, healthy eating, environmental, financial literacy, safe sex, problem gambling etc.

Most had worked on campaigns which affected attitudes and behaviours about other people and groups of people. These included; family violence, child abuse, homelessness, women's

rights, race, cultural and religious relations, as well as those involved in the Like Minds campaign to address discrimination against and the stigmatising of people with mental illness. This last campaign had many similarities and parallels with the campaign to change attitudes and behaviours towards disabled people. Experiences gained from these campaigns are particularly relevant in the disability context.

## 2.2 Themes from the interviews

Four clear themes emerged from the eight interviews. The themes were common to most interviewees, and were very clearly articulated by many. They were:

1. Getting started and establishing a clear structure at the outset. Research, knowing what needed to change, preparation and planning, good foundations and evaluation were critical factors for all interviewees.
2. Putting the planning into practice. Creating a flexible strategy that will evolve over time was another strong theme emerging from all interviews
3. Engaging with people. Everyone emphasised the critical roles people and their communities play in social change. Ownership and engaging with those who seek the change and those who need to change was seen as critical by everyone
4. The fourth theme includes some challenges, problems and pitfalls to avoid.

### 2.2.1 Getting started – a clear structure

Interviewees were all very clear about preparation for any campaign. They talked about appropriate and thorough research, preparation and planning, and emphasised that good evaluation is a critical success factor. They said:

- Problem definition, data gathering and defining the problem is very important.
- Decide what is to be addressed and which part of the big picture can be fixed
- Research should be driven by this hypothesis. It might need to be amended following research results analysis
- Look for the drivers and use experts
- Be clear about what to measure and how to measure it. One way is to collect people's stories about what has and has not improved. This is research that can be, and perhaps should be done by disabled people themselves, recognising that change may be incremental. Those who change need to be able to tell their stories too.
- The size of the strategy will relate to the size of the budget
- Be pragmatic. Look at what has already been done and what works
- You need to be able to look back and see what has changed. Having a reflective element to social change is critical
- Do your homework. The whole thing will be a slower process than it looks
- Make sure the campaign structure is right so the community is on board.

- Like Minds had a complex structure. I would keep it simple. Build a wall of bricks of inclusion, giving each brick a name and a connection.
- Good research to understand your audience.
- Leadership at all levels
- Sustainable funding throughout the process will be important
- Clear problem definition is critical
- Narrowly identify what you want people to do
- You need to know what you are trying to change. Is it possible? Attitude changes are harder to achieve than actions
- Be clear about what you want to achieve
- Take the time to reflect

## 2.2.2 Planning into practice – Flexible strategy evolving over time

The strategy should include a clear articulation of what needs to change. There may be a number of choices. What will be changed? Even when taking account of the reasonably limited time frame of this project all respondents said that it is important to take the time needed, emphasising that there are no short cuts in an area which is not black and white.

They valued being pragmatic and realistic about what you can do and achieve. They emphasised that social change will need to be maintained over time as things can easily slip backward without a sustained campaign, but they also said that social change is not a linear process. One respondent said that particularly large campaigns such as Like Minds are messy and you learn as you go. He talked about the need for a range of skills, especially those of managing complexity and tensions. Some sub-themes identified by interviewees were:

### 2.2.2.1 Consistent messages

While respondents supported a flexible and responsive strategy, they were clear about the importance of staying on message. Coherence and consistency of agreed themes was important, and while strategies might change, one clear message and theme throughout was necessary. This was linked clearly to planning and knowing what needs to be changed. Positive messages are best and may better support sustainable behaviour. Understand the tough market and have an effective message. Creating a unique message people will notice was suggested along with “selling” the issues. Keeping messages succinct, human and conversational was suggested by several people.

### 2.2.2.2 Seizing opportunities

Opportunism, keeping an open mind and looking for unexpected opportunities and being prepared to be responsive to them was emphasised by several respondents. An example given was the response to the earthquake in Christchurch, the deaf guy and the increased visibility of New Zealand Sign Language.

Opportunities included linking to related salient public events. Tactics depended on reading the public mood and interest at the time. Infiltration of popular culture had proved useful in campaigns relating to people experiencing mental illness, for example Like Minds got their message into soap opera, as did a mental health campaign from the UK.

Respondents looked for different initiatives, angles and new habits. One said that a strong voice at the right time gets an audience.

### 2.2.2.3 Media

Use the media to reinforce messages, not to reinvent. A fractured media means that communication need to be active in different formats and with different audiences. Campaigners need to make and cultivate friends in the media as well as in other areas.

Social media need to be maintained. Blogging can be used effectively, but like other social media needs to be regular and will take time to build an audience..

Respondents recommended using a wide variety of communications channels, social media, Internet, blogs etc. They gave examples of the use of photos and growing the audience through the use of links and tags in social media such as Facebook. They stressed the need to keep the campaign fresh and unexpected and the continuing emphasis to be on message

Social change can be presented as a variety of options rather than win or lose in the current climate. It is not clear cut or black and white. Finding the hook to engage an audience can be critical.

## 2.2.3 Engaging with the People

People are critical to the success of any social change campaign. This included the people the campaign sought to change, those working on the campaign, and the group or groups of people who would benefit. Without ownership a campaign would not succeed. Everyone had something to say about this theme and it was a strong theme threaded throughout the interviews.

### 2.2.3.1 A role for everyone

Respondents gave examples of different types of ownership, and ways they could add strength to a campaign, for example a committee could be a mixture of NGOs, government etc. But people need job descriptions, and job descriptions should not just evolve without careful thought, with the right people in the right roles. Barriers to cohesion need to be managed and campaigners need to understand their audience/s and hook into a positive construct to maintain their engagement.

### 2.2.3.2 Nothing about us without us!

Experience and involvement of people with mental illness was and is fundamental to the campaign's success. Starting where people are at and helping them address their own stigma and discrimination was as important as other aspects of the campaign. People with different experience have valid roles and this was seen with "stropky people" in Like Minds who demanded involvement and provided leadership at all levels. John Kirwan gave strong credibility to the Like Minds Campaign.

### 2.2.3.3 Working constructively with your key audience/s

“Behaviour change may be more important than attitude change. Awareness and understanding helps both.”

The White Ribbon campaign has had particular success in engaging with the men whose behaviour it is seeking to change through its ambassadors programme. This campaign is focused on those who need to change primarily. It hooks into their concerns and world views. Those men involved in the programme have opportunities to tell their stories of change and the impact it has had on their lives. The message is clear and straightforward: Stop violence against women.

Respondents saw a need to plug into the passion and interest of people to fan the flame, even if it's small. “Go where the real people are.” Connect with the audience and to do this you need to know whom to target. Be authentic and go where your audience is rather than seeing the problem from your own understanding of it. A campaign idea has to resonate with enough people to know it will resonate with most.

Relationships, networks and spreading the ownership

“Fundamentals are relationships, empowering and working with others.”

Much of the work is about establishing relationships and empowering other people to do things, encouraging and acknowledging them. There is a need to make friends in many places; the media, education, politics, even using “seduction” in the words of one respondent. Everyone talked about building strong networks and good relationships with partners and different sectors, empowering and engaging different communities, working with the people who want to work with you, such as sympathetic politicians. Bringing local people together, such as those working to develop good race relations, is a real strength.

To get on the social agenda, for people to want to be interested and want to connect you have to get momentum. People can connect to an event or issue. You need community activism and engagement. Find people to work with and build a network of support to further that. You may have to counter resistance, which can sometimes be deep-seated. People need to be inspired to identify as human beings with the issue. Social marketing for social change is about real people and their stories, Share the idea, be the change you want and the campaign will be more successful. It is about other people and sometimes outcomes can be unpredictable.

Where there is a limited budget and uncertain future the more spread the ownership is the better. In support of this Like Minds has a powerful national identity with grassroots community engagement. Find out who supports so they can be champions. Reward and recognise unlikely champions.

## 2.2.4 Some Challenges, problems and pitfalls

### “Humans are hard to change”

While many of the activities outlined in earlier parts of this report present significant challenges, there were some particular pitfalls and problems that people had encountered in their work.

The Like Minds campaign was very complex at the start, and in retrospect one respondent said “I would keep it simple” He said that clear role definition could have helped at an earlier stage.

The feel-good factor represented a trap for the inexperienced. One respondent gave an example of using posters which looked good but had little success over time partly because they were a one-way message. There can be a danger that activity can replace good planning and strategy, busyness that is Impossible to measure.

One respondent stressed the importance of being open to non-rational drivers and looking for the unstated barriers. An example of the unstated barrier related to car- pooling to combat climate change. The reason given for reluctance was inconvenience but the real reason people didn't like to car pool was that other people's cars did not smell nice. It is likely that the disability campaign will encounter unspoken barriers that will be difficult to identify, challenge and measure.

Timing and focus can bring challenges. A respondent reflected that Like Minds took a long time getting started and could have focused more on particular groups such as employers and landlords rather than a general audience.

One respondent warned “Don't go into warlike mode.”

There were challenges relating to sustaining activity, the need to keep up with social media activity, for example. One respondent felt that blogging activity could have been maintained more frequently and effectively in one particular national campaign

She also reflected that one of the big challenges is how to get noticed in a very crowded space, both in the various media and elsewhere. She observed that competition for popular attention is tough.

Another was enthusiastic about collaboration and co-creation, which can work well, but need time and hard work to maintain them.

Once again there was an emphasis on the time involved, the lack of shortcuts, and the necessary understanding that social change is not black and white.

One respondent warned that raising the bar too high might lead to rejection of the message. Just getting traction on an issue may be success, they said.

Several people emphasised the importance of a clear understanding of what is to be achieved before spreading money around. There needs to be a strong commitment to the change not just the money, a lesson learned from the Like Minds campaign.

Resisting novelty was important. The advice was to try to avoid too many initiatives and to stick with a few activities that work over time.



One respondent issued a challenge to “be the change”. Those running the programme had to model the change they were seeking to give the campaign credibility.

### 3 Interviewer’s experience

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Over the years I have taken part in a number of social change activities. My experience concurs generally with that of those interviewed for this project.

For this report I have considered one particular campaign. The Common Ground Campaign conducted in the early nineteen nineties. The campaign was centred on changes to the New Zealand Human Rights Act, and sought the inclusion of a number of groups, particularly the gay and disability communities under the anti-discrimination provision of the Act. Because AIDS was at that time to the forefront of the public consciousness an alliance was formed to ensure everyone was included from both the gay and disability communities.

The campaign was successful, and one of the last benefits has been continuing cordial relations between the two communities. While at this distance in time it is difficult to remember detail I have been able to identify some of the things that worked well.

Contributing factors to the success were;

- The two groups in the coalition had equal power and status, or at least felt the lack of it
- The project was clearly defined, with boundaries and a short time span
- They were working voluntarily with few resources but with a good range of skills and experience needed for the campaign
- Because of the equality of the parties the relationship was respectful, with each recognising and respecting the areas of knowledge and expertise of the other
- Everyone taking part was there because they had chosen to take part in the campaign
- The campaigners were a relatively small group of people, working largely in Wellington which made organisation easier.
- People were working on their own issue, which was highly motivating.

The disability mantra, “nothing about us without us,” was powerful here as it has been elsewhere. Enabling and including disabled people in a campaign about them and their place in society is powerful.