

THE CHRISTCHURCH EARLY  
INTERVENTION TRUST

# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2022 - JUNE 2023



**45 TAMARIKI  
'GRADUATED'  
FROM OUR  
PROGRAMMES**

**207 CHILDREN  
AND  
THEIR  
FAMILIES  
RECEIVED  
OUR  
SERVICES**

**66 CHILDREN  
SUPPORTED  
AT  
THEIR EARLY  
CHILDHOOD  
CENTRE**

# FROM THE CHAIR

ANDREW HALL



This past year has seen the Champion Centre continue to deliver the same excellent service as ever to 207 children and their families/whānau with 45 graduating from the service and another 66 being supported in their early childhood centre. At the same time, our committed team continue to innovate and have been expanding the programmes on offer with three new offerings: Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT), LEGO-based Therapy, and Support Groups for mums. It is critical that as a world-leading early intervention service, we continue to develop our service at the same time as remaining true to the methodology and ideals that Dr Patricia Champion established 46 years ago.

Financially the Centre is in good shape. Our Fundraising & Marketing Coordinator Tracey Horsham and our Executive Director Wendy Entwistle have ensured the Centre more than covered its costs again this year. Tracey has done a stunning job fundraising from supporting small scale events to dealing with corporates at the same time as coordinating with the fundraising efforts of Emma Newman and the Champion Foundation Trust. Meanwhile Wendy has been busy making sure we get the most out of our government contracts and despite the cessation of our Oranga Tamariki contract, small increases in other contracts have been much appreciated.

I also want to acknowledge the tremendous work done by our good friends at the Champion Foundation Trust. They've initiated a number of events over the past year that have lead to fundraising not just for the Foundation but directly for the Champion Centre too. They're also excellent at keeping the name of the Champion Centre in the forefront of the charitable sector, not just in Christchurch but in Wellington's parliamentary corridors too. Also, the Foundation is leading the establishment of the Champion Centre Alumni. This is an excellent new initiative that will enable family and whānau of Centre graduates to remain in touch with the Centre and each other long after their direct association with us has ended. Watch this space for more details about how to join and get involved with the alumni.

This year we've welcomed on to the board, Lisa Brennan and Gill Connell. Lisa is a parent of a Champion Centre graduate and is also the General Manager of Pegasus Health. Gill has 30+ years in preschool and primary education and is an internationally recognised child development expert, specialising in the foundations of learning through movement and play. She has developed the Moving Smart programme based on the idea that "A moving child is a learning child". Along with Vince Barry and the Hon. Ruth Richardson, the trust is very fortunate to have such high calibre trustees.

Finally, I've decided it's time to step down from the Christchurch Early Intervention Trust board. For just over 10 years it's been my huge privilege and honour to serve on such a wonderful board for such an outstanding organisation doing such important work. Lisa Brennan has agreed to be the new Chair and although fairly new to the board, brings to the position considerable organisation management and governance skills.

Huge thanks to my board colleagues, our good friends on the Champion Foundation Trust, our excellent Directors, Wendy and Lauren and all of the Centre's incredibly committed and talented staff. Also, thanks to our stakeholders, funders and supporters for sharing and believing in our vision and finally to the little people and their families who attend the Centre: thank you for trusting these critically important years to our wonderful staff so that our team can help you all fully realise the potential you have.

Hei konā mai,

Andrew Hall

**96% of families told us we help them to understand and support their child's development either 'really well' or 'well'.**

**100% of families felt we are helping them to meet the goals they have for their child and family either 'really well' or 'well'.**

**96% of whānau told us they feel they are an active partner in their child's early intervention programme at the Champion Centre.**



# FROM THE DIRECTORS

**WENDY ENTWISTLE**

**LAUREN PORTER**

For more than 45 years, the Champion Centre has been at the forefront of early intervention services for tamariki and their whānau. We embrace a strong commitment to fundamental key principles that combine philosophical foundation with innovative growth. On the one hand, we honour the principles upon which our work relies: our multi-disciplinary teams, our partnership with parents, our child-centred focus, our ecological stance, and our belief in advocacy, inclusion and relationship-based practice. On the other hand, we honour our ongoing commitment to continual growth and renewal: constant review of our work, updating practice to incorporate cutting edge research, integration of feedback from consumers and those with lived experience, and adaptation of new knowledge emerging from the early intervention fields. In 2023 - as in all the years previous - we keep our feet firmly planted on well-established ground and our eyes looking up toward aspirational goals.

Our multidisciplinary programmes continue to thrive. This year we were privileged to join 207 families to whom we provided services and wrap-around support. Each team has created a programme of intervention unique to each child. Each session is attuned to the child's assessed needs, the family's priorities, and the moment-to-moment unfolding between child and therapist, child and parent, child and peers, child and the world. The experience of attending weekly is something familiar to both parents and children, interwoven into the child's life. Programmes provide opportunities for connection between children, between parents, and between whānau. Like in 2022, we continue to offer groups as part of the weekly programme offerings; this has augmented other times of connection such as hui time and bucket time, group music, and morning tea.

Augmenting our multidisciplinary programmes, this year we have introduced three new offerings: Paediatric Autism Communication Therapy (PACT), LEGO-based Therapy, and Support Groups for mums.

PACT is an evidence-based, supportive intervention for children with autism or features of autism/social communication challenges. It is, to date, the only intervention in the field that has shown long-term sustained effectiveness in high-quality clinical trials, improving child outcomes for six years after the end of intervention. PACT is a partnership between professionals and parents.

Each term in 2023, we have offered LEGO-based Therapy groups for children. The groups have given children opportunities to engage in something that extends and supports their social connection and communication skills. LEGO-Based Therapy is an evidence based social skills programme developed for people on the Autism spectrum and fits well into our service. This therapy model coaches group participants to work as a team, using LEGO in a structured way to achieve an outcome together as a group. Children are engaged in turn taking, sharing, communicating, and deepening social connections and social skills. Research has also shown the skills learned in the group naturally transfer well to other settings such as school and home.

Across terms 2 and 3, we offered facilitated support groups for mothers. We had five mums attend in a group that spanned both terms, and another five mums attend a second group that spanned one term. Feedback from both groups was very positive, and we plan to build in support groups as a regular offering. As one mum summarised the experience, "The journey of having a child with a disability has been so isolating and lonely. I really wanted to connect with other mums who have a similar journey and hear their perspectives on things. When people share their lives with each other, a connection or bond is formed. Connecting with others has been healing."

Following a review of leadership, we have restructured our leadership team into a Steering Group and Programme Group. The Steering Group maintains an overall strategic focus, and the Programme Group is tasked with advising on the clinical programmes delivered at the Centre. We are very pleased to report that both groups are working effectively in service of the Centre's goals.

We have continued our successful partnership with the Champion Foundation Trust and continue to fundraise together for both current operating costs and a long-term legacy for the Champion Centre.

Closing the gap between our government funding and programme costs remains a constant and ongoing challenge. Despite this, we can report a successful year thanks to our funders and community of supporters. We wish to acknowledge the Ministry of Education and Whaikaha (Ministry for Disabled People) for ongoing funding of our services. We are also once again humbled by and immensely grateful to all our loyal supporters, including individual donors (large and small), businesses, corporate entities and grant making trusts for believing in what we do and being so generous. You are a vital part of our Champion Centre community.

Our staff are central to all we do. Every day they demonstrate immense skill and professionalism and time and again have been willing to 'go the extra mile'. We thank them for their dedication and commitment. We also extend our thanks to our Board of Trustees who give freely of their time and provide wise governance and counsel in support of the Champion Centre. Particular thanks goes to Andrew Hall for his many years of service.

And finally, thank you to all of the children and families who join us. It's a privilege to work in partnership with you.

Ngā mihi,

Wendy Entwistle (Executive Director) & Lauren Porter (Clinical Director)

**"We look forward to 2024 and continuing our commitment to supporting tamariki and their whānau".**

# WHO WE ARE

## AND WHAT WE DO

### Who we are:

The Champion Centre is an internationally respected early intervention centre for preschool children (birth to age 6) whose development is impacted by conditions such as Down syndrome, other genetic disorders, Cerebral Palsy, the consequences of prematurity, Autism and brain injury. The Centre is based on the Burwood Hospital campus in Christchurch and provides services to families in the Canterbury area.

### What we do:

Our multi-disciplinary team includes physiotherapists, early intervention teachers and educators, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, musical play therapists, psychologists, social workers and technology assisted learning specialists. All work in partnership with parents, caregivers and whānau to help each child reach their full potential. Our approach is holistic, evidence-based and family-centred. Families who attend the Centre regularly find support from other families on similar journeys.

There are two parts to our service:

- An Early Intervention programme which typically provides weekly sessions to families
- A Monitoring programme for children who are at developmental risk due to prematurity or other health related vulnerabilities.

All children are referred to the Centre by a paediatrician.

### Mission:

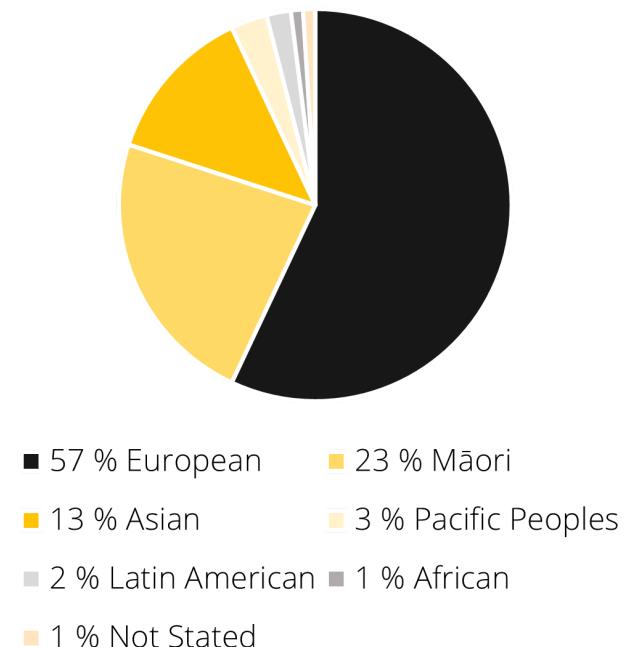
The Champion Centre is committed to providing high quality family/whānau based early intervention services for children/tamariki with multi-faceted developmental delay. In partnership with our local rūnanga (Te Ngāi Tuāhuriri), the Champion Centre will educate about early intervention and act with parents/mātua of children/tamariki with developmental delay as advocates for adequate and appropriate community services for them and their children/tamariki.

### External Review from the Education Review Office:

In November we welcomed the Education Review Office (ERO) to the Champion Centre. Reviews from external parties are always a useful measure and we were thrilled to receive a very positive report inclusive of the following judgment: *Children's learning and development is supported through intentional and responsive planning and teaching focused on developing children's individual learning dispositions and goals. There is a significant focus on relationships, sensory, communication, literacy and numeracy and developing social and emotional competence. Learning-focused partnerships between educators and whānau are strongly evident. Parents and caregivers are actively involved in planning, goal setting and engagement in their child's learning. Assessment and planning celebrate achievements and makes children's learning and progress visible.*



### Ethnicity of children 2022 / 2023:



**“BEING IN A SAFE SPACE AND SHARING MY EXPERIENCE IN HAVING A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY HAS BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL.”**





# OUR IMPACT

## CASSIE'S REFLECTIONS

### Introducing Cassie, Noah and her whānau

Cassie attends the Champion Centre every week with her 3-year-old son Noah. Originally from California, Cassie was living in Blenheim with her husband Nick, and their older daughter when Noah was born with Down syndrome. Reflecting on the challenges ahead, and with the support of her family, Cassie decided she would be a strong advocate for her baby and strive for the best life she could for him. After some investigation into the services available and following a trip from Blenheim to Christchurch to visit the Centre, Cassie and Nick decided to relocate their family to Christchurch to be closer to extended family support and to attend the Champion Centre.

We sat down with Cassie who shared with us some of her thoughts about the Centre and in particular, the most important things that have really made a difference. We are delighted to share these reflections here. What better way to understand the impact of our services than to hear directly from whānau.

### Making supportive connections with other families

"On joining the Champion Centre Baby Programme, I began to make supportive connections and finally felt I'd joined a community of other families who understood what it is to have a child with disabilities. I hadn't experienced this before. While the journey for each family is different, I really feel that everyone tries to encourage one another as parents and nurture the relationships we are building while attending the programme together. It has also been particularly helpful to be part of a group in which all of the children have the same diagnosis. Because we come together regularly, on a weekly basis, we are able to support and learn from one another. Meeting with other parents and whānau has been one of the greatest benefits of coming to the Champion Centre."

### A multi-disciplinary wrap-around service staffed by highly skilled professionals

"Over time I have come to understand just how unique the multi-disciplinary service offered at the Champion Centre really is. Most other health and education departments simply do not work together in the collaborative way staff do at the Champion Centre. I am immensely grateful that therapists operate as a strong multi-disciplinary team to support the best outcomes for Noah. Having all of the therapists under one roof takes the weight off me and allows me to slow down and notice all of the wonderful developmental progress that Noah is making. Having a Speech Language Therapist, an Early Intervention Teacher, an Occupational Therapist and a Musical Play Therapist working together means that I feel really reassured that all aspects of Noah's development are attended to and that his development is viewed holistically. I have a background in primary school teaching and I understand just how much work goes into the jobs of the clinical staff behind the scenes, including planning, preparation and assessment. The Champion Centre staff are always so willing to do whatever is needed for Noah, and their skill and expertise are just so evident."

I am also grateful for the wrap-around nature of the service. I truly appreciate being able to just be myself whenever I come into the Champion Centre. I know I don't have to put on a brave face, as I sometimes feel I need to when I am out and about. I can arrive at the Champion Centre and whether I've been having a really good day or a terrible one, I can let the therapy team know, and it will be OK. The team will always make sure I have a cup of coffee and the chance to talk through some strategies to support me and help me move forwards."

### Supporting communication through sign language

"Supporting Noah's communication has been a priority for me and my family. We've worked really hard and taken every opportunity to work alongside the Champion Centre's Sign Language Facilitator, Liz. Signing is definitely supporting his language development and thanks to Liz, we now incorporate sign language into every part of our lives. I credit Liz with helping Noah learn and utilise over 400 signs which support him to better express what he needs and what he is feeling."



Here is Noah, using his sign for 'Mama'

**"I truly believe the Champion Centre is 'a one stop shop' where bonds are formed between peers and families who may never have connected otherwise. Parents understand and are sympathetic to one another's struggles because they are on similar paths with similar concerns for their children."**

# OUR IMPACT

## CASSIE'S REFLECTIONS CONTINUED



### The importance of family support at the Champion Centre - A one-stop shop

"I can't speak highly enough of the family support offered to me before I had even stepped into the Champion Centre. The Social Work Team and the in-house counselling have just been so helpful. As a mother to a child with high needs, my own needs do tend to come last, and my own wellbeing can get lost in the rush of things. It took me some time to realise that I had been prioritising Noah's health and wellbeing, while ignoring my own needs, and if I'm not OK, I can't be there for him. I am encouraged and supported during my Champion Centre journey by someone from within the organisation who is close enough to understand my situation and struggles. This has meant the support is not disjointed and is much more personally tailored to my needs.

I've also recently attended a Mum's Support Group at the Champion Centre which was incredibly beneficial. Again, it was provided onsite and facilitated by staff who understand what the journey of having a child with disabilities can be like. This makes a huge difference."

### Looking back at where we've come from - Noah's developmental progress

"It is amazing to have a team working alongside Noah to cheer with me and celebrate his wins. The individualised forward planning of the therapists at the Champion Centre has helped Noah to excel and reach exciting developmental milestones. He is running, riding a balance bike, climbing, and always making people laugh with his witty sense of humour; while his speech is delayed, he has amazing receptive language and understanding, and is able to communicate with sign language. There are so many things to celebrate!"

### Helping to develop our Champion Centre Community - Giving back

We're grateful to Cassie for sharing her reflections. We're also grateful for what she does for our Champion Centre community.

Cassie told us that she has always loved helping and being around people and is constantly on the lookout for new ways to help others who might not ask for help. She understands all parents are on a different journey and have different needs. Her hope is that every family at the Champion Centre will feel part of a strong community and able to access support, whether that's from staff, or from other families, when they need it. She has recently helped start three initiatives at the Champion Centre, all about families helping families:

- A Facebook Group for Champion Centre caregivers/parents is now active. It's a safe space where whānau can connect and offer support to one another. It already has 70+ members. All families are made aware of the group by the Family Support Team and can choose to join if they wish. It's one more line of support.
- A 'meal train' system for families is now in operation. This means that when a family is in need of a meal (maybe they're having a tough time, have a busy day full of appointments, or having a day when thinking about preparing dinner is just one thing too many), then they can take a meal from the freezer at the Champion Centre. The Family Support Team worked with Cassie to breathe life into her meal train idea which is now up and running. Thanks to a generous donor, we were able to purchase a freezer, and families and supporters who are able to make a meal for the freezer, can do so. Then, whenever a family might need a meal, they can take one from the freezer.
- Toiletries and items to help parents 'freshen up' are now freely available for parents to use in the bathrooms at the Champion Centre, for those times when it's been a morning rush and everyone else's needs have come first. Healthy snacks are also available for parents to take in reception.

Cassie describes these initiatives as The Champion Village – by Champion families for Champion families. These are simple ideas with a big impact. Thank-you to Cassie and to each and every member of our Champion Centre community.



The 'Champions Alumni' has been launched so if you would like to connect with other Champion families, please ask us how to get involved!



# OUR FUNDING

## AND SUPPORTERS

### Our Funding – Closing the Gap:

Champion Centre services are funded by a mix of government funding and funds provided by our very generous community of supporters who truly understand the importance of our work and its impact on the families we join. These donors and supporters include individual and corporate donors, grant making trusts and organisations, private trusts and community groups.

Our ongoing annual challenge is to bridge the 'gap' between government funding and our operational costs. This year the gap amounted to \$703,455 or 26.5% of our overall costs.

Our philanthropic funding ensures that our services for children and families are comprehensive, regular and delivered according to the Champion Centre model. Key elements of our Champion Centre programmes which are unfunded by government include our musical play therapy programme, our technology assisted learning programme and our family support programme. Philanthropic funding also enables us to see more children.

We wish to thank every single supporter who has contributed to our cause and made a difference to the lives of many children and families in Canterbury. Your donations, big and small have helped us to continue to deliver our comprehensive services. We are a powerful community and together we helped 'realise every child's potential'.

We also thank our government funders, including Ministry of Education, Whaiaka (Ministry for Disabled People) and Te Whatu Ora.

**Heartfelt thanks to all of our very generous supporters:**

- **Regular givers**
- **Payroll givers**
- **Individual donors**
- **Event and fundraiser donor/organisers**

**Have you thought about leaving us a gift in your will? Please get in touch to ask us how!**

### Thanks to the following major donors:



• **C & S Davidson**



- **The Estate of Mr Peter Meech**
- **The Ralph & Eve Seelye Charitable Trust**

### Sincere gratitude to the following supporters:

- S & A Cumming Charitable Trust
- Farina Thompson Charitable Trust
- Sutherland Self Help Trust
- Robert & Barbara Stewart Charitable Trust
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- Foodco New Zealand Ltd
- Oporo Farms Ltd
- Wigram Lions
- Rose Edgar

# A BIG THANK YOU

FOR SUPPORTING US!



**"The support we get as a whānau, the connection and non-judgmental attitude, the belief that our children are amazing, incredible and special wee people - all of these things are incredible."**

**"It feels like a family which is hugely important for me to feel like I can trust that they have my child's best interests at heart and genuinely care for us both."**

**"The Centre has really helped me to learn where he's at in all areas of his development and I feel like I meet him there now."**

**"I have more confidence as a mother. This has come from learning different skills from the team which I can implement at home and outside. This has improved my connection with my child."**

**"The Champion Centre has a fantastic wrap around service. They have always worked as a team and they celebrate all achievements no matter how big or small."**

**"The staff are all fantastic. So friendly, great communication and always willing to help. They show empathy and understanding and are so very good at what they do."**

## FAMILIES TELL US...

**"The aroha is completely tangible from the minute we walk into the building until we walk out."**

**"I am more aware of what she needs and how I can help her achieve what she needs to."**

**"The bond with my child has deepened, flourished and grown thanks to the whole experience of being at the centre throughout the year."**

**"We're blown away by the hearts of the staff, from the friendly welcoming reception staff to the cheerful people who greet us in hallways."**



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