



Helen Mason

Healthy, thriving communities, Kia Momoho Te Hāpori Ōranga.

Sustainability: what can we do as healthcare professionals?

I've recently listened to an audio book *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver, where the Kingsolver family tries for a year to consume food only produced by them or their near neighbours.

It's a thought-provoking book, including the startling statistics on how much of the price paid for a product goes to the initial producer and how much more goes to the supply chain. It ends with Kingsolver explaining not everyone needs to go to the extremes her family did, but that everyone can do something. Some changes in behaviour might seem small but collectively they add up to something significant.

It's clear from our daily lives that sustainability, and the sense of societal responsibility around it, is gaining traction. From the greater emphasis on recycling, to the use of re-usable shopping bags instead of plastic ones, paper straws rather than plastic, buying locally-produced food as opposed to imported, and the increasing number of electric vehicles on our roads, it's evident people are becoming more and more engaged.

I know some of our team have been going to great lengths to reduce waste, recycle and employ a range of other sustainability activities for some time. What we are doing now is seeking to understand more about what sustainability means for our work practices.

What we need going forward is to have a more comprehensive understanding of what we are currently doing, what we could do in the short term, and a plan for what we would like to achieve in the longer term. This will enable us to bring together work that is underway in various departments and teams to inform a more cohesive way forward.

We've asked Debbie O'Byrne to look at opportunities for improvement in this area. Debbie has been involved in the background on sustainability issues for our DHB for many years.

As health professionals we can be walking the talk in terms of sustainability. I encourage you to engage with Debbie over the next couple of months as she works through the process of understanding all the initiatives already underway, and develops a plan for the next steps in our sustainability journey.



“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”

– Robert Swan OBE, FRGS, (born 28 July 1956) - author and adventurer and the first person to walk to both Poles.

“There is no such thing as ‘away’. When we throw anything away it must go somewhere.”

– Annie Leonard (born 1964) American proponent of sustainability and Executive Director of Greenpeace USA.