

Wellington Welfare Guardianship Trust



Newsletter

November 2021

2021

Highlights this year include:

- Ngā Mihi to the Newtown Lions for generous financial support in 2021 that has allowed the trust to provide a koha to our volunteers.
- Assisting the Whanganui WGT to become a new trust location in NZ, sharing resources and meeting them to provide training and support.
- Jill Stringer organised a public meeting in Masterton in April with their local Lions group which was attended by a wide cross section of the community. Three new volunteers were recruited for the Wairarapa hub of WWGT, and all are now linked with a subject person.
- The Trustees developed a survey of our volunteer base to assess if there were any common issues, in order to assess how best volunteers can be supported. The results of the survey are included in this newsletter.
- The Trust met with Minister Verrall – Minister for Seniors, and more recently the Retirement Commissioner Jane Wrightson and the commissions governance administrator Rebecca Jenner to raise awareness of the failings of the legal system to support persons without legal capacity.
- There are regular email enquiries from agencies and individuals all around New Zealand, in respect of an array of questions. A topical scenario around a Covid-19 vaccination consent/lack of consent was an interesting situation to review.
- We continue to match volunteers and subject persons, both in the Wellington and Wairarapa, and have subject persons waiting in Kapiti where there is a need for volunteers.
- Volunteer social get together, postponed from earlier in the year was finally held in November, and is a highlight for many of us, sharing experiences and providing volunteers an opportunity to seek advice of trustees for the varied unique situations that arise.

Trust Objectives



To assist all persons who lack capacity to make decisions relating to their personal care and welfare.

To recruit and train suitable persons to apply for Welfare Guardian Appointments

Provision of Education and Training to promote and mentor volunteers.

To promote and educate the public on the role of Welfare Guardians

All WWGT Activities are consistent with a charitable Trust

Retirement Commission Meeting & Minister Verrall (Office for Seniors)

The role of Welfare Guardians came into existence under the Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act for people who did not have an Enduring Power of Attorney in place and who had lost mental capacity and therefore could not appoint anyone to make the decisions that they no longer could. Many believe Parliament should have done more by creating a special role of Guardian of Last Resort, similar to that in the UK, which is state funded.

If you lose capacity and have no enduring power of attorney or family member prepared to be a Welfare Guardian, there is the possibility of the Family Court appointing the Public Trust to take on the managing of your financial affairs. There is no similar arrangement for your Health and Welfare. One of the roles of the WWGT is to lobby government to try to get this changed, relying on volunteers alone for this important need is not good enough.

Several trustees met with the Minister responsible for older persons Ayesha Verrall. She had a good understanding of the issues involved (she is also a medical doctor) and was accompanied by departmental staff who were instructed to pursue this issue further.

Ben Gray met with the Retirement Commissioner Jane Wrightson. She explained that her key role is in overseeing the financial arrangements for retirement, but that she is involved in some advocacy and was pleased to have met and have some understanding of the role of Welfare Guardian Volunteers. She noted that an Aged Care Commissioner is in the process of being appointed. They will work out of the office of the Health and Disability Commissioner and will have a firm advocacy role. In addition to the Disability Rights Commissioner there will be a better ability to advocate for the vulnerable people we are involved with.

A really important piece of news is that the Law Commission is undertaking a review of Adult Decision-Making Capacity <https://huarahi-whakatau.lawcom.govt.nz/> which is usually an important first step in amending legislation so it looks like there is progress being made.



The Office for Seniors sent WWGT a letter after our July meeting encouraging the trustees to contribute to the law review, stating that our organisations informed perspective will contribute to robust and comprehensive recommendations.

The review will examine existing law and associated practice relating to adult decision-making capacity – they will consider whether our law and practice strike an appropriate balance enabling people to make decisions about their own lives (with appropriate support from family, caregivers, professionals, and the community) whilst safeguarding people from harm.



Law Commissioner – Geoff Shirtcliffe was interviewed in relation to the review of this law the link to this is:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/2018820544/law-commission-reviews-decision-making-capacity-law>

Survey of volunteers – the results and actions

Purpose of the survey was to learn from our Volunteer Welfare Guardians (WGs) what the role involves from their experience, including challenges and issues faced and their experience of support provided by the Trust along with suggestions for improvement.

What our Volunteer WGs told us

There are a variety of ways Subject Persons (SPs) like to spend time with their Volunteer WG such as talking, going out for coffee, walking with the WG's dog.

WGs respond to what their SP wants to do or can do. You were also realistic about what you could do/manage around frequency of contact, visits or phone calls and duration of visits

On average, most of you visited or had direct contact with your SP either fortnightly or weekly.

Contact / relationship with staff at Care facility – positive relationships with staff; staying connected with facility staff (e.g. the manager) and encouraging communication about your SP.

Involvement in medical decisions or reviews with SPs included:

- quarterly Care Plan reviews with nurse manager and doctor
- approval/consent for COVID vaccination; dental extractions, and other medical procedure
- invited to attend medical appointments and three-monthly reviews, with two Volunteer WGs arranging medical / dental appointments and one transporting their SP
- involvement in care home placement ranging from meeting with social worker and care home manager to discuss placement, to admission to Rest home, and seeking an alternative care home.

Challenges:

Examples of a couple of challenges you faced and what would help you to manage/resolve these issues:

having to travel to see their SP – mileage costs.

Explaining the Volunteer WG role to staff at Care facilities – WWGT will prepare a leaflet/information about the role for Volunteer WGs to give to Care facilities.

Satisfaction:

What you found most satisfying about being a WG – most of you identified satisfaction in: seeing the need for the WG role, that this relationship makes a positive and lasting benefit to the client, being able to use your knowledge and skills to make decisions that impact on and give your person a voice.

Knowing that someone who has no other visitors is feeling a bit more connected with the world.

Support for the WG role:

What would help you feel more supported or confident in the WG role:

- mileage to support visiting SP
- more involvement with trustees in discussion of challenging issues regarding SP
- having relevant educational material (e.g. presentations) and opportunities to increase knowledge to support SP.

Promoting the volunteer WG role:

Would you recommend being a volunteer WG to others - almost all of you said yes, or maybe.

Many of you gave heartfelt comments about the value of this (WG) service and the support it offers people who have no one else to be there for them. Some examples of your comments:

[It] depends on the subject person.

It is a unique and new relationship, still evolving I believe, so it is interesting being part of a new service.

It is participating in an important community service, it offers significant interdisciplinary engagement, it is personally satisfying.

Imagine being a resident in a home without anyone from outside caring about what happens to you?

Responses to the question – How do you think we could attract more volunteer welfare guardians? – offered a range of suggestions including:

- stories in the media
- get the word out generally (advertising in papers and social media), but then have a rigorous interviewing system
- stories and shoulder tapping
- reaching out to service clubs such as Lions / Probus, where people already volunteer
- presentations to service groups and professional development forums
- add health professional positive feedback to publicity promotional material.

*A volunteer relayed the story of her SP,
with whom she has a regular phone “date”, over-hearing a conversation
as the SP came toward the phone, responding to a question posed.....
“Who is that lady calling you” – the response was,
“It’s Helen, **my guardian angel.**”*

A new name for Welfare Guardians perhaps?

CONFERENCE 2022- OBJECTIVE...

WWGT is keen to hold a conference during 2022, involving all the Welfare Guardianship Trusts from around New Zealand, which include Otago, Wellington, Waikato, Christchurch, and Whanganui.

The objective would be to bring these groups together to share experiences, and given the timing of the law review, the Law Commission has indicated they would support such a conference and potentially deliver a presentation. We would hope to invite specialist speakers from around New Zealand involved in this area and will set aside time for volunteers to share their stories and learn from each other. Planning is at an early stage, and we will wait, hoping that the situation with Covid-19 will become more predictable.

We will plan this during the first quarter of 2022, with a view to holding an event in the middle of the year.



Thank you for your continued interest...

We again thank the wonderful volunteers in the Wellington Region who provide ongoing support and guardianship to those in need.

The trust has no regular funding or grants (despite applying for a few) and as such, it is truly the good will of our local people to help others in need. The trustees would like to acknowledge all these people and their on-going work.

In July 2021 the Newtown Lions provided the trust with a donation which was much appreciated and has been used to directly support our volunteers.



We would very much appreciate it if you could canvas your networks for persons who may have some availability to become a Welfare Guardian and assist a person in care.

For further information on the role of a volunteer welfare guardian, there is additional information on our website.

Meri Kirihimete

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou

Ben, Annette, Vicki, Darien, Tom, Jill, and Megan

Trustees of the Wellington Welfare Guardianship Trust 2021

**Dr Ben Gray - Vicki Wilde - Annette Gray - Darien Mahony
Jill Stringer and Tom White**



For further details on the Trust please refer to our website

<https://welfareguardians.nz/>

email wwgtrust@gmail.com

Please send this newsletter onto any person that would be potentially interested in WWGT services or as a potential volunteer.

Donations gratefully received.

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