SERVICES AND PROGRAM ENTRY

CATEGORY: Therapeutic and Clinical Services

ENTRY TITLE: From zero to national taonga

NAME OF APPLICANT: Brian O'Connell, Chief Operations Officer

ORGANISATION: Whakarongorau Aotearoa // New Zealand Telehealth Services

Additional Information about Entry (1 x A4 page).

Please expand upon the brief description given in Part A.

Whakarongorau Aotearoa // **New Zealand Telehealth Services** (previously Homecare Medical) is the social enterprise running the New Zealand Government-funded 24x7 national telehealth services across seven digital channels.

The services are supported by 12 clinical teams of registered nurses, mental health nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, counsellors, doctors, paramedics, poisons officers, health advisors, family and sexual harm professionals, and emergency triage nurses.

Around 600 staff work from contact centres in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch and from their homes across Aotearoa. We also partner with Iwi and Māori-owned organisations in Northland, Hastings, and the Bay of Plenty.

The services are co-funded by Te Whatu Ora / Health New Zealand, the Ministry of Social Development, the Accident Compensation Corporation, and the Department of Corrections. Whakarongorau Aotearoa is owned by ProCare and Pegasus Health.

The purpose of Whakarongorau Aotearoa is to give everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand the opportunity for wellness, through the connected world of digital care.

Digital healthcare is the use of technology to improve healthcare services and outcomes. It includes telehealth, telemedicine, virtual healthcare, and health and wellness support via a wellness app, or oVRcome virtual reality exposure therapy).

Telehealth – we deliver a range of health, mental health, family violence and sexual harm services across seven digital channels (mobile, phone, text, email, webchat, web/social media) where our frontline staff interact directly with our service users overcoming the separation of distance and/or time using digital technology.

Telemedicine refers to health professionals using technology to provide remote medical consultations and treatment (e.g. doctor consultations and diagnosis).

Virtual healthcare has come to mean the video aspects of telehealth and telemedicine i.e. seeing someone virtually.

In June 2017 Whakarongorau Aotearoa launched 1737 a new free 24/7 four-digit phone and text number to make it easier for people to connect with mental health and addictions professionals. 1737 provides brief intervention counselling.

The 1737 service was based on research that showed four-digit numbers are easier to remember and attract people who feel other lines are not suitable. Developed with telecomms provider Spark, 1737 was the first text and call 4-digit number in health.

1737 was deliberately set up to be community ‘owned’ and promoted – a brandless brand that anyone can use. 1737 is now a widely promoted service – with 1737 badges worn by Prime Ministers, TV presenters and mental health advocates, and with sports teams asking to use the 1737 logo on their rugby jerseys.

Address the following Criteria (max. 10 X A4 pages).
Judges allocate marks to each criterion

1. **Evidence of a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.**

In the 12 months to the end of June 2023, 1 in 3 people contacted a Whakarongorau-run telehealth service – nearly 1.6 million individual people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Across all our services we responded to over 2.2 million contacts – over 6,000 contacts a day.

The vision is that no matter which national telehealth service someone contacts, they will get the care, advice, and support they need. Every door is the right door. The vision is also of equitable care, beyond a medical model, and that telehealth services are accessible and accessed by those most in need – Māori, Pacific peoples, and disabled people.

Mental Health
In the year to 30 June 2023 across all Whakarongorau-run mental health services we supported ~151,300 people across New Zealand, responding to ~351,300 contacts.

The **1737 Need to talk? team** supported ~42,500 people – answering ~124,200 contacts – including 66,000+text conversations (~800,000 text exchanges)

A further ~12,500 people (30,000+ contacts) were supported when they contacted the **Depression Helpline**.

The **Alcohol and Other Drugs** team supported 8,500+ people (~11,300 contacts)

The **Gambling Helpline** team supported ~2,600 people (3,700+ contacts) dealing with the effects of problem gambling.

Our **mental health nurses** answered ~91,000 contacts on behalf of 12 District Health Boards (DHBs).

The **Earlier Mental Health Response team** triaged 11,700+contacts from Police and ambulance services to support 6,300+people in social and psychological distress.

The **Puāwaitanga team** received ~2,200 referrals and delivered nearly 7,000 appointments to people seeking ongoing mental health support.

The focus: make 1737 famous
The focus when 1737 was launched in 2017 was to establish 1737 as the national mental health and addictions (MH&A) helpline that was thought about and talked about around every dinner table in the country.

From launch, promotion focussed on:
- Using media to help build awareness with the New Zealand public
- Vigilance with print, broadcast and online media listings (aiming for clarity in a confused space)

- Working with existing stakeholders to help establish understanding of/credibility for 1737 - developing collateral and content to help
- Input from and co-ordination with frontline MH&A teams and management – to plan the approach and for demand

The engagement levels provide strong evidence the goal of establishing 1737 as the national MH&A helpline has been achieved.

In its **second year of operation**, the 12 months to 30 June 2019 the 1737 service received ~86,500 contacts (including 43,000 text exchanges) and supported more than 49,000 people in distress.

In the **most recent 12-month period** to 30 June 2023, the 1737 Need to talk? team received about 124,200 contacts (including more than 66,000 text conversations) and supported ~42,500 people.

2. Evidence of innovation and/or recognised best practice.

Service Design Innovation
Whakarongorau Aotearoa (Homecare Medical then) commissioned research that showed that four-digit numbers are easier to remember, and that they can attract a wider range of people who may feel other specific lines are not suited to their needs.

Launched – with no additional funding required - in June 2017, 1737 Need to talk? was a new free 24/7 four digit phone and text number carefully designed to make it easier for people to connect with mental health and addictions professionals.

The service was designed over 12 months based on in-depth consumer input from speaking with people about their concerns around reaching out for help.

The features of 1737 are:
- A multi-channel helpline number which can be called or texted free, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
- The easy to remember 4-digit number links New Zealanders in mental health distress - to an expert team of mental health and addiction professionals and overseen by a team of clinical psychiatrists.
- Calls (and texts) are answered by the Whakarongorau mental health and addictions team; the same people who answer the Depression Helpline calls.

The objective when the service was launched included providing media with a new listing of helplines to include at the end of print, broadcast and online articles or programmes about mental health, mental health issues and themes; the new, brand-neutral, 4-digit number 1737 – features at the top of those listings - for people to call and text for free; if only one number can be used, media are asked to use this new number. This approach is supported and promoted by the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation.

This was initiated because consumer and sector feedback was that the Depression Helpline ‘brand’/ name is not always appropriate for people who are in distress and to ensure that when people are seeking help for mental health issues are directed to

a funded, sustainable, quality assured, professional service offering clinically safe support.

1737 was a significant technological innovation developed in partnership with telecommunications provider Spark - being the first text and call 4-digit number in health.

Digital Response Innovation
The 1737 team is able to do geo/ age targeted social media posts reminding communities of free, 24x7 1737 support available.

These events have included Rangiora youth suicide (a request from Pegasus suicide prevention team), the Dunedin Countdown attacks, the 2023 flooding and weather events in Auckland and Hawke's Bay, or working with MoH, Southern District Health Board, WellSouth and Queenstown District Council to provide additional support to increase awareness of 1737 in the region which was significantly affected by socio-economic factors related to the COVID tourism downturn.

Coordinated Care Team
The Coordinated Care Team (CCT) was established in 2019 to provide enhanced support to service users whose needs were unmet through standard service offerings. The CCT comprised a small specialist team within Whakarongorau Aotearoa of a Service Delivery Manager/ Clinical Psychologist, a senior Social Worker, and a senior Occupational Therapist, with opportunities for weekly team consults with a Whakarongorau Aotearoa Lead Psychiatrist and Chief Medical Officer.

Informed by research and service user experiences, the foundational blueprint for CCT identified service users who may benefit from CCT input, including those with complex health needs, who may call frequently, who did not get the service they needed, or who are not being helped by existing frontline services.

CCT support for service users and staff extended across all Whakarongorau Mental Health & Addiction Lines including 1737 Need to Talk,

Callers who may benefit from CCT input were referred by frontline staff with caller consent. CCT input enhanced support for callers with more complex needs who may call frequently by:

- Engaging with callers via phone, identifying their broad needs, current supports, and what they found helpful or unhelpful.
- Linking callers with appropriate supports in the community and addressing barriers to engagement.
- Creation of collaborative support plans informed by both callers and their primary supports (e.g., GP, Whanau, Mental Health Teams, Community Support Workers, Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Clinical Teams, Ambulance Services) with caller permission. The broad aim of support plans was to guide frontline staff, ensure caller needs were being met, and manage call frequency.

3. Evidence of participation of mental health consumers in the planning, implementation and evaluation of mental health service delivery.

Evidence of prioritising increased level of engagement and influence of consumers and where higher level participation such as authentic co-design is highly favoured.

*There may be exceptions to the involvement of mental health consumers. Some entries may reasonably explain any particular circumstances where the involvement of mental health consumers is different or limited***.**

Planning

In February 2017 the PwC Digital team spoke to 39 members of the public about their mental health, helpline experiences and communication preferences. The aim of this research was to investigate the needs and viewpoints of potential service users of a brand-neutral mental health support line (accessed by phone/text number 1737.

Their *Homecare Medical 1737 Helpline Insights Report, March 2017* provided key insights of barriers, observations and positives before calls, during calls and after calls.

Before call barriers included:

- Stigma of mental health distress
- Negative experience of healthcare system in the past
- Not sure if 1737 was a number to call or text
- Unsure if calling or texting was free

Before call positives included:

- 1737 is easy to remember
- 0800 numbers are hard to remember

During call barriers included:

- Having a long waiting time
- Calling the Depression Helpline is offputting
- Painful to retell my story
- Concerns about privacy

During call positives included:

- Generic and empathetic helpline that anyone can contact for help
- Good service options

After call barriers included:

- A bad helpline experience could be a missed opportunity for life
- If there is no name how would you find it

After call positives included:

- Post call check-ins and follow-ups
- People want to be heard and given actionable advice and solutions

Researching promotional campaigns



From the outset, the priority for any service promotion or marketing activity was to get the key messaging right to simply explain what the Peer Support Service was and promote the service as an additional reason to contact 1737.

With the input of 44 participants to test and validate key messaging and promotions activity has been developed with a design focus on key ethnic groups and priority populations.

The outcome from the user testing was the development of 60 different ad variations across numerous digital platforms-designed to help us best engage people indifferent ways and in different online locations.

Some of these ads running on mobile phones have "'click to call" functionality. That means people seeing some of these ads can click to dial 1737 immediately on their phone. This is a new marketing approach for NTS and is proving a popular option for engagement.

Implementation

Our kaimahi (staff) are based on three offices around Aotearoa New Zealand – Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch – and many work from their homes, located from Kaitaia to Bluff.

More choice for service users

- Some Māori and Pasifika service users have told us that they'd like the option to talk or text with someone of their own culture when they contact 1737. To meet that we've worked hard to recruit and now around 20% of our team are Māori or Pasifika.
- Also in response to feedback, in August 2020, we introduced a 1737 peer support option where people can choose to speak to someone with lived experience of wairangi/mental distress.

We are seeing people from all walks of life and of all ages experiencing – some for the first time - issues such as economic and employment distress, anxiety around the uncertainties of the changing COVID environment, alcohol and other drugs issues and relationship challenges.

Peer support – talking to someone who has 'been there' – is another way of making sure we have care available for everyone, for issues that may be causing them concern.

A trained peer support worker, who can normalise experience of distress and when appropriate, share what helped them, or suggest actions that might help, can in turn help the person experiencing distress to make sense of their own situation and make

changes that help them recover. Support provided by someone who has “walked in your shoes” has a powerful impact and many people find this to be an influential factor in their recovery.

“The new service may be of benefit to people who have mainly experienced wellness in their lives, but who now confront a changed reality due to the impact of COVID-19; and to those who have experienced ongoing mental health challenges.

“Peer support workers can help people navigate through challenging life situations, which can cause a loss of confidence, or bring about feelings of shame. Having these feelings normalised, and being supported, is for many people a very healing experience.

“The new service is proving popular, with 29% of 1737 callers electing to speak to a peer support worker in August - its first month of operation,” says Dr Codyre.

The Peer Support is provided by Mind and Body

Responding to demand

- To meet demand and anticipated trends, the team are continuously planning, modelling and forecasting so that they can have the right workforce on at the right times.
    - As part of workforce planning, contractors can be brought on to support. An example of this was in response to the Christchurch mosque attacks.

Evaluation

Mental health and addictions

- We see the increased volume and complexity of calls across mental health services is impacting current capacity and performance.
- Risk and youth trends continuing to increase, requiring more time and skill to support.
- Market saturated with self-serve tools but is heavily fragmented, making where to go for support confusing for tāngata wha iora / people seeking wellness.
- In response we are looking to technology solutions to automate growth in digital channels, improving partnerships and pathways with the sector, utilising different workforce capability, including peer support/ those with lived experience, social workers, student internships for different channels and low risk contacts.

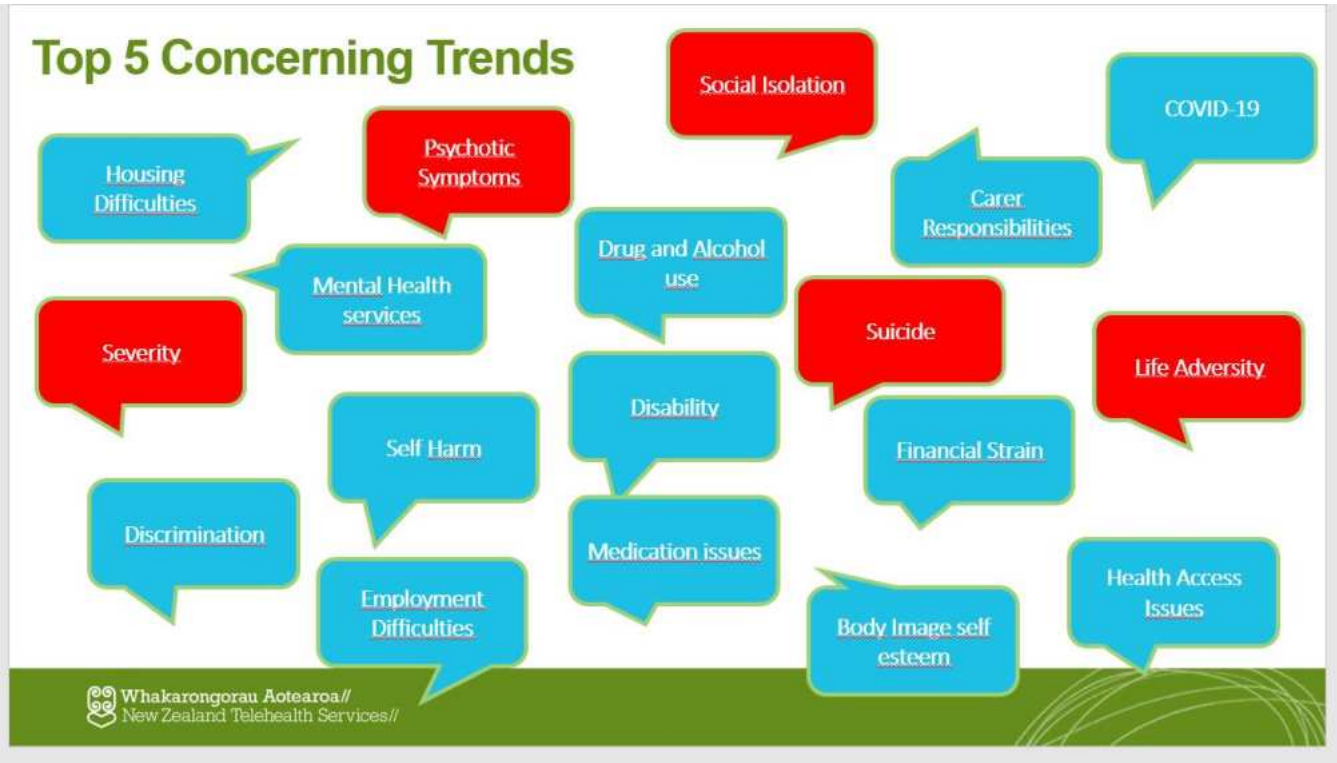
What we are seeing

All mental health services are seeing an increase in workload

- Societal views about mental health challenges are changing - and more people are seeking help
- There are challenges in accessing face to face services – we have a team of people who are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- COVID and other community events have an impact on services like ours - most recently flooding and cyclones

What is influencing call lengths and wait times?

- Our mental health and addictions services are designed for one-off brief intervention support, with an open door to return for support
- Over the last five years we have seen an increase in the clinical complexity presented across our services
- The numbers of people calling in crisis and with suicide risk have also increased
- Around 16% of contacts indicate previous or current mental health service involvement
- The result is that the average length of a 1737 call has increased 50%
- Youth are increasingly using 1737



4. Evidence of partnerships and linkages with all key stakeholders (collaboration for continuity between organisations).

Trusted partner for Government

Whakarongorau is the social enterprise that built and launched the national telehealth platform and has been a trusted partner for Government for the last eight years. In that time Whakarongorau-run services have been vital in supporting the country and the health system throughout the COVID pandemic, the Christchurch terror attacks, fires and floods, the annual flu seasons, and winter pressures.

Given the breadth of the services we provide, no one has a better view of what's going on in the health and wellbeing of the people of Aotearoa than we do – that is a privilege. We are essentially the largest – virtual – ED in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Working with multiple agencies to solve sector issues

Whakarongorau has worked with multiple agencies to solve key sector issues – examples include working with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to launch a national sexual harm service and an elder abuse service, with Police on a service to support 111 callers in mental health crisis, and with Te Whatu Ora // Health NZ and Whaikaha // Ministry of Disabled People to establish the dedicated Disability Helpline.

Diverting people from EDs and GPs for mental health

The key areas of focus for Whakarongorau are integrating the end-to-end services we offer, to support the system from primary through to tertiary care. We play a key role in supporting the system by diverting people away from EDs and GPs by providing for their healthcare needs, where they are, and by meeting unmet demand. This includes in mental health – with increasing demand and complexity.

5. Verification of effectiveness (quality improvement activity, data collection and its use, including graphs and tables, achievement of performance indicators, e.g. attendance figures, outcome measures, number of document downloads, page views, click through rates etc).

Whakarongorau Mental Health and Addictions facts and figures

- 1737 now makes up circa 70% of the total contacts to Whakarongorau-run mental health services,
- Contacts are evenly split between SMS and phone call interactions,
- The frequency of complexity is increasing – 20% increase in calls longer than 25 min in last quarter alone
- A third of tāngata whai ora / people seeking wellness are 13-25 year olds.
- 17% of known service users are Māori.
- 185,000 contacts delivered by 45 FTE – equating to more than 4,000 support interactions per year

Quality improvement activity
Whakarongorau texts all 1737 service users 48 hours after their interaction asking if they would take part in a survey about their experience and their satisfaction. Service users may opt out of then receiving the online survey to complete. The information received is used to make service improvements.

Suggestions and feedback from service users that have been implemented include the introduction of the Peer Support option, changes to welcome messages asking callers to take some time to think about what they wanted from an interaction with a 1737 counsellor, changing the experience for service users when they are waiting for their call to be answered, and exploring the option of a distinct pathway for Māori service users.

Data collection and its use
Whakarongorau measures key service performance indicators in real time (calls waiting, wait times etc). Demographic data is requested from service users.

Attendance figures

12 months ending	Contacts	People Supported	Text conversations
30 Jun 2018		40,000	
30 Jun 2019	86,000	49,000	43,000
30 Jun 2020	123,000	59,000	
30 Jun 2021	132,000	63,000	50,000
30 Jun 2022	127,000	47,000	70,000+
30 Jun 2023	124,200	42,500	66,000+

Depression/1737 Outcomes

- 82% of people who contact the 1737 service thinking about suicide or harming themselves, have their needs met within the call and are not referred to other services.
- Partnership with Mind and Body to provide peer support service is exceeding expectations with more than 25,000 tāngata whai ora supported per annum

	Q3-22/23	%	Q4-22/23	%	Q1-23/24	%	Q2-23/24	%	Total	Row %
Brief intervention	14927	45%	15790	43%	12847	40%	11768	41%	55332	42%
Not engaging/ declined	7734	23%	10584	29%	10168	32%	8355	29%	36841	28%
General support	5882	18%	5567	15%	4854	15%	4470	16%	20773	16%
Support plan followed	3276	10%	3087	8%	2810	9%	2885	10%	12058	9%
Signposted to other service	1177	4%	1083	3%	1097	3%	847	3%	4204	3%
Emergency Referral	105	0%	109	0%	192	1%	141	0%	547	0%
Information/ resources provided	67	0%	56	0%	66	0%	120	0%	309	0%
Referral to F2F	35	0%	53	0%	58	0%	60	0%	206	0%
Total	33203		36329		32092		28646		130270	
Col %	25%		28%		25%		22%			

Service User Feedback

Daryl* reached out to the 1737 service recently for support while he was experiencing some struggles in his life. After speaking with one of our counsellors, he sent an email with feedback to say: "Just spoke with one of your staff, she was extremely helpful, intelligent and kind-hearted. She validated my struggle and gave me constructive non-judgemental advice. Deeply appreciated. Give her a raise, gift card, charming nickname, or something! At the very least, please let her know she helped me a lot. Chur".

Conclusion (1/2 x A4 page).

Launched in June 2017, Whakarongorau Aotearoa // New Zealand Telehealth Services' 1737 Need to Talk? service has become a go-to for New Zealanders with mental health and addiction needs. 1737 Need to Talk? is a free 24/7 four-digit phone and text number that makes it easier for people to connect with mental health and addictions professionals.

The 1737 service was based on research that showed four-digit numbers are easier to remember, and can attract a wider range of people who may feel other specific lines are not suited to their needs. 1737 was a significant innovation developed in partnership with Spark - the first text and call 4-digit number in health.

The engagement levels provide strong evidence the goal of establishing 1737 as the national MH&A helpline has been achieved. In the 12-month reporting period to 30 June 2023, the 1737 Need to talk? team supported received about 124,200 contacts (including more than 66,000 text conversations) from about 42,500 people.

The development, implementation and promotion of the 1737 service have been carefully researched by Whakarongorau Aotearoa to provide a service of on-going value to New Zealanders who need it. The service is rigorously monitored, evaluated and improved to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.

In developing the 1737 service we have worked with multiple agencies including Police to support 111 callers in mental health crisis. We play a key role in supporting the health system by diverting people away from EDs and GPs by providing for their healthcare needs, where they are, and by meeting unmet demand. That is particularly the case in mental health with its increasing demand and complexity.

Appendix of Support Material (max. 8 x A4 pages).

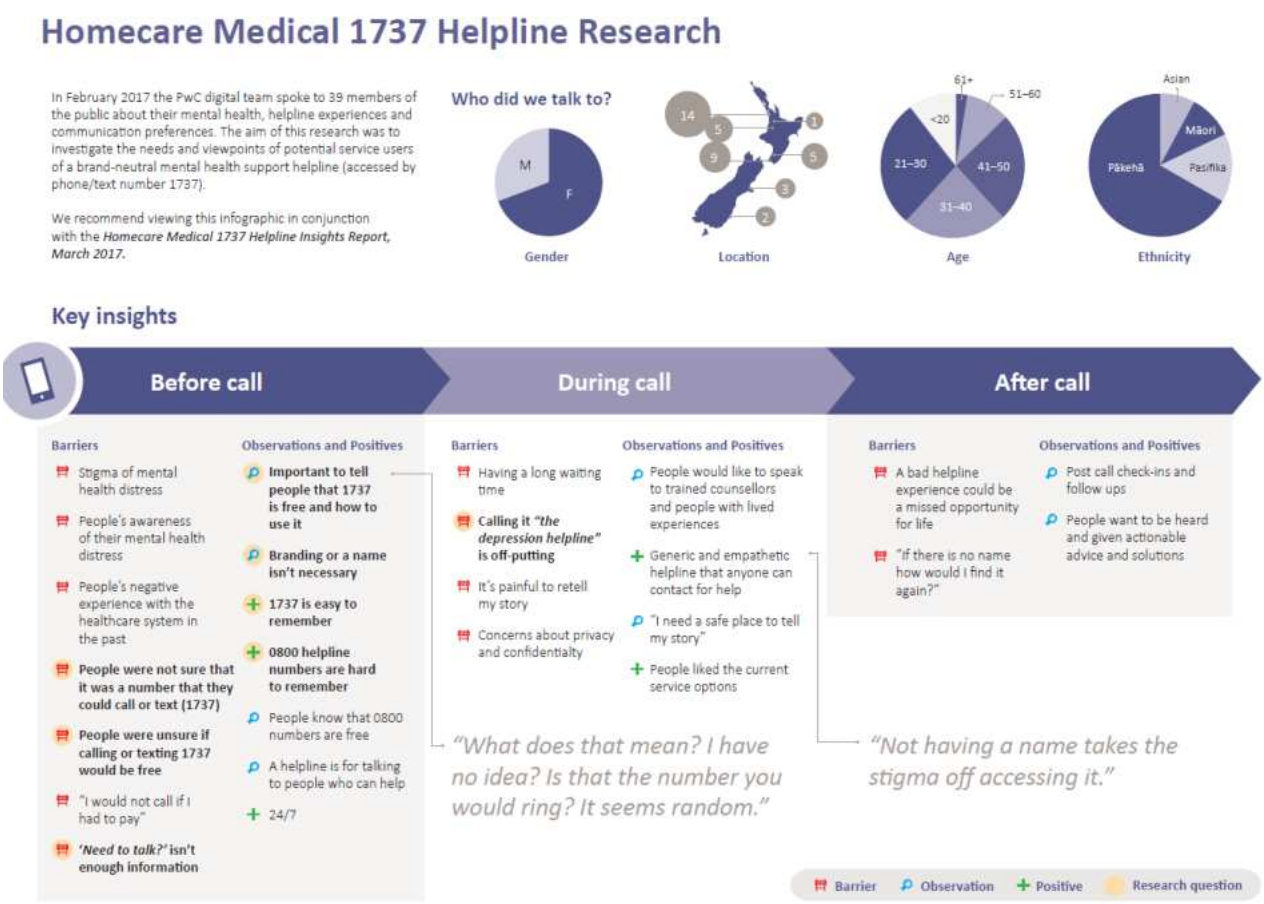
Page and word limits must be strictly adhered to. Any submission that exceeds the stated maximum will not be accepted and returned for review.

Links to other documents or websites may only be included in the Appendix/Supporting Material Section (2xA4 Pages) and are not to be included anywhere else in the submission. Links to other documents or websites in the main submission will not be considered by the judges.

Please directly copy all content/essential information to be reviewed by the judges in the main submission as links within the Appendix/Supporting Material Section will only be viewed at the judges' discretion.

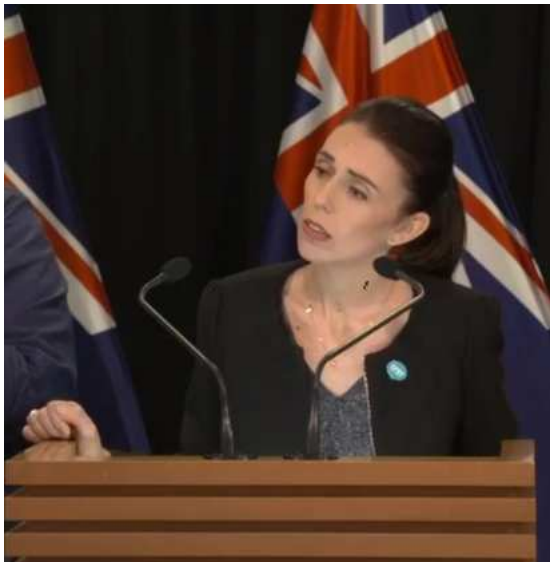


Formative research by PWC Digital



Promotion

The 1737 badge seen on the lapels of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Megan Markell and Seven Days host Jeremy Corbett.









Promotional campaigns



LOST?

Everyone feels like that sometimes.
But you don't need to go it alone.
Just free call or text **1737** any time
to talk to a trained counsellor. They're
ready to listen, support and help you
make a plan to find yourself again.

CALL OR TEXT 1737 Free support any time.









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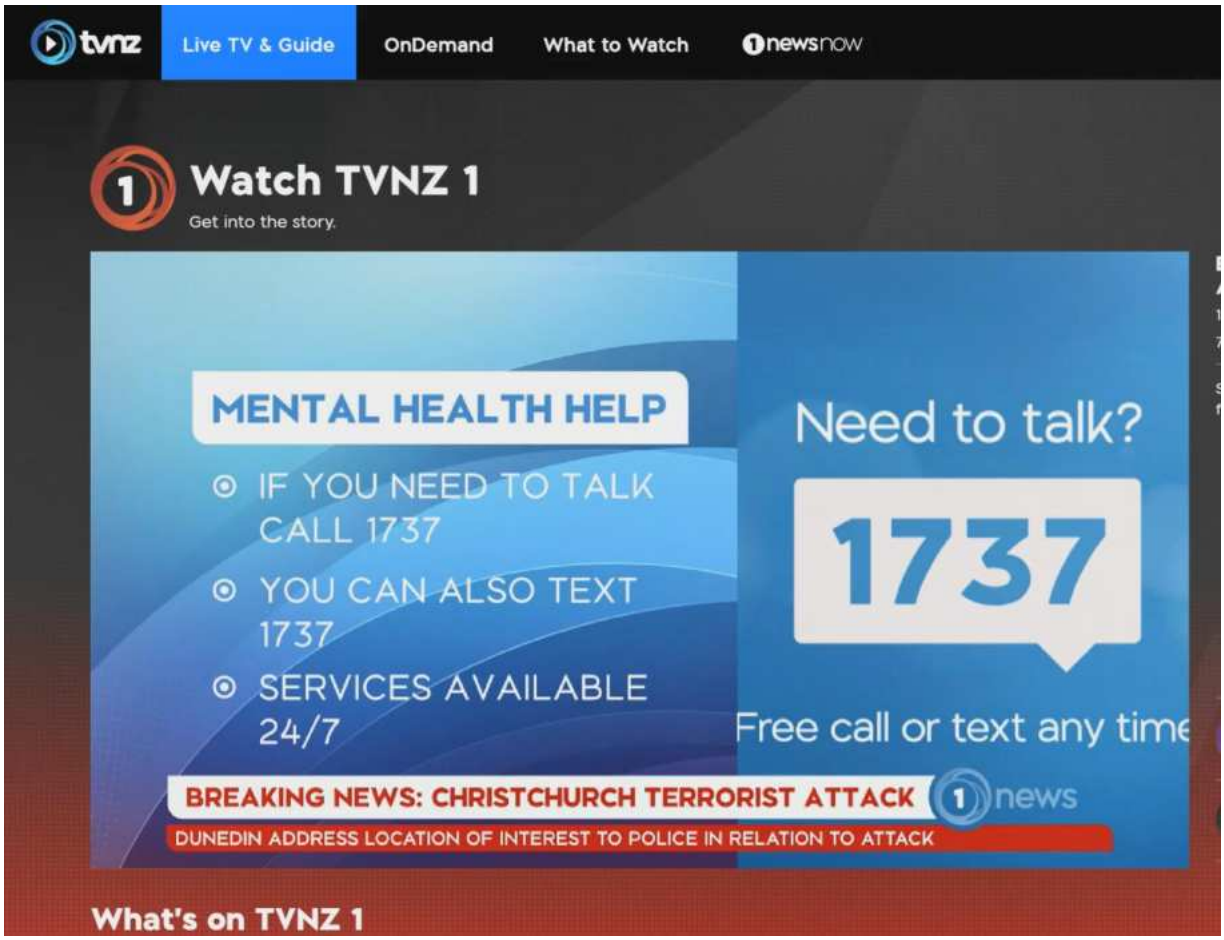
Multimedia, multi-lingual promotion







Community Activation







Smart technology

