



# *Kiwi Kid Sponsorship*

## IMPACT REPORT 2021





## Contents

Foreword  
**02**

Kiwi Kid Sponsorship  
– Variety’s Approach  
**03**

Overview  
**05**

Our Programmes  
**05**

Evaluating the  
impact of Kiwi Kid  
Sponsorship (KKS)  
**08**

What we found  
**10**

Being a Kiwi Kid  
Daniel’s story  
**14**

Being a Kiwi Kid  
Tom’s story  
**15**

The impact of  
Kiwi Kid sponsorship  
**16**

Being a Kiwi Kid  
Sally’s Story  
**18**

The effects of Material  
Hardship on children  
and families  
**20**

Conclusion  
**21**

Sponsors and  
supporters  
**26**



## *Purpose and vision*

---

*Variety enables children and young people to thrive in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

---

*We envision a New Zealand where all young people can realise their hopes and dreams.*





## Foreword

### *Child Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand*

With one in five or 210,000 children in Aotearoa New Zealand growing up in deprivation and poverty, too many young New Zealanders go without the essentials: food, warm bedding, a school uniform, stationery, or appropriate footwear.

The reality for many children is that everyday items like warm bedding – and activities like school camps and swimming lessons, things that most of us take for granted – are beyond the means of their families. This can lead to feelings of stigma, exclusion and a lack of belonging, which can affect children's physical health and their mental and emotional well-being. This in turn affects educational achievement.

The effects of childhood deprivation are long-lasting. The economic cost of poor childhood outcomes can be measured in terms of lower success in education and training, reduced workplace productivity, and increased public health, welfare, and judicial expenditure.

"The strength of our nation is only as strong as the wellbeing and happiness of our children."

Susan Glasgow, CEO Variety.



# Kiwi Kid Sponsorship

## – Variety’s Approach

*Variety is committed to improving the well-being of children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand. We believe that every child is unique and that all children need – and deserve – a happy, healthy childhood filled with opportunities to explore, grow, and learn. The Kiwi Kid Sponsorship (KKS) programme acknowledges that these opportunities are different for every child and are influenced by the child’s individual circumstances as well as their needs, unique talents, hopes and dreams.*

### **Kiwi Kid Sponsorship is tailored to the individual child**

Since its launch in 2013, Kiwi Kid Sponsorship has supported thousands of children living in financial hardship. The programme empowers families and caregivers to meet their children’s basic needs by providing them with material support from a sponsor.

For children and young people on the programme, Kiwi Kid Sponsorship gives them access to the same things that many other children enjoy – while nurturing individual choices, interests, and talents. The programme can be tailored for children’s unique challenges and experiences – whether a physical or learning disability, an ongoing illness, a sick parent, or living in an isolated community.

Survey feedback about the KKS programme suggests that sponsorship has many benefits. It can:

- improve the relationship between the caregiver and the child
- decrease stress and anxiety for the whole family, and
- help parents and caregivers to budget more effectively.

For many children, Kiwi Kid Sponsorship impacts on more than just education and health.

### **Nine-year-old Harmony says:**

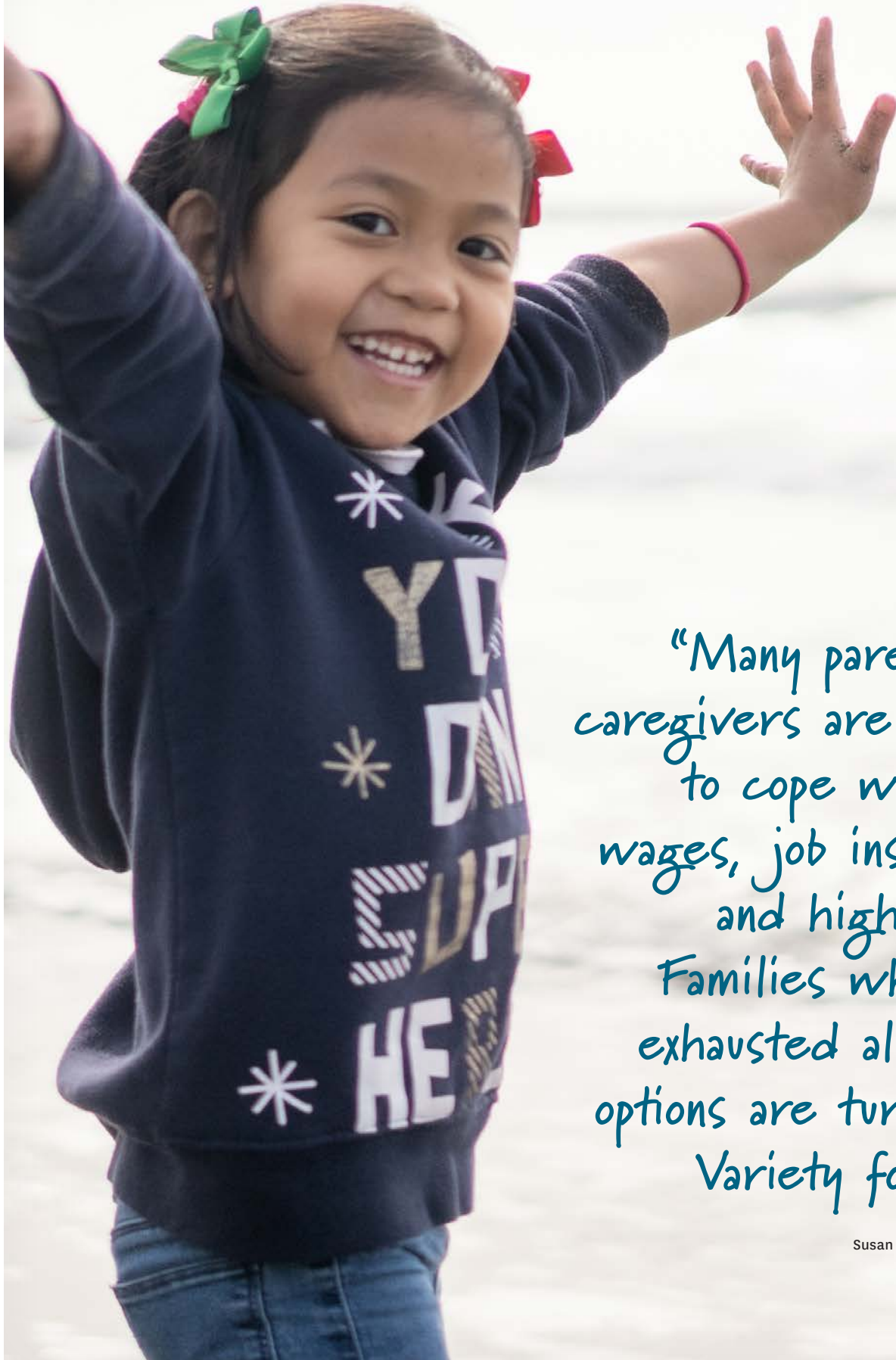
***“It has made me feel more included, feel less stressed and have lots of new experiences and make more friends... Thank you for helping my Mum give me a bit more to spend on myself. My Mum does her best for me and my siblings, but it can be hard sometimes financially, so thank you for making it possible for me to get some new clothes.”***

It is through stories like these, that Variety raises awareness of the realities of poverty for children, and the long-term social costs of children missing out on opportunities for enriching educational and personal growth.

***“For me, it’s a sense of obligation – a country like New Zealand should be able to lessen the large number of children living in poverty. We don’t want kids to be left behind. We want to empower them.”***

Richard Spilg, President, Variety.





"Many parents or caregivers are trying to cope with low wages, job insecurity and high rents. Families who have exhausted all other options are turning to Variety for help."

Susan Glasgow, CEO Variety.

## Overview

*Variety's programmes support its three strategic pillars – health, education, and well-being. These programmes improve the lives of children and young people who are experiencing financial hardship, deprivation, illness, or disability. To deliver its programmes, Variety works directly with parents and caregivers, and alongside schools, social workers, community agencies, sports associations, trusts, healthcare professionals, district health boards and the Healthy Homes Initiative.*

*Variety's work is underpinned by a strengths-based approach which acknowledges the self-determination and tenacity of caregivers and their children. By providing support for the challenges faced by parents and caregivers, Variety's flagship programme Kiwi Kid Sponsorship, helps to ensure their agency, participation, and inclusion.*

## Our Programmes

Variety delivers four key programmes that are designed to respond to the unique and individual needs of children:



### Kiwi Kid Sponsorship

Kiwi Kid Sponsorship gives ongoing, one-to-one support for children and young people aged 4 to 18. It provides essentials, school-related costs and extra-curricular activities for children on the programme.



### Active Me – Kia Tū

Active Me – Kia Tū provides funding for children to be active. The programme encourages children to participate in sport, play, dance, and all other forms of physical activity through a partnership with Sport NZ.



### Individual Grants

Individual Grants provide one-off grants to children aged from 0-18 years, supporting caregivers to provide their children with essentials, support for health and disability needs, medical equipment, therapy, and digital and other educational tools.



### Beds for Kids

Beds for Kids delivers new cots, beds, and bedding packs to children from 0-18-years old. In partnership with the Healthy Homes initiative (HHI) across the North Island, the Beds for Kids initiative identifies families in need and by providing their children with beds, helps to reduce respiratory illnesses and associated hospital admissions.

# Kiwi Kid Sponsorship (KKS)

*Kiwi Kid sponsorship matches a child in need to a sponsor whose funding provides essentials and school-related costs. Sponsors pay \$50 a month and Variety creates a grant that makes a full 12 months of funding available to the child's caregiver as soon as their child is sponsored.*

Children are eligible for Kiwi Kid sponsorship once they are four years old. Parents and caregivers can apply directly to Variety for sponsorship, or they can be referred by their school, social worker, or a supporting organisation.

Children and young people on the Kiwi Kid Sponsorship programme can use their sponsor's financial support to buy school uniforms, books and stationery, bedding, for fees to attend school camps, for medical fees and for extra-curricular activities and sport.

## Kiwi Kid Sponsorships supports children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand by:

- Increasing their access to education and extra-curricular activities
- Improving their health and wellbeing outcomes
- Improving children's mental health outcomes by enabling participation and inclusion in age-appropriate activities
- Empowering parents and caregivers to provide for their children
- Reducing financial stress and anxiety for families
- Building a strong network of care around children who are on the programme
- Raising awareness about child poverty and how it impacts on children and young people
- Advocating for improved child wellbeing outcomes.

## Meeting an ever-increasing need

Meeting the needs of children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand is a growing challenge. Since the first evaluation of Variety's Kiwi Kid Sponsorship in 2017, the KKS cohort has doubled. Currently there are more than 7,000 children and young people who receive sponsorship, with a waiting list of approximately 500<sup>1</sup> more children. The economic effects of Covid-19 have compounded the hardship that many families experience as they struggle to make ends meet while continuing to support their children at school.

## Sponsors:

When sponsors are first introduced to their sponsored child, they receive a picture of them and details about their hobbies and their favourite school subjects. Both the sponsor and the child can send messages to one another through Variety's bespoke, online portal.

## Sponsors have the chance to make their child's Christmas and birthday special by sending a greeting and a gift card.

Variety is very careful to protect the identity of both the child and the sponsor. Sponsors know only the first name of their sponsored child and the region they live in. The child and their Parents/ caregivers only know their sponsor by the first name.

<sup>1</sup> As of November 2021

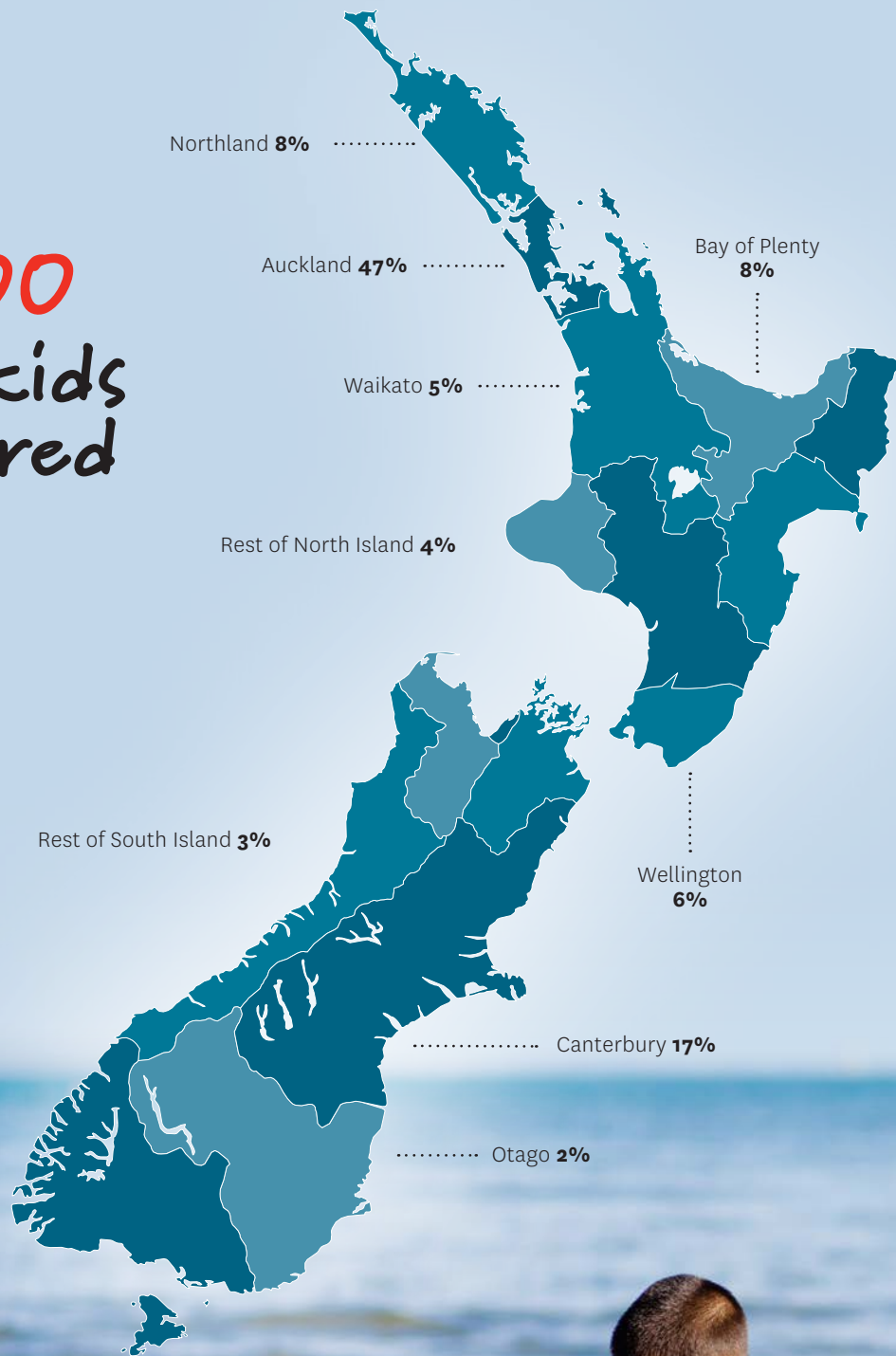


## DID YOU KNOW?

of caregivers of children on the programme, are single parents



♥  
**7,000**  
Kiwi kids  
sponsored





"It is the most amazing experience I have had when it comes to my children. I know it is hard to ask for help, but when you do, it can be life changing."

Parent



# Evaluating the impact of Kiwi Kid Sponsorship (KKS)

*It is important that Variety understands the lived-experiences of children supported by Kiwi Kid Sponsorship. The more that is known about these children and their families and whānau, the better Variety can meet their specific needs and advocate for change.*

The aim of the annual KKS survey is to find out more about the families, whānau and the children who are on Kiwi Kid sponsorship. The results of the survey allow Variety to monitor children's needs and respond to change.

## **Our approach to evaluating the Kiwi Kid Sponsorship Programme**

The evaluation used a survey and interviews to collect data. It assessed the following key indicators:

1. **Education**, did KKS lead to an increase in school attendance and more joy in learning for sponsored children?
2. **Family dynamics**, was there less stress and worry for parents and caregivers, a decrease in financial pressure, a sense of empowerment and a change in the ability of families to provide for their children?
3. **Health**, was there a decrease in illness due to warm bedding and better clothes, did sponsored children experience improved wellbeing through physical activity and sport?
4. **Social inclusion**, did sponsored children have a greater sense of inclusion, experience less bullying and were they more able to participate in sport and activities?

## **The survey**

In March 2021, the survey was sent to the parents and caregivers of 5,700 sponsored children, as part of a broader evaluation of the Kiwi Kids sponsorship programme commissioned by Variety.

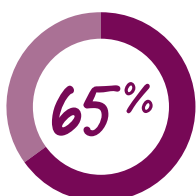
In the survey, caregivers were asked to comment on their:

- living Conditions
- food Security
- physical activity
- access to internet and digital devices
- home health: beds, heating, and dampness
- Kiwi Kid Sponsorship and its impact.

One of the main aims of the survey was to find out about the difference that Kiwi Kid Sponsorship had made for children and their families. More than half of all parents and caregivers with children on KKS responded to the Variety survey.

## **Interviews**

Face-to-face interviews were designed and delivered by a social impact researcher. These provided insight into the impact of the programme in the different regions of Aotearoa New Zealand; and insight into the significance of Kiwi Kid sponsorship for children, families and whānau. They also created an opportunity for families and communities to tell their stories in their own words.



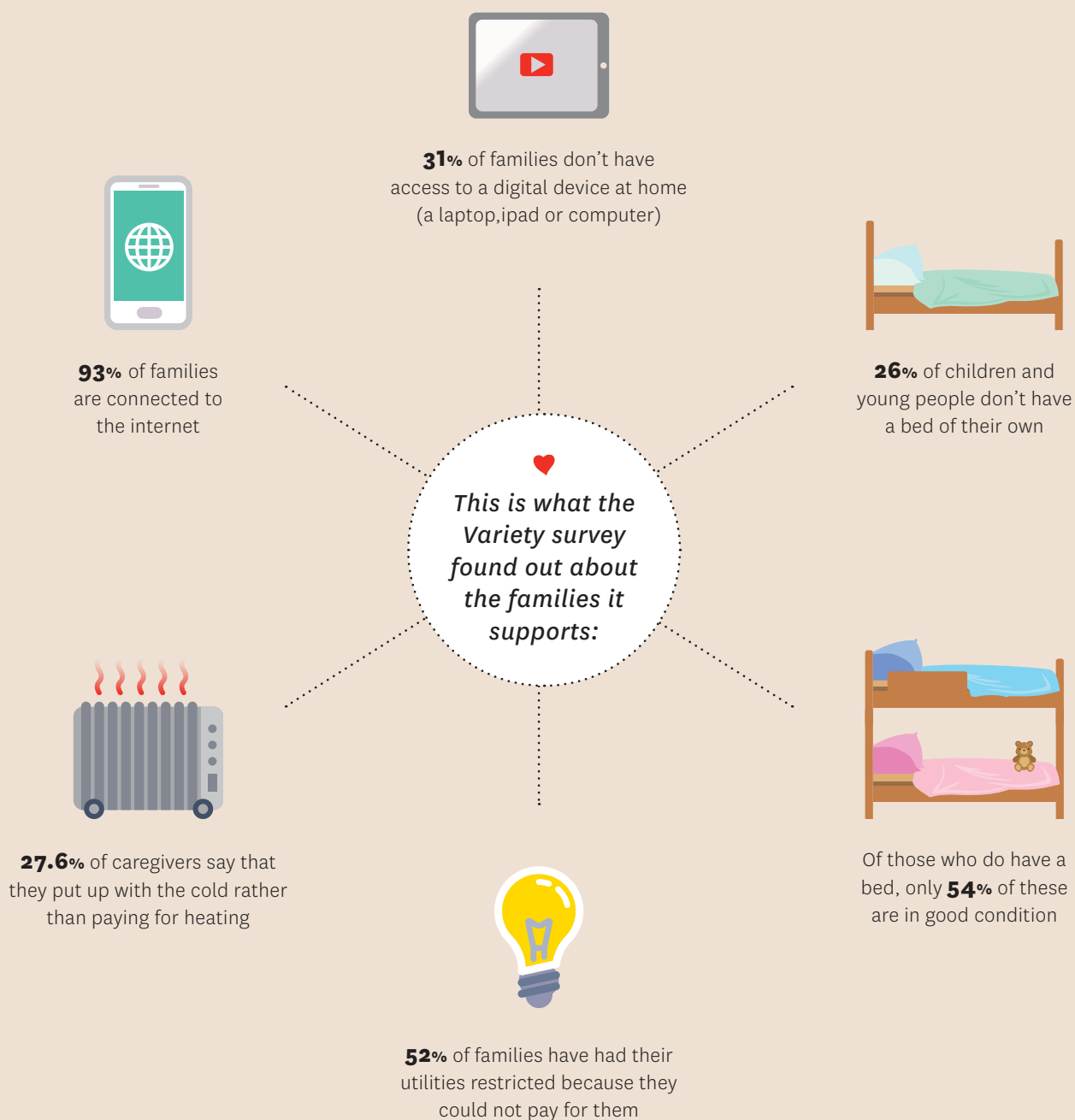
**DID YOU KNOW?**

*of our sponsored cohort  
belong to Māori and  
Pasifika families*

## What we found:

### Material hardship

The effects of ongoing financial and material hardship on children and families show themselves in many ways. For children, material hardship can mean **less food** in the cupboard and on the table, or it can mean **sharing a bed with siblings**, not having a school uniform that fits or not having shoes and equipment for sporting activities. For parents and caregivers, financial hardship may mean not being able to pay unexpected bills, visit the doctor or **heat their home** – or not having the money to support their child's interests.





***Kiwi Kid Sponsorship improves outcomes for children and young people***

The evaluation showed that the Kiwi Kid Sponsorship programme has had a profound impact on the well being, health, feelings of inclusion and educational outcomes of young people on the programme. According to the children and their parents and caregivers, being on KKS has meant the following:



**IMPROVED FAMILY WELL-BEING:**

**91%** of parents and caregivers' report that being on Kiwi Kid Sponsorship makes their child feel special and cared about.

**88%** of parents and caregivers' report that they feel less stressed and that overall, their family feels happier because of the financial support they receive.

**95%** add that they feel better about themselves as parents because they are better able to provide for their children.



**IMPROVED SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT:**

**75%** of the children on Kiwi Kid Sponsorship say that they attend school more regularly because they have the uniform, stationery, and the digital devices and clothing that they need.

**85%** of parents and caregivers say that their child enjoys school more and 91% say their child feels more confident and included.

**86%** of parents and caregivers' report that their children are doing better at school.

**61%** of parents and caregivers believe their child gets into trouble less and feels more integrated into the community.

### The gap that Kiwi Kid Sponsorship fills

The evaluation showed that Kiwi Kid Sponsorship greatly reduces the effects of material hardship on children, young people, and their families, by meeting their unique needs.



**80%** Go without other essentials



**52%** Cut back on food



**24%** Take out a loan

*Parents and caregivers told us that without the support of KKS, they would have had to:*



**32%** Ask for support from another organisation



**40%** Borrow money from friends or family



**5%** Move to another home or area



"We are very thankful for their generosity and that they are helping her to be able to participate in extra-curricular activities that help her health and wellbeing. It helps her feel part of the community. Without their support, she would miss out on these opportunities... being a sole parent I cannot afford it."

Parent/caregiver





Being a  
Kiwi kid

## Daniel's story

### *Enabling hobbies and confidence*

*Being a teenager can be a particularly challenging time in a young person's life. For teens living in poverty, these challenges are compounded.*

Daniel, 18, lives in Christchurch. He has had Kiwi Kid Sponsorship for 7 years. He attends what he describes as a 'very normal' high school and is engaged in a range of hobbies and interests, including digital photography and carving, and he is learning te reo Māori.

While photography is something he enjoys doing with his friends, carving is something that he likes to do alone. Daniel is learning to create the same pieces his grandfather once carved, including a walking stick and patu.

Sponsorship has supported Daniel's overall learning and has enabled him to participate in extra-curricular activities that he would otherwise have been unable to enjoy.

Equipment is expensive and being able to get the tools he needs through Variety, has helped to open a world of possibilities for him.

***"It feels good to have that support – knowing there are others out there that want to help and support people like me."***

### **A sense of confidence**

Just being able to purchase a new school uniform and school supplies gives Daniel a feeling of confidence. Very few people he knows have to wear second-hand school uniforms and while Daniel never shies away from talking about his experience with Variety, the help it provides means he can fit in with his peers and experience the same opportunities that they do.

While Daniel benefits directly from the sponsorship, he can see the impact that it has on his parents too.

***"It takes a load off my parents for sure. There is less pressure for them to provide the things that I need."***



## Tom's story

### *Enabling talent and passion*

*Sixteen-year-old Tom has been sponsored since 2014 and explains the impact it has had on his life.*

***“The sponsorship makes me feel great, I have access to so many opportunities which I wouldn't otherwise have.”***

A college student in Auckland, Tom is a keen sportsman who enjoys mixed martial arts, basketball, tag and rugby league. He loves being part of a team and relishes being able to play sport with his friends. Extra-curricular activities like these usually come at a high cost, but for Tom this is covered by his sponsor, enabling him to do the things he is most passionate about.

Tom is keen to pursue a career as a PE teacher when he leaves school. He feels that with the help of Variety and his sponsor, this is not just a dream but something he can make into a reality.

***‘My sponsor is very encouraging, often telling me to aim for my dreams and to keep going to achieve what I want in life.***

For both Daniel and Tom, navigating the challenging teenage years are made that much easier knowing they have the support, care and backing of their sponsors. With Variety's help, a whole world of possibilities has presented itself to these two teens. As Daniel puts it: ‘With Variety, I feel like there is nothing stopping me.’



# The impact of Kiwi Kid sponsorship

## 1 The impact of Kiwi Kid sponsorship goes beyond financial support

Being supported by their sponsor has a significant impact on children's self-esteem and sense of belonging. For children and young people, knowing that someone they've never met cares for them and wants them to succeed, has positive benefits.

***"Even though they do not know them, my children have a real relationship with their sponsors. They know that 'hey, there is someone out there who cares for me.' That is very special."***

*"My child can participate more fully in school activities and isn't as exposed to our family's financial stresses."* Caregiver

## 2 Kiwi Kid sponsorship wraps a network of support around each child or young person

Community advocates and people who refer children to Variety play an important role in promoting KKS. These referrers can be social workers, teachers, budgeting advisors or from the wider community. These people confirm that for children, having the opportunity to be on KKS has significant benefits, including lifting the self-esteem of the children and their parents.

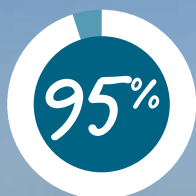
Kim is a school social worker who refers children to Variety. She says that being on the KKS programme boosts children's confidence and helps them perform better at school.

***"The kids do not feel stigmatised by receiving sponsorship but see it as a real bonus. They are empowered by it"***

Many schools have a School Champion who - like Kim, acts as a facilitator and works with Variety to benefit the children at their school. Champions often identify children who come to school without the basics. They are then able to reach out to their families and whānau to explain how KKS sponsorship can help. Champions support caregivers by applying to Variety and helping them to use their child's KKS funding to pay for uniforms and stationery, school camps and extra-curricular activities. They also work with caregivers to get support for children through Variety's other programmes.

***"By enabling them to participate and play sports, Variety gives children the opportunity to shine. This is so valuable for their wellbeing, for social inclusion, for mental health and future opportunities. It sets them up to be contributing citizens."***

School Champion



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**95%** of families and whānau on KKS live on an annual household income of \$50,000

### 3 *Kiwi Kid sponsorship alleviates stress and anxiety for parents and caregivers*

With the cost of education and extra-curricular activities met through Kiwi Kid Sponsorship, parents and caregivers worry less about everyday expenses. Reducing this financial stress means that parents and caregivers can enjoy their family life more.

Receiving financial support for their child therefore has a positive impact on the entire family and whānau. The evaluation shows that 97% of parents and caregivers believe that their stress levels have reduced drastically, and that overall, their family feels happier – thanks to Kiwi Kid sponsorship.

Yvette is a single mother of three active young girls who are each supported by an individual sponsor.

She believes that sponsorship increases her own sense of pride because it allows her to provide for her daughters' needs. She says that: "It enables me to provide as a parent. My children are not going without, they don't feel like they, or we, are failing. What more could I ask for, than being able to look after my girls? It is such a huge help."

### 4 *Kiwi Kid Sponsorship responds to the needs of families and communities*

Allie Fyfe is a nurse at an Auckland District Health Board. For 15 years, she has worked with refugee families, linking them with essential services. She often saw children who needed glasses – and helped them by applying to Variety for an individual grant to pay for these. Since then, a large part of her volunteer work has included referring migrant and refugee families to Variety.

***'A lot of people in our community don't know where to go for help...Variety gives refugees opportunities that they otherwise would not have.'***

"Education is key to a better future – I want to support children's access to quality education." Caregiver

"The kids have more ability to participate with their peers and feel like they have the same things." Caregiver







Being a  
Kiwi kid

## Sally's Story

### Enabling family time

***When their daughter became terminally ill, Sally and Martin Miller gave up their jobs to look after her. This put a huge strain on the family's finances.***

Fulfilling the needs of their other children became impossible. Not knowing where to turn, Sally's caseworker helped her with an application for Kiwi Kid Sponsorship. The children were accepted onto the Kiwi Kid Sponsorship Programme and connected with a sponsor.

***'We have never looked back; it has been so brilliant. I hated watching my kids worry about our finances and now they don't have to.'***

### Embracing the uniqueness of each child

The girls have been on the programme for several years now. Sally describes the journey as "simply amazing", commenting that her kids love receiving correspondence from their sponsors, just as much

as they enjoy sending it. She says: 'The lines of communication with Variety and their sponsors are always open; there is the genuine knowledge that there is someone out there who cares for them.'

Sally loves watching her children develop their mutual interests and believes that Variety acknowledges the uniqueness of each child.


'Variety does not paint children with the same brush, instead the programme sees each one of them as individuals with different needs.'

### A hand-up, not a hand-out

Sally sees the sponsorship from Variety as a 'hand-up' not a 'hand-out', knowing that a hand-up is crucial for empowering families in the community.

***'Variety has made life easier for us but as a family, we are still on the same journey together. I wouldn't change a thing. I would do it all over again for my daughters. To be able to provide for my kids now, for me it's a source of pride.'***





"The kids have more ability to participate with their peers and feel like they have the same things."

Parent/caregiver

# The effects of Material Hardship on children and families

## Poverty and food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand

*The definition of poverty in New Zealand, as in many other developed countries, focuses on unacceptable financial or material hardship.*

Our evaluation showed that in New Zealand, ongoing financial and material hardship impacts on many families in ways that would not be expected in a developed country. This includes food security, the management of debt, on bedding and sleeping arrangements – and is closely tied to families' ability to keep their home warm and dry – which in turn impacts on their health.

For many people in New Zealand, the high cost of living makes fresh food unaffordable. This has been exacerbated by Covid-19 and associated job losses. Families continue to experience high levels of food insecurity – defined as having a limited ability to afford enough nutritionally adequate food to sufficiently feed the household.

"Variety does not paint children with the same brush, instead the programme sees each one of them as individuals with different needs." Caregiver

## Of those families who have children on Kiwi Kid Sponsorship:

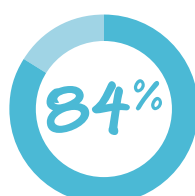
- Only **1.2%** are fully food secure (meaning that 98.8% of families are not food secure).
- Nearly **66%** of caregivers say they 'always' or 'sometimes' rely on others for food.
- **83.16%** of Variety respondents 'always' or 'sometimes' make use of food banks or grants.
- **93.6%** of Variety caregivers are 'always' or 'sometimes' stressed about not having enough money for food\*

## Child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

Supporting children and young people to have a childhood filled with rich experiences, learning, participation, and achievement will enable them to grow into well-rounded adults who in turn give back to their communities. Witnessing the positive impact Kiwi Kid Sponsorship is having on these children's lives, reinforces Variety's role as an advocate and a voice for children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

*While Variety's unique support system clearly offers substantial help to families in need, Variety's evaluation survey also shows there is still a lot of work to be done to combat child poverty in Aotearoa.*

The insights from the survey data will be used to inform future programme development.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

*of caregivers identify as female*



## Conclusion

*Ko e ahurei o te tamaiti, aroha o tatou mahi.  
Let the uniqueness of the child guide your work.*

*“These positive childhood experiences, to participate, to have a sense of belonging, enable children and supports good mental health.”*

School champion

*“By enabling them to participate and play sport, Variety gives children the opportunity to shine. This is so valuable for their wellbeing, for social inclusion, for future opportunities. It sets them up to be contributing citizens.”*

School champion

*“It is about reaching every child.”*

Referrer

*“Variety acts as a powerful voice for children. Through our KKS programme and the tailored approach it provides, we know what is really happening ‘on the ground.’”*

Richard Spilg, President Variety

*“I have been a teacher at a low-decile school here in South Auckland, I have seen the impact that poverty has on children with my own eyes. I am of the mindset that if you are in the position to do so, you should help your community – and sponsoring a child is helping.”*

Sponsor





## Thank you to our sponsors and supporters

We are privileged to share the voices of the caregivers, children and young people who participate in Variety's programmes – and the community champions who support them.

Families on Kiwi Kid Sponsorship want the chance to thank the caring sponsors who are making such an impact in their lives:

*"They are amazing people and because of them my son is able to have his own belongings that he cherishes and is proud of, and his face lights up knowing someone else cares for him which is beautiful because he is autistic and in our world, it is not a common thing, unfortunately."*

*"We love and appreciate our sponsors so so much. Even being a working teacher who studies full-time we're constantly living week to week, feels like we are never getting ahead, so we are grateful to have help from our sponsors."*



"We are truly grateful for what our sponsor has given us over the years. We have been able to get uniforms, shoes, books for school. Plus our sponsor would send a birthday gift every year. Variety is amazing and so are the sponsors behind it."

**"We are eternally grateful for all the support. The kid's confidence has blossomed because they have shoes that fit and clothes that fit. Learning outcomes are improved because we can get resources and stationery they just would not have without your support. Forever grateful."**

"As a single parent that works and also studies I would like to say thank you so much for all the support and contributions, you have given to my children. I am forever grateful and I hope to make similar contributions in the future when I'm financially able to give back. Thanks again."

**"They are grateful for their help as it makes it possible for them to feel not left out and different from others. Thank you for giving them more opportunities and giving them what they need when I cannot provide for them. Thank you."**

**"Our whānau is always grateful to receive anything and it makes the boys light up. My son is away on Year 6 camp right now and he was so excited about it. I wouldn't have been able to afford it otherwise so thank you very much."**

"Thank you Variety and our sponsors for giving our kids here in our own country the opportunity to do good, be great and be given choices to live and make better choices for themselves. Our future for the next generation is being invested in too. Thank you for being neighbourly. Our hope is one day we will be in a position to pay it forward by sponsoring ourselves or even our children."

**"Our little family absolutely appreciates the extra financial help. It has meant that my child is able to have new linen and blankets, a winter wardrobe, and a summer wardrobe. It also helps with music lessons, and recently being able to put some of the sponsorship money towards buying a Chromebook for school has been really helpful."**

A huge thank you, without your generosity my Mokos would miss out on all the gifts that you make happen for them, taking them shopping to buy what they want. Seeing them smile big when they open their gifts is what every one of us loves to see and for that, I am truly grateful.



Level 1, 300 Great South Road  
P.O. Box 17276, Greenlane  
Auckland 1546, New Zealand

+64 9 520 4111  
[kiwikids@variety.org.nz](mailto:kiwikids@variety.org.nz)

Charity no: CC24039  
**[variety.org.nz](http://variety.org.nz)**