

# Annual Report 2024/2025

Ka wariu ka whakaute a ka whakapau e ngā wheako mate ā hinengaro o ngā tangata

Valuing, respecting and utilising people's mental health experiences

# Introduction

# **Kites Trust**

Kia ora koutou, and welcome to our 2024-2025 Annual Report! We're so pleased you've taken the time to read this, and we're excited to share the story of this year's mahi with you.

It has been another exciting and eventful year at Kites. We have successfully completed two pilot programmes and transitioned them into business-as-usual, launched a third pilot, and welcomed several new staff members – including a new CEO.

In 2024, we restructured our operating model, and in 2025, we completed our new organisational strategy. This strategy ensures a strong and stable pathway for future achievements. Our team has done amazing mahi to bring Kites' vision into the public space and has enacted Kites' mission by providing outstanding peer support to Tāngata Whai Ora – just like ourselves. We are immensely proud of what we have created as a community.

We hope you find this report interesting, informative, and inspiring.







# **Background**

# **Kites Trust**

Kites Trust is a charitable organisation established in 2004. We empower Tāngata Whai Ora (people seeking wellness) by utilising their lived experience of mental health and/or addiction to support others in their recovery journey – while reinforcing their own.

Much has changed since 2004, and Kites has grown significantly. Originally started as a mental health think tank, Kites Trust focused on systemic advocacy within the mental health system. We also designed and tested pilot programmes — our "Kites": ideas we would release to see if they could fly. Once we had built and strength-tested them, we handed them over to others and returned to creating more.

As we enter 2026, our mission and vision have evolved – and so has our work. We are now more hands-on and community-based. What hasn't changed is that we're still flying high and working hard to empower Tāngata Whai Ora, stamp out stigma, and create a world where everyone has equal opportunity to live, work, and participate in our wider community.

Today, Kites co-creates and delivers Tāngata Whai Ora-led mental health services that are informed by lived experience. These services support Tāngata Whai Ora in the acute recovery units at Te Whare o Matairangi, Te Whare Ahuru, and the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department. We also deliver a Rangatahi service in various community locations.

Our work is about creating spaces that fulfil the needs of Tāngata Whai Ora. We know this works best when done by peer kaimahi. Having someone who has walked a similar path brings a unique shared dynamic, deep understanding, and way of working that enriches experiences of healing.

When Tāngata Whai Ora engage with our services, they are able to access free, non-judgmental support that engenders hope. Kites kaimahi work with Tāngata Whai Ora through mutual goal setting, offering a safe space to express feelings without shame, and practicing healthy boundaries. Together we build resilience and encourage stronger relationships across all areas of life.

# **Key Actions 2024/2025**

# **We Build**

- · Restructured our operating model
- Transitioned our peer support delivery from volunteer roles to paid positions
- Worked with our funders and clinical partners to expand inpatient peer support through new contracts with Health Pasifika and Te Whare Ahuru.
- Revamped our internal systems and infrastructure
- Built a new team culture and collaborated to create a new strategic pathway
- Appointed a new CEO and Service Manager with proven credentials in our field
- Refreshed our Youth Peer service

# We Guide

- Established a new peer support team
- Supported access to relevant training pathways for Kites peer support workers in both clinical and community settings
- Created Team Lead roles at each site to ensure continuity of care and service across our various services, while fostering strong relationships and accountability with clinical site leaders
- Networked with our clinical partners to increase understanding of the peer support role and how it complements and benefits existing clinical mahi
- Provided EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) support as part of the Kites employee package
- Identified peer-specific supervision training to create a career pathway for peer workers

# We Fly

- Awarded and initiated a contract to bring peer support to the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department
- Continued to build, train, and optimise the performance of our professional lived experience workforce
- Launched a Community of Practice for the peer workforce
- Strengthened existing sector partnerships and built new ones
- Initiated a brand refresh, set to launch in the second half of 2025
- Created a strategy that encompasses the foundations of our values and was contributed to by every member of the Kites Trust team







# Vision

# Building a Tāngata Whai Ora-led Aotearoa

# **Mission**

By Whai Ora - With Whai Ora - For Whai Ora

# **VALUES**

- Community Te Kōhatu (The Anchor): Creating spaces where Tāngata Whai Ora feel heard, safe, and supported
- Creativity The Flowing Wind: Supporting Tangata Whai Ora to lead their own journey with freedom, dignity, and self-determination
- **Liberation Ka Rere te Manu (Flying the Kite):** Uplifting the collective voice of Tāngata Whai Ora to lead, influence, and fly
- Accountability The Threads of the Kite: Honouring mutual responsibility through integrity, learning, and relational repair





# Chair Report Kites Trust Annual Reflection

Victoria Parsons (she/her) Board Chair, Kites Trust



It's been another big year at Kites Trust – one filled with challenge, change, and incredible growth. We've navigated some tough waters, including making some courageous decisions at the board level due to serious gaps in compliance. This led to an almost complete board turnover. While that was difficult, it's also brought a wave of fresh energy, new skills, and perspectives that have been a real gift to the organisation.

We said a heartfelt goodbye to Saskia, whose leadership helped us shift our peer support model to one that values lived experience by paying our peer support workers. Her impact will be felt for years to come. In August 2024, we welcomed Serena Lal as our new Chief Executive. Serena has stepped into the role with grace and strength, guiding our team through ongoing change with relational skill and steady leadership. Our board has focused on strengthening our foundations – improving policies, procedures, and financial resilience. We're proud of the work done in previous years to build strong reserves and manage them wisely. We've also put considerable energy into recruiting to our board to ensure an incredible balance of skills and perspectives that will set Kites up for continued success - I'm personally really excited about this configuration as we move into the next year!

We've also deepened our co-delivery with MHAIDs. While this partnership has faced challenges through our own internal change processes and forming, storming, and norming; we've remained committed to showing up with integrity and advocating for safe, respectful collaboration. Our team has continued to lead with courage and care, and we are seeing the results of this partnership in the fantastic mahi we're doing with our Te Whare O Matairangi colleagues, Health Pasifika colleagues, and emerging at Te Whare Ahuru after some changes to our initial contracting arrangements. A big mihi to the leaders at MHAIDs who enable this collaboration to thrive.

One of our proudest achievements this year has been the recruitment of paid peer support roles, including leadership and admin support. These additions are helping our day-to-day delivery thrive and are a testament to our commitment to valuing lived experience. We also renewed our strategic direction, which will support us to navigate the next two years while we build futures thinking to grow our moemoeā for the decade ahead.

It's been inspiring to see our new operating model take shape and the benefits flowing to tangata whaiora and our kaimahi. The changes we've made are starting to shine, and it's a joy to witness. It's also wonderful to see the continued success of our Youth Peer offering, and our Community of Practice blooming. The level of collaboration, support and growth that we experience as a community alongside our fellow NGOs and MH&A organisations is really special, and we are grateful to be a part of this warmly connected sector.

Finally, a huge thank you to our hardworking Board, CE, and staff – especially those staff who have navigated the changes with us. As my time with Kites comes to an end, I'm reflecting on two years of deeply challenging and rewarding mahi. It's been a privilege to be part of this journey, and I'm excited to see how Kites continues to grow with heart and purpose as new leaders step in. I send deep respect, thanks, and acknowledgement to those that went before, and those that will come after. Everyone has done their best to ensure that Kites lives its values and is a strong, brave, and safe organisation heading into the future.



# **CEO Report**Annual Plan 2024/2025

Serena Lal (she/her) Chief Executive, Kites Trust



This was my first year as Chief Executive of Kites Trust, and it has been a time of deep listening, bold decision-making, and collective growth. Stepping into this role meant honouring the legacy of Kites while guiding the organisation through a period of transformation. I am proud of the trust we've built, the risks we've taken, and the direction we are heading together.

Kites has evolved significantly in culture, infrastructure, and action. We continue to grow, learn, and improve as part of our community and our co-accountability culture. Our peer-led approach has expanded across inpatient, youth, and emergency department settings, and our work in the Wellington Emergency Department was recognised and praised by Minister Matt Doocey, affirming the value of lived experience leadership in acute care environments. "I'm very pleased this service is now being rolled out to Wellington ED and I have no doubt it'll make a real difference" – Minister Doocey

We've laid strong foundations through a major organisational restructure, a refreshed strategy, and a renewed commitment to our vision: Building a Tāngata Whai Ora-led Aotearoa. Our mission – By Whai Ora, With Whai Ora, For Whai Ora – continues to guide our direction and decisions.

Looking ahead, our priorities are clear. We will embed Te Tiriti o Waitangi into every layer of our mahi, strengthen our infrastructure to support peer-led leadership, and expand our reach across the region. We will continue to centre lived experience in service design, delivery, and advocacy, measuring our success not just by outputs, but by the depth of connection, impact, and transformation we create alongside Tāngata Whai Ora.

I want to thank every kaimahi who contributed to the past year. Your commitment to reflection, experimentation, and doing things differently has shaped the organisation we are today. We are already harvesting the internal impact of that investment, and it is showing up in our culture, our systems, and our outcomes.

Kites is not here to replicate systems. We are here to reimagine them. Together, we are building something bold, necessary, and deeply rooted in hope.

## **JULY**

July was a month of restructuring and partnership. Changing the operational model of such an established trust took thought, time, and effort. We're incredibly grateful to the small but dedicated team of office staff who ensured a heartfelt farewell to our volunteers, then got to work planning and executing the new internal structure – all while also ensuring that peer support continued for our Tāngata Whai Ora at Te Whare O Matairangi. This work was backed by the unwavering support and leadership of our Board Chair. A big shoutout to Maddie Clarke, Georgie Trigg, Victoria Parsons, and Madeline Cook – well done!



# Service to others

### **AUGUST**

August brought a breath of fresh air, along with new leadership in the form of Serena Lal, our current CEO. Serena brings an extensive background in activism, leadership, governance, and service design. She arrived with the skills and passion needed to refine and complete the work laid down by our previous CEO, Saskia Ymker.

Under Serena's guidance, we developed our pilot programmes into fully functional services and created robust spaces to discuss needs with our clinical partners. We welcomed Dominic Coe and Damien Woods to the Kites Peer Support team and resumed our hosting duties for our friends at the Lived Experience Advisory Group (LEAG).

It was great to feel the buzz return to the Kites office after a quiet period of rebuilding.

### **SEPTEMBER**

In September, we welcomed two new peer support staff to our adult services: Poutalie Hollis-Elis and Romeo Leaupepe. It was exciting to see the fruits of our labour – expanding the peer support team and hiring a dedicated peer support worker for our Health Pasifika contract.

It became clear that all of our new hires supported each other and our Tāngata Whai Ora, bringing unique cultural experiences that enriched the mahi. We feel deeply grateful to the team and honoured to facilitate diverse worldviews in spaces that don't always have access to them.

Big ups to the team – your collaborative approach made all the behind-thescenes work more than worth it!





# **OCTOBER**

October was a month of review and expanding our external presence. We took time to explore our service model further with staff and partners. Although we had offered volunteer peer support in clinical settings for many years, transitioning to a professional model came with added responsibilities and some unexpected challenges.

We've been truly fortunate to have amazing partnerships, particularly with our friends at Te Whare O Matairangi.

In the office, Maddie Clarke began her journey into social media and radio, boosting our online presence and joining the board of Community Networks Wellington. This kicked off a series of radio interviews on Access Radio, featuring the many people and partners who help keep Wellington's community services serving Wellington.

# **NOVEMBER**

In November, we farewelled several of our board members and welcomed new ones. While it's always sad to say goodbye, our outgoing board guided us through turbulent times and served the Trust with dedication and care. It was exciting to welcome new people with fresh skills and perspectives into the organisation Alongside this, we streamlined policies and procedures and implemented systems to capture institutional knowledge.

We also welcomed three new peer support staff: Caleb Leota, Roimata Riddel, and Kai Faasen. With a full team in place, we began training and laid the groundwork to expand our adult service into another clinical site.



### **DECEMBER**

By December, the adult peer support team was in motion, and we turned our focus back to our Youth Peer service. Serena, our CEO, and Riley Watkinson, one of our experienced youth peer facilitators, had done incredible work redesigning the service to reduce isolation for the Tāngata Whai Ora using it.

It became clear that additional leadership was needed to fulfil the vision. Later in the month, we welcomed Matthew Lloyd as our new Youth Peer Team Lead. Matthew has a background in designing, funding, and implementing youth services. Alongside his work at Kites, Matt is studying architecture, specialising in Te Ao Māori spatial design. His vibrant personality and strong vision are a perfect fit for the service.

Before wrapping up for the Christmas break, we ended the year with a powerful training session led by Jolie Davis from Manawa Ora. The session truly was an eye-opening experience that gave us a basic understanding of Mirimiri and Romiromi, and the Te Ao Māori approach to healing.

Our team was deeply impacted by the experience, recognising many parallels with the peer support model — especially the way practitioners walk alongside individuals to foster healing and empowerment.

# **JANUARY**

A new year brought exciting opportunities and challenges. Kites was awarded a new clinical contract to design and implement a pilot peer support service in the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department. We also recognised the need to update our strategy to reflect the organisation's evolving direction.

Serena began the search for service designers and strategy facilitators to support these new projects. The Youth Peer service got off to a roaring start, and Matt began expanding their partnership networks with Wellington City Council.

Kites welcomed two new staff members: our Team Administrator, Laura Harper, and our new Service Manager, Megan Haag-Fisk. Born in Aotearoa and raised in the United States, Megan brings a unique background in peer work, social work, and therapeutic practice—a perfect combination for a service manager in this field. Laura came with a background in counselling and facilitation. Both are fantastic additions to the team.



# **FEBRUARY - MARCH**

In February we welcomed Bradley Reynolds to our Youth Peer team and saw the Adult Peer service return to Te Whare Ahuru in Lower Hutt. Alongside the expansion of existing services, planning for the Emergency Department pilot got underway with the engagement of Tania Anderson – a highly experienced service designer who laid the foundation for the ED pilot programme. The Peer Support team became actively involved in the design process, offering valuable insights to the project team as the service began to take shape. MHAIDS provided expert training for the Emergency Department environment through Ka Rere Te Manu, specialists in lived experience workforce development.

It was a pleasure to work with Aroha Crosbie and Brody Runga – thank you, Ka Rere Te Manu!





# **APRIL**

In April, we engaged with Katerina Kupenga, founder and owner of Arahina – an extraordinary facilitation company that uses a Te Ao Māori lens to guide organisations through strategy development that includes every voice.

The entire team – from the Board to the Youth Peer service – gathered at the Maranui Surf Club to co-create the vision now laid out in the strategy page at the beginning of this document. It was heartening to see such strong alignment across the team.

Katerina is a truly kind and gifted facilitator who made the process feel effortless. She also connected us with a design team, and we began the process of rebranding the trust. The new brand will officially launch at the end of 2025.

The whole experience was fun and uplifting, and our new strategy feels both representative of and driven by our community.

# **MAY - JUNE**

In May we welcomed Bryony Moses to our Adult Peer team and saw our first Peer Support Community of Practice hui. This was led by Charmaine Lam and hosted by our friends at Whakamaru. This hui focused on whakawhanaungatanga and setting the values of the CoP. May also marked the official launch of our Emergency Department pilot with the "Test and Learn" phase. Peers Support Specialists began short shifts on specific days to gain insights into the environment and the needs of Tāngata Whai Ora presenting at the Emergency Department. The ED environment posed many challenges – frequent staff turnover, limited space, and the reality that people arrive at the most heightened point in their journey. However, by taking a slow and steady approach, we were able to observe and respond to these challenges before committing peers to full-time roles.

We built connections with key individuals across departments and found that, despite the dynamic and sometimes messy nature of the space, staff were helpful and enthusiastic.

Peers were empowered to do their work and gained valuable insights into how to operate differently from their usual pace in the wards. And so, a new service was born.

To find out how it went, tune into Kites' 2025-2026 Annual Report and discover the thrills and spills of navigating the Emergency Department IT systems!



Adult Impatient Services - Te Whare Ahuru & Te Whare O Matairangi

Hours of peer Support delivered 1743.60

Number of Tāngata Whaiora Interactions 2342

# **Youth Peer Community Groups**

Hours of peer Support delivered **96.50** 

Number of Tāngata Whaiora attending groups 320

# **Emergency Department Pilot - Month 1 of Test and Learn**

Hours of peer Support delivered 49.5

Number of Tāngata Whaiora Interactions 48







# **Health Impact**

At Kites, we increase people's access to a range of supports by walking alongside Tāngata Whai Ora during some of the most challenging times in their lives. We offer hope – and hope primes the mind and body for healing. While we refer to mental health, we recognise that people are whole beings and must be treated as such. Our approach is not solely talking-based (though kōrero plays a big role); we also engage through activities, waiata, and silence.

At the same time, we are doing this in clinical settings – exposing (and inspiring) our clinical colleagues to a different approach to support, that can work alongside and enhance clinical mental health interventions.

We are Tāngata Whai Ora-led, and our primary mission will always be to prioritise the wellbeing of the people we serve. We also believe that support and change are only possible with a holistic view. Therefore, we also offer support to our clinical colleagues through education, real-world examples of recovery, and help to bridge the gap between them and Tāngata Whai Ora.

# **Social Impact**

Because our work is Tāngata Whai Ora-led, at Kites we are all Tāngata Whai Ora. We live the example we aim to promote. We show our wider community the value and use of lived experience, to walk alongside others on their path to a thriving life. This adds to the ongoing work of social change around the attitudes that prevail towards people who experience mental health and/or addiction. This is slow and steady work, and it has real-world impact that we can see and touch every day.

When we are open about our vulnerabilities, as well as utilising our strengths, we give others permission to do the same. Mental health exists on a spectrum, and even people who do not identify with having mental health distress still face their own struggles. We know that our living example can engender hope - emboldening people to be open about their challenges and growing empathy for others whose experiences of mental health and/or addiction may be more extreme than their own.

# **Our Partners**











































# **Our Staff**

# **Current**

**Damien Woods** 

**Bryony Moses** 

Nephi Paku

**Dominic Coe** 

**Murray McCarrison** 

**Matthew Lloyd** 

**Riley Watkinson** 

**Bradley Reynolds** 

Kai Faasen

Serena Lal

**Madeline Cook** 

Megan Haag-Fisk

Madeleine Clarke

Laura Harper

Caleb Leota

Hamish Bowker

Lori Thompson

# **Departing**

Roimata Riddell

**Jasmin Fannin** 

Romeo Leaupepe

Poutalie Hollis-Elise

Adelaide Aydon



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the work we do. It wouldn't be Kites without you!!!



# **Our Board**



**Victoria Parsons** 



Jane Patterson



Elise Watkins



Rahini Uniyaal



Rebecca Gallacher



**Imogen Goldsmith** 

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the work we do. It wouldn't be Kites without you!!!

# Kites Trust – Wellington Region - For the year ended 30 June 2025

### **1.DESCRIPTION OF ENTITY'S OUTCOMES**

Kites Trust exists to improve long-term outcomes for Tāngata Whai Ora people seeking wellness, health, and healing who access care in Wellington and Hutt hospitals' acute psychiatric units. We deliver peer support during their time in the wards, creating therapeutic, relational spaces led by people with lived experience.

Peer support offers a unique contribution: a reciprocal relationship grounded in empathy, shared experience, and mutual accountability. It helps Tāngata Whai Ora feel hope for recovery, engage more meaningfully in their journey, and retain/build their self-determination. This approach supports smoother transitions back into the community, where day-to-day support is often less available.

# Kites Trust – Wellington Region - For the year ended 30 June 2025

#### 2. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During the reporting period, Kites Trust finalised a major organisational restructure, laying the foundations for a peer-led employment model. Key developments included:

- Expansion of inpatient peer support through new contracts with Health Pasifika and Te Whare Ahuru
- Refreshment of the Youth Peer Team
- Initiated presence in the Wellington Emergency Department
- Growth in creative and engagement projects, including zine design and social media outreach
- launch of a Wellington region Community of Practice for peer support workers

Two strategy days were held to shape organisational direction. The formal strategy was approved in July 2025, confirming our updated vision, mission, and values:

# **Vision**

Building a Tāngata Whai Ora-led Aotearoa

# **Mission**

By Whai Ora – With Whai Ora – For Whai Ora

#### **Values**

- Community Te Kōhatu (The Anchor): Creating spaces where Tāngata Whai Ora feel heard, safe, and supported
- **Creativity The Flowing Wind:** Supporting Tangata Whai Ora to lead their own journey with freedom, dignity, and self-determination
- **Liberation Ka Rere te Manu (Flying the Kite):** Uplifting the collective voice of Tāngata Whai Ora to lead, influence, and fly
- Accountability The Threads of the Kite: Honouring mutual responsibility through integrity, learning, and relational repair

# Kites Trust – Wellington Region - For the year ended 30 June 2025

# 3. STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Kites Trust's work is strengthened by deep relationships with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. These partnerships reflect our commitment to collaboration, lived experience leadership, and community-rooted service delivery.

Catergory	Organisation / Partners
Peer-led and lived experience	Changing Minds, Mind and Body (PeerZone), Take Notice – Lived Experience Leadership, Piki Peer Support, The Road Forward, Whakamaru, Amigos, Oasis Network
Mental health and addiction	Emerge Aotearoa – Ka Puta Ka Ora, MHAIDS Wellington, Pact Group, Pathways, PGF – Problem Gambling Foundation, The Bridge, Yellow Brick Road, Mapu Maia
Cultural and community	Te Pae Pae Arahi, Health Pasifika, Te Hauora Runanga o Wairarapa Inc, Te Waka Whaiora, Asian Family Services, Rainbow Youth Wellington, Stand Tū Māia
Educational and clinical	Whitireia, Wellington Hospital Emergency Department, Te Whare o Matairangi Inpatient Service, Te Whare Ahuru Acute Inpatient Unit
Sector collectives and networks	Platform (mental health and addiction NGO collective), Navigate Central

# Kites Trust – Wellington Region - For the year ended 30 June 2025

### 4. COMMITMENT TO TE TIRITI O WAITANGI AND EQUITY

Kites Trust has taken an active stance in strengthening Tangata Tiriti leadership and deepening support for Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This includes:

- Participation in Te Ao Māori spaces and Māori-led calls to action
- Contributions to bill submissions that reflect lived experience perspectives
- Guidance from Te Ao Māori approaches in external service delivery
- Targeted training, including Māori Health education through Manawa Ora

Looking ahead, a priority for the next financial year is to develop a detailed organisational plan that embeds Te Tiriti practice into every layer of our mahi.

Kites Trust is intersectionally diverse - a reflection of the communities we serve.

This diversity strengthens the quality of our services and the depth of connection we build with Tangata Whai Ora.

# Kites Trust – Wellington Region - For the year ended 30 June 2025

#### 5. KEY SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

During the year ended 30 June 2025, Kites Trust delivered peer-led services across inpatient, youth, and community settings, while progressing key service design and strategic development initiatives.

- Peer support delivered in three acute inpatient settings: Te Whare o Matairangi, Te Whare Ahuru, and Health Pasifika
- Weekly youth peer support groups for people aged 18 to 30
- Emergency Department peer support progressed through co-design and an eight-week test-and-learn phase
- Community of Practice launched in May 2025, engaging over 30 members across the region
- Creative engagement expanded through zine design and storytelling projects
- Social media reach grew to 1,521 followers across platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok)
- Systemic advocacy included lived experience-informed bill submissions and Māori-led actions
- Staff development supported through targeted training, including Manawa Ora
- Two strategy days held; formal strategy approved in July 2025
- Five new staff members welcomed; ten donations received
- Volunteer programme formally discontinued, completing transition to a fully peer-led employment model

# Kites Trust – Wellington Region - For the year ended 30 June 2025

# **6. SERVICE DELIVERY METRICS**

Comparison: June 2024 vs June 2025	June 2024	June 2025
In-patient Peer Support Hours	495.3 hours	1743.60 hours
Youth Peer Support Hours	42 hours	96.50 hours
Youth Peer Support Hours		320 participants
Emergency Dept. Peer Support Hours		49.50 hours
Emergency Dept. Interactions		48
Social Media Followers	1,170	1,521
New Staff Memebers	5	14
Donations Received (Value)	\$282.00	\$70.00
Whitireia Peer Support Scholarships Awarded	0	1
Community of Practice Engagement		30 members



# Ngā Mihi See you next year!!

PO Box 7017,
Newtown
Wellington 6242

(04) 389 9677



hello@kites.org.nz



www.kites.org.nz