

Kia ora koutou

6 April 2020

I hope the first week of the school 'holidays' has gone well for you all and that you are all getting into a routine of sorts. If you are anything like me, you will most certainly have challenges around rural broadband connection and trying to balance working from home with the demands of everyone else in your bubble!

Having said that my garden hasn't looked so good for a long long time, and yesterday I even washed the outside of the windows – something that hasn't happened for a very long time!

Thank You to all of you who completed the survey on home learning. The start date for term two is Wednesday 15 April. Currently the COVID-19 Alert Level 4 is due to remain in place until Thursday 23 April, which means learning will continue from home. The Ministry is currently working on a package of supports and resources to supplement learning material to support remote learning. The information you have provided will be passed onto the Ministry so that they can identify where devices and hard copy learning resources may need to be delivered. While they won't be able to meet everyone's needs all at once they will continue to provide as much support as they can and I will communicate what this may look like when that information comes to hand.

Financial support for food

The Ministry of Social Development is helping make it easier for more people to get help with food online, so they don't have to ring them. They are lifting people's food balances as a temporary change, reflecting the exceptional circumstances COVID-19 has placed people in. Apply on MYMSD <https://my.msd.govt.nz>

Mana Ake website

This is a new website created over the last week in response to COVID-19 for parents. Mana Ake provides mental health and wellbeing support for children in the primary school years 1-8 across Canterbury. They are currently working from home and are available to be contacted. You can reach the site via this link.

<https://manaake.health.nz/>

BYOD Online ordering now available for Essential IT items

I have included a link from Cyclone IT who are now approved by the government to supply essential devices and services which allows them to deliver to residential addresses. They have launched a new BYOD portal for parents to purchase from (there are some supply constraints currently so they have added a stock on hand field). The portal link is here: (<https://byod.cyclone.co.nz/student>) if you are interested in this option.

Updates from the Ministry of Education

I receive an update from the Ministry of Education twice weekly, and they ask me to pass on messages to you. The following is information you may find useful from the MOE .

Wellbeing information updated including new tip sheets for families, caregivers and whanau

We have slightly updated the [wellbeing information on our website](#) to better reflect how the COVID-19 response has changed over the last weeks. Included in there are three new tip sheets for parents, caregivers and teachers:

- [Tips for teachers, parents and caregivers – supporting toddlers](#)
- [Tips for teachers, parents and caregivers – supporting children](#)
- [Tips for teachers, parents and caregivers – supporting young people](#)

There are a large range of supports in place that may be able to assist if you are struggling with isolation. These include:

- [Mental wellbeing](#)
- [Supporting children and young people at home](#)
- [Managing self-isolation](#)
- [Care options for children of essential workers](#)
- [Financial support for employers and employees](#)
- [Staying safe online](#)
- [Preventing harm from bullying](#)
- [Family harm](#)
- [Responding to discrimination – through the Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Accessing healthcare](#)
- [For people vulnerable to COVID-19](#)

Improving internet connectivity

Our IT team has put together some tips for improved connectivity at home.

For home internet connections

It is important to eliminate performance/speed issues with the home wifi setup first, rather than assuming there is an issue with the connection from the house to the internet. To check this:

- Run a speed test at www.speedtest.net to establish a baseline, and repeat after making any change below to check for improvement
- Power off the home router every morning, leave off for 30 secs before powering back on (don't press the reset button this will reset the device settings!)
- Turn off, or disable Wi-Fi on, unused devices where possible, especially older devices that run at slower Wi-Fi speeds

- Decrease the physical distance between your device and the Wi-Fi router, line of sight is best
- Use an Ethernet cable on devices where possible, to reduce Wi-Fi load (especially smart TVs, gaming consoles) – plug these into a spare LAN port on your router

Data Allowance/Cap issues

- Check you are not already on an uncapped data plan (applies to Spark, Vodafone, Vocus/Slingshot, and 2Degrees, Trustpower). If unsure contact your provider
- Some providers have made uncapped offers to rural and remote customers for off peak (night time hours only). Consider shifting non time critical downloads such as computer patching to these time periods
- Check what options are available for the address at <https://broadbandmap.nz/> and if not on the cheapest/best option suggest changing provider as an option (this is covered as an essential service)

For mobile phone connections

- The data plan on mobile phones is NOT covered by the removal of data caps
- Individual data plans vary significantly – high data usage on some plans over the allowance is very expensive
- For personally owned phones consider changing to a different plan that better reflects new usage patterns. Often this can be done at no/little additional cost
- Use the app provided by your mobile phone supplier to track usage
- “Hot spotting” from a mobile phone is less efficient than using home Wi-Fi (aerials are smaller) so this will be slower
- If using for voice calls and running out of minutes consider alternatives where possible such as email/messaging systems.

Keeping on line safe

You may want to encourage your parents, caregivers and whānau to discuss internet safety with their children - of all ages. They should agree with their children what they can do online including sites they can visit and appropriate behaviours including:

- reviewing and approving games and apps before they are downloaded
- reviewing privacy settings of sites and applications
- checking children’s profiles and what they are posting online
- check the sites your child is accessing

- reminding children that anything that is posted online will be permanently on the internet
- taking the time to understand what sites they are visiting and who they are talking with and check in regularly
- some social media sites have age restrictions to join, check these before letting your child use them or join them
- monitoring a child's use of the internet and consider having them use it in an open, common area of the house
- making sure your children know to report any activity they don't feel comfortable with to parents and caregivers straight away.

There is a unique opportunity during the lockdown of families going out together, albeit it close to home, but if your child is going out on their own it's still important to check where they are going.

- [Netsafe](#) continues to be available to provide your parent and caregiver community with support for online safety. They have [information for parents and caregivers](#) and have pulled together their [top tips for online safety during the lockdown](#). To report an incident To Netsafe - <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/reportanincident/>
- If you think a child in your care is the victim of online exploitation or abuse, report it to Police - if you or a child are in danger or a crime is being committed, call 111 or visit [your nearest Police Station](#) immediately.

If we all work together to make sure children are safe online, we can make the internet a great tool for people of all ages.

Helping children and young people while they are learning at home

We have put together some tips and guidance for parents, caregivers and whanau on how to help children and young people while they are learning at home. Here is the link which you may find useful.

<http://education.govt.nz/school/health-safety-and-wellbeing/pastoral-care-and-wellbeing/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-coronavirus/>

Keep safe – I am thinking of you all.

Take care

Lynda