

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CYFS REVIEW POSITIVE, BUT MORE WORK STILL TO BE DONE, SAY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES

Lifewise and Wesley Community Action have cautiously welcomed the release of the Minister's announcement on the future of child protection and care.

"We are pleased the Minister has decided to raise the age of foster care to 18. We look forward to it being raised to 21 in subsequent years," says David Hanna, Director, Wesley Community Action.

Lifewise and Wesley Community Action agree that putting the voice of young people at the centre of decision-making is critical.

"Most of the children and young people we work with say they want their own families to be in their lives. So the Minister's focus on prevention is particularly welcome. Our own innovative work alongside families shows the potential to reduce the numbers of children entering the care system. We see the need for the focus to shift from making children safe by removing them from their families, to making families safe for children," says Moira Lawler, Chief Executive, Lifewise.

"We look forward to working with the Government on how we put the children's voices at the centre so that they and their families can shape their positive future together.

"A lot of work has been done by whanau, families, and the community sector. The evidence emerging from this must inform the work ahead."

- ends -

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Editors' note

About Lifewise

Lifewise are an Auckland-based social development agency, who develop new ways to solve challenging social issues, and help to turn around the lives of families, older people, people with disabilities, and people at risk of homelessness.

Focusing on the principle of interdependence, Lifewise provide sustainable solutions to social issues, addressing the root causes of social isolation and disadvantage, rather than simply meeting immediate needs. In order to alleviate homelessness long-term, Lifewise works to an internationally acknowledged 'housing first' model, and is influencing homelessness intervention practice at a national level.

Lifewise also run Merge Café on Karangahape Road, which provides affordable, nutritious food for everyone. Merge encourages people from all walks of life to share food and conversation, and proceeds are used to support people into housing. Merge acts as a touch point, enabling people to access Lifewise's staff and services, and providing a safe environment that embraces choice, dignity and respect.

Lifewise aim to be a 'go-to' organisation, through which media can access accurate, balanced and constructive commentary on issues including:

- Parenting support
- Good outcomes for children in care
- Support for families under stress
- Quality early childhood education
- Neighbourhood and community development
- Mental health and addiction support
- Older persons' care
- Services for people with disabilities
- Ending homelessness

In 2015, Lifewise helped to turn many lives around:

200 families were supported into affordable social housing

63 rough sleepers were supported into permanent housing

196 people received treatment for mental health and addiction

159 children received early childhood education

Over **20,000** meals were served at Merge Cafe, nourishing both hunger and hope.

Find out more at www.lifewise.org.nz

About Wesley Community Action

Established in 1952 by the Methodist Church, Wesley Community Action has been pioneering innovative approaches to social justice and quietly helping create just and caring communities ever since.

Wesley Community Action is;

Passionate – about social change – we don't separate helping individuals from working towards wider social, political and economic transformation.

Biased – we believe in all peoples capacity to contribute to their wellbeing, tend to work with people with the least voice or power. We believe the Treaty of Waitangi is important to positively shape the lives of all New Zealanders now and in the future.

Practical – we get stuck in where we see a need, are grounded – we know our areas of expertise and limitations, we laugh a lot, we enjoy what we do, value partnerships and are optimistic.

Find out more at www.wesleyca.org.nz