



Over the last two decades, there has been a growth in research findings that indicate the damaging effects of social isolation and loneliness on physical and mental health. Some people in society are at higher risk and this includes:

- Younger people between the ages of 15 to 24 years.
- Older people 75 years and above.
- Those with chronic illness and disability.
- Those living in rural areas without access to transport.
- Those who do not have access to digital communication.

Not only does social isolation affect health, it often results in isolated people being unaware of the services that are available that could assist them. Isolated people do not have a network of others that they can ask for help. The overall result is a deterioration in health and low resilience to an adverse event.

Wellby is an initiative to address social isolation and loneliness in the Nelson Tasman Region. At the core of this model is a community directory that lists organisations and services. The objective is to link people to a service they require or a community group that will provide social connection.

The effectiveness of Wellby lies in its simplicity. It involves three elements:

1. The Found Directory is a community resource that lists about 1,300 organisations and services. It has been in existence for several decades and has been recently upgraded so that it is more user-friendly. The link to Found is <https://www.found.org.nz/>
2. The Wellby team hold Talking Cafes in a variety of locations. This is an opportunity to talk face-to-face with people and find out what they are looking for. The Found Directory is used to find an organisation or service that someone may need and gives them the required information. It is a great connecting opportunity.
3. A Community Signposter is a micro-volunteer or active citizen that is able to reach people who are isolated and hard to contact. They have undergone a short training session and are able to point people to the Found directory or to a Talking Café.

Wellby is a learning organisation. It is always ready to try a new approach and is able to identify gaps in the community that may need to be addressed. It is built on the premise that everyone belongs.