

Applying evidence-based interventions for conservation behaviour change

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Conservation in Aotearoa New Zealand is undergoing a shift from primarily agency led to increasingly community led action. This is in part in response to the national “Predator Free 2050” vision to rid the entire country of some of the most harmful introduced predators which threaten biodiversity. This has captured hearts and minds, inspiring even those not previously interested in conservation to act. To further increase community involvement in conservation, to attract new volunteers, and to support the growing community led movement we run a program increasing awareness, education, networking, training and mentoring. Our program is based on a theoretical framework (the COM-B model) to design evidence-based interventions (using the behaviour change wheel) to enable behaviour change (i.e. pro environmental behaviour). Based on a survey of 2348 residents we modelled the sources of behaviour which influenced several social and environmental outcomes. I will present those relevant to Botanic Gardens conservation: involvement in community conservation, social capital, environmental activism and conservation at home. In a New Zealand context, increasing practical skills was a source of behaviour which was significant for all four outcomes, with providing an opportunity to carry out conservation and increasing social interaction significant for three others. These findings enable us to more effectively design programs to influence behaviours by focusing programmes with behavioural components on developing practical skills (physical capability), strengthening and extending social interactions (social opportunity), and providing access to the means to carry out conservation (physical opportunity). This work also identifies where Botanic Gardens may be effective partners in the efforts to increase pro-environmental behaviours with a clear track record in the provision of practical skills development e.g. training, social interactions, family-friendly events and networking as well as providing opportunities for action e.g. forest restoration or nursery volunteering.