

Keynote Presentation Abstracts

Keynote 1 Abstract

Invisible and Hyper-visible: The Dual Realities Shaping Asian Young People and Their Workforce; Speaker: Dr Ying Wang

Asian young people in Aotearoa New Zealand often navigate a delicate balance between visibility and invisibility: highly noticeable as “different,” yet frequently unseen in their emotional, cultural, and well-being needs. Drawing on two national qualitative studies with Asian young people, families, educators, and help-professionals, this presentation explores how these experiences shape everyday life across education, well-being, and the workforce. Through participants’ stories, metaphors, and artwork, the presentation brings forward the relational, cultural and emotional labour carried by both young people and practitioners. Importantly, the focus is not only on challenges, but on strengths. The presentation highlights the workforce’s remarkable cultural, relational, and therapeutic expertise—creating safe spaces, fostering connection, supporting agency, and nurturing hope. By centring lived experience and creative expression, this presentation invites educators, practitioners, community leaders, and policymakers to consider how visibility, recognition, and collective care can be strengthened, enabling Asian young people and those who support them to flourish with dignity, belonging, and well-being.

Keynote 2 Abstract

Understanding What People Who Gamble and Their Families Consider Help and Treatment, and Implications for Workforce Development; Speaker: Dr Simone Rodda

Help and treatment are defined in different ways by people experiencing gambling harm, and these definitions shape how pathways into support are understood in practice. This presentation examines who seeks help across the gambling continuum and how motivations and barriers influence engagement, as well as how readiness shapes when support is accessed and what type of support is relevant. Service contact is not treated as a single entry point but as one element within broader client pathways that may involve repeated attempts over time. Case studies illustrate differences in timing, readiness, and the distinct needs of people experiencing different degrees of gambling harm. Because gambling harm can influence mental health, physical health, financial, legal, and family relations, people may seek help for related concerns without identifying gambling as the primary issue. The session therefore considers how responses can be tailored to need and how workforce capability can be strengthened to better respond to gambling harm.

Keynote 3 Abstract

From Evidence to Advocacy: Amplifying Asian Community Voices in Policy and Practice; Speaker: Dr Andrew Zhu

Asian communities are among the fastest-growing and most diverse population groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. Yet, their experiences, needs, and outcomes have long been underrepresented in national data, policy design, and workforce planning. Since 2019, Asian Family Services has adopted a sustained, evidence-led approach to public advocacy, service innovation, and policy engagement to address this gap. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation initiated the first large-scale, nationally representative mental health and wellbeing survey designed specifically for Asian New Zealanders, marking a critical shift in making community experiences visible, measurable, and relevant to decision-makers.

Over the past five years, a programme of population-level research has examined mental health and wellbeing, gambling and online gambling harm, alcohol and drug use, discrimination, and school bullying. These findings illustrate the real and intersecting challenges faced by Asian clients and communities, including cultural stigma, language barriers, uneven access to services, and widening disparities for youth and specific ethnic groups. The evidence also exposes how existing service models and workforce settings often struggle to engage effectively with this complexity.

The presentation concludes by setting out practical priorities for system leaders and policymakers, including embedding cultural capability requirements into workforce planning, funding bilingual and bicultural roles as core positions rather than pilot initiatives, using disaggregated data to guide commissioning decisions, and holding systems accountable for equitable access and outcomes. Together, these actions point toward a more capable, resilient, and responsive workforce that can meet the realities of Aotearoa New Zealand's rapidly diversifying population.