

# A guide to advancing child and youth wellbeing in Local Government



**Child and Youth  
Wellbeing Strategy**

# Contents

Introduction .....	4
Why child and youth wellbeing is important to Local Government .....	5
What is child and youth wellbeing? .....	5
What it means for Local Government.....	5
Local Government as a community leader .....	6
Councils as a leading employer.....	6
Implementing the Treaty of Waitangi.....	6
Providing community grants in high trust ways .....	6
Activating community in purposeful ways that supports wellbeing, child development, social connections and family time.....	7
Being conscious spenders and investing in building community capacity .....	7
Enabling and encouraging community-led initiatives.....	7
Facilitating education to employment pathways for young people.....	8
Influencing central government .....	8
Building relationships with and between children and young people .....	9
Why it matters .....	9
Building authentic relationships .....	9
Place-making to build belonging.....	9
Events build social connections and inclusion.....	10
Supporting play and recreation through the environment, parks and spaces.....	12
Why it matters .....	12
Revisit your investments in play and recreation and facilities .....	12
Natural spaces and water are play spaces.....	13
Transport and access, housing, facilities and sustainable asset management.....	14
Why it matters .....	14
Active transport network and landscape design .....	14
Housing that helps .....	15
Sustainable asset management .....	15
Participation and voice (children, youth, families).....	16
Why it matters .....	16
Children and young people add value to planning and council operations .....	16
Youth development: Building capacity of youth to be active participants in society .....	17
Useful resources .....	18

Evidence and Data .....	19
Why it matters .....	19
Build your child and young person evidence base .....	19
Strategy, Planning and Coordinating Investments .....	21
Why it matters .....	21
Strategy and Long-term Planning .....	21
<b><i>Child and/or youth wellbeing Strategies</i></b> .....	21
Long Term Planning / Spatial Planning .....	22
RMA planning.....	23
Co-ordinating investments.....	23

WORKING DRAFT

# Introduction

This co-designed guidance aims to help council staff view wellbeing from the perspective of children, young people and their families.

The development of this guidance was led by Taituarā and the Child Wellbeing Unit, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. It followed a webinar which focussed on Central Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and the ways local government can contribute as a sector, including through its Community Wellbeing Service.

An online hub was established in September 2020, with Councils invited to contribute to the development of the guidance. A follow-up series of online sessions were then held in January 2021 to help fine-tune the guidance. We also invited Councils to share resources, initiatives, plans and policies specifically focussed on supporting child and youth wellbeing, so that we could showcase examples of how this is already being done.

We've deliberately taken a 'pick and mix' approach when developing the guidance, recognising that Councils have different situations determining how they operate in the child and youth wellbeing space.

WORKING DRAFT

# Why child and youth wellbeing is important to Local Government

## What is child and youth wellbeing?

New Zealand's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy sets out a set of holistic wellbeing outcomes that reflect what children and young people said was important to them. These outcomes signpost the social conditions, economic and environmental factors and individual strengths needed for wellbeing.

The Strategy's [six high level wellbeing outcomes](#) include that children and young people:

- **are loved, safe and nurtured:** - this includes loving homes that are free from violence, having time with family and whānau and being safe from avoidable harm and accidents
- **have what they need:** this includes income and resources, as well as other important aspects of material wellbeing such as nutritious food and quality housing
- **are happy and healthy:** this includes physical and mental health, spaces and opportunities to play and healthy environments
- **are learning and developing:** this includes education to build knowledge, skills and capabilities and encouragement to achieve potential and navigate life's transitions
- **are accepted, respected and connected:** this includes feeling a sense of belonging, living free from racism and discrimination, having good relationships and being connected to identity
- **are involved and empowered:** this includes support to contribute, be listened to, care for others, make healthy choices and develop autonomy.

## What it means for Local Government

Councils have a broad role in supporting child and youth wellbeing. This is set out by the purpose of Local Government to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future (section 10 Local Government Act).

- Councils control many of the important levers that directly impact wellbeing in everyday life, such as transport, community spaces, arts and culture events, and the infrastructure for healthy homes. By providing these services, amenities, infrastructure and enabling environments, Councils support social connections, brain and physical development and the overall wellbeing of their children, young people and families.
- Child and youth wellbeing has a ripple effect across the community. If children are doing well, the community is doing well. A general commitment to looking after children can help to build a sense of place and wellbeing.
- Children and young people are our future residents. By actively considering their needs and creating space for children and young people to voice their aspirations for their wellbeing now and in the future, councils can build resilient and connected communities.
- Intergenerational poverty severely impacts children. Councils can target poverty interventions to foster equitable and inclusive outcomes.

# Local Government as a community leader

Local governments are already using their community leadership position to advance child and youth wellbeing. This can be done in a number of ways, including:

## Councils as a leading employer

- Some Councils are paying living wage to all employees, developing youth mentoring schemes and cadetships to develop career options for young people who are finding it hard to get a job. Examples include:
  - [Wellington City becomes NZ's first Living Wage council](#)
  - [Auckland Council's cadet programme](#)
  - [Whangarei District Council's scholarships and cadetship programme](#)

## Implementing the Treaty of Waitangi

- There are a number of provisions in the Local Government Act 2002 and the Resource Management Act that relate specifically to Māori.
- Local government is charged with the responsibility to promote opportunities for Māori and tauwiwi (other members of the public) to contribute to its decision-making processes.
- These provisions apply to ALL Māori in the city, district, or region. They acknowledge that Māori other than mana whenua may be resident in the area. Outcomes for Māori need to be embedded in policy/strategy.
- In addition to the Treaty, Treaty Settlements also may require Local Government Action. For example:
  - The Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River, outlined in Schedule 2 of the [Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims \(Waikato River\) Settlement Act 2010](#) is deemed into the Waikato Regional Policy Statement. Councils in the Waikato Region are required to give effect to it through district plans and other strategies and plans (including the Annual Plan/Long-Term Plan). This legislation is changing how Hamilton City Council deals with stormwater, and how councils can support people to (re)connect with the Waikato River and its tributaries.
  - [Bay of Plenty Regional Council has developed a Working with Iwi - Treaty Toolkit which is helping to guide its Māori relationships and engagement plan](#) for its Freshwater Management and Natural Resources work programmes

## Providing community grants in high trust ways

- This can help trusted influencers and community support groups do what they do best – help whānau and communities in their local neighbourhoods. Examples include:
  - [Rotorua Lakes Council Community grants and partnership agreements](#), providing not-for-profits with flexibility and three years financial certainty in order to better meet local needs. They also offer a neighbourhood matching fund to support community self-help projects.

- [Dunedin City Council](#) also offer [Neighbourhood Matching Grants](#) for activities and projects that bring people living in neighbourhoods and close communities together

## **Activating community in purposeful ways that supports wellbeing, child development, social connections and family time**

- Councils can help provide new parents and babies with positive experiences for brain development, peer support and connections for parents, children and young people, increase quality family time and promote physical activity and play. These benefits will continue for life. Examples include:
  - [Hutt City Council helping bring a community together with play](#)
  - [Christchurch City Council membership of Active Canterbury Network](#) that's promoting easy and low-cost ways to be an active and healthy family

## **Being conscious spenders and investing in building community capacity**

- This includes a focus on social procurement and opportunities to address local poverty, as well as supporting community-led initiatives that build local capacity and capability to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. There is also a role for local and central government partnerships (e.g. roading). Examples include:
  - [The Southern Initiative's Shared Prosperity](#) approach is characterised by initiatives that intentionally seek out the best opportunities for South and West Auckland communities, with the greatest potential for personal, whānau and community transformation. It includes social procurement, promoting Māori and Pasifika entrepreneurship, work to accelerate the advancement of Pacific Peoples in the workforce and Māori and Pasifika Trades Training.
  - [Auckland Council's support for a community-led social enterprise](#) – the Papatoetoe Food Hub
  - [Rotorua Lakes District Council using a child equity lens](#) to improve access to services for children young people from lower socio-economic communities

## **Enabling and encouraging community-led initiatives**

- This includes creating a platform for others who are working in the child and youth wellbeing space. Council could literally create a physical, place-based space or create spaces for discussion.
- Councils can also bring together different people/activities and act as a bridge around collaborative effort. Examples include community gardens working together with schools, libraries, etc. This can help disparate activities have more influence.
  - [Far North District Council support for a community-led initiative](#) to turn a rarely-used area into a vibrant community playground and recreational area

- Supporting communities to help turn their ideas for improving the wellbeing of their children into action. Check out the [Child Rich Communities website](#) for inspiring stories and resources to support community-led action
- Working with community partners to help evaluate the impacts of their work with young people can help these organisations increase their funding potential, visibility, etc.

## Facilitating education to employment pathways for young people

- As well as being able to offer employment opportunities and exposure to a range of jobs, Local Governments also have key partnerships with businesses, iwi and educators. Together you can find ways to connect students with work opportunities can help local business develop local talent and young people to find their feet in the job markets.
- Research has shown that participation in education to employment programmes can change the attitudes pupils to education, influence their future plans and subject choices, motivate them to study harder, reduces the likelihood of being not in education employment or training and contextualises education. Examples include:
  - [Upper Hutt City's youth employment programme](#)
  - [Mayors taskforce for Jobs - Tuia programme](#) aimed at developing the leadership capacity of rangatahi Maori
  - Clutha District Council running [speed date mentoring with employer and youth](#)
  - Two year pilot-programme, led by the Kāpiti Coast District Council in partnership with Work Ready Kāpiti, [supporting youth who are most at risk of long-term unemployment and who are not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#), including those transitioning from school that are needing extra support.

## Influencing central government

Central government investments could be 'tagged' to local government outcomes. Money could either free up local government money (e.g. by allocating to infrastructure so local government can spend on wellbeing) or it could be allocated directly. Examples include:

- [Hokonui Huanui](#) initiative in Gore is a partnership between iwi, community, schools, local government and government and has received Provincial Growth Fund support.
- The Southern Initiative has a lot of examples demonstrating the value of partnership with central government. See its [Tamariki Wellbeing Project](#) for examples.



# Building relationships with and between children and young people

## Why it matters

Local Government actions and the sense of place and belonging that they can foster can be an enabler for children and young people's wellbeing. When young people feel accepted, respected and connected they are more likely to feel valued and contribute to their communities and grow to be responsible citizens. In addition, feeling accepted and having strong social relationships – with friends and trusted adults is a strong protective factor against poor mental health.

- While children and young people don't have a vote (yet), they do have a voice and they are a critical part of the community.
- Understanding what they need can provide a compass for future work and direction.
- Councils can benefit from designing a range of opportunities for ongoing relationships where there is regular feed-back so participants are brought along on the whole process.

## Building authentic relationships

Councils need to build authentic and trusted relationships with and between children and young people. Many councils only connect with young people when they want something. It's important to shift the culture from one-off engagement to more ongoing, collaborative relationships.

- This may require council-wide organisational change – training staff to recognise the strength that children and young people bring and that they should be valued in conversations.
- Authenticity also means closing the loop and feeding back to children and young people, so they feel heard and can see actions based on what they have asked for.

Education can help many young people to better understand what councils do. Council can help provide things like mentorship and civics education.

- Demographic knowledge and mindful engagement are important factors to drive more permanent shifts that encourage young people to stay. Locations without secondary /tertiary educational institutions also need to consider how to attract young people back into their region.

## Place-making to build belonging

Place making opportunities are story telling opportunities and this helps build identity and sense of place. Places such as parks, libraries and recreational spaces, urban redesign opportunities and refurbishments of spaces where people congregate (e.g. public transport stations) or travel through (such as walk/ cycle ways) provide a chance to build character and reflect culture.

- Reflecting language, culture, stories and local history when place making helps people connect to their culture and identity, their whakapapa and tūrangawaewae.

- Welcoming and safe spaces are needed for young people to be themselves and see themselves reflected in the environment (built and natural). One way to do this is use youth generated art and creative expression to define the space.
  - One example is [Youth Space](#) in Christchurch, which allows for youth activity (markets, sports, concerts, street art, etc.) that is created by and for youth. I.e. Recent Hip Hop events, Basketball competitions, free kai, etc.
- For small children and their parents, nurturing spaces are needed with facilities for changing babies, heating up milk and food, for small children to play and make noise and for caregivers to relax and connect knowing their kids have a safe space to explore. Be explicit to families that spaces are there for this purpose, because often people aren't sure.
- The ARUP report '[Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods](#)' is a really useful report on urban planning to make cities more child-friendly, designing for green infrastructure and also how to make cities walkable. This is a helpful combination of both the research and the 'how to' in terms of case studies, implementation and design.

## Events build social connections and inclusion

Does your event calendar include child, youth events, as well as larger, family-oriented community events? Applying a manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga approach to family events may be useful (connection and care for others and for the environment) to get new audiences along. Consider how events are targeted to different ages, stages and abilities.

- Youth widen their horizons and create connections through informal opportunities to gather, connect and participate such as youth specific spaces, sports and recreation and community events.
  - Christchurch's '[Gap-filler](#)' project includes examples that helped young people connect with their City, eg The #chchswing, two giant swings framed by giant orange 'photo' frames designed as fun hangout spaces for teenagers in the city that encourage taking and sharing photos online.
- Providing safe and welcoming spaces for children and youth to congregate, with or without their parents is a critical role for local government. Young people say that safety includes physical safety as well as being safe to express themselves without fear, harassment or negative judgement.
- Councils often take a role in the after school and school holiday programmes, and offering spaces up to youth at other times for less structured connections is also beneficial. Where specific communities want to lead and host gatherings (e.g. cultural, disability, or LGBTQIA+ youth groups) councils can provide their facilities at little to no cost. This helps the council demonstrate inclusiveness, manaakitanga and value youth participation.
- For small children events and spaces could take a nurturing and brain building lens. Spaces that enable manaakitanga and support play and language development, interactions with and between whānau builds brains.
- Parents of babies and young children need free or low cost opportunities to interact with their children "[serve and return](#)". Soft play facilities, playgroups, baby and toddler specific movement and music classes, story telling and educational sessions on food, language, sleep and child development that can include the whole whānau are examples of how to support these needs. For example:

- [Wellington City Council's pre-schooler programmes](#) are good examples of recreation and play events for very young children and their caregivers

WORKING DRAFT

# Supporting play and recreation through the environment, parks and spaces

## Why it matters

Play is so important to child development that it is recognised as a human right for children.<sup>[1]</sup> Through play, young children learn and develop the foundations of all critical life skills. Evidence shows that the promotion of wellbeing in early developmental stages is critical for setting the foundation for wellbeing later in life. Therefore, considering the needs of children between 0 to 6 years of age is fundamentally important.

Play is instinctual and a critical part of children's physical and cognitive development. Started early, playing with infants assists with their brain development, including their language acquisition and growing ability for self-regulation. Together these provide a springboard for communication, imagination, physical capability, strength, health, wellbeing and positive social behaviour. Play enhances school readiness for young children and promotes concentration in older children.

But play is not just for the young ones – it benefits everyone and should continue throughout life. It enhances wellbeing and social connections. In addition, while play spaces and opportunities achieve a range of benefits for children and their families, there is also evidence that play spaces support the local economy. Shops, cafes and other businesses benefit in having a playground nearby.

## Revisit your investments in play and recreation and facilities

- Councils enable play in all their communities. Councils are mandated to provide for and manage play infrastructure and open spaces, including sports fields, swimming pools, recreational facilities, active transport routes, walkways and paths. In addition, Councils often support sports and play through grants and funding.
- Some examples of Councils investing in play infrastructure investments and renewals include:
  - Hamilton City Council takes a whole council approach to supporting play which recognises that play doesn't just happen at play spaces. Its direction is to make Hamilton an urban playground. It has applied this thinking to a range of assets and facilities and this is captured in its [master design principles](#).
  - [WCC place-based play strategy](#) is an example of a strategy that sets a direction on building play opportunities beyond playgrounds (homes, gardens, etc.). The Council is bringing together urban designers to re-think how to embed play into new and existing urban features. This includes considering how to make spaces more accessible for scooters, skateboards by not making pathways bumpy, painting steps different colours, etc.
  - Auckland Council found significant inequities in spending on play through comparing its play infrastructure renewals funding to its population numbers (under 25).. This helped inform the discussion document [Tākaro – Investing in Play](#) and subsequent engagement.
  - Ruapehu District Council – [Pipiriki playground](#) is being built next to a marae. The idea is to use existing community hubs (such as marae) as spaces to foster play.

- Wellington City Council is collaborating with Waka Kotahi to establish play activation days and play spaces in suburbs .
- Some Councils own trailers of play equipment and free play items to help activate play in local parks and these can be loaned out to faith and community groups. Video link [here](#).
- Rotorua Lakes District Council has the [FreeParking Rotorua](#) programme designed to fill different youth spaces with free sports and activities.
- Development contributions could be applied to support children’s play and active / safe built environment/ active transport and food security. This can help address equity and apply child and youth wellbeing lens.
- Elected members can also act as champions for play. Consider inviting speakers to council to discuss the importance of play in across different business groups.

## Natural spaces and water are play spaces

- Consider everywhere where kids swim as a play space and make it safe and accessible
  - Auckland Council makes safe to swim data available at beaches – and uses behavioural insights to get more people engaging with the water quality data.
- Children, young people and their families are enthusiastic kaitiaki of the environment. Councils can facilitate family friendly events and opportunities to be involved in environmental management. Supporting young people to be involved can , increase social connections, a sense of purpose and belonging and help address climate change.
- Involve climate change influences (e.g. [Generation zero](#) members) on steering groups for infrastructure renewals and built environment space design
  - Wellington CC involves the skater community in its skate parks work, connects climate change to civics education and involves kids in play and park design/ redevelopments.

# Transport and access, housing, facilities and sustainable asset management

## Why it matters

Community infrastructure that considers the ongoing needs of children and young people contributes to building strong, healthy and vibrant communities. This includes:

- providing safe and accessible and active transport options,
- affordable and sustainable housing, and
- spaces where children, young people and whānau can connect, socialise, learn and participate in a wide range of social, cultural, art and recreational activities.
- community events and activities that improve lifestyles and a sense of belonging and pride among residents.

Young people (as young as years 7/8) are savvy re climate change, cycle ways, etc., but there can sometimes be a challenge with trying to shift the conversation with older generations. We need to work hard on this, to ensure policy is equitable for future generations and doesn't reflect/reinforce intergenerational differences.

## Active transport network and landscape design

- Considering active transport routes and road safety from the eyes of a child or young person can really make a difference to usability, access to additional social connections and can help build independence.
- An active transport network that connects people to schools, playgrounds and public amenity needs to be purposefully connected and safe for bikes, scooters, prams and buggies and pedestrians.
- Play streets are also a useful concept as they clearly prioritise play for children over the use of the street by vehicles, this can be for time limited events or more permanently.
- Examples of initiatives include:
  - Waka Kotahi has an [Innovating Streets for People programme](#) with funding, case studies, resources and tools to support Councils to implement fast changes to deliver physical changes to streets to make areas people centric. Funded projects so far include connections to cycle ways, community engagement on street safety, intersection innovations and school safety measures.
  - Ruapehu District Council's [Pride of Place Policy](#) includes funding to work alongside Marae to improve walking access along the roadside.
- Developing and engaging active transport requires network thinking – a need for spines, connections, safety and age friendly design. For ideas check out:
  - Auckland Transport's [approach to increasing more walking and cycling](#)
  - The World Health Organisation have set up (and NZ is a participating signatory to) the [Age friendly cities initiative and have published some helpful guidance](#).

- [Kainga Ora Landscape Design Guidelines](#) are a useful resource for all communities.

## Housing that helps

- Local Government has a strong impact on the sustainability and affordable housing and district planning and land use zoning create conditions for the housing market.
- Check out [LGNZ's work programme to support councils' considerations around housing supply, social housing and healthy homes](#).

## Sustainable asset management

- Much of New Zealand's vertical infrastructure is aging and up for renewal. When exploring investment in these assets, there are literally thousands of opportunities to build back better, smarter and more sustainably. This includes considering the needs of children and young people in these decisions as well as future proofing assets for as long as possible.
- For better water and land management, green infrastructure is a well-recognised concept, where asset renewals can protect, mimic and restore the natural water cycle.
- Swapping hard surfaces for permeable surfaces, raingardens and stormwater swales are easy switches to make and can be designed in ways to maximise amenity and ecological gain. Daylighting streams and living buildings are also examples of green infrastructure.
- Council has a key role in tackling managed retreat – “even though it's politically hard”. Hazard info and LIM reports have a role to play in this.

WORKING DRAFT

# Participation and voice (children, youth, families)

## Why it matters

Young people are experts in their own lives and this needs to be valued. Young people want more partnerships with communities and to codesign services and events that will work for them.

The Local Government Act 2002 requires consideration of the views of people effected by a matter, both now and in the future. This is especially important for addressing the needs of young people in Long Term Council Community Plans. As well as helping inform your direction, youth participation makes young people aware of being a citizen in a democracy and encourages engagement and interest in politics and voting.

- Seeking out and listening to what children and young people say, and involving them in planning and decision-making builds understanding and helps create more successful and effective events, programmes and services.
- Youth are active, motivated and capable. They are well connected and can (and do) mobilise action and galvanise change within their peers on community and global issues. The recently established [School Strike 4 Climate](#) movement and [The Hive](#) are just two examples,
- Effective engagement with young people uses a ‘many-to-many’ engagement approach (many times, many ways, many groups) rather than open shut, project specific engagements. It’s key to value the discussion/engagements rather than being outcome or project focussed. This helps to create cross-pollination opportunities of youth ideas into many different council processes. *(see Building Relationships section for more information)*

## Children and young people add value to planning and council operations

- Youth bring new energy and ideas to standard issues and concerns and can offer new perspectives on tackling challenges and realising opportunities. Involving youth in community activities increases overall community vitality and engagement and creates positive connection.
- Many Councils value the input of Youth Councils / Children’s Panels into a range of planning, activity and events. While they don’t need to replicate the structure used for similar adult representation groups (for example in formality/ process), the building of these groups should:
  - reflect the demographic community both in terms of representation, recruitment and reach
  - include a range of ages, stages and abilities
  - provide clarity about their role and mandate, ensuring they are heard and supported by the decision makers in the Council and Council staff have the time to support them deliver meaningful projects.
- Engaging children and youth on LGA and RMA planning processes is a key way to take an intergenerational lens to business planning, investments and decision making.



- An example of Integrating youth voice/ submission processes into business as usual is the [Hamilton Youth Action Plan](#) .
- Some things to consider for effective youth engagement include:
  - using digital technology such as mapping tools like social pinpoint and validate informal communication (eg Facebook).
  - creating youth portals, with rewards (eg vouchers, council facilities)
  - finding ways to seek and empower youth generated creative expression (eg Uptown, supported by TSI)
  - consider internal training for council staff on why youth voices matter. [Child Matters weeklong training](#) can be helpful to teach techniques on how to collaborate with young people. The impacts of the course can help to shift mindsets, which can flow through to policy-making.

## **Youth development: Building capacity of youth to be active participants in society**

Some councils lead youth development initiatives or partner with others to build capacity of young people in their communities to be engaged, participate, co-design or lead the development of youth centred events and ideas. Where active youth are leading, councils should value this effort with koha, grants and free access to services and amenities or time banking.

- Youth Voice groups often attract a certain type of young people. Council can foster partnerships – finding who young people are engaging with (schools, councils, iwi, social support or youth organisations) and bringing them together. An example includes:
  - Auckland Council are working on a network approach to bring in youth who may not otherwise engage. The network approach identifies youth orgs who already work with young people and asks them to connect back to council.
- Supporting youth development doesn't need to be solely focused on the Local Government agenda – but could be widened to focus on inspiring leadership. Ideas include:
  - Local Government Parliaments and Councils
  - helping to replicate Council in the school space
  - providing schools resources for understanding local civics
  - nurturing /mentoring youth leadership, eg Upper hutt City Council's [Spearhead Leaders programme](#)
  - providing opportunities to feed up to decision makers – particularly through online avenues

## Useful resources

- [Listening to Kids: tips for being child-centred and engaging with children](#)
- [Keepin' it real: a resource for involving young people in decision making](#)
- [Youth Participation: A guide for local government](#)
- [Taking young people seriously: Young people on boards and committees](#)
- [Ara Taiohi's Takiwa](#) information resource regarding young people and [Ara Taiohi](#) has a range of resources to help people who work with youth.

WORKING DRAFT

# Evidence and Data

## Why it matters

Data enables informed decision-making. The more information you have to write policy and strategy, the more effective it is likely to be. Additionally, data and evidence (along with effective story-telling), enables CE's and Councils to accentuate the "Why?" for elevating the status / importance of child and wellbeing to community success.

As time goes on, the population of the [Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Indicators](#) will help improve this situation. In the meantime, there are other ways to understand the contexts children are living in and what's working to support them.

## Build your child and young person evidence base

- Building a richer evidence base to understand how children and young people are faring in New Zealand's diverse communities will help to plug gaps in our knowledge. Particularly important is the granularity, relevancy, and frequency of the data. Different districts will have different factors that drive inequities in wellbeing outcomes for children and young people, therefore making use of any and all regionally available data will help to inform decisions.
- One of the best approaches is to consider [SOLGM's Data for Wellbeing service](#) from a child wellbeing perspective.

### ***Collect or review your own data with children and young people in mind***

- Get to know how your work impacts on children and young people – do you know how children and young people are getting your services? Is there a way to focus more on high needs or early years? What happens if you apply an equity lens to explore who's using what, or not, and why? You could use a child and youth lens on your Annual reports and this would build a picture of child youth experiences in your area.
- Some examples of what Councils are doing include:
  - [Rotorua Lakes District Council applied a child equity lens](#) to access of its facilities.
  - Auckland Council compared its play infrastructure renewals funding to its population numbers (under 25) and found significant inequities in spending. This helped inform the discussion document [Tākaro – Investing in Play](#) and the subsequent engagement process.

### ***Gather data for evidence informed decisions.***

- Consider the way your services ask children and young people for feedback – for example rather than libraries measuring "how many were books taken out by kids?" it could consider "how connected did we make the kids feel?". Try using child wellbeing outcome indicators and consider the gap between these and what is happening on the ground. This might help you advance outcomes in service design.
- Data about children and young people can be challenging to gather as there are ethics, rights, and protections in place around talking to young people. A possible solution is to employ professionals who work with children and young people to gather qualitative data. Larger

councils can rely on in-house experts (research and monitoring team, for example) to do this work.

- There may also be opportunities to partner with central government or others, including: academic institutions, NGOs, civil society organisations or Iwi groups who may collect data on wellbeing that is not readily available in existing surveys.
- Some examples to consider include:
  - Porirua City Council have been undertaking a [children and young people's status report](#) for the last four years.
  - [Education Counts](#) is a good educational data resource and the [Know your Region](#) site drills educational data down and [Communities of Learning data](#) will be useful for those after town or neighbourhood educational data and connections.
  - Iwi specific educational information is available on [Te Mataaho-a-Iwi - Education Dashboard](#)
  - The [Child and Youth Wellbeing and Poverty Reporting website](#) has a range of links to data and information with [Child Poverty Statistics](#) and [Child Poverty Related Indicators](#) being available by region.

WORKING DRAFT

# Strategy, Planning and Coordinating Investments

## Why it matters

Children and young people's health and safety extends well into their built and social environment. This includes the access to and visibility of alcohol, tobacco, drugs and gambling in communities. A healthy community has playgrounds, parks and public spaces that encourage quality family time, places and spaces to play and be and quality events and opportunities to build whānau and social connections.

A number of Councils have found that having a Children and Young People's specific strategy or strategic outcome can really help them:

- gain traction across council business areas
- identify practical actions
- gain political buy in and allocate spending to beneficial projects.

Environmental and spatial planning play a huge role in enabling social connections and environmental health, affordable housing and positive play and recreational experiences. By placing a child and youth lens over this you can start to see how to future proof these plans and make natural and built environment spaces more human centric and friendly to various ages and stages.

## Strategy and Long-term Planning

### *Child and/or youth wellbeing Strategies*

- Councils are increasingly establishing their own Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategies, to ensure it is a priority and focus across Council activity.
- Below are some examples of how Councils have made children and young people's wellbeing a strategic priority:
  - [Porirua City Council made children and young people one of its council's strategic priorities](#) and have a strategic framework to guide its work for children and young people.
  - Auckland Council has a specific children and young people's strategic plan called [I Am Auckland](#) which has seven goals that influence action and decision making across the council business. As part of this, it has developed a theory of change logic model: See the files areas for templates for you to use and adapt.
  - Napier City Council has a [Youth Strategy](#) that helps focus an action plan and broader achievement of its visions for Napier to be a vibrant and sustainable city for all.
  - Hamilton City Council has a [Play Strategy](#) which is a practical support for wellbeing for all the community but is especially great for children and young people's development and wellbeing.
- Council templates are also an easy tool to trigger this thinking across all departments and reinforce that child and youth wellbeing is a priority. For example:

- use impact / contribution statements in decision making to show linkages to or demonstrate progress on strategic intentions, goals or mandated responsibilities – e.g. child and youth wellbeing, upholding the Treaty, wellbeing, families.

## Long Term Planning / Spatial Planning

- LTPs and Annual Plans are critical tools to drive wellbeing forward as outcomes must drive investments and investment planning.
- Strong spatial planning requires focus on the spatial interaction patterns of day-to-day people and business activity, arising from where things are, what people and businesses need or want to do, how they interact and where and how they travel to do so.
- It's important to recognise the intergenerational gap that can exist within many issues. One example is housing, whereby young people's concerns often relate to housing supply and quality rentals, whilst older, longer-term residents may be more interested in maintaining heritage values.
- While Council's are under constant pressure to carefully manage spending and make trade-offs to avoid significant rate rises, work to advance child and youth wellbeing doesn't have to mean more, it can mean doing things differently.
- Councils have significant levers to deliver on wellbeing. Some things to consider include:
  - Councils can embrace a culture shift, where councillors advocate for issues that are important to young people. This could include bringing young people's voices into the decision making
  - Influence your finance team – for example by making a business case for children and young people. Also consider how you can bring young people's voices into the engagement, after all they are ratepayers of the future (if you can keep them!).
  - Influence early in the planning architecture/process, eg raising questions as to whether physical activities are being supported when plans are being made. Embedding physical activities in the planning process from the outset would be beneficial.
  - drive investments to support equity at all levels of decision-making and spending
  - explore whether Can the 'basics' be delivered in alternative ways? Councils are responsible for the wellbeing of youth and of communities, so they must juggle many different capacities. Future wellbeing strategies should be multifaceted as opposed to siloed, where certain projects can be joined with others to create mutual benefit for children and young people.
- Below are some examples of children and young people's wellbeing being integrated into Councils' long-term planning:
  - The ['Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030'](#) takes a strong equity approach and one of the strategic objectives is around creating active environments. This recognises that we can either build in activity (safe walking and cycling networks, lots of green space) or inactivity and inequity into our cities (for example through constructing transport systems which privilege private car use).
  - [Hamilton City's efforts to create an urban playground across its rohe.](#)
  - Christchurch City Council's "[Strengthening Communities Strategy](#)" helps to prioritise funding for community development. It also has a public [open space strategy](#).

## RMA planning

- Young are becoming more vocal in communities about the need for action on climate change and environmental issues, and want meaningful opportunities to exercise kaitiakitanga.
- Regional and District plan reviews and other planning processes could more actively engage youth to articulate concerns eg energy, active transport, climate change, housing, recreational spaces.
- New tools are available for urban developments to occur more quickly, creating liveable and sustainable urban environments: <https://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Urban-Development/Urban-Development-Bill/the-Urban-Development-Act-Outcomes.pdf>

## Co-ordinating investments

- There are a number of examples of councils using child and youth wellbeing as a lens to coordinate investments
  - Christchurch City Council connects funders to suit specific purposes. [Whanui funding advisor network](#) (made up of DIA, Rata Foundation, etc.) discusses who is being funded, who needs funding, and identifies issues for funding.
  - Sports NZ – [Tu Manawa funding](#) available for those who want to promote physical activity and play.
  - The Healthy Families Programme – takes a systems-based approach to health. Providers may be council, but may be marae, schools, private orgs, etc. Local Government could act as a funder to different providers.
  - Waka Kotahi has an [Innovating Streets for People programme](#) with funding, case studies, resources and tools to support Councils to implement fast changes to deliver physical changes to streets to make areas people centric.
  - [Social Wellbeing Advisory and Recovery Group](#)