

Practices that enable community-led action to enhance child and youth wellbeing outcomes

Research and experience show that children, young people and whānau do better when they live in strong and supportive communities. Alongside, appropriate, accessible and timely support services, community-led action also plays a critical role in enabling the outcomes we want for our kids, as outlined in New Zealand's [Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy](#).

The Strategy has its own set of [guiding principles](#), outlined on the next page, which reflect the values New Zealanders have said are most important. Collectively, the principles promote wellbeing and equity for all children and young people, and outline the importance of working together for real impact. This resource focuses on key community-led practices that bring the Strategy's outcomes and principles to life.

→ www.chilyouthwellbeing.govt.nz

“A focus on children has to include a focus on families and communities – these can't sit in separate boxes.”

Child Rich Communities Hui
Participants November 2016.

Taking a Community-led Approach

A community-led approach involves weaving ideas, connections and contributions from everyone so that solutions are fit for, and driven by local aspirations, energy and contexts. If we put child and youth wellbeing at the centre, a useful start point is asking “what can we do to make this place better for our children and whānau?”

It's also often messy, and takes time for change to embed and be noticed. Done well however, collective community action can:

- build community connectedness and leadership
- strengthen local parenting support systems
- mobilise local resources
- identify collective aspirations to support outcomes for local children

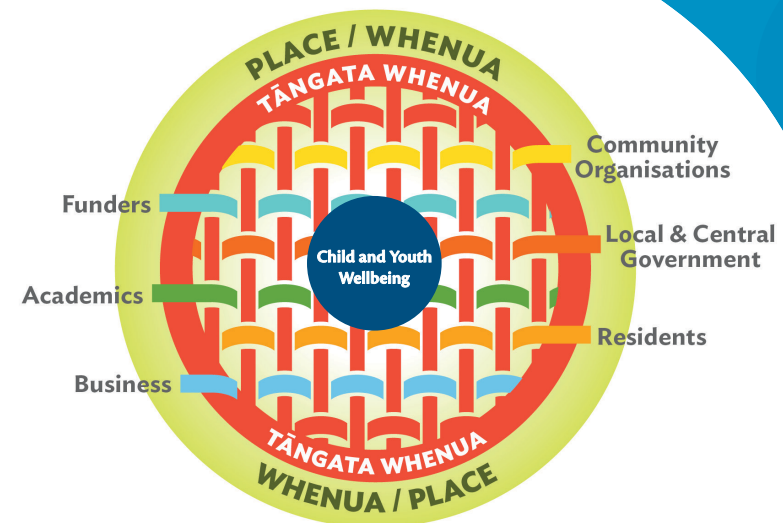


Child and Youth
Wellbeing



“Together, we can ensure that all children and young people receive the support they need to achieve wellbeing in every area of their lives.”

New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019.



Te Whakawhanake ā-Hapori
Weaving our connections and contributions

Taking a Community-led Approach *continued*

- celebrate and nurture diversity
- grow the voices and contributions of young people as active citizens in their communities.

It doesn't happen all at once. But with the right support, capacity building and investment in critical phases, loose connections between local parents, community leaders and community groups, young people, whānau, hapū and iwi, and supportive organisations (e.g. service providers, local Councils, businesses) can build into bigger, bolder locally-led action involving more people, partners and possibilities. This is described more in the Child Rich Communities [Theory of Change](#), an initiative hosted by Inspiring Communities.

→ www.bit.ly/CRCCTHEORYOFCHANGE

For more on taking a community-led approach to improving outcomes for children, young people and families in your community, see our [companion resource](#).

→ bit.ly/HelpChildrenAndYoung

New Zealand Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Principles

- Children and young people are taonga.
- Māori are tangata whenua and the Māori-Crown relationship is foundational.
- Children and young people's rights need to be respected and upheld.
- All children and young people deserve to live a good life.
- Wellbeing needs holistic and comprehensive approaches.
- Children and young people's wellbeing is interwoven with family and whānau wellbeing.
- Change requires action by all of us.
- Actions must deliver better life outcomes.
- Early support is needed.

A Child Rich Story

In Gore, community-led action started with conversations between three local mums and grew from there. Over the last 5 years, collaborative community-led efforts have not just created a co-located kids services hub but also a fantastic new toddlers playground for the whole community.

→ For more see www.bit.ly/KidsHubGore



A strong focus on the how

In community-led development it's not what you do, but how you do it and with who that is the most important.

In talking and working with communities and organisations applying a community-led lens to their mahi with children and families over the last decade, Inspiring Communities has identified some core practices that enable and strengthen wellbeing outcomes for children, whānau and communities at the local community level.

“Let us speak our minds because only us young people/children know what we want to have good lives. This can be done by getting to know us and talking to us.”

Young person.

Core 'Child Rich' practices to include in your community approach include:



Engagement

All children and young people are taonga. They and their whānau are also incredible assets – they are experts in their own lives and need to be heard on things that affect them. Having a sense of belonging and feeling valued provide powerful motivations for them to contribute to their communities. Engagement involves:

- working inclusively and without judgement
- proactively reaching out and involving children, young people, their whānau and the wider community in conversation, co-design and decision making opportunities
- talking about what outcomes kids want to see locally, as well as the kinds of services that will work best for them
- taking time to understand the hard stuff some kids, families and neighbourhoods are facing by talking with them, not about them
- asking about the good things happening there too – there are strengths and assets in all our communities.



Empowerment

Go beyond traditional social service delivery approaches that typically do things for people. See how you might also walk alongside to help children, families and communities recognise their own power and ignite their own dreams. Helping people build confidence to participate, lead, make decisions and take action themselves takes time and a commitment to capacity building. That is, providing resources (e.g. support people, putea, information, connections, time) that help build skills and capability of local people to participate, self organise, act and lead from within. If we see leadership being about willingness to help and taking any action - no matter how small – then we quickly see our communities as full of potential leaders.



Child Rich Communities

www.childrichcommunities.org.nz

Practices in action

In South Auckland, a strengths based, whānau centric co-design approach has underpinned collective efforts to improve outcomes for young children, families and whānau. For more on the Early Years Challenge championed by [The Southern Initiative](#) and partners see here:



www.tsi.nz

In 2019 the Schools for Climate Change movement saw thousands of school age children encouraged and empowered to lead local protest campaigns to highlight climate injustice. See more here:



www.bit.ly/NelsonClimateStrike





Connection

Build on the positives first and be welcoming, inclusive and show manaakitanga (hospitality, respect, care). Start from where local families and the community are at and use 'soft doors' to bring new connections.

That is, informal activities in local communities, such as;

- coffee groups
- free and fun local events
- kids performances
- shared kai
- toy libraries
- community gardens
- pātaka kai

which can provide opportunities to strengthen social connectedness and build relationship, trust and rapport.

Also look to link people and their ideas with others who can help so that next steps might be taken together. Seek to build community in all you do and make sure you reflect on how you can demonstrate this - what we focus on grows.



Collaboration

Work together with multiple stakeholders to maximise energy, impact and resources. Make sure tamariki, local whānau and community leaders and local businesses are authentically involved and supported to actively participate too – their context knowledge is critical for effective local solutions. By proactively partnering and working with local people, the complex needs of children, families and communities can more effectively be addressed. Being anchored by a shared local vision and securing commitments to action from multiple people and partners helps build momentum and local accountability for change. He waka eke noa – we're all in this together! Also think about how your project supports the aspirations of the NZ Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. Aligning to this national framework can help bring larger agencies, stakeholders and funders on board and potentially open up new conversations around support and resources to help enable locally-led efforts.

→ www.bit.ly/TamarackResourceLibrary

Practices in Action

In the small Bay of Plenty village of Tāneatua, a community garden is providing a gateway for support and nurturing of local children and families.

→ www.bit.ly/GrowingandNurturing



In the Hutt Valley, the Common Ground Project has adopted a 'collaborACTION' approach that values and builds community-led responses into all they do.

→ www.bit.ly/SKIP_village



In the Ruapehu District, a collective community approach is enabling positive transformation for all families in the communities of Raetihi, Ohakune and Waiouru. The Ruapehu Whānau Transformation Plan frames 5 key goals and 23 solutions for locally-led change.

→ www.ruapehuwhanautransformation.com





Relationship focused

Value and nurture strong, respectful, reciprocal and long-term relationships with families, whānau and the wider community. In the early stages of community-led approaches, conversation is the relationship. Making time for whakawhānau, or getting to know each other, matters. Doing what you say you will, being honest and open, and doing things to support and awahi other's aims and aspirations are all useful ways to build meaningful relationships and trust.

“The large body of outcomes research on what contributes to effective change tells us that only 15% of change can be attributed to the model, service or technique involving expert-led intervention by a professional. The majority of impact (70%) is from factors such as a person’s existing networks, history, community and the kind of relationship they have with their key worker.”

Abridged from Hubble, Duncan and Miller in *The Heart and Soul of Change*, 1999.



Responsive

Be willing to change and adapt how things are done to enable the aspirations of local families, whānau and the wider community. Sometimes this means changing your usual ways of doing or delivering things. Being responsive also means acting on community insights, as they did in Rotorua to improve equitable access for all children to local swimming pools. Taking a learning by doing approach can also help. That is, courageously giving new things a go to see what works and doesn't and using these understandings to quickly inform what you do next.

→ www.bit.ly/ChildEquity

→ To hear and learn more about community-led initiatives using community-led practice to improve child, whānau and community wellbeing, check out the Child Rich Communities webinar series and the community story section of the Government's Child and Wellbeing Strategy website.

www.childrichcommunities.org.nz OR www.childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz



Think and work holistically

If families and whānau are well, their children are more likely to be well. If our whānau, families and children are all well – so will be our communities. Similarly, focusing on child wellbeing means joining up diverse social, economic, cultural and environmental lenses. Young people and communities don't think in boxes or sectors so neither should we. Get creative and look to see how you can enable multiple outcomes. This could be through taking a two generation approach to grow student achievement by helping parents into training and jobs. Or improving health outcomes, community connectedness and local economic wellbeing through developing a community-led fruit and vege co-operative initiative as they have done in the Wellington Region.

Practices in Action

The Wellfed initiative started from listening to Mums wanting to learn to cook so that their families could eat well. In the last 5 years they've done that and much more – helping parents into further study, free community meals, supporting community and backyard gardens, building friendships and community.

→ www.bit.ly/Wellfed_Video

Te Pā o Rakaihautu

Tamaiti akona i te pā, tū ana ki te ao, tau ana

A child educated to be strong in their own identity stands confident in the world.

It Takes a Village' is also a Whānau Ora based concept focused on increasing Māori engagement in learning in an authentic Māori environment. Local parents' dreams led to the creation of Te Pā o Rakaihautu, a Pā Wānanga (Māori based learning village) in the North-East of Ōtautahi, Christchurch. Te Pā is underpinned by a whānau focused, holistic, place-based learning by doing approach to education.

→ www.bit.ly/Rakaihautu