



Evaluation of the Auckland Council Community WasteWise Programme of Work

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Executive summary

Auckland Council aspires to achieve zero waste by 2040. Doing so will require significant shifts in how waste is produced, reduced and recycled across the region. The council's Community WasteWise team funds a significant amount of community-based waste reduction activity, in service of getting to zero waste by 2040. This evaluation was commissioned to understand the outcomes associated with WasteWise initiatives and to improve the effectiveness of the programme of work.

Conducted in 2022, and drawing on interviews and focus groups with WasteWise staff and community partner staff, as well as monitoring data and a survey of the public, this evaluation reports on lessons from the set-up and delivery of WasteWise-funded initiatives, and outcomes arising from them. The report also includes three case studies and recommendations for improvement. A summary of findings is provided below.

Lessons from the set-up and delivery of WasteWise-funded initiatives

The WasteWise team supports initiatives that fall into two broad categories: dedicated programmes, delivered largely by community organisations, that have a specific area of focus (e.g. reducing organic waste through composting), and partnerships with more than 30 community partner organisations, which typically focus on encouraging a range of waste reduction behaviours in specific geographic or demographic communities.

It was not easy to quantify the exact balance of activities across the whole WasteWise programme, due to the high number of different activities, along with limitations in ongoing monitoring data. However, a broad assessment shows the programme is focused primarily on private household waste behaviours, with lower levels of focus on the wider public at events, and an even smaller focus on waste within institutions and businesses.

In terms of waste types, most activity is focused on food waste (e.g. prevention, diversion, composting) and recycling. A smaller amount is focused on upcycling and resource recovery/reuse.

The design and delivery of initiatives is – in line with the 'community-led' ethos that guides the WasteWise programme – generally organic. It is driven by a mixture of observation of community needs and ideas arising from within community partner organisations or the WasteWise team, a collaborative approach between two partners. This results in initiatives that are tailored to the communities they are serving, but might not be standardised in terms of focus or delivery approach. Opportunities have been identified through the evaluation to improve the way evidence is used in the development of initiatives.

This community-led delivery approach has both advantages and disadvantages. The challenges experienced by community partners include COVID-19 disruptions, the long-term nature of behaviour change, capacity constraints in some community partners, a need for strong(er) relationships, contracting issues, difficulty with monitoring and evaluation, engagement with the public, and a

reliance on volunteers. Recommendations focus largely on addressing these challenges through better supporting community partners, in part by leveraging Auckland Council's expertise and scale.

Outcomes emerging from these initiatives

The evaluation identified a range of positive outcomes emerging from the WasteWise initiatives, highlighting how on-the-ground behaviour change approaches can support higher-level strategic objectives (e.g. as outlined in Auckland's Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2018).

Actual waste reduction and behavioural change were noted as important outcomes. The majority of those participating in initiatives reported high levels of satisfaction with their experience. The majority also reported that they had made changes or intended to make changes to the way they dealt with their waste in a variety of ways, mainly by improving their composting and recycling behaviours, but also by using reusable items, gardening, changing purchasing habits to avoid plastic, and upcycling and repairing. For example, 82 per cent of respondents reported that they had reduced the waste they produced because of participating in WasteWise initiatives, and 84 per cent said they had shared what they learned with others.

In addition to environmental outcomes the evaluation identified social and economic outcomes experienced by individuals and their communities. The development of community relationships and connections were noted as an important outcome for initiative participants. Depending on the initiative, some members of the public also experienced personal development and improved wellbeing, as well as social and economic support, employment opportunities and positive financial outcomes.

Case studies

Three WasteWise initiatives – ME Family Services in Māngere East, Waiheke Resources Trust (WRT), and Waste Free Parenting (WFP) – were selected as case studies. The aim was to generate learning regarding their set-up and delivery, and to explore participant experiences and self-reported outcomes. There was positive feedback from initiative participants across all three case studies regarding the value of their engagement. Survey respondents reported high levels of satisfaction, and the majority said that they would recommend the initiative to friends or family.

The key strengths of each initiative varied, although three common themes were identified:

- knowledgeable and passionate staff, who were viewed as caring, approachable and non-judgemental
- the provision of impactful and practical information that could be easily implemented into everyday life
- the community focus of ME Family Services and WRT, both of which could draw on extensive local connections and knowledge.

Similar to the overall WasteWise programme of work, the evaluation identified a range of waste-related and other outcomes for organisations and individuals who had engaged with the case study initiatives. These included increased knowledge and skills with regard to waste reduction and general

life competencies, a reduction in household waste, and broader social outcomes such as improved mental health and wellbeing and access to employment. Importantly, it was reported that these outcomes had extended beyond initiative participants into their families/whānau and the wider community, via the sharing of information and skills gained.

Key learning highlighted by staff regarding the set-up and delivery of initiatives included the long-term and flexible approach required, the effectiveness of achievable behaviour change messaging, the value of partnerships and relationship-building with participants and other stakeholders, and the importance of addressing underlying needs to enable waste behaviour change.

Using behavioural insights to reduce waste

This evaluation is supported by a supplementary report titled *A review of interventions to reduce household waste*. This report reviews interventions aiming to reduce waste to landfill that could be adopted by Auckland Council and community partners, and summarises two useful behavioural insights frameworks for use when designing future waste-reduction programmes. The two reports are intended to be used together, where the present report provides specific recommendations for improving the WasteWise programme of work, and the supplementary report on behavioural insights acts as a resource for implementing some of the recommendations.

Recommendations

A number of detailed recommendations are provided across the following areas:

- Improving the capacity of community partners by developing training and mentoring offerings in areas of governance, enterprise, internal administration, communications, monitoring and evaluation, and behavioural science
- Providing more opportunities to strengthen support networks among community partner organisations
- Reviewing the WasteWise programme's focus with maximising impact in mind
- Make better use of behavioural insights frameworks
- Further assisting community partners in engaging with the public
- Improving aspects of funding and contracting
- Further supporting monitoring and evaluation.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Every year, more than 1.6 million tonnes of waste are sent to landfill in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Much of this could be diverted to more productive use, such as compost, or recycled for other purposes, and has the potential to be a valuable resource for Aucklanders by creating jobs, boosting the economy, and improving our care of the environment (such as through reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with organic material going to landfill).

The waste going to Auckland's landfills each year consists of approximately 15 to 20 per cent household waste, 40 to 60 per cent construction and demolition waste, and 25 to 45 per cent other industrial, commercial, and institutional waste, as shown in Figure 1 below.¹

Figure 1. Composition of Auckland's landfills, by source



Auckland Council has set an aspiration for Auckland to achieve zero waste by 2040, known as the Getting to Zero movement, as outlined in Auckland Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2018 (WMMP).² The plan seeks to take care of people and the environment and turn waste into resources, through accomplishing three primary goals:

- Minimise waste generation, by:
 - Advocating for stronger regulatory incentives to reduce waste
 - Advocating for product stewardship to avoid or reduce waste at source
 - Increasing individuals' sense of personal responsibility for waste reduction.
- Maximise opportunities for resource recovery, by:

¹ <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/environmental-plans-strategies/docs/wastemanagementplan/waste-assessment-2017.pdf>

² <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/environmental-plans-strategies/Pages/waste-management-minimisation-plan.aspx>

- Developing infrastructure and processes to enable resource recovery
- Identifying local economic development opportunities through resource recovery
- Achieving operational efficiencies in council's domestic waste and recycling services.
- Reduce harm from residual waste, through:
 - Restricting organic and other harmful waste going to landfill
 - Reducing the incidence of litter and illegal dumping
 - Continuing to manage residual waste effectively and efficiently while progressively reducing Auckland's reliance on landfills.

Achieving these goals requires input from various teams across council, as well as working in partnership with communities and central government agencies such as the Ministry for the Environment. Auckland Council's Waste Solutions department has primary responsibility for implementing the WMMP.

This evaluation focuses on the work of the Community WasteWise team ('the WasteWise team') within the Waste Solutions department. The WasteWise team focuses on driving behaviour change initiatives and partnering with others to achieve a zero-waste Auckland.

The WasteWise team approached council's Research and Evaluation Unit (RIMU) to evaluate what impact their work programme has had on achieving their goal to be a 'catalyst to inspire and enable Aucklanders to live waste free', and to identify areas for improvement.

This evaluation focuses on initiatives delivered by 'community partners' – community-based organisations that are contracted by the WasteWise team to achieve waste reduction outcomes. The term 'Initiatives' is used throughout this report to refer to distinct public-facing interventions delivered by these community partners.

The WasteWise team's overall work programme is made up of multiple initiatives delivered by more than 30 community partner organisations. Many community partners deliver multiple initiatives, some of which have been running in some form for many years.

1.2 The WasteWise team's work programme

The Wastewise team is funded primarily by the Ministry for the Environment's (MfE) waste disposal levy. Through this levy, the team contracts a range of community partner organisations to deliver initiatives designed to reduce various types of waste to landfill. The team has a wide remit in terms of encouraging personal behaviour change and has flexibility to determine where waste-reduction funding is best focused.

Decisions on how to allocate waste disposal levy fundings appear to be driven in part by initial strategic planning on the part of the WasteWise team (seeking to meet the objectives of the 2018 Waste Management and Minimisation Plan and in line with statistics on the most common types of waste going to landfill), and in part by a 'natural evolution' in contracts and initiatives over time in response to changing community needs and new ideas.

The role of WasteWise staff members is primarily to manage the contracts with community partners – leaving the delivery of initiatives to community partner staff. However, in setting up and managing contracts, staff play an important role in determining the focus of initiatives and providing ongoing support for community partners.

The majority (approximately 20) of the current community partner contracts were initiated in 2016, initially for three years. In July 2019, a variation to these contracts was agreed, extending them through to June 2020. Following this one-year extension, a three-year renewal to these contracts was also agreed. In 2020, additional contracts were established with a group of new community partners with the intention of expanding engagement with diverse ethnic and cultural groups. As such, most community partners have been contracted for more than six years. Ethnic Community partners are newer, starting in 2020.

Each year, every partner goes through an annual renewal procurement process where a service agreement is signed by both parties outlining activities and deliverables for the year to come.

At the time of preparing this report the WasteWise team were working on a new procurement plan, expected to be operational in mid-2023.

Most community partners have contracts between \$50,000 and \$80,000 per year, although some newer community partners have lower value contracts between \$10,000 and \$30,000.

Contracts come with obligations on community partners to report on activity and engagement numbers and the WasteWise team provide a generic reporting template for this purpose.

The initiatives that the team funds and supports fall into two broad categories: 1) programmes that are focused on a specific area of waste, and 2) partnerships with community organisations who focus, typically, on encouraging a range of waste reduction behaviours in specific geographic or demographic communities. It is important to note that initiatives within the second category are often responsive to community need and designed by community partners with these needs in mind. Although the two categories of initiatives differ somewhat in terms of how much flexibility community partners have in deciding their activities and approaches, all community partners had notable freedom to try new things and to propose new ways of engaging with the public. The two broad categories of initiatives are described in more detail below.

Note, this evaluation does not look at Auckland Council's Waste Minimisation and Innovation Fund (WMIF), which provides grants to support waste minimisation projects. A comparison of the relative effectiveness of the different approaches taken for the WMIF and by the WasteWise team could be the focus of a future project.

1.2.1 Dedicated programmes that focus on one main source of waste

The dedicated programmes include the following:

- Compost Collective³ – aims to reduce waste to landfill by encouraging members of the public to compost
- Love Food Hate Waste⁴ – aims to avoid food wastage through better cooking and planning skills
- Waste Free Parenting⁵ – works with parents to adopt sustainable parenting approaches, particularly by using reusable nappies
- Zero Waste Events⁶ – working with event organisers to use more sustainable consumables, and providing bins free of charge to better sort waste and recycle at events
- The Anti-litter Champions⁷ – a programme designed to reduce litter in public spaces and to raise awareness about waste in general

These dedicated programmes have varied origins, with some (e.g. Love Food Hate Waste and Waste Free Parenting) also delivered nationally via other, non-Auckland Council sources of funding. In all cases, however, WasteWise funding has significantly supported delivery of these programmes in Auckland.

Although these programmes may have some overlapping impacts on other waste behaviours (e.g. composting workshops may incidentally cover recycling or reducing food wastage), their intent is focused primarily on one waste ‘problem’.

1.2.2 Community partner initiatives that focus on multiple sources of waste

The second category of initiatives seeks to engage specific geographic or demographic communities on waste reduction across multiple domains. These initiatives are delivered by community partner organisations⁸. They include activities that aim to:

- Educate and motivate members of the public (adults and children) about the range of ways to minimise waste
- Encourage households to compost or bokashi
- Provide compost to the community
- Help households avoid food waste at home
- Teach gardening skills and coordinating community gardens

³ <https://compostcollective.org.nz/>

⁴ <https://lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/>

⁵ <https://katemeads.co.nz/pages/waste-free-parenting>

⁶ <https://zerowasteevents.org.nz/>

⁷ <https://earthactiontrust.org.nz/our-programmes/>

⁸ Note, some community partners are also contracted to deliver the dedicated programmes described above (e.g. Compost Collective or Love Food Hate Waste workshops).

- Provide community food services that are focused on diverting potential commercial food waste to meet community need
- Encourage recycling
- Provide workshops on how to repurpose and upcycle household items (e.g. mending and sewing courses, making reusable bags and other household items)
- Encourage the purchase and use of reusable products rather than single-use products
- Provide resource recovery⁹ services for the community where unused items can be donated and picked up for free
- Provide waste audits to organisations
- Work with event organisers to reduce waste at events
- Improve waste management within marae, schools and other organisations
- Coordinate stream and public space clean ups
- Discourage illegal dumping.

Community partners report employing a wide range of engagement approaches and communication channels to encourage behaviour change in the above-listed areas, including engagement with people in public spaces, delivering workshops and presentations, running community gardens, attending community markets, helping event organisers, newsletters, social media, running recycling and resource recovery centres, organising networking events, door-knocking, and educating at schools. The ways in which initiatives are designed is discussed in Section 3.3.

1.2.3 The overall balance of initiatives across the WasteWise programme

The large number of different activities, and limitations in ongoing monitoring data, means there are challenges in quantifying the exact balance of activities across all community partners.

Looking at the focus areas described in Sections 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, however, it is possible to characterise the collective WasteWise programme as having an overall strong focus on food waste, moderate-to-strong focus on recycling, moderate focus on both upcycling/reuse and event-related waste, and a relatively lower focus on waste produced within businesses and other institutions. Note, this is the evaluation team's characterisation of the WasteWise programme of work as a result of reviewing team documentation, talking to WasteWise staff and community partners.

Figure 2 below shows our estimate of the types of *behaviours* the WasteWise programme aims to target. The dominance of food and recycling-related activities is evident.

⁹ Resource recovery in this context refers to separating materials from waste that can be reused by someone else or informally recycled into new products, and is actioned with the goal of diverting as much waste from landfill as possible

Figure 2. Estimated focus of the WasteWise programme in terms of waste behaviour

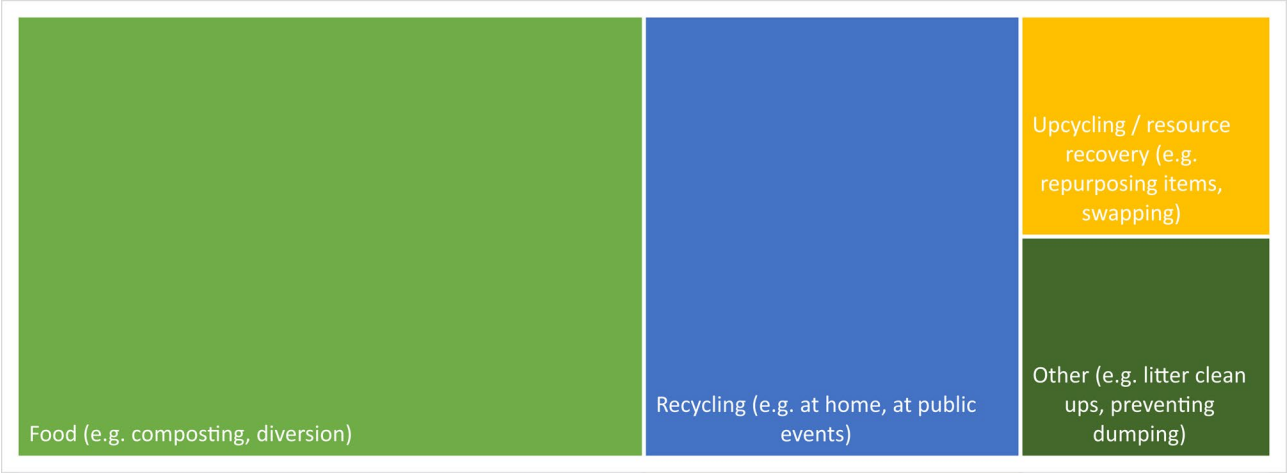


Figure 3 below shows our estimate of the audiences being engaged by the WasteWise programme, regardless of behaviour. Private households are the main audience, although members of the public at events, and institutions such as marae and schools also feature. Direct engagement with businesses is occurring (e.g. via provision of waste audits), but this is a smaller component of community partners’ work.

Figure 3. Estimated focus of the WasteWise programme in terms of waste source



1.2.4 The delivery approach used by the WasteWise team

The WasteWise team have adopted a ‘community-led approach’ for most of their programme of work.¹⁰ In practice, this means community organisations are contracted by the WasteWise team to design and deliver waste reduction activities for their own communities. While the delivery of waste-reduction initiatives rests with the community partners, the WasteWise team seek to work

¹⁰ The one partial exception is the Waste Free Parenting programme, which is delivered by a business that contracts across New Zealand in the area of waste free parenting. The delivery approach is similar to many of the community partners, and so this distinction is not a meaningful one.

collaboratively with the partner organisations to assist with design, reporting, networking and capacity building. Findings relating to how well community partners are supported feature throughout this document.

For many of their contracts, WasteWise staff reported proactively approaching existing community organisations who are working in specific geographic areas or with particular demographic groups, about delivering waste initiatives. In such circumstances, the WasteWise staff may also suggest different types of activities or initiatives for the community partner to deliver, based on their experience of what works in other circumstances.

1.3 Purpose of the evaluation

The evaluation was commissioned to provide evidence on progress to date, key learnings and opportunities for improvement. It is anticipated that the information from this evaluation will be used to support the WasteWise team in determining the focus of their investment and how best to support community partners to achieve meaningful waste reduction across Auckland's communities. Ultimately, it will help determine the effectiveness of the WasteWise team's contributions to achieving Getting to Zero.

The evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What were the key learnings from the set-up and delivery of initiatives?
- 2) What are the emerging outcomes of the initiatives?
- 3) How could the initiatives or overall work programmes be improved?

The evaluation focused on waste-reduction initiatives delivered by community partners. Because of the large number of community partners and even larger number of initiatives delivered by these organisations, the evaluation sought a broad assessment of the work programme to identify key insights across the initiatives, complemented by specific case studies profiling three community partners in detail.

The evaluation was undertaken in mid-2022 by RIMU alongside Rachael Butler, an independent social researcher.

1.4 This report

This report contains the findings and recommendations from the evaluation. The sections in this report outline:

- How the evaluation was conducted
- Findings regarding how initiatives were set up and delivered
- Findings regarding emerging outcomes
- A summary of case study findings
- Recommendations for improvement.

This evaluation is supported by a supplementary report titled *A review of interventions to reduce household waste*. This supporting document reviews interventions aiming to reduce waste to landfill that could be adopted by Auckland Council and community partners, and summarises two useful behavioural insights frameworks for use when designing future waste-reduction programmes.

2. How the evaluation was conducted

The evaluation took a mixed-methods approach to gathering information. Due to the large number of community partners and initiatives involved in the WasteWise programme of work, it was not considered feasible to conduct an in-depth evaluation of every initiative. Therefore, several complementary methods were used to answer the evaluation questions, by providing broad, high-level information across the programme of work, supplemented by data from a small number of community partners to generate specific insights.

The evaluation data collection occurred between March and August 2022.

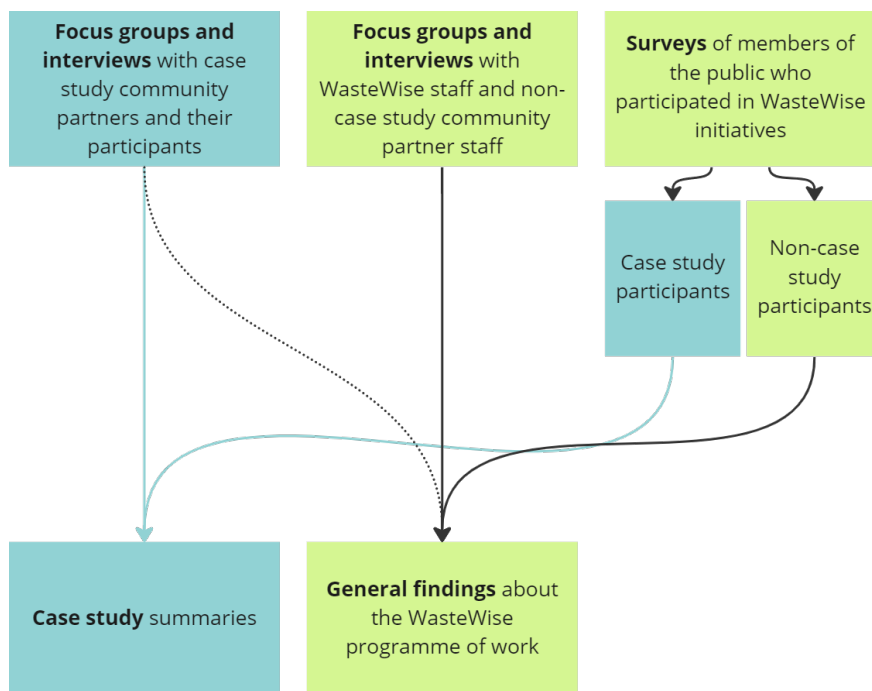
2.1 Data collected

A multi-layered approach to evaluation was employed, which included collecting the following data:

- **Case study interviews and focus groups:** These were used to explore the work delivered by three community partners in detail. Interviews were conducted with community partner staff, WasteWise staff and members of the public who participated in community partner initiatives.
- **Focus groups with WasteWise staff and staff from non-case study community partners:** To identify patterns relating to initiative set-up and delivery, key learnings and insights, and areas for improvement across all initiatives.
- **A survey of members of the public who participated in WasteWise initiatives:** To understand high-level impacts of WasteWise initiatives on waste-related behaviours. Note, this survey included people who participated in initiatives delivered by the three case study community partners. Responses of these individuals are included in the overall summary of survey findings, as well as reported specifically in the case study sections themselves.

The interrelationships among these sources of information are seen in Figure 4 below and each are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Figure 4. Sources of data collected as part of the evaluation



Quotes from these sources of data are presented throughout the report, attributed to either ‘Community partner’, ‘WasteWise staff’, or ‘Member of the public’.

The evaluation was also informed by a review of **existing monitoring data**. Community partners provide monitoring data capturing their activities and partnerships over the previous financial year (e.g. number of workshops conducted, number of attended events, number of volunteers, etc.). These data were reviewed by the evaluation team to understand the balance and focus of activities being delivered.

The evaluation team also undertook a **rapid literature scan** to understand behavioural science approaches and interventions aiming to reduce waste, which could be adopted by Auckland Council and community partners. Findings from the literature review have been published in a separate, accompanying document.

The evaluation approach was reviewed by Auckland Council’s Research Ethics Advisory Group in December 2021.

2.1.1 Case study interviews and focus groups

As a means of generating learning regarding the set up and delivery of initiatives, and to identify emerging outcomes, three WasteWise initiatives acted as case studies for the evaluation. These were selected in collaboration with the WasteWise team and included:

- Māngere East Family Services (MEFS)
- Waiheke Resources Trust (WRT)
- Waste Free Parenting (WFP).

A mixed methods approach was adopted for this phase of the evaluation:

- A total of 26 semi-structured interviews with project stakeholders (e.g. council and community partner staff) and members of the public who had participated in activities delivered by the community partner
- Analysis of the subset of responses from the online survey for respondents who had participated in at least one of the case study's activities (see section 2.1.3 for further information on this)
- A review of secondary data sources (e.g. work plans, monitoring data collected by the initiative).

Possible interview participants were initially identified by WasteWise staff, who informed them about the evaluation and invited them to participate. The details of those who agreed to take part were provided to the evaluation team who subsequently made contact and organised a time for the interview.

Interviews were primarily conducted on-line¹¹; these were around one hour in duration, and all were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with participants' permission. Initiative participants who took part in an interview received a small koha¹² as an acknowledgement of their contribution to the evaluation. A thematic analysis¹³ of the data was conducted to explore and map out themes from the discussions, with NVivo software utilised to process and code transcripts.

2.1.2 Focus groups with WasteWise staff and staff from non-case study community partners

Four qualitative focus groups were conducted in June 2022. Two of the groups comprised members of the WasteWise team, and the other two consisted of representatives from community partner organisations¹⁴. As with the case studies, the WasteWise team initially identified a long-list of potential participants, and then the evaluation team contacted individuals (excluding the WasteWise team from this further communication, in order to maintain participant confidentiality).

The focus groups were facilitated by the evaluation team and structured by a discussion guide. They supported information gathered from the case studies by providing a broader exploration of key issues across the whole programme of work.

The two groups with the WasteWise team took place in person, while the two community partner groups were conducted over Microsoft Teams. This allowed community partners, located across the Auckland region, greater flexibility in their ability to participate.

¹¹ COVID-19-related restrictions were in place during much of the data collection phase. Therefore, the vast majority of interviews were conducted via Teams or Zoom, with four face-to-face interviews undertaken at one of the case study sites once these had been lifted.

¹² This was a \$60 supermarket voucher.

¹³ Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

¹⁴ This excluded the initiatives that had been selected as case studies.

In total, 16 people participated across the four groups – seven WasteWise staff and nine community partner staff.

As with case study data, focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and thematically analysed using NVivo. Themes emerging from analysis can be found in the subsequent sections of this report.

2.1.3 Survey of members of the public who participated in WasteWise initiatives

An online survey was disseminated to members of the public who had participated in initiatives delivered by WasteWise partners in the 18 months prior, with the objective of gathering information about both short- and long-term impacts. A period of 18 months was chosen to reflect disruptions to normal public engagement due to COVID-19.

The survey explored the types of WasteWise activities that individuals had participated in, their satisfaction with the activities, intended changes to their behaviour, and other changes to their attitudes and understanding of how to reduce their waste. The survey questions can be found in the Appendix.

The online survey was administered using Ubiquity from May to July 2022. The evaluation team worked with community partners to disseminate the online survey link. Out of 35 community partners, 19 were able to forward the link to individuals who had participated in their initiatives. The remaining were unable to participate, given that the nature of their activities meant they did not collect participants' contact information and, therefore, did not have mailing lists.

A \$100 supermarket voucher prize draw was offered to respondents who completed the survey.

A subset of the main survey questions was also disseminated to individuals who had participated in a Compost Collective workshop in the six months prior.¹⁵

A total of 499 valid responses were received (after the removal of 30 blank or duplicate responses), providing a robust sample from which to draw conclusions. Survey data were analysed using SPSS and open-text responses were thematically coded.

2.2 Strengths and limitations of this evaluation

Strengths of the evaluation approach included:

- **The close working relationship between the WasteWise team and the evaluation team facilitated connections with community partners.** Clear information was provided by the WasteWise team to community partners about the purpose of the evaluation, which enabled their buy-in of it as an exercise to understand what was working well and what additional

¹⁵ Compost Collective participants were asked how satisfied they were with the workshop(s) they attended, why they felt that way (open text), and how much they agreed with a range of statements about the impact of attending the compost collective workshop(s).

support they might need, rather than as an audit of their activities. This in turn allowed the evaluation team to gather a wide range of information, including a survey of members of the public that garnered a large number of responses.

Limitations of the evaluation approach included:

- **The self-reported nature of outcomes:** The evaluation relies on initiative participant and community partner staff reports of outcomes they experienced as a result of engaging with WasteWise activities. Self report, in contrast to more objective measurements of behaviour such as weighing household waste, are more prone to self-report and desirability bias, where positive changes are over-reported.
- **Lack of pre- and post-evaluation data on changes experienced by initiative participants over time:** Due to the nature of the evaluation, the evaluation team was only able to undertake a post-survey of initiative participants to explore the changes and outcomes they experienced over time. An inability to compare this against any attitudinal or behavioural data prior to engaging with WasteWise activities makes it challenging to attribute outcomes to specific initiatives.
- **Potential bias in the sampling of initiative participants for the survey and the case studies:** Community partners helped identify and recruit potential participants for the case studies, meaning there may be some bias in the types of participants that the evaluation team was able to access. Similarly, community partners were asked to forward the online survey link to participants. There may be biases in participant contact lists since those who do not want to be contacted by community partners may opt out of communications. Overall, this may mean that those who had a neutral or more negative experience were excluded from participation in the evaluation.
- **Resourcing and funding for the evaluation:** This introduced some constraints for the evaluation as it limited data collection in some areas.

These limitations mean the evaluation was not able to accurately quantify the causal effects of the WasteWise initiatives¹⁶, and there is some risk of over-reporting initiative outcomes.

¹⁶ Determining the causal effect of WasteWise funded initiatives would require a randomised controlled trial, or similar, where objective measures of participants' waste behaviour are recorded and compared to Aucklanders who did not participate in the initiatives.

3. Findings related to initiative set-up and delivery

Section 1.2 describes the WasteWise team's work programme, in terms of overall focus and delivery approach. The following sections summarise feedback received from community partner and WasteWise staff (including case study interviewees) on the focus and delivery model, and details key learning regarding the design and delivery of initiatives.

3.1 The focus of initiatives across the WasteWise programme

Analysis of monitoring data and discussions with WasteWise and community partner staff indicates a strong focus across the initiatives delivered by community partners on food waste, a moderate-to-strong focus on recycling, a moderate focus on both upcycling/reuse and event-related waste, and a relatively lower focus on waste produced within businesses and other institutions.

When asked whether this balance seemed correct, two community partners highlighted opportunities in concentrating on waste produced by customer-facing businesses such as hospitality, and hair and beauty salons.

Now, hospitality businesses are a big source of waste. And I think Waste Solutions needs to do some work in that area, because early this year, we ran a waste management survey in hospitality businesses in Dominion Road, Mount Eden. There were 62 businesses that we have done a face-to-face survey [with]. And a lot of them obviously do not meet the standard of waste management. (Community partner)

The hair and beauty industry, which [...is a] very high-waste industry. [They have] really no concept, I think, about what is happening with their waste, and as you can imagine they mix it all together. So we've got some pretty horrific chemicals actually going straight into landfill from that industry. (Community partner)

WasteWise staff indicated that workload pressures meant it had been some time since they had reflected strategically on whether the overall balance of initiatives is optimal and how future investment might address any imbalances. Recommendations relating to dedicating time to refresh the overall programme of work are provided in Section 6.1.

3.2 Feedback on the delivery approach

Participants provided a range of feedback on the perceived value of the community-led delivery approach.

Benefits of the community-led model: WasteWise staff and community partners described the community-led delivery approach positively. Both groups highlighted when seeking to deliver

community-focused initiatives, engagement with the community tends to be more successful when led by an organisation with well-established connections in the community. As such, this model often involves small, localised community partner organisations delivering for and within their community.

Interviewees described the delivery approach as designed from the 'bottom-up', which can be beneficial as it avoids council imposing solutions that may not be appropriate for specific communities. The approach is founded on the idea that the solutions might already be in the community, and it is about tapping into these solutions, leveraging them, and connecting people who might contribute to their enactment. This increases the chances that the approach is tailored and responsive to the community, and facilitates buy-in and enthusiasm from locals.

In terms of community led... we work together with community. It's about working with the willing and fanning the fires that are already lit. (Community partner)

It's sort of working with them where they're at and aligning with what they're passionate about and growing. It's like if there's a little seedling there then if you can nurture it and grow it, it's a lot easier than kind of starting with a blank slate and having to do all the digging. (Community partner)

Challenges of the community-led model: Finding and working with community partners who have sufficiently close connections in localised communities comes with some challenges. In many cases, such organisations are small and have strong practical skills, but struggle with other aspects of running their organisations, such as preparing funding applications, dealing with contract and service agreement documentation, setting up suitable governance structures, and supporting and managing staff and volunteers. These, and other, challenges are discussed in more detail in Section 3.4.

3.3 How are initiatives designed and developed?

An objective of this evaluation was to document how initiatives have been designed and developed over time.

The wide purview of the WasteWise programme of work means that initiatives have developed in different ways. Each initiative differs in terms of which waste behaviour(s) they focus on, what engagement approaches they use, and what content they present.

A lot of community partner relationships, and resultant initiatives delivered by community partners, were initiated by WasteWise staff reaching out to community groups rather than the community groups asking for funding. In proactively reaching out to community partners, WasteWise staff also play a strong role in the design and shaping of initiatives in partnership with community partner staff, largely by suggesting things to try based on their experience of what has worked elsewhere.

3.3.1 Dedicated programmes generally leverage existing initiatives

The dedicated programmes, described in Section 1.2.1, are each focused on a specific waste behaviour (e.g. composting, food waste, parenting waste) and most have leveraged and expanded existing initiatives already delivered by external organisations (e.g. Compost Collective, Love Food Hate Waste, Waste Free Parenting). These initiatives are typically based around running workshops with interested individuals, supported by a range of other engagement activities, for example:

With the Compost Collective, a lot of it was driven from organic waste being a major priority in the waste management plan. And so [we asked ourselves] ‘okay, what can we do about that?’. So [we] came at it from more of a behaviour change lens, and that drove the programme. But ... the initial programme has changed significantly, in response to each facilitator or community group that delivers a workplan, and they do it in quite different ways. Responding to what works for their community. (WasteWise staff)

In addition to leveraging existing work, funding for the dedicated programmes has enabled the organisations delivering them to expand their work and reach, and has provided certainty for planning into the future.

3.3.2 Community partner initiatives are broader focused and more ad hoc in nature

In contrast, many initiatives delivered by community partners have been developed from scratch because of WasteWise funding. In many cases, community partners have been contracted to design and deliver initiatives that seek to reduce multiple types of waste within specific geographic or demographic communities.

As a result, community partner initiatives are more ad hoc, and less standardised in nature, in terms of which behaviour(s) to focus on, what engagement approaches to employ, and what content to deliver.

The design of the initiatives themselves is often a result of discussions between the WasteWise team and community partner staff, as well as inspiration gained from other initiatives delivered by colleagues in the waste sector. The quotes below describe how WasteWise reach out to community organisations, and how they develop initiative ideas together:

... there might be a community group or demographic that we're trying to reach, [for example] the ethnic community project that [that we just discussed. For that we] reached out to groups that are already working in that area and said ‘what can you do in the waste space?’ (WasteWise staff)

[The WasteWise contract manager] suggested the activities. She suggested some ideas. She was welcoming of new ideas if we had anything else to add. (Community partner)

Initiatives also tend to evolve over time, as community partners try different ideas and modify their approach. Participants describe making changes to initiatives in response to changing needs in the community, specific suggestions from community members (including initiative participants), and feedback from enthusiastic staff members.

I would say that our ideas are very much the conversations that we are having with members of our community. (Community partner)

We just keep a real ear to the community. We're really tied into the community here and we're trying to tap into that again and again to keep refining our projects. We have never stayed still on a project. (Community partner)

Community partners might spend time tailoring existing initiatives (e.g. Live Lightly) for their target audience. Community partners talked about focusing on making waste reduction meaningful for people (e.g. making sure resources are in people's primary languages) and building on existing networks in the community.

3.3.3 Behavioural research is not widely used in the design of initiatives

The last decade has seen a growth in applied behavioural research, turning behavioural science principles toward addressing real-world problems. Some of this research has been focused specifically on waste reduction, while other research provides useful general principles for designing behaviour change programmes.

Discussions with community partner and WasteWise staff indicated that while there was some awareness of the existence of behavioural research exploring strategies to encourage various waste behaviours, it is not used in a systematic way in the design of initiatives. One WasteWise staff member describes how the team has not applied a behavioural science approach to the design of specific initiatives, in part due to concerns around undermining the community-led nature of current initiatives.

In terms of really focusing on waste minimisation, we haven't gone through the exercise [of applying behavioural science approaches] yet. You know, what are all the behaviours, all the barriers, what are we going to make our priority. [We haven't done it] partly because if we do that, it's ... a very prescribed way of focusing on an intervention, which might be effective in waste minimization, but you will lose the dimension of community development, community empowerment. (WasteWise staff)

There are likely ways to combine behavioural science approaches for more effective programme design with existing community-led approaches to reap the benefits of both methods. For example, this could involve training and empowering community partners in the application of behavioural science for use alongside their current community engagement approaches.

The evaluation team have produced a review of behavioural research, and relevant toolkits, in an accompanying document titled *A review of interventions to reduce household waste*.

3.3.4 Most initiatives are about more than just waste

In line with the community-led development approach, interviewees described needing to look at the bigger picture in people's lives to understand what might motivate them to change. Community partners described frequently encountering members of the community with more pressing and urgent needs than waste reduction and, as a result, they sought to address these in the first instance, in order to enable waste behaviour change.

[We're] dealing with people who aren't just coming along for a waste workshop but they might have violence at home as well, and they might have kids that are in trouble with the law. So you have to have quite a big skillset to be able to not only deliver a waste workshop but actually listen to people and figure out, link them up with [other social services]. (Community partner)

Because we are a migrant led organisation. We cannot separate the needs of migrants from what we're doing. (Community partner)

You've got clothing, you've got your money and then you can finally see you've got your housing. These are the biggest barriers for our whānau and that's what they really think about at the moment instead of all this learn[ing] about rubbish. But we'll slowly interact that into a way that it does work for their whānau once they're in their house, we could tackle those little wee things. (Community partner)

As a result, many of the community partner initiatives and activities are not just concerned with waste minimisation, but also focus on broader issues such as building community connections and relationships, pathways to employment, opportunities for skill development, and health and wellbeing. Section 4 notes some of the outcomes observed in these areas.

3.4 Challenges

Community partners and WasteWise staff highlighted a range of challenges in delivering waste reduction initiatives across Auckland, as outlined below.

3.4.1 COVID-19 caused disruption

As with many public-facing activities during 2020-2022, COVID-19 has disrupted the WasteWise programme of work.

Most community partners reported a reduction in activity as the country went through various COVID-related lockdowns. In-person activities – a staple of most initiatives – became impossible, and many potential participants and stakeholders were less inclined to engage with waste-related issues as they dealt with more pressing health and employment concerns. Most community partners moved to online delivery of workshops and community engagement, but still experienced a decrease in engagement and attendance.

It's a very face-to-face community and so we have done stuff online and I think we have reached a different audience, and that's been a learning curve for us trying to figure out how you reach people online. It's not necessarily everyone's forte and we have I guess relied on face-to-face 'cause that's how the community prefers to operate, it's all about relationships and making those connections and because we're not really open, we're just open for booked appointments now, so we've really lost that kind of drop-in hub kind of a feeling, which is sad because it was really pumping. (Community partner)

COVID-19 also impacted the ability of many community partner organisations to plan for the medium- and long-term. Organisations shifted to focusing on their more immediate survival and keeping staff employed. One participant described how they had only recently (August 2022) started planning again for the long term:

What [COVID] did do was ... stop us being able to make any strategic plans over those three years... strategy stopped altogether. It was like we were just in survival, crisis mode... It's actually only just changed since the beginning of this year... (Community partner)

COVID-19 also had some silver linings: It encouraged some community partners to think about new initiatives they could deliver, and online engagement – while less accessible to some audiences – resulted in waste initiatives being more accessible to others (e.g. working professionals, expectant parents). Similarly, some interviewees reported that the public became more aware of the importance of growing food during the pandemic, due to both financial concerns and having more time at home.

Some community partners used the lockdowns to foster and strengthen relationships. One community partner, for example, extended their ability to source food for the community by increasing the number of potential commercial providers, and arranging a van for collections. This has resulted in more food waste being diverted toward community use and will play an important role in the success of their food recovery café as it re-opens in spring 2022.

3.4.2 Changing behaviour takes time

There are no quick fixes to shifting waste-related attitudes and behaviours. Community partners describe needing to adopt a longer-term focus made up of incremental changes that build on one another.

You will not be able to swoop in and make incredible change really quickly ... it's a huge investment of time to build relationships. It might go nowhere and that's okay and you kind of have to be okay with those not going anywhere... Trying to empower community when those people are multifaceted and they're not just working on waste things can be a real challenge ... you didn't always see the fruition of what you thought was the time investment into there. (Community partner)

Encouraging lower waste behaviour is a slow task for a range of reasons. As noted in Section 3.3, many Aucklanders have other, more pressing life concerns that need to be addressed before they can

focus on waste. Even for those with greater capacity to consider waste issues, a lot of waste-related behaviour is habit, and changing habits takes time. In addition, building relationships with new audiences, including local community members, is not always achieved quickly.

3.4.3 Varied capacity amongst community partners

Many community partners are small, volunteer-supported organisations. They are staffed by passionate individuals with a range of skills. However, the size and community-focused nature of the work means that some have limited capacity and skills in a range of areas. Interviewees noted that ‘capacity’ could be a challenge in a range of areas, including:

- Governance (e.g. separation of governance and management functions, governance structures and processes)
- Enterprise (e.g. generating diverse funding sources)
- Internal administration (e.g. supporting their staff, human resources, and health and safety processes)
- Communications and storytelling
- How to evaluate the impact of their work
- How to make use of published research findings to improve their initiatives.

[For] many community organisations, their management and their governance are combined together, because [they’re] small organisations [with] mainly volunteers... this is challenging for many, they don’t have any proper governance, [and] therefore that will have an impact on their long-term, big-picture growth. (WasteWise staff)

For [community partner], we’re getting a business consultant to come in and do a business plan with them. Because they’ve got so many income streams that they could build on. So it’s building the enterprise capacity. There’s a lot of them that want to get into that space, but they don’t have that way of thinking. (WasteWise staff)

Not all community partners have needs in all these areas, as some are large, established organisations with very few capacity constraints. Likewise, not all community partners have the same appetite for growth in funding and activity.

A specific capacity challenge experienced by community partners engaging with some migrant and ethnic communities is the expectation from their communities that they represent all aspects of Auckland Council and be available to answer questions outside of their contracted area. For many in these communities, the community partner may be their only contact with Auckland Council. Those in this position reported wanting additional support in managing such questions.

The WasteWise team plays an important role in supporting community partners and already assists with capacity building, through, for example, providing monitoring advice and support, and arranging networking events for community partners. However, there are opportunities to expand and formalise the support provided. Several recommendations for supporting community partners are provided in Section .

We probably need to get more intentional about the opportunities and build into our budget or their contract a certain amount for professional development. (WasteWise staff)

3.4.4 The importance of relationships among community partners

For most community partners, relationships with other waste-focused organisations are highly valued. Having a network of fellow waste-passionate practitioners provides ideas, inspiration, and energy for community partner staff.

I just think that partnering and going alongside those that share the same values and aspirations for the community is probably one of the key wonders, it's just amazing. It's just that that's when the magic happens. (Community partner)

Some community partners have good networks, but others appear to be working more in isolation. Those without good networks, or who recognised that there was a disjointed approach to waste minimisation, expressed a strong desire to develop stronger connections with others working in the field. One community partner describes how they sought to address this in their area:

One of the things we did early on when we first started the contract was ... we formed a sustainability network ... it's really difficult to get people to work together and I think partly it's the way that we're all funded and we're kind of competing with each, even though we're supposedly on the same page in terms of what we're trying to achieve... it's very fragmented and siloed. And so the network was an opportunity for people to regularly come together and say 'this is what I'm doing and this is what's coming up, and maybe we could work together on this', that kind of thing. (Community partner)

The WasteWise team already provides some opportunities for networking (e.g. via skills share networking events and the Zero Waste Awards contract), although some of these have been disrupted by COVID-19. Our discussions with community partner staff indicated there would be significant benefits in facilitating further connections amongst community partners. Recommendations along these lines are provided in Section 6.3.

3.4.5 Contracting

Challenges associated with obtaining funding and agreeing contracts were mentioned by many community partners, with the key issues raised outlined below.

Administrative burden of contracting processes: Difficulties included the inexperience of some community partner staff and volunteers in preparing proposals, negotiating contracts, and agreeing annual service agreements, as well as the time required to do these things.

The skills that are actually required to put a funding application or an RFP [are quite advanced]... those documents that come out from Auckland Council. I'm like, 'oh, man, you've got to be joking me', like there are hours and hours and hours of work actually going into those documents. (Community partner)

A robust process and documentation are important for ensuring acceptable use of public money. However, the WasteWise team recognises the administrative burden placed on some community partners and has worked to simplify some of the processes. As evident in the comments below, some community partners acknowledged and appreciated these changes:

I'm really grateful that we didn't have to jump through all those giant hoops to get the funding we have for our waste minimisation and sustainability. That is, so it was accessible to us to be able to fill out those forms. And I'm really grateful for having a partnership, because... you had to do quite a bit of paperwork, but it seemed a lot easier... It wasn't difficult... (Community partner)

In a similar vein, WasteWise staff also reported experiencing a high administrative load from managing the contracts themselves under the current system.

The systems that we have in place right now. It is admin heavy. (WasteWise staff)

Different contracting processes across council: Some community partners hold multiple contracts across multiple council teams, each of which may have different processes. WasteWise staff reported that sometimes there could be low awareness across council teams of what other teams are doing and seeking to achieve. In such cases, this presents a strategic risk to council, where funding is not necessarily most efficiently used to obtain shared outcomes across departments.

It was not always clear whether all the frustrations shared by community partners were related to WasteWise contracts alone, or extended to other parts of Auckland Council

Current funding levels: Community partners also mentioned a desire for contracts to better account for inflation over time. A lack of adjustment for increasing costs means long-term contractors feel they are being asked to deliver the same level of outcomes for less money. It also makes it hard to retain staff, with multiple community partners noting turnover due to inability to pay their staff enough.

Our budget hasn't changed in years, yet the delivery expectation is still the same as what it was 10 years ago, but with the same money, which makes it really challenging as a contractor to still give the best value for less money with costs going up. (Community partner)

We're lucky that there were two of us that stuck around for as long as we have but it's not a lot of money... We did end up losing someone last year that was brilliant but couldn't survive on what we could offer them... (Community partner)

Contract duration: Similar to concerns regarding inflation, community partners also highlighted that shorter contract lengths (e.g. 12 months) make it harder to retain staff who are seeking more job security. It was not clear from community partner participants whether they were referring to the 12-month contract extension to all WasteWise contracts that occurred in 2019, or the 'annual renewal procurement process' where service agreements are signed by both parties outlining activities and

deliverables for the year to come. WasteWise staff reported working on a new procurement plan for effect in 2023, which could extend the length of service agreements.

WasteWise staff recognised the challenges experienced by community partners, especially those resulting from requirements to renew agreements yearly. Ministry for the Environment yearly waste disposal levy funding arrangements mean that longer-term contracts and service agreement timeframes can be challenging for the WasteWise team and pose financial risks to Auckland Council, due to uncertainty around future funding levels. The current yearly timeframes associated with service agreements often mean that there is a rush to spend money within a given financial year, which might not always lead to the best long-term waste outcomes or promote stability in community partner organisations.

We don't know how much we're getting from the waste levy every year. (WasteWise staff)

Supplier diversity: Delays in procurement processes meant that supplier diversity was limited, which prevented innovation, as well as broader or more targeted engagement with specific demographic or geographic communities. For instance, some WasteWise staff noted that there was only one small community partner contracted to engage with a particular ethnic community, despite this being a sizable community across Auckland. The resource of this community partner did not match the size of and diversity within the community, limiting how effectively they could engage and undertake innovative, tailored delivery.

For example, in the Pasifika space, we only have one community partner. Considering Auckland has the biggest Pasifika community in the whole of Aotearoa, the expectation would be that there would be more representation in the space, but there's not. [Community partner] is under-resourced. I would like to see us be able to support more up and coming groups and energies. (WasteWise staff)

3.4.6 Monitoring and evaluation

Challenges with monitoring and evaluation are experienced by most community partners, and is an example of a specific capacity constraint as highlighted in Section 3.3.4.

A multitude of difficulties with monitoring and evaluation were reported in the evaluation:

- Not all community partners have the degree of technical skills required to undertake monitoring and evaluation.
- Some small community partners have very limited human resource to devote to administration and reporting.
- Monitoring and evaluation require early planning in order to collect data at the right time in the right way. Some community partners might miss crucial moments to collect the data they require in order to report the extent and impact of their activities.
- For 'action-focused' community partner staff, monitoring can feel like an administrative load that is taking away time from the delivery of initiatives

- Collecting data can be challenging, even for highly trained researchers (e.g. low response rates due to reluctance amongst initiative participants to complete surveys or provide follow-up data on changes to waste behaviour). Data collection becomes harder over time which make tracking longer-term impacts very difficult.
- Attributing impact to specific interventions can be difficult, especially when members of the public participating in activities may have been exposed to other waste-related messages from other organisations.

As a result, community partners generally struggle with evaluation and monitoring, and need to be supported, encouraged, and reminded to do it.

I find the reporting document challenging... it takes a couple of hours a week, just to keep on top of it. (Community partner)

A review of the monitoring data provided by community partners over time reveals some of the challenges experienced. Instances of likely overcounting (e.g. counting the whole population of a school as engaged when placing waste collections bins in the school) and double counting (e.g. reporting the number of people engaged in two reporting categories) were observed in reporting from previous years. The WasteWise team have worked with community partners to support accurate and timely reporting, and this appears to be reflected in an improvement in statistics presented over time. This is likely to be an ongoing challenge and will require continued support and training of community partners to ensure accurate data. It may be beneficial to continually reinforce the importance of collecting data over time to build up a robust evidence base, as a means for sourcing alternative funding streams, as this will help highlight the value of this activity as a core component for community partners.

Undertaking evaluation within the WasteWise team can also be a challenge. One staff member describes how programme trials could be better conducted:

I feel like we do a lot of 'pilots'... without doing the proper, like, evaluating and then scaling (Wastewise staff)

3.4.7 Engagement with the public

More generally, community partners described a range of issues in relation to engaging members of the public, including falling workshop attendance due to COVID-19, which has, for some, persisted after lockdowns eased in late 2021; an increase in the number of 'no shows' where people book but do not attend or inform the community partner they can no longer attend; as well as challenges engaging individuals who have not thought about waste issues before.

Community workshops ... [have] been a bit shaky for a while, even pre-COVID... we'd schedule something and then it wouldn't happen [because the volunteer group organising it cancelled], or you'd only get two people turn up. (Community partner)

Some community partners had tried different approaches, with some success, to decrease no shows and/or increase overall engagement. These included offering nominal charges, providing food or other ‘incentives’, and reminding participants of upcoming events.

Some described the value of existing resources for engaging members of their community, but challenges in accessing them. For example, they reported hearing about interesting events or activities from the WasteWise team too late to enable them to incorporate them into their work programmes. The Zero Waste Zone was mentioned in particular, with community partners desiring more assistance to gain access to this resource:

Booking the Zero Waste Zone is very difficult. They like to educate the [school] students, but for a community group, we really had to do a lot of things and wait a lot before we can get just one chance each year to go in and have a look... I would like to do more, but just one time involves a lot of work already... I don't know who to contact, who would be the person who can book us in... we have to fill in a lot of forms... then we have to wait till the time comes, only one time is given, and not within a week or two. But we'll have to wait for a month or two. I find it not so easy [to organise]. (Community partner)

Another theme that emerged in discussions was the inclusion of a range of ‘harder to reach’ communities in WasteWise programmes and initiatives. Auckland is ethnically and culturally diverse and this creates the need for a diverse range of approaches to engaging the public.

WasteWise staff have deliberately sought to work with community partner organisations from within a range of demographic communities. Their involvement can have flow-on effects across communities, for example:

For our ethnic communities, because many of them, particularly their stakeholders, migrants, refugees, they've never really been in this sector. So I think through our community partner, first of all, now they are in the sector. Secondly, they now connect with the communities, they have some volunteers who become the waste champions or experts. (WasteWise staff)

Several community partners worked extensively with new migrants and former refugees and incorporated waste minimisation activities into their everyday business (e.g. teaching English language skills). Engaging participants through social and employment assistance could also be a useful platform to engage them about waste.

Through that volunteers' programme, we can then use that opportunity to raise awareness of our rubbish problem in New Zealand. Because a lot of these job search workshops are just talking about how do you write a CV, or how do you network, how do you sit for an interview? But it's actually a very good platform to introduce why we migrants and refugees need to be involved in waste reduction in New Zealand. (Community partner)

However, there was scope for improvement in more deeply and widely engaging with these harder-to-reach communities. While community partners are contracted for their expertise and ability to

engage the public more effectively than council staff, engagement is not always straightforward or easy, given the range of barriers faced by some communities (e.g. financial challenges, digital inequity, lack of transport to activities, lack of time or ability to engage).

3.4.8 Reliance on volunteers

Many community partners rely on volunteers to deliver programmes and activities. The volunteer-based model has benefits in terms of harnessing community enthusiasm, providing opportunities for social connections in the community, and delivering services at lower costs. It also provides opportunities for waste minimisation education with community members who decide to volunteer, enabling the community partner to engage them in behaviour change.

That's like an opportunity for people to actually come along and learn how to grow their own vegetables from seed. And then also making the greenhouse available, so in return for simply going on a roster and perhaps watering once or twice a week, being able to actually take seedlings away. So the emphasis is very much on wanting to educate people. (Community partner)

At the same time, however, community partners' reliance on volunteers comes with challenges. In particular, volunteers can be an unreliable source of labour.

With the Zero Waste events it's always hard to engage enough volunteers... I find that I get volunteer fatigue during the summer season, because they've already done one weekend, they don't want to do the next weekend, and the next weekend, and the next weekend. But there's pretty much an event every weekend. (Community partner)

Paid staff are required to coordinate volunteers and to maintain an organisation's momentum. Volunteers are also likely to get burnt out if they are asked to do too much. One community partner explained how they wanted more ways to recognise their volunteers.

I wish we could... get more funding for our [volunteers]... [for] vouchers and stuff, even a food voucher or something. (Community partner)

Relying on volunteers to help recruit for workshops can have inconsistent results. One community partner describes how different levels of volunteer engagement can result in varying levels of attendance at a workshop designed for 10 people.

All of a sudden you've got one community group who's all in, and you go over there and they've got 20 people. [In other cases, it's] been a challenge because often [the community group hosting the event is made up of] volunteers and they don't have the time to put into to getting people there... [so] we've turned up where there's been no one and the person's like "I totally forget that it was on and I sent out an email last year, well just fingers crossed people turn up today". (Community partner)

4. Findings related to WasteWise programme outcomes

This section reports on outcomes of initiatives delivered through the WasteWise programme of work. As a means of contextualising the findings, it firstly discusses these within a community-led development framework. Following this, an overview of each of the main outcomes identified is presented. These include waste reduction, improved knowledge and skills, building the waste minimisation movement, relationships and community connection, and other community wellbeing outcomes.

4.1 Programme outcomes within a community-led development model

The nature of outcomes in a community-led development context is complex and overlapping, which means they can be challenging to quantify and measure. Analysis of data collected as part of this evaluation indicates that the community-led development context in which initiatives have been established and delivered has a strong bearing on the way in which outcomes emerge for individuals, households, and communities. Key findings include:

- **Waste minimisation outcomes are intertwined with other programme impacts, notably community wellbeing outcomes:** While waste minimisation and diversion from landfill are broad objectives of initiative delivery, the community-led development approach can often involve provision of support to address other life issues, to help remove barriers to participation in waste minimisation behaviours. As a result, engaging in waste minimisation activities can lead to other outcomes that promote individual and community wellbeing (e.g. reduced social isolation, access to jobs, or onward referrals to other social service agencies). Social and economic outcomes are, therefore, all within scope within a community-led development context, alongside environmental outcomes.

It's about other outcomes beyond just waste diversion... but we know as practitioners, growing communities interconnected with the zero waste vehicle is incredibly powerful... all the different levels, like social outcomes, employment outcomes, environmental outcomes. It's quite intentional, because it's documented in our waste plan... we're guided by social procurement guidelines that do have all the sustainability outcomes that do relate to job creation, local employment. (WasteWise staff)

- **It can be challenging to attribute outcomes to specific initiatives:** The circular and multi-layered nature of initiatives can mean that outcomes overlap and span different projects. For instance, one community partner discussed how compost produced from a community garden is sold at markets, with funds used to finance other streams of work – in this example, waste minimisation or reduced levels of waste to landfill could potentially be attributable to several different streams of work. In addition, members of the public may be engaged with other environmental activities outside of the WasteWise programme. This may mean that outcomes

may not be directly linked to specific WasteWise contracts, and/or captured in existing reporting mechanisms.

- **Outcomes can take time to emerge:** Within a community-led development context, outcomes emerge through small steps towards positive change, with each step producing ripple effects that build on each other.¹⁷ There is, therefore, a need to focus on behaviour change on a longer-term scale, while recognising that this can also make it challenging to identify and measure outcomes.

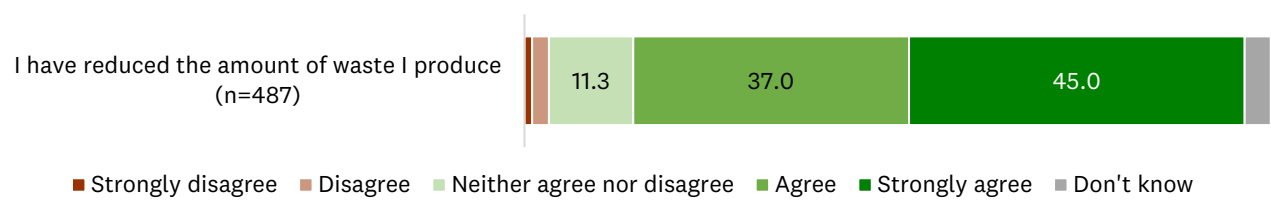
Some of the projects, it's challenging at this point to measure the waste diversion. But it doesn't mean it's not happening meaningfully or creating good outcomes. But it's part of the story. Sometimes it might take a project two years to get to the point where they can start measuring the diversion. (WasteWise staff)

Understanding the nature of outcomes across the WasteWise programme of work will help contextualise the emerging outcomes described below. While each outcome is presented separately, it is important to note that these were typically overlapping and inter-related. The findings below primarily draw on data from interviews and focus groups, and integrate survey findings where pertinent.

4.2 Waste reduction

Reduction in waste produced: Evaluation data highlighted that actual waste reduction was occurring at the individual and household levels, as a direct result of individuals participating in WasteWise initiatives. The survey of initiative participants conducted for this evaluation found that, as a result of participating in WasteWise initiatives, around eight in ten respondents (81.9%) agreed that they had reduced the amount of waste they produced, while only 3.3 per cent disagreed (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Agreement with survey item about waste reduction



Source: WasteWise main survey of initiative participants and Compost Collective survey.
Question: ‘As a result of the activity you attended, engaged with, how much do you agree or disagree that... [I have reduced the amount of waste I produce]?’
Labels are not shown in the chart for percentages less than five per cent to avoid visual clutter.

¹⁷ <https://ecct.org.nz/connecting-communities-through-community-led-development/>

Changes to behaviour: The main WasteWise survey found that 78 per cent stated that they had made, or intended to make, changes to the way they dealt with their recycling and waste, as a result of participating in WasteWise initiatives. Most of these respondents (89.8%) provided comments explaining what changes they had made or intended to make, with a wide range of behaviours reported, including:

- **Composting** – this was the most commonly-mentioned behaviour respondents said they were undertaking to reduce waste

We now use a bokashi system for most of our food waste, which is making a significant difference to our rubbish bin, and hopefully to our garden in the future. (Member of the public)

- **Recycling** – the second most commonly-identified behaviour, respondents reported they had learned to sort their rubbish, how to wash recycling material so it was not contaminated, and how to dispose of different types of recyclable materials (including soft plastics, inorganics, e-waste, and others)

We have always been into recycling and I joined to learn more about it... now we recycle paper, tins, bottles, and everything that can be recycled. Now we also have started putting the soft plastic into the bins that have been set up in Countdown. (Member of the public)

We are now taking batteries and polystyrene to the [recycling] centre instead of disposing it with weekly kerbside rubbish removal. (Member of the public)

- **Using reusable items, packaging, and containers** – respondents mentioned they were making efforts to reuse items rather than using disposable items, taking reusable containers to the refillery, and taking reusable bags to buy vegetables from the supermarket

Big emphasis on keep cups instead of disposables (Member of the public)

I have used cloth nappies majority of time and used disposables when travelling or for those necessary or convenient times only. I am glad I can carry it on with my next kid but starting earlier this time. (Member of the public)

- **Gardening** – so that respondents could grow only what they needed and reduce food waste by using it as compost in their gardens

How to be more self-sufficient and have the garden being more productive, given lots of ideas about how to reduce impact on the environment. (Member of the public)

- **Changing purchasing habits** – in order to reduce buying plastic packaging, buying bulk at the refillery, and lessen consumption habits overall

Careful of what I purchase particularly looking at containers and buying from Bin Inn more and more. (Member of the public)

- **Upcycling or repairing items, as well as donating or buying second-hand** – to prevent items going to landfill

I also love learning how to reuse other materials and to turn them into useful new items. I do these things because I realise how easy these small changes can be made in my own home. Learning and doing these things has become important and meaningful to me. (Member of the public)

- **Improving food practices in general** – such as eating leftovers, improving food longevity, reducing what gets thrown out, and understanding use-by dates

I learned to store onions and potatoes further apart so they last longer. I learned more things I can freeze to make them last longer. (Member of the public)

Instead of throwing away old veges, I will now be making stock out of them, which has never occurred to me to do before. (Member of the public)

- **Making or using environmentally-friendly household products** – to reduce hazardous chemicals going to landfill.

I'm learning to use natural materials to make my own cleaning products such as dish wash, handwashing and laundry liquids and soap. (Member of the public)

These survey findings aligned with interview and focus group data noting a wide range of examples of behaviour change. Primary actions that individuals and households were undertaking to reduce their waste were composting and participation in community gardens. In some communities, community networks and social media groups had been set up to facilitate these actions. For instance, some community partners described the growing movement of composting and community gardening among Auckland's ethnic communities.

We have worked with composting workshops for close to maybe 10 years and we can really see the result. First of all, many people are composting. Why do I know that? Because we have [social media] groups set up... we also deliver organic gardening. So I can see a lot of [specific community] gardening groups set up... even though we have done [composting] for a long time, there are still groups requesting to have composting workshops. So this is something we can measure and we can see the change. (Community partner)

Our [community], so many of them started composting after the sessions... They changed behaviour like how much packaged food they buy... they kept a daily journal, how much waste they throw away every day throughout the programme. (Community partner)

Waste diversion: There was also evidence of large-scale waste diversion occurring, such as through the Kai Ika project delivered through Papatūānuku Marae, which diverts fish heads, frames and offal to feed communities and fertilise community gardens, and which would otherwise end up in landfill. To a lesser extent, there was some discussion from community partners of working with larger

businesses to divert waste from landfill, such as the work of Waiheke Resources Trust with a supermarket to reduce food wastage.

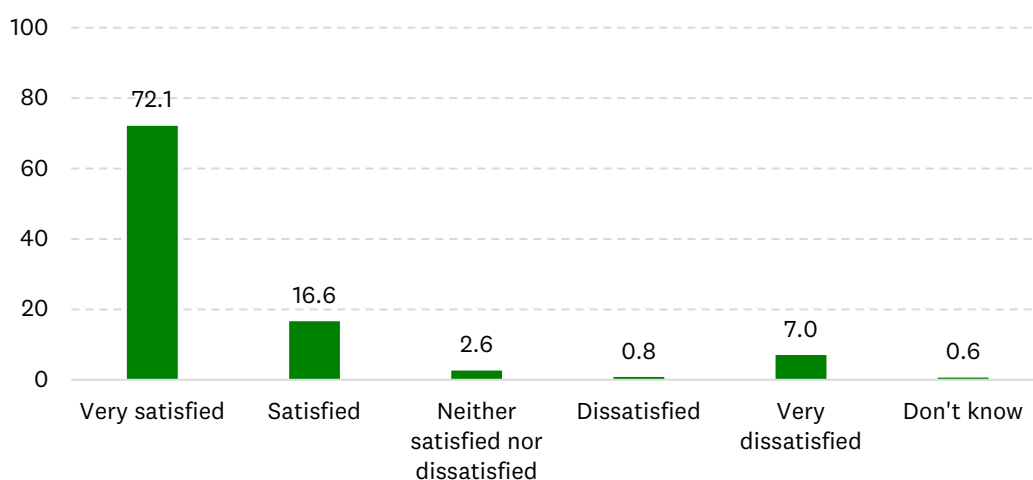
Waste Free Parenting: diversion of waste from landfill.

Data collected by the Waste Free Parenting initiative indicates that as a result of the programme 835 tonnes of nappy waste was diverted from Auckland landfills in the three years from 2017 to 2020. More recent data from 2020/21 shows that 1.5 tonnes of actual waste was directly diverted by Early Childhood Educators during their eight-week trial period. Further, it was projected that there would be around 12 tonnes of waste diverted per year if the centres continued to use cloth nappies post-trial. In addition to this, Waste Free Parenting workshop participants pledged to divert 396 tonnes of nappies.

4.3 Satisfaction with initiatives delivered by community partners

The combined results from the main WasteWise survey and the Compost Collective survey found that almost nine in ten respondents said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the WasteWise activities they had participated in, with only 7.8 per cent expressing dissatisfaction (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Survey respondents' satisfaction with WasteWise activities (n=499)



Source: WasteWise main survey of members of the public and Compost Collective survey.

Question: 'Overall, how satisfied were you with these activities?'

There are important caveats to the 'very dissatisfied' scores, which indicate that respondents may have intended to select 'very satisfied' instead. Analysis of the open-text responses explaining respondents' reasoning for their satisfaction scores revealed that all of those who selected 'very dissatisfied' instead provided positive comments about the activities they participated in (i.e. their satisfaction scores did not align with their open-text explanations). This means that the actual proportion of satisfied respondents could be higher than 72.1 per cent.

Analysis of respondents' explanations of their satisfaction scores showed that they were satisfied with WasteWise initiatives and praised key elements of the activities:

- **Content and information provided:** A substantial proportion of respondents were satisfied with the information provided and felt it was clear, simple, easy to understand, and accessible to a wide range of attendees. Practical information was communicated that could be easily implemented into everyday life.

Fantastic ideas that have given me practical ideas for myself and ideas for gifts, and I love the recycling aspect. (Member of the public)

Very clear and helpful instructions about what to do which were easy to put into practice. (Member of the public)

- **Facilitation:** Many participants were pleased with the way that the content was delivered. They praised the passion of the facilitators and noted the fun, interactive delivery format of workshops.

The cooking demonstrations were interesting and interactive. The learners loved talking about food and how to make it last. They enjoyed the demonstration. The visit to the refuse centre was educational and there were some good interactive activities. (Member of the public)

- **Opportunity to learn new things:** Many participants left activities feeling they had learned something valuable, even those who had already attended waste minimisation activities in the past or who were already knowledgeable on the subject.

I learnt lots more than expected each time I participated and was made welcome to share the knowledge I have too. (Member of the public)

- **Ability to implement knowledge and change behaviour:** Participants felt they had gained useful tips and tricks that they could easily implement at home and make small but noticeable differences to the environment.

I learned a lot about the composting techniques that I have been trying but not successful in. This has now improved my knowledge and I am now bokashi-ing and worm farming regularly. (Member of the public)

- **Opportunity to develop relationships and connections:** Many participants also valued the initiatives, not only because it helped them learn ways to minimise their waste and negative impacts on the environment, but also because it provided opportunities to connect with like-minded people in the community and provided spaces for connection.

[Community partner] events are always fun and informative and give me an opportunity to meet local people and be part of making our community a better place. (Member of the public)

- **Impact of the community partner organisation and the passion of the team:** Many comments praised the passion and enthusiasm of the team delivering WasteWise initiatives, which motivated participants to make changes in their lives.

Such amazing guidance and support. The full team are wonderful. No question is stupid and they really inspire you to reduce waste and make it an enjoyable experience. (Member of the public)

- **Provision of a good service:** In many instances, participants were satisfied with the services they had received from community partners, such as free compost or other resources, which facilitated their waste journey.

The materials packs kindly given out were very good and [community partner] staff were very welcoming. (Member of the public)

- **Opportunity to contribute positively to the environment:** Some participants valued the opportunity to attend the initiatives as it made them feel like they were doing something positive for the environment. Many noted that it felt good to be able to do the right thing, and the activities facilitated their learning and journey in this space.

Making positive changes to our lifestyle, our whole perception and attitude toward recycling gives one a sense of satisfaction when the next generations of tamariki and mokopuna see recycling as a normal part of growing up. (Member of the public)

- **Ability to save money:** A smaller but notable subset of participants were also satisfied with the initiative as it provided them with simple eco-friendly practices that helped them cut back on costs. This was seen as very important given the current context of inflation and the rising cost of living.

This helps the Community to have a sustainable living by growing our own food in our property. Since the high cost of living is hitting everyone, alternatives like gardening helps to sustain the food supply and also healthy food on the table for the whānau. (Member of the public)

As noted above, only a small number of respondents were dissatisfied with the WasteWise initiatives they attended. Eleven respondents provided comments explaining their dissatisfaction (about 2.2% of all respondents), which included issues like no opportunity for follow-up questions, not learning anything new, or asking for greater flexibility of the services being provided.

There was no follow-up to the questions I had so I was confused and have not been able to implement what I thought. (Member of the public)

My understanding was that the workshop was to learn how to grow greens but most of it was a lecture about food waste which was tedious because it's nothing I don't already practice... wish it had been more accurately described. (Member of the public)

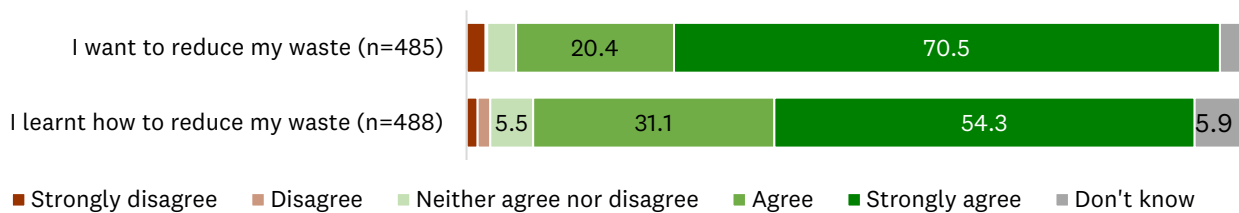
4.4 Improved knowledge and skills

Changes in waste-related behaviour were a result of notable improvements in individuals' knowledge of waste minimisation, and motivation to change behaviour. Those participating in the evaluation reported new knowledge (or improvements to their existing knowledge) about things they could do to reduce waste and otherwise positively contribute to the environment more generally. It is worth noting that findings about the types of knowledge gained were self-reported from initiative participants and community partners; there were no pre- and post-intervention data showing what objective changes in knowledge occurred over time.¹⁸

Survey responses indicate that WasteWise initiatives and the Compost Collective programme appear to be effective in motivating and teaching respondents to reduce their waste. As a result of participating in WasteWise initiatives (Figure 7):

- most (90.9%) agreed they wanted to reduce their waste (2.7% disagreed)
- over eight in ten (85.5%) agreed they had learned to reduce their waste (3.1% disagreed).

Figure 7. Agreement with survey items about motivation and knowledge gained to reduce waste



Source: WasteWise main survey of initiative participants and Compost Collective survey.

Question: 'As a result of the activity you attended, engaged with, how much do you agree or disagree that... [I want to reduce my waste], [I learnt how to reduce my waste]?'

Percentages less than five per cent have been suppressed to avoid visual clutter.

Interviews and focus groups provided deeper insights into the types of knowledge and skills that individuals gained through participating. Knowledge acquired related not just to waste reduction topics (like composting, recycling, sorting rubbish, minimising food waste, using cloth nappies instead of disposable products), but also related to more broader learning about living sustainably, including gaining skills in gardening, food preparation, sewing, and creating eco-friendly household products. Participants reported remembering information that was highly motivating, such as the scale of landfill waste taken up by nappies. One example of food waste minimisation related to

¹⁸ It is also worth noting that the accompanying literature review finds that 'information-only' interventions tend not to be particularly effective. This does not mean that increased knowledge, as reported here, is a bad thing. We believe that 'learning how to reduce my waste', in this context, demonstrates a broader increase in psychological or physical capability, that goes beyond just learning information.

understanding the differences between ‘use by’ and ‘best before’ dates and how food longevity could be enhanced, and another related to school students learning writing and critical thinking skills through engaging in projects delivered by one community partner.

I think one of the huge impacts for them understanding, this really floored me, I didn't expect it, they didn't understand the difference between ‘use by’ and ‘best before’. And that would have made a big difference in their shopping, they don't throw things out. We learnt that if it looks alright and it feels alright and it tastes alright, that's alright.
(Community partner)

There was also some evidence of organisational learning. For instance, one corporate entity reported their newfound learning about community engagement, as a direct result of working closely with community partners and gaining assistance with funding applications.

WRT survey findings: Intended changes to behaviour

43/50 survey respondents said they had – or intended to – make changes to the way they deal with their recycling and waste as a result of engaging with a WRT activity. Examples of these changes included:

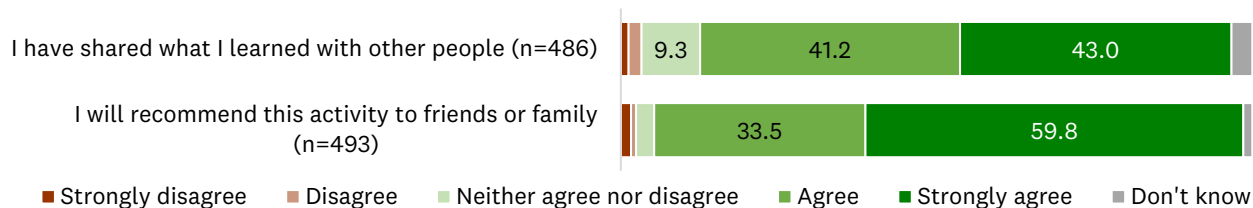
- Setting up a worm farm
- Composting (e.g. setting a compost bin, establishing a Bokashi system, rat-proofing compost bins)
- Recycling more effectively/correctly (e.g. cleaning plastics and bottles beforehand, no longer putting food scraps in rubbish bin)
- Reducing purchase of single use plastic and reusing containers
- Supporting local businesses
- Changing/reducing consumption in general
- Planting/gardening more, including sharing excess produce with others.

4.5 Building the waste minimisation movement

As noted at the start of this section, outcomes generated through the WasteWise programme of work tend to have ripple effects. The main mechanism for this was through initiative participants sharing the knowledge they gained with friends, family, and others in their community. Combined findings from the main survey and the Compost Collective survey indicated that (Figure 8):

- Most respondents (84.3%) agreed they had shared what they learned with others (3.3% disagreed)
- A larger proportion (93.3%) agreed they would recommend the activities they participated in to others (2.4% disagreed).

Figure 8. Agreement with survey items about sharing knowledge with others



Source: WasteWise main survey of initiative participants and Compost Collective survey.

Question: 'As a result of the activity you attended, engaged with, how much do you agree or disagree that... [I have shared what I learned with other people], [I will recommend this activity to friends or family]?'.

Percentages less than five per cent have been suppressed to avoid visual clutter.

Survey respondents described their actions to spread awareness of waste minimisation and teach others what they had learned. They mentioned implementing new practices within their households that provided role-modelling for children and other whānau on how to reduce waste. Some also mentioned talking with friends and neighbours about simple steps they could also take to reduce waste.

We also tried to share what we learned from this organisation with our friends and families when we get together at family gatherings or when we hang out as friends in public places. (Member of the public)

For starters, I have already instructed housemates about minimising trash, cleaning receptacles before committing them to recycling, etc. (Member of the public)

Interviews with community partners highlighted their observations of how initiative participants were sharing knowledge and skills with their broader community, which had facilitated community empowerment and more widespread change.

One thing that was really interesting is that they were able they succeeded to master the language needed to share their new knowledge about waste with their friends and family. And that was, I think, one of the objectives of the project. It's not about teaching individuals, it's about teaching the whole community, through people themselves through the learners. (Community partner)

They extend that to their whānau now so they're teaching people to sew and that's been a real highlight how that's empowered people. (Community partner)

They reported that small actions – such as discussions about waste or a simple change in purchasing habits or waste disposal behaviour – could create ripple effects of greater waste diversion down the line.

If we get back to that whole thing about, if I don't bring my keep cup, I can't buy a cup of coffee. It starts to really change the way they're thinking and that enables them to feel so much more powerful about their decisions, you know. I am going to go to the refillery, I am going to take my plastic containers to the deli, I am going to look at

actually going along to farmers markets and supporting those because the fruit and vegetables are not wrapped in plastic, you know, all of those things that we actually start to think about. And all of that comes from one small decision to take the food scraps out of their waste stream. (Community partner)

Not only were members of the public sharing knowledge and skills with others in their community, engaging in WasteWise initiatives also led to some individuals instigating their own waste minimisation projects. One example involved a local marae which had set up a composting system that resulted in the majority of the organisation's waste being diverted from landfill. The ripple effects of that included whānau becoming more engaged in waste minimisation, as evidenced through the regular volunteer composting education sessions that had been set up as a result.

In another example, a community partner highlighted how a participant in one of their activities went on to set up a food initiative in their local community.

[There's an example of] a resident who's been transformative... The lady, she came into [community partner] as, I think it was an intern or a volunteer, she was just a resident and wanting to do some local work. And then she ended up getting so inspired by the [community partner] programme that she went onto then apply for Love Food Hate Waste funding to run her own Love Food Hate Waste workshops. So that's just an example of what happens there as people kind of interact with the centre. They then go out and then [we] supported her, how to apply for the funding and that. (Community partner)

According to interviews with WasteWise staff and community partners, the combined effects of these individual- and community-level decisions to reduce waste contributed to the increasing visibility and momentum of the waste movement and helped it become more mainstream. Available data demonstrated increasing participation and attendance in Compost Collective workshops over time; likewise, one ethnic community partner noted there was increasing demand amongst their community for composting and gardening workshops. Community partners talked about the increasing cross-sector collaboration they saw to minimise waste, with some projects involving council, marae, and local businesses and communities working together, as well as the improving momentum of the annual Zero Waste Awards and presence of politicians.

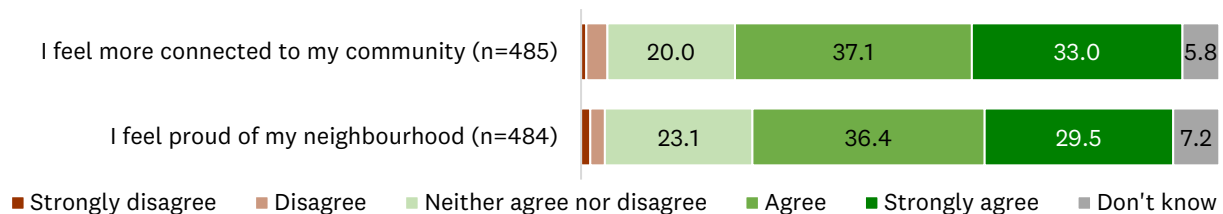
The Zero Waste awards, I'm proud that as a team, we took that from, you know, a humble start to something that we hit 120 nominations of all different projects of zero waste happening throughout Auckland. You know, that knocked us out for the quarter benchmark. We had people in the room that were politicians. So that's a signal of the movement, something that we've created that's shifting the narrative of this being something to celebrate. Going from like a really small kind of like, casual group of people that are alternative to like this mainstream event. (Community partner)

4.6 Relationships and community connection

Although not directly related to waste, engaging in waste minimisation activities had the potential to improve initiative participants' connections to others in their neighbourhood and wider local community. Combined findings from the main WasteWise survey and the Compost Collective survey indicated a high level of agreement with items about improved community connection through participating in WasteWise initiatives (Figure 9):

- almost three-quarters (70.1%) agreed they felt more connected to their community (4.1% disagreed)
- about two-thirds (65.9%) agreed they felt proud of their neighbourhood (3.7% disagreed).

Figure 9. Agreement with survey items about community connection



Source: WasteWise main survey of initiative participants and Compost Collective survey.

Question: 'As a result of the activity you attended, engaged with, how much do you agree or disagree that... [I feel more connected to my community], [I feel proud of my neighbourhood]?'

Percentages less than five per cent have been suppressed to avoid visual clutter.

Interview data supported these findings. There were several examples of neighbours making deeper connections through engaging in WasteWise initiatives, such as talking to one another more through sharing knowledge about recycling, or through volunteering together or attending weekly lunches hosted by community partners. Notably, several interviewees indicated that WasteWise initiatives helped to create a safe space for individuals, through developing an inviting community hub where they could not only access waste-related resources, but also form relationships with staff and other members of the community.

It also brought people together, and I hear stories about neighbours talking to each other for the first time and checking in with each other because they're checking in on the recycling, so the people are brought together. (Community partner)

Ethnic community partners in particular noted the positive impacts of WasteWise on migrant and former refugees' sense of belonging within their local community. In some instances, WasteWise initiatives helped facilitate civic and social participation among migrant communities, as the inclusive approach enabled participants to feel like their voices mattered. They saw it as an opportunity to positively contribute to the environment and feel part of a wider movement.

The other thing, which I think really struck me was the opportunity for our learners to give feedback about, you know, the council rubbish disposal... most of our learners never get consulted about anything. So for our learners to have the opportunity to give feedback on the size of the rubbish bin they needed... That was a very valuable sort of social community participation... just our learners feeling empowered, because someone was consulting them about something. That that doesn't happen often with our communities. (Community partner)

WRT: Kai Conscious Café

The Kai Conscious Café operates from the WRT Sustainability Centre on Waiheke Island. It holds a free community lunch every week, which is prepared by volunteers utilising food donated by local businesses and/or accessed via the organisation's Food Rescue service; this is supplemented by produce grown on site at the WRT's community garden. A wide range of koha is accepted as 'payment' for the meal (e.g. people can contribute their time or garden produce). Feedback from both staff and volunteers at this initiative indicate that while it fulfils an important function in reducing food wastage, it has also played a valued role in connecting residents of Waiheke Island. This includes both those attending as café patrons and amongst the cohort of volunteers. Of note, it was reported that it has brought together a diverse mix of people who may not otherwise have come into contact and provided valuable social connections for isolated members of the local community.

While WasteWise initiatives had positive impacts on initiative participants' connections with others in their community, there were also positive outcomes for community partners themselves. Firstly, it helped them strengthen their own relationships within the communities they serve. Secondly, working in the waste space enabled organisations to establish valuable close working partnerships with others in the same sector, including with council staff and other community partners.

4.7 Other community wellbeing outcomes

Qualitative data from the evaluation highlighted a range of broader community wellbeing outcomes from the WasteWise programme. It is important to note that, while these were considered important, they tended to be less commonly identified.

Personal development and wellbeing: Interviewees identified that engaging in WasteWise initiatives sometimes contributed to individuals' wellbeing and development. This included improved confidence to take action, improved mental health, and developing a sense of contributing to one's community. For instance, one community partner shared a story about a young person attending an initiative and walking away with a new mindset of taking responsibility for waste in their community.

We had an email come in from a young lady that had joined a stream-side plot planting with our nature team... we were talking a lot about just the care of our waterways and what's ending up in our waterways in this urban environment... about two days later, she was driving past the carpark that backs down onto the stream. Someone had

dumped three bags of rubbish in the carpark. And she drove past it. And she thought, we need to call Council, someone actually needs to clean that up. And then she drove past again, on her way home. And the next morning when she drove out, she wrote in the email, I thought to myself, this is my community, I am responsible. If those bags don't get picked up soon, they're going to rip open, and that rubbish is going to end up in our stream. So if not me, who? And she got her flatmates and they went down, and they put on gloves, and they picked up that rubbish and they dealt with it, you know.
(Community partner)

Addressing broader social needs: Some community partners had provided social and other supports to families who were facing financial, employment or emotional challenges. This included referrals to other services (e.g. social workers in schools), help for families to access second hand clothing and household goods, employment assistance, or the provision of emotional support. The delivery of these additional supports could not only improve family wellbeing but also help to reduce some of the barriers to participating in initiatives.

[Staff member] can talk to them about hey if you've got stuff that you don't need any more that you could pass on, here's where you can bring it rather than putting it out on the road or the stream, chucking it over the fence. So I think it's connected up a lot of people with our service and then we can link them up with social workers and ECE so that wraparound support can happen but also its kind of incidentally introducing them to the idea of waste reduction and why it's important to us and then we know we can link them up with the garden and so on as well. So yeah, there's a whole lot of flow on effects with that. (Community partner)

ME Family Services: Resource Recovery Room

ME Family Services operates a Resource Recovery Room from its site in Māngere East. Partnerships with organisations such as Auckland Airport and other businesses (e.g. hotels) provide access to a wide range of clothing and other household goods that are redistributed in the local community. The room operates a trading system whereby goods can be exchanged for money, time, skills, networks or anything else of value to the community. Alongside its contribution to waste reduction (e.g. in July 2021 it was reported that over 25 tonnes of items had been redistributed) the evaluation identified its role in addressing broader social needs. This includes the provision of household items to local families facing financial or other hardships, emotional support and onwards referrals to social services provided by staff to visitors to the room, and personal development and wellbeing outcomes for volunteers who offer their services and time to the initiative.

Employment outcomes: Some community partners were able to find local employment opportunities for those attending their waste minimisation initiatives. This included working in partnership with local businesses to promote workplace opportunities. It also included building local capacity, through volunteers developing skills and knowledge that could be transferred to paid employment.

From my compost workshops that I ran, I've actually managed to employ two of my participants in the [organisation]. So you know, for me about, you know, the biggest impact is about employment. And so we've got one of them was ended up being the compost manager for the site. And the other one ended up being the operations manager for a short time, which was amazing just because it's all about connection.
(Community partner)

From our volunteer programme, we are able to identify volunteers that are looking for a job... we've helped a couple of Indian volunteers in their job search. And then we recently helped an Eritrean refugee get an environmental job at [organisation].
(Community partner)

Financial outcomes: Engaging in WasteWise initiatives helped some participants cut back on costs due to implementing new waste-related behaviours. For example, parents were able to save money on disposable nappies by using reusable cloth nappies instead. Additionally, organisations were able to benefit financially due to setting up on-site composting, meaning they did not have to purchase compost for gardens or pay other people to collect scraps. As evident in the following feedback from one member of the public, growing their own food had also resulted in a reduction in household costs:

This helps the community to have sustainable living by growing our own food in our property. Since the high cost of living is hitting everyone, alternatives like gardening helps to sustain the food supply and also healthy food on the table for the whānau.
(Member of the public)

4.8 Summary of outcomes

Initiative participants reported experiencing a wide variety of outcomes from engaging in WasteWise activities. Notably, while actual waste reduction and behavioural change were important outcomes for participants, these were intertwined with social and economic outcomes and promoted individual and broader community wellbeing.

5. Case studies

As a means of generating in-depth learning regarding the set up and delivery of initiatives, and to identify emerging outcomes, three WasteWise initiatives acted as case studies for the evaluation. These were selected in collaboration with the WasteWise team and included:

- ME Family Services (MEFS)
- Waiheke Resources Trust (WRT)
- Waste Free Parenting (WFP).

Note: While some case study findings have been included in the previous section, a more complete overview of findings relating to participants' experiences of the initiatives and self-reported outcomes is provided here. In addition, findings related to the set up and delivery of case study initiatives have been combined with those identified from the community partner and WasteWise staff focus groups and are presented in Section 3.

5.1 ME Family Services

ME Family Services is a community organisation which has been in operation for nearly 30 years and delivers a range of services to support local families in Māngere/Ōtāhuhu. This includes an early childhood centre, a school and community-based social work team, as well as the Talking Rubbish team, which delivers a range of projects to regenerate te taiao in the area.

The organisation operates a Recovery Room, which redistributes household goods and clothing via a trading system and has a community garden on site (Te Puna Oranga), which acts as a learning and demonstration space for gardening and related activities.

The WasteWise team has been working with MEFS towards a zero waste 2040 vision since 2014 via its Talking Rubbish team. While the contract has evolved over time, the work plan at the time of the evaluation comprised the following key activities:

- **Facilitating waste reduction in the community** via a range of activities and waste minimisation education, including workshops/audits, Te Puna Oranga, and support for waste champions
- **Management of the Māngere/Ōtāhuhu resource recovery network:** this includes the maintenance and promotion of the MEFS Recovery room
- The exploration, documentation and amplification of **stories of place** and local success stories via a range of platforms
- **Facilitating the connection of people and groups** working on regenerative projects in Māngere/Ōtāhuhu.

This section presents findings from the ME Family Services case study which draws on the following data sources:

- N=9 semi-structured interviews with a mix of council and MEFS staff, and individuals who had engaged with MEFS.
- N=30 respondents to the online survey described in Section 2.1.3 and throughout the document, who had participated in at least one¹⁹ of the organisation's activities. Around half had accessed the Resource Recovery Room or Network, and others had attended a workshop or other activity (e.g. Talking Rubbish Open Day), learnt about gardening, participated as a Time Trader, received support at a Zero Waste Event, or taken part in a waste consultation (e.g. audit).
- A review of project documentation and other secondary data provided to the evaluation team.

The experiences of initiative participants were explored in the semi-structured interviews and the online survey; this includes individuals who had engaged with MEFS either on a personal level or as part of a professional role. Information presented below incorporates findings from both data sources and, where relevant, feedback from community partner or council staff.

5.1.1 Feedback from members of the public

Case study interviewees were very positive about their experience of engaging with ME Family services. Survey respondents also reported high levels of satisfaction with their participation in different activities or events delivered by the organisation; this included n=23/30 who indicated they were very satisfied. Only one comment expressed dissatisfaction with the service and nearly 90% stated that they would recommend ME Family Services to friends or family.

Key strengths of MEFS, as reported by initiative participants, are outlined below.

MEFS staff: both case study interviewees and survey respondents commented on the positive contribution staff made to the work undertaken by MEFS and the overall culture of the organisation. Individual staff members were praised for their specific skills or qualities, and variously described as friendly and approachable, non-judgemental, and caring; this included the 'founder' of MEFS who was credited with creating a strong and enduring vision for the organisation. The employment of local people by MEFS was also valued for the connection to the community that it brought to their roles and the delivery of the work. Comments included:

I like the way ME family services engages participants in a constructive conversation about how to make things more environmentally friendly. The tone is always friendly and never judgemental. (Member of the public)

With the staff, again a very inclusive way that they did that. And also the people that they would bring in to do the education because they were generally also people from the local community that had an immediate connection with lots of our staff. Because they recognised themselves in that and therefore were very accepting of what they would be taught or what would be shared at that point in time. (Member of the public)

¹⁹ Twenty of the survey respondents reported that they had taken part in more than one activity.

They're nice people here. They don't judge, they're just nice people. (Member of the public)

The organisation's community-led delivery model: evaluation participants highlighted the merits of MEFS' focus on the local area and its broad community-led approach. This was evident in the initiative's authentic engagement with the community, extensive community networks, openness to working in partnership with other organisations, and the employment of local people:

ME Family Services, probably their biggest strength is that they really see the potential in their community. (WasteWise staff)

I was incredibly impressed with what they were doing and how they were doing it and how willing they were to talk to us. And we just really holistically started talking about what could this mean, what could we do together, how could we help each other? And their approach to helping I also really loved in regards, so they were like no we don't just, it's not, it really isn't about just giving us money and donations, we really want to build the community up and build skills up and if we can do something with that. (Member of the public)

The organisation was seen to have established strong networks both with individuals and other organisations based in the Māngere area. Feedback indicates that this has facilitated collaborative activity – e.g. via joint projects which have brought community members together – and also contributed to some valued outcomes for individuals (e.g., employment opportunities):

She [MEFS staff member] has great connections with many organisations in the community so she can, if she needs to get rid of stuff she'll know which lot to ring. Yeah, she's connected to everybody. (Member of the public)

MEFS are great communicators, approachable and visionary. They have an ongoing struggle in a community with so many other different social pressures, yet are resilient and find alternative ways to connect. (Member of the public)

Another strength I think they have is around networking and joining the dots in the community, just being people that work on bringing people together to work towards a vision around waste. So it's a really powerful thing because it means it's kind of like the work's going beyond just their workplan, but other organisations are continuing to do the work and that. (Waste Wise staff)

MEFS site: the location and setting for the organisation was considered a key asset of MEFS by both staff and others involved with the organisation. Staff reported that they encouraged local families to drop in and spend time at the site as a means of providing the community a safe place to visit whilst also facilitating their access to information, resources or support. Feedback from the community indicates that it is viewed as a welcoming and whānau-oriented space, with case study interviewees describing it as a “sanctuary” or “home”. Other aspects highlighted included its co-location with associated services (e.g. the Early Childhood Centre) which contributed to MEFS being seen as part

of a community hub, and the community garden which provided hands-on access to learning about waste reduction and related skills in an informal way:

It's in the heart of the community, I always feel welcome. (Member of the public)

So usually in here, out the back gardens. Just actually sitting down there and having a cup of tea and sharing food is part of a trade as well, which this used to overflow. The place used to overflow before with people, with families. We've had the kaumātua come in, the rest home people and all that...and they've just sat in this space and sat all day just yacking. It's a space that they come in and enjoy. (Community partner)

It's the freedom I think, the freedom to drop in if you want to, the freedom to have a drop in and have a cup of tea if you want to or just come in and sit there, just the freedom to do it. (Member of the public)

As can be observed in the following comments, the welcoming and peaceful environment of MEFS, and the resources on site, played an important role in engaging the local community:

A lot of people are coming into the Centre that wouldn't have necessarily come in before to access resources but then while they're there [staff member] who runs the room, can talk about why we're doing it and that this is all the rubbish that goes to landfill and she shows them a picture. So there's like incidental waste education that goes on. (Community partner)

On Monday, I came in, I literally came in because I had nothing to do. It was a Monday, it was a big week. I just wanted to come and chill and be around people that I can connect with. That's probably another good thing about this place, is that connecting with people, like-minded people. (Member of the public)

5.1.2 ME Family Services outcomes

A range of waste-related and other outcomes were identified from the ME Family Services case study, as reported by both case study interviewees and survey participants.

Knowledge and skills gained

Survey respondents and case study interviewees indicated that they had gained knowledge in a range of areas, including:

- *Waste reduction:* A little over 80 per cent of survey respondents reported that they had learnt to reduce their waste (e.g. via shopping less for new goods, fixing broken items). Areas of learning identified by case study interviewees including recycling practices, general information on landfill, strategies to reduce food wastage, and upcycling techniques.
- *Other skills:* This included life skills (e.g. financial management) and interpersonal skills (e.g. patience). One interviewee who had worked with MEFS in a professional capacity reported that their organisation had learnt how to work alongside, and engage with, their local community:

So I always felt incredibly privileged to be honest that they were so open to working with us as a big corporate within that area because they could have easily gone ‘nah you’re just a corporate out there for money’, they could have easily done that but they were not like that at all. They really saw the opportunities and taught us how to really work with the community as well, really special. (Member of the public)

Sharing knowledge with others

Findings indicate that people are sharing the knowledge gained, with nearly 87 per cent of survey respondents reporting that they had shared what they learned with others, including family members, staff in the workplace, and the broader community. Initiative participants highlighted that they were educating others in their household (e.g. tamariki and mokopuna) about different aspects of waste minimisation (e.g. what and how to recycle) as well as broader life skills (e.g. financial management). One staff member also noted that this dissemination of learning had resulted in children becoming involved in recycling waste. Comments included:

I do share it with my grandkids, like I've got one here, I'm in [place] at the moment staying with them and one of them helps me in the garden and the other ones help me do cooking and stuff. (Member of the public)

When the kids came to stay, I taught one child at a time to sort the rubbish. Unfortunately, he's the only one that's actually learnt anything. So when their brothers fill up their bags, I make him stand there and watch them empty it and sort it. I said, 'And if they put it in the wrong bin you make them take it out and put it in the right bin.' (Member of the public)

That has probably been I think one of our biggest successes because then you hear that they've gone home and they've started a garden or they've started a compost, they've got their kids recycling. I think that learning by osmosis is probably the most successful. (Community partner)

Waste reduction

Over three quarters (26/30) of MEFS survey respondents reported that they had reduced the amount of waste they produced, and slightly less (25/30) indicated that they wanted to reduce their waste. Those who had not or did not intend to make changes, indicated that they were already doing everything that they could to minimise waste or they rarely had rubbish for disposal. Examples provided in survey responses of changes to behaviour that were contributing to a reduction in household waste included:

I am active in composting waste and am more aware of what I purchase and the packaging and waste that comes from my purchases. I recycle far better than I used to previous to meeting the Talking Rubbish team. I am better for it. (Member of the public)

I sorted my rubbish and it reduced the rubbish from taking to the road every week into fortnightly. I cook enough for every meal and if there's leftover, my family eat them next day. (Member of the public)

Instead of throwing clothes or household items in the bin, I give them to the resource room. (Member of the public)

I compost my food waste and separate all my recyclables, containers, soft plastics and aluminium cans. (Member of the public)

Case study interviewees also highlighted that their engagement with MEFS had resulted in waste being diverted from landfill – either within their household or at a place of business. It was reported by one interviewee, for example, that as a result of waste audits and other related activities undertaken with MEFS in their workplace, there had been a significant reduction in the number of products going to landfill²⁰. Instead, these had been diverted to other organisations in the community and either utilised in their original state or repurposed for other uses. Within the MEFS organisation itself, there were also reports of behaviour change amongst staff which had led to a reduction in waste:

We've done waste audits, we do regular staff training and the social work team they're in a different location to us and they've ended up starting this garden and they've got compost bins. I think that's really powerful because it shows other organisations that you don't have to be an environmental organisation to be doing this stuff, you can work with people or be a business or whatever and still incorporate waste reduction practices into what you do. (Community partner)

The Resource Recovery Network was identified as having played a key role in diverting waste from landfill. MEFS staff reported that they were collecting a broad and extensive range of items from local businesses and redistributing them in the local community; this included contracts with Auckland airport and local hotels where large ticket items such as beds had been disseminated during pandemic lockdowns. There were also examples provided of items identified via waste audits being redirected to other organisations or community locations for the local population to access:

So I sorted the stuff out and toilet paper, cleaning products, bottles that weren't open - bottles that were open we just emptied - and I would collect all this foodstuff and drop it off at the pātaka on my way back to the office. (Member of the public)

²⁰ It was also highlighted that the company was now recording the level of waste diverted from landfill, although this was reported at a company level so data related to Māngere only was not able to be extrapolated.

ME Family services survey findings: Intended changes to waste or recycling behaviour

24/30 survey respondents said they had – or intended to – make changes to the way they deal with their recycling and waste, as a result of engaging in a MEFS activity. Examples of these changes included:

- Composting or gardening
- Recycling properly, including washing containers before recycling
- Teaching tamariki and mokopuna to reduce waste
- Reducing consumption and purchasing habits
- Reusing containers and taking containers to Bin Inn
- Using environmentally friendly products
- Eating leftovers
- Donating old clothes and household items.

Personal development and wellbeing

Some individuals reported that engaging with MEFS had a positive impact on their personal development or self-reported mental health and wellbeing. In some cases, this was related to the sense of purpose they felt in giving back to their community and/or contributing to local sustainability aims via a volunteer role at the organisation. Others spoke about activities that had strengthened family wellbeing, or a general improvement in their mental health. One individual, for example reported that they were a ‘nicer’ and ‘kinder’ person as a result of interacting with MEFS staff and spending time at the organisation:

Well everybody here is nice and there's really no negative stuff here. I've had a lot of negative in my life so coming here was kind of like a peace place, a peaceful place to chill. I'd go shopping and just drop in and sit down, say hello and have a read and then carry on. (Member of the public)

I feel like if I'm helping them, I'm making a difference and that's kind of my aim in life is to make a difference. (Member of the public)

The last stream clean-up it was such an enriching experience for our family.... we walk down the road in the morning, and our boots and our gunboats, my daughter's stomping in puddles. That's the first day my partner is off work, so we're out. And we're just enjoying each other's company as a family walking through the streets. (Member of the public)

Some also spoke about the pride they felt in what they had achieved (e.g. growing vegetables and providing for their family). This includes people feeling proud of their local community, with three quarters of survey respondents indicating that they felt proud of their neighbourhood after being involved with the organisation. Comments included:

He built all these beautiful hydroponic systems that then could be handed out to the rest of the community who started learning how to build their own vegetables, grow

their own vegetables in this hydroponic system. So things like that were absolutely incredible, incredibly impactful from all sorts of angles, like not just from the waste reduction part but really from the connection part and from making people proud. (Member of the public)

For them to highlight some of the good that was happening in that community and how we could link into that [was] incredibly powerful, even from a mental health and wellbeing perspective I would say for staff to see that to sort of go hey actually I can be proud of my community. (Member of the public)

Staff reported wellbeing outcomes amongst families who had accessed resources and learning from MEFS, which had resulted in some significant changes within their household (e.g. establishing a garden and growing their own produce):

So that's what I see in a family is that they've taken everything that's been shared in here and they've come back 100 per cent on top with their wellbeing, the environment, the children, their support workers that they're working with and it's made mum be able to take care of herself. (Community partner)

Relationships and community connection

Around three-quarters of survey respondents reported that they felt more connected to their community following participation in a MEFS activity. Case study interviewees also stated that they had built social connections through MEFS; this included both with staff and other people they had met through the organisation (e.g. time traders). As can be observed in the following extracts, this had been a valued outcome for some and was a key motivation for engaging with the initiative:

I came in, and [staff member] said, you've got a friend in here. And I was just talking and tidying the shelves and yeah, and things like that. But it was cool to have that connection with somebody else as well. (Member of the public)

The time-trading work has caused me to meet a lot of people... I've gained a lot of connections. I mean, [staff member] knows a lot of connections. And I knew that if I put my hand [up] I'm going to benefit some way or another. So obviously, there's a lot of overflowing benefits here. (Member of the public)

This outcome also extends to broader community connections, including between different organisations. For example, it was reported that MEFS' strong community networks, and role in facilitating different stakeholders to work together, had led to some valuable collaborations (e.g. between schools and local businesses). In addition, while acknowledged as a work in progress, staff reported that the organisation's involvement in a local Sustainability Network had brought together community groups aligned with the "waste kaupapa" to introduce a stronger collective voice and potentially influence waste-related developments in the local area.

Addressing broader social needs

Findings from the case study indicate that MEFS is addressing broader social needs in its local community, both through its Talking Rubbish work and related activities. In particular, case study interviewees spoke about the social and other support local families had received from the organisation. This included addressing food insecurity issues, the provision of household goods to community members who were struggling financially, and broader emotional support. The organisation's ability to provide wraparound support via referrals to its other services (e.g. social workers) was also highlighted by staff. One interviewee spoke about the sense of security they felt knowing that assistance was available from the organisation, if needed:

Just knowing that no matter what happens at home, income wise, we have this place to kind of fall back on so to say. Like if we need kai, there's some kai out in the garden, if we need food, so a kind of sense of security. And just that hopefulness. (Member of the public)

Several employment-related outcomes were identified by both staff and individuals who had engaged with MEFS. These were generally facilitated by MEFS' connector role, which involved the organisation linking individuals and businesses. For example, MEFS had bridged the relationship between a school in Māngere and a local business which had led to students being exposed to potential future vocations and some subsequently securing internships with the company. In addition, staff reported that, as a result of their volunteer role at MEFS, some individuals had gone on to secure paid employment in a waste-related position.

There were a small number of financial impacts reported by both case study interviewees and survey respondents. These included reduced household expenses as a result of resources accessed from the service, or knowledge gained which had led to a change in behaviour (e.g. families starting their own garden). One individual also reported that they had benefitted financially due to budgeting skills acquired through engagement with the organisation.

5.2 Waiheke Resources Trust

Waiheke Resources Trust (WRT) is a professional not-for-profit organisation that has been serving the Waiheke community for over 25 years. WRT celebrates and protects all the resources of Waiheke and builds capacity and knowledge in the community toward the creation of a resource-full future for all.

Through six main project areas, WRT works to support thriving environments and communities by engaging, educating and supporting people in environmental restoration, food resilience and waste minimisation. WRT collaborates with volunteers, interns, local business, national and regional networks, iwi, government bodies, subject experts and Waiheke whānau to achieve its goals.

While the overall organisation delivers a wide range of projects in this space, the focus of its work within the WasteWise programme comprises the following main elements:

- Love Food Hate Waste initiatives (e.g. within the local High School)
- Kai Gardens
- Delivery of composting workshops and supporting local composting hubs
- Food rescue and redistribution
- Kai Conscious Café
- Zero Waste Events and activities (e.g. managing waste for large events like Flamingo Pier and supporting Ostend market)
- Good to Go Reusables.

The initiative also seeks to build the capacity of other groups and organisations to lead waste minimisation initiatives and undertakes promotion of waste minimisation behaviour through its organisational networks, social and traditional media, and other promotional activities.

This section presents findings from the WRT case study which draws on the following data sources:

- N=10 interviews with a mix of council and WRT staff (council and programme) and individuals who had engaged with the WRT.
- N=50 respondents to the online survey described in Section 2.1.3 and throughout the document, who had participated²¹ in at least one²² of the organisation's activities. Around half had attended a Compost Collective Workshop or the Kai Conscious Café, and others had participated in a Zero Waste Event, other workshop (e.g. cooking), community gardening/composting, reusable jar project, or wine bottle cap collection.
- A review of project documentation and other secondary data provided to the evaluation team.

²¹ This included individuals who had participated via a volunteering role.

²² N=35 of the survey respondents reported that they had taken part in more than one activity.

The experiences of initiative participants were explored in the semi-structured interviews and the online survey; this includes individuals who had engaged with the WRT either on a personal level or as part of a professional role. Information presented below incorporates findings from both data sources and, where relevant, feedback from community partner or council staff.

5.2.1 Feedback from members of the public

Case study interviewees were very positive about their experience of engaging with the WRT. Survey respondents also reported high levels of satisfaction with their participation in various activities delivered by the initiative; this included n=41/50 who indicated they were very satisfied²³ and a further four who were satisfied. Almost all survey respondents (96%) stated that they would recommend WRT to friends or family.

Key strengths of the WRT, as reported by initiative participants, are outlined below.

WRT staff: initiative participants spoke very highly of WRT staff. They were widely praised by both case study interviewees and survey respondents for their extensive knowledge and expertise with regard to waste minimisation and sustainability issues, and the passion and enthusiasm they exhibited in carrying out their work. They were also viewed as good communicators, reliable, and approachable:

[The] WRT team are amazing and go out of their way to serve in every way for the betterment of the collective, prioritising our Whenua and Taiao at all times. We are lucky and very grateful for this awesome team's enthusiasm, dedication and just that they are an awesome bunch of people serving our Island community. (Member of the public)

The way they are with the children, the way that they run those little discussion groups with the children, it's lovely... Just really approachable with the children, they treat them as little people, not just as kids... They're lovely, really nice to work with and just have all the answers. It's great. (Member of the public)

Some individuals particularly appreciated the willingness of staff to share their knowledge and mentor others in the local community; this included feedback from one volunteer who spoke about feeling valued by the organisation due to the way in which staff engaged with them:

She [WRT staff member] treats me as an equal... and she includes me in any conversations that are going on about anything to do with the [project] so I just feel like, even though I'm a volunteer, I'm very much an equal partner... And [WRT staff member] whenever I see him he's 'oh this is looking great, thank you so much'. He makes a point of actually acknowledging what we're doing there. (Member of the public)

²³ Only one respondent reported they were dissatisfied with an activity they had participated in.

Content and delivery of information: Both case study interviewees and survey respondents highlighted the nature of information imparted – and the way in which was delivered – as a key strength of the organisation. This included the provision of practical advice and “hands-on” learning that could be applied in the home setting, and the efficient and engaging manner of delivery; some also appreciated that information presented had local relevance to Waiheke Island:

The workshops were well organised, and I learned helpful information and skills that I could use in my garden. The presenter used a range of methods to convey the information and were very competent. (Member of the public)

Convivial hands-on learning atmosphere. (Member of the public)

As evident in the following feedback from one individual, the passionate delivery of information played an important role in the way in which it was received and subsequently acted on:

I think because they are so passionate about what they do they live and breathe it every day, it's easy to become involved. You want to do it, you want to go home and do the same and I think the children have picked up on that. (Member of the public)

Organisational capability: WRT was recognised as a well-established, professional, and innovative organisation with a strong infrastructure and extensive community connections. As noted above, staff were highly valued and seen to contribute to the overall competency and professionalism inherent in the work undertaken. The WRT's access to a wide range of resources, both in-house and externally, was viewed as a key strength of the initiative. Its extensive capability meant that some initiative participants had drawn on the organisation for various types of support, including assistance with funding applications to support their own waste-related initiatives. Comments included:

They've got a good bank of knowledge between all of them that work there and if one's not an expert on it somebody else will be. (Member of the public)

They've very respectful of my experience and what I did to start things off. And then there's huge relief that I can hand it over to an organisation that's actually got the funding and the infrastructure to do it really well. (Member of the public)

I mean it's one of the things I really like is that they're very open to sort of seeing how all these things connect up, because it's involving the community in ways that go further than just what is strictly funded. (Member of the public)

WRT site: Several initiative participants referred to the WRT Sustainability Centre as a valuable and welcoming space, which played an important role in facilitating engagement with the local community; the community garden was also viewed as a key asset:

It's just a really happy place to be. I really look forward to popping in because there's always a smile. (Member of the public)

5.2.2 WRT outcomes

A range of waste-related and other outcomes were identified from the WRT case study, as reported by case study interviewees, survey respondents, and other stakeholders.

Knowledge and skills gained

Survey respondents and case study interviewees reported that they had gained knowledge in a range of areas following participation in one of the WRT's activities, including:

- *Waste reduction:* Nearly 90 per cent of survey respondents indicated that they had learnt how to reduce their waste and/or found out about initiatives that they had not been aware of before. Areas of learning identified by case study interviewees included how to reduce food wastage, recycling techniques, how to make beeswax wraps, composting, worm farms, and disposal of food packaging – as well as more general learning regarding the waste sector (e.g. “*the hierarchy of recycling*”).
- *Life skills:* This included gardening techniques, alongside cooking skills acquired via attendance at a cooking class or a volunteer role at the Kai Conscious café.
- *Other learning:* This included learning from projects that had been instigated after engaging with the WRT. For example, it was reported that school pupils had gained a broad mix of skills – such as writing, science, maths, critical thinking – across the national curriculum:

They [pupils] decided they weren't happy about this and they were going to write to these companies. So they wrote to the [publication] to make them aware... So the children learnt persuasive writing because they wrote persuasive letters, so that was good. We also did science experiments. (Member of the public)

There were several examples identified of initiative participants sharing learning (e.g. recycling techniques) with significant others (e.g. family members) which had impacted on household behaviours. This included four-fifths of survey participants who reported that they had shared what they learned with other people:

I talk to others who do not have all that I have, and share what I have learnt and some of my produce, thanks to what I have learnt and the support I have received from WRT. (Member of the public)

I learned a lot and have been applying and teaching what I have learned. (Member of the public)

There was one student who after that course went home and was really inspired about the whole waste management idea, not just food waste. So she got her family to separate all the waste in their house and she went out and got plastic bins so they would have one for glass and paper and she got them composting as well. So that kind of thing happens a lot. It's really good to work with kids because they teach the parents. (Community partner)

Waste reduction

Nearly all (90%) of WRT survey respondents reported that they had reduced the amount of waste they produced, and slightly more (94%) indicated that they wanted to reduce their waste. Those who had not – or did not intend to – make changes, indicated that they were already doing everything that they could to minimise waste and/or had established systems in place. Examples provided in survey responses of changes to behaviour that were contributing to a reduction in household waste mostly included the introduction of a composting system or worm farm, and/or increased consideration of packaging materials when making household purchases:

I now understand what I can recycle and how and what is waste. So I avoid to buy things with no recyclable packaging. (Member of the public)

I compost a lot more efficiently than before, adding bokashi system. (Member of the public)

Feedback from interviews with initiative participants and staff support these findings, with a range of examples of waste being diverted from landfill as an outcome of WRT's work. This includes some larger scale impacts such as the Ostend Market which has waste stations to divert market-related waste, as well as the Kai Conscious café and related food rescue service which had resulted in significant reductions in food wastage:

The food rescue, which I think was the best thing that's ever happened to Waiheke. Every Friday, they used to have the dinners and anyone could go, and the lunch. So it's diverted so much food from landfill. (Member of the public)

Another example includes a community organisation where there had been a progression in low levels of waste reduction via the introduction of improved recycling systems, through to almost all on-site waste being diverted from landfill:

We initially kind of started where we just had the bin, and they told us what could go in it. And then we paid a subscription, and they would take it away and empty it. And so we were diverting everything from landfill. But now we are actually keeping everything on site. And we compost everything ourselves. (Member of the public)

Personal development and wellbeing

Case study interviewees reported a range of ways in which their personal development and wellbeing had benefitted due to engagement with one of WRT's activities. This included individuals who spoke about personal growth or a sense of satisfaction or achievement from their contribution as a volunteer:

It really is what gives me my sense of being a part of the Waiheke community. Like for me being involved and making a difference is just really fundamental to me, to who I am. (Member of the public)

*It gave me some direction on how I can be a useful member of the community here.
(Member of the public)*

This was also highlighted by staff or other volunteers who had observed this outcome amongst people helping out at the Kai Conscious café or in the gardens:

I think the gardens have had a huge impact [in terms of] mental health. We've got some gardeners who need that space, to go into that space and just hang out there. (Member of the public)

*I've had young women who would come up to me and they'd be like 'you taught us how to make those things and I've gone off and made them for my family'. So I think it's really a lovely thing to see, and you empower people by giving them that knowledge.
(Community partner)*

The introduction of new waste minimisation systems had led to further waste-related projects in one community organisation, including composting workshops being offered to the families that they worked with. As evident in the reflections of the individual leading this work, while waste reduction was a key impact sought, the improved health and wellbeing of the people involved was an unanticipated – and highly valued – outcome:

As much as it is about the food that we grow or the compost or whatever, what we've kind of understood is that actually the most valuable thing that we've produced is the ability for people to connect and the ability for people to do something that is positive and good for their mental health. We didn't necessarily understand that at the beginning. But it's definitely what we realise now is that those outcomes are actually much, much more important than the food or whatever it is. (Member of the public)

Other personal development outcomes reported included improved coping skills and adaptability, and increased self-confidence. One interviewee, for example, reported that mentoring provided by WRT had led to them feeling more confident in their ability to navigate the complexities of accessing funding and other pathways to extend their organisation's own sustainability projects.

Relationships and community connection

A key outcome of WRT's work on Waiheke Island has been the establishment of social and community connections for initiative participants. For example, 80% of survey respondents reported that they felt more connected to their community following engagement in a WRT activity. There was further evidence of this finding in the open-ended survey responses, with many referring to the social aspects of the Kai Conscious café and the opportunity it provided to connect with others in the local community, while also learning about waste minimisation or accessing quality food:

Kai Conscious Café is a community meeting ground to connect, learn how to make great meals, learn about our waste issues and get a good feed. (Member of the public)

Apart from being disappointed to see how much food still gets wasted by some restaurants I absolutely loved being part of the crew to deal with it and turn this useless waste into something useful. (Member of the public)

I really love the Kai Conscious gathering. It's like the heart of Waiheke where you go and connect with the community while you share amazing Kai prepared with food waste. (Member of the public)

Case study interviewees also spoke about this as an important outcome of WRT's work. This included the role the café played in providing a space for isolated residents of the island to connect with others, or Zero Waste Stations facilitating people coming together over shared interests:

My friend, it's her thing to look forward to during the week, to come and chop veggies and talk to us and have a cup of tea. And we get about six older people who they're not coming because they're hungry for a free lunch, they're coming for a community and something to do and something interesting. (Member of the public)

Building the waste minimisation movement

At an organisational level, there were reports of WRT utilising its networks to connect or work alongside various community groups or service providers, which had facilitated their access to additional resources or support. Of note, WRT staff highlighted that the organisation's involvement with different providers in the Waiheke community had led to a range of ancillary outcomes, such as the sharing of information across different entities, mentoring opportunities, the development of new initiatives, and improved facilities for other service providers:

We helped [organisation] for example... We even did a teaching and learning how to make food together, so we did like a whole workshop thing. And we taught them how to rescue food, to make things in their kitchen... They got to inject that money that they'd spend on food into their kitchens, [so now] they've got a commercial dishwasher, we helped them get a grant for that. (Community partner)

As evident in the following extract, connecting with other organisations or individuals via the WasteWise contract on one issue often led to additional benefits being realised:

Every conversation we have over selling a bokashi bin becomes a fourfold conversation about the whole circle of all of that. "What are you doing over there?" "Have you heard about our Kai Café?" "Oh you do food rescue, that's great. I have extra stuff in my garden, I'll put it in the thing". And it keeps happening in every single direction. (Community partner)

Addressing broader social needs

A range of broader outcomes were identified from the case study which were addressing a mix of social needs within the local Waiheke community. These included:

Provision of food for families facing food insecurity on the island. This was generally provided via the Kai Conscious café, the community fridge, and the Kai Garden. It also included produce from the

garden and food rescue service being distributed to other community organisations on Waiheke. Staff members acknowledged that there had been increased demand for these services and that their outputs in this area had significantly risen in response to this.

I think the hugest impact is it's provided food for a lot of people who can't afford food. So the patakas are regularly filled up with food from the gardens (Member of the public)

Development of employment skills and opportunities. This included university students who interned at the WRT gaining skills and knowledge that can be applied to future work settings; a staff member reported that this sometimes involved local high school pupils they had previously worked with in the school setting. One initiative participant also indicated that their employment direction had been influenced by their volunteer experience at the WRT, and there was evidence that information was being shared about job opportunities amongst volunteers and other attendees at the Kai Conscious Café.

A lot of the time the tasks and the projects that the interns work on in the WasteWise contract is also used for them to advance their actual career post university. Because they can show how they took action and initiative and professional skills to create a solution on a study or an educational document. (Community partner)

[Trading of skills and goods] was also happening on an informal basis. Someone would say 'I've just arrived, I don't know what I'm going to do'. And someone else would say, 'Well there's a job going at Man O'War, why don't you apply?'. So I think when you bring people together, one you get wonderful creative ideas, but two, you get this lovely sort of sharing of knowledge and know how. (Community partner)

Financial impacts. This was due to accessing food from the organisation, or the ability to purchase seedlings at a low price that enables residents to grow their own food; both of which contributed to reduced household bills. There were also examples of reduced costs for organisations engaged with the WRT – e.g. not having to pay for compost due to producing it themselves.

5.3 Waste Free Parenting

The Waste Free Parenting Programme is designed and facilitated by Kate Meads. It was initially developed from a cloth nappy workshop and has since been extended to include a broader focus on waste-free parenting. The target audience for the initiative is expectant parents or those with young babies. The programme consists of the following three strands:

- **Public workshops** delivered either face-to-face in a range of settings (e.g. at the Baby Show) or online, via pre-recorded modules.
- **Community workshops** which are arranged with individual organisations or groups, with the content tailored to the audience.
- **Cloth nappy trials** with Early Childhood Centres (ECEs).

Workshops cover a mix of topics, including an overview of landfill and the impact of disposable nappies, recycling, wastewater, and impact of single-use wipes on sewerage systems, and the cost of using disposable vs cloth nappies. Content also incorporates a range of strategies for parents to reduce their waste including via the use of cloth nappies, reusable baby food pouches, food preparation and other general waste-related tips (e.g. using toy libraries).

At the time of the evaluation, workshops were priced at \$16.80, with all attendees receiving a free trial pack which included two cloth nappies and a selection of other parenting-related products (e.g. reusable food wraps).

This section presents findings from the Waste Free Parenting case study which draws on the following data sources:

- N=7 semi-structured interviews with a mix of staff (council and programme) and workshop participants²⁴
- N=12 respondents to the online survey described in Section 2.1.3 and throughout the document, who had taken part in a Waste Free parenting/cloth nappy workshops
- A review of project documentation and other secondary data provided to the evaluation team.

The experiences of workshop attendees were explored in the semi-structured interviews and the online survey; this included their motivations for enrolling in a workshop, how satisfied they were with the workshop, and their overall experience of participating in the initiative. Information presented below incorporates findings from both data sources.

5.3.1 Feedback from workshop attendees

Motivations for attending a workshop varied, although all case study interviewees indicated they were interested in learning more about how they could parent in a more environmentally conscious way. This included those who reported that they were already invested in waste minimisation in other

²⁴ This included a mix of those who attended a face-to-face event and others who took part online.

aspects of their life, as evident in their subscription to waste-related social media sites, or participation in other waste-related initiatives:

I used to do New Zealand Waste Free stuff, I'm not a hardcore waste free person but I try a little bit. (Member of the public)

Those who were expecting their first child acknowledged that they felt nervous or uninformed about parenting and were seeking guidance from external sources. This included some who were looking for information on cloth nappies that could help them decide whether to use these products, and others who had already opted to do so but were seeking further information as to how they worked:

This is my first [child] which is why I kind of looked into the workshop, I guess. Because I had no idea what I'm doing. (Member of the public)

My experience was like obviously you had to do a special fold or whatever and some pins but when you look on these websites it's like boosters. Do you want the bamboo booster or the microfibre booster? And you're like 'what?' It's confusing, it's hard to know where to start. (Member of the public)

One person highlighted financial considerations and the potential to learn about cost-saving strategies as a key motivation, with others were attracted by the free trial pack offered as part of the programme:

I think for me it was a combination of things. Saving money because we had just bought a house and I fell pregnant and so time, money was very much on my mind with the cost of all the other baby things that you have to buy. (Member of the public)

If I'm going to be perfectly honest like it was the way my friend was just like "You get this free package of stuff," so I was like "Oh cool, that sounds cool." Obviously, there was a lot of benefit behind it after it but to be honest the primary motivation, it sounded like a really cool pack of things that you were going to get. (Member of the public)

Case study interviewees generally provided very positive feedback on their experience of the workshop. All 12 survey respondents also reported high levels of satisfaction (10 indicated they were 'very satisfied' and two were 'satisfied'), and all indicated that they would recommend the workshop to their friends or family.

Key strengths of WFP, as reported by workshop attendees, are outlined below.

Workshop format: For those who took part in an online workshop, the format provided flexibility in choosing when and how to participate, including the ability to take part at different times of the day, being able to schedule it around other commitments, and the opportunity to involve their partner who may not have been available to take part in a face-to-face workshop. The pre-recorded format allowed participants to work through the information at their own pace and select content that was of most interest to them, which was also seen to work well for people that were "time-poor".

I've gone back and watched the modules again, so I think that is useful because it's a lot of information so it's quite good being able to kind of have that and look back if you want to or pause it. (Member of the public)

We sort of fast-forwarded certain parts of it and I've consequently recommended the course to quite a few different people and I've said it's one of those things that you could kind of just do either over a couple of nights or sort of fast-forward and find the bits that really resonate with you. (Member of the public)

A minority had participated in a face-to-face WFP workshop (due largely to COVID-19) and reflected on the advantages of this format, including the opportunity to ask questions and for information to be tailored to the audience:

It was great to be able to chat with someone in person about cloth nappies which is why we went. We learnt about a bunch of other reusable products we didn't know about. (Member of the public)

Content and delivery of the information: The workshops delivered motivating and impactful information that resonated with initiative participants, as evident in their ability to recall some of the key take-home messages. This included both impactful waste-related information (e.g. “every disposable nappy ever produced is still in existence”) and useful practical tips (e.g. the recommendation to try different brands of cloth nappies to see which works best). A broader communication that small steps or changes in behaviour can make a difference was widely recalled as an inspiring message. One interviewee also highlighted the booklet as providing “really good handy tips and tricks”. Other comments included:

When they compared the amount of waste that a kid produces ... and I just saw it and I couldn't believe it, like I really couldn't. When you see the graphic image of it, I mean you know it, but when you see it graphically, it really made me think about okay I really need to do something about this, it's a big problem. (Member of the public)

I mean it gave me that easy opportunity. There was no excuse and then you realise how easy it was and just like that one quote about do one a day, that really sort of cemented everything. (Member of the public)

A couple of interviewees commented that some of the content was less relevant to their personal situation, and that the information presented was a little unfocused or overwhelming in places, given the wide-ranging material covered across the modules.

Feedback from both case study interviewees and survey participants highlighted that information was generally clearly presented in easily understood language, and that they appreciated Kate's approachable and down-to-earth style of presentation.

Everything explained in language I could understand. A good background of information. (Member of the public)

She was so realistic about it. Like I think if it was a different person could maybe try to, would possibly make you feel bad like you're not doing enough, gloom and doom, but I felt like her saying like look I'm not perfect, I'm still learning, it wasn't intimidating at all. (Member of the public)

Perceived value for money: Interviewees felt that the cost of attending the workshop was low and reported that it did not create a barrier to participation. Particularly given the free samples provided in the trial packs that a number of participants had gone on to use afterwards, it was viewed as excellent value for money. Indeed, there were many positive comments received about the sample pack, with several attendees viewing it as a highlight of participation.

I can't quite remember everything that was in the sample packs but I know there was a little tiny laundry detergent and I think there was the beeswax wrap ... Then there were also two cloth nappies, so that was amazing. I mean that in itself was a savings for us because you can try them out and even if you invest no other money into it, you already have yourself a couple of nappies to use. (Member of the public)

5.3.2 Waste Free Parenting outcomes

A range of outcomes were identified from the WFP case study, as reported by both case study interviewees and survey participants, alongside council and programme staff.

Knowledge and skills gained

Initiative participants reported that they had gained knowledge and skills in a range of areas, including:

- *Nappies:* this included learning linked to both disposable and cloth nappies (e.g. that different brands vary in style, average number of disposable nappies used for a newborn baby).
- *Waste reduction:* this included building overall waste-related knowledge (e.g. the level of waste created by disposable nappies) as well as learning about composting, strategies to reduce food wastage and correct recycling techniques. All WFP survey respondents agreed that they learnt how to reduce their waste.

Very informative session not only about using reusable nappies but also about waste in Auckland. I learnt a lot about what to recycle and what not. Also about where our general waste goes! (Member of the public)

Some individuals highlighted that this learning was passed on to others – including partners, children, and friends.²⁵ Case study interviewees indicated that this was either directly via sharing information, or indirectly via modelling different behaviours in their household. In some cases, these other parties were relatively uninformed and/or resistant to changing their waste-related behaviour.

²⁵ All survey respondents reported that they had shared what they had learned with other people.

He [husband] was like why should I do this? I was like but it's our baby and it's something that's important for her future and stuff. It's the same conversation over and over again. (Member of the public)

Mostly it's just been with day-to-day role modelling to them [children] and what we do with our things. And I think just leading by example really, talking about what we need and what we don't need and the cheapy little toys that are made out of plastic that you know are gonna break... so let's think about what we're bringing into our home, things that we are going to love and they're going to last. (Member of the public)

Waste reduction

Initiative participants indicated that after completing the workshops, they had introduced new behaviours within their household – many of which had been sustained over time and had resulted in a reduction in their household waste. This included all survey respondents agreeing that they had reduced the amount of waste they produced.

As can be observed in the list below of new behaviours reported by workshop attendees, while these included the use of cloth nappies, they also extended to other waste minimisation or parenting behaviours, such as food preparation:

- Trialling one or two brands of cloth nappies
- Ongoing use of cloth nappies – either exclusively or in combination with disposables (e.g. disposables only when on holiday)
- Commenced potty training at a young age
- Upcycling of used household goods
- Monitoring rubbish outputs
- Reduction in purchase of new products (e.g. children's clothing)
- Accessing second hand parenting products (e.g. toys) from friends/family or op shops
- Use of kai carrier pouches instead of store bought baby food.

I have not bought clothes for a long time. I buy things that she requires only, like inners and like sometimes leggings or something like that she really requires, and we haven't had friends give it to [us], but otherwise there's nothing else. (Member of the public)

Even now I use mostly cloth nappies. So the only time I don't is if we go away on holiday which isn't that often but if we go away for a weekend or something somewhere then I use disposables, otherwise we use cloth nappies. (Member of the public)

I would say that I do definitely try to lead a life with less waste. I'm not perfect but definitely try to think about what we consume. I think she talked about plastic packaging and how much plastic packaging is in the supermarket and whilst we do have to think about how much money we spend at the supermarket, I do try to look at some of those things and the differences and if there's not much of a price point... trying to be more mindful of what we're bringing into our house. (Member of the public)

For some, these new behaviours were attributed to increased confidence or a shift in mindset. One participant indicated that she felt so invested in the new behaviours that it would be difficult to revert to a more wasteful approach; in addition, an original motivation to save money had now shifted to a waste reduction focus. Comments included:

I think it just helped me to become more confident and trying something that I knew nothing about. (Member of the public)

I mean I don't know if we would have even started down the cloth nappy thing without it... Like I don't see myself as like an eco-warrior or anything like that. Maybe if I hadn't done it and hadn't got the nappies I might have been like, that's only for certain types of people and it's in the too-hard basket. So that did change. (Member of the public)

I think it went solely kind of from a saving money thing to a 'we can play our part in reducing our waste'. And now I feel like it's more, I'm in it this far, I have all the supplies, why would I not keep going with it? Like there's times, like so my oldest is two and a half and he has some pretty gross poos and sometimes I'm like this, argh what am I doing? But I'm so invested in it, I just can't stop now. (Member of the public)

Waste Free Parenting survey findings: Intended changes to behaviour

10/12 survey respondents said they had – or intended to – make changes to the way they deal with their recycling and waste after attending a workshop. Examples of these changes included:

- Using cloth nappies exclusively
- Using other reusable parenting items
- Bokashi composting, and trying other council waste minimisation workshops
- Reducing use of disposable products
- Intention to learn how to reduce food waste
- Taking soft plastics to Countdown
- Improving composting and recycling habits
- Changes to purchasing habits to reduce consumption and waste production.

Financial impacts

Financial impacts reported by case study interviewees mostly related to the money saved by utilising cloth nappies instead of their disposable counterparts. Some initiative participants also indicated that they had benefited financially due to other changes in behaviour, such as the use of cloth wipes or a reduction in the purchase of new clothing. As evident in the comments below, the financial savings were not insignificant and valued as a key benefit by some:

I don't know how many thousands of dollars it's saved us just with cloth nappies and then I mean there's all the other stuff as well. The beeswax wraps and using the wipes for the little bottoms that are just face cloths instead of using all the disposable wipes. (Member of the public)

I guess I spent quite a bit of money on nappies at the start but I tried to work out okay so if I buy these nappies and I use them this many times, how long will it take for me to pay them off? Like I kind of tried to do some math of my own and now I've lost count. They've well and truly paid themselves off. I would say we must have saved thousands because of it. (Member of the public)

It's such a big deal [financially] because just nappies alone saves like 30 bucks a week. So that was a big change and then food on that and what else, clothes was a big thing because I think when I was pregnant I bought some clothes for baby and then after I did the course I was like I really don't need clothes and I started getting clothes from my friends. (Member of the public)

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to increase the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of the current community-led approach. These recommendations have been workshopped with the broader WasteWise team prior to the publishing of this report. They are grouped into the following categories:

- Improve the capacity of community partners
- Strengthen networks between community partners
- Review the WasteWise programme's focus with maximum impact in mind
- Make better use of behavioural insights frameworks
- Help with engaging the public
- Improve contracting
- Support monitoring and evaluation.

6.1 Review the WasteWise programme's focus with maximum impact in mind

Considering the findings regarding the WasteWise programme of work and the way in which initiatives and contracts have evolved over time, the following are suggested:

- Run a strategic refresh session involving relevant WasteWise staff. Revisit the outcomes the team wants to prioritise, with whom, and assess the current balance of initiatives in light of these priorities. Ensure there is time and resourcing allocated for actioning ideas generated within the session(s).
 - Consider using a comparison between the focus of the current WasteWise programme (Figure 10) and the composition of Auckland's landfills (Figure 11) to guide this discussion.
 - Consider, in particular, broadening the team's focus to include waste produced by customer-facing businesses (noting that some community partners are already funded by the WasteWise team to assist organisations and businesses reduce their waste).
 - Consider better addressing the root causes of waste: overconsumption. This likely requires working at both household and systemic levels.
 - Dedicate time to developing a team theory of change. Map each community partner's activities onto this theory of change, to identify areas where more or less focus is needed.
 - Consider how the WasteWise team might provide advisory support to colleagues in engaging construction businesses to reduce their waste.

Figure 10: Estimated focus of the WasteWise programme in terms of waste source.

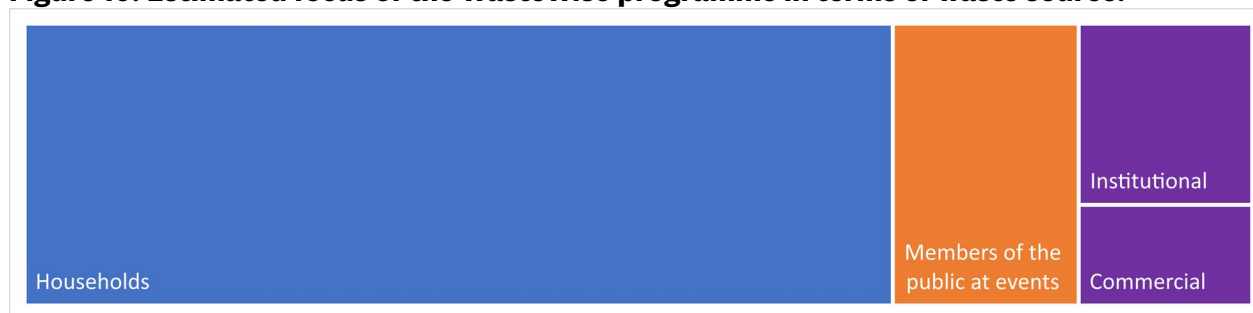
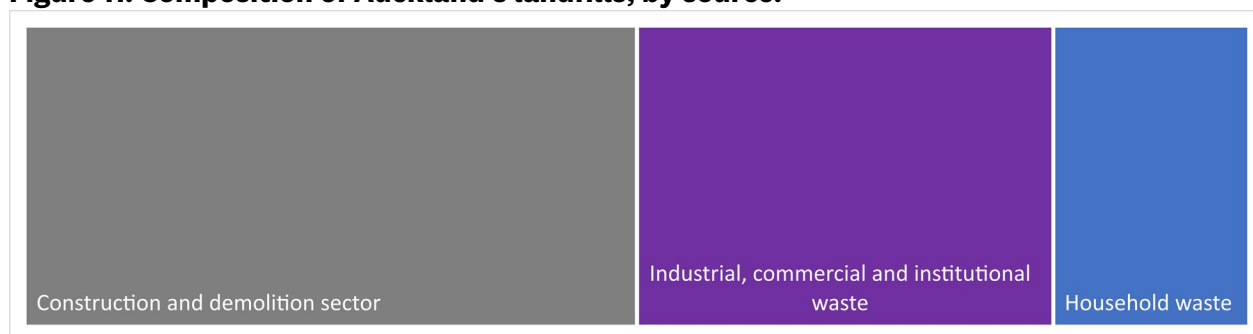


Figure 11: Composition of Auckland's landfills, by source.



In addition to the suggestions above, we recommend:

- Developing a WasteWise-wide framework for assessing and prioritising future initiative ideas that ensures new initiatives are aligned with the strategic refresh above.
- Consider whether targeting specific household types is warranted, in light of research indicating that wealthier households waste more food.²⁶
- Developing a mechanism, and/or assign a team member the responsibility, for looking across the whole programme of WasteWise work, and similar programmes across council, spotting opportunities for collaboration, partnership and deduplication across contracts.
- Considering a pathway forward for contract manager workloads which offers a balance between developing new partnerships and supporting existing partners.

6.2 Improve the capacity of community partners

The following recommendations address gaps in community partner capacity:

- Dedicate greater resources to community partner capacity building, in the areas outlined below.
- Develop a customisable training and mentoring package where partners are supported over time to address their capacity needs. Focus offerings on governance, enterprise, internal administration, communications, monitoring and evaluation, and application of behavioural insights, as identified as needs through this evaluation.

²⁶ Verma M. vdB., de Vreede L., Achterbosch T., Rutten M. M. (2020). Consumers discard a lot more food than widely believed: Estimates of global food waste using an energy gap approach and affluence elasticity of food waste. *PLOS ONE* 15(2): e0228369.

- Seek out existing resources and activities being run by other council departments to upskill community partners, to avoid duplication and to make use of existing resources. Where the expertise or resource does not exist within Auckland Council, consider bringing in external expertise to deliver training.

6.3 Strengthen networks between community partners

Community partners reported having good relationships with other community partner organisations to be incredibly valuable. In light of the strong appetite amongst community partners for further opportunities to develop these relationships, we recommend:

- Supporting stronger connections and opportunities for mutual learning among community partners (e.g. through facilitating networking, cross-training, and mentoring). Establishing an advisory group of community partners to advise and help implement these opportunities may provide value.
- Considering how community partner networks and relationships might be strengthened through formal contractual arrangements. The use of joint or umbrella contracts described in Section 6.6 below may be one way to achieve this. Contracting larger community partners to facilitate relationships among community partners might be another.

6.4 Make better use of behavioural insights findings and frameworks

Section 3.3.3 outlines how behavioural research is not systematically used in the design and implementation of many WasteWise-funded initiatives. A review of interventions to reduce household waste has been conducted by the evaluation team and has been published accompanying this document.

It is recommended that the WasteWise team incorporate findings from the review of WasteWise initiatives. Community partners should be offered capacity building in this area and the use of at least one of the behavioural insights frameworks could be included in contractual agreements, where appropriate.

6.5 Assist partners to engage with the public

Community partners are contracted for their ability to engage with their local communities. However, they too struggle with some aspects of engagement, in part due to their capacity and resourcing. The following were identified by community partners as possible ways that the WasteWise team might assist them in engaging members of the public:

- Provide more information to community partners on existing available resources and ways of engaging Aucklanders with waste.
- Share information earlier of future activities and events occurring across the region with community partners to enable attendance or involvement.

- Provide greater resource support (e.g. centralised translations of engaging material) for community partners who are engaging and supporting diverse communities for whom standard communications are not appropriate.
- Consider how the broader marketing messages and channels of Auckland Council can support community partner initiatives, in terms of assisting with recruitment for workshops, engaging hard to reach audiences, and reiterating basic waste messages (e.g. how to recycle) in areas where these behaviours are identified as an issue.
- Facilitate community partners' access to the Zero Waste Zone, as many community partners report finding this resource both incredibly valuable and difficult to book/access.
- Consider whether it is possible to connect community partner initiatives with existing council services or direct communications that provide a way to access Aucklanders who are not currently engaged with waste.

6.6 Improve contracting processes

A number of suggestions for improvement were offered by community partners with regard to contracting and funding. These included:

- Further simplify and streamline procurement and contracting processes across Auckland Council (including outside of the WasteWise team, where possible)
- Continue the shift to longer contracts (3-5 years, where appropriate) to provide stability for community partners to deliver outcomes and develop their organisations.
- Include inflation adjustments in contracts to enable community partners to account for increasing operational costs and to provide cost of living adjustments to staff.
- Consider developing 'umbrella contracts' where larger, more established providers hold an overall contract and then sub-contract/partner with smaller community partners to deliver aspects of the initiatives. The use of umbrella contracts should include terms requiring collaboration and mentoring across community partners.

6.7 Support improving monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are challenges for most community partners. Recognising that the WasteWise team already assists and encourages community partners in this area, the following is suggested:

- Ensure monitoring and evaluation requirements placed on community partners are scaled to match the scope and contracted value of their initiatives. We note that the WasteWise team are already doing this, to a large degree, however any changes to monitoring and evaluation requirements should keep this principle in mind.
- Provide additional, targeted support and funding to formally 'trial' new, potentially scalable initiatives. Trialling, in this instance, should involve evaluation as a central component. An initiative should be formally trialled only if there is a strategic reason for doing so, such that the results will influence significant future decisions about funding, scaling up the trialled approach across Auckland, and/or improving other community partner initiatives. External evaluation expertise will likely be required for this task.

- Continue to assist community partners in how to accurately monitor and record the number of people they have engaged with, especially when they are attending large events where they are not able to engage every person at the event.
- Provide back community partners with their own monitoring data, in a format that is useful for them and helps them secure other funding should they wish to apply for it.
- Where evaluation is required from community partners that goes beyond routine monitoring, funding earmarked for this purpose should be included in contracts to enable it to be undertaken.
- Build upon the data collected in this evaluation, possibly using specific survey questions to build community partner KPIs and repeating the survey to track progress against those KPIs.
- Although significant effort has already gone into making the community partner reporting template(s) easy and accessible, some community partners report them not being fit for purpose. Revisit the format and appropriateness of reporting templates when contracts are renewed.

7. Discussion

Achieving the aspiration of zero waste by 2040 requires significant shifts in how waste is produced, reduced and repurposed across the Auckland region. The WasteWise team aims to facilitate community-level changes in waste behaviour to achieve this goal.

This evaluation shows that where community partners are able to engage with members of the public they are having positive impacts on community behaviour. Those participating in WasteWise initiatives outlined they had made changes or intended to make changes to the way they dealt with their waste and/or recycling in a variety of ways, mainly by improving their composting and recycling behaviours, but also by using reusable items, gardening, changing purchasing habits to avoid plastic, and upcycling and repairing. Additional outcomes were also reported, including the development of community relationships and connections, personal development, improved wellbeing, and improved finances.

However, there are some limitations to delivering waste reduction initiatives through small-scale, community-led organisations. Some of the smaller, volunteer-supported organisations struggle with administrative tasks (e.g. governance, contracting, human resources, health and safety), enterprise focused activities, communications, monitoring and evaluation, and knowing how to apply behavioural research. They also require strong professional support networks to be successful, and some community partners would benefit from having these facilitated and strengthened.

Further support and improvement to the WasteWise team's community partner delivery model will be necessary for wider-scale waste behaviour change, and this evaluation provides a number of recommendations for the WasteWise team to progress this.

8. Appendix: WasteWise survey of initiative participants

Email introduction containing the online survey link:

[Community partner] and Auckland Council's WasteWise team (our partner) would love your feedback on the waste reduction programmes we deliver.

You are in our records as having engaged with one of the waste-related programmes delivered through [community partner] some time in the last 18 months. We would appreciate if you could take a few minutes to complete this short survey on your experience. It will help us improve what we do.

The survey takes only 3-5 minutes and is anonymous. As a thank you, everyone who completes the survey can go into the draw to win a \$100 supermarket voucher.

Please click here to complete the survey.

Survey questions:

1. Which of the following [community partner] activities have you taken part in or been involved in?
(Please tick all that apply)

Drop-down list pre-populated with a list of each community partner's WasteWise activities

2. Overall, how satisfied were you with these activities?

1 – Very dissatisfied
2 – Dissatisfied
3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4 – Satisfied
5 – Very satisfied
Don't know

3. Please explain why you gave the rating above.

Open-text response

4. Have you made, or do you intend to make any changes to the way you deal with your recycling and waste, as a result of taking part in the activities above? (Please circle one)

1 – Yes
2 – No

3 – I'm not sure

5. [If 'yes' to Q4] Please explain what changes you have made, or intend to make, and why.

Open-text response

6. [If 'no' to Q4] Please explain why you will not make any changes.

Open-text response

7. [If 'I'm not sure' to Q4] Please explain why you are not sure whether you will make any changes.

Open-text response

8. After taking part in the activities above, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

As a result of the activity I attended/engaged with...

	1 – Strongly disagree	2 – Disagree	3 – Neither	4 – Agree	5 – Strongly agree	Don't know/ NA
I want to reduce my waste						
I learnt how to reduce my waste						
I have reduced the amount of waste I produce						
I have shared what I learned with other people						
I feel more connected to my community						
I feel proud of my neighbourhood						
I will recommend this activity to friends or family						

9. Please share any final comments here.

Open-text response

Find out more: phone 09 301 0101, email
rimu@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or visit
aucklandcouncil.govt.nz and knowledgeauckland.org.nz