



I Am Auckland Review Findings Report

October 2023



I am Auckland review findings report October 2023

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1. Executive summary

[I Am Auckland](#), Auckland Council's strategic action plan for children and young people has been reviewed to evaluate the past three years of implementation and assess if the strategy is still fit-for-purpose to respond to current and future challenges and opportunities.

The review has used a range of qualitative and quantitative methods. These include desktop research, engagement, evaluation, and stocktake.

The applied methodology has resulted in comprehensive findings about the relevance and effectiveness of I Am Auckland, the broader opportunities and challenges for children and young people, and the role council could play now and in the future. A focus on hearing directly from tamariki and rangatahi was critical to this review, and the insights in the report demonstrate the value of this.

I Am Auckland was first published in 2013, and since then the context has changed significantly. This includes not only the adoption of national strategies focussed on improving child and youth wellbeing, but also relevant strategy developments within council such as the publication of the Ngā Hapori Momoho /Thriving Communities strategy. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have been significant; creating considerable strain on resources, challenging the way support could be delivered, and ultimately affecting child and youth wellbeing.

We found that while most children and young people are safe, happy, and healthy, some are being left behind. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori, Pacific children and young people, rainbow children and young people, and disabled children are more likely to experience inequity across a range of measures than their peers.

The review has identified deteriorating mental health, high rates of child poverty, and access to safe, warm, and dry housing as particular issues facing tamariki and rangatahi. There are also concerns related to accessible public transport, safety, and discrimination.

Emerging trends, such as climate change and the changing nature of work and education risk adding to the inequities experienced by some groups of children and young people.

The review found that although there is good practice occurring across council, I Am Auckland has not been effectively implemented or considered across the council whānau. The strategy is not informing programming and investment decisions and does not provide evidenced-based principles to guide the type of support council offers, which many staff would find helpful.

A headline finding of the review is that council could do more to focus on those experiencing the greatest persistent disadvantage, as well as empower children and young people to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

The methodologies revealed insights into what is and isn't working well for tamariki and rangatahi, the experience of many children and young people, the effectiveness of I Am Auckland, and considerations for council's future strategic direction. A summary is presented below. Further detail is provided in Parts One to Three of this report.

Findings: context for tamariki and rangatahi

Some children and young people are experiencing persistent disadvantage and greater hardship

Deteriorating mental health, poor housing, and inequity are persistent or worsening, with Māori and Pacific children being disproportionately affected. Discrimination is also particularly persistent for Māori, Pacific, disabled, and rainbow children and young people.

Present and emerging challenges for children and young people need to be considered

The long-term challenge presented by increasing trends such as global pandemics and a worsening climate need to be deliberately considered in the design and delivery of responses.

Many children and young people have access to opportunities

Access to outdoor activities, recreational spaces, new technology, and opportunities to learn about their culture are some of the things that are going well for children and young people.

There are common issues facing children and young people

Safety, unreliable transport, deteriorating mental health, and concern about the environment were issues consistently raised through the engagement.

Children and young people have told us what is making a difference

Valuing diversity, feeling accepted and safe to be themselves, green spaces, quality relationships and connections, and access to community spaces were frequently shared as things that matter to them.

Findings: I Am Auckland specific

Te-ao Māori could be better incorporated into council's strategy and approach

Embracing concepts such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga would strengthen I Am Auckland at both the strategic and programme level.

Supporting mechanisms are not reflecting the long-term nature of challenges

We need different mechanisms and structures to appropriately respond to the current and future context. For example, improved collaborative ways of working and partnering with the child and youth sector, and more flexible and sustainable funding mechanisms.

There is a disconnect between council strategy and delivery

An effective connection requires several conditions and structures to be in place. Other strategy reviews have also highlighted the disconnect between strategy and implementation.

I Am Auckland is not highly visible or influencing services and support

Programmes are often being retrospectively attributed to the strategic plan, rather than the plan shaping the programmes or funding decisions.

Evaluation, learning, and sharing of insights is not working effectively

The current processes are not driving learning, better outcomes, and it is challenging to bring together comprehensive data and information sets on how council is delivering against its strategic goals.

I Am Auckland is not designed for the current context

I Am Auckland does not adequately respond to some of the current challenges children and young people face, including persistent inequity and discrimination.

Findings: opportunities

There is national commitment to improving child and youth wellbeing

Since the publication of I Am Auckland, significant national strategies and approaches that focus on children and young people and promote collaboration have been developed. There is an opportunity to make more explicit connections with such strategies.

A focus on equity could have benefits for all

Auckland Council could focus on the groups who are falling furthest behind. By applying an equity lens to strategic, investment and programme decisions around child and youth wellbeing, we could realise more opportunities to partner, leverage resources, and ultimately improve outcomes.

Long-term commitment is required to improve outcomes for children and young people

Many of the challenges facing children and young people are interconnected and long-term. Council could develop more integrated responses to help address these.

Council could better support tamariki and rangatahi to have their say on regional decisions

Creating quality and culturally appropriate opportunities to hear from children and young people more frequently should be prioritised.

More culturally grounded, co-designed support could have huge benefits

The value of diversity of voice and perspective is critical when supporting children and young people. Priority should be given to co-developing support, particularly with tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau.

Council is delivering some quality programmes which we should promote and learn from

Although not always informed by I Am Auckland, this review could be an opportunity to highlight and promote what is working across the council group.

Council could develop principles of best practice and better target its support

There are foundational principles, key life stages, and critical success factors which are recognised for making the greatest difference for children and young people. Council could look at applying these to its programme and investment decisions.

Based on the review, it was concluded that **I Am Auckland is no longer fit for purpose.**

Several options emerged for council. Each option responds to the findings differently, with some taking a comprehensive approach to redesigning the strategy, and others proposing a new path.

Staff were also aware that there are internal factors to consider when exploring next steps. These include the need to exercise prudence with resourcing decisions, the direction from elected members to unlock co-investment opportunities and clarify what is our role versus

that of central government and other stakeholders, and the request for the consolidation of strategies.

Part Four of the report presents four options for the next steps for council's approach to improving outcomes for children and young people: no dedicated child and youth strategy, enhance the current strategy, a new strategy and approach, and strategic priorities for children and young people nested under the Ngā Hapori Momoho/Thriving Communities strategy.

Option four: strategic priorities for children and young people nested under Ngā Hapori Momoho, scored the highest overall against the criteria in the options analysis.

This approach is most likely to meet council's internal requirements while acting on the key findings of this report. This includes:

- responding to the need to take a more equitable and holistic approach to the way we support and invest in tamariki and rangatahi
- basing programmes and support on culturally grounded, best practice models which recognise the long-term and often interconnected nature of challenges and opportunities
- prioritising the voice of children and young people and enabling greater partnership working.

A clear message that came through the review is that prioritising children and young people and including them on matters about the future of the region, will have benefits for all.

2. Introduction

Purpose

In September 2021 the Parks, Arts, Communities and Events Committee endorsed a recommendation to carry out a three-year review of I Am Auckland – council’s strategic action plan for children and young people. This report presents the findings and analysis of this review.

Since the adoption of I Am Auckland in 2013 the social, cultural, economic, and environmental landscape has changed significantly for tamariki and rangatahi.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on the lives of many children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. It not only exacerbated persistent issues but has created new challenges.

In addition, over the past few years it has become increasingly apparent that there are specific groups facing persistent disadvantage. There has also been an increased national commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. This has included the development of the government’s Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and the Child Poverty Monitor.

As a result of this context and the time that has passed since I Am Auckland was published, council staff carried out an analysis of the social, cultural, economic, environmental context for children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau today.

The report examines the above alongside council activity to evaluate whether I Am Auckland is working as well as it can as the council’s action plan, and ultimately whether council is effectively supporting child and youth wellbeing. Drawing on this analysis, the report provides options for Auckland Council’s future support for tamariki and rangatahi.

Scope

In 2021, the Parks, Arts, Communities and Events Committee endorsed the review of I Am Auckland to:

- A. evaluate the past three years of delivery and implementation of I Am Auckland
- B. review the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy
- C. determine whether the strategy is fit-for-purpose.

The committee requested that staff report back on the three-year review of I Am Auckland in 2023.

To adequately address these three areas, a thorough analysis of both the action plan and the broader context for children and young people was required.

The methodology took a breadth and depth approach to achieve this. This has resulted in comprehensive findings about the broader opportunities and challenges for children and young people, the relevance and effectiveness of I Am Auckland, and the role council could play now and in the future to support child and youth wellbeing.

The report is split into four parts:

Part One: The broader context – demographic and contextual information, and presentation of the issues and opportunities facing young people in Tāmaki Makaurau now and in the future.

Part Two: What we heard – what children, young people, the sector, and council staff told us directly about their experiences.

Part Three: I Am Auckland assessment – how well the strategic action plan is being implemented and the achievement of its goals.

Part Four: Potential next steps – analysis from Parts One, Two, and Three resulting in suggestions for how council could support children and young people.

To assist with the analysis, Parts One to Three begin with a summary of the key findings from the section, and present relevant considerations.

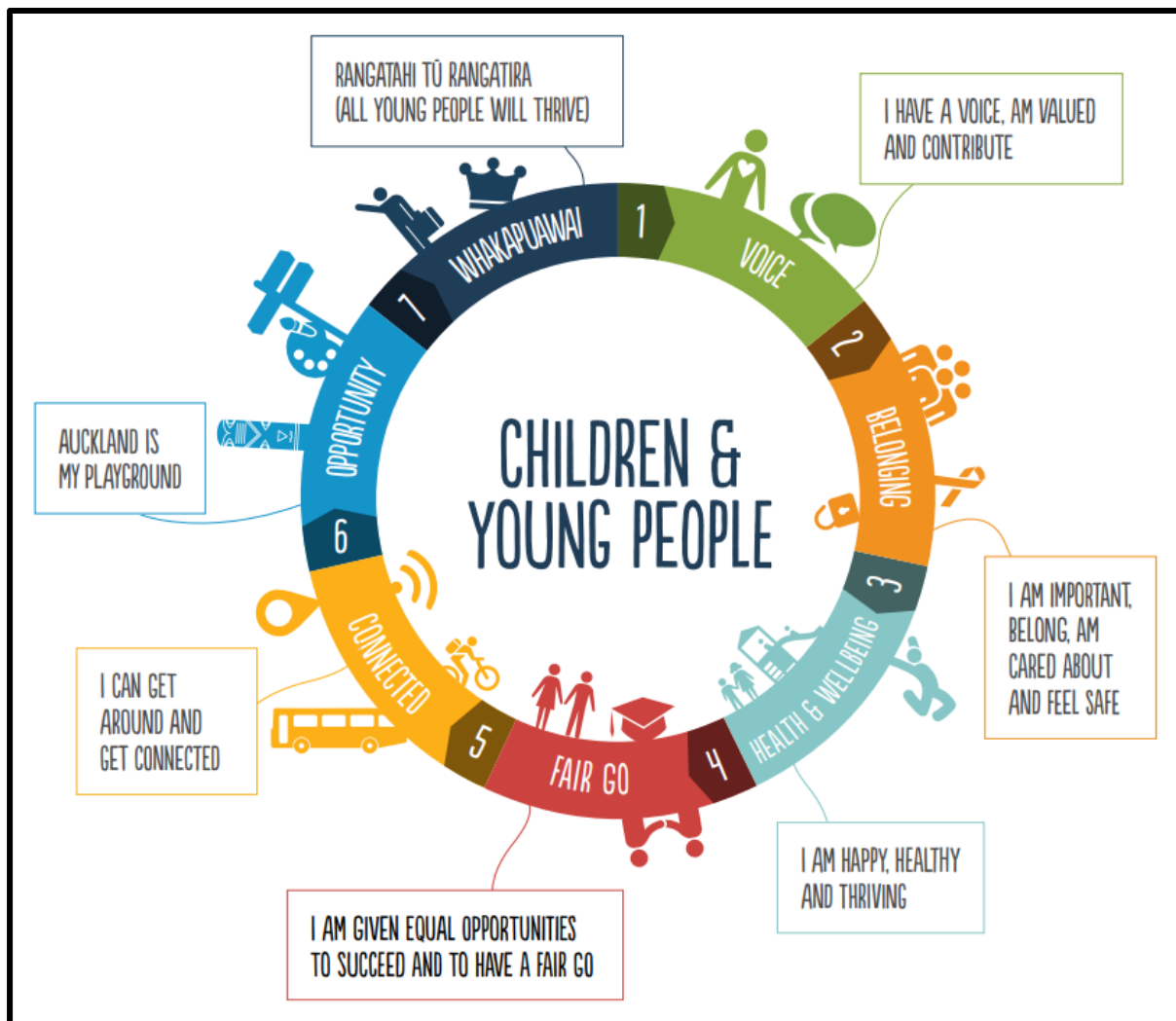
F **Findings:** the key insights from the section of the report.

Con **Considerations:** based on the findings, what council might want to consider for our approach to improving child and youth wellbeing.

3. Background

About I Am Auckland

I Am Auckland was adopted as a region-wide strategic action plan in 2013. It sets out seven goals that Auckland Council is working towards for children and young people:



Why I Am Auckland was developed

I Am Auckland was developed soon after the establishment of the unitary authority and was a demonstration of Auckland Council’s region-wide commitment to children and young people.

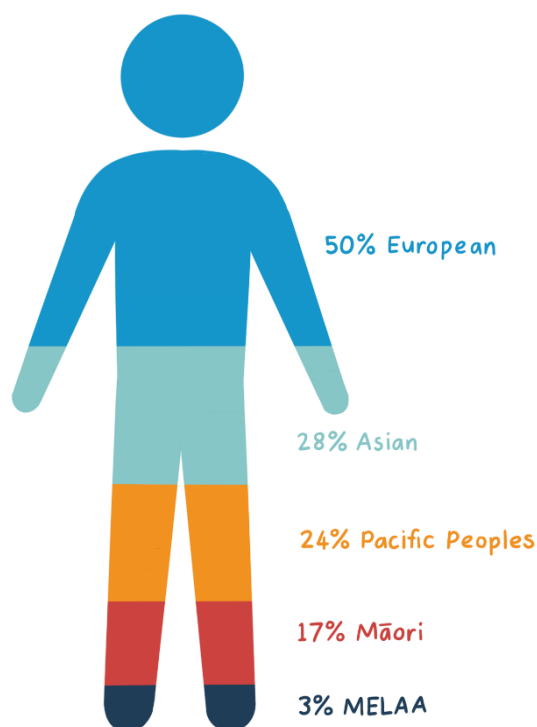
The action plan was designed to ensure all Auckland’s children and young people had an equitable opportunity to participate and be heard.

It was developed as an essential strategic action plan to support other critical strategies. For example, The Auckland Plan sets out a 30-year vision for Auckland, and I Am Auckland is a

framework for ‘delivering the outcomes set out in the Auckland Plan in a way that involves children and young people and the community that support and encourage them’¹.

Auckland Council appreciated the significance of this population group at the time. In 2013, there were almost 500,000 people under 25 years old living in Tāmaki Makaurau which was almost 40 per cent of the total population². During this time, Aotearoa’s child welfare ratings were poor on many indicators, and the country had comparatively low rates of investment in children and young people.

According to the 2018 census ³ the ethnic makeup of children and young people in Auckland is:



The seven goals (page 10) in I Am Auckland were a result of collaboration with thousands of children and young people via Auckland Plan engagement, with an appreciation of their diversity. Council identified that a mix of existing and new actions were required to deliver these goals, and that partnership was essential.

There was also an acknowledgement that although it was a region-wide action plan, local efforts were needed including providing new and improved community facilities and the supporting of local events and programmes. It was anticipated that local board plans would incorporate the I Am Auckland goals.

¹ <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/community-social-development-plans/docsiamauckland/i-am-auckland-strategic-action-plan.pdf>

² Reid, A and Rootham, E (2016). A profile of children and young people in Auckland. Auckland Council technical report, TR2016/022

³ <https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/topic-based-plans-strategies/community-social-development-plans/docsiamauckland/i-am-auckland-strategic-action-plan.pdf> p7

I Am Auckland developments since 2013

I Am Auckland was first reviewed in 2017. The review highlighted some good strategic alignment to the plan across council, good practice in delivering child and youth outcomes, and identified some gaps in our delivery and evaluation.

Following this, Auckland Council adopted the I Am Auckland [Implementation Plan](#) and [Evaluation Framework](#). The evaluation framework was designed to complement the I Am Auckland Implementation Plan, with findings from the evaluation work to inform any improvements or scaling up of services and identify future priority areas. It provides a plan for annual progress reports and three-yearly reviews to ensure the council whānau is delivering on its commitments to children and young people.

The evaluation framework (which was revised in 2020) has three elements with measurements against each to evaluate:

- whether Auckland Council is making high-level progress towards each of the goals of the plan
- whether the child and youth-focused initiatives are achieving their stated results
- the uptake of I Am Auckland itself, its implementation across the council whānau and whether we are delivering on our commitments to children and young people.

As part of this review staff have looked at the past three years of implementation of I Am Auckland, and considered whether the plan has been suitably monitored and evaluated.

4. Methodology

Overview

Staff undertook a thorough review of I Am Auckland, to determine whether it is meeting the needs and aspirations of children and young people (see scope on page 8).

This required staff to understand what council activities are currently being delivered, the current and future challenges and aspirations for children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau, and what evidence suggests ‘best practice’ is in the design of programmes and support.

The methods

The methodologies used can be grouped under four workstreams; desktop research, engagement, evaluation and stocktake. Below provides an overview of the specific methodologies and their purpose.

Grouping	What	Purpose
Desktop research	Profile of Children and Young People: 2022 Update. (The Research and Evaluation Unit)	To identify current and trends in demography, education, employment, health, housing, safety, and child poverty. This included understanding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people.
	Effective interventions paper	To collate quality methods shown to improve child and youth wellbeing. This included what made certain interventions successful, and what age groups should be targeted to make the biggest improvements for children and young people.
	Futures thinking research	To determine the emerging trends that will likely affect child and youth wellbeing over the next ten years.
	Comparative analysis	To collect insights into the comparative strengths and weaknesses of I Am Auckland against other child and youth strategies, nationally and internationally.
Engagement	Direct child and youth engagement through stalls, workshops, storybooks, and empathy interviews	To understand what children and young people like and do not like about Auckland, the big issues they are facing, and their hopes and dreams for the future. The findings were presented in the report <i>Voices of Children and Young People in Tāmaki Makaurau</i> . The full report can be found on Knowledge Auckland here .
	Child and youth sector engagement through interviews and workshops	To understand the health of the sector and what it sees as the major challenges for children and young people.
	Council staff engagement through survey and interviews	To understand how I Am Auckland is being used across the council whānau, what council is doing well for children and young people and where there is room for improvement

Grouping	What	Purpose
Evaluation	Evaluation of six of council's programmes for children and young people via the Centre for Social Impact	To review what outcomes the programmes are achieving for children and young people, how these connected to I Am Auckland, and where there are opportunities for improvement.
Stocktake	Mapping of council activity against I Am Auckland (completed annually)	To understand how I Am Auckland is being implemented across the council whānau, how many initiatives are contributing towards each of the goals and the breadth of work that council undertakes for children and young people.

The findings from these workstreams are reflected in this report and directly inform the recommendations and potential next steps outlined in Part Four.

Part One: the broader context

Part One presents information about the broader context and environment for children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. The findings provide critical insights for the review, helping to determine if the strategy is fit-for-purpose to address the issues and opportunities facing children and young people.

This section presents:

- a demographic overview of tamariki and rangatahi in Tāmaki Makaurau
- a summary of demographic trends
- analysis of these trends against the I Am Auckland evaluation framework
- the national context
- future scenarios for children and young people.

Some of the data speaks to national trends, where possible Tāmaki Makaurau specific data is provided.

Below is the summary of findings and potential considerations.

Summary of findings from Part One: the broader context	
Disadvantage is persistent and growing for many children and young people	Deteriorating mental health, poor housing, and inequity are persistent or worsening, with Māori and Pacific children being disproportionately affected.
Present and emerging challenges for children and young people need to be considered	The long-term challenge that events such as global pandemics and a worsening climate bring for children and young people need to be deliberately considered in the design and delivery of responses.
There is national commitment to improving child and youth wellbeing	Since the publication of I Am Auckland, significant national strategies and approaches that focus on children and young people and promote cross-agency collaboration have been developed, presenting opportunities for Auckland Council.
Te-ao Māori could be better incorporated into council's strategy and approach	Including concepts such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga could strengthen I Am Auckland at both the strategic and practice levels.
Long-term commitment is required to improve outcomes for children and young people	Many of the challenges facing children and young people are interconnected and long-term.

Considerations from Part One. Council could...

Take a long-term view to our support for children and young people. Including developing more integrated responses to long-term interconnected issues.

Focus our efforts on tamariki and rangatahi experiencing persistent disadvantage.

Consider how we could better prioritise the needs of children and young people across different programme areas. For example, when designing and intensifying urban spaces.

Review our role in responding to the current and future scenarios and what this would mean for the type of support it provides children and young people, what it focuses on, and the cultural frameworks that underpin this.

Explore what a more deliberate connection to relevant strategies both internally and externally could mean for how we deliver programmes, partner, and ultimately contribute to improving child and youth wellbeing.

Demographic overview of tamariki and rangatahi today

In 2022, policy staff commissioned the Research and Evaluation Unit at council to update the 2016 report titled A Profile of Children and Young People in Auckland. This updated report presents key trends in demography, education, employment, housing, health, safety, and child poverty. It also presents how tamariki and rangatahi fared in Auckland throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data was collected between 2016-2021. Policy staff have drawn on more recent data where it is available. The full technical report, titled A Profile of Children and Young People in Auckland: 2022 update can be found [here](#).

Headline findings

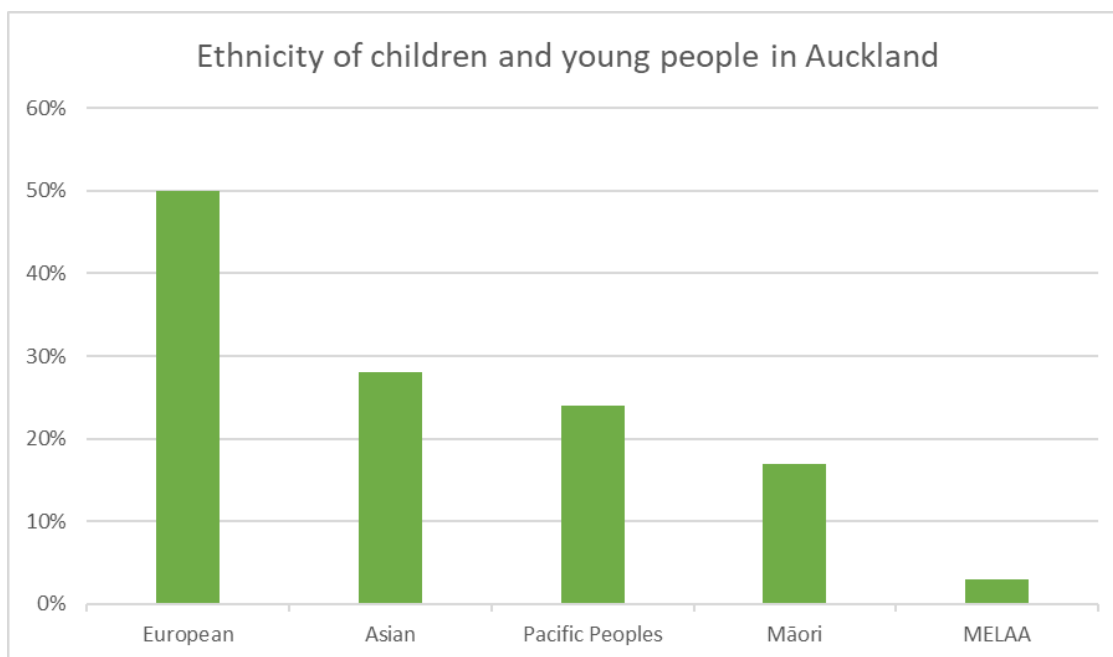
- **Auckland's child and youth population is growing:** In 2018, the census data had the population of children and young people at 535,000 in Tāmaki Makaurau. With the population growing by 30,000 between 2013 and 2018. This equates to about 34 per cent of Auckland's population.
- **The number of children and young people living in Auckland is expected to continue increasing:** This is largely driven by Auckland's generally youthful age structure, migration from other parts of New Zealand and overseas and the relatively high fertility rates of the Pacific and Māori populations. However, the proportion of Auckland's population who are children and young people is expected to decrease due to population ageing.⁴

The data also had young people aged 18-24 making up 7 per cent of Aotearoa's population. Although the per centage is relatively small, the significance of the population group is considerable as it is a stage in life where large changes often occur,

⁴ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

such as entering employment, tertiary or other education, and gaining independence from the families.

- **Almost one-quarter of Auckland’s children and young people live in South Auckland:** 24 per cent of Auckland’s children and young people live in the Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa, and Papakura local boards areas (Census 2018).
- **Auckland’s children and young people are increasingly diverse:** The graph below shows the ethnicity of children and young people aged 0-24 years based on data from the 2018 Census.



While there have been increases in the number of children and young people in all ethnic groups over the last four censuses, the Asian ethnic group has grown rapidly, increasing by 12 per cent since 2001.⁵

Almost one in five (19 per cent) children and young people identify as being part of more than one of the above ethnic groups. This has increased from 15 per cent in 2006 and is likely to continue increasing.⁶

Relevant demographic trends

The following information also comes from A Profile of Children and Young People: 2022 Update⁷. Although they are national trends, where possible Tāmaki Makaurau specific data is provided.

Rangatahi are generally well and physically active

⁵ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

⁶ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

⁷ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

Auckland's children and young people are generally physically active, healthy, and achieving well in the education system. Nationally, 86 per cent of young people report having good, very good or excellent health.⁸ Results from the Active New Zealand survey show that participation in physical activity has remained relatively stable overtime, with 91 per cent of young people taking part in play, sport, exercise, or active recreation at least once a week.⁹ Overall substance use is declining.

Many children and young people feel safe

Children and young people tend to feel safe at home, with their friends, at school and in their neighbourhoods. Most children and young people report feeling loved by the people who care for them or look after them.

Mental health is worsening

Mental health is worsening, particularly for young females, young people with disabilities, rainbow young people and rangatahi Māori. In the recent Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey, 28 per cent of young people (aged 12-18) in New Zealand were experiencing serious distress¹⁰.

In 2021, 12 per cent of young people reported that they had attempted suicide in the past twelve months, an increase from 4 per cent in 2012. In 2021, self-reported suicide attempts increased to 16 per cent for Pacific young people, 20 per cent for rangatahi Māori, 26 per cent for young people with disabilities and 26 per cent for rainbow young people.¹¹

The drivers of poor mental health include poverty, stress, childhood trauma, lack of access to appropriate healthcare services, intergenerational trauma, racism, discrimination, socioeconomic deprivation, social media and worries about the future, particularly the climate.

There are persistent issues and inequality is becoming more entrenched

The data shows that tamariki and rangatahi Māori, Pacific children and young people, rainbow children and young people and children and young people with disabilities are experiencing deep inequity across a range of measures, which impacts their wellbeing.

Child poverty remains a persistent and significant issue

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of child poverty among rich and developed nations.¹² Children experience poverty in a range of ways, including hunger, living in cold and damp housing, not having their basic needs met and lower participation in education due to associated costs. This results in fewer employment opportunities later in life. Child poverty is also associated with contact with the criminal justice system later in life.

Child poverty rates are worse for tamariki Māori, Pacific children, and children with disabilities.¹³ We expect to see the negative impacts of inflation on child poverty over the coming years, as the economic downturn will affect things such as employment rates and the ability of families to make mortgage repayments.

⁸ Malatest International. (2022). What About Me Overview report.

⁹ Sport New Zealand. (2022). Active NZ Changes in Participation: The New Zealand Participation Survey 2021.

¹⁰ Ministry for Social Development. (2022). What About Me? The National Youth Health and Wellbeing survey.

¹¹ Malatest International. (2022). What About Me Overview report.

¹² Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

¹³ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

Poor housing has significant effects on health and wellbeing

Māori and Pacific people are less likely to own their homes, compared to those of European ethnicity, and are more likely to be affected by poor-quality housing.¹⁴ Auckland has one of the lowest home ownership rates when compared to other regions. Approximately four in every ten households in Auckland rent. This impacts housing quality, warmth, residential mobility and can lead to overcrowding. These factors contribute to family stress and child poverty.¹⁵

Damp, poorly ventilated and inadequate/polluting heating systems have been linked to asthma and other respiratory illnesses in children. Approximately one in five homes in Auckland are either sometimes or always damp. Children and young people in Auckland are more likely to live in damp and mouldy housing compared to the total Auckland population.

Housing deprivation is more likely among disabled and rainbow young people

Young people with disabilities and rainbow young people are also more likely to experience housing deprivation. The Counting Ourselves survey¹⁶ found that 12 per cent of rainbow young people had been homeless at some stage, often due to unsafe and unstable living conditions. Transgender and non-binary young people are also more likely to experience housing discrimination.¹⁷

Sole parent households are more likely to experience poverty

In 2018, one in five Auckland families with dependent children were sole parents. Across New Zealand, children in sole parent households are more likely to experience poverty, live in poor quality housing and live with a parent experiencing poor mental wellbeing, compared to those living with two parents.¹⁸

Māori and Pacific rangatahi face the greatest barriers to education and employment

In 2020, the proportion of chronic absences increased for Māori and Pacific students and attendance rates declined for decile 1 and 2 schools.¹⁹ Digital access was also more difficult for some Māori and Pacific students. It is expected that these impacts on students learning will deepen existing inequities.

In 2021, 85 per cent of Auckland's school leavers attained at least NCEA Level 2. This dropped to 67 per cent for rangatahi Māori school leavers and 78 per cent for Pacific school leavers.²⁰ This represents a decrease in attainment compared to 2019 and 2020. This is likely a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, which disproportionately impacted Auckland, and Māori and Pacific students.

¹⁴ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

¹⁵ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

¹⁶ Veale J, Byrne J, Tan K, Guy S, Yee A, Nopera T & Bentham R (2019) Counting Ourselves: The health and wellbeing of trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Transgender Health Research Lab, University of Waikato: Hamilton NZ

¹⁷ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

¹⁸ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

¹⁹ Prakash, A. (2022). A profile of children and young people in Auckland: 2022 update. Auckland Council technical report, TR2022/7.

²⁰ Education Counts. (2022). School qualifications: NCEA Level 2 Auckland region.

The rate of young people not in employment, education or training has remained relatively stable over the past three years and was at 12 per cent for the year ending December 2022.²¹ This remains a persistent issue for young people in Tāmaki Makaurau, particularly for young women, and Māori and Pacific rangatahi.

Trends against the I Am Auckland Indicators and Measures

The I Am Auckland, Evaluation Framework (developed in 2018 and revised in 2020) includes a set of indicators and measures against each of the seven goals of the plan. The measures, captured in the table below, are drawn from the Auckland Plan, 2022 Profile data, Quality of Life data and the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS).

These indicators help to understand trends over time. They contribute to an overall understanding of tamariki and rangatahi experience and provide insight into areas that may need more concentrated effort.

The table shows mixed results for children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau

More Māori students are learning te reo Māori for three or more hours per week. There is slightly better representation of youth voice, with the number of 18-25-year-olds voting in Auckland’s local election increasing from 23 per cent in 2019 to 26 per cent in 2022. However, we have also seen a decrease in health metrics. Children and young people feel that housing is less affordable than in 2019, and they feel less safe. The rate of young people not in employment, education or training remains a persistent issue.

The measures which do not have sufficient data to determine a trend have been removed from the table.

Indicator	Measure	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
Voice						
Democratic participation	Per centage of young people aged 18-25 years who voted in Auckland’s local election	23%	-	-	26%	↑
Belonging						
Sense of safety	Percentage who strongly agree or agree they feel safe in the city centre after dark	-	40%	-	37%	↓
Sense of community	Percentage who strongly agree or agree they feel a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood	34%	31%	-	34%	↔
Health and wellbeing						
Children in material hardship	Deprivation score of six or more	13%	12%	11%	-	↓
Housing affordability	Percentage who strongly agree or agree their housing costs are affordable	25%	31%	-	20%	↓
Housing quality	Percentage of children and young people living in households with a major problem with dampness or mould	8%	7%	6%	-	↓

²¹ Stats NZ, accessed from Figure NZ, Youth who are not in employment, education or training in the Auckland Region, New Zealand.

Indicator	Measure	2019	2020	2021	2022	Trend
Physical health	Percentage who rate their physical health as good, very good or excellent	-	70%	-	65%	↓
Mental health	Percentage who rate their mental health as good, very good or excellent	-	49%	-	47%	↓
Emotional wellbeing	World Health Organisation 5 Well-Being Index	62%	47%	-	52%	↓
Criminal charges	Number of children and young people with charges finalised	411	393	354	282	↓
Parent health	Good, very good or excellent parent-rated health	98%	97%	98%	98%	↔
Fair go						
Educational attainment	School leavers with NCEA Level 2 or above	84%	87%	85%	-	↑
Educational attainment	School leavers with NCEA Level 3 or above	64%	71%	67%	-	↑
Educational attainment	Enrolment in tertiary education one-year post-school	64%	69%	-	-	↑
NEET rate	Percentage of young Aucklanders aged 15-24 years who are not in education, employment, or training	12%	11%	12%	12%	↔
Connected						
Use of public transport	Percentage of young Aucklanders under 25 years who use public transport weekly	59%	46%	-	35%	↓
Affordability of public transport	Percentage who strongly agree or agree that public transport is affordable in Auckland	39%	47%	-	40%	↑
Opportunity						
Participation in sport and recreation	Percentage of children taking part in sport and recreation weekly	94%	-	91%	-	↓
Time spent exercising	Average time spent exercising per week	11 hours	-	12 hours	-	↑
Whakapuawai						
Māori students learning te reo	Number of Māori students learning te reo Māori for three or more hours per week	8,268	9,288	10,524	16,658	↑
Māori students not learning te reo	Number of Māori students not learning any te reo Māori	9,600	9,528	9,513	9,832	↑

The national context

As well as Auckland Council's regional focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, there is a national drive to prioritise and improve child and youth wellbeing.

This national context is particularly relevant for Auckland Council given it is the largest council in the country, and this brings opportunities for reciprocal relationships with partners addressing similar challenges. Connecting local and regional plans within broader strategic frameworks can result in more effective, efficient, and collaborative activity.

Since the publication of I Am Auckland, several relevant strategies have emerged which have an explicit commitment to address the persistent inequity facing some tamariki and rangatahi.

A national commitment for improving child and youth wellbeing

In 2019, the government introduced the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The framework sets out a vision, principles, and six wellbeing outcomes. It is supported by actions which highlight the steps government is taking to improve child and youth wellbeing. It provides a strong foundation for central and local government action and enables other partners to contribute to its goals.

A key feature of the strategy is its emphasis on the need for cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration to meet the outcomes it sets out. Auckland Council was involved in its development, and there is an opportunity to reconfirm the mutually beneficial relationship between this strategy and council's regional commitment to children and young people.

Publication of a principle-based, mana-enhancing framework for working with youth

In 2020 Mana Taiohi was launched by Ara Taiohi, the peak body for youth development in Aotearoa. It is a principle-based framework that guides the work of those who work with young people. The principles are focused on the inherent mana that young people have and emphasise the connection between health of a place and the health of young people, and the need to support their participation in protecting the whenua. Mana Taiohi describes how youth workers (and others) can enhance this mana.

Drawing on Mana Taiohi and the Independent Māori Statutory Board values reports, there are opportunities for I Am Auckland to be better informed by te ao Māori. For example, embracing concepts such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga could strengthen I Am Auckland at both the strategic and practice levels. This would also strengthen the Treaty relationship and is likely to translate to better outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

The development of relevant council strategies

Relevant Auckland Council strategies have been developed since I Am Auckland was first published. Ngā Hapori Momoho/Thriving Communities, council's strategy for how we will work with Auckland's diverse communities in new and more sustainable ways, is one example as it has clear connections with the needs of children and young people.

The strategy sets out a series of outcomes and ways of working to ensure all communities, but particularly those facing greatest disadvantage, can thrive. There is an opportunity to explore how a closer connection with the strategy could result in greater prioritisation for tamariki and rangatahi.

Emerging scenarios that will likely affect child and youth wellbeing.

Part of the process to review I Am Auckland was understanding emerging trends that could impact children and young people over the next ten years. Ideally, I Am Auckland, or any future strategy should withstand these possible futures, or even support progress towards a preferred future.

Below sets out the future scenarios over the next ten years identified by council staff through research and workshops.

Future scenario	Relevance to children and young people
Increasing climate change	In the next ten years the impacts of climate change are likely to be widespread and significant. Heatwaves, droughts, flooding, heavy downpours, coastal erosion, and ocean acidification will have a considerable impact. Children and young people are more vulnerable, as they rely on adult decision making and will be impacted by disasters and decisions for years to come.
Declining mental health	Children and young people’s mental health is deteriorating, both nationally and globally. This is driven by a range of complex factors.
Changing work and education landscape	As the nature of work changes, our education system and programmes need to ensure children and young people have skills in creativity, STEM, and problem solving. We also need to be conscious of the impacts of automation, the circular economy, and gig employment.
Increasing child and youth participation in decision-making	Children and young people want to have a say in the decisions that impact them. We see this through climate marches and the Make It 16 campaign (which aims to lower the voting age to 16).
Urban inequities are heightened	Travel, pollution, high-rise living, urban sprawl, crime, isolation, and unequal access to the central city pose challenges for children and young people living in urban environments.
Growing wealth inequality	The gap between the wealthy and poor is widening. This is felt disproportionately by Māori and Pacific families. In addition, generational debt will accumulate and reduce the opportunities that children and young people can access.

Part Two: what we heard

A critical part of understanding the broader context for children and young people included hearing directly from them. Specifically, their challenges and aspirations. We also engaged directly with parts of the sector working with children and young people to understand their experiences and perspectives, as well as council staff delivering programmes for tamariki and rangatahi.

Part Two provides further information on the engagement methods used to hear from children, young people, the sector, and council staff and presents the key insights.

Below is the summary of findings and potential considerations.

Summary of findings from Part Two: what we heard	
Many children and young people have access to opportunities	Access to outdoor activities, recreational spaces, technology, and opportunities to learn about their culture are some of the things that are going well for children and young people.
There are common issues facing children and young people	Safety, unreliable transport, deteriorating mental health, concern about the environment were issues consistently raised through the engagement.
Children and young people have told us what is making a difference	Valuing diversity, feeling accepted and safe to be themselves, green spaces, quality relationships and connections, and access to community spaces were frequently shared by children and young people as things that matter to them.
Some children and young people are facing greater hardship and inequities	Discrimination and inequity across multiple domains are particularly persistent for Māori, Pacific, disabled, and rainbow children and young people.
Council could improve how it involves children and young people in big decisions about the region	Creating quality opportunities to hear from children and young people more frequently should be prioritised. Not only will it improve the quality of decisions made, but it will create more inclusive and intergenerational policy.
Culturally grounded, co-designed support could have huge benefits	The value of diversity of voice and perspective is critical, particularly hearing from tamariki and rangatahi Māori. This may require improved outreach to communities including considering who is doing the outreach, use of social media, and using age and culturally appropriate engagement methods.

Summary of findings from Part Two: what we heard

Council mechanisms are not reflecting the long-term nature of challenges

Children and young people are facing complex, often entrenched issues, and we need better mechanisms and structures to appropriately respond. This could include more collaborative ways of working, more flexible, and sustainable funding mechanisms, and policy and resourcing decisions that consider the inequity and needs across different groups within the 'child and youth' population.

Considerations from Part Two. Council could....

Involve children, young people, and whānau earlier in programme design to ensure we are focussing on things that matter most to them and that they are designed to be culturally relevant.

Review how we involve children and young people in decisions about significant regional matters. Ensuring their voice is a core contribution to all work and are included from the outset. For example, when planning what inclusive and safe spaces would look, we could consider the perspectives of children and young people.

Explore prototyping opportunities that prioritise more targeted and tailored approaches to addressing the needs of children and young people experiencing the greatest disparities. This could include leveraging council's assets and levers to focus on specific groups, or prototyping underpinning mechanisms such as funding relationships with youth support organisations which reflect the long-term challenge of improving child and youth wellbeing.

Methodology to hear from children and young people

We used a range of methods to hear from children and young people. The methodology and engagement questions were co-designed with seven young people. More detail can be found on page 32 of the [Voices of Children and Young People from Tāmaki Makaurau](#) report.

- Stalls – we set up stalls at 10 locations around Tāmaki Makaurau. Children and young people could share their views by filling out a postcard.
- Workshops – we ran 14 workshops with children and young people. Most of these were facilitated by Action Education and used spoken word poetry as a way for participants to express their feelings about growing up in Tāmaki Makaurau.
- Storybooks – we asked children to share their views by drawing or writing in a storybook. Parents and caregivers were asked to support children to do this and to describe their child's drawing.
- Empathy interviews – to help us better understand how intersectionality impacts young people we held seven interviews with rainbow young people and young people with disabilities.

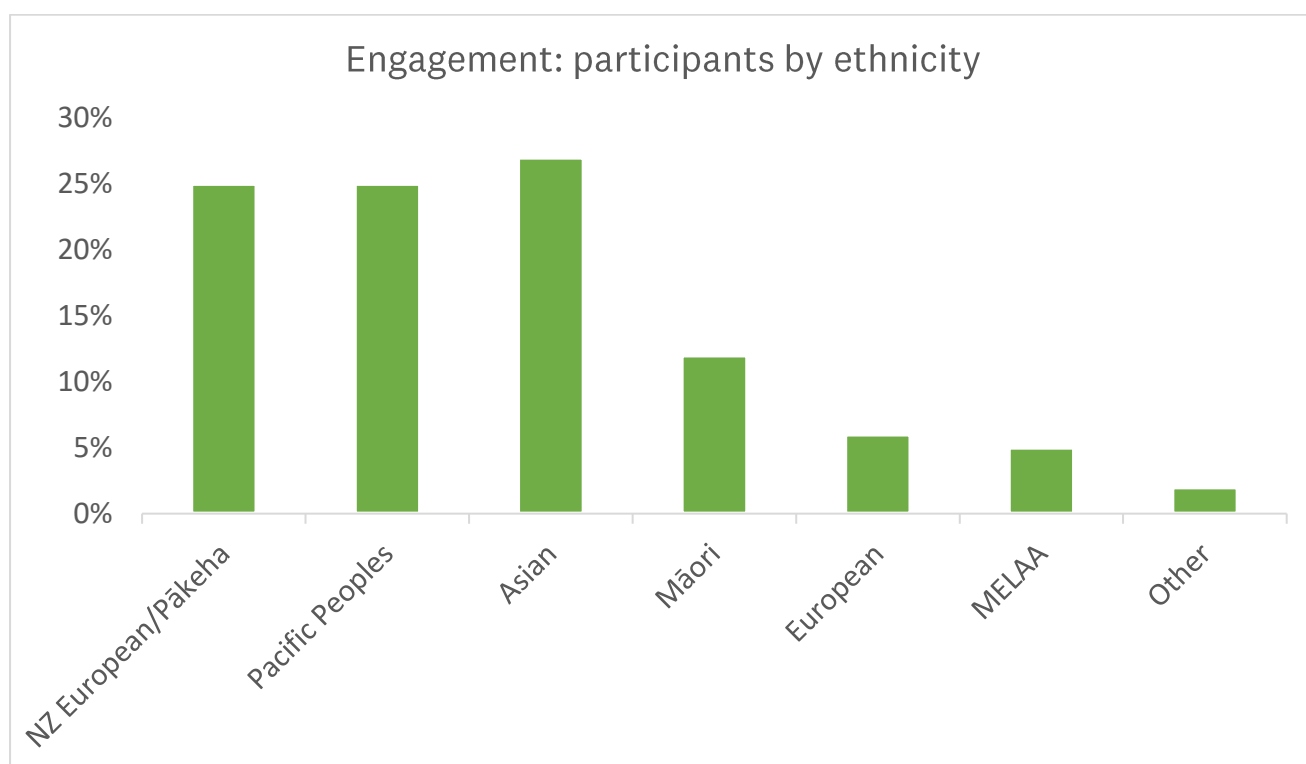
Using the above methods, we asked children and young people the following questions:

- What are your favourite things about where you live in Auckland?
- What are three things that you would change or add to Auckland?
- What issues or challenges are most important to you right now?
- What are some of your hopes and dreams for the future?

These questions were tailored according to the methodology applied and the age and stage of the children and young people we were engaging.

Across these methods, we heard from over 400 people aged 2-24 years. For those who shared their demographic information, 269 identified as female, 181 as male, and seven as non-binary.

Most ethnic groups were well-represented, as shown in the graph below. Māori were under-represented in the stalls and storybooks but over-represented in the workshops.²²



We heard from children and young people from all local boards, except from Waiheke and Aotea/Great Barrier²³. Ōtara-Papatoetoe and Albert-Eden local boards had the highest number of participants.

²² The comments about under and over-representation are made in comparison to 2018 Census data.

²³ We reached out to the local boards but did not hear back. This may be because of low numbers of children and young people in the area.

Key findings from engagement with children and young people

Children and young people love many things about Tāmaki Makaurau

It was easy for children and young people to tell us their favourite things about Tāmaki Makaurau. They told us how much they love the beaches, libraries, museums, cultural events, and festivals. Parks, playgrounds, and the natural environment were often positively mentioned by children and young people.

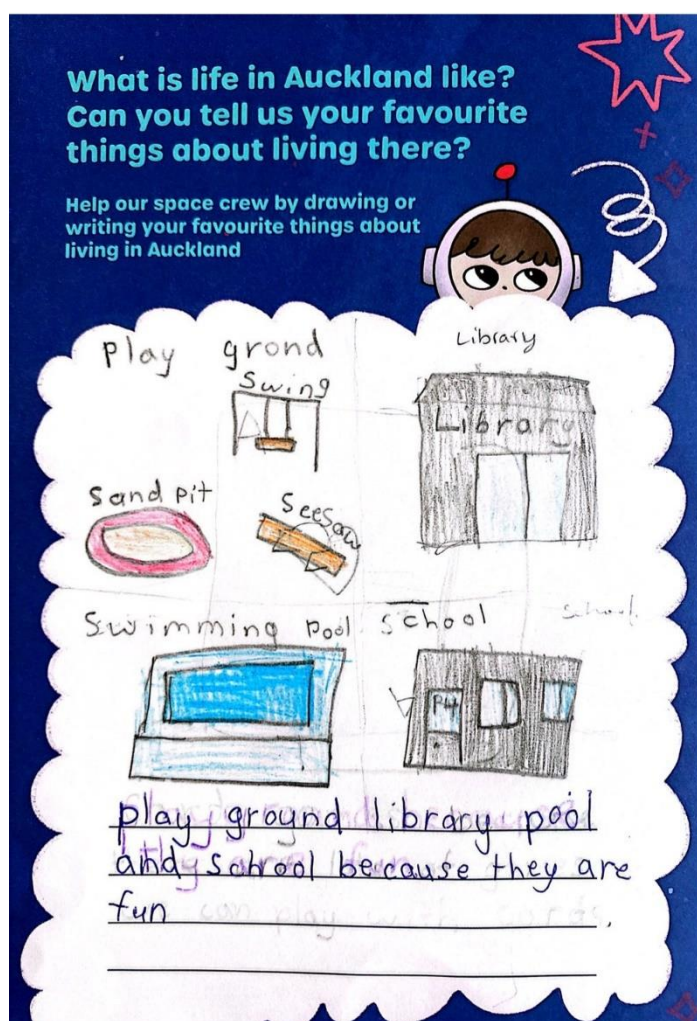
“Everything is awesome in Tāmaki Makaurau! Everything at your fingertips! <3” – 16-year-old, Pākehā, Māori, Manurewa Local Board

They love the diversity of the city and talked about this in relation to people, food, landscape, and opportunity. They also told us that they like how much life and energy there is in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Lots of children and young people felt deeply connected to places and communities. This was most common for children and young people from South Auckland, West Auckland and Warkworth. Some described Tāmaki Makaurau as a place where they can connect with their own culture and learn about other cultures.

“[I am] In a place where I can learn my roots (Tonga) while being away from my homeland of Tonga.” – 17-year-old, male, Pacific peoples, Hibiscus and Bays Local Board

A lot of children aged 5-8 years told us they love going to school to learn and see friends.



Storybook response from a 9-year-old, female of Middle Eastern/Latin American/African ethnicity.

Public transport was one of the most frequently discussed issues

Children and young people were frustrated by traffic and public transport. They felt Aucklanders are too reliant on cars, and wanted to see safer, more reliable, and more frequent public transport. They also wanted better walkways and cycleways.

“I’m very reliant on public transport but it’s not very reliable.” – 18-year-old, non-binary, Pākehā, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board

Housing concerns were frequently raised

Children and young people had conflicting views about housing. Some felt that Auckland needs more apartments, while others felt that there are already too many houses and too much construction.

Some young people told us that lots of Auckland’s houses are built for Western families, who tend to have two to three children and not live in multi-generation homes. Instead, we should be building housing that meets the needs of Auckland’s diverse populations. This would mean building larger homes, with space for more children and extended family. We also heard that there needs to be more accessible housing.

“Specialised homes for larger families. Instead of making a house, they should have made a home. Think about growth of family.” – workshop participant.

Safety is an issue for some children and young people

Tāmaki Makaurau does not always feel safe for children and young people. For some this was related to crime. However, it was also related to identity. For example, rainbow young people were less likely to feel safe and more likely to mask part of their identity or change their plans to be home earlier. Some young people also felt unsafe due to a lack of accessibility or because of over-policing and racial profiling.

“If I’m on my own, it would just be like, trust no one, trust nothing. Because who knows what someone else is going to do... always keeping an eye out. Which can be kind of exhausting to be honest.” – 18-year-old, male, Pākehā, Māori, Henderson-Massey Local Board.

We also heard that children and young people don’t like excessive use of alcohol, drugs, and smoking and that they want cleaner and more accessible public toilets.

Children and young people were concerned about the environment

It was common for children and young people to express concern about rubbish and pollution. Climate change came up less than we expected. This could be due to perceptions of council’s role in addressing climate change.

“I don’t like how people are not doing anything about rubbish.” – 13-year-old, male, Pacific peoples, Ōtara-Papatoetoe Local Board.

Some children and young people face issues of inequity across multiple areas of life

Some of the children and young people we talked to were in really challenging circumstances. Some told us they were struggling to get by. They talked about the price of housing, fuel,

water, and food. Some children told us they needed necessities such as clothes and toothpaste. Children as young as seven were aware that their parents were struggling to meet housing costs, such as rent and mortgage payments. These children told us they were worried.

“I come from a home with an empty fridge.” – workshop participant

We heard from some young people growing up in families where crime felt hard to avoid. They talked about gang affiliation and intergenerational trauma. Some felt that the odds were stacked against them and that they were being judged for their identity, culture and by the colour of their skin.

“It almost feels like I am guaranteed a spot in a cell.” – workshop participant

Poem

I am broken.

I am from a family of drugs and gangs.

I see a future of hard work.

I wish for self-improvement.

I’m challenged by my own mind for that self-improvement.

I find strength in myself.

I look forward to a healed heart and family.

Auckland is home.

- 16-year-old, male, Māori, Hibiscus and Bays Local Board

Some young people felt the ‘system’ was against them

We heard about the social welfare system, the justice system, the education system, and immigration. They are frustrated by the attitude “this is the way it has always been” and want to see and be involved in change.

“... it shouldn’t be about us without us. I think something people in power currently fail to realise is they’re making all these decisions based off their own morals and their own hopes and dreams, failing to recognise that the decisions they’re making are going to impact the rest of our lives. Not their lives... the rest of our lives, the rangatahi, the people that are to come. They’re building a country for us to come into and at the moment they’re building upon a broken system.” – 19-year-old, male, Pākehā, Kaipātiki Local Board

Some children and young people experience discrimination

This included racism, queerphobia and ableism. Racism was the most mentioned form of discrimination. Children and young people told us that people make fun of their culture. They feel judged before people even get to know them.

“I see racist science teachers with high tempers.” – 17-year-old, female, Māori, Pacific peoples, Maungakiekie-Tāmaki Local Board

We heard about young people with disabilities experiencing discrimination when transitioning to university, applying for jobs, and learning to drive. Rainbow young people told us that people sometimes yell at them in the street. The lack of acceptance some rainbow young people face impacts their ability to feel confident in their identity. Telling people about their identity sometimes meant they lost important relationships.

“When I came out I felt some pressure of hiding my true self be relieved.” – 18-year-old, female, Pacific peoples, Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board

Poor mental health is a concern for many children and young people

Some children and young people we spoke to were really struggling with their mental health. They felt the threshold for getting help was too high and wanted more services and shorter wait times. They also wanted more support from family, friends, and school.

“I struggle with drug addiction, self-harm, mental health, and abusive relationships. Help please.” – 17-year-old, female, Pākehā, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board

Children and young people shared the importance of strong relationships

Most of the children and young people we spoke to told us about how much they love and care for their family and friends. When we asked children what their favourite thing is about Auckland, lots of them told us about their family.

“Playing with Daddy.” – 5-year-old, male, Middle Eastern/Latin American/African, Hibiscus and Bays Local Board

“I am from a family that teaches me to be me.” – 13-year-old, Māori, Pacific peoples, European, Hibiscus and Bays Local Board

Some children and young people told us about strong relationships with friends, teachers, youth workers and God. These trusted relationships can support children and young people growing up in difficult family environments.

“...my friends, who are my family...” – 18-year-old, female, Pacific peoples, Māngere-Ōtāhuhu Local Board

They want a safe and inclusive future where everyone belongs

Children and young people had dreams for their futures. A lot of these were centred around family and hoping that they would be safe and happy. They also wanted to get a good education, have a good job and own their own house.

“I hope my sister becomes a good lawyer.” – 14-year-old, female, Pacific peoples

They had a lot of hopes and dreams for Tāmaki Makaurau. They want it to become a safer place that is accessible to everyone and where everyone belongs. They also want a healthier environment.

“I hope Puhinui will become a safer community and that every person unique or different will have the same rights.” – 11-year-old, female, Rodney Local Board

Some want the strength of their community to be more widely understood and appreciated. They dream of a region where people can connect with others and belong.

“I look forward to South Auckland being shown to the world.” – 18-year-old, male, Pacific peoples, Manurewa Local Board

Children and young people see themselves playing a role in creating a safer and more inclusive Tāmaki Makaurau. Some want to be role models or representatives for their community.

“When I grow up, I would like to change the world.” – 8-year-old, male

You can read more about the engagement findings in the [Voices of Children and young people from Tāmaki Makaurau report](#).

Key findings from engagement with the child and youth sector

As well as engaging with children and young people, we also talked to over 100 people working in the child and youth sector.²⁴

We did this through:

- three sector workshops
- ten key informant interviews.

We asked the sector what is going well for children and young people and what they see as the big issues children and young people are facing.

Key themes that emerged about what is going well for children and young people are:

- **Young people have supportive communities and service providers**
There are lots of positive and encouraging community organisations, teachers, friends, and family that support children and young people in Tāmaki Makaurau. The sector felt there was an increase in services available to address diverse needs, and that there are rich and supportive relationships between young people and youth workers.
- **Young people have access to activities**
Young people can get involved in a large range of activities, including at school, through volunteering, through sports and the arts and through opportunities for self-development.
- **There are great recreation spaces for children and young people to enjoy**
Auckland’s playgrounds, parks, swimming pools, libraries and sport fields provide opportunities for young people to play and develop. The sector felt that children and young people have good access to the outdoors and open spaces.

The sector shared concerns for child and youth wellbeing:

- **Children and young people are struggling with their mental health**
Some of the organisations we talked to had seen an increase in disclosures of poor mental health. There is particular concern about the 10-12-year-old ‘pre-teen’ age group. There is a lack of targeted support and an overreliance on schools to address complex issues. Many of the organisations we spoke to asked for more early intervention and prevention measures.

“We have higher levels of depression than we’re prepared to acknowledge... by the time it’s been diagnosed, and clinically specified, it’s too late. Prevention work has got to be more important.” – quote from sector engagement

²⁴ The child and youth sector refers to organisations who work with children and young people. This includes organisations working in early years, education, employment, childcare, care and protection and youth development.

- **There is inequitable access to basic needs**
Some children and young people do not have access to basic needs, such as food, clothing, housing, and hygiene products. The cost-of-living crisis is exacerbating inequity and resulting in young people dropping out of school to help their families financially.
- **Not everyone has healthy, consistent relationships or sense of belonging**
Intergenerational family harm and gang affiliation are negatively impacting some young people. They are struggling to find a sense of belonging and stability. For some, the sprawling layout of Tāmaki Makaurau can get in the way of building a strong sense of community.
- **Young people are experiencing challenges in education**
There are concerns about the rate of truancy, low literacy levels and the impacts of COVID-19 disruptions on schooling.
- **Vaping and drug use appears to be increasing**
While fewer young people are drinking alcohol, vaping and drug use is a concern.
- **Youth offending has increased**
Ram raid culture, youth offending, and gang affiliation has increased in frequency. There is concern about the ongoing impact this could have on young people’s lives.
- **There is a lack of inclusive and safe spaces for children and young people**
Playground inequality is a concern, particularly in less affluent areas. We heard that some want indoor playgrounds and more accessible playgrounds. Those working with young people told us there is a need for more spaces for young people to hang out and connect with friends.
- **Digital inequity, and the rise of technology is a concern**
Online safety, comparison and peer pressure are concerning for some. There is digital inequity in access to devices and connectivity.
- **Young people are struggling with their identity and discrimination**
Young people are struggling to find opportunities to learn about and connect to their culture. Racism, discrimination, intergenerational trauma, and ongoing effects of colonisation all contribute to this. Young former refugees and migrants feel like they have a double identity, as they try to maintain their religious and cultural practices, while fitting into Aotearoa’s cultural frameworks.

“As Pasifika youth we navigate two worlds. Unless you are in our shoes you don’t know.”
– quote from sector engagement

The sector shared ways council could improve its support to tamariki and rangatahi

The sector wants to work with council to address the issues identified above. To do this effectively they suggested reviewing:

- **Funding models**
Longer-term funding arrangements that support innovation and hearing from diverse voices, and funding structures that incentivise collaboration, not cause competition.

- **Contracting**
Moving towards more of a partnership approach rather than contractual relationships.
- **Council's assets and levers**
Leveraging council facilities for programmes and activities for children and young people. Smaller organisations wanted these available at lower cost.

Key findings from engagement with council staff

We engaged with council staff who work with children and young people through a staff survey and seven key informant interviews. The aim was to understand their perspectives of the context for children and young people, and what could be done to better support them.

The council whānau had similar insights to the child and youth sector. Staff engagement also helped us understand how I Am Auckland, and its implementation plan and evaluation framework were being used by the council whānau. This is explored in Part Three of the report.

Key themes that emerged from staff about what is going well for children and young people:

- **Young people are involved and contributing to different spaces**
Young people have community spirit, initiative, and capability. This was demonstrated through COVID-19 lockdowns as they stepped up to help their communities. There are more opportunities for young people to share their voice, for example through youth councils and leadership development programmes.
- **Young people have access to a range of activities**
There are lots of outdoor, nature-based activities for children and young people to participate in. There are also free arts, culture, and education programmes. Young people can learn about new technologies, and many are able to learn about their culture in a way previous generations were not able to (for example through Māori medium kura).

Staff also shared concerns for child and youth wellbeing:

- **Early childhood education (ECE) and school attendance**
Similar to the sector, council staff were concerned about high absence from ECE and school. They were concerned about the ongoing impact this may have for learners and were also worried about the impact this would have on deepening inequity.
- **Transport**
Auckland's transport system is not designed to best serve children and young people in terms of cost, reliability, and accessibility.
- **Inequity and cost of living**
Staff noted the challenges of material poverty, inequitable education, and economic disadvantage. They were concerned about how the cost-of-living crisis would amplify inequity.
- **Safety**
Children and young people do not always feel safe in Tāmaki Makaurau. They avoid using public transport late at night. Creating safer spaces could involve more seating,

free resources such as charging ports, access to fresh water and public toilets and better lighting.

- **Discrimination**

There is still too much discrimination against Māori, Pacific people, rainbow people, and people with disabilities. This impacts the safety, wellbeing, and sense of belonging of these groups, particularly children and young people.

- **Climate change**

Climate change concerns mean many young people feel uncertain about the future. For Māori and Pacific young people there is an added impact on wellbeing due to a potential loss of connection to the whenua and because the Pacific Islands are more susceptible to climate events.

- **Mental health**

One staff member commented that 'mental health and wellbeing is the silent pandemic for young people'. Staff felt council needed a greater overall focus on wellbeing. They talked about mental health in relation to technology, social media, COVID-19 lockdowns, and social isolation.

Part Three: I Am Auckland assessment

Parts One and Two of the review presented a range of critical perspectives on the opportunities and experiences facing children and young people and provided evidence about the reality of growing up in Tāmaki Makaurau.

Many of the challenges relate to complex societal issues that council does not have direct control over. However, there are opportunities for council to use its levers better and differently to improve our support for tamariki and rangatahi.

Part Three reviews council’s progress against I Am Auckland, focussing on:

- evaluating the past three years of delivery and implementation of I Am Auckland
- reviewing the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

It presents the key findings from the internal review of council activity against I Am Auckland, provides a deep dive analysis into some council programmes, and suggests opportunities to improve our strategic and programming approach.

To assess council’s progress on implementation and monitoring and evaluation we carried out:

- a. a stocktake of activity against I Am Auckland goals
- b. staff engagement and survey
- c. a programme evaluation
- d. research into ‘best practice’ support for children and young people.

Below is a summary of the findings and considerations.

Summary of findings from Part Three: I Am Auckland assessment	
There is a disconnect between council strategy and delivery	Regional strategies and operational delivery are not working as well as was anticipated or is required. An effective connection, which is essential for accountability, requires several conditions and mechanisms to be in place. Other strategy reviews have identified similar issues between strategy and implementation.
I Am Auckland is not highly visible or influencing services and support	I Am Auckland does not always drive council activity. Programmes are often being retrospectively attributed to the strategic plan, rather than the plan shaping the programmes or funding decisions.
Evaluation, learning, and sharing of insights is not working effectively	The reporting mechanisms for some regional strategies, including evaluation, are not working as intended. For I Am Auckland, the mechanisms are not driving learning, better outcomes, or presenting a comprehensive data and information set on how council is delivering against its strategic goals.

Summary of findings from Part Three: I Am Auckland assessment	
The development of culturally relevant approaches should be considered	Given Tāmaki Makaurau’s history, diverse population, and the disadvantage facing Māori tamariki and rangatahi, the value of a Mātauranga Māori framework within any strategic approach should be considered. This should include relevant measures that recognise the interconnected dimensions of wellbeing (mauri).
I Am Auckland is not designed for the current context	I Am Auckland does not adequately respond to some of the current challenges children and young people face, including persistent inequity and discrimination.
Council is delivering some quality programmes which we should promote and learn from	There are good programmes for children and young people being delivered. Although these are not always informed by I Am Auckland, this review could be an opportunity to shine a light on what is working across the council group and promote the practice.
Council could develop principles of best practice and better target its support	<p>There are foundational principles and critical success factors which are recognised for making the greatest difference for children and young people when designing support. This includes having co-designed, whānau-centred, strengths-based, and culturally responsive design principles.</p> <p>Council could agree to focus on certain demographics or key life stages that are known to have the greatest benefit for children and young people. For example, Māori and Pacific children and young people, and the first 1000 days and the early adolescent years.</p>
Considerations from Part Three. Council could....	
Look at what processes and culture change approaches are needed to better connect strategy and practice, including what more relevant evaluation and funding models could sit under any strategy to support an acknowledgement of the complexity and long-term nature of the challenges.	
Develop a set of principles that help to guide the way we work with tamariki and rangatahi.	
Review and redesign the existing mechanisms and structures that underpin I Am Auckland to make them more culturally and contextually relevant, including measuring what matters to children and young people.	
Explore whether a ‘theory of change’ that factors in the broader system conditions and interconnected nature of the issues facing children and young people would be more effective and provide more relevant guidance for staff.	
Learn from current effective practice (both internally and across the region) and consider how council’s levers and assets could be used to best support children and young people in place. For example, leveraging libraries, and community centres to create whānau-friendly spaces.	

Overarching findings:

Two overarching findings emerged through this stage of the review. As these relate to systemic issues which have broader implications for how council implements strategies and evaluates progress they have been highlighted first. More specific findings then follow.

1. The lack of application of I Am Auckland is symptomatic of a broader challenge

I Am Auckland, council's strategic action plan for children and young people was designed to inform programming decisions. However, the review has shown this is not happening as intended. For example, of the seven council teams we engaged in the review, only two reported referencing or incorporating I Am Auckland in their team or department's strategic plans. Another two interviewees communicated general awareness of the strategy but no explicit use to guide their work. For those who were familiar with the strategy but do not actively use it, they were instead aligning with more culturally relevant, or programme-specific strategic outcomes that were promoted or set within their teams.

This lack of alignment is despite efforts to socialise the strategy, including the facilitation of communities of practice and the development of an implementation plan and evaluation framework plan following a similar finding in the 2017 review.

Staff suggest this is not an isolated issue, and that the lack of application speaks to a more fundamental disconnect between regional strategies and operational delivery; in other words, that strategy and practice are not working as effectively together as was anticipated or is necessary. Similar findings have been identified through other reviews (Toi Whītiki, for example).

This challenge is further heightened by the sense among many staff that there is a plethora of strategies without clarity about how they relate to each other and the structure they sit within. The recent imperative to consolidate strategies and policies may address this in part, but the need for clear and agreed mechanisms to connect strategy and practice will remain.

If council is to invest strategically and remain accountable to Aucklanders (across any of its portfolios) then it is essential that this disconnect is resolved; council should be able to communicate the totality of its work and contribution to wider system outcomes, not only its delivery of quality isolated programmes.

2. Data, insights, and evaluation are not regularly used for learning and improvement

The review of I Am Auckland highlighted another systemic issue for council around data and improvement. Specifically:

- the lack of a shared approach to gathering and sharing data and insights
- an absence of prioritisation of programme evaluation
- lack of cross-council learning.

Although earlier work had been carried out to socialise the I Am Auckland Implementation Plan and Evaluation Framework, this review found many teams were unaware it existed, or questioned its relevance.

At the same time, staff provided feedback that council does not have quality insights and data to properly understand the needs and aspirations of children and young people, resulting in ad

hoc programming, rather than a more strategic or focussed approach. Staff queried whether council could be doing more to apply culturally relevant evaluation and learning tools to their practice.

The idea of learning to adapt and improve is not widely prioritised across council, contributing to a lack of awareness about why we would collect programme data and what we would do with it.

Staff shared that given the complexity of some of the challenges they were trying to address, a theory of change that helps them to understand council's role in a wider system would be useful. This could increase understanding of whether their work contributes to a strategic goal.

These overarching findings are key considerations in Part Four of the report.

Specific findings by methodology:

The following presents the more specific findings from the assessment of I Am Auckland, following each methodology (see page 35). Insights from the staff engagement and survey are shared throughout.

Stocktake of activity against I Am Auckland

Council has monitored delivery towards I Am Auckland's seven goals since 2019. The intention is to track what council is doing to support children and young people, who this is reaching, and how this activity is contributing to I Am Auckland's goals.

The primary mechanism to track delivery is through a stocktake, where information is provided from operational teams to the policy department for collation.

Taking the stocktake data, the below presents key findings on the effectiveness of the stocktake process for I Am Auckland, how council is delivering against the I Am Auckland goals, and whether the goals are adequately addressing emerging trends.

The stocktake process is not seen as useful for many staff and programmes

Council uses the stocktake information for the annual monitoring reports, which in turn provide visibility of council investments and support towards strategic outcomes.

Gathering the 2022 data for this stocktake was particularly challenging. This was due to several factors such as ongoing restructures, COVID-19, and conflicting priorities.

A crucial finding of this review is that staff find the stocktake process cumbersome; both those collecting the information, and those providing it. This points to the fundamental issue that I Am Auckland is not viewed as the critical strategy to guide council's activity for children and young people, and that strategy and operations are not informing one another as is required or was intended.

Many felt the annual reporting against I Am Auckland was not improving delivery and is focussed on internal monitoring rather than used to drive better outcomes for children and young people. The current reporting process requires operational staff to input their activities individually each year to the policy team responsible for monitoring I Am Auckland. This causes multiple problems for accurate reporting.

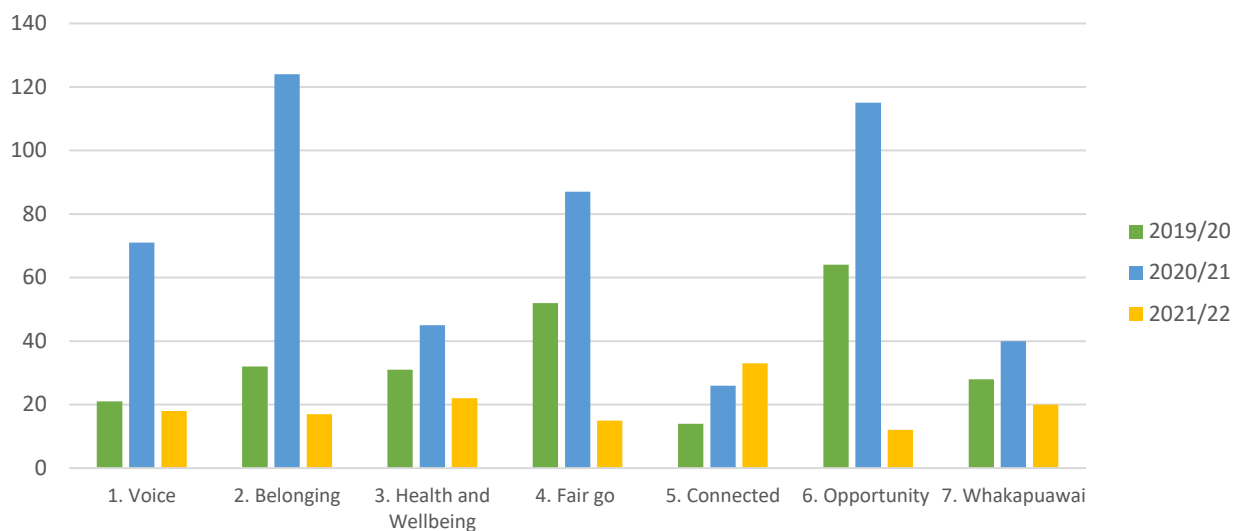
In part this reflects a lack of understanding of the core purpose of monitoring and evaluation; that it is through the contributions of many that a systems-view becomes clear, which enables

us to connect investment and support decisions to strategic objectives. It is also how we can understand the difference we are making. This is a core part of how council remains accountable to Aucklanders.

There is inconsistent delivery or reporting towards I Am Auckland goals

It is difficult to ascertain whether the inconsistency in the stocktake data is due to fewer programmes being delivered, or because of the limitations (as noted above) of the stocktake process.

The graph below shows delivery for the 2019/2020, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 financial years.



This graph shows that there tends to be more delivery towards ‘belonging’, ‘fair go’ and ‘opportunity’. Delivery towards ‘whakapuawai’ has steadily increased, which is positive as this was an area of improvement identified in the 2017 status review. Delivery towards ‘connected’ is also steadily increasing over time.

The overall number of activities appears to be down in 21/22. Although this could be interpreted as a reduction in activity, our hypothesis is that this is due to the challenges of getting a complete data set through the stocktake process. We also know that COVID-19 affected delivery.

Goal 6 – Opportunity, had the largest number of initiatives that identified it as the primary goal.

“[we deliver against] belonging, because when we think about our libraries, spaces, you know, we’re trying to make sure that they are spaces that our kids enjoy being in, they are places that our children are affirmed in terms of their mana, in terms of what they bring”. – quote from Libraries staff member

Ambiguous goal descriptions could hinder reporting against them

Because the meaning of some goals can be open to interpretation there may be some reporting inconsistencies. For example, the ‘connected’ goal is focused on getting around the region. However, some staff may interpret this goal as connection with others.

Similarly, the ‘whakapuawai’ goal could be made clearer, clarifying that it focuses on rangatahi Māori thriving. Some programmes may be better described elsewhere, but because they target Māori they are primarily coded as ‘whakapuawai’.

Over half of all activity in 2021/2022 catered to multiple or all age groups

Only 3 activities in 2021/22 were reported to be focused on children aged 0-4, despite the first 1000 days of a child’s life being known to be vital in child development.

Thirty-eight activities cater to the 18–25-year age group, meaning more than half of all activities that have a specific age focus are aimed at young people rather than children. Given what research has told us about the importance of the first 1000 days, council may want to consider whether the balance of provision is right.

Targeted programmes are being delivered, but are guided by other strategies

Some targeted investment does occur, and most of this is directed towards Māori and Pacific children and young people, and their whānau. Staff noted that this was driven by Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau, the Māori outcomes performance measurement framework, and the Ara Moana Pacifica Strategy, rather than I Am Auckland.

There is also evidence that investment is targeted at children and young people from migrant communities and the rainbow community.

While staff acknowledged the need for service provision across the entire region, there was a general trend that “South and West are always that high priority when it comes to trying to achieve equitable outcomes for our communities” (council staff member).

The evaluation focuses on collecting quantitative data, not stories or qualitative insights

Staff felt the I Am Auckland evaluation framework would be more helpful if it supported them to tell the story of what they are achieving for children and young people. For example, staff want to show how the programmes they deliver empower young people or increase their confidence, rather than capturing attendance or use of service.

I Am Auckland could better connect with other strategies and plans

The review looked at how I Am Auckland was referenced or aligned with other council strategies, plans and policies. We reviewed these to determine whether I Am Auckland was specifically mentioned or whether the goals were broadly aligned.

We found that 17 strategies, policies and plans had been published by council between 2019-2022. Of these, five specifically referenced I Am Auckland. Most of the other documents aligned with the goals of I Am Auckland.

Of the 18 CCO statements of intent, 16 were strongly aligned with one or more of I Am Auckland’s goals. However, only two CCOs specifically referenced I Am Auckland (COMET and the Contemporary Art Foundation).

Although many of the local board plans have actions directly relating to child and youth wellbeing, only one of the 21 local board plans explicitly referenced I Am Auckland (as of June 2023).

I Am Auckland's goals address some, but not all, emerging trends

Based on the current and future demographic, issues, and opportunities analysis presented earlier in this review, we know that I Am Auckland needs to respond to a range of trends.

Goals one (voice), three (health and wellbeing) and four (fair go) address trends related to child and youth participation, declining mental health and the future of work and education. However, research and feedback from staff and sector suggests the response to these trends could be more explicit in the plan. The plan, most likely because of when it was produced, does not adequately respond to known and emergent trends, opportunities, and challenges.

There is a lack of focus and demographic prioritisation in I Am Auckland

Some of the emerging trends identified earlier show that existing inequities are likely to be exacerbated over the next few years.

I Am Auckland does not currently target population groups or provide direction about the different approaches required to meet the needs of these groups. This lack of focus means the strategy is likely to be less effective in addressing the needs of tamariki and rangatahi who experience the greatest barriers to participation and disparities in outcomes.

Programme evaluation

As part of the three-year review of I Am Auckland, staff wanted to understand what outcomes council's programmes were having for children and young people, how these were aligned with I Am Auckland, and how we could improve. To deliver a detailed assessment, Centre for Social Impact evaluated six selected council programmes focussed on children and young people.

Methodology

The Centre for Social Impact used a range of methods to evaluate the programmes. These included desktop research, interviews with operational staff, case study evaluation, and reviewing kaupapa Māori and culturally responsive practices.

The programmes were selected following a call for expressions of interest. We used a selection criteria to determine which programmes would be evaluated.²⁵

The following programmes were evaluated:

- **He Pia He Tauira** – an Eke Panuku placemaking programme, which supports rangatahi Māori who are mana whenua in the practice of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga through regeneration projects.
- **Tuia** – rangatahi are mentored by local board members to deliver community projects and participate in wananga with other mentees. It aims to build intergenerational understanding and leadership.
- **TOPS** – the Ōtara-Papatoetoe squad is a youth council that offers leadership development and opportunities for young people from the Ōtara-Papatoetoe local board area.

²⁵ The selection criteria including delivery towards at least two of I Am Auckland's goals, location of programme delivery, which population groups were targeted and demonstration of best practice.

- **West Tech / Tech Club** – an initiative to increase digital equity by teaching children and young people how to repair laptops and other digital devices.
- **Tula’i Ngāue**– a leadership programme for Pacific young people in West Auckland. It involves youth mentoring, inspirational speakers, connection with parents, community service, a camp and graduation celebrations.
- **Girl on Fire** – a programme for young girls to encourage increased physical activity and build leadership skills. It is based at Northcross Intermediate School on the North Shore.

The key insights from the evaluation are set out below.

All programmes are contributing to multiple I Am Auckland goals

The evaluation found evidence that all six programmes are contributing to Goal 1: Voice of I Am Auckland and Goal 2: Belonging. Goal 2 was evidenced through each programme encouraging connections between the young people who are participating.

Girl on Fire is the only programme that was found to be contributing to Goal 6: Opportunity. Girl on Fire has a specific focus on encouraging play as a form of active recreation.

None of the programmes in the current evaluation were identified as contributing towards Goal 5: Connected—I can get around and get connected. However, the evaluators suggested West Tech does contribute towards digital connectivity.

The below table shows the connection between the I Am Auckland goals and programmes.

Table 1: Evaluated programmes in relation to I Am Auckland goals	He Pia He Taurira	TUIA	TOPS	West Tech	Tula’i	Girl on Fire
Goal 1: Voice – I have a voice, am valued, and contribute.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goal 2: Belonging – I am important, belong, am cared about, and feel safe.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goal 3: Health and wellbeing – I am happy, healthy, and thriving.			✓	✓		✓
Goal 4: Fair Go – I am given equal opportunities to succeed and to have a fair go.	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Goal 6: Opportunity – Auckland is my Playground.						✓
Goal 7: Whakapuawai – Rangatahi Tū Rangatira (All young people will thrive).	✓	✓			✓	

Some programmes are more intentionally influenced by I Am Auckland than others

Tula'i Ngāue, for example, was a community-driven initiative where I Am Auckland was of minimal influence, although the programme is clearly aligned with four of the goals. In contrast, I Am Auckland had a strong influence on Girl on Fire as Goal 6: Opportunity - Auckland is my Playground was a "guiding philosophy" for the council officer who led the pilot programme.

Each programme has delivered the anticipated outcomes

Overall, the evaluation found that evaluated programmes are achieving positive outcomes for children and young people. In many cases, additional positive outcomes beyond what had originally been identified have been achieved.

All the programmes evaluated contributed towards tamariki and rangatahi feeling accepted, respected, and valued. The programmes created spaces where children and young people's voices and opinions were being heard and considered in decision-making processes. In some cases, this might be decision-making related to project activities but in others, young people have influenced decision making at a national level. For example, TOPS members were consulted about the COVID-19 vaccine roll out.

Some of council's programmes contributed to young people's connection to their culture, language, beliefs, and identity. He Pia He Tauira and Tuia supported rangatahi Māori to deepen their relationship with te ao Māori. Tula'i Ngāue supported Pacific young people to connect with and celebrate their identity in a safe and nurturing environment.

There is also evidence that council's programmes are supporting children and young people to build their self-esteem and resilience. They are developing knowledge and skills, increasing their confidence, and developing a sense of connection.

Common success factors across the programmes

The Centre for Social Impact identified four success factors as critical to the effectiveness of council's programmes:

- **Programmes are designed with tamariki and rangatahi**
Most of the programmes involved children and young people in the design of the programme itself. This is in line with good youth development practice, as it provides opportunity to build positive connections, have a sense of ownership over the programme, and enable them to share their ideas. It also ensures the programmes are focussed on the specific needs of those involved.
- **Good use of the tuakana-teina model**
This involves a two-way learning process. Tuakana support and mentor teina, sharing their knowledge and expertise. Tuakana learn more about the world of those they mentor and can recognise and share their own skills.
- **The programmes have a strong values-base**
This helps children and young people connect with the programme, particularly where the principles and values underpinning the programme are shared with participants. Programmes were impactful when children and young people could see how they were contributing to the described values.

- **Community support**

All of the programmes evaluated benefited from the support of the local community. This included schools, mana whenua, youth development organisations and trusts. These groups provided space, expertise, relationships, knowledge, donations, and/or funding.

The evaluation also recognised there are some good evaluation processes being utilised. For example, reflection and feedback are used to improve programmes.

The resilience, passion and energy staff and volunteers bring to the programmes are also seen as a strength. Staff appear knowledgeable and are operating from positive youth development frameworks, which emphasise young people's strengths and capacities.

Areas for improvement identified through the evaluation

While council's programmes were found to be delivering positive outcomes for children and young people, the Centre for Social Impact also found areas where we could improve. These can be split between opportunities for 'operational improvement' and opportunities for 'strategic improvement'.

Areas for operational improvement:

- **Funding and resourcing**

Most of the programmes evaluated were limited in what they could achieve because of limited funding or resourcing. Some programmes are supported by staff who go above and beyond their roles. For example, Tuia does not have dedicated resourcing, putting it at risk if current staff move on. Some programmes also faced constraints due to lack of physical space or over-reliance on volunteers.

- **Overlap and duplication**

Auckland's youth sector is complex and dynamic. There are multiple organisations and programmes which aim to achieve similar results for population groups. Council should consider its role in supporting the increase of collaboration and coordination across the sector.

- **Measuring and communicating impact**

Only two of the programmes evaluated have resource to support evaluation. While the programmes made use of reflective activities, no formal budget is available to measure impact. This affects council's ability to understand what is and is not working and to adapt and scale programmes in response. The evaluators also recommend council explore ways to better share quality practice across child and youth programmes.

Areas for strategic improvement:

- **I Am Auckland could target disadvantaged population groups**

Compared to more recent child and youth strategies, I Am Auckland has very little targeting. While Auckland Council is committed to all children and young people, we know that there are disparities in outcomes. I Am Auckland could be strengthened by moving from the language of 'all' towards a focus on equity, through identifying and targeting population groups.

- I Am Auckland could be better informed by te ao Māori**

Drawing on Mana Taiohi and the Independent Māori Statutory Board values reports, there are also opportunities for I Am Auckland to be better informed by te ao Māori. For example, weaving in concepts such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga could strengthen I Am Auckland at both the strategic and programme levels. This would also strengthen the Treaty relationship and is likely to translate to better outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.
- Council could focus on systems change rather than discrete programmes**

The Centre for Social Impact recommended that council strengthen its focus on systems change and co-design practice. They proposed a theory of change for I Am Auckland would be beneficial. They suggested this would help with scale, which is more likely to come through changes in practices, attitudes, narratives and sharing of learning and knowledge transfer between families than from service replication.
- Council should review its funding model for child and youth programmes**

It was recommended that council consider its funding arrangements and the role we have in increasing collaboration and coordination within the sector. This includes providing funding for evaluation. This echoes the view of the child and youth sector who suggest council should consider how funding arrangements could better enable collaboration and innovation. These opportunities to strengthen council's strategic support for child and youth wellbeing, and the mechanisms that sit under this (such as funding) are explored more in Part Four of the report.

Best Practice Analysis

As well as evaluating council programmes, staff reviewed national and international research to understand if there are principles or approaches that have the greatest impact on children and young people. The findings connect with the future scenarios work and provide further insight into whether the focus and approach of I Am Auckland is 'fit for purpose'. Encouragingly, some council programmes already align with the principles that were identified through this work. This alignment was highlighted in the above evaluation section.

Below provides an overview of key findings from the best practice research.

The current and future context should be a key consideration in programme design

Children and young people are growing up in a very different world than generations before them. As the wellbeing of children and young people is influenced by the environment, national policies, and global trends, it is important that we are aware of these changes when designing support.

It is important to be mindful of the big picture influences on children and young people's lives. Sometimes behaviour that is difficult to understand can be explained by looking at social or economic influences. For example, poor mental health can often be exacerbated by a range of factors including globalisation, climate change, social media use and colonisation, and discrimination.

The following are examples of changing factors that research recommends should be considered in the design of support:

- More women are joining the workforce, with this an increase in afterschool care and increased safety fears have combined to give children more structure and less unsupervised play.
- Teenagers have greater access to money, social media, and more choice in the school system and in extracurricular activities.
- The age of puberty has fallen dramatically over the last 150 years. Some demographics, including Māori and Pacific girls tend to experience puberty sooner than others. Brain development is not associated with puberty and young people looking older than they are, can result in inappropriate assumptions about other aspects of maturity and development.
- The COVID-19 lockdowns caused an unprecedented change to children and young people's daily lives. They were unable to go to school and connect with friends and wider whānau.

There are some critical underlying principles when designing support

Although the conditions for child and youth wellbeing are complex and can change with age, there are some underlying principles that remain important for all support. They are:

- **Culturally responsive**
Tamariki and rangatahi in Tāmaki Makaurau are increasingly diverse, and some population groups are facing greater inequity than others. Evidence shows that cultural connections strengthen wellbeing, particularly for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and Pacific children and young people. These connections significantly increase feelings of belonging and acceptance, as well as social and mental wellbeing. Conversely, experiencing cultural discrimination has a very negative impact on youth mental health and is linked to depression and suicidality.
- **Strengths-based**
Support that focuses on what children and young people are capable of are more effective than those that start from a place of risk or what they 'cannot' do. The latter approach alienates children and young people from meaningful participation. Instead, we should embrace the creativity and enthusiasm of children and young people.
- **Consider the wider support system**
Children and young people's wellbeing is inherently connected with the wellbeing of their whānau. It is common for interventions to focus on individual outcomes, but this approach does not reflect the reality of children and young people's lives. Council cannot expect to lift outcomes for children and young people without also improving outcomes for their whānau, friends and communities.

- **Co-design**

Research shows that children and young people benefit from meaningful engagement. It builds their confidence and leadership skills and reduces feelings of loneliness and isolation. Active citizenship means having the rights, the means, the space, and the opportunities to participate in and meaningfully influence decisions that matter to them. Council should consistently be designing opportunities for children and young people to have their opinions heard and acted on.

Best practice example from Auckland Council: He Pia He Taurira

WHO: This council programme supports rangatahi who are iwi mana whenua ki Tamaki Makaurau to co-create, plan, and deliver activations, events and placemaking plans.

WHAT: Placemaking is a process that fosters the creation of places where people feel a strong relationship with their communities and a commitment to make things better. It also supports meeting the needs of the city's long-term growth, while creating strong neighbourhoods, and generating income for the region.

HOW: The rangatahi co-designed events for Auckland Anniversary, Matariki on the waterfront, and HAUMI (an event which celebrates Wynyard Quarter, the people and place). The programme lasts 12 months and typically involves 7-12 rangatahi aged 17-24 years. Rangatahi are supported to share their ideas and implement them, connect to their culture, develop their confidence, and are supported to thrive. In turn, their mahi then influences and supports Eke Panuku in ensuring that its placemaking approach supports Te Tiriti and respect of Te Ao Māori as central to how we make places for Tāmaki Makaurau. Importantly rangatahi are remunerated for their mahi and contribution to the programme.

“Participating in He Pia He Taurira has made me think about working in Placemaking or in Council. I would like to explore Council more, working with the Māori outcomes team or a Māori initiative would be cool.” – programme participant

This is an example of a culturally relevant, strengths-based programme which was designed alongside the rangatahi participants, and our mana whenua partners.

Targeted support is beneficial for tamariki and rangatahi

The research found that targeted support can be effective, particularly when there are groups who are known to be more vulnerable, disadvantaged, or facing greater inequity than others.

This includes focussing on the key life stages when support can be most valuable. For example:

- **The first 1000 days:** Intervening during key periods of development can impact people's life trajectory. The first 1,000 days of life (from conception – two years) is a period of rapid development. Maternal mental health impacts foundational pathways that begin forming in utero. Interventions that focus on maternal health can have a positive long-term impact on child development. A vital part of early years development is the acquisition of executive

function and self-regulation skills. These enable children to plan, focus, remember instructions and control impulses. These are foundational skills for learning in school environments.

- **Early adolescence:** Early adolescence (9-14 years of age) is a period of rapid physical growth as well as rapid learning (particularly social, emotional, and motivational learning).²⁶ As a result of hormone changes and brain development, young people want to develop their independence and have novel experiences. This period is considered ‘a second window of opportunity’ where effective interventions can improve outcomes across the life course. Specific examples of stages or ages where young people would benefit from targeted support include:
 - Young people who experience persistent emotional and behavioural harm during their adolescent years are at greater risk of other negative outcomes throughout their life. This can include an increased risk of depression and anxiety throughout adulthood, worse education and employment outcomes and being not in employment, education, or training.
 - During early adolescence, young people need to be supported to explore their identity, have greater independence, and take healthy risks. Support should be focused on friendship, school, and community contexts, as well as whānau. Young people need opportunities to engage in social activities that ignite passions such as education, play, music, sports, or civic engagement.²⁷

²⁶ UNICEF Office of Research. (2017). The Adolescent Brain: A second window of opportunity, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence.

²⁷ UNICEF Office of Research. (2017). The Adolescent Brain: A second window of opportunity, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence.

Example of Auckland Council best practice: Girl on Fire

WHO: Girl on Fire focuses on encouraging and normalising physical activity for girls in Year 7 and 8 (11-13-year-olds). The programme supports girls to co-design physical activities to take part in each week.

WHAT: In the first phase of this programme, 78 girls played games, learnt basic sports skills, and did cardio fitness, dance, multisport and recreational activities. The first phase supported Asian girls, and following phases have seen girls from a range of diverse backgrounds take part.

The mid-point survey taken during the programme found that:

- 80 per cent were more confident and skilful
- 78 per cent had been encouraged or motivated to do more physical activity or join sport.

Everyone interviewed as part of the programme evaluation had joined at least two new sports since taking part.

HOW: The programme also supported girls to develop strong friendships with their peers by creating a safe and inclusive environment.

“It’s made me feel better about myself that there are other people like me who don’t like, actually talk and I’m able to socialise with them and become friends with them.” – programme participant

This programme is based on a strong understanding of the problem (low physical activity levels for Asian girls). It intervenes at a critical period in their lives, where patterns developed during this stage can alter the life course and create life-long health habits. Combining this with a positive, fun, and empowering environment had incredibly positive outcomes for participants.

Working with whānau is beneficial to the child and young person

Whānau struggle to provide the environment needed for their child to thrive when they experience toxic stress. This type of stress can come from several cumulative factors but is often connected to living in poverty or experiencing family violence. This toxic stress has been found to negatively impact the executive function of children as young as two years old.

Whānau-focused, place-based programmes are highly effective for young children if they are culturally appropriate and able to adapt to different family needs.

In addition, the Growing Up in New Zealand study shows that removing even one stress factor for whānau can lead to more positive outcomes for children. This could include addressing overcrowded housing, poverty, and food insecurity²⁸.

²⁸ Morton, S. M. B., Atatoa Carr, P. E., Grant, C. C., Berry, S. D., Mohal, J., Pillai, A. 2015. Growing Up in New Zealand: A longitudinal study of New Zealand children and their families. Vulnerability Report 2: Transitions in exposure to vulnerability in the first 1000 days of life.

Best practice Auckland Council example: Te Paataka Koorero O Takaanini (Takaanini Community Hub)

WHO: Te Paataka Koorero O Taakanini was designed and developed in partnership with mana whenua (Te Ākitai Waiohua and Ngāti Tamaoho). The development process drew on earlier insights and learning developed with whānau about what they wanted to see, feel, and experience in their community spaces to ensure they were welcoming and nurturing for tamariki.

WHAT: The space supports play, social interaction, and connection. Kitchen spaces are deliberately available to anyone to come and make their lunch, offer tea to others, and restock the fridge. Other spaces can be configured differently by those using it at any given time. There are separate rooms for whānau to connect with Work and Income, Inland Revenue, and legal support.

HOW: There is a deliberate effort to recruit locally and indigenise recruitment practices. Staff are trained to support community, whether that be by offering a cup of tea and a chat or referring to services.

The community hub is a space where whānau can spend time, children can play, and services can be accessed. The space reflects the diversity of the local community, with the history of the local area told throughout the building. This created a strong sense of belonging and inclusion for those using the space regularly.

Part Four: potential next steps

This review of I Am Auckland has found that while many children and young people are doing well, there are persistent issues that need to be addressed. These include poor youth mental health, access to public transport, poverty, discrimination, and poor-quality housing.

These issues are experienced disproportionately across the child and youth population. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori, Pacific children and young people, rainbow children and young people, and disabled children and young people are more likely to experience negative outcomes than their peers. This points to an urgent need to focus on equity.

Although many of the issues and challenges relate to complex conditions that council does not hold all the levers for, there are some obvious areas where we can make a difference. For example, by investing and prioritising in spaces and events which support children and young people to play, learn, and connect, providing reliable and affordable public and active transport, and supporting programmes that reflect the diversity of young Aucklanders.

We found that there is some good practice being demonstrated across council. Many of our programmes are in line with best practice evidence. However, there is more that we could do to ensure our programmes are targeting the most disadvantaged, are designed around critical periods in children and young people's lives and are supported by effective systems and processes. There is also an opportunity to make stronger connections to existing council and national strategies, leveraging off current mandates to have a greater impact.

I Am Auckland is rarely driving activity and is generally not well recognised among council whānau. It could be better targeted to the needs of Auckland's tamariki and rangatahi and more responsive to the current and future context.

Part Four of the report provides:

- A summary of the findings from Parts One-Three
- Consideration of what these findings could mean for what council does and how it works
- Options and recommendations for next steps.

Summary of findings

There were common themes in the findings and the considerations across Parts One-Three of the report, highlighting specific areas council could focus on to improve its support for tamariki and rangatahi.

A summary of the findings from the end of each part of the report have been themed below according to; contextual findings, I Am Auckland findings, and opportunities.

Findings: context for tamariki and rangatahi

Some children and young people are experiencing persistent disadvantage and greater hardship

Deteriorating mental health, poor housing, and inequity are persistent or worsening, with Māori and Pacific children being disproportionately affected. Discrimination is also particularly persistent for Māori, Pacific, disabled, and rainbow children and young people.

Present and emerging challenges for children and young people need to be considered

The long-term challenge presented by increasing trends such as global pandemics and a worsening climate need to be deliberately considered in the design and delivery of responses.

Many children and young people have access to opportunities

Access to outdoor activities, recreational spaces, new technology, and opportunities to learn about their culture are some of the things that are going well for children and young people.

There are common issues facing children and young people

Safety, unreliable transport, deteriorating mental health, and concern about the environment were issues consistently raised through the engagement.

Children and young people have told us what is making a difference

Valuing diversity, feeling accepted and safe to be themselves, green spaces, quality relationships and connections, and access to community spaces were frequently shared as things that matter to them.

Findings: I Am Auckland specific

Te-ao Māori could be better incorporated into council's strategy and approach

Embracing concepts such as manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga would strengthen I Am Auckland at both the strategic and programme level.

Supporting mechanisms are not reflecting the long-term nature of challenges

We need different mechanisms and structures to appropriately respond to the current and future context. For example, improved collaborative ways of working and partnering with the child and youth sector, and more flexible and sustainable funding mechanisms.

There is a disconnect between council strategy and delivery

An effective connection requires several conditions and structures to be in place. Other strategy reviews have also highlighted the disconnect between strategy and implementation.

I Am Auckland is not highly visible or influencing services and support

Programmes are often being retrospectively attributed to the strategic plan, rather than the plan shaping the programmes or funding decisions.

Evaluation, learning, and sharing of insights is not working effectively

The current processes are not driving learning, better outcomes, and it is challenging to bring together comprehensive data and information sets on how council is delivering against its strategic goals.

I Am Auckland is not designed for the current context

I Am Auckland does not adequately respond to some of the current challenges children and young people face, including persistent inequity and discrimination.

Findings: opportunities

There is national commitment to improving child and youth wellbeing

Since the publication of I Am Auckland, significant national strategies and approaches that focus on children and young people and promote collaboration have been developed. There is an opportunity to make more explicit connections with such strategies.

Long-term commitment is required to improve outcomes for children and young people

Many of the challenges facing children and young people are interconnected and long-term. Council could develop more integrated responses to help address these.

A focus on equity could have benefits for all

Auckland Council could focus on the groups who are falling furthest behind. By applying an equity lens to strategic, investment and programme decisions around child and youth wellbeing, we could realise more opportunities to partner, leverage resources, and ultimately improve outcomes.

Council could better support tamariki and rangatahi to have their say on regional decisions

Creating quality and culturally appropriate opportunities to hear from children and young people more frequently should be prioritised.

More culturally grounded, co-designed support could have huge benefits

The value of diversity of voice and perspective is critical when supporting children and young people. Priority should be given to co-developing support, particularly with tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau.

Council is delivering some quality programmes which we should promote and learn from

Although not always informed by I Am Auckland, this review could be an opportunity to highlight and promote what is working across the council group.

Council could develop principles of best practice and better target its support

There are foundational principles, key life stages, and critical success factors which are recognised for making the greatest difference for children and young people. Council could look at applying these to its programme and investment decisions.

Analysing the above findings, alongside the considerations that accompanied these in Parts One-Three of the report, council's opportunities for how it can more effectively support children and young people can broadly fall into two categories: what we could do and how we could do it.

What we could do...	We could do this by...
<p>we commit to contributing to a Tāmaki Makaurau where all children and young people can thrive, while appreciating the need to support young Aucklanders who are experiencing persistent disadvantage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focussing on equity and target population groups • recognising the need to provide for whānau and community wellbeing when supporting children and young people • ensuring council’s programmes reflect the ethnic diversity of young Aucklanders.
<p>we prioritise what children and young people care about</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving children and young people in decisions about the region • concentrating on the big issues and emerging trends impacting child and youth wellbeing, including mental health and climate change • developing culturally relevant mechanisms for engagement, which help to involve diverse children and young people, and their whānau and communities • delivering on things that matter to children and young people and are within our remit, such as improving access to public transport and ensuring community and public spaces support young people to play, learn, and connect.
<p>we understand the interconnected nature of many challenges, and the value in long-term, targeted support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focussing on systems change and developing a theory of change, rather than discrete interventions • creating the mechanisms that give staff and partners the confidence and ability to share learning, highlight success, and problem solve more regularly.
<p>we take a strategic investment approach to programming decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using investment principles to guide decisions • understanding the ‘levers’ that exist for council beyond direct financial support. For example, through our partnerships, and the opportunity to leverage community spaces and infrastructure • having greater influence over local board and CCO planning and delivery. This could include evaluation and learning support, as well as clear communication about what council prioritises and why.

What we could do...	We could do this by...
we draw on best practice evidence and consider the cultural context when designing support/programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-developing culturally grounded approaches and best practice principles that guide effective and relevant support to groups facing the greatest disadvantage. • prioritising learning and connecting across the organisation, with partners, and with children and young people • having strategy and practice be informed by best practice, developmental science, and mātauranga Māori.
we work in partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring our funding model appreciates the interconnected and long-term nature of some challenges and opportunities • collaborating and building relationships with other partners (including mana whenua) and making explicit connections with relevant strategies • reviewing our resourcing approach to allow for longer term partnerships with the child and youth sector, encouraging innovation and collaboration.

Implications for next steps

The headline conclusion of the review is that **I Am Auckland is no longer fit for purpose**. The needs of tamariki and rangatahi have evolved since the strategy was first developed. Based on the findings of the review it is not effectively:

- addressing current and future challenges and opportunities
- driving investment and programming decisions
- supporting the evaluation and monitoring of council activity.

This has a flow on effect to the achievement of the strategy’s goals and council’s ability to be accountable to key stakeholders and Aucklanders. These factors contribute to I Am Auckland not contributing to the Auckland Plan’s outcomes of Belonging and Participation, and Māori Identify and Wellbeing as effectively as was originally envisaged.

Some of these review findings council will have direct influence over, and some sit outside of council’s immediate control. The latter requires an appreciate of the interconnected nature of challenges, and the value of prioritisation and partnership working.

All the findings need to be considered alongside the council context. Specifically, the resourcing constraints, the directive to identify partnership and co-investment opportunities, and the request for strategy consolidation.

Options assessment

Based on the above, staff have identified and considered four options for council's future commitment to children and young people.

Each option responds to the findings differently, with some involving strategy redevelopment, and others proposing a new path.

The options have been segmented the following way:

- Option one: No dedicated youth strategy
- Option two: Enhance the current strategy
- Option three: New Strategy and approach
- Option four: Strategic priorities for children and young people nested under the Ngā Hapori Momoho/Thriving Communities strategy.

This section provides an overview of each option and applies a consistent assessment criteria to each.

Assessment criteria

Staff have presented overviews of each option including its strengths and weaknesses, and developed assessment criteria to enable comparison of the four options. Each criterion is drawn from the findings of the review.

The criteria are unweighted and allow for objective assessment.

The extent to which option responds to:

1. **Context:** does it consider the current and predicted future context for children and young people.
2. **Effectiveness:**
 - a. will it help council respond to the challenges and opportunities facing children and young people to improve their wellbeing
 - b. is it likely to contribute to addressing inequities for children and young people
 - c. does it support council staff to respond to the directive for a prioritisation/consolidation of strategies.
3. **Accountability:** will it improve accountability between:
 - a. council and residents and young people
 - a. council and key partners
 - b. council and CCOs, and council teams.
4. **Resourcing:**
 - a. can it be designed, implemented, and maintained within the existing resourcing context
 - b. will it strengthen/clarify council's investment decisions.

The first criterion focuses on the ability of the option to appropriately respond to both the current and potential future contexts which have been identified through engagement and research.

The second criterion considers how effective the option will be. There are three considerations, two of which are outcomes related and one process:

- will it help council to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing children and young people (outcome)
- will it allow council to contribute to improving some of the persistent inequities facing some children and young people (outcome)
- does it respond to the elected members directive for council to consolidate the number of strategies it delivers to (process).

The third criterion assesses whether the option will improve accountability among stakeholders. This criterion is based on the research which found the current I Am Auckland is not effectively driving accountability or delivery, as well as a recognition that council has both internal and external accountability requirements and stakeholders.

The fourth criterion focuses on whether the option will require no, little, or significant additional resource, and if it will bring structure to resourcing decisions relating to tamariki and rangatahi across council group.

A classification system of ticks, three being the most was marked against each criterion. Fewer ticks correspond to weaker achievement.

Option One	No dedicated child and youth strategy
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The removal of a standalone strategy for children and young people. • Council’s child and youth activity required to align to existing council strategies. • Limited evaluation and monitoring required.
Example of what is included in this option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I Am Auckland would be formally retired. • The Auckland Plan could set the strategic priorities for children and young people. For example, the ‘Belonging and Participation’ outcome in the Auckland Plan includes focus areas that align with what tamariki and rangatahi said was important to them, as well as commitment to investing in ‘communities of greatest need’. • It would be anticipated that the outcomes for children and young people could be delivered through existing strategies without needing to respond to the findings of this review. • Reporting requirements against child and youth wellbeing could be expected every three years. This could be part of the Auckland Plan monitoring.
Problem/opportunity the option is responding to (Strength)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns with request for a consolidation of strategies. • Low resourcing requirements which respond to the current resourcing challenges. • The reduction in monitoring and compliance requirements reflects staff feedback that this has proved challenging.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing strategies have similar themes to what has emerged from this review, making alignment possible (such as focusing support to groups facing the greatest disparities, as outlined in the Auckland Plan).
<p>Problem/opportunity the option is not responding to (Weakness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamariki and rangatahi voice are not explicitly prioritised through this approach. Council is not proactively responding to the issues identified in the review and what children and young people have told us is important. It is unlikely to maintain or improve accountability between key stakeholders, particularly if monitoring and evaluation requirements are reduced. This would lead to less visibility about what council is doing to support children and young people, a delivery and reputation risk. The absence of a stand-alone strategy, or policy directive, could mean children and young people are deprioritised by council. This would affect council’s leadership in the child and youth wellbeing space, as well as our ability to partner or co-invest around shared outcomes. Enhancements or additions to processes or programmes could be difficult to deliver without more explicit strategic direction, and staff may lack the evidence base or mandate to improve the support offered. As no investment criteria or unique outcomes are being developed, funding decisions may be ad-hoc rather than targeted and strategic.
<p>Implementation considerations</p>	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once approved by committee the decision would need to be socialised among council whānau and partners. There may be challenge if some see this as a ‘retraction’ of council’s commitment to children and young people. Policy staff would need to identify relevant strategies and work with the teams to confirm alignment. <p>Financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A low cost option. It removes the need to develop and review a strategy and reduces the frequency of monitoring and evaluation. Staff would need to consider how programmes and services might be affected by the removal of the strategy. Spending on child and youth services and support may reduce without a standalone mandate for investment. Risk that without a targeted strategy, council could spend money on programmes and services that are not evidence

	<p>based or having an impact on the lives of children and young people in Auckland.</p> <p>Other resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional staff requirements. • Accountability mechanism for teams delivering programmes for children and young people would need to be considered. <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given there is limited additional work required, it would be a relatively short timeframe (approximately 6 months).
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Option one assessment: no dedicated child and youth strategy

Contextualised	Effectiveness		Accountability	Resourcing
✓	Improving outcomes	Improving process	✓	✓✓
	✓	✓✓		

Option Two	Enhance the current strategy
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A standalone strategy remains, largely in its current form (I Am Auckland with the seven goals). • The enhancement would be through addressing the weaknesses of the monitoring and evaluation processes.
Example of what is included in this option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic direction for children and young people continues to be driven through I Am Auckland. The seven goals remain the strategic focus. • The priority is to strengthen the connection and accountability mechanisms between the strategic direction and operational practice. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Co-designing with staff the monitoring and evaluation process. Including more culturally relevant evaluation approaches ○ Increasing the frequency that staff report to elected members and the Youth Advisory Panel on progress against outcomes ○ Involving local boards in the evaluation and monitoring process.
Problem/opportunity the option is responding to (Strength)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An improved monitoring and evaluation process to help staff better align practice to strategy and put the focus back on outcomes.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains council’s strategic commitment to tamariki and rangatahi. • The focus on improving monitoring could demonstrate accountability on council’s part. • Relatively low resources requirements.
<p>Problem/opportunity the option is not responding to (Weakness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not support the consolidation strategies. • Significant efforts to improve the evaluation and monitoring mechanisms have been made over the years. There are no guarantees a new approach under the same strategy will offer better results. • The review found the seven goals were largely disconnected from each other and not ‘future focussed’. • It does not provide a pathway for targeted investment, clarity on funding approaches, or a focus on addressing inequity. This could reduce our ability to realise co-investment opportunities. • It does not require staff to focus on best practice principles, prioritise the voice of tamariki and rangatahi, or consider culturally informed approaches. All elements identified as critical to improving child and youth wellbeing outcomes.
<p>Implementation considerations</p>	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the mechanisms underpinning the strategy. • Co-develop and socialise changes with council whānau. • Work with elected members and local boards to agree the reporting and accountability process. <p>Financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option could be carried out by existing staff, keeping additional financial requirements low • As investment criteria/targeted support is not being prioritised under this option, additional savings or redistribution of resources is unlikely. <p>Other resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional staff requirements beyond greater involvement in the design of the new systems (including with elected members and local boards). <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given there is some redesigning work with staff and elected members, a medium-term timeframe is expected (approximately 10-12 months).

Option two assessment: enhance the current strategy

Contextualised	Effectiveness		Accountability	Resourcing
✓	Improving outcomes	Improving process	✓	✓✓
	✓	✓		

Option Three		New strategy and approach
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design and development of a new standalone strategy for children and young people • This would respond to the findings of the review and focus investment on the groups facing greatest disadvantage. 	
Example of what is included in this option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The totality of the review findings is closely considered, resulting in innovative approaches to developing and delivering the strategy. Based on the findings, some of approaches in the new strategy may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the seven goals being replaced by a model of change which recognises the interconnectedness of challenges and opportunities ○ a long-term co-design and partnership process developed between young people, whānau, mana whenua, staff, elected members (including local boards), and partners, enabling broader input into the strategy redesign and the underpinning structures. ○ a focus on ensuring the redesign, implementation, and evaluation is mana-enhancing and prioritises the voice of children and young people ○ children and young people are involved in a ‘participatory budgeting’ process to guide strategic investment decisions across council group ○ culturally relevant frameworks for programme design and learning are developed ○ new funding and commissioning models are piloted: focussing on long-term partnerships, co-investment, and targeted funding ○ tamariki and rangatahi are involved in all major futures thinking work, such as the ‘resilient Auckland’ programme 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a learning and evaluation approach is developed which focuses on improving equity and wellbeing, staff and partners use this to track the ‘investment to outcomes’ connection.
Problem/opportunity this option is responding to (Strength)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A standalone strategy, which could strengthen council’s leadership and commitment to child and youth wellbeing. • Provides an opportunity to develop a future-focussed strategy. This increase in relevance could improve buy-in among staff and partners. • Responds to findings about the value in more targeted investment and a focus on addressing inequity. • Prioritises collaboration with young people, whānau, the sector, and central government. • It would require staff to draw from best practice principles, culturally informed approaches, and tamariki and rangatahi voice; three key areas for development identified in the report. • It could respond to the identified system shortfalls through the co-development of processes that are seen as more relevant and useful for operational staff and partners. For example, improved learning and evaluation tools.
Problem/opportunity this option is not responding to (Weakness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not respond to the request to consolidate strategies. • Significant effort will be required to comprehensively respond to the review findings. This would likely be facilitated and funded by council. • This option is heavily dependent on a range of stakeholders being engaged in the process and outcome, which may be difficult as many are time and resource poor. • It would take a significant amount of time to develop, which may leave some partners, communities, and staff uncertain about council’s approach.
Implementation considerations	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed scoping and project planning would be required to ensure the redesign reflects the findings of this review and meets the needs of children and young people. • Co-design will be necessary with community, local boards, and mana whenua at earlier stages (and then ongoing).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of innovative systems and tools (such as an equity and wellbeing framework) would require a long-term commitment from council. <p>Financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This option requires significant resource. It is likely that additional staff and budget will be needed to refresh the strategy, followed by further resource to socialise, and then monitor and evaluate progress. Engagement with mana whenua and mataawaka, community, council staff, and elected members will require considerable additional resource. <p>Other resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful implementation of a refreshed or new strategy needs strong political and executive leadership. Children and young people would need to be supported to shape the strategy in ways that value their diversity and culture. This would take time to design and deliver. <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the scope of this work, it would be an intensive and longer timeframe before a strategy was presented back to elected members (approximately 20-24 months).
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Option three assessment: new strategy and approach

Contextualised	Effectiveness		Accountability	Resourcing
✓✓✓	Improving outcomes	Improving process	✓✓	✓
	✓✓✓	✓		

Option Four	Strategic priorities for children and young people nested under the Ngā Hapori Momoho/Thriving Communities strategy
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council’s strategic direction for children and young people is nested under the Ngā Hapori Momoho/Thriving Communities strategy. This would include a mandate to prioritise outcomes for children and young people, supported by unique policy positions and actions, with the Thriving Communities mandate (to deliver equitable wellbeing) as the foundation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ngā Hapori Momoho presents a series of outcomes, and shifts in practice to help all communities, but particularly those facing greatest disadvantage, to thrive. There is an opportunity to develop more explicit links with this strategy, enabling council to better prioritise and target investment to the children and young people facing the greatest inequity. • This option would remove a standalone strategy, while maintaining a focus on children and young people.
<p>Example of what is included in this option</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Ngā Hapori Momoho’s <i>investment principles, shifts in the way we work, and outcomes</i>, and translating these to reflect the findings of the I Am Auckland review. This would result in the development of policy positions and actions that prioritise children and young people facing the greatest disadvantage. It would also bring some specificity to the Ngā Hapori Momoho outcomes, demonstrating what a more detailed application of the concepts could look like. • It is anticipated that an action plan for children and young people would be the primary nested artifact. This would be supported by targeted policy directives drawn from the review findings and connected to the direction and outcomes of Ngā Hapori Momoho. New systems and mechanisms to support these directives would be developed where required. • What components of this action plan could look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A model of change nested under Ngā Hapori Momoho to better reflect the interconnected nature of the child and youth wellbeing outcomes council is contributing to. ○ ‘Best practice’ principles for the type of support council provides based on the review findings and Ngā Hapori Momoho’s key shifts ○ A learning and evaluation model that is culturally relevant and evidence informed ○ Identifying what other mechanisms would need to be developed or improved to best reflect the report findings and Ngā Hapori Momoho directives. For example, devolved funding models (reflecting the shift Ngā Hapori Momoho shift towards ‘council as an ‘enabler’ and partner’) and monitoring and evaluation frameworks that consider wellbeing and equity indicators.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because Ngā Hapori Momoho applies systems thinking, this approach should enable greater partnership working and system coordination with national bodies and ministries. For example, the national Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy and Mana Taiohi. These partnerships could leverage additional funding.
<p>Problem/opportunity it is responding to (Strength)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds to request to consolidate strategies. The ‘nesting’ could act as a pilot for applying this approach to other strategic plans. • Leverages existing alignment as through its investment principles and key shifts, Ngā Hapori Momoho already prioritises many of the findings from this review. Including targeting groups most in need and appreciating the interconnectedness of complex challenges. • There are reciprocal benefits: the nesting would provide practical direction to Ngā Hapori Momoho’s implementation. For example, addressing inequity, improving the wellbeing of whānau and communities, supporting those facing greatest disadvantage, and giving tamariki and rangatahi greater voice. Ultimately, this would support the achievement of Auckland Plan outcomes, such as ‘Belonging and Participation’. • The review findings for how council needs to adapt to improve child and youth wellbeing aligns with Ngā Hapori Momoho’s key shifts in the ‘way we work’. For example, from one-size-fits all programming to targeted, whanau-centred models of support, and from council as expert to an organisation that prioritises partnership. • The prioritisation of partnership and understanding council’s role versus that of others could help us to realise co-investment opportunities with the sector and central government. • Targeting children and young people who are facing the greatest disparity should result in more strategic investments, which responds to both the findings of the review and the organisational budget challenge. • Ngā Hapori Momoho outcomes are informed by 4 kaupapa Māori values. This could be a foundation to develop culturally relevant approaches for working with children and young people. • Deliberate connection to existing council strategy brings a stronger collective voice within council, clarifies priorities, and encourages shared ownership of outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi.

<p>Problem/opportunity it is not responding to (Weakness)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the ‘nesting’ is an innovative approach, there are no council examples to follow. This option will require an openness to learning and flexibility. • This option will need detailed scoping and significant staff engagement at a time when staff are facing numerous pressures. • Careful curating of the nesting and the supporting collateral will be required to help ensure council understands what this approach means and does not lose focus on children and young people.
<p>Implementation considerations</p>	<p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a nesting approach that strengthens Ngā Hapori Momoho and reflects the review findings. This will need to be tested with staff and children and young people. • Review the current systems and mechanisms for driving activity and implementation and improve where required. For example, an effective learning and evaluation model will need to be developed. • The approach will need to be designed, tested, and socialised with staff and partners so that the concepts are brought to life and the focus on children and young people is not lost. • As Ngā Hapori Momoho has been adopted and is in implementation phase, there is an existing mandate for taking this targeted approach forward. <p>Financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process can occur with existing financial resource. • Staff expect the targeted approach and application of investment principles to result in co-investment proposals and the reallocation, or potential savings across programmes. <p>Other resource:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be significant ‘in-person’ resource required but it is expected this can be met through existing staff. • Work with elected members and local boards will be necessary. <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the scope of this work, staff anticipate there would be co-designed collateral (including policy positions) ready for testing with staff and partners in approximately 12-18 months.

Option four assessment: Strategic priorities for children and young people nested under the Thriving Communities strategy

Contextualised	Effectiveness		Accountability	Resourcing
✓✓✓	Improving outcomes	Improving process	✓✓✓	✓✓
	✓✓✓	✓✓✓		

Options assessment summary

Option	Contextualised	Effectiveness		Accountability	Resourcing
		Outcomes	Process		
Option 1	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Option 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓
Option 3	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Option 4	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓

Analysis and recommendation

Option one: no dedicated child and youth strategy, did not score favourably on many of the criteria. This is largely because the removal of a focus on children and young people would not enable council to respond to the findings of this review and would risk damaging and/or weakening the support council provides children and young people. The resourcing score reflects the fact that no additional human or financial resource would be required but that it may not result in improved targeting of investment.

Option two: enhance the current strategy, also scored comparatively low on the contextualised, effectiveness, and accountability criteria. Again, this reflects the shortfalls of the current strategic action plan. This option would not provide council with the opportunity to make the strategic enhancements required to give staff, elected members, partners, and the community the confidence that the strategic goals would be achieved, and child and youth wellbeing improved. Again, it is expected to be a relatively low-cost approach which is reflected in the resourcing score.

Option three: new strategy and approach, scored well on how it would respond to the current and future context, improve outcomes for children and young people, and scored relatively well on accountability. This is a result of the redevelopment requiring careful consideration of the review's findings. However, it scored the lowest on the resourcing criterion. This is because it would be resource intensive to develop and implement, and council's ability to make more

strategic investment and programming decisions would take time to come to fruition (because of the length of time a strategy redevelopment process takes). It is also inconsistent with the directive to consolidate strategies.

Option four: strategic priorities nested under the Ngā Hapori Momoho/Thriving Communities strategy, scored the highest overall against the criteria. The connections between the findings of this report and Ngā Hapori Momoho presents the opportunity for a more deliberate connection between the two programmes of work.

The significant trade-off between option three: new strategy and approach and option four: strategic priorities nested under Ngā Hapori Momoho, is that option four is a new approach for council, so it could take some time to embed across the council group.

Although option four would be a departure from council's traditional strategy approach, staff believe it could be developed in a way that is relatively resource-light, responds to council's direction, and improves child and youth wellbeing. For example, applying the investment principles in Ngā Hapori Momoho to tamariki and rangatahi would lead to a series of policy positions which focus on supporting those facing the greatest disadvantage.

The connection with Ngā Hapori Momoho would allow for culturally informed approaches to be prioritised, and greater participation from children and young people and their whānau in the design of support. This increase in relevance between strategy and practice should help staff to deliver best practice support for children and young people, and ultimately drive greater accountability.

This option would respond to the request for a consolidation of council strategies without diluting council's commitment to improving child and youth outcomes. The targeted investment approach would likely result in the more effective use of council's resources, and enables council to identify partnership and co-investment opportunities with the sector and central government.

Based on the analysis staff recommend committee approves option four for council's approach to supporting children and young people. If approved, staff would prepare a full scope for this approach to ensure it adequately responds to the key findings in this report.



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