



Manaaki Tangata: A Review of a Central Auckland Service for People Experiencing Homelessness

Trudie Cain

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Trudie Cain, Senior Social Researcher
Social and Economic Research and Evaluation Team
Strategic Advice and Research Unit
Policy Department
Auckland Council

Approved for Auckland Council publication by:
Alison Reid
Manager, Social and Economic Research and Evaluation
Strategic Advice and Research Unit

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Manaaki Tangata community space, Sturdee Street, Auckland.

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a qualitative review of Manaaki Tangata, a low-barrier, relationship-centred space supporting people experiencing homelessness in central Auckland. The purpose of the review was to understand the value and contribution of Manaaki Tangata, how it is experienced by those who use it and those who hold it together, and which elements are critical to preserve as decisions are made about its future.

The review was commissioned to inform reflection, learning, and decision-making, particularly in light of the planned redevelopment of the current site and the likelihood that Manaaki Tangata will need to be relocated. It considers not only what the initiative delivers in practical terms, but how it works in practice, why it matters to people, and what could be lost if its defining qualities are not carefully protected through any transition.

Evidence for the review was drawn primarily from written reflections and interviews with people who use Manaaki Tangata, alongside perspectives from Māori Wardens, community organisations, and council staff. A narrative-led thematic approach was used to ensure that lived experience remained central to the findings, while still identifying clear patterns relevant to policy and operational decision-making.

What is Manaaki Tangata?

Manaaki Tangata is a centrally located, low-threshold drop-in space established in November 2024 through a partnership between Auckland Council, Eke Panuku, and Māori Wardens. Grounded in the principle of manaakitanga, the space provides access to showers, meals, laundry, and basic amenities in an environment designed to be calm, welcoming, and dignifying.

Tamaki ki Te Tonga District Māori Wardens, referred to throughout this report as Māori Wardens, play a central role in the operation of Manaaki Tangata. As volunteers, their presence provides consistency, cultural authority, and relational safety. Rather than operating as a formal service with rigid processes, Manaaki Tangata functions as a place people can enter without referral, scrutiny, or expectation; it is a space where support is available but not imposed.

Manaaki Tangata sits within a wider network of services supporting people who sleep rough in Auckland, but its role is distinct. It does not replace other services, but complements them, particularly for people who experience barriers to more formal or highly regulated environments.

How the space is experienced

The strongest finding from this review is that Manaaki Tangata is experienced less as a service and more as a place, one that people use in different ways, but consistently value for how it makes them feel.

People described coming to the space quietly or socially, regularly or occasionally, with varying degrees of attachment. Some used it as a brief stop in a longer day; others saw it as one of the few places where they felt known and welcome. Even those who attended infrequently spoke about the reassurance of knowing it existed as a place they could go when other options fell through.

Across these experiences, common threads emerged. People valued:

- **Calm without surveillance**, including the absence of queues, security, or public correction
- **Dignity through everyday practices**, such as being able to sit immediately, help themselves to kai, and not explain themselves
- **Belonging without obligation**, where engagement is welcomed but never required
- **Care expressed relationally**, particularly through food offered with attention and respect.

For some, the space provided relief from anxiety and the constant pressure of being watched or judged in public space. For others, it functioned as social and cultural anchoring. Importantly, critical voices were also present. These perspectives did not reject the kaupapa of Manaaki Tangata, but held it to a high ethical standard, underscoring that expectations are higher precisely because the space is so important.

Taken together, these stories show that Manaaki Tangata reduces daily strain for people, eases harm and supports stability in ways that are subtle but significant. People did not describe the space as solving homelessness. Rather, they described what it prevented: escalation, anxiety, and exclusion.

Why it works and where pressure sits

The review found that the qualities people value are not accidental. They are actively sustained through relational practice, cultural authority, and everyday judgement exercised by Māori Wardens and supported by partner organisations. Regulation within the space is accepted because it is relational, consistent, and grounded in mutual respect rather than enforcement.

At the same time, the review makes visible the limits of this model. The small physical environment creates pressure when demand is high, and the emotional labour required to hold the space together increases when people are unwell or distressed. Expectations of the space are high because it is experienced as fair and humane, so when something goes awry, moments of conflict or exclusion are felt more acutely.

These pressures are compounded by uncertainty about the future of the site. The review highlights a clear tension between how essential the space feels to people who rely on it, and how provisional it remains within broader systems.

Council context and system considerations

Council staff perspectives help explain why a space that delivers clear value remains fragile. Manaaki Tangata is widely regarded within council as a high-impact, low-cost initiative. Supporting around 9500 visits annually, it delivers disproportionate value relative to its investment, particularly in wellbeing, safety, and harm reduction.

Despite this, the initiative exists within fragmented systems. Staff described long-standing difficulties in securing space for homelessness-related initiatives, with responsibility often falling between teams or being treated as *too hard*. Manaaki Tangata emerged through persistence, timing, and individual champions rather than systematic alignment.

Council staff also articulated clear risks associated with relocation. Displacement is not neutral for people experiencing homelessness, particularly when place, routine, and familiarity are critical to

wellbeing. Staff strongly rejected the idea that other services could automatically substitute for Manaaki Tangata, emphasising that geography, accessibility, physical ability, and past exclusion all shape where people can realistically go.

Key insights

Five key insights emerge from the review:

1. **The value of Manaaki Tangata lies in how care is provided**, not just in what is provided. Low-barrier, relational practice is central to building trust and effectiveness.
2. **The space functions as essential social infrastructure**, offering stability and psychological back-up even for people who attend infrequently.
3. **Relational governance works**, but relies on people, time, and environments that support rather than undermine that work.
4. **The initiative delivers disproportionate value relative to cost** yet remains vulnerable due to a lack of institutional ownership.
5. **One space cannot meet all needs**; Manaaki Tangata works best as part of a network of complementary spaces rather than a single, centralised solution.

Implications for decision-making

The findings suggest that decisions about Manaaki Tangata are not simply operational or property-based. They are decisions about what kinds of spaces are valued in the city, whose wellbeing is prioritised, and whether relational, culturally grounded forms of care are protected or allowed to erode.

Relocation planning, resourcing decisions, and future service design must therefore focus not only on retaining a physical footprint, but on preserving the conditions that make the space work: calm, dignity, accessibility, and relational safety.

Conclusion

Manaaki Tangata offers something rare in the current service landscape: a place where people experiencing homelessness can exist without scrutiny, pressure, or explanation. Its power lies in small, deliberate practices that reduce harm and affirm dignity on a daily basis.

As Auckland Council considers the future of the initiative, the strongest message from this review is clear: what matters most is not easily replicated if lost. Protecting the relational, low-threshold, and culturally grounded qualities of Manaaki Tangata will be essential to ensuring continuity of care and wellbeing for those who rely on it.

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1 Introduction

Manaaki Tangata is a small space with a large footprint in the lives of the people who use it. For some, it is a place to rest quietly; for others, a source of connection or reassurance; for many, it is simply somewhere they know they can go when other options fall away. This review was commissioned to understand the value of Manaaki Tangata through the experiences of the people most affected by it, and to inform decisions about its future at a time of impending change.

The review is grounded in conversations with people who use the space, Māori Wardens who care for it, and council staff who support its operation within wider systems. Rather than assessing Manaaki Tangata solely through service outputs or performance measures, the review focuses on how the space is experienced in everyday life, what makes it work, and what is at risk of being lost if decisions about relocation, resourcing, or redesign are made without care. In doing so, it recognises that much of the initiative's value lies in quiet, relational, and often understated practices that are not easily captured through conventional reporting.

The purpose of the review is to provide an evidence-informed foundation for reflection, learning, and decision-making, particularly given that the current site will, in due course, be redeveloped and Manaaki Tangata will need to be relocated. It seeks to identify the elements of the space that are essential to preserve, the conditions that support its effectiveness, and the pressures that currently sit alongside its strengths. The review is intended to support council and partner organisations to make decisions that maintain continuity of care, protect trust and accessibility, and uphold culturally grounded approaches as the initiative evolves.

Specifically, the review aims to:

- Understand how Manaaki Tangata is used and experienced by different people
- Articulate the value of the space from the perspective of users, funders, and partners
- Identify the core qualities that must be retained in any future location
- Inform decisions about relocation and future operation in ways that minimise disruption and harm.

The primary audience for this report is council governance, senior leadership, and operational teams involved in decisions about place, resourcing, and service design. By centring participant voices alongside organisational context, the report is intended to support decisions that are not only practical and strategic but grounded in the lived realities of the people for whom this space matters most.

The report is structured as follows. Section Two outlines the background and policy context for Manaaki Tangata. Section Three describes the methodology. Section Four presents the findings, using composite narratives and thematic analysis to foreground the lived experiences of those who use the space. Sections Five and Six examine the perspectives of Māori Wardens and the organisational context and constraints in which they work, respectively. Section Seven sets out key insights and recommendations, followed by concluding reflections.

2 Background and context

Homelessness and rough sleeping are an ongoing focus for Auckland Council, reflecting a broader commitment to supporting wellbeing, equity, and inclusion across the city. Council's approach is shaped by *Kia Whai Kāinga Tātou Katoa: The Regional Cross-Sectoral Homelessness Plan for Auckland*, which provides a shared framework for responding to homelessness through partnership, prevention, and coordinated action. Council also aligns with the goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring, working alongside central government and community providers within the constraints of local government roles and responsibilities.

This is a complex and evolving environment. While council plays an important role in shaping public space, access to facilities, and community wellbeing, many of the structural drivers of homelessness sit beyond its direct control. As a result, council-supported initiatives often focus on harm reduction, stabilisation, and connection, alongside advocacy and partnership with service providers. Maintaining continuity, trust, and cultural safety within this context is an ongoing challenge and a key consideration when assessing the value of place-based initiatives.

2.1 Manaaki Tangata

Manaaki Tangata is a low-threshold, drop-in space located in central Auckland. It was established in November 2024 through a partnership between Auckland Council, Eke Panuku, and Māori Wardens. The space operates on Sturdee Street in Downtown Auckland, providing a centrally located space close to amenities and other services commonly relied upon by people sleeping rough.

Manaaki Tangata is intentionally designed as a walk-in, relationship-centred space. People can enter without referral or formal process, stay for varying lengths of time, and engage on their own terms. The space provides access to showers, laundry, meals, and basic facilities, alongside informal connection to health, housing, and support services when appropriate.

Visit data indicates sustained use of Manaaki Tangata over time, with consistently high attendance despite month-to-month variation. From December 2024 to January 2026, monthly visits increase from fewer than 500 to more than 1000, with particularly high use across mid to late 2025 (Figure 1).

Frequent return visits suggest the space is relied on as a stable source of support rather than a one-off service, providing important context for the narratives that follow throughout this report.

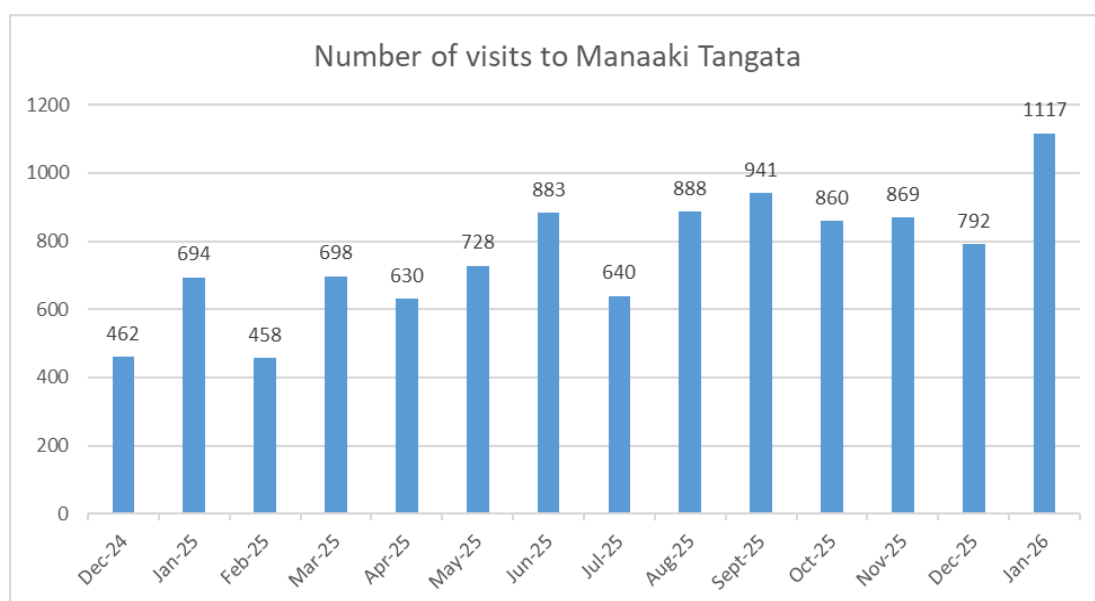


Figure 1: Number of visits to Manaaki Tangata

Māori Wardens play a central role in holding and operating the space. Importantly, this is undertaken in a voluntary capacity, underscoring the extent to which the space depends on community contribution as well as formal systems. Beyond practical support, they provide a consistent and trusted presence, exercising cultural authority and relational care. Their approach is grounded in manaakitanga and contributes to a calm, respectful environment where safety is maintained without reliance on formal enforcement or surveillance.

Manaaki Tangata sits alongside other services supporting people who sleep rough in Auckland, including those delivered by organisations such as Auckland City Mission and Lifewise. Its role is complementary rather than substitutive, serving people with diverse needs, capacities, and histories of engagement, including those who have been excluded from other spaces or who find more formal environments difficult to access. Over time, the space has evolved in response to patterns of use and demand, shaped by everyday practice rather than rigid design.

2.2 Relocation considerations

The current Manaaki Tangata site is located near the Downtown Car Park, which has been identified for redevelopment. As a result, Manaaki Tangata will need to be relocated, although the timing and details of this transition are not yet confirmed.

Relocation presents more than a logistical challenge. For many people experiencing homelessness, proximity, familiarity, and routine are critical to wellbeing and safety. Decisions about location, accessibility, and continuity therefore carry significant implications for those who rely on the space, particularly for people with limited mobility, health needs, or long-standing routines in the central city.

Finding a future site that maintains accessibility while preserving the kaupapa of dignity, care, and low-barrier access will be essential. The review that follows is intended to inform these decisions by identifying what makes Manaaki Tangata work in practice, what must be protected through any transition, and what risks arise if relocation prioritises property or convenience over lived experience.

3 Method

This review adopted a qualitative, trauma-informed and culturally responsive approach, recognising the sensitivities associated with experiences of homelessness and marginalisation within public space. The emphasis was on participant dignity, safety, privacy, and wellbeing throughout all stages of engagement. The research project went through an Auckland Council-led ethical review process, following best practice guidelines (review number 2025-09).

The design prioritised lived experience through semi-structured interviews with people who use Manaaki Tangata, supported by a storyboard poster exercise that enabled additional users to reflect anonymously on what the space means to them. These methods were complemented by perspectives from Māori Wardens and Auckland Council staff, which provided contextual insight into how the space operates and the conditions that enable or constrain it.

3.1 Data collection

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three groups:

1. Eleven people who use Manaaki Tangata
2. Six Māori Wardens involved in operating the space
3. Two Auckland Council staff with responsibility for, or involvement in, the initiative.¹

Interviews were flexible and participant-led, conducted one-on-one, in pairs, or in small informal groups depending on participant preference. Questions were open-ended and focused on experiences of the space, its uses, and the factors shaping how it operates.

The interviewer adopted a facilitative approach, allowing participants to guide the conversation and share experiences in their own words. Participants could pause, skip questions, or withdraw at any time. With consent, interviews were audio recorded for transcription and analysis. Interview prompts are included in the Appendix.

3.1.2 Informal poster contributions

Users of Manaaki Tangata were invited to write brief reflections on posters displayed within the space. The posters asked: *What does Māori Wardens mean to you?*² Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and unmediated by the researcher.

Responses ranged from single words to short reflections and expressions of appreciation. As contributions were made in a shared semi-public setting, no identifying information was collected. Posters were photographed for analysis, with care taken to avoid capturing identifiable individuals.

¹ One additional interview was conducted with a staff member from another Auckland-based service who regularly refers people to Manaaki Tangata. Their insights have been woven throughout the analysis.

² People who use Manaaki Tangata most often refer to the space as Māori Wardens.

3.1.3 Recruitment and participation

Participants were recruited through outreach, existing relationships, and informal invitation via service delivery settings. Participation was voluntary and verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Interviews were conducted in locations chosen to support comfort and safety, including familiar community settings. Light refreshments were provided, and participants could choose to be interviewed individually or alongside others they trusted.

To capture a range of perspectives, the sample included people experiencing short- and longer-term homelessness, as well as people recently housed who continued to use Manaaki Tangata. Variation in age, gender, and patterns of engagement was sought to capture a range of perspectives. All participants provided verbal informed consent prior to participation. No identifying information is included in the reporting of findings.

3.1.4 Analysis

Data were analysed using a narrative-led thematic approach, prioritising participants' lived experiences while identifying patterns in how Manaaki Tangata is used, experienced, and sustained.

Composite narratives were developed from multiple interviews to reflect shared experiences while preserving anonymity. These narratives formed the primary analytic basis for the findings.

Poster contributions were treated as complementary material and used to corroborate and extend themes emerging from interviews. They were not analysed as a standalone dataset but integrated into thematic development where relevant.

Māori Warden and Auckland Council staff perspectives were incorporated to provide contextual understanding of operational and structural conditions influencing the space.

3.2 Limitations

This review is based on qualitative engagement with a small number of participants and does not claim statistical representativeness. Findings reflect the perspectives of those who chose to participate during the period of data collection.

While most participants expressed positive experiences, critical and ambivalent perspectives are included where they arose. Composite narratives enhance anonymity and highlight shared patterns but reduce visibility of individual trajectories.

Poster contributions were brief and self-selected, and not all users engaged with this format. Interpretation of all material is necessarily shaped by researcher judgement; however, triangulation across methods strengthens confidence in recurring themes.

4 The value of the space: An integrated narrative analysis

This section is grounded in conversations with people who use the space and those who support it. It opens with four composite narratives, before turning to a thematic analysis of the experiences they reflect.

4.1 Composite narratives

This section presents four composite narratives, constructed from multiple accounts rather than individual participants. They reflect shared experiences, patterns, and perspectives of people who use Manaaki Tangata, while protecting participant anonymity. Together, they illustrate the diversity of meanings and uses associated with the space.

“Somewhere I can just sit”

He doesn't come every day. Usually once or twice a week, sometimes less if the timing doesn't work. It depends on how he's feeling and how long the walk seems that morning. When he does go, he keeps it simple: sign in, sit down, eat, maybe have a coffee. He doesn't hang around. He's not there to socialise.

Crowds make him anxious. Loud spaces make it worse. Some places feel like they expect something from him – to talk, to line up, to explain himself, and that's when he feels himself retreat. This place doesn't do that. He can sit quietly and no one questions it.

He's aware of how often people watch you when you're sitting outside with nowhere obvious to go, and how tiring it is to feel noticed all the time; walking in here, he feels that weight lift a little.

He notices the small things. That no one shouts across the room. That people aren't being moved on the moment they've finished eating. That when things get a bit tense, it settles quickly without becoming a scene. He doesn't always see how it happens. He just notices the difference.

The food matters more than he expected. Not just that it's hot, but that it's made properly. It doesn't feel rushed or careless. He can tell someone paid attention to it, and to him, even if he doesn't talk much.

What he values most is knowing the place exists. Even on weeks he doesn't go, it's there in the back of his mind. If meals are cancelled. If it's been a rough couple of days. If everything else feels like too much. Just knowing it's an option makes things feel more manageable.

If it wasn't there, he says he'd cope, but he knows it would make everything a bit harder. More walking. Fewer quiet places. More time spent on edge.

This place, he says, you can just sit.

Why this story matters

This story reflects users who value low-pressure safety. For them, the key isn't engagement or connection, but the absence of surveillance, noise, and expectation. Māori Wardens' relational presence, often unnoticed by users, is what makes this calm possible. Any changes that increase crowding or regimentation risk excluding people like him.

“It feels like family, but you don't have to act like it”

She talks easily and knows most of the faces. Some days she comes with friends; other days she arrives on her own and ends up caught in conversation anyway. She's been around a long time, long enough to remember when other services felt different, long enough to know where she's welcome and where she isn't.

She calls the women who run the space the aunties. They know her name. They remember how she has her tea. They'll pull her up if she's out of line, and she's fine with that. She knows it comes from care, not control.

What she likes is that the space feels social without being forced. People talk. People laugh. New faces come and go. If someone's loud or upset, it doesn't usually get out of hand. Someone will have a quiet word. Someone else will step in if needed.

Food is a big part of it. She talks about certain days – the boil-ups, the barbecues, the meals that feel like someone's cooked for real people, not just served food. It reminds her of family meals she hasn't had in a long time.

She's brought others here too. People new to the city, people who didn't know where to go. She tells them: this place is different. For some, it becomes part of their routine. For others, it's just a temporary stop, but a good one.

She knows the space is small. She knows it gets crowded. She knows the women running it carry a lot. When things go wrong, when someone is asked to leave or tempers flare, it hurts more because expectations are high. This place is meant to be better.

She's clear that spaces like this matter because they allow people to exist without having to explain themselves, without being reduced to a problem to be managed or moved on. That's why it matters so much when those values feel strained.

If it closed, she says, it wouldn't just be about food or showers. It would feel like losing a place where people know her and where she knows she belongs.

Why this story matters

This narrative captures users for whom the space functions as social and cultural anchoring. Regulation is accepted because it is relational. Māori Wardens' role as aunties – firm, familiar, and known, is central. The emotional cost of conflict or trespass is higher here precisely because the sense of belonging it provides is so deeply felt.

“I wanted it to live up to what it said it was”

She doesn't go there anymore. Not because she thinks the place is bad, in fact, that's part of the problem. She expected more from it.

When she first started going, she liked the warmth. The toast in the morning. The feeling that people were being looked after, not processed. It felt calmer than other places. Safer.

Then something happened. It wasn't even about her directly, but it cut close to home. Someone she knew, someone Māori, was asked to leave. Police were involved. To her, it felt like a line had been crossed.

When Māori do that to Māori, she said, that's hard.

She knows people make mistakes. She knows drugs and mental health make things complicated. She also knows how quickly people run out of places to go. A trespass isn't just being told to leave, it can mean having nowhere.

Since then, she's noticed other things more sharply. How dark it feels down there sometimes. How close it is to the road. How cramped it can get. How the space feels fine if you already know it, but harder if you don't.

She hasn't written it off completely. She still tells people it helps. She still believes the women there mean well. But she watches from a distance now, and she holds the space to a high standard.

It's meant to be a place of care, she says, and that means something.

Why this story matters

This story represents principled critique, not rejection. It shows how high expectations that are rooted in tikanga, safety, and ethics amplify feelings of harm when things go wrong. Organisational insight helps explain why trespass occurs, but this narrative reminds decision-makers that *how* boundaries are experienced matters as much as why they are set.

“It's not my whole day, it just helps it”

He doesn't talk about the place like it's home. He wouldn't use words like belonging or family. That's not how he thinks about it.

For him, it's part of the circuit. One of a handful of places that make the day workable.

Some mornings he'll go to the Mission first. If he's still hungry later, or if something's been cancelled, he'll walk down. Other days he won't bother. It depends how much energy he's got and whether the distance feels worth it.

When he does go, he appreciates that it's straightforward. No queues. No standing around wondering where to go. No pressure to talk. He eats, has a drink, maybe exchanges a few words, then leaves to get on with the rest of his day. Library. Park. Somewhere else to pass the time.

He likes that people are friendly without being in his business.

They smile. They ask how you are. That's enough, he says.

The space feels calm compared to others. Even when it's busy, it doesn't feel chaotic. He's noticed that when people start getting edgy, it usually doesn't spiral. Someone steps in. Things quieten down.

He's also conscious of its limits. It's small. The seats fill up fast. If you leave your stuff somewhere else to walk down, that's a risk. And there are days when the timing just doesn't line up.

Still, he would notice if it was gone.

It's one of those places you don't think about every day, he says, but when you need it, you're glad it's there.

He doesn't rely on it completely. But it smooths out the rough edges of the week. Takes a bit of pressure off. Makes things easier than they would be otherwise.

That's enough for him.

Why this story matters

This narrative represents users who are quietly positive but lightly attached. The space is not central to their identity or routine, but it plays a stabilising role, filling gaps, reducing stress, and offering a reliable option without demanding commitment.

What these stories tell us

These stories show that the value of the space cannot be understood through a single type of user or a single mode of use. People come for different reasons, stay for different lengths of time, and hold the space with varying degrees of emotional attachment. Yet across these differences, there are common patterns in how the space fits into people's lives and why it matters.

For some, the space offers calm and relief from anxiety, a place where they can sit quietly without being watched, directed, or judged. For others, it is a social anchor: somewhere familiar, relational, and culturally grounded, where regulation happens through respect rather than enforcement. Some people hold the space lightly, using it as part of a wider daily circuit, while still valuing its reliability. Others hold it to a higher moral standard precisely because it represents care, tikanga, and whanaungatanga, and feel that weight when those values are strained.

Several participants spoke about the emotional toll of being visible in public space, of being constantly watched, judged, or moved on, even in subtle ways. For these individuals, the value of the space lay not only in what it provided, but in what it suspended: scrutiny, explanation, and the need to justify one's presence. Being able to sit without drawing attention, or to enter without being assessed, offered a form of relief that accumulated over time. This perspective strengthens the picture that emerges across the narratives: that the space functions as a refuge not just from material hardship, but from the ongoing strain of being seen as out of place.

Across all four narratives, what stands out is not dependence on a service, but the importance of having an option. The space functions as a psychological back-up, a place people know they can go when other supports fall through, when energy is low, or when the day feels less manageable. Even people who do not attend regularly describe feeling more secure knowing it exists.

These stories also reveal that much of what users value is deliberately understated: the absence of queues, the lack of surveillance, the way food is offered, the ability to engage or withdraw without

consequence. These are not accidental features; they are the result of sustained relational labour by Māori Wardens – the ongoing work of building trust, safety, and connection.

At the same time, the narratives make visible the limits of the model. The intimacy that makes the space feel safe and human also creates pressure when the environment is crowded, when people are unwell, or when the physical space cannot meet demand. Moments of conflict or exclusion are felt more sharply here because expectations are higher. The space is not just a place to access support; it is a place people measure against values of care and fairness.

For decision-makers, these stories suggest that the question is not simply whether the space is valued – it clearly is – but what kind of value is at stake. Much of its impact lies in what would be lost if it were disrupted, diluted, or reshaped without care: the quiet sense of safety, the dignity of low-pressure access, the stabilising effect of knowing there is somewhere to go.

In that sense, the space operates less like a conventional service and more like a piece of social infrastructure, one that eases daily strain, reduces harm, and holds people in ways that are difficult to measure, but easy for those who use it to recognise.

4.2 Patterns across people's experiences

The four narratives presented above illustrate different ways people use and value the space. They don't suggest a single, uniform experience but reveal recurring patterns that help explain why the space matters, how it operates, and where it is under strain.

The following section presents a thematic analysis of interview data, identifying key themes that emerge across participants. These themes highlight the relational, operational, and environmental dynamics that underpin the space's value and effectiveness.

4.2.1 Safety without surveillance

Across the narratives, safety is not associated with enforcement, rules, or visible control. Instead, it is described as something felt, a settling of the body, a reduction in tension, a momentary release from the need to stay alert.

For one quieter, more anxious user, this shift was immediate:

You don't have to stand there lining up, watching everyone. You just come in, sit down.

Safety, in this sense, is not imposed. It emerges through the absence of scrutiny. This understanding is echoed in the short, unprompted comments people left in the space itself, where safety was named simply as *safe & home*, *coming home*, or as relief at being in a *caring non judgement place*.

In more socially connected accounts, this extends to how behaviour is managed. Order is present, but it is not experienced as control. Interventions happen early, quietly, and without public correction, maintaining the tone of the space rather than disrupting it.

Māori Wardens describe this as intentional practice:

We settle them down if you talk to them nicely. Otherwise, it just carries on.

Community organisation staff similarly note that this relational approach often makes formal security unnecessary. Respect, familiarity, and the desire to remain part of the space do the work that enforcement might otherwise perform.

For several participants, safety was inseparable from relief from not being watched, assessed, or moved on. In a context where public space is often experienced as surveilled and conditional, this temporary suspension of scrutiny carries significant weight.

Implication

Safety here is produced through atmosphere and relationships, rather than surveillance and control. Efforts to formalise or scale the model, particularly through visible security measures, risk undermining the very conditions that users experience as safe.

4.2.2 Dignity through non-institutional practices

Across the narratives, dignity is not described as something actively given, but as something preserved through the absence of institutional routines. It is felt in the small, everyday practices that distinguish this space from others such as no queues or processing, and no need to perform or explain.

As one user put it:

It doesn't feel like a conveyor belt.

Movement through the space is quiet and unremarkable. People enter, sit, and are attended to without drawing attention to themselves. In this way, dignity is maintained not through formality, but through the removal of pressure.

From the Māori Wardens' perspective, this is not incidental. It requires constant, often invisible, coordination:

We don't have a line. We write names, we remember, we just sort it out.

What appears simple is, in practice, labour-intensive. It relies on attentiveness, memory, and judgement rather than fixed process.

A staff member from another service provider who regularly recommends this space described it as unusual within a system under pressure, where efficiency is often prioritised through standardisation and visible order. In contrast, they noted that here, flow is achieved without exposing people to scrutiny.

For several participants, this difference is significant. Dignity is described less in terms of being treated well, and more in terms of no longer being positioned as a problem to manage.

This theme also appears in the poster comments, where dignity is explicitly named, and where the ability to meet basic bodily needs without judgement or procedural attention is taken for granted rather than apologised for.

Implication

These small procedural choices, such as how people enter, wait, and receive support, are not neutral. They shape how individuals experience themselves within the space. Preserving dignity requires actively resisting institutional or operational drift, particularly as demand increases.

4.2.3 Food as care, not charity

Food is a constant presence across all participant responses, but it is rarely described in terms of quantity alone. Instead, people notice how it is made, how it is served, and what it signals about how they are valued.

Users speak of food as *made properly*, with care, attention, and intention:

You can tell someone's cared when they made it.

These details matter. They distinguish the experience from one of basic provision, marking food not as charity, but as a form of relational care. The emphasis on food as care rather than charity also appeared in poster responses, where people paired kai with kindness, and noted the reliability of being fed every day, without elaboration or qualification.

For Māori Wardens, this care is both practical and moral. Food is managed collectively and responsively, with provisions stretched, shared, and adjusted, as required:

If we survive, we'll make them survive too.

Decisions are made moment by moment, guided by need rather than fixed allocation.

Māori Wardens and council staff also drew attention to the labour behind this including meals prepared off-site, transported, and reheated in a constrained kitchen. Much of this work remains unseen, yet it underpins what users experience as effortlessness.

Across these accounts, food operates as more than sustenance. It becomes a visible expression of respect, signalling that people are worth the time and care it takes.

Implication

Food functions as a powerful marker of worth and relational attention. Shifting toward efficiency, standardisation, or volume risks diminishing this meaning, reducing care to provision rather than connection.

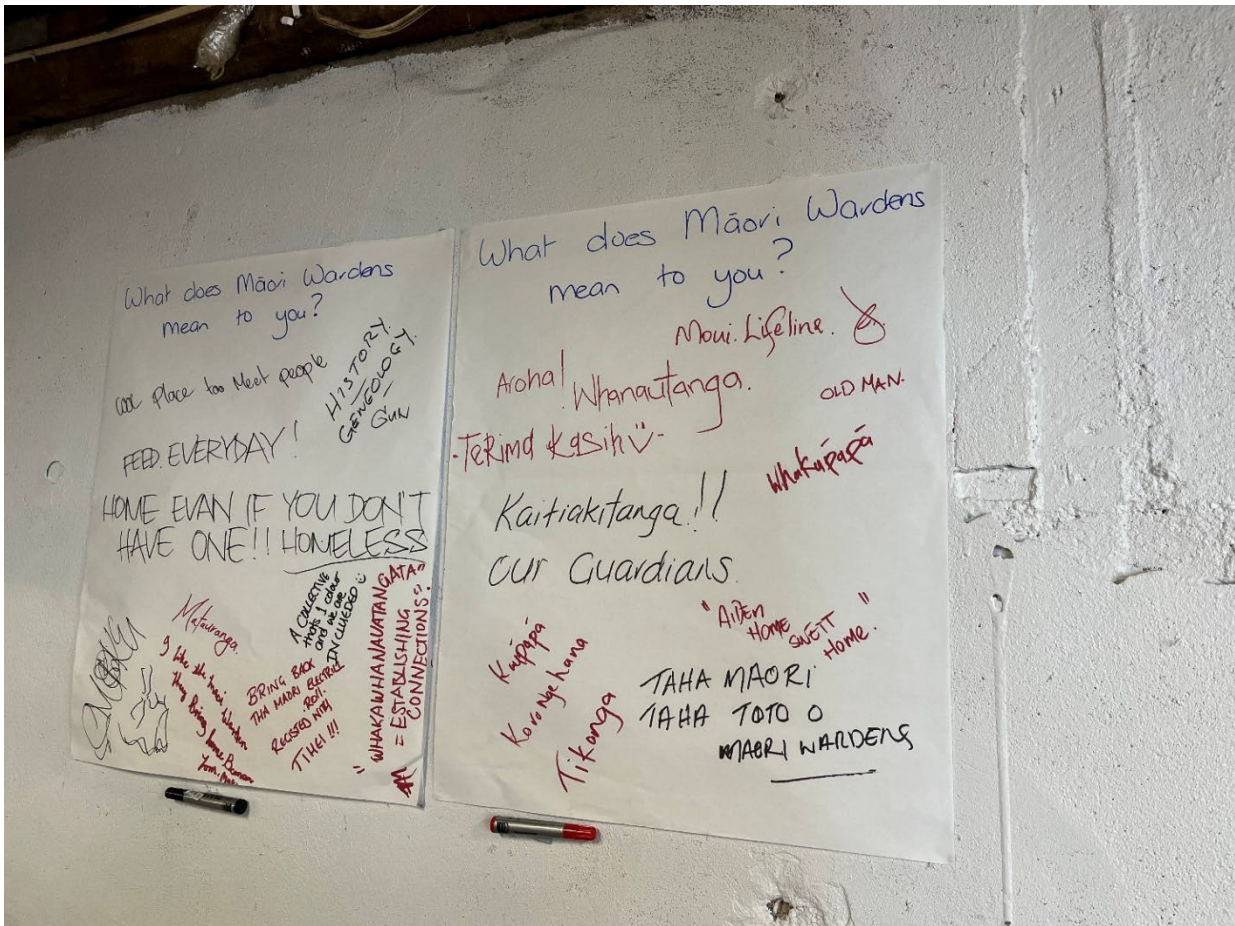


Figure 2: Comments recorded by users of Manaaki Tangata

4.2.4 Belonging without obligation

A sense of belonging in this space is present but never enforced. Across the narratives, people describe a shared environment that accommodates both connection and distance.

For some, belonging is expressed through brief, low-key interactions:

They smile. They ask how you are. That's enough.

For others, the space carries a stronger sense of familiarity, described as *like home* or *like whānau*. Yet even here, participation remains optional. There is no expectation to engage beyond what feels comfortable.

This low-pressure belonging is also reflected in how people described the space informally, as whānau, community, or simply a good place to meet people or see *the brothers*, without any suggestion that engagement needed to be earned or maintained.

This flexibility is actively maintained. Māori Wardens describe a careful balancing act, gently inviting connection while respecting withdrawal:

Some of them you have to keep gently asking. Others, you just leave them be.

In this way, belonging is not something people must perform or reciprocate. It is something made available.

For those who find larger or more demanding environments overwhelming, this low-pressure approach is critical. It allows people to enter, take what they need, and leave without any social cost.

Implication

Belonging in this space is defined by availability rather than expectation. Preserving this dynamic is essential, particularly for people experiencing anxiety, trauma, or social fatigue. Introducing more structured or participation-driven models risks narrowing who the space can hold.

4.2.5 Regulation through relationship

Across the narratives, order in the Manaaki Tangata space is not experienced as control, but as something negotiated through relationship. Expectations are present, but they are carried by people rather than imposed by rules.

As one user explained:

They'll pull you up, but it's not nasty.

Correction, when it happens, is quiet and proportionate. It draws on familiarity and mutual recognition, rather than authority alone.

Māori Wardens describe their role not as enforcement, but as a form of relational guardianship that is grounded in cultural authority, consistency, and care. Boundaries are maintained, but they are embedded within ongoing relationships.

Users themselves recognised the Māori Wardens' role in maintaining safety and social order through relationship-based practices grounded in manaakitanga, whanaungatanga, and kaitiakitanga. One participant called for the return of the *Māori patrols related mahi*, reflecting an understanding of regulation as culturally grounded presence and relationship rather than punitive enforcement.

At the same time, this approach has limits. Trespass emerges as a point where relational practice is stretched. For some users, exclusion (whether of themselves or others) feels like a rupture, particularly in a context shaped by tikanga and expectations of whanaungatanga.

Organisational perspectives, however, reveal the work that precedes these moments:

*That [incident that resulted in a trespass order] unfolded over months. Food still went out.
Hospital support still happened.*

What appears as a single decision is often the endpoint of sustained effort to avoid it.

Implication

Relational regulation is both effective and resource intensive. It depends on trust, time, and emotional labour, and is most vulnerable when people are acutely unwell and external supports are limited. Without adequate backup, the burden of care and boundary-setting falls heavily on those holding the space.

4.2.6 Stability and psychological back-up

Across all user perspectives, including those who visit Manaaki Tangata only occasionally, the importance of the space lies not just in its use, but in its reliability. It is something people know they can return to.

As one user reflected:

You don't think about it every day. But when you need it, you're glad it's there.

This quiet assurance matters. In a system often experienced as inconsistent, with changing schedules, limited capacity, and unpredictable access, the space offers a rare point of stability.

Even for those who attend infrequently, its existence reduces uncertainty. It provides a fallback when other options fail, helping people manage risk in everyday decision-making.

The sense of psychological back-up was also visible in how people named the space collectively, describing it as a lifeline, and offering messages of gratitude and blessing that gesture toward how much its continued existence matters.

One participant, a service provider who frequently recommends Manaaki Tangata, emphasised that this reliability is actively maintained. It is produced through consistency, flexibility, and, at times, small extensions of effort such as staying open slightly longer, accommodating late arrivals, and adjusting to personal need.

Implication

The value of the space extends beyond direct service delivery. It lies in what it prevents such as escalation, anxiety, and the need to constantly search for alternative spaces to rest. Disruptions to this continuity risk immediate and uneven impacts, particularly for those with few other options.

4.2.7 The limits of intimacy in crowded spaces

User perspectives make clear that the qualities that give the space its strength also place it under pressure. Smallness enables familiarity and connection, but it also creates constraint.

For some users, this becomes visible when the space is full:

Sometimes it just feels like too much.

Moments of crowding can shift the atmosphere, making the space feel intense rather than calming.

Māori Wardens describe these pressures in practical terms, such as a small kitchen, limited facilities, and a building that requires constant upkeep. The physical environment does not simply contain the work; it shapes and, at times, adds to it:

The building actually creates more work.

Service providers and council staff similarly note that the space functions as well as it does because of the people holding it together, rather than because the infrastructure supports them.

Notably, the poster reflections rarely referenced space or infrastructure, underscoring how relational labour often absorbs physical limitation until pressure becomes unavoidable.

Across these accounts, a tension emerges between relational strength and physical limitation. Care, flexibility, and effort compensate for the environment, but not without cost.

Implication

Relational models cannot indefinitely absorb the pressures created by inadequate space and infrastructure. Any redevelopment or relocation must relieve these constraints while preserving the intimacy and informality that underpin the space's value.

4.2.8 Challenges and future considerations

Alongside the strengths identified, participants point to a set of practical and systemic challenges that shape how the space operates and what it can sustain.

These include barriers of distance and accessibility, particularly in relation to where people spend time or store belongings; limited opening hours and reliance on volunteer capacity; and ongoing constraints within the physical environment, including ventilation, hygiene, and limited space.

There is also a broader concern about continuity. Participants expressed unease about the future of the space, including the risk of relocation, loss of cultural integrity, or a shift toward more institutional models.

Poster comments echoed these concerns, particularly around the continued presence and role of Māori Wardens, signalling how closely the future of the space is tied to its cultural and relational foundations.

These concerns are not abstract. They reflect an awareness that the qualities that make the space effective such as its relational approach, low barriers to entry, and cultural grounding, are also those most at risk of being diluted.

As one participant put it:

Without the Māori Wardens around, it'll be really heart aching ... I'll be heartbroken.

Looking ahead, participants consistently emphasised the importance of preserving what already works. This includes maintaining the relational, culturally grounded approach of the Māori Wardens; protecting the low-barrier, home-like environment; and ensuring accessibility, proximity, and predictability.

At the same time, there is recognition that improvements are needed, particularly in relation to space, safety, and facilities. The challenge lies in making these changes without eroding the qualities that give the space its meaning.

Implication

Future planning must balance enhancement with preservation. Strengthening infrastructure and accessibility is necessary but must be undertaken in ways that protect the relational, cultural, and low-pressure dynamics that underpin the space's effectiveness.

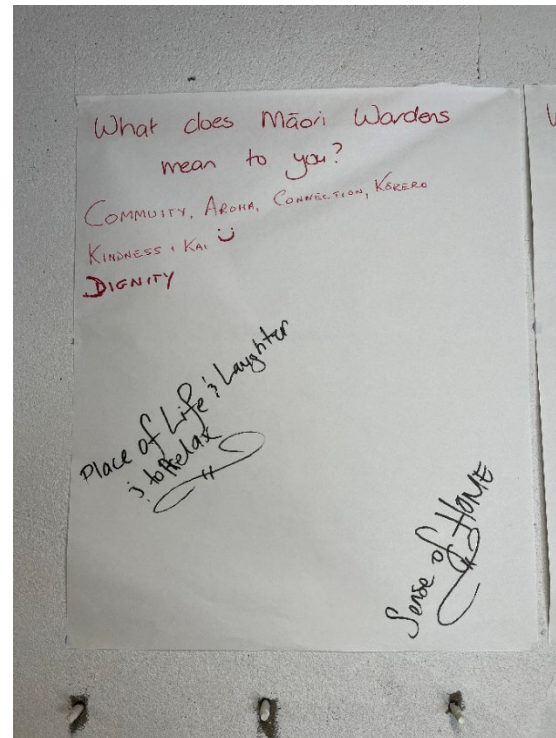


Figure 3: Art and comments made by users of Manaaki Tangata

4.3 Summary

The findings from this review show that Manaaki Tangata is experienced less as a conventional service and more as a flexible, meaningful place that fits differently into people's lives. Across the four composite narratives, participants used the space quietly, socially, pragmatically, or critically, and with varying levels of attachment. Despite this diversity, common threads emerge: the calm, low-pressure environment; relief from scrutiny; care embedded in everyday practices; and the freedom to engage on one's own terms. For some, the space provides respite from anxiety or public visibility; for others, it functions as a social anchor, a reliable back-up, or a standard of care against which other spaces are measured. Users consistently highlight that much of what makes the space valuable, such as the absence of queues, the quality of food, and the relational presence of Māori Wardens, is deliberately created and maintained, even when it appears effortless.

The thematic analysis reinforces these patterns, highlighting safety without surveillance, dignity preserved through non-institutional practices, relationally grounded regulation, and the stabilising role of reliable access. At the same time, the analysis makes visible the pressures on the space: physical limitations, crowding, volunteer dependency, and uncertainty about continuity. Together, the findings suggest that the significance of Manaaki Tangata lies not only in what it provides, but in what it makes possible: moments of rest, recognition, and belonging within lives often shaped by exclusion and instability. Protecting and strengthening these relational, low-barrier, and culturally grounded dynamics should be central to any future decisions about the space, even as incremental improvements to facilities and accessibility are pursued.

5 The mahi that holds the space: Māori Wardens' perspectives

The experiences described in earlier sections of this report are not accidental. They are made possible by the everyday mahi of Māori Wardens, who hold Manaaki Tangata together through relationship, presence, care, and judgement. While users tend to describe outcomes, such as feeling welcomed, safe, calm, or respected, the Māori Wardens describe the work required to create and sustain those conditions, day after day.

Across two group interviews, five Māori Wardens spoke openly about what the space means to them, how they understand their role, and the often-invisible labour involved in keeping the space functioning. Their accounts reveal Manaaki Tangata not as a service delivered to people, but as a relational environment continuously enacted through tikanga, experience, and care.

5.1 More than a role: Being aunties, elders, and family

Māori Wardens consistently described their role in familial terms rather than formal job descriptions. They spoke about being aunties, whaea, nannies, or elders, people who hold authority through care rather than position. This framing was echoed repeatedly in the language people using the space use to describe them, reinforcing that the relational dynamic is mutual and deeply understood.

Rather than treating people as 'street people' or clients, Māori Wardens described treating everyone who enters the space as people first, and in many case, people young enough to be their children or grandchildren.

This relational positioning establishes expectations around respect and behaviour without needing explicit rules. Authority comes from age, consistency, and care, rather than enforcement. As several wardens reflected, once people understand *how it works down here*, serious problems are rare.

5.2 Safety through relationship, not security

Māori Wardens were clear that the calm, orderly nature of the space is not achieved through surveillance or security measures, but through relational authority and cultural understanding. They described being able to de-escalate situations through tone, familiarity, humour, or a quiet word, often long before issues became visible to others.

They respect it that way ... they come here and they respect that thing.

Peer accountability also plays a role. Māori Wardens noted that when boundaries are set, other people using the space often reinforce them as well, helping to maintain collective responsibility. This produces a culture where safety is shared rather than imposed.

Importantly, Māori Wardens framed boundary-setting, including asking someone to leave, as something they try hard to avoid. Trespass or exclusion is described as a last resort, used only when there is a genuine risk to others. Even then, the relational tie often continues beyond the space through follow-up, food deliveries, hospital visits, or informal check-ins.

5.3 Care that extends beyond the door

One of the strongest insights from the focus groups is the extent to which the Māori Wardens' care extends well beyond the physical boundaries of Manaaki Tangata. Māori Wardens spoke about:

- Taking people to hospital when ambulances are slow or people are reluctant to go alone
- Sitting with people at court hearings for support
- Helping people navigate case workers, paperwork, and housing systems
- Delivering food to people once they are housed
- Doing laundry at home when facilities are unavailable
- Actively approaching people on the street to tell them about the space.

This work is not formally required, and in some cases, wardens acknowledged being advised *not* to do it. Yet they described continuing because relationships do not end when someone leaves the building.

Even when they get housing, we're still there for them.

This extension of care is grounded in empathy and lived understanding, an ability to *put yourself in their shoes*, and to recognise how hard systems can be to navigate, particularly for people with limited literacy, English as a second language, mental health challenges, or trauma.

5.4 The invisible labour of everyday care

The focus groups made visible a vast amount of invisible labour that underpins the space. Māori Wardens talked about cooking most meals at home, transporting food, managing takeaways carefully so everyone eats, cleaning daily, managing showers and laundry, sourcing donated items, and ensuring people leave with what they need, not just food, but dignity.

Food, in particular, was described as an expression of care rather than efficiency. Several wardens spoke with pride about presentation, quality, and attentiveness to people's preferences.

It's not just about the food. It's about how you present it to somebody.

This attention signals worth. It communicates that people matter enough not to be rushed or treated carelessly, a theme echoed repeatedly in user narratives.

5.5 Holding the space within constraints

Māori Wardens were also frank about the limits they work within. The small kitchen, single shower, lack of storage, and ageing building all place additional strain on both people using the space and those running it. Much of the work they do compensates for these constraints, rather than being supported by the environment itself.

Despite this, they expressed pride in what has been created.

It feels like they actually feel like they're part of society when they're here.

They also spoke thoughtfully about what could be possible in a future space: room for quiet counselling, literacy and life-skills support, art activities, shared cooking, and spaces where people

can rebuild confidence and capability at their own pace. These ideas were not framed as programmes, but as natural extensions of the care already happening, *little things we take for granted*, made visible and shared.

5.6 What Māori Wardens want decision-makers to understand

Above all, the Māori Wardens' perspectives underline that Manaaki Tangata works because it is relational, human, and grounded in tikanga. The space is not held together by buildings, rules, or policies, but by people and the trust they have built over time.

Decisions about the future of Manaaki Tangata carry real consequences. Changes that increase formality, reduce flexibility, or disconnect the space from the people who hold it together risk undermining what makes it work. Conversely, decisions that recognise and support this mahi, through suitable space, facilities, continuity, and recognition of the Māori Wardens' role, will strengthen the conditions that users value most.

6 Context and constraints shaping the space

The perspectives of council staff provide an important institutional lens on the Manaaki Tangata space, complementing the earlier accounts from wardens and users. While wardens and users describe the lived, relational experience of the space, council staff locate it within broader operational, infrastructural, and policy contexts. This shift in perspective helps surface a quiet tension evident across the narratives: the contrast between how essential and grounding the space feels to those who rely on it, and how provisional it remains institutionally.

Council staff expressed discomfort that one of the city's most affirming spaces for people experiencing homelessness operates from a deteriorating structure, while also observing that users rarely foreground the building itself. As one staff member noted, *no one talks about the building ... they talk about how it makes them feel*. This challenges assumptions about what constitutes a fit for purpose environment, highlighting the primacy of relational and cultural factors over physical infrastructure alone.

Council staff also described Manaaki Tangata as filling a critical system gap, particularly for people who have been excluded from other services or spaces. Rather than functioning as a single-purpose service, it acts as a connection point, a place where people can stabilise, feel safe, and, where appropriate, be linked back into other forms of support. Staff emphasised its importance for those who have *fallen between the gaps of the gaps*, including individuals excluded from libraries, day spaces, or other facilities.

The lack of long-term certainty for the space presents a significant risk. While relocation is anticipated, there is no confirmed alternative site. Staff described repeated attempts to identify future options across council, often met with silence or lack of follow-through, reflecting both capacity constraints and reluctance to engage. This raises concerns about continuity, particularly given the importance of place, familiarity, and routine evident in users' accounts. As one staff member put it, displacement in this context is not neutral: *you're displacing a displaced person*.

Staff also rejected the idea that other services could simply replace Manaaki Tangata. They noted that different spaces serve different people, and that geography, physical ability, and prior exclusion shape where individuals feel able to go. As one example highlighted, *Auckland's not flat ... if you're in a wheelchair, you're not going to make it up the hill*. This reinforces the need for a network of complementary spaces, rather than reliance on a single, centralised solution.

Taken together, council staff perspectives do not explain why Manaaki Tangata matters — that case is made most powerfully through the stories of people who use it. Instead, they illuminate the structural conditions that make such spaces difficult to establish and sustain, and the consequences of decision-making frameworks that prioritise property, compliance, or commercial return over wellbeing and inclusion. For decision-makers, this context highlights that choices about continuity, location, and resourcing are not merely operational, but shape whether the kinds of experiences described in this report remain possible at all.

7 Key insights and recommendations

This section draws together the findings from the integrated narrative analysis and the contextual insights provided by council staff. Each key insight reflects a recurring pattern across people's experiences and highlights implications for decision-making. Recommendations are directly linked to each insight.

7.1 Manaaki Tangata's value lies in *how* care is provided, not just *what* is provided

Across all user narratives, people consistently described the space as valuable not because it offers food or showers alone, but because of the way these supports are offered. Safety without surveillance, dignity through non-institutional practices, and belonging without obligation were central to how people experienced the space. Small, deliberate choices such as no queues, quiet regulation, and flexibility in engagement shaped people's sense of calm, respect, and inclusion.

Council staff perspectives reinforce that these qualities are not accidental. They result from sustained relational practice, cultural authority, and everyday judgement exercised by Māori Wardens, often with minimal formal infrastructure or resourcing.

Why this matters

Changes that focus on efficiency, throughput, or compliance risk altering the very conditions that make the space effective and trusted.

Recommendations

- Protect and preserve the low-threshold, relational model in any decisions about resourcing, redesign, or relocation
- Avoid introducing formalised processes (e.g. queuing systems, surveillance, rigid time limits) that would increase pressure or scrutiny
- Explicitly recognise relational practice and cultural authority as core components of service quality in any future planning or evaluation.

7.2 The space operates as critical social infrastructure, not a discretionary service

For many users, including those who attend infrequently, the significance of Manaaki Tangata lies in knowing it exists. It functions as psychological back-up, a reliable option when other supports fall through, and as a place where people can rest, stabilise, and feel less exposed. Council staff similarly described the initiative as filling a critical gap for people who have "fallen between the gaps of the gaps", including those excluded from other services or physical spaces.

Despite this, the space remains institutionally provisional, with no long-term certainty around location.

Why this matters

Disruption, closure, or relocation without continuity planning would remove a stabilising anchor from people's lives, with disproportionate impacts on wellbeing and safety.

Recommendations

- Treat Manaaki Tangata as essential social infrastructure within the central city, rather than a temporary or discretionary activation.
- Prioritise continuity of access in any relocation planning, including overlap periods where old and new spaces operate concurrently if possible.
- Ensure decisions about the space are assessed for their potential impact on wellbeing, safety, and exclusion, not solely property or cost considerations.

7.3 Relational governance works, but relies on people, time, and workable environments

Users consistently accepted regulation when it was relational, culturally grounded, and exercised by people they knew and trusted. Council and community perspectives confirm that Māori Wardens' presence enables this model, resulting in exceptionally low levels of conflict and exclusion across thousands of visits.

At the same time, both users and wardens described pressure points: crowding, physical constraints, single-point facilities, and the emotional labour required to sustain calm and fairness in a small space.

Why this matters

Relational models are robust but not limitless. Without adequate physical conditions and support, pressure shifts onto people rather than systems.

Recommendations

- Improve physical conditions in ways that support relational practice (e.g. additional showers, improved kitchen space, storage, accessibility), without formalising or institutionalising the space.
- Ensure any future location allows wardens visibility, ease of movement, and safe working conditions.
- Explore options for additional support during peak times to reduce pressure on wardens, particularly when people are acutely unwell.

7.4 Manaaki Tangata delivers disproportionate value relative to its cost

Council staff described Manaaki Tangata as a high-impact, low-cost initiative, while serving around 9,500 visits per year. A modest investment supports a service that reduces pressure elsewhere, mitigates harm, and provides a point of connection for people who might otherwise be unsafe, excluded, or highly visible in public spaces.

Despite this, the initiative exists largely through individual advocacy rather than systematic alignment across council.

Why this matters

Failure to recognise or protect low-cost, high-impact initiatives risks false economies and increased downstream costs.

Recommendations

- Formally acknowledge Manaaki Tangata as a cost-effective preventative intervention within council planning and budgeting frameworks.
- Make homelessness an enterprise 'key area'. Require all departments to consider implications for homeless in their planning and implementations.
- Improve visibility of council-owned or managed spaces that could support similar low-threshold, wellbeing-focused uses.

7.5 One space cannot meet all needs and complementary spaces are required

Council staff strongly rejected the idea that other services could simply replace Manaaki Tangata, noting that geography, physical ability, prior exclusion, and personal history shape where people feel able to go. User narratives reinforced this, with people describing personalised daily circuits and varying tolerance for formality, distance, and crowding.

Why this matters

Treating homelessness responses as interchangeable risks excluding those least able to adapt to more formal or centralised services.

Recommendations

- Plan for a network of complementary spaces rather than relying on a single, centralised model.
- Consider accessibility, distance, terrain, and patterns of exclusion when assessing suitable locations.
- Resist assumptions that new or more formal facilities will automatically meet the needs currently served by Manaaki Tangata.

8 Conclusion

This review shows that Manaaki Tangata matters because of how it is experienced by the people who use it. Through their stories, the space emerges not as a conventional service, but as a place of calm, dignity, and relief in lives shaped by uncertainty and exclusion. Its value lies in understated but powerful conditions: safety without surveillance, care offered without judgement, belonging without obligation, and the reassurance of knowing there is somewhere to go when other options fall away. At the same time, Manaaki Tangata functions as an important point of connection within a wider ecosystem of support, offering informal pathways to other services, information, and relationships that people might otherwise struggle to access.

The findings also make visible the fragility of what has been built. The relational and culturally grounded practices that sustain Manaaki Tangata operate within physical, organisational, and political constraints. Uncertainty around location, limited facilities, and reliance on individual advocacy place pressure not only on the space itself, but on the broader network of services that intersect with it. These pressures do not diminish the value of the model; rather, they underscore the importance of deliberate, informed decision-making to ensure that Manaaki Tangata can continue to play its connective role within the system without being overburdened.

Ultimately, this review suggests that decisions about Manaaki Tangata are not simply operational. They are decisions about what kinds of spaces are valued in the city, how different forms of support are allowed to work together, and whose wellbeing is prioritised. Protecting and strengthening the conditions that matter most to users, including Manaaki Tangata's role as a trusted, relational bridge to other forms of support, will be key to ensuring that it continues to offer what so many described as rare, necessary, and deeply human.

9 Appendix

9.1 Interview schedule: Users of Manaaki Tangata

Interview Schedule – users of Manaaki Tangata (30 mins)

1. Whakawhanaungatanga (2–3 mins)

- Introductions
- Before we start, is there anything you'd like me to know about how you'd like this kōrero to run?

Prompts: pace, breaks, having someone nearby, or skipping questions

2. Opening up the kōrero (5 mins)

- Can you tell me a bit about how you first came to Manaaki Tangata?
- What usually brings you here these days?

(Prompts if needed: what's happening in your day, routine, safety, food, people, time out, somewhere to be)

3. Meaning and value of MT (8–10 mins)

- When you think about Manaaki Tangata, what does this place mean to you?
- Can you tell me about a moment, or a time here, that really stands out for you?
- In your experience, what feels most helpful or important about this place, for you, or for others who use it?

Prompts if helpful: practical things, how people treat you, relationships, support, feeling safe)

4. Experience and relationships (8–10 mins)

- Can you walk me through what a typical visit here is like for you, from when you arrive to when you leave?
- Are there things about this place, or the people here, that help you feel comfortable, welcome, or at ease?
- Thinking about the future, what would you really want Manaaki Tangata to keep doing? Are there things you think could work better or differently?

5. Unintended impacts or surprises (3–4 mins)

- Has being involved with Manaaki Tangata affected your life in ways you didn't expect? That could be positive, challenging, or a mix of both.

- Are there things that sometimes make it harder to come here, or that get in the way of using the space the way you'd like to?

6. Wrap-up and manaakitanga (2–3 mins)

- Is there anything we haven't talked about that you think is important for us to understand?
- Thanks, whakawhiti kōrero, koha, and checking in about how they're feeling.

9.2 Interview schedule: Māori Wardens

Interview Schedule – Māori Wardens (30 mins)

1. Whakawhanaungatanga (2–3 mins)

- Quick introductions.
- Before we start, is there anything you'd like me to know about how you'd like this kōrero to go today?

(e.g. pace, topics to avoid, breaks)

2. Role & Involvement with MT (5 mins)

- Can you tell me about your role as a Māori Warden, and how Manaaki Tangata fits into your work?
- What does a usual shift, or a typical interaction connected to Manaaki Tangata, look like for you?

Prompts: responsibilities, presence on site, who you interact with, what you're keeping an eye on.

3. Understanding the Purpose of Manaaki Tangata (5 minutes)

- From your perspective, how would you describe the purpose of Manaaki Tangata?
- What needs do you see it responding to for people who sleep rough?
- Thinking back to before Manaaki Tangata existed, what feels different now?

Prompts: dignity, safety, manaakitanga, connection, hygiene, routine, regular contact)

4. Experiences Working with People Who Use MT (7–8 mins)

- What has it been like for you supporting people who use Manaaki Tangata?
- Can you tell me about an interaction that felt particularly positive or affirming?
- Can you tell me about an interaction that felt challenging, and what made it challenging?

Prompts: safety, wellbeing, trust-building, behaviour, relationships, whanaungatanga.

5. Impacts, Changes and Unintended Consequences (5 mins)

- From what you've observed, what impacts has Manaaki Tangata had?

Prompt: for people who use the service, for the surrounding area, or for your role as a warden)

- Have there been any outcomes or changes that you didn't expect when Manaaki Tangata started? What were those like?

6. Working as Māori Wardens in This Space (3–4 mins)

- What does being a Māori Warden bring to the way you work in this space?
- How, if at all, do tikanga or kaupapa Māori show up in how you approach this mahi?
- Are there aspects of this work that support those values, or at times make them harder to uphold?

7. Improvements, Ideas and Future (3–4 mins)

- Based on your experience, where do you see the most opportunity for Manaaki Tangata to grow or improve?
- If you were speaking directly to decision-makers, what would you want them to understand about your role or your experiences here?

8. Closing (1–2 mins)

- Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't talked about?
- Whakawhiti kōrero, thanks, and koha.

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research@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

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