



MANAAKITIA A TATOU TAMARIKI

**CHILDREN'S  
COMMISSIONER**

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Undertaking Child Impact Assessments in Aotearoa  
New Zealand Local Authorities : *Evidence, practice,  
ideas*

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## **Foreword**

Bringing children into the centre of decision making makes a lot of sense. They are not only citizens for the future, but also citizens now. Yet their experience and views are seldom included in local government or government processes.

This report provides a starting point by reviewing some of the international evidence around how and when child impact assessments can be used in such decision-making by government. It also includes New Zealand experiences of such an approach, demonstrating the richness of children's contribution to local government planning. There are of course many other opportunities that exist.

I want to thank AUT University's Local Government Centre for their work on this project and UNICEF for partnering with my office on this work. I hope that it provides an instructive and constructive lesson for local and central governments, about the value of including children from the outset in decisions that affect all our communities.

**Dr Cindy Kiro**  
**Children's Commissioner**

UNICEF NZ is very pleased to be associated with this report. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which New Zealand signed up to in 1993, clarifies goals for children's wellbeing and the obligations of government agencies to take the best interests of children into account in their planning and operations.

Where and how children live, play, learn and grow depends on well informed adults making decisions that reflect a world fit for children and appreciating their worth as residents with a valued contribution to make to the way cities and communities develop.

We can't afford to get this wrong – children need to be involved and participate at all levels in the city and community building processes. Including them is not merely a politically correct gesture – there are social, cultural and economic imperatives. Exclusion can mean that facilities and services designed by adults for children fail to achieve their purpose – an expensive and demoralising problem for all concerned.

Local authorities are on the front line and with trends towards urbanisation and government decentralisation they are primary actors in matters affecting children's lives. Human skills, knowledge, creativity and time, along with the wisdom to use resources in the community effectively and appropriately, are basic to an effective child friendly approach.

Our youngest citizens have much to offer, they can help us to look at things through another lens and give consideration to matters that don't just enhance their world but can make it better for everyone.

**Dennis McKinlay**  
**Executive Director**  
**UNICEF NZ**

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## 1. Executive summary

Child impact assessment involves assessing a proposed policy, decision or activity to determine its likely impact on children. It can be seen as one way signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) can fulfil their obligation under Article 3(1) to ensure that the best interests of the child become a primary consideration in all actions affecting children, including those undertaken by government bodies.

Although children and young people are a significant group in Aotearoa New Zealand, with under-20-year-olds making up nearly 30 percent of the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2007), their interests are not routinely taken into account in government decision-making processes. There are good reasons for systematically considering children's best interests, including the following:

- children are citizens
- children are largely excluded from public decision-making processes
- children make more use of and are more dependent on public services than adults
- children's wellbeing is as vital to the nation's sustainability as a healthy environment, society and economy
- children are the most likely population group to experience poverty
- children's issues are not highly visible in government processes.

More awareness of children's needs when developing policies, allocating funding and delivering services is therefore crucial. Improving decision-makers' understanding of children's needs can save costs by aligning services with children's needs. Child impact assessment is a mechanism for raising awareness and facilitating action.

Child impact assessment is an emerging field internationally and in New Zealand, with theoretical contributions dominating the discourse thus far. Child impact assessments overseas have been undertaken largely at a state legislative level. The Office of the Children's Commissioner was interested in testing the feasibility and effectiveness of child impact assessments in New Zealand, specifically at the local government level. The commissioner contracted AUT University's Local Government Centre to undertake child impact assessment projects in a sample of local councils and to report on the implementation processes and outcomes. UNICEF provided additional resourcing to support this venture, and an external Reference Group supported and guided the project. The age bracket chosen for this research was children aged under 18 years.

Before the New Zealand implementation pilots, a literature review suggested that certain factors improved the likelihood of child impact assessments being successfully integrated into an organisation (not necessarily into a council).

Child impact assessments were piloted in the Auckland City and Manukau City Councils, metropolitan councils serving populations of 401,000 and 335,000 people respectively. An AUT researcher worked with the Auckland and Manukau City child advocates to choose appropriate policies or projects for piloting a child impact assessment. The pilots also advanced the council advocates' aspirations to promote the interests of local children with their colleagues. Auckland City decided to canvass children who lived in the central business district (CBD) to influence the council's Victoria Quarter Plan for inner-city development; Manukau City worked with local children to understand the persistent litter problem between dairies and schools.

Neither council completed a full assessment cycle, from developing the policy to producing an assessment report and monitoring the outcome. So, while valuable lessons were learnt, they should be treated with some caution because the process was not completed in the pilots and the two councils are not representative of all New Zealand local government. Furthermore, various tools are available for ensuring children's issues and needs are considered in local government decision-making; child impact assessment is only one of them. However, the literature combined with the results of the pilots indicates that certain pre-existing factors in councils may contribute to successful child impact assessment. These include:

- organisational or individual goodwill towards children's views
- good inter-departmental and external relationships
- staff with responsibilities for children's issues
- adequate resourcing
- experience with other types of impact assessment
- good information
- a supportive strategic and policy environment.

Integrating what was learnt from the literature review with the subsequent implementation pilots, the researchers propose a six-step process for undertaking a child impact assessment in the local government environment:

1. Screening
2. Scoping
3. Information gathering and developing questions
4. Assessment
5. Reporting
6. Monitoring and evaluation

This cycle reflects the two core purposes of local government in New Zealand:

- To enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities
- To promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities, in the present and for the future (Local Government Act 2002, Section 10).

Certain factors may help staff to develop a process that is likely to be successful, including:

- an assessment framework that affirms children's interests, rather than taking a deficit or negative approach
- an exploratory project management approach that encourages trial and error
- a practical and user-friendly process that focuses on the *best interests of children*
- a multi-skilled, motivated and cohesive working group
- documenting the process to build organisational knowledge and skills.

An important qualification is that this report explores the initiation of an *inaugural* child impact assessment process in metropolitan councils. The research timelines did not allow an analysis of the best mechanisms for sustaining child impact assessment processes in councils, although some tentative findings on this subject are presented in the conclusions.

## 2. Rationale for research

Child impact assessment involves assessing a proposed policy, decision or activity with *the best interests of the child* as a central consideration, rather than at the margins of decision making (Hanna et al 2006). The literature has focused on *why* it is important to consider the needs of children in policy and decision-making processes, rather than the mechanisms for doing so systemically. Child impact assessments overseas have been undertaken largely at a state legislative level.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner and AUT University's Local Government Centre (LGC) wished to investigate how councils in New Zealand considered the impact of their activities on children. The aims of this project were to:

- identify issues for local government to consider when assessing the impact of a policy, decision or activity on children and people aged 18 and under
- suggest effective ways for councils to determine their impacts on children and young people and to maximise positive effects
- increase the understanding of issues that arise in implementing child impact assessment in councils.

UNICEF New Zealand gave financial support and credibility to this project, as its aims concurred with UNICEF's global *Child Friendly Cities*<sup>1</sup> programme. A reference group was convened, with representatives from local and central government, the Families Commission, and academia, with expertise in impact assessment, social development and child advocacy. The group guided the literature review, assessing opportunities for implementing child impact assessments, and pilot project reporting. This expert knowledge helped to steer the research and provided useful contextual depth to the study's findings.

To contextualise this project, a targeted small-scale literature review was undertaken, the condensed findings of which are outlined in section three. This review collates the most up-to-date international information about child impact assessment implementation processes, to improve the pilot project sites' capacity to undertake child impact assessments in New Zealand.

In scoping this project, the need for a means of expressing children's needs in the local government operating environment became apparent. A model was developed to connect the Local Government Act 2002 with this child-orientated work to help councils place this work in their core operating business (outlined in section four). This model had to acknowledge the key international convention specific to children, UNCROC, as New Zealand is a signatory to this convention and it frames much child-orientated policy in New Zealand. A paramount principle of UNCROC, *'in the best interests of the child'*, became central to this model. Behind this principle sits the two key purposes of New Zealand's Local Government Act 2002: 'to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities, in the present and for the future'.

Section five describes two child impact assessment case studies by the chosen councils. It includes the research's aims, and the methods and roles of the parties engaged in the pilots. It then outlines the processes followed and examines the outcomes to date.

The findings of the literature review are assessed alongside the findings of the pilots in section six. Inter-related themes are traced, following particular factors in the

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<sup>1</sup> See [http://www.childfriendlycities.org/pdf/cfc\\_booklet\\_eng.pdf](http://www.childfriendlycities.org/pdf/cfc_booklet_eng.pdf)

development and implementation of child impact assessments. These are related to the project reference group's predictions about the effective implementation of child impact assessments.

A template for councils to use for an initial child impact assessment has been developed and is detailed in section seven, *"Implementing the first child impact assessments in your council"*.

Final conclusions are in section eight, which summarises the factors to be considered when establishing child impact assessment in New Zealand councils. A list of research resources that have contributed to this project is provided in section nine.

### 3. International and national literature on child impact assessments

The project required an up-to-date analysis of literature on the implementation of child impact assessment projects in councils, to ensure the pilot was soundly based in theory. Assessment methods, content and processes for child impact assessment were researched. The complete literature review is available on the Internet<sup>2</sup>.

A report by Angus (2007) notes that little material is available on the implementation of child impact assessments, suggesting that this “reflects the fact that while child impact assessment has often been recommended, it has less often been implemented, and its impact on policy development and decision making has not been well evaluated” (p. 4).

The literature provides various reasons for assessing the impact on children of existing or new policies, legislation, regulations, budgets, organisational or administrative structures, facilities, initiatives, decision-making processes, guidelines or proposals. The rationale behind child impact assessment, according to the literature, includes the following considerations:

- children are largely excluded from public decision-making processes, with no voting ability and limited advocacy power except through adults
- they make more use of and depend more on public services than adults; there is a high probability of adverse effects on children when they fail, and they have poor access to complaints mechanisms and redress
- children’s wellbeing is as vital to the nation as a healthy environment, society and economy, yet is rarely given the same priority
- children are the most likely population group to experience poverty and its effects<sup>3</sup>
- children in New Zealand are not doing well on a number of measures, partly because policies ignore impacts on children
- government structures and processes tend to fail children, with responsibilities fragmented across agencies, their visibility in government processes low, and prioritising of more influential political agendas.

Hodgkin (1999) argues that children’s issues tend to get eclipsed by those of adults, and for the reasons outlined above, they should receive priority when proposals are vetted. The Swedish Children’s Ombudsman argued: “we never discuss the time and resources needed for democracy for grown ups. This is democracy for children, and resources should not be a barrier” (All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, 2007, p. 13).

The many different forms of impact assessment used in New Zealand and elsewhere can be broadly classed as environmental or social. Environmentally-focused assessments have been undertaken in New Zealand for some time because the Resource Management Act 1991 requires councils to monitor environmental impacts, to determine their present and future management. Environmental impact assessment covers such categories as biodiversity, climate change, forestry, fisheries, disasters and conflict<sup>4</sup>. Social assessment has included family, indigenous participation, gender and health impact assessments, which are receiving varying degrees of political interest in

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.ipp.org.nz/localgovtresources.htm#impact>

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Social Development (2007:61. Table EC3.1). This data demonstrates that children aged less than 18 years were the single largest age grouping living in low-income households. In 2004, 23% of Aotearoa New Zealand children lived in low-income housing.

<sup>4</sup> See: [www.iaia.org](http://www.iaia.org)



New Zealand. For example, considerable resources and expertise have been applied to developing a Health Impact Assessment Unit within the Ministry of Health.

There are opportunities for integrating child impact assessment with other systems, such as health and family impact assessments. A number of councils have voiced resistance to engaging in health impact assessments because they regard them as beyond their sphere of responsibility (Child Impact Assessment Reference Group, 2008) and some people working in the impact assessment field would prefer to broaden existing social impact assessment parameters to include children, rather than fragment the sector with another specific-population assessment tool. However, subsuming child impact assessments within broader impact assessment processes might not improve children's visibility in councils' (or social or environmental) policy and planning; indeed it might render children invisible. It is worth noting that in the New Zealand Association of Impact Assessments' objectives and ethical guidelines, neither children nor children's needs are explicitly mentioned in the information pages<sup>5</sup>.

Table 1 (below) is adapted from Hanna et al (2006). It also uses work from the 2007 British All Party Parliamentary Group for Children and Corrigan (2006) to describe the potential benefits and drawbacks of child impact assessment. It does not specifically relate to the New Zealand context or particularly to local government, but it offers indicative information that could be useful for New Zealand council pilots, and is included to contextualise this work.

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.nzaia.org.nz/Info/Objectives.htm>

<b>Table 1: Potential benefits of child impact assessment</b>	<b>Potential drawbacks of child impact assessment</b>
Decisions are informed by knowledge of what contributes to and detracts from children’s wellbeing and realising their aspirations.	Child impact reporting is not a panacea, and predicting all effects on children in all cases is impossible. Also, children’s needs change. However, this applies to any legislative or policy development process.
It can increase intersectoral collaboration in the pursuit of outcomes that fall across multiple organisations and sectors (eg. health, housing, justice, education).	Inter-sectoral collaboration is often difficult to build and maintain. The process used must work for all concerned, benefit the decision-making process and promote collaboration rather than mire organisational processes in bureaucracy.
Could promote more transparent policy and decision-making processes, and might improve accountability.	Being visible does not guarantee being heard, and children and their advocates may be repeatedly disappointed by this aspect of democracy.
Can avoid the preventable blunders that can occur when children’s interests are overlooked.	In practice, this can consist of a one-off assessment near the end of the process, missing earlier opportunities to shape policy.
Better coordination of efforts to improve outcomes and quality of life for children and families.	Institutionalising the best interests of children means that the purpose can become obscured by the process. Checklists or implication statements can become mere compliance reporting.
Child impact assessment complements health and social impact assessment tools.	Child impact assessment may create confusion where other impact assessment tools are being considered, or already being used.
A step-by-step assessment is particularly useful for upskilling staff in assessing the potential impact of conceptual policy proposals.	Policy-makers are not obliged to carry out child impact assessments, and there are no sanctions where they are not adhered to or completed. The quality of implementation varies.
The meaningful (vs. tokenistic) participation of children is important and desirable.	Working with communities is not easy; impact assessments tend to be “top down” processes; community relationships take time to build and decisions are often needed quickly (Hanna et al, 2006:5). Enabling informed participation by children (and other people) on often complex issues can be difficult, as is managing people’s expectations about their influence upon the eventual decisions.
Existing local child-specific data is consolidated and used.	There are often difficulties disaggregating data for children, and determining specific impacts on children, because of the complexity or the lack of information available.

There are few published evaluations of child impact assessments, but the literature posits a number of factors that could increase the likelihood of such processes being successfully implemented in an organisation:

- senior organisational and political commitment
- adequate budget
- supportive strategic and policy environment
- a multi-skilled group of staff
- clarity of purpose
- transparent and replicable steps
- a practical and user-friendly process
- execution early in the policy and review process
- good local qualitative and quantitative data
- the meaningful participation of children, as well as of agencies that advance their interests
- presenting alternative solutions
- demonstrating how the assessment process benefits the council
- good communication of findings
- monitoring the actual impacts on local children
- implementation as an ongoing rather than a one-off process.

These points indicate high quality and generic project management requirements. If *'the best interests of the child'* are to become central to an organisation's decision making in a sustainable forward-thinking way, then significant organisational shifts may be needed on every one of these points.

Various tools are available to local government for placing children more centrally in its decision-making processes. One sophisticated system is UNICEF's *Child Friendly Cities Toolkit*<sup>6</sup>. Other child advocacy tools can also increase the visibility of children's rights and needs to local government decision makers, and their understanding of them, including:

- child advocate roles at staff and political levels
- a policy or strategy setting out why and how the interests of children will be taken into account
- council reporting processes requiring that the impacts on particular population groups, including children, be considered and addressed
- particular processes triggered when decisions which are deemed to have a significant impact on children are being made
- the resourcing of a community-based agency or external body to undertake child impact assessments on issues or decisions or as part of the policy function (eg. the multi-agency Child Advocacy Group which advises the Manukau City Council on children's issues; or the UK's National Children's Bureau, funded to undertake child impact assessments of selected Bills<sup>7</sup>).

The literature suggests that child impact assessments may be more successfully introduced into an organisation where some of these advocacy tools are already used. Once an organisation has decided to undertake a child impact assessment, the literature notes the need to attract quality people into the process. Angus (2007) and the Ministry of Health (2007) propose the following skills and resources could be useful in a child

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.childfriendlycities.org/pdf/cfc\\_booklet\\_eng.pdf](http://www.childfriendlycities.org/pdf/cfc_booklet_eng.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.ncb.org.uk>

impact assessment team:

- research and analysis skills
- information about UNCROC and other rights and agreed goals for children
- an understanding of the position of children and their interests and needs in respect of the proposal being assessed
- access to relevant information, including local and national policies, legislation and strategies
- knowledge of the evidence base for predictions of impact.

The first task would be to agree on an assessment process. Table 2, below, is a synopsis of the key features from international impact assessment models (Corrigan, 2006:44–45), modified to apply to children’s issues.

**Table 2: Common child impact assessment steps (adapted from Corrigan, 2006)**

**Screening**

While it might be ideal to assess every policy, activity and decision, this is impracticable. A screening or filtering process is common to most impact assessment procedures. It contextualises the assessment environment ie. determines which other decision-making processes in the organisation consider children. A clear and transparent method for screening is required so that it can be easily replicated and measured.

**Scoping**

It is decided whether a brief or full assessment will be undertaken. It is useful to document the reasons for the decision.

**Core questions**

A coherent set of questions should be developed which can be adapted to different contexts, and which embrace a whole-child perspective.

**Assessment**

This is the analytical process of carrying out the impact assessment. The methods used should be clearly explained and justified. There are many different methods (see Appendix III) for determining potential impacts and mitigating factors for children.

**Consultation**

Almost all impact assessment processes recommend consultation with key stakeholders on significant or substantial policies. Many of the assessment methods emphasise the desirability of actively involving children in issues that affect their lives.

**Choose or develop alternatives**

All impact assessments should specify alternative options to the proposal being considered. The projected impacts of all feasible options and possible redress options need to be clear.

**Reporting**

All impact assessment mechanisms result in some form of report; a non-technical summary report is also desirable. The content should be attuned to the audience’s needs and uptake of the conclusions from the assessment.

**Monitor and evaluate**

This is especially important in the early days of child impact assessment when the effectiveness of the process needs to be scrutinised by the organisation, as well as the outcomes for local children.

The literature relating to this table acknowledges the importance of avoiding the bureaucratic burden of undertaking discrete impact assessment processes for every conceivable interest served (or not served) by local government, such as children, migrants, older adults, disabled people, the environment etc. It is important to take a targeted approach, undertaking a child impact assessment only where it can benefit children's lives. The literature suggests developing in-house criteria for deciding which council policies to assess. Pragmatic considerations include timelines, staff availability and professional skills, and financial resources. The policies or programmes selected need to sit within a broader strategic view, so that assessments do not become exercises in compliance or reaction, but express a long-term commitment to a more child-friendly district, city or region. A common theme in the literature is that child impact assessment is a process, not a one-off activity (Payne 2000:11), and that it should be undertaken at appropriate stages in the policy, project, legislative or decision-making process to maximise its effect. There is a balance to be struck. Becoming engaged too early in the decision-making process may allow only general input, while being involved too late may mean that significant decisions have already been taken and consideration of children's issues cannot be integrated.

With any new tool, it is important to demonstrate how it benefits the intended population group(s) as well as the institution. This is true of child impact assessments in councils. There are inherent difficulties in monitoring the assessment process and children's outcomes; both are very difficult to evaluate quickly because changes in children's lives happen slowly, while the child population itself is transient, moving from childhood to adolescence and adulthood. This can mean that issues of importance in one generation of children may not be pertinent for the following generation. Nevertheless, a mechanism to track outcomes for local children, perhaps through indicators, is important. Reporting on the assessment process is important to a different (internal) audience and needs to be considered in the final documentation and communication. Ideally, the process will be sufficiently robust to be replicated, building incrementally a body of knowledge about local children.

In summarising the literature review findings, the evidence proved to be inconclusive; Corrigan notes that "there is currently a lack of concrete evidence that policy proofing or impact assessment in relation to children or other groups has demonstrably changed policy itself" (2006:p46). She notes that child impact assessments have been found to result in benefits to an institution. The requirement sends a signal about the rights of children and the process increases awareness of children's interests. She suggests that over time these mechanisms may mainstream consideration of children's interests in policy and practice.

UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities provides guidance for councils and includes case studies from around the world, up to 2003/2004. Specific examples from Sweden, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Finland in the literature reviewed showed a state-wide approach, and provided excellent frames of reference and detail for any legislative reviews. The international examples consistently demonstrate a systemic approach based on child-focused (most often UNCROC-derived) values. This focus may be because UNCROC is delivered primarily at the national level. Edmonton and London were the only examples documented in English of local government-led child impact assessment processes.

Pockets of research are being undertaken around New Zealand in child-specific public policy, for example, Claire Freeman's (University of Otago) work on how children experience their urban environment was brought to light in the literature review.

#### **4. The Aotearoa New Zealand context: relevant legislation**

In New Zealand, attempts have been made to integrate children's needs into local government processes. Most recently, this has been done through the Agenda for Children *Making it Happen* Implementation Plan (Institute of Public Policy et al. 2002) which was developed by national agencies. In this document, one of the seven specified action areas seeks to "improve local government and community planning for children" (pp. 11–12). The associated action points encapsulate a good breadth of inclusive processes and possibilities, which some councils and agencies have acted on eg. with the completion of the *Toolkit for Child and Youth Participation* (Local Government New Zealand, 2004).

To facilitate councils' specific uptake of child impact assessment, this project sought guidance from New Zealand legislation most pertinent to local government and affecting children, namely the Local Government Act 2002, as well as UNCROC.

##### **Local Government Act 2002**

The purpose of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA), and its three amendments, is to provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities. Section 10 of the Act states the two specific purposes of local government as:

- to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities, in the present and for the future.

The Act requires councils to prepare annual plans and budgets in consultation with their communities and to report annually on them. Concurrently, councils are explicitly required to take a sustainable development approach (Section 3 d). A primary means of achieving sustainable development is consultation with local people. Part 6 of the Act comprehensively details legal minimum conditions for consultation, including specific mechanisms for facilitating the involvement of Māori and other communities. Consultation between councils and their local communities and agencies is a greatly enhanced mechanism in this new Act compared with the previous legislation (Office of the Auditor General, 2006:p40) and is a possible means by which children and other citizens can exert their right to be involved in all council business and decisions.

##### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

While general forms of impact assessment pertinent to children's needs and rights may have been used in various international legislative forums in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, UNCROC brought child impact assessment processes into focus via the UN Committee's oversight of the convention's implementation in member-states (Hanna et al, 2006). This convention was ratified by New Zealand in March 1993, and is applicable to children aged under 18 years. The Ministry of Youth Development Te Manatū Whakahiato is the Crown agency responsible for reporting back to the United Nations on New Zealand's progress in implementing the convention.

The 54 UNCROC articles are founded on these four general principles:

- all children have the right to protection from discrimination on any grounds
- the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all matters affecting the child
- children have the rights to life, survival and development
- all children have the right to an opinion and for that opinion to be heard in all contexts (Ministry of Youth Development, 2007).

The council-based studies focus on the “best interests of the child” principle, weaving UNCROC and LGA strands into a child impact assessment framework. Rarely does a United Nations convention filter into New Zealand’s local government sphere, so this principle has been interpreted in this project as a benchmark, alongside the dominant local government legislative environment. This is not to suggest that the “*best interests of the child*” principle is weaker or less visible than the two legally mandated local government principles; rather, that it is appropriate for the imperatives of the state sector and local government to co-exist.

## **5. Case studies**

This section describes two case studies undertaken in selected councils and sets out the results achieved so far.

It was decided to focus this research on councils in the Auckland region where the researchers were based. The eight councils in the Auckland region include four large metropolitan councils, three smaller district councils, and the single overarching regional council. A small number of councils were invited to participate in the child impact assessments but declined. Others could not be arranged within the research timeframe.

### **Aims**

This phase of the research set out to increase understanding of the issues that arise when implementing child impact assessment in local government in New Zealand. This was to be fulfilled by piloting child impact assessment case studies in councils.

### **Methods**

It was important to fit this research method into the existing policy environment, so that the findings could be correlated with the New Zealand context. The idea was not to present a predetermined blueprint for delivering child impact assessment to each council, but rather to encourage each council to take an evolving approach when undertaking their inaugural child impact assessment. The research method chosen for these case studies was participatory action research (PAR), a social research method that promotes the use of an experimental and iterative process (Massey University, 2004, p. 3).

### **Recruitment**

The researchers originally intended to develop criteria for choosing ideal pilot sites. Councils that fitted the criteria would then be invited to participate. Once ideal councils had been selected, it was expected that discussions would be held between the researcher, council-based personnel with responsibilities for children's issues, and their colleagues connected with policy areas that were potential subjects for child impact assessment. These meetings would be coordinated by the council's child advocate. Once a baseline understanding had been agreed, the researcher would work with staff to bring together local information with the literature research findings, to create a locally-relevant child impact assessment implementation framework. It was considered important to take time to create a unique, locally appropriate framework that fitted each council's policy environment.

Neither the Children's Commissioner nor AUT actively sought expressions of interest, and there had been virtually no formal communication about the proposed pilots. However, the dedicated child-youth advocates from Manukau, Waitakere, and Auckland Cities all expressed an interest in child impact assessment work. The commissioner and AUT discussed the project in detail with each of the three councils, covering the project's aspirations, the projected financial costs to each council, timelines, tasks, and possible outcomes.

The council-based advocates then obtained a mandate from their immediate managers to proceed with a child impact assessment trial, mostly on the grounds that the project would expand the network of people in the council equipped to pursue child-friendly



programmes, policy, and planning. It was also hoped that the assessment results would prove useful for other councils and external colleagues. The researchers' role in this buy-in process was negligible, as the advocates undertook most of this work.

After the informal approach, Auckland and Manukau undertook formal agreements with the commissioner, committing them to undertake the pilot child impact assessment processes detailed in the next section.

## Case Study I: Auckland City Council

Auckland City, the largest city in New Zealand, sits within the greater Auckland region. According to 2006 census figures, there are 76,000 children aged up to 14 years in Auckland City's total population of 404,600 people (18 percent of the population). The number of child inhabitants is larger than the total population of many New Zealand towns, which gives a sense of the challenges faced by this city council. The population is socially and ethnically diverse.

### Strategic, policy and personnel environment

In September 2007, at the beginning of the project, various council staff had responsibilities for children's issues and needs alongside the Child and Youth Advocate. The commitment to undertake a child impact assessment built upon existing council plans and policies pertaining to children, in particular *Growing up Together – Auckland City Council's Child and Family Policy* (2005), which aims to make Auckland a nurturing, exciting, safe city for all children and their families. The policy defines children as aged from birth to 12 years, and focuses on children in the context of the family environment. This policy explicitly includes a commitment to child impact assessment in the 2007–08 Annual Plan, so a budget was already available for implementing this project.

### Screening

It was important to ensure that the child impact assessment framework would fit strategically with the council's policy environment, as this project was being established following local body elections. Policies, processes and programmes were screened for suitability for the pilot child impact assessment. Evidence suggested that a focus on an area that was not typically child-focused offered more organisational benefits, because this meant people who would not normally encounter children in their work would become informed about children's issues. A number of policies were considered by the Child and Youth Advocate for this pilot programme, such as road, footpath, and bicycle policies. However, high-density central city housing stood out as an area where a child impact assessment could be carried out relatively easily and where the results could influence the provision of services for residents of the CBD.

A review examining the characteristics and needs of apartment-dwellers in the "Victoria Quarter" and wider CBD was considered a good candidate for a child impact assessment for a number of reasons:

- the assessment aligned with the city's Child and Family Policy Action Plan and with needs established in a review of the Future Strategy Action Plan for the Auckland CBD
- a relationship already existed between the social policy team of the council and the staff responsible for the Victoria Quarter and wider CBD output
- it was not a stereotypically child-specific field of work
- an output stipulated in the Victoria Quarter Plan was the development of statutory guideline documents on the needs of families in higher-density living environments.

Auckland City Council staff determined that the potential for further residential development in the Victoria Quarter Plan created a need for information that a child impact assessment might provide. Apartment developments are proposed near the two universities, with some apartments designed for single parents to improve their opportunities for tertiary study. Canvassing opinion about what is important for children was therefore extremely timely.

Council staff working on CBD upgrades were interested in the concept of child impact assessments. The 2006 census data indicated that Auckland's CBD was one of the fastest growing residential areas in the region and in New Zealand. Specifically, of the nearly 18,000 CBD residents, 2499 were children: this is double the number of resident children at the 2001 census. Of this group, 603 were aged under 14 years. The council had noted an increase in new babies living in the CBD, and a number of emerging issues for children and families living in apartments.

## **Implementation**

Within one month of discussions starting between AUT and Auckland City Council, an inaugural meeting of internal council staff was held. A synopsis of processes and key questions, largely developed by AUT, was distributed to council staff. The meeting explained child impact assessment, and the value it offered for the CBD and Victoria Quarter work. Promised benefits of the pilot project included:

- use of the results to improve council programmes
- more opportunity to consider the needs of children when implementing long-term plans under the Local Government Act 2002
- better understanding of the strengths and needs of families in order to promote their social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing as required by the Local Government Act
- a chance to lead the way in developing best practice in child impact assessments.

A cross-council team was put together, including the manager of city planning, the CBD transport programme manager, the CBD community advisor, and social policy team members. They worked collaboratively with AUT's Local Government Centre manager to design and implement the child impact assessment process. This team determined which council staff could benefit from this work in any way. Subsequent meetings talked through planning questions, parameters and ideas, including:

- who should be involved in the project
- who would undertake the assessment, write it up, and analyse its findings
- which children should be included
- whether there were measurable indicators
- what kind of information was likely to be useful
- whether children could be involved in developing the scope of the assessment in any way
- who would develop the research methods.

## **Information gathering and question development**

A priority was to determine which existing reports and data could contribute to this work. The council provided maps and statistical analysis, and a list of childcare centres and schools. AUT supplied New Zealand and international literature about children and urban design, and about impact assessment.

Possible lines of inquiry to pursue with children were explored from the various council officers' perspectives. A core research question was agreed:

*What is it like for children to live in Auckland's CBD?*

The council's social policy team wrote a paper scoping and justifying the project, which secured the financial support and engagement of the council. New Zealand research (Witten et al, 2006) was used to investigate the question further and shape specific questions. In this research, parents of young children were asked to list the services and amenities that were important to them in their caregiving roles. Parents' six most important domains were:

- sport and recreational facilities (such as beaches, parks, libraries, clubrooms)
- public transport and communication (bus, train, ferry, public telephones, high-speed broadband)
- shopping facilities (dairies, cafés, banks, supermarkets, service stations)
- educational facilities (from pre-school to tertiary levels)
- health facilities (GP clinics, Plunket, pharmacies, hospitals)
- social and cultural facilities (community centres, marae, churches, Citizens Advice Bureaux).

Other possible questions were rejected after discussion. The structure of the research was also discussed, and it was decided that enquiry would progressively move from the micro scale – what children liked and didn't like about their immediate home environment – towards the macro – what children liked and didn't like about particular public and private spaces.

### **Research methods**

How to hear directly from children was considered: focus groups, a children's Christmas party, and talking with visiting school students were among the ideas canvassed. The research method chosen was face-to-face interviews with children, avoiding reliance on their written comprehension. The interviews were carried out by the council's youth cadet (aged 16), who received interview training and was supported by project team members during the interviews. This was seen by council as an ethical and safe approach to talking with its youngest citizens.

The consultation approach was to "go to where the kids were", and so in January and February 2008, school holiday programmes and the public library were used for interviews with children aged 12 years and under who lived in the CBD. Twenty questions were asked of each participant, traversing the children's perceptions and experiences of their homes, relationships (with kin, pets, friends), recreation, and transport. Participants were selected informally, with the interviewer being mindful and inclusive of age, gender and ethnicity. Free zoo passes were given to the participants as thanks. Forty-four children participated in the interviews, representing 7.3 percent of CBD residents under 14 years old.

The main issues raised by the 44 children interviewed included the following:

- their need for more space inside their homes (76 percent of respondents) and outside of their homes (43 percent)
- not liking the noise made by people, traffic, construction, music, and ships (60 percent of the children), some children speaking spontaneously about having resultant difficulty getting sleep

- not having extended family members nearby (68 percent of respondents); although 57 percent had friends nearby
- having no pets (92 percent)
- feeling that their neighbours were only sometimes friendly, or were not friendly, towards them (25 percent).

The interviews also elicited the following information:

- during their holiday period [of sustained sunny weather], 16 percent of the children had not played outside in the bush, climbed trees, or been at the park, while 43 percent had done so within the previous week
- the majority of children (68 percent) lived with their mum and dad, or in a single-adult household (27 percent)
- almost all of the children had a parent who worked nearby (77 percent).

The responses suggest that some of the children enjoyed living in the CBD and enjoyed some recreational opportunities comparable with those associated with suburban living. Studying the advantages enjoyed by, the needs of, and the issues for apartment-living people is a relatively new field of enquiry in New Zealand, and the issues children raised may be pertinent to other specific populations' experiences of inner-city living.

### **Dissemination of information**

Auckland City staff recognised that the information elicited for the Victoria Quarter Plan review was applicable beyond this work to other council projects. The research team realised that it was important to share these findings with certain council departments: the CBD Board; city planning; those responsible for the public library and art gallery; and urban design.

It was also seen as important to report to:

- Youthtown, the YMCA, Central Library and art gallery (as the sites of holiday programmes)
- Auckland City Mission (sponsor of significant inner-city apartment development)
- children and their whanau-families.

Most of the departments and agencies had been given a summary of the findings by the time of this report's completion, and further connections were established with appropriate elected members' and officials' committees.

The possibility of extending the research by facilitating focus groups with children and parents or carers was discussed. It was suggested that such groups could be hosted by the central library and local schools, but this has yet to be done.

### **Outcomes to date**

Exit interviews with staff engaged in this project were used to determine the benefits of child impact assessment for the council. This yielded useful information. The resultant knowledge was shared among staff and this project provided an excellent opportunity for staff to become immersed in this new field of enquiry. The project profited significantly from the youth cadet's involvement, and she acquired new skills and confidence from her training and facilitation of interviews with children.

The working arrangements between council units and AUT proved effective. In future, council envisages that a specialist agency, possibly AUT's Local Government Centre,

will train and support other council personnel for this work. The project exposed more council staff to child impact assessments, developing institutional knowledge of their implementation in council groups not traditionally involved in incorporating children's perspectives explicitly. All staff involved recorded enthusiastic interest in hearing directly from children, and gaining an understanding of children's issues and perspectives. Finally, the project brought about a contribution from a nine-year-old CBD-dweller into the residents' newsletter, attracting positive feedback from the public.

In evaluating the outcomes of the assessment process for local children, the challenge will be to maintain momentum. The findings are being disseminated through the council's CBD Board, the Community Services Committee, City Mission Development work, and urban design team, with a view to influencing the District Planning processes. The council coordinated a Child Friendly Cities forum with council planners, where AUT spoke about child impact assessment. The council's communications and marketing team has already received calls from external agencies wishing to know more about this work.

Consultation with children meant children's perspectives became much more visible in this project. Council staff involved determined that a number of specific factors contributed to its success:

- setting strategic and operational targets for the project
- picking the right venues and times to talk with children
- having a younger person lead the consultations
- having a single contact person on the project
- sufficient budget
- partnership arrangements between council units
- partnership arrangements between the council and AUT
- personal enjoyment of and interest in talking with children, and in the impact assessment work.

## **Conclusions**

Not all of the steps described in Table 2 (page 11) were completed in this case study. Screening and scoping were undertaken to identify a suitable focus. Core questions were developed and these were used to assess children's experiences of living in the CBD. Consultation took place within the organisation but external consultation was limited. The project did not progress to the stage of choosing and developing alternatives, however, findings from the interviews with children were reported within the City Council. It has not been possible to progress to the final step of monitoring and evaluating because there was no specific outcome of the child impact assessment.

This project demonstrates that valuable information can be obtained by conducting a child impact assessment. Although the research did not specifically assess the Victoria Quarter Plan's responsiveness to the interests of Auckland children, the information gathered was placed before the CBD Board, which can modify the direction of the plan and the information is also being used by staff in other areas.

The council research team members have demonstrated what a motivated group with the desire to learn about their youngest citizens' needs and issues can achieve. The timeframe for this work was perhaps unrealistic and a contributing factor in the process being incomplete. Perhaps more importantly this project demonstrates the importance of such child impact assessment being embedded in the organisation.

## Case Study II: Manukau City Council

With a population of approximately 329,000 Manukau is New Zealand's third largest city, and fastest growing, with a diverse community. It is home to more than 165 ethnic groups, with the largest Māori and Pacific communities in New Zealand. Twenty eight percent of Manukau residents speak two or more languages, with Samoan being the most widely spoken after English<sup>8</sup>. Manukau is also a young city, with 26 percent of its population (86,000) aged under 15 years. Thirty seven percent of residents aged over 15 earn under \$20,000, while 14 percent earn over \$50,000 (2006 census figures).

### Strategic, policy and personnel environment

The Senior Policy Advisor Children, Young People and Families at Manukau City Council (MCC) was familiar with the concept of child impact assessment from his previous employment in the United Kingdom. He saw great benefit in connecting with staff across the organisation in a child impact assessment process, enabling colleagues to understand the needs and strengths of Manukau's children and young people better.

Some MCC policies acknowledged and sought to meet the needs of local children, including:

- *Child Poverty Action Plan*
- *Youth Policy and Action Plan – 2004* (being reviewed in 2008–09)
- *Education Strategy* (being reviewed)
- *Tomorrow's Manukau: Manukau Apopo – A vision for Manukau into the future 2006–2016*, which includes children and young people in all its discussions of key themes.

Some MCC staff had specific responsibilities for children's and young people's issues and needs, alongside the advisor, including:

- the child and youth services manager, who manages youth-specific posts such as youth worker coordinator
- the community advisor, with lead responsibility for young people
- the coordinator of Te Ora o Manukau – Manukau the Healthy City, child advocacy group<sup>9</sup>
- the education and employment planner.

A small budget was available for implementing the child impact assessment project.

### Development process and screening

With the researcher's guidance, the council's advisor selected a non-typical and discrete sphere of council business which could significantly affect local children: the review of the *Waste Management Plan 2005–2010*<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.manukau.govt.nz/default.aspx?page=about\\_manukau](http://www.manukau.govt.nz/default.aspx?page=about_manukau)

<sup>9</sup> A multi-agency group of Healthy City charter signatories who are working to reduce child poverty and to promote children's health.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.manukau.govt.nz/uploadedFiles/manukaugovtnz/Environment/Waste/Waste\\_Management\\_Plan/mcc-waste-plan-05-10.pdf](http://www.manukau.govt.nz/uploadedFiles/manukaugovtnz/Environment/Waste/Waste_Management_Plan/mcc-waste-plan-05-10.pdf)

A growing population and increasing amounts of packaging and waste material make Manukau's waste management challenging. Manukau estimates that it sends nearly 300,000 tonnes of solid waste to landfill each year. About 30 percent of it is generated by the city's households and is directly managed by MCC. The remainder, more than 70 percent, is generated by the city's businesses or by construction activity and is managed privately, according to the *Waste Management Plan 2005–2010* (p. 7). This plan is designed to promote effective and efficient waste management, and to minimise the waste being generated and disposed of, in the interests of sustainability. It involves schools significantly, with a Regional School Education, Waste Wise Schools and Enviroschools programmes, a Waste Education Programme Strategy, and a "Come On: Be a Tidy Kiwi" anti-litter campaign.

The advisor met members of the city environment waste team, who were enthusiastic about the idea of child impact assessment. They were keen to understand more about the reasons for the large amount of waste that is dropped between dairies and schools, and to find ways to reduce it. The waste team saw that consulting children and understanding their perspectives would advance their own understanding of the issue and the search for solutions. The community litter education strategy, a part of the Waste Management Plan, was chosen as the focus for the child impact assessment process. The strategy seeks to:

- assess litter and littering behaviour in the city
- raise awareness of litter as an issue in the council and the community
- focus on litter in public areas.

### **Information gathering**

The advisor's involvement ceased soon after the initial discussions with the waste team. The waste team staff needed to find its own way to assess children's waste issues and review its engagement with children. This revealed interesting information, little of which was known to the advisor. The waste team undertake a lot of child-specific environmental and waste minimisation work in the city, but disconnected from other child and youth services delivered by the council. The waste team was familiar with evidence of a strong correlation between educating young people about waste and waste reduction by children and their families. The team already had a school-based resource for children, and was involved with the "Be a Tidy Kiwi" campaign, which is targeted to schools.

Information was obtained from other sources. The Howick Youth Forum had already decided that waste was an issue to address via youth networks. In December 2007, the Mayor of Manukau wrote to schools asking pupils what they would like to see improved. Of the more than 400 replies a good percentage mentioned litter and making Manukau tidier.

While children have not been involved in the council's proposed child impact assessment project directly, their views are coming through channels such as those mentioned, and initiatives already being undertaken by the waste team. However, an important aspect of any child impact assessment, children's explicit perspectives upon the issue, have not been established by the review.



## **Outcomes to date**

MCC did not implement the process fully in the time available, although it increased engagement with children's issues in some of its departments. Further child-specific benefits may result from MCC's introduction to child impact assessments.

It was agreed that celebrating what was already being done in the council for local children's wellbeing would be beneficial. This might also support the branding of child-specific outputs by the council to help increase them, in order to implement the UN's First Call for Children, which the council signed more than a decade ago. This convention provides the operational framework for the council's child advocacy group.

The council's youth strategy will be reviewed in 2008/09, and a child impact assessment approach will be included in the review's terms of reference. It was concluded that the advisor and the waste team could build upon an existing platform of child-specific information and data as well as existing work by the waste team and by local youth groups connected to the spheres of waste and children's issues.

The pilot has also meant that more council-based staff have been exposed to child impact assessment. It is unclear whether any improvements in service delivery or strategy have resulted.

## **Conclusion**

This project did not progress beyond the screening step of the process although some consultation did take place during this phase. Balancing competing roles, political realities, personal expectations and required outputs is difficult to sustain, especially where a child impact assessment is not mandated by an existing work plan. Getting child impact assessment into a department's work plan is vital if it is to be established and maintained.

Much can be learnt from actions that do not go according to plan. In this instance attention to the primary focus was lost to competing demands. These are part of organisational life; what is important is the assessment's loss of priority. Once it became clear that the implementation timetable was slipping, the council's child advocacy group offered to help progress the initiative. This suggests that there was potential to reach across the organisation for collaboration earlier in the process, for example with child and youth services and child advocacy group. Had such collaboration occurred, the waste team might have advanced the engagement of children, and aligned service delivery more effectively with local children's needs. However, progress was made toward the council increasing their engagement with children and improving its systems to allow the inclusion of child impact assessment in future council business.

## 6. Discussion

This section consolidates the findings from the pilot project's implementation with those of the literature review. Ideas and information from the reference group for this project are integrated into this discussion. Variations between information from the three main sources warrant attention.

The challenges of implementing child impact assessment processes are outlined, drawing on the factors identified in the literature that increase the likelihood of child impact assessments being successfully implemented by an organisation.

### **Multi-skilled, motivated and cohesive group**

The literature indicates that child impact assessments are unlikely to be successful in a local authority without personnel with appropriate expertise, such as a knowledge of the impact assessment evidence base, research skills, information about UNCROC, an understanding of children's interests and needs, and access to relevant data. In the two case studies, some of these skills were lacking when each pilot project was initiated, and the assessments were undertaken on a reduced scale.

Neither case study council had previously undertaken an impact assessment, but one of the case study research teams had very motivated staff. Indeed, this was the critical factor that allowed the child impact assessment process to develop as far as it did in the Auckland City Council pilot. This strength remained constant even as members entered and left the team during the project. In terms of immediate and future work outputs, each member saw the value of eliciting children's perspectives about their inner-city living experiences. Each member drew from diverse existing sources of data and contributed this information when it was needed. The staff contributed their time, networks and in some instances budgets to the project, *and continue to do so*. Although the literature alluded to the importance of quality staff with diverse skills and knowledge, it gave little attention to team cohesion. This was clearly a central factor in the success of Auckland's process.

### **Supportive strategic and policy environment**

The ready and supportive policy environment of both councils, where child-focused policies and strategies preceded the project, may have helped the pilot's credibility in the organisation. The councils' child or youth strategies were used as a lever by child advocates to internally promote acceptance of the child impact assessment proposal. Certainly the language used to describe and contextualise children's place in the two cities, and the justifications for local children's place in council business, had already been established and mandated by elected members. The task of promoting a child impact assessment to a council where such policies do not exist may be quite different.

### **Council expertise well matched with external expertise**

Council staff led initial discussions, as they were already familiar with the concepts and were best placed to progress matters internally. Questions from the proposed council departments were promptly and informally answered in-house, with no need to refer them to an external agent such as AUT. This calls into question the literature finding that a good match between internal and external expertise is necessary; indeed a complementary rather than equivalence relationship between internal and external skills could be expected to work best.

## **Good quality information**

The early implementation phase of the process required information about child impact assessment to be immediately available; subsequently, supporting research and data about the policy field chosen by the two localities was called for. In the overview information about child impact assessments developed by AUT for the councils, no specific mention was made of UNCROC. This was because in initial conversations council colleagues who were informed about UNCROC quickly dismissed the convention's relevance to local government. It was considered prudent therefore to treat the UNCROC '*best interests of the child*' message as a benchmark rather than as a central platform. This was not to diminish children's visibility but rather to avoid scaring off council colleagues with what they perceived to be global-sized concerns. The staff involved did not contest the intent of placing children at the centre of decision-making. The generic information focused on pragmatic details such as common process steps, and typical questions asked during a child impact process – what the staff needed to persuade their managers and subsequently their colleagues.

AUT quickly found national and international research pertinent to inner-city living, urban design issues and children, and about waste minimisation, littering and children, and correlated it with existing in-house data. AUT also guided Auckland City Council staff to develop their research with children, thus building the council's institutional knowledge of research design, and particularly of seeking child-specific information. While external research shaped the core research question – *What is it like for children to live in Auckland's CBD?* – internally-derived data and analysis sharpened the research focus and shaped the process.

## **Adequate budget**

The availability of a budget for the project was useful, while noting that these pilots did not test whether the lack of dedicated funding would hamper success. Ordinarily, council policies with no budget rarely get traction.

## **Early engagement in policy review processes**

Both councils' child impact assessments were positioned within policy review frameworks. One of the specific social and cultural outputs of Auckland City's Victoria Quarter Plan was to "establish and promote awareness of family needs in higher density living environments" (p. 15). The child impact assessment was seen as a perfect vehicle for exploring ways of delivering this output. At Manukau City because the waste review had recently been established there was a good possibility of affecting a discrete component of this review, litter between dairies and schools. Unfortunately this assessment did not proceed beyond the information-gathering phase so the results could not be explored through a *best interests of the child* lens.

It can be inferred from these case studies that appropriate timing may depend on the nature of the policy or review under consideration. These assessments were undertaken at the beginning and in the middle of review processes, not at the end. It seems likely, although this was not tested, that assessments done at the end of a review process would have limited influence upon policy.

## Meaningful participation by children

Neither case study achieved the aim of meaningfully involving children, in the sense that children did not have control over the research's design, content, delivery or eventual communication of findings. For example, the decision as to which policy was to be assessed was substantially led by the child advocates, a pragmatic and expedient decision to get the project moving. The child advocates noted, however, that this top-down approach was not appropriate, and that a better process for future assessments would be to focus on policies that impact on issues raised by children. This aspect of child impact assessment will require significant support from an external agency. While councils are regularly required by statute to facilitate public engagement, they are still a long way from empowering children through civic engagement.

Ethical child-focused consultation processes need to be more widely understood. Some adults in the case studies expressed misgivings about talking with children directly in their professional capacities. Appropriate consultation processes would allow free and frank exchanges between children and predominantly adult decision-makers about children's issues. It is the responsibility of adults to create an environment in which children clearly understand the purpose and meaning of the discussions, and can participate and exit on their own terms. Awareness and acknowledgement of intergenerational power and control issues is important if adults and children are to feel safe and valued. For example, many adults engage with children in a paternalistic way, *informing* children of what is happening rather than *inviting* children to determine what they would like to happen. This does not amount to meaningful consultation with children.

## Acceptance of children's views

Short consultation and advice processes were identified by the reference group as a possible barrier to children's direct involvement in a child impact assessment. The Swedish Children's Ombudsman points out that time is made available for adults' input into policies, but a country's youngest citizens often do not receive this same acknowledgement. It was refreshing to note that in both case studies, consulting children was seen as beneficial and welcomed by some council staff. In the Auckland City case study, the direct integration of children's ideas into policy discussions was made easy, and the findings are now being used with various decision makers. In Manukau City, while children were not engaged directly in the process, it was noted that there many opportunities to communicate with children for future projects exist.

While the reference group cited a lack of appreciation of children's perspectives as a potential barrier, this was not encountered at either of the pilot sites. There was a willingness to hear from children, and be guided by their ideas and experiences in future service delivery. Staff said they enjoyed meeting and talking with children, and being exposed to children's perspectives as a mechanism to test policy. Councils are required by the Local Government Act 2002 to consult widely and diversely; as the reference group observed, listening to children is an important way for councils to determine local needs. It also suggested that some councils might get stuck on traditional council business – 'roads, rates and rubbish' – or displace children's issues consigning them to central government's responsibility. These tendencies were not encountered in either of the pilot projects, which is not to say that they don't prevail in other departments or councils in New Zealand.

This acceptance of children's views suggests there is an excellent platform of individual and institutional goodwill to build on when promoting child impact assessment.

### **Participation of child-focused agencies**

The participation of explicitly child-focused agencies was not secured in either of the pilot projects, which was disappointing. Future processes would benefit from external agencies' engagement with the councils to bring in different focuses, information and relationships.

### **Inter-departmental communication in councils**

Another potential barrier identified by the reference group was departmental silos in councils but in both councils interactions with departmental colleagues were in fact relatively easy. In smaller councils it is assumed that silos would be less of an issue because staff are more likely to know one another and their respective spheres of work to overlap. However, this assumption may not be accurate because although smaller councils may have fewer staff and a smaller population to work with, the staff must still give effect to the same legislated responsibilities. It was found that staff from smaller councils with responsibilities pertaining to children typically also had a myriad of other priorities competing for their attention. Adding a new child impact assessment output, even with the offer of professional support, was not a feasible option for them.

This may also reflect these community-orientated advisors' lack of familiarity with child impact assessment. They were perhaps predictably reluctant to take on an unknown area of work that could become unwieldy, with an unknown colleague, towards an uncertain (and unplanned for) outcome.

### **Dedicated child advocate**

The literature did not mention the employment of a dedicated staff member with responsibilities for child-specific outcomes across a council, but the pilot research suggested this was important. Dedicated child advocates do not exist in most district councils. This represents an obstacle to the development of child impact assessment, and may be an argument for more support for district councils who wish to establish such processes. Determining the appropriate staff member to approach about child impact assessment is important, and an internal advocate for child impact assessment is vital to implementation.

The transience of staff in the child and youth advocacy field was a persistent issue in this study. By the end of the project, the original child advocates had moved into new spheres of work. This impacted on some projects more than others. The Auckland city council proceeded smoothly with their assessment process despite the departure of the dedicated child advocate. The Manakau City project was initiated by the child advocate but did not then proceed. One other council, however, decided not to proceed after their child advocate changed roles.

### **Exploratory approach**

In the literature, a crucial issue for decision-makers, child advocates and policy advisors alike is whether to build child impact assessment into existing council policy and practice in an integrated way, or to adopt a piecemeal approach, introducing a child focus into policies and programmes as and when possible. The pilots took the latter exploratory approach for their inaugural assessments, logically as this was new terrain for all involved. A council can work towards a fuller more integrated process once an initial child impact assessment has been undertaken, and improvements made on the strength of the exploratory experiences.

Policy review timelines are prone to stretching, most often because of external influences. Although staff from the pilot projects would enquire about the research timeline imperatives, it was important to be relaxed and accept what was realistic, so as not to lose momentum and goodwill. Each council had different policies, systems, imperatives and personalities to draw together into the project, which affected establishment and delivery timelines beyond the control of AUT; council staff were best placed to muster their colleagues. A possible sustainable approach would be to have council staff decide how to achieve the necessary cohesion among their colleagues.

Because there was little precedent for this child impact assessment, and certainly none specific to New Zealand, the researcher adopted a supportive approach, listening to, and assisting council colleagues in practical ways. Again, sustainability is more likely to be achieved when council rather than university staff carry out the council-based assessments. The researcher deliberately positioned herself as an outsider, though a benevolent one. She took direction from council colleagues, and if there was sustained silence, she would make contact and offer support in whatever capacity seemed useful, generally by offering to meet or to provide particular information. This relatively unstructured support role will have affected the two assessment processes, and may need further scrutiny in any future child impact assessment implementation. It may be that a more proactive communication approach would produce better results. It would need to be tempered however with recognition of the pressure on council staff to complete their other work.

On the positive side, this relaxed project management approach meant that new information became available simply because more time meant more opportunities for connecting with different facets of council business and with new people. It also meant that children's participation could be realistically timetabled in the review in one council, resulting in new, valuable qualitative data. An obvious disadvantage of this elastic timetable was a loss of momentum and timeline slippage in the Manukau City project.

### **Practical and user-friendly process**

A user-friendly process was followed in the Auckland City Council pilot project – friendly for child participants and friendly for council staff. The Auckland City team took time to determine what they wanted to know more about, and who the resulting information should be communicated to. The assistance of the trained youth interviewer meant that children responded more readily than they might otherwise. The Auckland staff noted their enjoyment of the consultation work. Both pilot projects were applied to discrete fields with specific relevance to local children rather than across large areas of council work. This meant that the assessment process was manageable and contained for the staff involved.

### **Transparent process**

At both sites conversations with various colleagues, decisions made and the steps taken were documented. This made the process transparent and provided a basis for institutional learning. The compilation of this information may also help other councils to undertake child impact assessments.

## **Senior management and political commitment**

The results of the inaugural implementation differed from those predicted in the literature regarding the importance of obtaining permission at the highest management or political levels. In both of these inaugural projects, such permission was *not* sought. Instead, the child impact assessment was grafted onto existing policies already mandated by council decision-makers, to get the project off the ground. It was thought that senior decision-makers could be tapped for support later in the proceedings when the assessment findings were utilised for decision-making purposes.

Engaging senior management and politicians in the assessment process may be useful when child impact assessment is being embedded into council processes. Political buy-in is especially important when organisational resources need to be re-prioritised to include child impact assessment. A commitment to child impact assessment from operational and political leaders sends a clear message to the organisation that this is a preferred mechanism. The requirement for a child impact assessment approach as part of a council officer's job description or department's workplan was considered a good way to improve the likelihood of assessment being continued by the two New Zealand councils involved.

## **Impact assessment in local government**

Impact assessments of various kinds are already being undertaken by councils. Economic impact assessments have been undertaken for years. Environmental impact assessments, and in some instances social impact assessments, are undertaken as required by the Resource Management Act 1991. It is possible that other kinds of assessments, including child impact assessment, will evolve to eventually become standard council mechanisms. Competing social-sector interests, however, may hamper the entrenchment of child impact assessments. For example, children's advocacy groups rarely have sufficient resources to compete with those of other specific populations, such as older people. This may become more pronounced as the population ages, leaving children marginalised in advocacy processes.

The New Zealand Association of Impact Assessment and Local Government New Zealand (NZAIA) is concerned about the fracturing of impact assessments into more specific denominations within the social and environmental spheres. This concern reflects the difficulty of gaining recognition for broader fields of impact assessment enquiry beyond legislative imperatives. "Assessment fatigue" was cited in some councils, and further additions to the impact assessment menu were perceived as unhelpful.

The researcher and the Children's Commissioner made beneficial connections with health-sector colleagues, who were investing significant resources in promoting health impact assessment. The relationship prompted more awareness of children's needs and issues within this broader framework. It is notable that, while the NZAIA mentions the relationship between environmental and social impact assessments in its objectives and ethical guidelines, neither children nor children's needs are explicitly noted in any of its web pages. This demonstrates the need for child-specific assessment processes to address this invisibility.

The Families Commission has also been looking at some form of impact assessment to bring family issues more prominently into the policy-making process in a local government context. It is developing a family impact assessment framework with councils and has discussed including child impact assessment among family-oriented assessment tools for major decision-makers.

## **Affirmative framework**

Children's needs and issues are often portrayed through a deficit lens with emphasis on children's need to be protected because they are vulnerable. This deficit perspective can overlook beneficial and affirming aspects of children's development and their contributions to their communities. The reference group noted that health is often similarly framed around illness and deficit, and noted an apparent disparity between deficit-oriented paradigm and the local government approach, which is more concerned with individual equity. The group considered the incongruity between these approaches to be counterproductive. Instead they recommend framing child impact assessment as contributing towards the community's wellbeing, and thus reflecting the legislated purposes of New Zealand's local government.

## **Summary**

The two case studies demonstrate that many of factors identified in the literature are relevant to implementation of child impact assessment in the New Zealand context. Some variance has, however, been identified. This may simply be due to the fact that these were *inaugural* child impact assessments in councils with associated difficulties getting the projects off the ground. This discussion has focused *upon the delivery of an inaugural child impact assessment in a local council* and has not endeavoured to explain how to sustain such a process in a council because this was beyond the scope of these pilot projects.

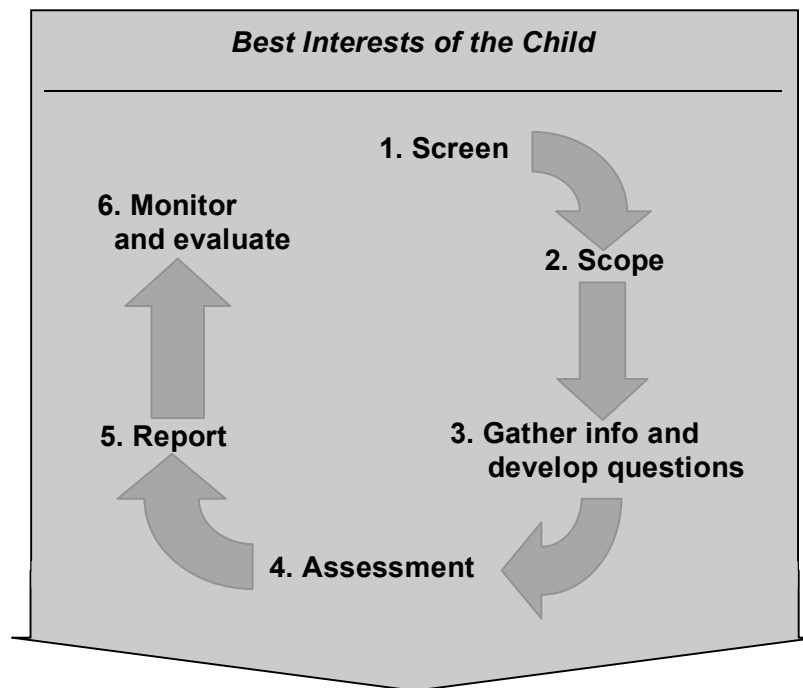


## 7. Template for implementation

A model has been developed for implementing a child impact assessment, reflecting the findings from the literature and practice. The process will not necessarily be as linear as this model suggests, but each step is important, and no step is redundant, for a comprehensive assessment.

**What is it?** Child impact assessment involves assessing a proposed policy, decision or activity with *'the best interests of the child'* as the central consideration. Child impact assessments present solutions and alternatives to the policy or activity being assessed.

**Why do it?** UNCROC principles and local government laws and policies mandate children's meaningful involvement in council business. The requirement sends a signal to decision makers about the rights of children and the process increases awareness of children's interests. Over time, this may lead to mainstreaming children's interests and needs into policy and practice.



*Enable democratic local decision-making and action, and promote social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing.*

*Sustainable engagement with children's issues leads to positive well-being outcomes.*

**Who can do it?** Motivated team members who collectively understand relevant local and national policies. Meaningful participation takes time and children's busy schedules do not easily leave room for it but it is beneficial to include children's perspectives.

**When can it be done?** Child impact assessments begin with small, discrete projects, ideally at an early stage of the policy development cycle. The assessment needs to be framed affirmatively, and use an exploratory approach. To succeed, it requires supportive strategies and policies; adequate resourcing; relationships; goodwill; a user-friendly process; quality local data and an internal advocate.

## Process for initiating a child impact assessment at your council

Following this process should enable a council-based team to answer the core question:

*What are the likely positive and negative impacts of a policy or activity on local children – including particular populations of children - and what are the alternatives that might mitigate these impacts?*

### 1. Screening

Attention should be focused on policies and activities likely to have significant effects on children, including marginalised and disadvantaged groups within this population. The less-obviously child-related areas of council business may be the most beneficial to assess. Criteria for choosing what to assess must include timelines, financial resources, and the availability of staff with suitable professional skills and motivation. The team needs to examine its council's planning and assessment processes. This step should result in the choice of a policy area for assessment.

### 2. Scoping

Scoping involves determining which aspects of the policy or activity are to be assessed and translating these into a single core research question. This is then subjected to either a full or brief child impact assessment. Two-stage processes have been used overseas, and a similar approach is taken by New Zealand's Ministry of Health – Manatu Hauora, where a health lens tool is used for a brief health impact assessment and a health appraisal tool for a more detailed assessment<sup>11</sup>. Whichever depth is chosen, the reason for the decision should be documented. The outcome of this step will be a core research question which specifies the main aspects of the policy or activity to be assessed against the principle of *the best interests of local children*.

### 3. Information gathering and developing questions

Other questions are then developed to investigate the core research question in detail. They might cover social, physical, individual or behavioural, environmental, cultural, spiritual, and economic issues, and access to services. Both quantitative data and qualitative information can be used to shape the assessment. Much of this information will be available internally or online already. The methods used to find information should be clearly explained and justified. Ideally, children will be actively involved in some capacity, voicing their opinions and experiences. The outcome of this step will be a body of child-specific information related to the policy or activity being assessed.

### 4. Assessment

When the team is assessing the specific policy or activity against the gathered information, it may be useful to look for win-win options. Using multiple data collection methods allows a team to undertake iterative analysis and supports the credibility of the eventual findings. The outcome of this step will be a response to the research questions pertinent to the policy or activity.

### 5. Reporting

Reporting can be contributed to by the team, with one member taking responsibility for writing. Use plain English, and visuals (pertinent diagrams, graphs, photos etc) where

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<sup>11</sup> Accessible at [http://www.nhc.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/700/\\$File/GuideToHIA.pdf](http://www.nhc.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/700/$File/GuideToHIA.pdf)

possible. The inclusion of a non-technical summary is advisable. Suggesting solutions is constructive, and improves the likelihood of the assessment findings being heard by decision-makers. The outcome of this step is a clear and useful paper for council decision-makers to act upon.

## **6. Monitoring and evaluation**

It is difficult to evaluate local children's wellbeing outcomes meaningfully, as changes in children's lives happen slowly. Therefore, a mechanism to track outcomes for local children, perhaps through indicators, is important. Reporting on the assessment process is also important to various internal audiences. This might involve documenting staff's experiences and organisational learnings. The outcome of this step will be a description of the *actual* impact of the policy on children, and evidence that the process is sufficiently robust to replicate, which also helps build a body of institutional knowledge on promoting local children's wellbeing.

## 8. Summary and conclusions

Care needs to be taken in drawing conclusions from the two case studies and generalising from them. Both were located in metropolitan councils. Of the 85 councils in New Zealand, only 16 are city councils, with the rest being either district (57) or unitary (4) councils and there are also 12 regional councils. The sample is, therefore, small and non-representative. Furthermore, it is difficult to compare or connect the examples because one did not proceed beyond the first step and neither completed an entire assessment cycle, reducing the quality and quantity of the data available.

The literature and practical case studies suggest that some existing factors in a council improve the likelihood of a successful *initial* child impact assessment:

- Individual and organisational goodwill  
Openness to children's views was evident in the two pilot studies providing an excellent platform from which to build a child impact assessment.
- An internal champion  
Child advocates played an important role advancing child impact assessments with management and elected members.
- Collaborative relationships  
Council staff are accustomed to combining their expertise to give best effect to council business. Strong inter-departmental and external relationships can help advance the cause of an inaugural child impact assessment.
- Resources  
Adequate resourcing is important, including staff time, and provision for costs such as sourcing information.
- Familiarity with other forms of impact assessment  
Other kinds of impact assessment work, such as environmental impact assessments required under the Resource Management Act, economic assessments (which have been a feature of local government business for years), social or cultural impact assessments (an emerging sphere in local government policy analysis) may facilitate child impact assessment through staff familiarity with, and use of the best features of existing tools.
- Local data  
Councils are significant repositories of local information and can provide much of the baseline information needed for child impact assessment. Other relevant data reflecting the diversity of local children's lives (eg. age, developmental stage, gender, (dis)ability, ethnicity, deprivation, and locality) may be derived from government, community and academic reports, budgets, surveys, or articles.
- Children's perspectives  
Such information can be gathered, using various research and consultation methods, by council staff and external child-focused agencies. Consultation and engagement with a diversity of children and with relevant child advocacy agencies is useful. The difficulty is that councils are used to facilitating and controlling *public* engagement, which does not necessarily empower children's civic engagement. Specific efforts to encourage children to take part in the assessment's design, development, and eventual dissemination may be useful.

- Supportive strategic and policy environment  
Clauses in existing workplans can generally accommodate the insertion of children's issues and needs. Any child, youth, family, or social inclusion policy statement will advance a child impact assessment, as the necessary connections already will have been made during the policy's development.
- Affirmative process  
Ideally an assessment should be framed as an affirmative, wellbeing-oriented process, which emphasises children's strengths and the benefits they bring to their communities. This is preferable to a deficit or negatively-orientated framing where children's issues are perceived as problems needing to be fixed.
- Pilot projects  
Child impact assessments are a new phenomenon in New Zealand councils; exploratory project management approaches enable staff to experiment and learn the assessment process. Documenting the process to build institutional knowledge and skills will help future learning, and encourage the replication of the successful components of previous processes.

In the two councils where the pilot child impact assessments were done, the project staff were enthusiastic, good managerial support and guidance was available, and there was a good sense of what an assessment could realistically yield for their child-focused advocacy work. A small team of skilled people with specific knowledge is useful for an assessment project but a motivated and cohesive group of non-specialist people can achieve a lot.

It was clear from the case studies that there is potential to undertake child impact assessments in a range of policy environments in councils, and interest from an equally diverse staff group. Importantly, the nominated projects in these councils were interesting, useful, manageable, and not stereotypically associated with children's issues. In the Manukau City Council case study the area selected offered potential to build on work being undertaken by the city environment waste team. It also reinforced the council's focus on sustainability, in that the child impact assessment process was aimed at future generations. For Auckland City, the process enabled staff to better understand the issues and needs of children as CBD residents. Auckland City staff have been promoting these newly discovered needs in various policy and decision-making forums. The next step for each of these councils will be to have the courage to adjust the policies in question in the "best interests of local children".

The Auckland Regional Child and Youth Network, hosted by the Ministry of Youth Development, is a potentially effective vehicle for progressing child impact assessment aspirations, as it is attended by many central and local government staff, and some community sector representatives with child-orientated responsibilities. This network extends across the Auckland region only. There are similar networks in other regions of New Zealand, which may already be interested in this kind of work.

The factors below may be relevant once the decision has been taken by a council to pursue child impact assessments. They were derived from the literature rather than the pilot projects, but may still be valid for child impact assessments in New Zealand.

- Secure the support of chief executive, senior management and/or elected representatives and their understanding of child impact assessments to ensure resourcing and mandate

- Obtain organisational commitment to an ongoing process eg. acknowledgement in annual business plan
- Find relevant overseas and New Zealand examples to follow
- Utilise existing council methods and systems to develop criteria for selecting policies for assessment
- Monitor the actual impacts on local children
- Demonstrate how the assessment process benefits the council
- Utilise transparent and replicable process steps
- Develop other child advocacy tools eg. particular processes that are triggered when decisions that significantly affect children are to be made
- Draw up a glossary of common terminology (in areas such as children's rights and sustainable development) for all the council departments involved in assessment, using existing council documents.

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## Appendix I – results of interviews with children living in Auckland CBD

*January and February 2008*

*Undertaken at the holiday programmes of YouthTown and YMCA, and  
Auckland Central Library*

**What kind of a home do you live in? (Tick one)**

Age counts and % of total			Gender counts and % of total			Ethnicity counts and % of total		
4-years	2	4%	Female	25	57%	Maori	3	7%
5 years	6	14%	Male	19	43%	Mixed	10	23%
6 years	2	4%				Pacific	2	4%
7 years	11	25%				Pakeha	10	23%
8 years	4	9%				Asian	12	27%
9 years	4	9%				Other	7	16%
10 years	7	16%						
11 years	6	14%						
12 years	2	4%						
<b>TOTAL 44 participants</b>								

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apartment <b>40 (91%)</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Office building        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> House <b>2</b>            | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop building <b>1</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Townhouse                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (flat) <b>1</b>  |

**How many adults normally live in your home? (Tick one)**

- 1 adult **12 (predominantly 'mum') 27%**  
 2 adults **30 (predominantly 'mum and dad') 68%**  
 3+ adults **1 (mum, poppa, nana) 2%**  
 Other (4 adults) **1 (mum, dad, grandpa, grandma) 2%**

**Does the adult(s) in your home work nearby?**    **YES 34 – 77%**  
**NO 5 – 11%**  
**SOMETIMES 1 (work from home)**  
**NO ANSWER 3 – 7%**  
**RESPONDENT DOESN'T KNOW 1**

**What do you like about the inside of your house? (PAUSE, then prompt .... its warm, lots space, comfortable, safe?).** There were **43 / 44** responses to this question. Key characteristics mentioned were:

- warm (**19**); safe (**19**); cosy / comfortable (13); own/my bedroom (12); deck/ balcony (6); views (5); clean (3). Two children commented that they liked the colourfulness of their homes.

The question used the prompts of 'warms' and 'space' and 'comfortable' and 'safe' which may have promoted these options in the children's minds.

**How could the inside of your house be better for you?** (PAUSE, then prompt.... more space, rooms, less traffic noise...). There were **38 / 44** responses to this question. Key themes mentioned were:  
- more room / bigger (**29**); have own room / currently share bedroom (9); stronger / less thin walls (2). One seven year old commented that the stairs were too high and too many.

The question used the prompts of 'space' and 'rooms' and 'less traffic noise' which may have similarly 'promoted' these options in the children's minds.

**What is good about outside your house?** (PAUSE, then prompt.... near park, bus stop, trees, interesting people.....). There were **37 / 44** responses to this question. Key themes mentioned were:  
- riding / playing outside (**12**); being near a park (**12**); having a deck / balcony (7); trees and bushes (6); near shops / café / dairy (4).

The question used the prompts of 'parks' and 'trees' which may have promoted these options in the children's minds.

**What do you not like about outside your place?** (PAUSE, then prompt.... traffic noise, rubbish, nowhere much to run...). There were **42 / 44** responses to this question. Key themes mentioned were:  
- noise (**25**); not a lot of space / no grass area / no play area / no outside / dirty outside (**18**); one child spoke of there being lots of windows so can't kick ball around. Some children spoke of people yelling, screaming, 'loud loud people' and 'don't get proper sleep'. Two additional comments included 'construction noise'.

The question used the prompts of 'noise' and 'rubbish' and 'nowhere much to run' which may have promoted these options in the children's minds.

**Do you have friends near where you live?** YES 25 – 57%  
NO 19 – 43%  
SOMETIMES 0

**Do you have a pet?** YES 4 – 9%  
NO 14 – 32%  
NOT ALLOWED 26 – 60%[includes noes, or not?]  
SOMETIMES 0

**Do you have family near where you live?** YES 11 – 25%  
NO 30 – 68%  
SOMETIMES 1  
NO ANSWER 2

**Are your neighbours friendly?** YES 28 – 64%  
NO 8 – 18%  
SOMETIMES 3  
HAVEN'T MET THEM 5 – 11%

**When was the last time you played at the beach / in the bush / climbing trees / at the park?**

- Yesterday **5 – 11%**
- Last week **14 – 32%**
- A few weeks ago **8 – 18%**
- Before Xmas **5 – 11%**
- Not at all **7 – 16%**
- Not sure / no answer **1 – 2%**
- Can't remember **4 – 9%**

**Where do you hang out?** There were **44 / 44** responses to this question. Key themes mentioned were: swimming / pools (**15**); at home (**14**); parks (**11**); YouthTown (**10**); library (7); Rainbows End (6); shopping / shops (6).

The question did not use prompts; however, two of the three locations of the surveys were located at YouthTown and the library, which may have 'promoted' these options in the children's minds.

**What do you get up to with your mates?** (PAUSE, then prompt... like clubs, swimming pool, parks, playing areas, basketball?). There were **44 / 44** responses to this question. Key themes mentioned were: playground (**14**); beach / pools (**14**); YouthTown (6); video / computer games / game parlour (5).

The question used the prompts of 'clubs' and 'swimming pool' and 'parks' which may have similarly 'promoted' these options in the children's minds.

**Which school did you go to last year?** (44 responses)

Freemans Bay <b>17 – 39%</b>	Green Bay Primary 1
Newton Central <b>10 – 23%</b>	Pt Chevalier School 1
Ponsonby Intermediate <b>5 – 11%</b>	AUT Kindergarten 1
Parnell Primary <b>4 – 9%</b>	Chelsea School 1
Laingholm Primary 1	Ferndale Kindergarten 1
New Plymouth 1	Ponsonby Kindergarten 1

**How did you get there and home again? (Exclusively use this transport)**

- Walk **8 – 18%**
- Bus **5 – 11%**
- Bike
- Scooter
- Skateboard
- Car **7 – 16%**
- Taxi
- Mixed transport **24 – 55%**

**How do you get to school and home again? (Tick all options)**

- Walk **22**
- Bus **18**
- Bike
- Scooter
- Skateboard
- Car **26**
- Taxi
- Other

**What is some free stuff you would like to have nearby?**

- ⊙ Swimming /wave pool /baths /waterpark = **29**
- ⊙ Sky tower = **13**
- ⊙ movies = **8**
- ⊙ park (and shady trees) = **7**
- ⊙ Rainbows end = **5**
- ⊙ zoo = **5**
- ⊙ beach = **3**
- ⊙ game parlour / laser strike / arcade = **3**
- ⊙ colouring in / painting pictures / art lessons = **3**
- ⊙ YouthTown = **3**
- ⊙ children / animal shows = **3**
- ⊙ ice cream = **2**
- ⊙ games at parks = **2**

**Single suggestions from children included:**

- ⊙ Warehouse
- ⊙ library
- ⊙ telephone store selling octaphones
- ⊙ DVD shop
- ⊙ McDonalds
- ⊙ Seaworld
- ⊙ Movie world
- ⊙ Splash world
- ⊙ trampoline
- ⊙ Butterfly creek
- ⊙ JBHS
- ⊙ Internet
- ⊙ pretty flowers outside my door
- ⊙ Motat
- ⊙ bus / train rides
- ⊙ martial arts classes
- ⊙ dancing places
- ⊙ mini golf
- ⊙ have my dad nearby
- ⊙ skatepark / biking park

**How long you been living in your home?**

1-6 months **9 – 20%**

7-12 months **0**

1-2years **15 – 34%**

2+ years **8 – 18%**

unknown months **1**

unknown years **9 – 20%**

unknown **1**

unanswered **1**

**Do you live at another address? YES 11 – 25%**  
**NO 30 – 68%**  
**SOMETIMES 3 – 7%**

Analysis of results

There were 44 participants in this survey, which was undertaken in January and February 2008. The participants ranged from four to 12 years of age, with seven-year-olds comprising the majority (25 percent), while the smallest groups of participants were aged four, six and 12 years (each four percent of the total sample). There was a good proportion of male (43 percent) to female (57 percent) participants. The predominant ethnicity of the participants was Asian (27 percent) closely followed by Pakeha and 'mixed' ethnicities (both 23 percent); the fewest were Pacific children (four percent). The majority of the participants went to local public primary schools, Freemans Bay (39 percent) and Newton Central (23 percent), with a number of other schools represented.

The majority of children lived in an apartment (91 percent). Most lived with their mum and dad (68 percent) or in a single-adult household (27 percent), the single adult predominantly being mum. Of the 44 participants, 34 (77 percent) stated that at least one adult in their household worked near to where they lived. When asked about what they liked about the insides of their houses, the children spoke of them being

warm and safe (equally 44 percent of responses). They also stated that they liked having their own bedrooms, and that their homes were cosy or comfortable. Asked what could be better about the inside of their homes, the children mostly spoke of wanting it to be bigger (29 of the 38 responses – 76 percent). The next leading improvement the children wanted was their own room (24 percent).

The children were then asked about the outside of their home – what was good and what they did not like. The children liked playing and riding outside of their apartments equally, and being near a park (32 percent). What 60 percent did not like was *noise* – people, traffic, construction, music, ships etc. Some children also spoke about resultant difficulty getting sleep. The next most popular dislike was lack of space / no grass area / no play area / no outside area, or that the outside area was dirty (43 percent).

Slightly higher proportions of the child respondents had friends near where they lived (57 percent); most respondents did not have family nearby (68 percent). Nearly all children stated that they did not have a pet or were not allowed a pet (92 percent). In the majority of cases (64 percent), the children felt that their neighbours were friendly, although 11 percent had not yet met their neighbours, and a quarter of the children felt that their neighbours were only sometimes friendly, or were not friendly towards them.

When considering their recreation opportunities, the children were asked about when the last time was that they had played at the beach, in the bush, climbing trees, or been at a park. The questionnaire was administered in the peak of a sunny January school holiday period, and 43 percent of the children stated they had done at least one of these activities in the past few days or the day before. Sixteen percent said that they had not at all, with the remaining respondents (29 percent) commenting that they had done so within the past few weeks or before Christmas.

The children were asked about where they ‘hung out’: thirty four percent hung out at the swimming pools, with a similar number (32 percent) ‘hanging out’ at home. Given the children’s age, this is not surprising as they would still need to be supervised by an adult. Parks (25 percent) and YouthTown (23 percent) also featured in this response. The children were then asked about what they got up to with their mates, with playgrounds / parks, and the beach and pools being the most popular options for 32 percent of the children.

## Appendix II - Overseas examples

### *City of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*

The local authority of Edmonton in Alberta, Canada, provides a contemporary example of the integration of children's needs and strengths into council outputs. Edmonton's local authority developed a child impact assessment tool for examining the impact of programmes, policies and initiatives on children and youth. This tool was strongly linked with the council departments' overarching *Integrated Service Strategy* document. This child impact assessment process was required to be practical, simple to use, visible and visionary, with the goal of putting Edmonton at the leading edge of child-friendly cities (Yates 2005:372). The tool was designed to:

- Educate people about children's services
- advocate a child-friendly Edmonton
- integrate child-focused efforts into the business planning processes of the city
- focus on the key issues of importance to the children and youth of Edmonton.(ibid: 373).

The content of the tool was developed using the council's strategic goals and utilising international child frameworks such as UNCROC and UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities. Feedback from local children and young people also contributed. It involved five steps:

1. Departmental programmes, policies, services and amenities were selected for assessment to pilot the tool.
2. A standard form or template that could be used by staff easily was used to comment on the impact of the programme on children and youth. This was a collaborative process involving individual rating, group discussion and facilitated mediation.
3. Potential improvements were suggested.
4. Decisions were made regarding any changes to the programme or policy.
5. Programmes were altered to procure more child friendly outcomes.

A political shift resulted in an adaptation to this approach; the subsequent *Child Friendly Lens* was less prescriptive and was user-friendly for council staff, with an eye to uptake by external businesses and community agencies. The lens offers five "views":

- Children have voice and influence, and understand responsibility to themselves and others
- children feel safe and are protected
- children join in and participate freely
- children play, have fun, make friends and develop skills
- children feel welcome and respected, and have a sense of belonging.

The document asks users to seek responses (on a scale 1–5) from a number of populations to a series of statements related to the five views (total = 40 statements). Only one view may be assessed, or any combination of views, depending on the proposal being assessed. In this way, an overall assessment can be made as to the child-friendliness of a proposal. The responses help the evaluator to complete an "action" associated with each of the five views. There is no explicit external monitoring or enforcement of the assessment results by another party. The *Child Friendly Lens* sits within the overarching *Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy (2006)*. This document has three goals and seven objectives, designed to cumulatively interact to build a city-wide community of practice whereby children's issues, needs

and strengths are integrated into core council business and into other city agencies. A sample of actions within this wider strategy:

- Delivery of a status report on Edmonton's children and youth
- advocacy eg. national child day, luncheon for community leaders to hear from child health advocates, external and internal partnerships with children's agencies
- training of City of Edmonton staff with leading international colleagues
- the employment of a Child Friendly Edmonton coordinator
- a cross-departmental committee to move forward this agenda.

A menu of other approaches, and organisational building blocks, support the lens' utility and vice-versa, through the overall child-focused strategic direction. Concurrently, the political will in Edmonton is strong, with two of the 12 councillors nominated to support child-specific initiatives. Cumulatively, this creates huge and supportive momentum for child-focused action and change across the city (*Child Friendly Edmonton Coordinator, January 2008*).

### ***Finnish model***

In Finland, a handbook has been produced for local and central government agencies who are required to do child impact assessments.

### ***London, England***

A checklist was developed by the metropolitan authorities in London in 1995 (Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Children's Rights Office, 1995), asking local planners and policy staff to consider issues as diverse as child protection, access, opportunities, rights, deprivation and participation in services. This comprehensive and progressive questioning approach is no longer applied in the City of London and it is not transferable to the New Zealand local government context. However, the intention to integrate children's needs and issues into London's business is impressive, hence its inclusion in this review.

### ***Commissioner for Children initiatives in Scotland and Northern Ireland***

The Commissioners for Children in Scotland and Northern Ireland have developed child rights impact assessment tools. Features of their tools are described by Angus (2007:10):

- A focus on children's rights, using UNCROC's four principles as the framework, as well as the European Commission's statement on human rights, other international conventions, and national and local law
- involvement of children as participants in the process
- a two-stage process: first an initial appraisal, then a full analysis if warranted
- application to legislative proposals, policy, budget decisions, administrative changes and reviews of current planning and practice
- a template approach to guide the process and reporting.

The Scotland Commissioner for Children and Young People model has an eight-step child impact assessment process.

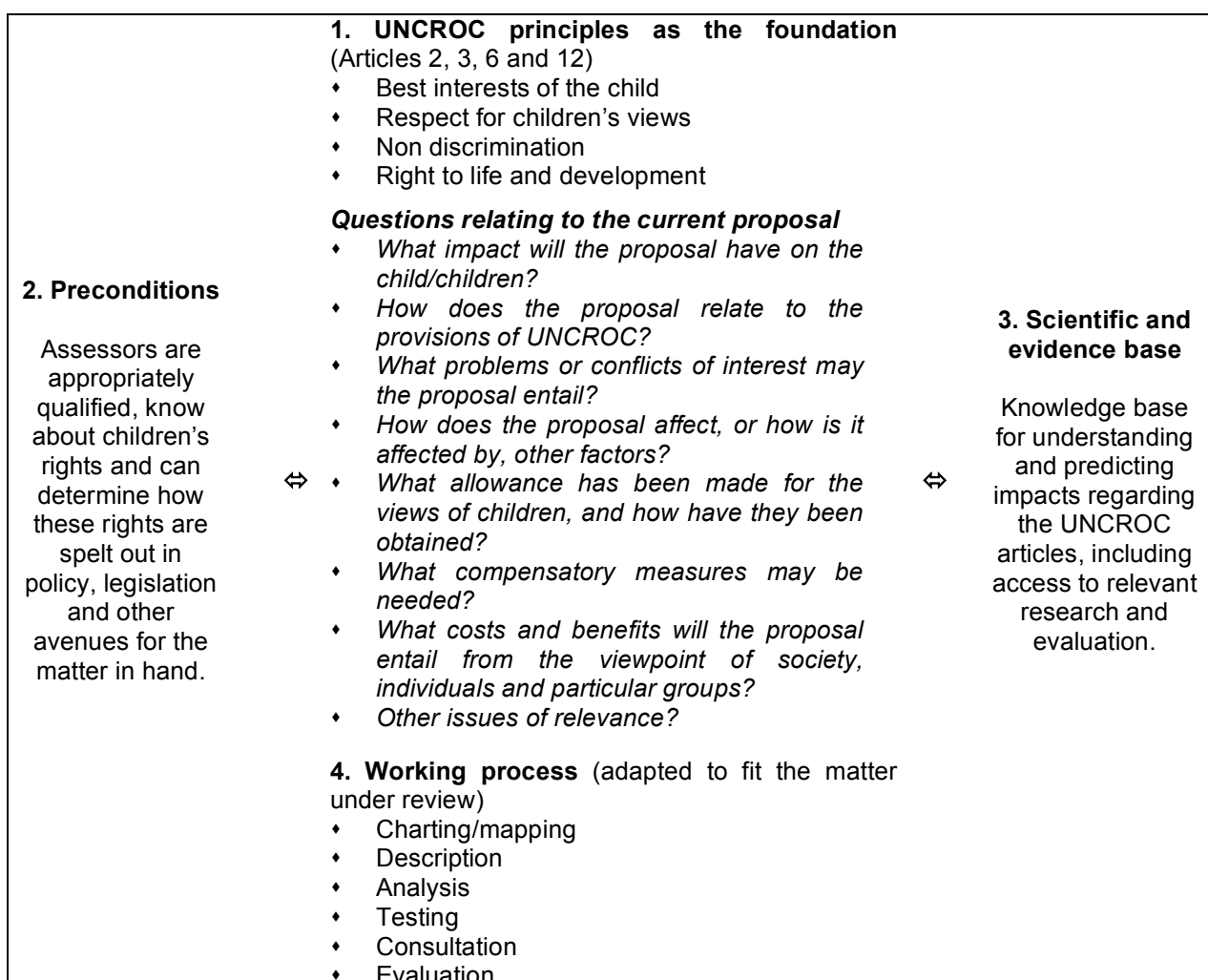
1. Identify – choose what proposals to assess; what to appraise; and what to do a full assessment of.

2. Map – describe the proposal, its objectives and likely impact and determine which articles of UNCROC apply.
3. Gather information.
4. Consult with stakeholders, children and experts.
5. Analyse.
6. Make recommendations.
7. Publicise.
8. Monitor and evaluate.

### **Swedish model**

The following model was developed by the Children’s Ombudsman in Sweden in 2000 (Sylwander 2001). Note that it has been adapted slightly from Angus’ citation (2007) for the purposes of this review. At the centre of the model are the questions to ask about the proposal being assessed, with the four general requirements for a good assessment feeding into this core assessment.

### **Sylwander / Swedish model (2001)**





## **Appendix III – methods for gathering information**

The methods by which information can be gathered for child impact assessment are diverse. Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment (Ministry of Health, 2007, pp. 20–21) lists various options:

- Focus groups or focused hui
- population and regional analysis (quantitative or qualitative)
- scenario assessments (quantitative or qualitative)
- health hazard identification and classification (quantitative or qualitative)
- stakeholder workshops
- surveys
- key informant interviews with kaumatua, experts, or groups such as runanga, Maori Women’s Welfare League and iwi tribal authorities
- brain storming
- citizens’ juries (inviting members of the public to hear evidence from experts and then make an assessment)
- Delphi processes (involving a panel of individual experts and key people engaged in consensus decision-making, where the group decides weighting and scaling using an iterative process)
- environmental monitoring (quantitative or qualitative)
- risk assessment, risk communication and risk management
- cost-benefit analysis
- evaluation.

## **Appendix IV - project reference group members**

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