

Promising Approaches for **Positive Parenting** in Waitakere

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1. INTRODUCTION

innovate change is a social innovation agency that works to identify and implement new and creative ways to design, deliver and review health and social care programmes, services and policy.

SKIP stands for Strategies with Kids, Information for Parents. It's a network of organisations and individuals committed to making New Zealand a better place for children to grow up. SKIP is supported by a small team within the Ministry of Social Development, and works with communities to change attitudes and behaviours toward children, and to provide support to parents. The focus is families with children aged 0–5, as this is when the foundations of positive, loving parent–child relationships are established. Find out more at www.skip.org.nz.

SKIP is not about doing things for communities; it's doing things with communities, to grow positive parenting in their space. SKIP looks different in different places because it's about local ideas and local opportunities. In early 2014, the SKIP team at the Ministry of Social Development engaged **innovate change** to develop community and parent led initiatives that help grow positive parenting in Waitakere.

How we look after children has a huge impact. Good parenting means that kids can thrive, belong and achieve. It affects their behaviour as children, their learning at school, their mental wellbeing and their ability to parent their own children. Although it's never too late to learn new habits, and it's possible to break the cycle, when we parent children well we set them up for a great start in life.

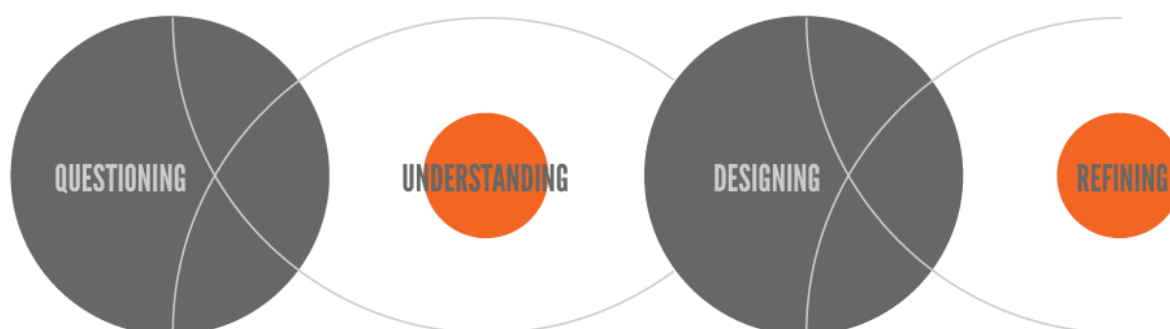
This document summarises promising approaches developed via a social innovation process with Waitakere parents, families and community providers. The process was led by **innovate change** for the Ministry of Social Development and it builds on companion report *Insights on Positive Parenting in Waitakere*.

If you would like a copy of *Insights on Positive Parenting in Waitakere* or a summary of our literature review or provider interviews, or for more information about this project or other work undertaken by **innovate change**, contact us via www.innovatechange.co.nz.

The document will be shared with the Ministry of Social Development and others, in order to support community and parent led approaches for growing positive parenting.

2. METHODOLOGY

innovate change has developed an innovative action model¹ that is used and adapted in social innovation work. This document summarises promising approaches identified by following the first four stages of the innovative action model (as pictured).



In the questioning phase of this project, 11 Waitakere parents were trained to interview parents in their social networks. They interviewed another 39 parents, all of whom live in Waitakere (23% were fathers; 20% Māori; 9% Pacific; 17% Chinese, Indian or other Asian; and 25% under 20 years). **innovate change** conducted in-depth interviews with 11 professionals from organisations that support Waitakere parents and held a whānau event in Ranui bringing together 30 local parents and 12 children. A targeted review of the research literature was also completed. All of this research was brought together in the *Insights on Positive Parenting in Waitakere* document.

Throughout this process, a co-design group that included Waitakere parents, community providers and creative thinkers guided the process and worked to identify priority population groups, behaviour change goals and focus areas for action. In the final phases, we identified promising ways to achieve these goals using innovation injection processes, which again involved Waitakere parents, service providers and creative thinkers.

This document summarises the promising approaches identified through this work. The diagram on the following page summarises the overall goals for SKIP in Waitakere and:

- the target audience groups
- behaviour change goals
- outcomes
- key activities, and
- secondary activities.

Subsequent pages then provide more detail on each of these programme components.

¹ See: <http://innovatechange.co.nz/about/innovative-action/>



REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION OF THOSE PARENTING 0-5 YEAR OLDS

INCREASE PARENTING STRENGTHS OF THOSE WHO PARENT 0-5 YEAR OLDS



BEHAVIOUR CHANGE GOALS

Increase the number of parents* who have supportive relationships in their community.

Increase the number of parents who know about local opportunities and support.

Increase the number of parents who do fun activities with their children.

Increase the number of parents who lead community parenting initiatives.

Increase the number of community leaders who encourage positive parenting.

OUTCOMES

More parents know others and feel supported in their community.

- Parents make use of support.
- The number of parents who struggle alone with challenges decreases.

Parent-child relationships improve; parenting confidence improves.

- More local parenting supports are available.
- Initiatives are shaped by those who use them

Parenting strengths and confidence improves.

KEY ACTIVITIES

★ Grow local connections

★ Grow parent leaders

★ Welcome new parents and let them know what support and opportunities are available

★ Social media platform

Target Audience Groups

- Parents* new to the area
- Parents living in low income areas and/or areas with limited transport
- Community and parent leaders

* We have used the term parents to encompass all those who provide a parenting role for children under 5 years old in Waitakere.

3. TARGET AUDIENCE GROUPS

Identifying a target audience is important if we want to take an impactful and strategic approach to social change. People are not all the same, and getting clear on whose behaviour we are trying to change should inform what goals we develop and what activities we implement. It is common in the health and social service sectors to try to ensure programmes target all, in order to be inclusive. However, resources are usually limited and a lack of effective targeting, often leads to social change programmes that are so broad, they fail to effectively reach anyone.

The first workshop with the co-design group focused on identifying *who* – essentially leading to the identification of target audience groups for this programme. These audience ideas were generated from considering questions about target audience, including:

1. Who is the highest risk?
2. Who is most likely to (or most open to) change?
3. Are there particular groups or sub-groups that will have a higher level of difference (e.g. opinion leaders, super parents) than others?
4. Who is critical to success?
5. Who are the key influencers of parents?

Three target audience groups were identified:

- Parents new to the area
- Parents living in low income areas and/or areas with limited transport
- Community and parent leaders.

Parents new to the area could be parents who have recently moved to Waitakere or parents who have moved to a new part of Waitakere (e.g. Henderson). These parents were identified as having particular support needs as they learn about support networks and resources in their new community.

Parents living in low income areas (e.g. Ranui, Massey) and those with limited transport (e.g. no car, poor or expensive public transport options) were identified as having particular vulnerability due to the high potential for social isolation.

Community and parent leaders refers to both leaders of community groups and movements (e.g. sports groups, marae, churches) and parents that take a leadership role in their community. These people who seen as having significant influence on parents with potential for high levels of positive impact.

The term 'parents' has been used to encompass all those who provide a parenting role for children under 5 years old in Waitakere. This could include adults in the extended whānau, grandparents, and other adults that play a parent or guardian role.

4. GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Reviewing the literature, the provider and parent interviews, and discussions with the co-design group led to a range of possible behaviour change goals. These were refined to focus on two overarching goals and five behaviour change goals.

The overarching goals for SKIP in Waitakere are to:

- **Reduce social isolation** of those parenting 0-5 year olds
- **Increase parenting strengths** of those who parent 0-5 year olds

The outcomes are intended to ‘unpack’ the goals by suggesting what may happen as a result of the goals being met. Outcomes are helpful in that they tell us what the ‘end state’ should be – essentially, what will it be like when we are done. There are seven outcomes and they correspond with the five behaviour change goals.

behaviour change goals	corresponding outcomes
Increase the number of parents who have supportive relationships in their community.	More parents know others and feel supported in their community.
Increase the number of parents who know about local opportunities and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents make use of support.• The number of parents who struggle alone with challenges decreases.
Increase the number of parents who do fun activities with their children.	Parent-child relationships improve; parenting confidence improves.
Increase the number of parents who lead community parenting initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More local parenting supports are available.• Initiatives are shaped by those who use them.
Increase the number of community leaders who encourage positive parenting.	Parenting strengths and confidence improves.

5. PROMISING KEY ACTIVITIES

The key activities are the actual actions, tasks or projects that could be done. The hypothesis for the SKIP Waitakere programme is that these activities would collectively contribute to the achievement of the behaviour change goals and the outcomes.

Key Activity 1: Grow Local Connections

One of the biggest barriers to parenting is social isolation (see: *Insights on Positive Parenting in Waitakere*). Growing local connections is a meaningful way to support families in their day to day parenting of children. Important connections can be developed and encouraged with other parents; older people in the community; and with neighbours.

The key activities identified for growing local connections are:

1. Local, regular, free and informal **playgroups and meet ups** in parks
2. **Cross generational activities** and groups
3. **Neighbours meet neighbours** activities.

The social innovation process identified that for these activities to have maximum impact, they should:

- be relatively **small scale** and **regular** so people get to know each other
- be **local** (ideally within walking distance) so transport is not a barrier and people get to know others nearby
- **engage** new families and/or those in low income and poor transport areas
- **grow local parent leaders** who might lead or take responsibility for the activity or begin a new one.

Playgroups and meet ups

Local, regular, free and informal playgroups and meet ups in parks were the most regularly suggested activity identified throughout the process. They were suggested by parents, whānau members, and providers across different groups, age cohorts and communities. The process highlighted that these get togethers should be relatively small scale, simple and regular so people get to know each other. Funding and co-ordination resources would be better spent on having more groups, more regularly. This should focus on more local options being available for more parents, or on making sure parks are 'playgroup ready' (e.g. having some sort of shelter available and having toilets), rather than on funding complex infrastructure or large, one-off events.

Example: Weekly meet ups in parks

Many parents highlighted the value of holding a weekly meet up for those parenting pre-schoolers in local parks, aimed at people in a particular neighbourhood. This could be in the same park each week or it could be rotated around a few local parks so that, at least sometimes, it would be very close to home for most parents participating.

The meet ups would use park resources and play equipment that is already in place. Meet ups could be led or co-led by local parents. For example, two parents could take responsibility for being at the park at the agreed time, welcoming others, and ensuring people were introduced to each other.

Social media, local welcome packs, signs at the park and local newspapers or noticeboards could be used to inform people of the meet ups. Parents could be encouraged to become involved by being encouraged to bring a friend or being asked to help in some way.

To build momentum and 'reasons to come', activities such as tree-planting, or themes, such as dress ups, could be used. For some, inviting a coffee van, having an event such as a barbecue, or hiring a bouncy castle could be a draw card. These things might be needed to build the momentum for a local meet up, however, the meet up should generally be frequent, local and simple, rather than large and complex.

Meet ups might usually target parents in a particular neighbourhood, street, or area, however it would also be valuable to have meet ups aimed at particular groups of people (such as dads, grandparents, young parents, or new migrant parents). Specific meet ups like this could be co-ordinated by leaders or groups from those communities.

Similar models could be used to run local playgroups in community venues.

Cross generational activities

The social innovation process identified that cross generational connections could support parents of 0-5 year olds in a way that could benefit both older and younger people. Cross generational connections can add value for older persons, as well as be beneficial and supportive for new parents. In this way, building cross generational connections can help to reduce social isolation and grow stronger communities. Activities to promote cross generational connections should allow people to get to know each other over time in a safe and non-threatening way.

Other ideas to build cross generational connections that did not rely on existing groups were also identified, including:

- Campaigns or schemes to support one to one connections, such as 'Adopt a New Parent', 'Adopt a Gran'.
- Developing a scheme for local parents like 'Twitter Aunties'. Twitter Aunties is an informal Twitter-based network of people who support a Women's Refuge. When the refuge needs particular support, it puts out a call to the Twitter Aunties who help with particular items (such as kitchen equipment), or an activity such as helping someone move house. The Twitter Aunties also interact socially on and off line.²

² See: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/morningreport/audio/2580996/'twitter-aunties'-help-an-auckland-women's-refuge-at-christmas>

- Utilise or grow existing approaches such as Bellyful (where older community members provide meals for new parents).³

Overall, these examples might be most likely to create genuine personal cross generational connections if they were relatively local or small and if they occurred over a number of occasions.

Example: Bring existing groups together

A walking group, craft group or Probus Club could be brought together with a playgroup, park meet up or a young parents group over several occasions. This could occur with groups with a shared interest, such as older persons and new parents from the same language group, in the same suburb or part of the same church. For example, men's groups such as Lions, ManKind Project or Big Buddy might partner with a young dads group.

The two groups could exchange skills through activities like preparing a soup to learning how to text, or they could work on a shared project such as maintaining a community garden.

A cross generational project could create a local 'recipe book' of community stories, ideas and recipes for sustaining healthy, connected families on a budget. This could involve older and younger people sharing recipes and ideas from their own culture or family. The 'recipe book' could be printed or put online and promoted in the local community.

A retired persons' walking group could begin to regularly take children in prams. This might begin as something quite small like taking children in prams for a walk around the park while the park meet up parents have some time with each other or with a smaller number of their children.

Neighbours meet neighbours

For parents, knowing neighbours can help break social isolation and build community connections. This can have positive benefits for neighbours of all ages and stages. This activity could be small scale and very simple. For example, challenging or supporting people to get to know those on their street could be an effective local campaign activity. Initiatives such as Neighbours Day⁴ and local business sponsorship could be utilised to facilitate neighbourhood barbecues, street parties or other events. Local suburban Facebook pages⁵ could be used to promote activities. Online projects like Neighbourly⁶ could be collaborated with to promote and build momentum for neighbourhood social events and activities. Local connections can also be grown through organised community treasure hunts, like the Violence Free Waitakere project Our Amazing Place⁷. This approach has been successfully implemented with Waitakere communities through.

³ See: <http://bellyful.org.nz/>

⁴ See: <http://www.neighboursday.org.nz/>

⁵ For examples of Waitakere local Facebook groups see: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TatPen/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/titirangi/>

⁶ See: <https://www.neighbourly.co.nz>

⁷ See: www.ouramazingplace.org.nz

Example: Neighbourhood activities

Port Phillip City Council in Melbourne provides a resource on how to create a street party in your neighbourhood⁸. This has helped residents to organise street parties involving diverse participants and has led to many neighbourhood gatherings taking place that otherwise might not have.

Key Activity 2: Welcome new parents and let them know what support and opportunities are available

Parents often do not use local informal or formal support such as playgroups or health providers. Two of the barriers identified, particularly for new parents and for parents who are new to an area, were that many do not know about the support available and some parents might not feel welcome to use such support. Simple steps to support parents to know about and use local resources were identified:

1. **Welcome packs** for parents new to the area distributed by landlords, real estate agents, health services, neighbours, and local parents
2. **Welcome information** on a wallet-sized card or brochure with key information, linked to a regularly updated website
3. **Parenting or community websites** or Facebook pages.

Welcome packs

In some areas, parents of new babies are given a baby pack which might include clothes, nappies and information. Parents and community leaders considered that a goodies bag or welcome pack for new parents in an area would help them to feel welcomed and to know about and use local support. This might be particularly effective if they were given the pack by a friendly welcoming parent or street co-ordinator or by the person they have arranged housing with (e.g. the real estate agent or property manager). Such a pack could include small gifts, discount vouchers for local business, and welcome information.

Welcome information

Parents wanted to know about what was available in their area, from local playgroups, coffee groups and park meet ups, to services like early childhood care and health services. However, they described multiple brochures and websites as overwhelming. Parents would find it helpful to have a single up-to-date wallet-sized card or one brochure to summarise local opportunities. The wallet card or brochure would be easy to hand out and helpful for those without regular internet access.

It would be ideal if it had a link to a community website that was updated regularly (this could be the same web presence as the parenting or community websites detailed below). It would make it easier

⁸ For a copy of the resource, see: <http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/updated-street-life-kit2011.pdf>

for families to feel welcome to use support, services and events if there were photos of the providers and services on the website so people could see what they look like or who goes there.

A resource of this sort would ideally be relatively locally focused (e.g. 'Welcome to Ranui') and could be distributed by landlords, property managers, and real estate agents to new families, as well as via schools, playgroups and early childhood services, health providers and local newspapers.

Online community or parenting pages

Many parents told us that local parenting or community Facebook or pages help to break isolation and help them to know about opportunities in their community. These pages can also be a vehicle for social media campaigns. A number of communities in Waitakere have active and vibrant online communities on Facebook already (e.g. Te Atatu Peninsula, Titirangi)⁹. Existing online projects like Neighbourly¹⁰ could provide useful collaboration opportunities. SKIP could support existing pages and/or set up a central page/template and invite community groups or leaders to take ownership of their local page.

⁹ For examples of Waitakere local Facebook groups see: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TatPen/> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/titirangi/>

¹⁰ See: <https://www.neighbourly.co.nz>

6. PROMISING SECONDARY ACTIVITIES

Skills or strengths in parenting can be encouraged in many ways. The parents and stakeholders engaged in this process identified growing local connections and welcoming new parents and letting them know what support is available as key activities to support great parenting. Other ideas that were also supported are described in this section.

Secondary Activity 1: Social media messaging and campaigns that encourage positive parenting

Social media could be used to encourage positive parenting and to increase parents' connections with others. Social media campaigns should be local and regularly updated. They could utilise social media strategies such as undertaking an activity and challenging friends to do the same. Challenges should be positive and fun. They could be linked to community events and make use of Waitakere local community Facebook groups.

Example: Five minute moments

An idea developed by participants in one of the *innovation injection sessions* held as a part of the process, was a social media campaign of five minute moments. Parents would be encouraged to have five minute moments where they have fun with their children, post the photo, and challenge other parents to do the same.

Secondary Activity 2: Local parenting support groups or parenting classes

Many parents value the opportunity to develop connections with other parents and to strengthen their parenting skills via community based parenting groups. For some, this means parenting groups within their suburb, while for others this means parenting groups within their language group, age group or another community of interest, for example lesbian and gay parents.

These could be formal parenting classes or informal gatherings, for example, a coffee group format. Smaller parenting groups (such as coffee groups) could be invited to get together with other groups on a regular basis. Some groups explicitly highlighted that parenting courses or classes would be useful. This need was particularly expressed by recent migrant groups and by some young parents.

Secondary Activity 3: Initiatives to grow parent leaders

Growing parent led initiatives requires parents to connect with others, to organise, and, for some, to take a lead. Parent leaders could be supported or developed by existing parenting or community groups and through organisations such as Māori Women's Welfare League.

Existing leaders of groups could grow new parent leaders through small actions such as:

- welcoming new parents
- inviting individual parents to take on a small role or responsibility
- offering volunteering options
- mentoring, or
- co-facilitating groups with new parents.

New parent leaders could be offered training or connection to other parent leaders (on or off line).

Example: Helpful hints for parent leaders

A simple activity could be making sure new leaders are able to access helpful hints for running playgroups. These could be online or simple paper resources with points such as:

- Welcome newcomers
- Focus on children
- Give parents a task
- Buddy up
- How to access to SKIP resources
- How to access local information or supports.

Secondary Activity 4: Utilising existing community leaders as advocates for positive parenting and supporters of parents

Community leaders, including kuia, kaumātua, sports coaches, pastors, school teachers, nurses, can support positive parenting in their communities. Sometimes small actions from trusted advisors can be incredibly powerful. Community leaders could be encouraged to promote positive parenting in small ways, e.g. by sharing SKIP resources or community welcome information. They could be asked to promote SKIP social media campaigns, to share messages about parenting that are relevant to their groups, or to support or host local play groups or meet-ups. Some community leaders might take a key role in promoting positive parenting by facilitating cross generational connections or encouraging and enabling local parents to set up a playgroup or meetup.

7. IMPLEMENTATION

The SKIP Waitakere Social Innovation Process has involved many parents and community members. Hopes and dreams have been expressed; many potential leaders and supporters have become engaged; and promising ways forward have been identified.

Many of the people who have become involved are new to SKIP and to community leadership and may not feel they have a mandate to carry ideas forward without support. If no active implementation strategy is used, parent led activities with the key target groups (parents who are new to an area, parents in low income areas, and community and parent leaders) may not spontaneously develop.

To implement parent and community led activities for positive parenting in Waitakere an active implementation strategy is recommended to ensure that:

- parents and communities remain engaged
- the vision and values remain a key focus
- momentum is maintained
- ideas are brought to action, and
- any funds are well spent.

There will be many ways to achieve this; three different options for implementation to achieve the overarching goals of reducing social isolation and increasing parenting strengths are suggested.

1. Appoint a **local SKIP Community Champion**. SKIP champions are funded individuals with strong connections in local communities, who understand the SKIP philosophy, focus and opportunities, and who actively support local communities to grow positive parenting. This model works well where there are skilled, committed individuals who can develop relationships with key communities and empower others to take action.
2. **Contract existing groups** and networks (such as the Waitakere Promoting Great Parenting Network) to ensure that activities are implemented. Groups such as this have a history in Waitakere and have important local connections.
3. **Continue the social innovation process**. **innovate change** and the Ministry of Social Development have led the first four steps of a social innovation process. This has involved significant engagement with parents and other stakeholders to identify key issues and challenges; develop goals and outcomes and a clear plan to achieve them. An obvious option is to continue the process, with the subsequent three steps (many social innovation processes, including the innovative action model are seven stages). Specifically this would involve:
 - **trying** – getting some of the key activities (and maybe some of the secondary activities) happening in a way that involves multiple small scale ‘trials’ and that involves local parents as leaders of those activities

- **reviewing** – regularly reviewing small scale ‘trials’ to check if they are achieving what they are intended to; checking if we are on the way to reaching our outcomes and seeing signs of change with the people we work with; changing and iterating activities
- **sustaining** – identifying ways successful activities could be scaled to other areas, neighbourhoods or suburbs and run sustainably.