



PLAY IN THE HUTT

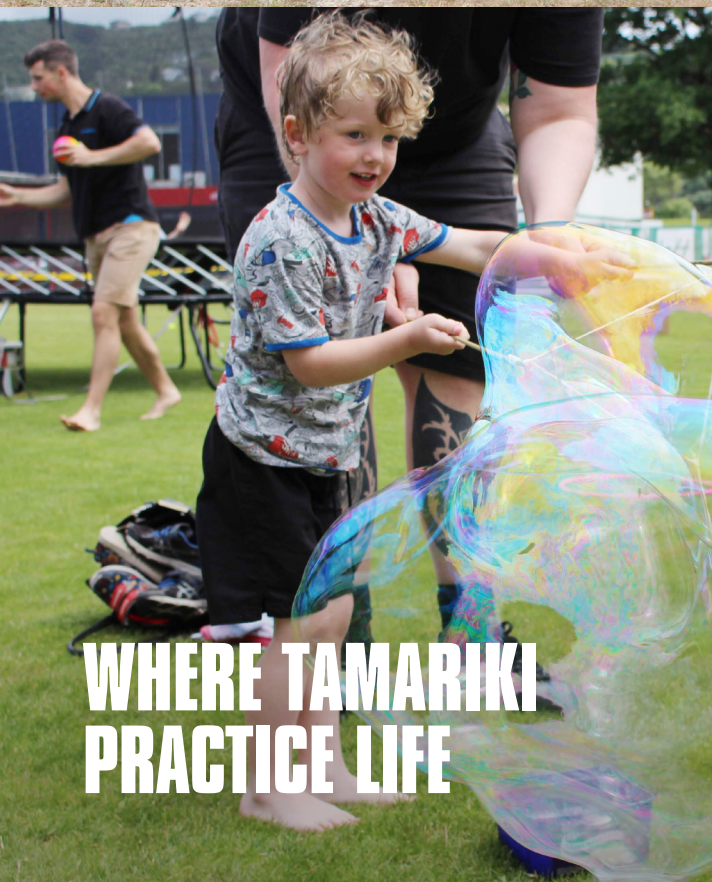
CASE STUDY

—
CHAMPIONING PLAY TO INCREASE
QUALITY EXPERIENCES AND
OPPORTUNITIES

PLAY IS...



**A WAY TO CREATE MORE
PLAYFUL NEIGHBOURHOODS**



**WHERE TAMARIKI
PRACTICE LIFE**



**UNDERSTOOD THROUGH
RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS**



**WHERE TAMARIKI
LEARN, DEVELOP
AND GROW**



**FUNDAMENTAL TO
OUR WELLBEING**

OVERVIEW



What we learnt is now informing how we collectively think and act to make Lower Hutt a great place to play again. We've put play on the agenda of those that can make decisions around urban design and spatial planning, active transport and community development.”

- HAYLEY BUCHAN
HEALTHY FAMILIES LOWER HUTT MANAGER

Hutt City Council, Healthy Families Lower Hutt and Sport NZ embarked on a bold challenge – to see play integrated and embedded across all its departments.

In 2017, Sport NZ developed a [Play Development Process](#) to support its regional partners to create and lead their own play development strategies.

One of the first on board was Hutt City Council who, in partnership with Healthy Families Lower Hutt, used an insights approach to explore and understand the state of play in Lower Hutt neighbourhoods and help answer the key question – “*how do we enable our tamariki and rangatahi to play more every day?*”

The resulting project, Play in the Hutt, was a way to create more playable neighbourhoods and communities with more child-friendly streets. Its key objective was to gather local knowledge to make a case for change and help inform what action is needed to have a lasting impact.

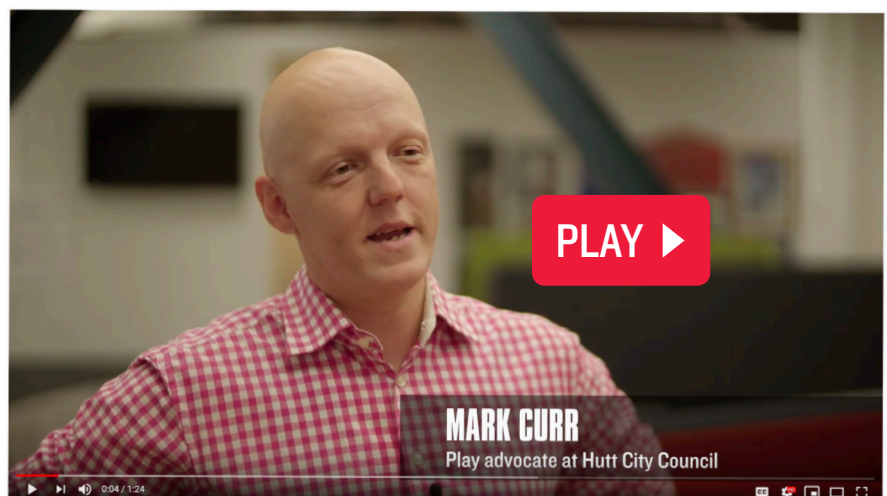
The Play in the Hutt team collected research and local insights to form a play analysis. This information resulted in:

- the establishment of a play team to ensure that play was part of the conversation and integrated into Council departments’ objectives.
- working with like-minded health and education providers and the local community to ensure a locally-led approach.
- the publication of the Tākaro – To Play report to guide Council when approaching the design, build and use of its physical and social environments.
- the team being able to influence both the Council and other community and national organisations on play initiatives.

Thanks to the insights gathered through Play in the Hutt, opportunities for unstructured play is now considered at a strategic level for many Council projects.

The knowledge gathered from the community has also helped the Council’s Sport and Recreation team tailor events. In the last two years, 25 community play events have been held, attracting more than 4,500 tamariki and their whānau. Many of these events have involved resources and commitments from cross-Council departments.

Mark Curr, the Sport and Recreation Programmes Manager at Hutt City Council, talks about being a play advocate in the video below.



WHAT WE KNEW



Hutt City Council's vision is for Lower Hutt to be a great place to live, work and play. Our city can't be great if our people aren't healthy."

- HAYLEY BUCHAN
HEALTHY FAMILIES LOWER HUTT MANAGER

Research shows that across the country 82% of tamariki and rangatahi (5-17 year olds) play in any given week. On average, tamariki and rangatahi spend 11 hours participating in play, active recreation and sport and 53% of this time is spent playing (Active NZ survey, 2018).

Play is where tamariki "practice life". Sport NZ defines play as:

- intrinsically motivated – it is spontaneous and will happen anywhere
- personally directed – it has limited or no adult involvement
- freely chosen – it is self-determined and has no pre-determined outcome
- fun, accessible, challenging, social and repeatable.

Play is essential for tamariki growth in cognitive, physical, social emotional and spiritual development and is the foundation of Sport NZ's Physical Literacy Approach. The earliest physical experiences for tamariki are through play which fosters creativity and innovation and builds ability to identify and manage risk. Play also contributes to the wellbeing of the whānau and wider community.

However, there is a growing concern that our increasingly risk adverse society is contributing to a generation of 'bubble-wrapped' tamariki who have limited opportunities to play creatively, instigate physical activity, overcome challenges independently and learn to manage risks appropriately (Duncan & McPhee, 2015).

Dr Wendy Russell, who has worked in the play and playwork sector for almost 40 years, talks about how play enlivens life and is the basis of mental and physical health.



GETTING STARTED



As a city we need to empower our communities to better understand and appreciate play and acknowledge the importance of play in creating a healthy and active society. Increasing access to quality play experiences for tamariki will enhance their development and enrich lives of Lower Hutt residents.”

- MARK CURR
HUTT CITY COUNCIL SPORT AND RECREATION
PROGRAMMES MANAGER

Hutt City Council and Healthy Families Lower Hutt recognised the value of play in both improving physical activity and the overall wellbeing of the community. They wanted to lay strong foundations to ensure tamariki were able to be physically active throughout their life-stages – starting with play at a young age.

The Council's previous focus on play was more about playgrounds. However, working with Sport NZ's Play Consultant Scott MacKenzie, they saw the importance of working across Council's infrastructure and with the community to see play-needs considered in decision-making.

To make sure Council decision-makers had a greater understanding of the definition of 'play' as an unstructured concept, research and insights would be essential. With no current baseline data on play in Lower Hutt, it was important to start with a strong local focus, with the aim of scaling the delivery and impact city-wide.

Initial insights were gained by talking to attendees at community events about what play meant to them and for their tamariki.

Due to the insights gained, Hutt City Council tweaked their methods and delivered different types of community interventions and events. They also had conversations with people about how they could fine-tune their play framework.



THE INITIATIVE



Everyone who attended was really excited to be involved and happy to devote their time. We wanted these people to help us spread the word, make play top of mind for decision makers at Council.”

- HAYLEY BUCHAN
HEALTHY FAMILIES LOWER HUTT MANAGER

Creating a cross-functional team

To promote play across internal and external channels, in September 2017 a cross-functional Council working group, comprising people whose roles effected how play was enabled within the community, was invited to discuss what play meant to them. This led to the establishment of the Hutt City Council Play Team.

The Play Team saw the need for greater research and community insights to both achieve the project’s objectives of understanding the barriers that tamariki and their whānau faced, and to help generate more opportunities for quality play experiences in Hutt City.

Undertaking local research

Sport NZ funding saw a Play Researcher employed to capture a local data story that took into account a number of diverse settings and identified communities.

It was important that the design of data collection provided insights for all socioeconomic communities within Hutt City and showed the differences in play opportunities across these neighbourhoods. Sport NZ’s research team supported the methodology of data gathering to ensure findings could be shared nationally.

Initially, Play in the Hutt focused on finding out the state of play in three local neighbourhoods; Naenae, Alicetown and Tirohanga. Through pop-up street parties, door knocking and surveys, tamariki and their whānau were asked how and when they play and what the barriers and enablers for play are. The neighbourhoods were selected to ensure a spread of socioeconomic, urban and more sparsely populated areas.

During this time, the Council’s sports and recreation team continued delivering other community events aligned with the kaupapa of Play in the Hutt. This live exploration helped reinforce the findings of the data and capture the reality of the socioeconomic spectrum of the city.



“

We should have a way to slow down the traffic in order for the environment to be safer for tamariki to play.”

- LOCAL PARENT

“

I love to play games like tag and hide-n-seek, otherwise just hang out.”

- LOCAL 11-YEAR-OLD

“

It would be great to connect with the neighbours so there's a sense of everyone looking out for each other.”

- NAENAE PARENT

“

Tākaro – To Play's data and insights provided the case for change at the systems level for how we design and activate our city. It has informed a lot of future interventions that work to support whānau to play and be active.”

- MARK CURR
HUTT CITY COUNCIL SPORT AND RECREATION
PROGRAMMES MANAGER

Tākaro – To Play

In 2018, the Play Team published the report, [Tākaro – To Play](#). Its research highlighted the lack of play outside of school, barriers to play, a strong demand for local play interventions and a high willingness to engage from the local community.

Tākaro – To Play reflected international and Aotearoa New Zealand trends that showed that tamariki seem to have fewer opportunities to play and were playing outside less due to a combination of limited time, permission and space (Sport NZ 2017 Young People Plan & Active NZ survey, 2017). In addition, many tamariki are living lives which are more sedentary and experience less adventure and risk (Duncan & McPhee, 2015).

Key insights from the Tākaro – To Play's report include:

96%

of Lower Hutt parents surveyed reported that their tamariki are not playing every day.

88%

of Lower Hutt tamariki surveyed reported that they do not play every day.

29%

of tamariki surveyed do not play at all out-of-school time.

24%

of parents are scared of cars, traffic, strange people and loose dogs and 23% of parents reported their tamariki are not allowed to play outside unsupervised.

The report showed that when tamariki could play outside they tended to walk, bike, scooter and skate around their neighbourhood and that playing games and playing with water were the top two favourite ways to play.

Tākaro – To Play recommended that future play initiatives, policies and urban planning should consider these 'most common' and 'favourite' places to play when looking to increase play opportunities for Lower Hutt tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. The report also recommended:

- play leadership from within local government and community
- integrating play into policy and planning functions
- play spaces that increase awareness and social permission to play
- increasing active transport opportunities so tamariki and rangatahi can “play on the way”
- play zone signs that provide permission to use road spaces and cues for motor vehicles to slow down
- local play initiatives (e.g. neighbourhood events and street parties) make play an easier option for whānau and their tamariki.

Since being published the report has been shared widely with other local governments, sports trusts, community groups, Sport NZ stakeholders, the Health Promotion Agency, the Ministry of Health, local MPs and transport decision makers.

The report has been used to develop a draft play framework, which includes recommendations and other aspirations including the establishment of a permanent play champion position.

“

Sport NZ partner and collaborate with groups and organisations interested in the importance of play to help ensure opportunities to play are preserved, enhanced and relevant to the world we live in today.”

- SCOTT MACKENZIE
SPORT NZ PLAY CONSULTANT

“

This work hits hearts and minds. Everyone can relate to play and what it used to be like for them.”

- MARK CURR
HUTT CITY COUNCIL SPORT AND RECREATION
PROGRAMMES MANAGER

Working collectively

Streets Alive

Thanks to the insights and work of the Play in the Hutt initiative, play is now being integrated into the development and progress of the Hutt City Council-wide ‘Streets Alive: Hutt City’ framework.

Led by a cross-functional Council working group, in collaboration with Healthy Families Lower Hutt, ‘Streets Alive: Hutt City’ supports Council teams and leaders to ensure the wellbeing of people is at the centre of planning, decisions, designs and actions.

Play Campaigners

In conjunction with the Play in the Hutt project, Sport NZ Play Consultant Scott Mackenzie, worked with the Hutt City Council and Healthy Families Lower Hutt to establish a group of local play campaigners in Hutt City.

Twelve interested people, with diverse roles and influence levels from the health and education sectors and the local Marae attended workshops about play. Each was invited to become a play advocate within their own network, to enhance knowledge and understanding of play in the wider community.

The work of the play campaigners and Play in the Hutt has informed subsequent initiatives and created advocates who want to help make local neighbourhoods’ healthy, safe, lively and playful spaces.



PLAY IN THE HUTT SUCCESS FACTORS



We have managed to unite around the simple idea of a more playful city ... everyone in our team 'gets it' and there has been a high level of motivation for the project from the start."

- MARK CURR
HUTT CITY COUNCIL SPORT AND RECREATION
PROGRAMMES MANAGER



Having somebody within Council focus on this work as their sole role has been a real game changer. They have been able to really lift the profile of play and its importance in a genuine and purposeful way. These types of roles also promote play integration across Councils, ensuring that everyone can and could become a champion of play."

- SCOTT MACKENZIE
SPORT NZ PLAY CONSULTANT

Working in collaboration for collective impact

Working as a tripartite, Sport NZ, Healthy Families Lower Hutt and the Hutt City Council were able to draw on each other's strengths and resources to broaden the reach of Play in the Hutt.

Uniting teams across Council to put play on their agendas ensured a strong level of influence and expertise as well as creating play advocates. The support of key Council staff from across different business units also helped to ensure that creating the conditions for play is a consideration of future Council infrastructure and development projects.

Working alongside community and wider stakeholders gave the community a voice and helped with buy-in for different ideas.

The importance of leadership

Having the mandate and trust of senior leaders within Council meant the Play Team was not afraid to try new initiatives or to make (and learn from) mistakes. This enabled them to try initiatives at different events and locations, leading to more robust and diverse play opportunities being offered.

The endorsement of elected officials and other key Council staff also helped build engagement and promote the importance of play within the community.

The buy-in, influence and energy of play campaigners, both from within the Council and from external organisations and community groups, has played a key role in putting play onto a wider network's agendas.

Understand your community

Recruitment of a specialist research-lead with connections and mana in the community was valuable in the gathering of insights. Robust measures around data collection resulted in highly-usable insights that enabled a greater understanding of what was occurring in terms of play within the city's diverse neighbourhoods.

Thanks to this methodology, the approach, findings and recommendations can be used by other communities and cities that are exploring their play environments.

Locally-led engagement also ensured the community voice was heard and contributed to greater engagement in play initiatives.

Telling your story

The importance of 'story-telling' should not be under-estimated. A strong and engaging story is essential for achieving buy-in from staff, stakeholders, influencers and the community. For this reason it is recommended to have communications support right throughout the project.

OUTCOMES



Hutt City Council's vision is for Lower Hutt to be a great place to live, work and play. As a city we need to empower our communities to better understand the importance of play in creating a healthy and active society. It is clear the responsibility of reducing barriers to play is shared by local government and community. We need to work together to create and enable more quality play opportunities."

- RAY WALLACE
FORMER MAYOR OF LOWER HUTT



We are finding that people with a vested interest are keen to get started as, thanks to the research, they can see the potential for community impact."

- HAYLEY BUCHAN
HEALTHY FAMILIES LOWER HUTT MANAGER



Tamariki are the oil that makes communities work. We need to commit to work over decades to change the lives of residents."

- MARK CURR
HUTT CITY COUNCIL SPORT AND RECREATION PROGRAMMES MANAGER

Play in the Hutt took a community insight driven approach to inform necessary systems changes to enable quality play across Hutt Valley communities.

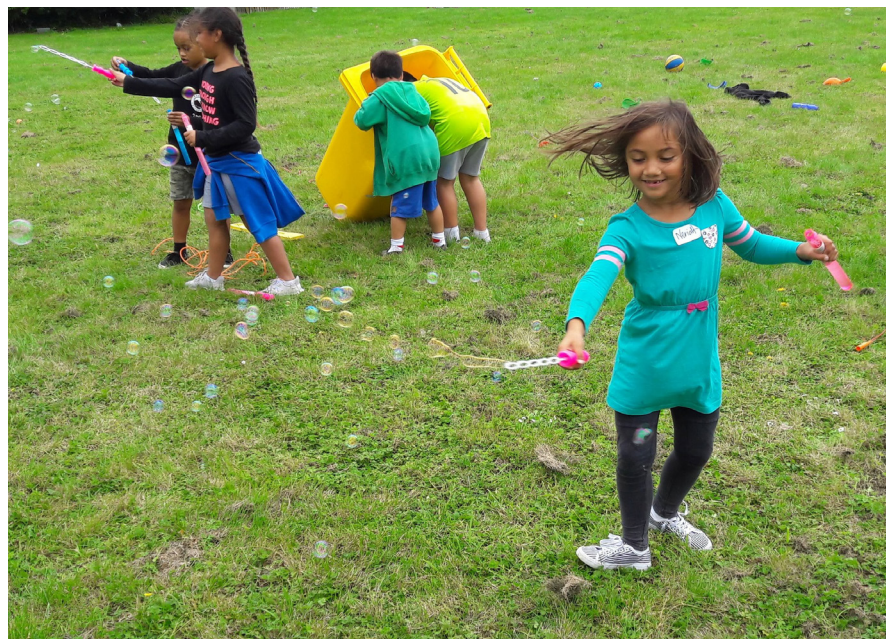
Thanks to the insights and work of the cross-Council team, play is now embedded as a consideration for strategic decisions relating to many Council-led ventures, including urban design and city transformation projects.

The insights gleaned from Tākaro – To Play ensures the community's voice is more influential and the report's sound methodology means that its learnings and recommendations can be used in other communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Play in the Hutt's insights, knowledge and data have already had an influence over Council policy, and it is beginning to play a key role in how the Council approaches the design, build and use of local physical and social environments to ensure healthy, safe play environments for tamariki.

The Play in the Hutt framework is currently in draft and the Hutt City Council and Healthy Families Lower Hutt continue to work closely with Sport NZ to promote play initiatives and opportunities within the city.

We all have a role in enabling play. You can take action now to benefit our tamariki and whānau – visit the [Sport NZ website](#) for ideas on ways to incorporate play in your community.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sport NZ would like to express special thanks to the organisations that developed these initiatives, for their willingness to share their stories, and for supporting more communities to benefit from sport and active recreation in Aotearoa New Zealand.

