Designing for equity and intergenerational wellbeing: Te Tokotoru

Healing

Strengthening

Responding

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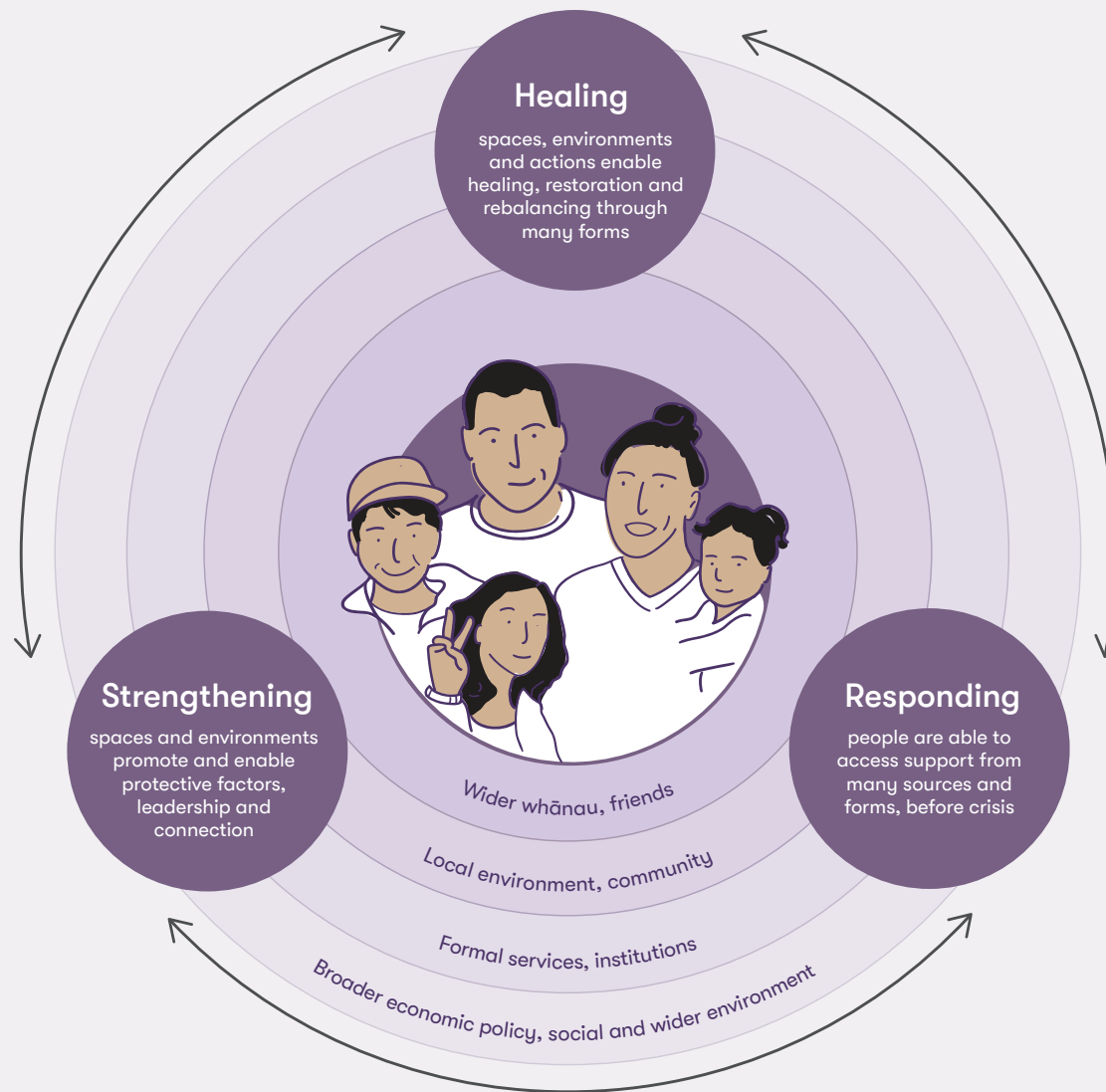
THE AUCKLAND CO-DESIGN LAB

The Southern Initiative

Auckland Council
Te Kaunihera o Tāmaki Makaurau

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Te Tokotoru (Unbreakable Three)
A systems approach to wellbeing.

Section 1: What is Te Tokotoru?

Introduction

Te Tokotoru provides a different starting point for designing and investing in equity and intergenerational wellbeing. Te Tokotoru, the "unbreakable three", has been developed with whānau, rangatahi and partners at The Lab and The Southern and Western Initiative (TSWI). Te Tokotoru emerged from work to identify the conditions that enable communities to be well. It is informed by the work of Māori and Pacific researchers and providers around what matters and makes a difference to whānau. While Te Tokotoru encompasses a broad view of wellbeing, our specific focus is on how local and central government can enable child and youth wellbeing as part of whānau wellbeing.

We know that in Aotearoa New Zealand conventional approaches to wellbeing underpinned by Pākehā or euro-centric models have not worked for families and communities experiencing the most disparity and impacts of inequity. A focus on the delivery of programmes and services has contributed to further compounded inequity and more of the same will only ever achieve slightly different outcomes[1]. No amount of services, regardless of their quality, will address the structural drivers of inequity, including institutional racism and the ongoing impacts of colonisation. A significant transformation in approach is needed, one that centres te ao Māori and enables other values-led and indigenous world views and practices.

Our work alongside whānau, rangatahi and other innovation partners is about exploring different starting points and conditions that help enable transformational change. Te Tokotoru is an outcome of that learning. Te Tokotoru represents the three interconnected dimensions of **strengthening, healing** and **responding**.

Whānau have shown us that all three dimensions need to be active at the same time to create the conditions for wellbeing. Whānau have also shown us that these three dimensions can be intentionally reinforced (or not) in our spaces, places, policies and environments.

Te Tokotoru is informed by practice-based evidence that includes whānau lived experience, mātauranga, indigenous and western knowledge. It is grounded in a commitment to indigenous and tangata whenua-led perspectives of wellbeing as well as to address the imbalance embedded in conventional government approaches.

A description of the three dimensions of Te Tokotoru is given overleaf. We then share how Te Tokotoru can help activate a wider ecology of wellbeing, and the key shifts it represents as a holistic approach to prevention. **Section 2** gives further detail about the whakapapa of Te Tokotoru. **Section 3** shares implications for government and examples of practical application.

Who are we?

TSI, The Southern and Western Initiative is an innovation unit within Auckland Council, embedded in south and west Auckland communities. The Auckland Co-design Lab (The Lab) is a local and central government innovation and learning lab nested inside TSI. We collaborate and work in partnership with local communities, whānau, change-makers, institutions, iwi, and marae, as well as central government, business, and philanthropic funders for systems change.

The team is dedicated to supporting south Auckland and west Auckland communities as prosperous, resilient places where children and whānau thrive, and where whānau lead their own change. We do this by shifting local and larger systems and policy conditions—modelling, and building capacity for compelling, whānau-led alternatives to the status quo. This requires growing the infrastructure and capacity of the system to work differently.

Central to this is a relational practice grounded in manaakitanga and whakawhanaungatanga that recognises and reconnects to the existing innovation capacity and natural and cultural supports of tangata whenua, as well as other indigenous practices and communities. Our practice is culturally grounded and tikanga-led, guided by Māori and Pacific leadership and practitioners, and teams who are part of the communities we serve. Being place-based means taking an integrated holistic view of wellbeing. Social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions are understood as interconnected, based in the recognition, and nurturing of wairua and mauri of people and place.

Strengthening

Investing in the relationships, conditions and capital that enable whānau and communities to thrive, lead and pursue their aspirations. This encompasses primary prevention and enhancing known protective factors for child and youth wellbeing.

It means deliberately building on and affirming natural, cultural and environmental strengths, aspirations, capacities and capabilities of people in place. It means investing in indigenous approaches and the capacities of whānau and hapori to lead their own change.

For example:

- Public places, spaces and institution support the development of pro-social connections, connection to place and enhance diverse and positive cultural identity and connectedness
- Gender equity and diversity of language and culture are modelled in government spaces and support services
- Marae are resourced and recognised as critical cultural and social infrastructure
- Child positive environments and inclusive norms, play and creative practices are supported in the community for all ages and abilities (things that also support healing)
- Communities are resourced and supported to lead their own responses and change.

Healing & Restoration

Intentional investment to enable healing, protection, respite, recovery, rebalancing and restoration for people and environments. It includes personal opportunities to heal such as access to natural environments and spaces of respite, customary healing practices and rongoā as well as mental health and trauma informed support.

Importantly it includes the normalisation and recognition of cultural and indigenous healing practices. It extends to restorative actions at policy, institutional, community and environmental levels to address intergenerational trauma, adversity, power-imbalances and the harms of colonisation and discrimination.

For example:

- Opportunities for whānau to be heard, to lead and exercise agency and choice
- Educational settings that ground learning in culture and place and empower cultural narratives
- Use of te reo and recognition of whakapapa and mana whenua in public policy and public places
- Spaces and resource for indigenous and tangata whenua led responses
- Recruitment practices are indigenised and social procurement prioritised to invest locally
- Inclusive, non-judgemental public spaces that allow respite, rest, calm, connection to nature and nurturing of te Taiao
- Engagements with services and institutions that are mana enhancing and affirming.

Responding

Support that is available in many forms, not just through formal services and programmes and not only during or after crisis. This includes indigenous customary practices and culturally grounded, peer, natural, local, community, long term and specialist services and supports.

It encompasses forms of early intervention, intervention and crisis responses. It also legitimises and recognises informal helpers and support that may come through family, friends, community, whānau and hapori. It includes resourcing and policies that recognise and build our capacity to support, respond to and help each other as communities, not just through formal crisis, health or social supports.
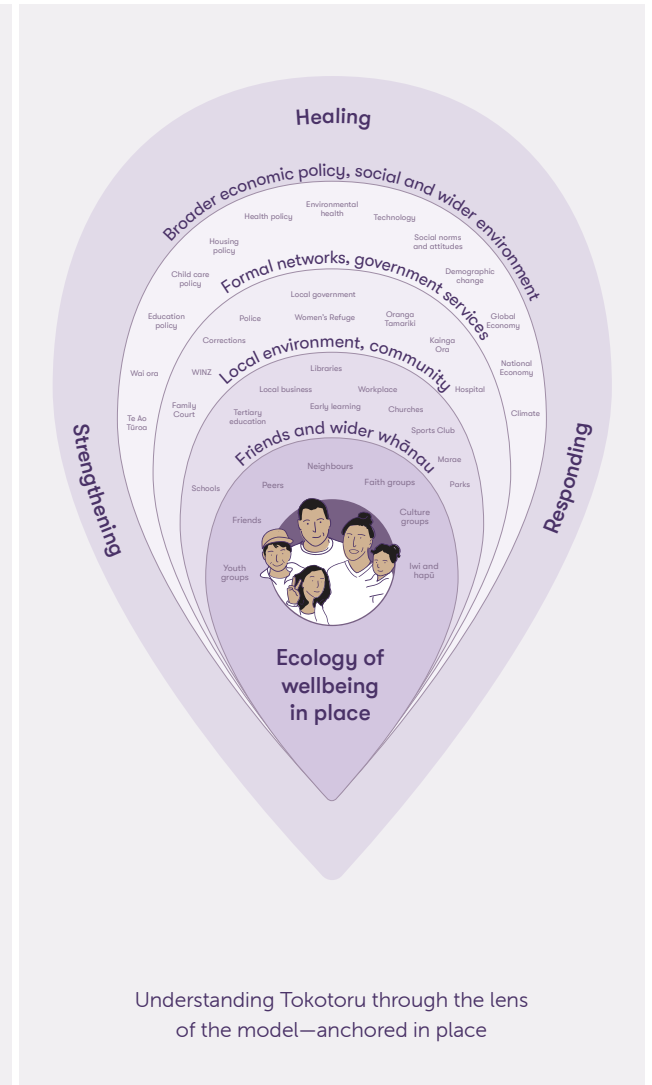
For example:

- Ensuring the places that whānau are connected such as workplaces, community networks, sports clubs, churches, health services, social services and public facilities are supported and resourced to respond when people reach out for help
- Community members and staff are supported or trained as first responders and can be a channel to specialist and crisis services where appropriate
- Specialist services include indigenous practices and responses and value whakapapa and whānau connection
- Asking for help is normalised and without stigma
- Organisations have policies about how to respond to incidents of violence and any disclosures
- Places such as schools are non-judgmental places to access holistic help for whānau without shame.

Activating a wellbeing ecology

Te Tokotoru encourages us to think beyond the limits of formal health and social services and programmes, and include in our focus activating or enhancing the existing ecology of wellbeing in the places where we live, learn, work and play. Te Tokotoru recognises that our communities often already have within them many of the things that we need to be well. The opportunity for government as we shift towards more centrally enabled and locally led approaches is how we can better organise ourselves (resources, policy, power, structures, funding) around enacting, enhancing, and enabling those ecologies of wellbeing.

The Child Youth and Wellbeing Strategy uses the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory model[2] as a way to draw attention to the range of influences on child wellbeing outcomes. This model helps make visible the social, environmental and cultural layers that shape our lives and experiences and the broader scope of things we can invest in to enable wellbeing. We often reshape this model so that the connection into place is clearer, using the image on the right.

Te Tokotoru draws on the layers of the model to emphasise that the conditions for wellbeing—and therefore the conditions for strengthening, healing and responding are set right across the system. An ecological perspective helps us work together to

The Ecological Model based on the
Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy model

Understanding Tokotoru through the lens
of the model—anchored in place

build a shared 'whole of systems' view so we can identify and act on the biggest opportunities for improving the wellbeing of whānau and tamariki. Organisations and leaders can locate themselves within the ecology and consider their sphere of influence and the different roles they or their institutions can play in strengthening, healing and responding.

An ecological view also helps remind us that the opportunities for investing in wellbeing are not only through services and programmes. Te Tokotoru encourages greater recognition of the range of cultural, natural and local capacities that exist within people and place. This includes recognising the knowledge, skills, innovation and mātauranga within whānau and hapori and the value of connection to place and whenua.

It also includes the critical role that 'anchor institutions' such as marae, schools, community organisations and social and health providers within communities play as supporting cultural and social infrastructure[3]. Our collective role in government is to consider how the local and broader social and policy environments and settings can work in mutually reinforcing ways to better activate this 'wellbeing ecology'.

The diagram to the right illustrates how the three dimensions of Te Tokotoru might be intentionally activated at different points in the ecology.

Examples of how different levels can activate or support wellbeing ecologies
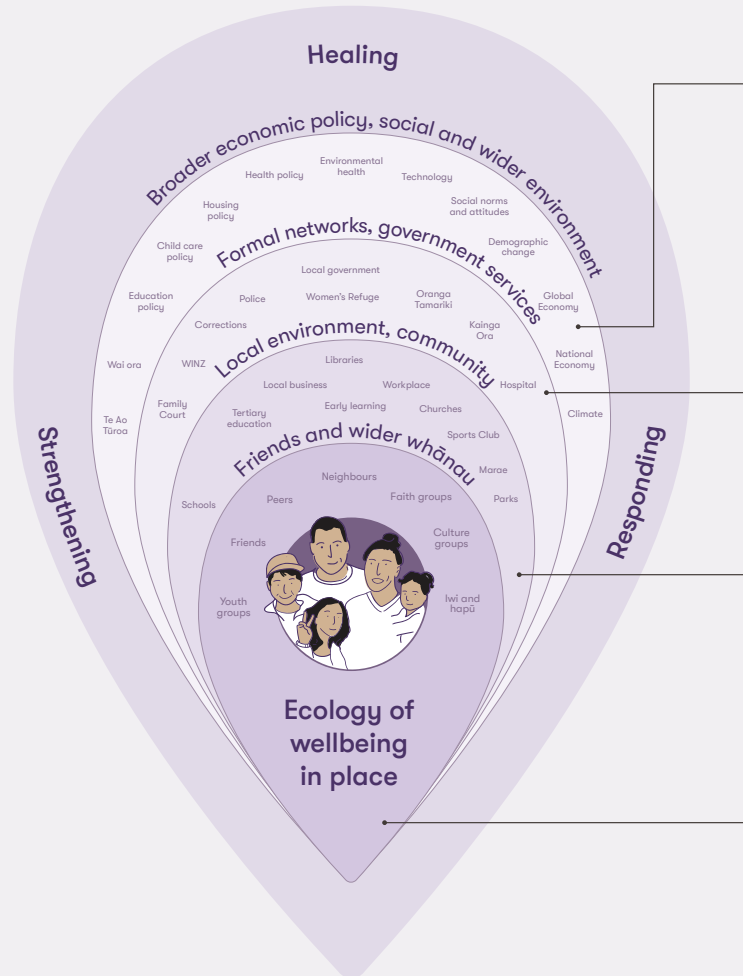
Broader policy environment

For example policy and legislative environments that prioritise and set the conditions for strengthening and healing as well as responding. Policies that promote protective factors from an intergenerational and equity lens.

Formal networks, government services

For example procurement and commissioning processes structured to enable a greater balance across the three dimensions. The capacities for cultural, indigenous and hapori-led responses are invested in, prioritised and enabled along side formal responses. Service interactions are designed and tracked around their capacity for healing and strengthening (not just responding).

Local environment, community

Local institutions (libraries, schools, workplaces, churches, marae, health providers) as well as clubs and networks are valued for their local capital, resourced as places of healing, responding and strengthening and resourced to define these with hapori. Spaces and places and the natural environment are recognised for their role and value as sites for healing and strengthening. Mana whenua are recognised in their role of kaitiaki.

Friends and wider whānau

Friends and wider whānau, networks and places are recognised for their capacity to strengthen, heal and respond and the local environments support them to do this. Local capacity, stories, pūrākau, history and social connections are valued and enhanced.

Te Tokotoru can help us ask what else might be possible if we were intentional and deliberate in prioritising our resources to enable the three dimensions of responding, healing and strengthening. As an example the table on the right shows how Te Tokotoru might be applied as a lens to consider investment approaches to child wellbeing in the first 1000 days.

We are finding it particularly useful to consider the potential for different parts of government to support the three dimensions—and how well overall government investment and focus is balanced. For example, local government has significant capacity for influence already in enabling healing and strengthening, because of its focus on the four wellbeings and the community assets, resources and infrastructure it is responsible for.

The three dimensions of Te Tokotoru also offer an alternative perspective on the kinds of wellbeing indicators, measures or outcomes we might choose to prioritise and track. Te Tokotoru gives the opportunity to understand with communities and teams how these three conditions show up and are enabled in different settings and contexts. Further examples of this are provided in the final two sections.

	Strengthening	Healing	Responding
Policy & wider environment	• Further embedding of mātauranga, and models of wellbeing that build on cultural constructs within policy frameworks. • Policies that support parents and whānau to build positive early attachment (e.g. paid parental leave and parental leave for Dads).	• Strategy and policy that prioritise tangata whenua leadership and opportunities for sharing power with whānau. • Policies and interventions that focus on healing and supporting whānau as part of child development, e.g. whānau support pre-post birth, taking an intergenerational lens.	• Resources, efforts, system capabilities and indicators are re-orientated to what whānau tell us will make the difference, for example positive relationships and building social capital. • Policies that strengthen community and whānau-led responses including culturally grounded and natural responses.
Formal services	• Engagement starts with aspiration and building capacity, parents are recognised as having natural capacity. • Opportunities for social connection is prioritised. • Recognition that pregnancy and birth is a time whānau are motivated towards change.	• Social and health sites are safe places for interaction and actively promote positive identity and cultural connection, they are not a point of re-traumatising, reducing parental stress is prioritised. • Indicators are localised—shifted to what matters, developed with families.	• Whānau-led responses are supported on par with specialist services. • Customary parenting practices are visible, acknowledged and supported. • Engagement with services is possible when families recognise they need it, criteria isn't the barrier to support.
Local environment, neighbourhoods	• There are lots of opportunities for whānau to connect with others and safe and welcoming places to take baby, e.g. libraries, parks, pools. • Spaces and places are tamariki positive, lots of opportunities to connect and play.	• Environments provide connection to place, nature and opportunities for respite. • There are opportunities for whānau to support each other.	• It is easy for whānau to access support services through trusted and cultural networks. • Whānau are involved in designing local fit for purpose responses alongside agencies (locally-led).
Whānau	• Whānau feel confident and affirmed in their customary parenting practices. • Whānau have a sense of hope and control for the futures of their tamariki.	• Whānau are able to access support to heal from past trauma, as part of parenting support, and in ways whānau have identified as relevant and appropriate.	• Whānau can get help before they fall into crisis. • Whānau lead in managing the complexity alongside agencies as equal partners in their wellbeing.

The case for Te Tokotoru and a more holistic approach to prevention

Te Tokotoru has given us a language that encapsulates what we are seeing and hearing from whānau and rangatahi about what is needed to shape our communities, policies, investment strategies, systems and institutions towards transformational outcomes. It is proving a valuable tool for considering how the different aspects of the prevention continuum, a model used to design and structure health and social interventions and responses, can be brought together in a united effort to support equity and intergenerational wellbeing.

The prevention continuum was developed to enable an increased focus on upstream and population level approaches. In reality, much of our investment has continued to be in issue-based interventions aimed at individual behaviour change and mainly drawing on western and clinical perspectives. Te Tokotoru builds on the intent of the prevention continuum to shift focus to earlier and structural drivers, grounded within an Aotearoa context.

Te Tokotoru offers room for more expansive definitions of what strengthening, healing and responding can look like when indigenous, cultural and natural responses are recognised and encompassed. It reflects learning grounded in tikanga-led, values-based approaches and customary practices. It is helping us move to a wellbeing approach that acknowledges and responds to historic harm and the ongoing effects of colonisation.

Te Tokotoru also recognises the important connections between strengthening and healing. Protective factors (such as social connection, sense of belonging and strong cultural identity) are both healing and strengthening factors. Protective factors are also holistic in that their enhancement addresses and strengthens the capacity of people and communities to navigate a range of issues and life challenges. For example youth development protective factors have strong cross over with mental health and family violence protective factors, meaning investment in strengthening and healing reduces the need and pressure on crisis responses and services overall, overtime.

The strengthening dimension of Te Tokotoru embraces enhancing the strengths and protective factors that sit within primary prevention, intentionally doing this in a way that acknowledges that significant harm and intergenerational trauma are already present in our communities.

Strengthening needs to be something we invest in both prior to harm being experienced as a prevention activity, and where harm has been present, helping to break the cycle of harm in the future. In this way, Te Tokotoru has provided us with an approach that recognises that in many cases harm has already occurred, and healing and mana protecting activities first need to be present and prioritised to create the opportunity for strengthening and further prevention[4].

This concept is important for whānau, but also for recognising the role of our institutions, systems and policies. For example settings like education or health have historically often been the site of trauma and harm against people. As environments they aren't neutral sites for prevention, they also need to actively prioritise healing policies and behaviours in order to be part of rebuilding trust and pro-social connections with whānau and communities.

Te Tokotoru is helping us to account for the realities we encountered in people's lives and the things people identified as wanting to see and experience in their communities that would make a difference.
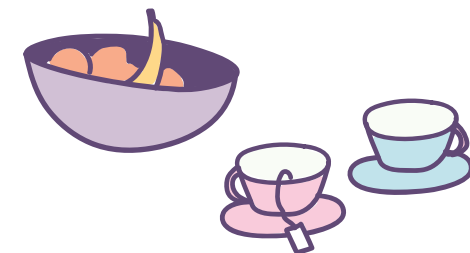
Some of the important shifts in our approach to intergenerational wellbeing embedded within Te Tokotoru include:

- **Te Tokotoru centralises whānau voice and perspectives, grounded in the current and cultural context of Aotearoa.** It starts from people's realities and the dynamics that exist in place, and builds out to a systems view, rather than the other way around.

- **Acknowledging that the kinds of supports and conditions that help people be well, are not represented through a linear sequence.** People do not progress from primary prevention (before harm) to early intervention, crisis and then healing as some of our conventional ways of organising services and 'treatment' imply. Increasingly, we are learning that the starting point for many rangatahi, whānau as well as institutions, communities and policies needs to be healing, and that healing comes in many forms.

- **Starting with aspirations, strengths and protective factors (not just responding to crisis).** Valuing strengthening and promotion of protective factors for wellbeing at whānau, communities, institutions and policy level, even (and especially) when harm has already occurred. An intergenerational perspective that sustains investment beyond the cycle of crisis responses.

- **Connectivity and balance between all three dimensions.** For people, whānau and communities to be healthy and resilient, all three dimensions need to be in place at the same time. Currently investment is heavily weighted in response. Our investment needs to be better balanced, and the dynamics of enabling long term change mean all three dimensions or conditions need to be available, active and invested in within our communities.

- **Moving beyond services, activating the potential within communities.** Complementing specialist and formal service responses with natural, cultural, indigenous and locally led responses built on the social connections and relationships that already exist within communities.

- **Activating the conditions for wellbeing at all levels and levers of influence.** As well as services and programmes, recognising the conditions for wellbeing are set through our policies, places, environments, narratives and capacities—to help to heal and strengthen communities and build capability for locally led responses. Equally we need to acknowledge the potential for policies, environments, spaces and services to perpetuate the status quo and keep us in a cycle of crisis.

Te Tokotoru recognises that people move between the different dimensions in terms of where they are at and the kind of things that matter or are helpful at different points in time and life. However it is not intended as a 'journey map' to define where people are at and decide what they need. Rather it is offered as a guide and provocation to re-orientate our responses, investment and resourcing to create strengthening, healing and responding rich environments where whānau can design and navigate their own pathways.

In developing and applying Te Tokotoru we are finding that it can be aligned with and enriched by other holistic, indigenous and whānau-led models. It is not intending to replace any model yet it provides framing to help us understand how we can reconfigure to foster the conditions that enable hapori to thrive and to lead their own wellbeing responses.
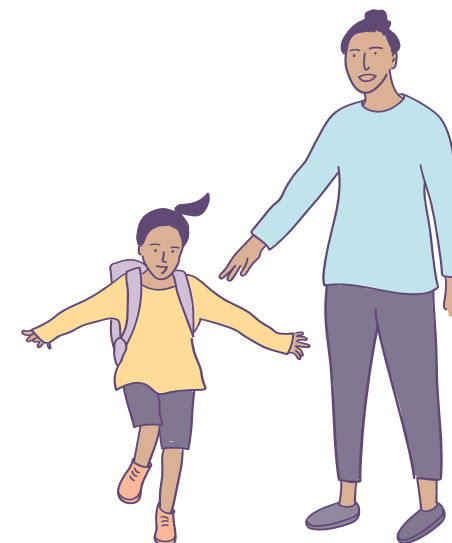
Section 2: Where did Te Tokotoru come from?
Whānau leading the way

Te Tokotoru is grounded in practice-based evidence from several years of innovation and design mahi with whānau and rangatahi in south and west Auckland.

This work has shown us that with whānau and rangatahi leading the way, we can enable intergenerational wellbeing and equity. This is because whānau start from different places and have a different lens than we do as government.

When whānau lead on the design of environments that promote tamariki wellbeing, they prioritise opportunities to be heard and to participate without judgement. They value experiences where the innate capacity of whānau and knowledge as parents is affirmed. They prioritise opportunities to heal from trauma so they can be the parents they aspire to be. Value is put on opportunities to connect, to lead, to practice aroha, ako, and manaakitanga, and where cultural values and indigenous practices are recognised.

Similar things occur when rangatahi help design the experiences and environments that will enable them to connect to education and learning. They prioritise connection, empathy and caring, recognition of culture and connection to place. Rangatahi understand their own health and wellbeing in relation to that of their whānau. The wellbeing of their whānau underpins the relationship rangatahi can have with learning.

This learning underpins Te Tokotoru. The following section summarises the key evidence for Te Tokotoru from testing out different approaches with whānau and rangatahi. This includes what matters, what helps and what is needed from our systems to enhance wellbeing.
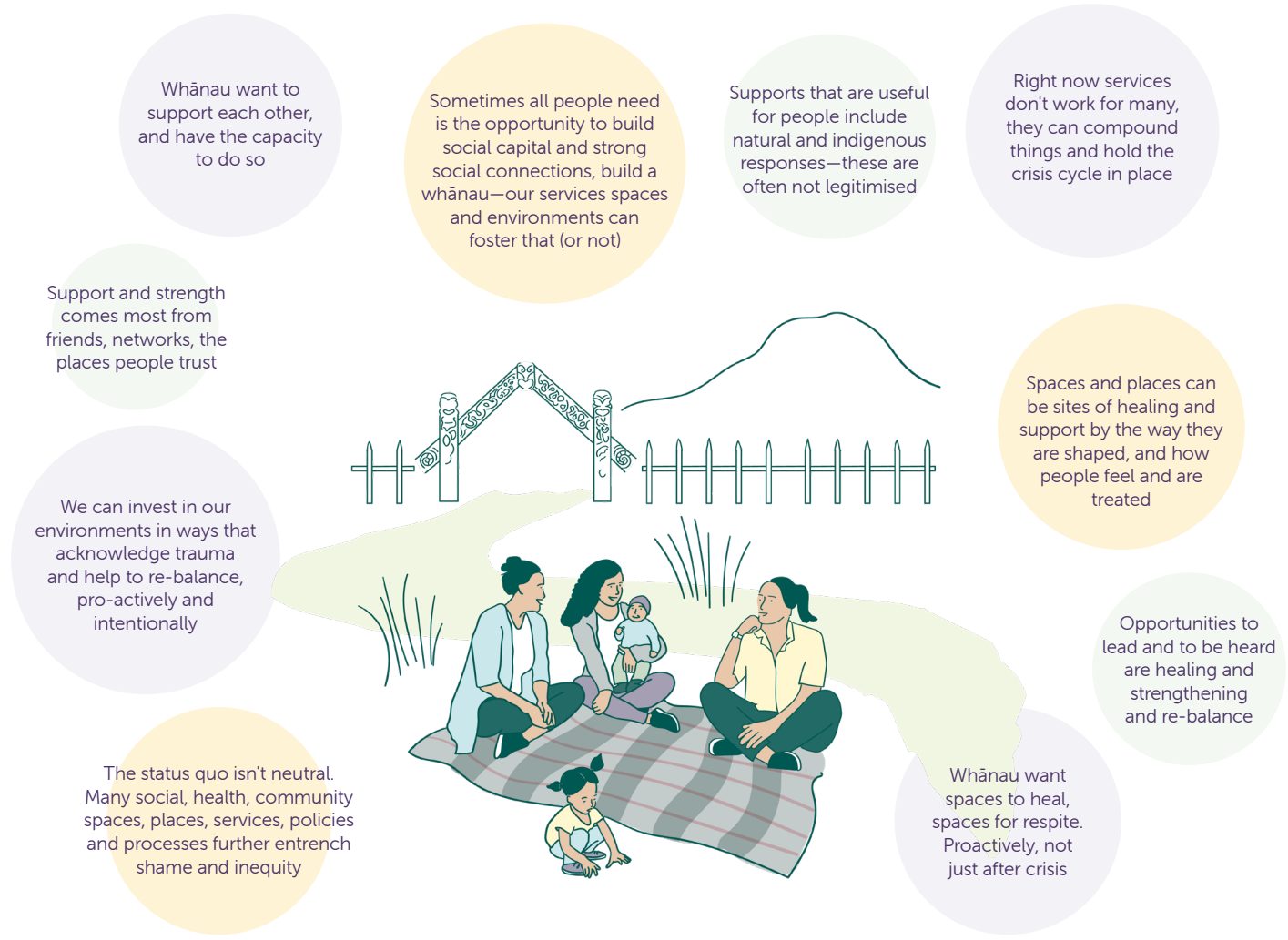
What is behind Te Tokotoru?
How the wider ecology can enhance wellbeing (or not)

We have found that the four themes below are consistent regardless of whether the focus has been on the early years and whānau led responses to support thriving tamariki[5], whānau experiences with housing and the co-design of strategies for healthy homes[6], young people's early experiences of employment[7] or whānau and rangatahi experiences of the education system[8].

They reflect whānau and rangatahi experience across many different service systems (health, housing and social services) and settings (such as schools, libraries, public spaces and workplaces). They point to the potential of the wider ecology of people's lives to compound inequity, or to promote wellbeing, and how we might better enable the latter.

Importantly, our work to help grow the conditions to thrive is a shared journey with many different partners. We draw learning and inspiration from the leadership and knowledge of other groups in Aotearoa who are demonstrating place-based, culturally or tikanga grounded and whānau-led ways of working[9].

Whānau want to support each other, and have the capacity to do so

Sometimes all people need is the opportunity to build social capital and strong social connections, build a whānau—our services spaces and environments can foster that (or not)

Supports that are useful for people include natural and indigenous responses—these are often not legitimised

Right now services don't work for many, they can compound things and hold the crisis cycle in place

Support and strength comes most from friends, networks, the places people trust

Spaces and places can be sites of healing and support by the way they are shaped, and how people feel and are treated

We can invest in our environments in ways that acknowledge trauma and help to re-balance, pro-actively and intentionally

Opportunities to lead and to be heard are healing and strengthening and re-balance

The status quo isn't neutral. Many social, health, community spaces, places, services, policies and processes further entrench shame and inequity

Whānau want spaces to heal, spaces for respite. Proactively, not just after crisis

A visual summary of key themes from whānau showing how the wider ecology can enhance equity or compound inequity

1. What helps doesn't need to be a service

Whānau consistently confirm that support and strength comes most often from friends, networks and the people and places they trust. They prefer to reach out and get support from whānau, hapū and iwi, as well as clubs, churches, networks, neighbours and workplaces—these are all integral sources of support[10].

This recognises the crucial importance of natural supports of networks and friends who are able to listen and provide respite or ease stress, and positive cultural responses. For example, a powerful response to family violence may include going to the urupā to deal with unresolved grief, or an opportunity to reconnect to the marae, rather than a referral to a predefined service. What might be most useful to a family to support their parenting is a safe space to just be and connect with others. Connection to nature and whenua also are also pathways for healing and strengthening.

Whānau often want to support each other and have the capacity to do so. The success of whānau to whānau and whānau-led models such as Kootuitui Ko Huiamano[11], SKIP[12] and Family by Family[13], which are values based approaches where whānau are able to support each other in ways that cannot be achieved by formal services—is evidence of the value of different approaches. In such responses, values such as whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga drive the outcome. Human and social capital emerges, that is transferable within whānau and across generations, offering potential for scale and for transformation. Supporting others can also be an important part of the healing and strengthening journey.

However these things that build people's ability to address the challenges in their lives are not often prioritised, funded or valued as outcomes of service interactions, or intentionally invested in across our communities. Formal services tend to be structured in ways that result in transactional delivery, assessments and a rationed number of services or binary options (e.g. an assessment or a referral or not).

The wider range of cultural, whānau and community responses are not considered part of the 'support' landscape[14]. While formal services are important, they are a small portion of the kinds of responses that are valuable to people. There is a much wider ecology of support to be enhanced through our policies, practices and investment structures.

2. Whānau want to start with healing

Much of our work is with whānau who are invested in helping to create the conditions in their lives and their communities for tamariki to flourish. A consistent message from whānau is that the most important start for them to fulfil their aspirations for their tamariki is to do their own healing from past, current or intergenerational trauma. Rangatahi are also clear that supporting them means supporting their parents to heal and build the capacities of their whānau.

Healing can come in many forms. It might mean a restorative action or programme, but is just as likely to be an opportunity to reconnect to whakapapa, whenua or whānau. It can mean strengthening social connections confidence to participate, or in some cases, to build new whānau. It might mean space or respite from unrelenting stress. Whānau have

demonstrated that opportunities to lead and be heard on equal footing with those who conventionally hold power, such as government agency representatives and social service providers, can also be opportunities for healing and strengthening.

For whānau, healing doesn't come, or need to come, at the end of progressive interventions or after a recent crisis event. Whānau that we work alongside proactively seek support for healing at different times in their journey, and it is the place many whānau, communities and institutions need to start in order to rebalance and address past trauma. In contrast, much of the social and service support currently on offer can only be accessed after a visible point of crisis is reached. Understanding healing as a starting point is a critical aspect of breaking the cycle of crisis and trauma, and acknowledging the ongoing dynamics of intergenerational wellbeing.

3. Many spaces and institutions are not neutral

Our work with whānau and rangatahi also emphasises the role that current policies, spaces, services, practices, values and behaviours can play in perpetuating and compounding trauma and inequity. These are sites over which local and central government have significant influence.

For example, schools carry a colonial legacy of systematic and intentional cultural dismantling and violence towards Māori and Pasifika children, young people and their families. They are often still sites of active structural and casual racism[15]. Libraries have often represented colonial structures that conventionally privilege certain types of knowledge,

knowing and expertise and represent certain types of norms. Health is well established as a site of ongoing inequity and racism[16].

As such, these spaces are not "neutral" sites for rolling out prevention initiatives. We need to consider how healing and restoration in these spaces can be enabled to address past and current harm. This is also true of other public spaces. Ways to address this include purposeful lifting of tikanga Māori, language, stories and histories in our places, buildings and landscapes through policies such as the Te Aranga Principles[17].

Whānau and rangatahi have shown us that investing in our environments and public spaces in ways that acknowledge trauma and help to re-balance can be done in a range of ways. This includes through use of language, affirmation of cultural practices and indigenous systems of knowledge, being critical about who and what is reflected in the places and positions of power, and what is prioritised and valued.

In schools, this might include integrating cultural practices, values and concepts in learning and teaching, creating pathways into STEM based on cultural knowledge, the teaching of our history, connection to place, mana whenua, local history, tikanga and pūrākau, and the simple but deeply impactful act of correct pronunciation of names.

From a public spaces perspective, the Creating Home initiative led by The Southern Initiative in partnership with whānau and Auckland libraries is another example.[18] It sought to prioritise manaakitanga as a core value of our public spaces and places. This is reflected in how we create a sense of belonging and welcome, how spaces align to whānau needs and aspirations, the language that is used, and the sharing of power and control with whānau in shaping those public spaces and places. This should also be connected to what we value, track and 'measure' in and about those spaces and how they serve communities by impacting wellbeing.

4. Achieving equity and intergenerational wellbeing needs to be as much inward as outwards looking

What is consistently reinforced in our (and others) work alongside whānau and innovation partners is that our local and central government change efforts need to be as strongly directed towards our internal systems, processes and values as they are towards outward looking changes in community 'behaviours' or outcomes.

This means paying attention to the ways in which our systems, policies and services, including the things that we report on and measure, contribute to compounding inequity. Whānau often experience discrimation and judgement in healthcare and social services that compounds their sense of shame and trauma.
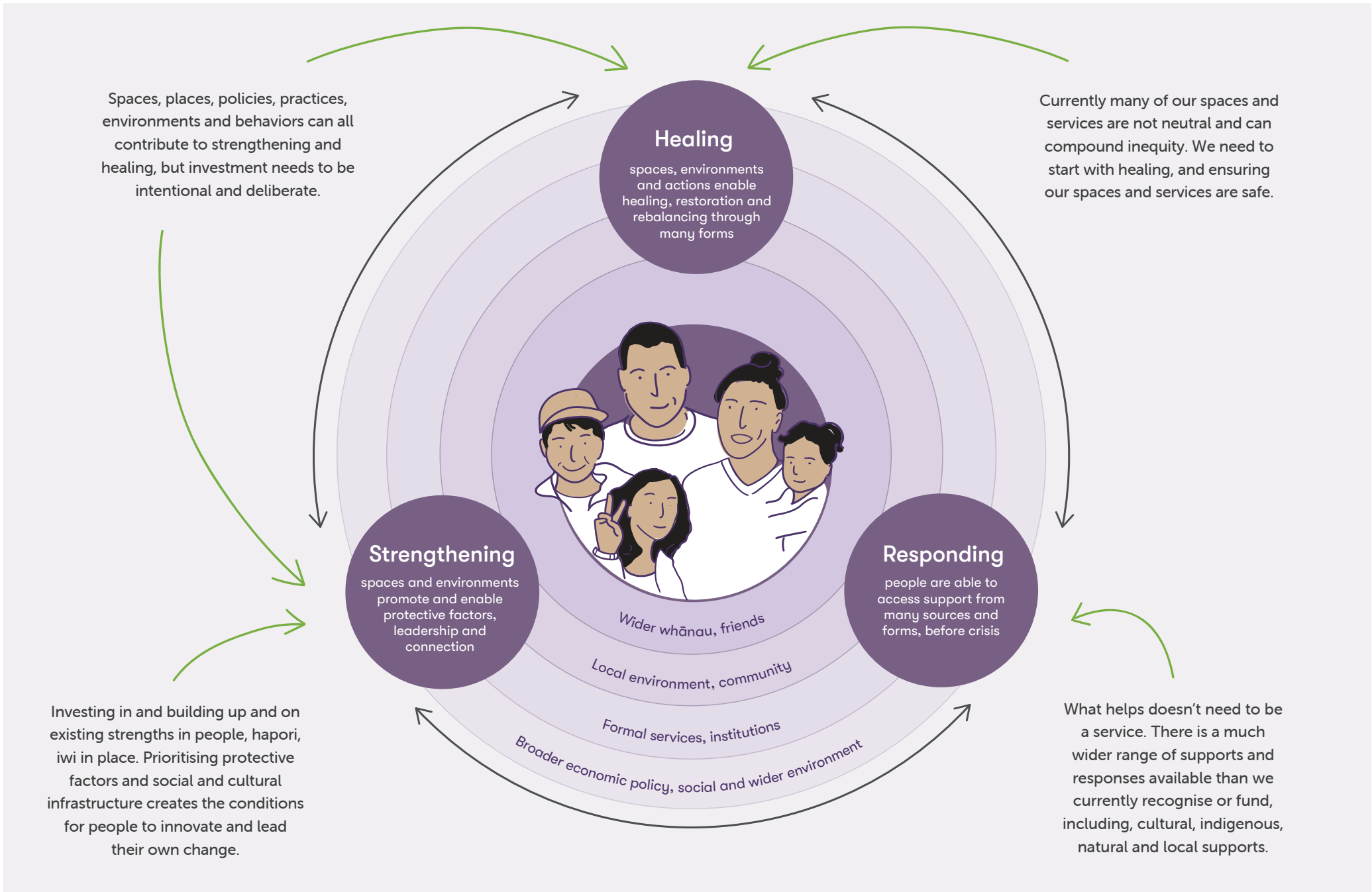
Similarly, criteria to access formal support may only be reached once a crisis has occurred, rather than helping whānau avoid it. Simple things like those inside the system restricting whānau access to drinking water or toilets in public spaces (but having them available to staff) in libraries or social services, are impingements on basic rights and dignity and demonstrations of power over communities.

Whānau sometimes describe avoiding services and government agencies as an act of reclaiming power and agency. Whānau speak of the need to isolate themselves to keep themselves and their tamariki safe. This challenges us to reconsider social isolation as a protective factor rather than a risk factor, and to consider the role we collectively play in people being 'hard to reach' or 'DNA' (did not attend) statistics.

This is an invitation to see whānau and community as the source of answers, resources and knowledge. Government has the opportunity to better support, activate, enable and create room for this capacity and leadership, rather than see community as the source of problems. As He Whānau Whānui o Papakura have shared, "we have the answers, we just don't have the opportunity to share them".

These key messages are summarised in the visual on the following page.

Spaces, places, policies, practices, environments and behaviors can all contribute to strengthening and healing, but investment needs to be intentional and deliberate.

Currently many of our spaces and services are not neutral and can compound inequity. We need to start with healing, and ensuring our spaces and services are safe.

Healing
spaces, environments and actions enable healing, restoration and rebalancing through many forms

Strengthening
spaces and environments promote and enable protective factors, leadership and connection

Responding
people are able to access support from many sources and forms, before crisis

Wider whānau, friends

Local environment, community

Formal services, institutions

Broader economic policy, social and wider environment

Investing in and building up and on existing strengths in people, hapori, iwi in place. Prioritising protective factors and social and cultural infrastructure creates the conditions for people to innovate and lead their own change.

What helps doesn't need to be a service. There is a much wider range of supports and responses available than we currently recognise or fund, including, cultural, indigenous, natural and local supports.

The genesis of Te Tokotoru and its name

From our work with whānau the three interconnected dimensions of an activated ecology of wellbeing emerged; healing, strengthening and responding. The dimensions represent what needs to be active in an ecology that is focused on promoting intergenerational wellbeing. Te Tokotoru is simple in its form, but built from a rich whāriki.

Visually, Te Tokotoru has interconnected dimensions, this aspect was guided by the whakaaro of Donna Tamaariki, drawing from her existing Mana Ātea practice.

Mana Ātea is an intergenerational customary practice of leadership to ensure āhurutanga or the ability to create safe spaces. In the words of Tamaariki, the connectivity between the three dimensions of Mana Atea "recognises that humans are non-linear and don't work in a vacuum".

Te Tokotoru embodies this same understanding, whānau move between and act across all dimensions, starting at any one point and moving between them at different times. From a systems perspective, all three dimensions need to be active and supported simultaneously in our communities to support wellbeing.

The name, Te Tokotoru, which can be translated as the unbreakable three, offered by Roimata Taniwha-Paoo, further reinforces the interconnected nature of the three dimensions. The ingoa comes from the triangulation of rangi (sky), whenua (land), moana (sea)—te tokotoru o te Taiao. The three dimensions of the natural world. The whakataukī tuia ki te rangi, tuia ki te whenua tuia ki te moana capturing this interconnectedness.

Our way of using, representing and understanding Te Tokotoru continues to evolve as we apply it, develop it and respectfully understand its connection to other mātauranga.

A focus on these three things as interconnected and operating at whānau and systems level, has helped us think about how we—collectively as local and central government—could re-organise ourselves and our collective resources to uphold the mana and aspirations of whānau and communities in place.

Section 3: Using Te Tokotoru

Implications for government re-organising how we invest to activate ecologies of wellbeing in place

Te Tokotoru helps us take a systems change approach to designing for equity and intergenerational wellbeing. It reflects what rangatahi and whānau have shown us about what matters and provides a different starting point for thinking about how we invest with communities in wellbeing.

The implications of Te Tokotoru are broad. As a tool for design, investment and evaluation, Te Tokotoru encourages us to think about how we can organise resources, supports, funding and infrastructure around the aspirations and capacities of people and place. It aligns to work across government to prioritise partnership, to shift power and decision-making towards more local, iwi, hapū and hapori-led responses, and reconfiguring commissioning models around this.

As we continue efforts to transition to more complexity informed, community and iwi-centred ways of investing in wellbeing as government, there are some implications emphasised by Te Tokotoru that we think are helpful to this transition. These can move us towards investment in wellbeing in a way that prioritises equity and intergenerational wellbeing.

1. Expanding our view and understanding of what support looks like

A critical part of Te Tokotoru (and central to other kaupapa and indigenous led approaches) is an expanded view of the kinds of support and responses that matter and make the difference to people, and therefore what is needed from our systems to activate these. This view means recognising whānau, peer, local, indigenous and cultural forms of support as just as important as existing service-based responses—and potentially more powerful, scalable and transformational. This is about the development of a system that recognises and values things that are already in place—including a return to customary practices.

2. Designing for non-linear relationships between healing, responding and strengthening

Acknowledging that whānau may start at any of the three dimensions and move back and forth between them, and that people's support needs are not linear, shifts how we organise our responses and investment. It challenges models that only allow access to resources and support once people are in crisis.

Schools and workplaces for example can promote and prioritise strengthening and healing, as well as be a point of access for a range of supports. Institutions have an active role to play in acknowledging and making up for their own role in perpetuating harm. Rather than thinking about prevention as the start point, investment approaches that are active across all three dimensions better reflect where whānau and communities are at. At the same time, we need to ensure that the way influential environments are currently configured do not continue to perpetuate inequity and discrimination.

3. Intentionally re-balancing investment across healing, strengthening and responding

Te Tokotoru gives equal weight to healing, strengthening and responding. Our current investment is heavily weighted towards crisis responses, be they interventions for mental health, family violence, or truancy[19]. The pressing need for short term responses to these issues make it incredibly difficult to focus on anything else. Yet without being intentional about a more balanced approach, the cycle of responding to whānau in crisis remains, and there is no shift in the underlying

conditions or causes that tip people into crisis or adequate investment in the things that will allow them to shift out. The three dimensions of the Tokotoru focus on change in the short and longer term—to help when people need it, while also investing in things that help communities be well.

Whilst specialist services for different issues remain an important part of our "response" (e.g. mental health, family harm, chronic health conditions, homelessness), the challenges people experience across these domains are most often intertwined. What helps to heal and strengthen for one often helps for another—investment in healing and strengthening reduces the need for a range of responses. If healing is prioritised, more people can move to strengthening and leading their own change without other responses being necessary.

4. Ensuring that our systems, environments, places and practices heal, strengthen and respond

Te Tokotoru is intended to help us think about our role as government in enabling wellbeing at different levels. Spaces, environments, institutions, policies, processes, behaviours and practices have as much capacity to contribute to healing, responding and strengthening as the specific services or programmes designed and delivered within them. The things that contribute to equity and wellbeing—or compound inequity—are structural, relational and environmental. To see real shifts, we need to evaluate all (or at least more) parts of the ecosystem, and hold it to account for how it strengthens and heals.

Conceptually, Te Tokotoru reflects ways of working that many have been advocating for or doing for some time. Yet this move towards a state where iwi-led, whānau-led, indigenous-led and relational practices are the norm, where cultural, customary and natural supports are considered as valid as specialist supports will take some time. Despite some leading lights, working in this way is not compatible with most of our norms around funding, accounting, reporting or rationing of budgets and time. Building the social infrastructure to support community led innovation practices will take shifts in funding and mindsets, as well as shifts in our accountability and learning mechanisms.

Each of these 'implications' suggest a different way of organising and valuing our collective resources. They also suggest how we might work together differently as local and central government to support wellbeing in place. The final section shares ongoing work to test and develop Te Tokotoru. We see its value in starting new conversations and promoting mindset shifts, and helping to identify and guide actions that enable the conditions for intergenerational wellbeing at different points in the system.
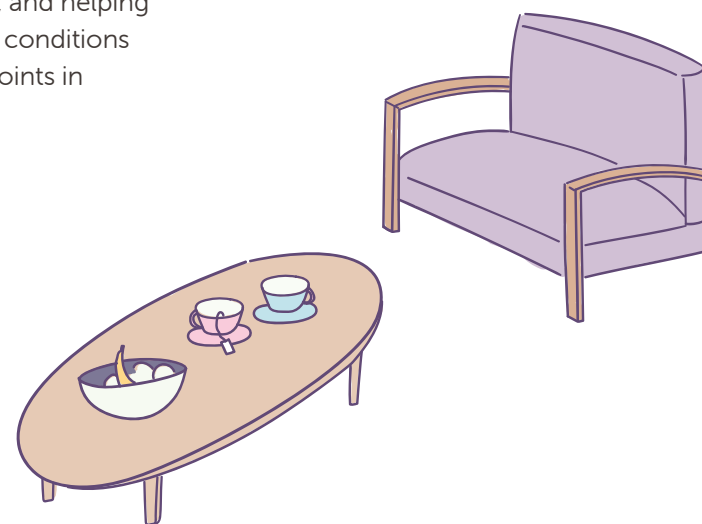
Tools for practical application

We share Te Tokotoru with the intent to tautoko other efforts by iwi, communities, kaupapa Māori organisations, communities and parts of government with which this mahi aligns. As we continue to develop and evolve our understanding of Te Tokotoru with communities and other partners we have been encouraged by the potential of Te Tokotoru for starting new conversations and promoting mindset shifts. We are finding Te Tokotoru is proving a simple but powerful lens to help teams to think differently about the conditions for wellbeing. It can be used from several different perspectives including:

• Government's **role and capacity for influence** at different points in the ecology, for example the role local government plays in strengthening and healing via policies, services, infrastructure, facilities and environments

• The potential for strengthening, healing and responding via influential **settings and institutions** in the community such as marae, libraries, schools, workplaces, social services and health settings

• Strengthening, healing and responding in terms of how we design and invest in outcomes around **particular wellbeing issues** such as child wellbeing, sexual and family violence, mental health or employment inequity.

Te Tokotoru can be used when organisations are engaging in strategy and policy development, investment planning, and service and resource use planning. It is also an evaluative tool for understanding or scrutinising current investment diversity. (See pull out box).

Te Tokotoru is currently being tested and adapted by different teams across local and central government to frame and reframe wellbeing efforts, and rethink approaches to design, investment and evaluation. We mention some of these below. As it is applied in more detail in different contexts, we aim to capture and share learning that arises.

Nationally, it is being used in our work around the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, helping to inform what it might look like to mobilise around the First 1000 days. The Joint Venture on Family Violence and Sexual Violence adapted the model in their 2021 budget to signal a shift towards different kinds of investment for intergenerational wellbeing and healing. It has been used to communicate interagency and community collaboration potential related to work on integrated, community-led responses. ACC Injury Prevention has also drawn on Te Tokotoru in their Theory of Change and will use it to explore future approaches for sexual violence prevention across the agency.

Using Te Tokotoru to map and evaluate current efforts

Example of questions teams can use to map their current efforts and identify potential shifts in focus:

• How expansive are our current definitions of responding, strengthening and healing?

• Do they take into consideration tangata whenua-led approaches? What about other indigenous practices and worldviews?

• Are we considering the capacity of our spaces, places and policies to model and mutually reinforce the conditions for wellbeing?

• Are we investing in what it takes for community-led and defined responding, healing and strengthening?

• What partnership, leadership and different ways of working and organising might be required to bring greater balance across the dimensions?

Te Tokotoru also supports a collective, whole of government assessment. For example we might ask:

• How well is our collective investment balanced across the three dimensions generally? How does it apply in terms of different spaces, life stages and issues?

At local government level Te Tokotoru is being used to inform prevention and wellbeing strategies and highlight local government's role as a backbone for investment in healing and strengthening in communities. This has been demonstrated powerfully in Christchurch through the use of public spaces and parks in supporting healing processes[20]. It also calls out local government's role in fostering locally-led responses and innovation, and the opportunities for partnership with iwi, community and central government for joint efforts in place.

The newly opened Te Paataka Koorero o Takaanini, the Takaanini Community Hub, is a living example of Te Tokotoru model in action, having been designed based on the same evidence base and whānau input as Te Tokotoru. Te Tokotoru provides a lens to understand the value of some of the less conventional aspects of the library and community space.
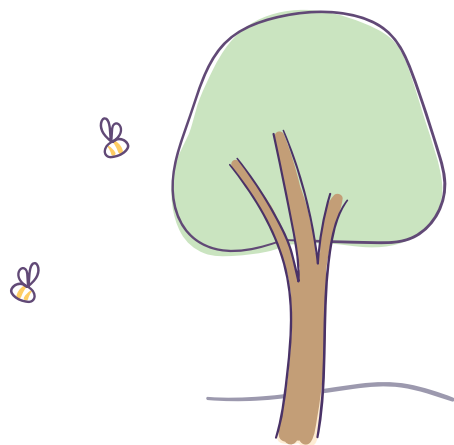
Healing and strengthening are embodied in the input and acknowledgement of mana whenua, Te Akitai Waiohua and Ngāti Tamaoho. This is clear outside the building and through the story of place described inside and emphasised by the correct pronunciation of Takaanini. Te Reo and other languages are highly visible throughout the library thanks to bi-lingual staff, books and activities.

The active use of play and support for social interaction and social connection in the space includes a slide in the space itself. Manaakitanga is evident as staff welcome you into an open and shared kitchen space, literally upon entry. This provides opportunities for respite, as well as connection as whānau and tamariki can be found regularly making themselves and others cups of tea. There is also a deliberate effort to recruit locally, indigenise recruitment practices and utilise the library as an employment transition pathway in recognition of the racism and inequity in current employment patterns.

From the perspective of "responding", the community hub acts as a vehicle for a range of supports that whānau can be part of offering and providing as well as accessing. Space and resources are available for whānau-led activities, staff are trained, empowered and ready to check in with people and help them out whether it be for a bit of a chat, emergency support or access to a shower.

Specific rooms are available for whānau to connect to specialist support including Work and Income, Inland Revenue Department, legal support and so on. Te Tokotoru helps to demonstrate the value of these things in contributing to community wellbeing, and suggests a different way that we might track and think about the value of our places and services and the people and interactions within them.

The Tamariki Wellbeing team at TSI along with He Whānau Whānaui o Papakura and Papakura Marae are collaborating with the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board and their agency partners to explore what it looks like when whānau take the lead in designing "responses". Results include whānau to whānau networks that share resources and build relationships that can provide support to whānau when they are well and when they are not, simultaneously strengthening, healing and responding. They are experimenting with how responses provided by agencies might be reconfigured and power and knowledge shared in more equitable and strengthening ways.

One prototype, Te Arataki, includes side stepping entirely the current "services" model, instead focusing on building positive relationships between agencies and whānau, and the sharing of connections and social capital to progress whānau aspirations. This prototype is founded on whānau identifying the value of the expertise, skills, experience and social capital of many of our local agency leaders, and the potential for this to support aspirations, rather than service intervention. It is helping us understand how we might reorient the human resources and capital within agencies toward strengths-based approaches to enable whānau and their tamariki to thrive.

Te Tokotoru can also be applied to the potential role that spaces and services already within the community can play to better support equity and wellbeing. For example, what might we prioritise differently when thinking about the role of child health services or a visit to an MSD Work and Income office site to support healing, strengthening and responding?

Currently these spaces are largely designed and understood as sites for the transactional delivery of health and social service responses. What would it mean to think about them as sites for strengthening and healing? As places that build upon the cultural and natural capital of the community, not just the specialist "expert" knowledge or services currently available?

In disrupting our conventional health services models, the current Well Child Tamariki Ora Review is an opportunity for thinking about how engagement with families around birth and early childhood is an opportunity for strengthening and healing, and supporting community and local responses, not just delivering specific clinical or specialist services.

Unleashing this potential ecology of wellbeing means we as government developing more fit for purpose tools and approaches. Moving beyond the structures of services and programmes is a shift from how we currently work. It includes the ability to conceptually and structurally value, recognise and resource community-led and indigenous practices as valid and as effective (if not more so) than conventional Pākehā specialist responses. We recognise that there is already significant reform underway with the intent to enable this.

Strengthening whānau and communities involves building up and investing in the capacity of communities to lead their own responses and working with communities to understand how the three dimensions show up and are connected in different places, settings and cultural contexts in place. It also includes building the capabilities and competencies and structures of our institutions and work forces to work in this way.

We invite you to use Te Tokotoru in your own settings, to reflect on how current efforts are organised, and to identify what healing, strengthening and responding does or could look like, for your settings and communities. The prompts and resources that accompany this document can help you explore this in your context.

Conclusion

Te Tokotoru provides a lens for thinking about wellbeing at whānau level, and for thinking about how we can activate (or not) the conditions for wellbeing across the different levels of the ecosystem.

Te Tokotoru incorporates a systems and ecology view that includes the many sites and levers available to us for creating the conditions for wellbeing, looking beyond services, programmes and crisis responses. It reminds us that responsibility for change and creating conditions for wellbeing is shared across us all. It prioritises indigenous responses and the kinds of cultural and natural supports that are most effective yet conventionally marginalised.

Te Tokotoru comes from the lived experiences and perspective of whānau and prioritises building and celebrating the capacity for whānau to guide and lead their own responses. At its centre is what whānau say matter and make the difference. This helps us to start in the places that whānau and communities live, rather than with centrally designed and commissioned services. We know our current ways of working are holding in place a status quo that won't shift outcomes in any transformational way. We know that we need to work differently. We hope that Tokotoru can contribute to this shift.
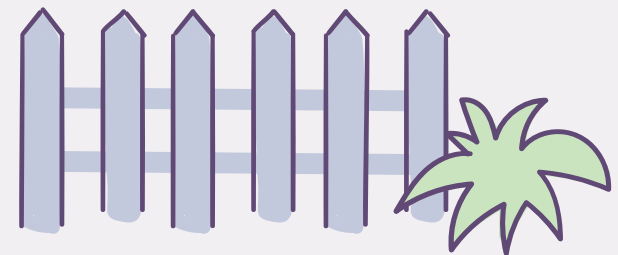
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1. This has been established in a range of reports and findings such as: The Productivity Commission's 2015 final report on 'More Effective Social Services' https://www.productivity.govt.nz/inquiries/more-effective-social-services/ Ongoing work by E Tū Whānau https://etuwhānau.org.nz/ and the Wai 2575 Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/wai-2575-health-services-and-outcomes-kaupapa-inquiry

2. Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz

3. For further information on Anchor Institutions see for example:

   Anchor institutions as place-based economic drivers, 2021, Probono Australia https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2021/02/anchor-institutions-as-place-based-economic-drivers/

   Howard K. Koh, Amy Bantham, Alan C. Geller, Mark A. Rukavina, Karen M. Emmons, Pamela Yatsko, and Robert Restuccia, 2020: Anchor Institutions: Best Practices to Address Social Needs and Social Determinants of Health American Journal of Public Health 110, 309_316, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305472

   Leveraging anchor institutions, 2020, https://democracycollaborative.org/learn/collections/leveraging-anchor-institutions

4. See for example E Tū Whānau Mahere Rautaki, Framework for Change 2019 2023 https://etuwhānau.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ETW-Framework-for-Change-2019-2023.pdf

5. The Early Years Challenge 2017, Auckland Co-design Lab, TSI https://www.tsi.nz/s/Early-Years-Challenge

6. Healthy Homes Initiative Auckland, 2018, Ministry of Health, TSI https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/healthy-homes-initiative-auckland-codesign-stage1

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8. Know Me Believe in Me. Kia mārama mai, kia whakapono mai, 2020, The Auckland Co-design Lab, TSI, Ministry of Education https://www.aucklandco-lab.nz/s/KnowMeBelieveinMeReportWeb2020.pdf

9. In particular we would like to acknowledge Whānau Ora https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/whakamahia/whānau-ora E Tū Whānau https://etuwhānau.org.nz/ and SKIP https://www.skip.org.nz/ as exemplars of alternative models that centre culture and capacities of whānau.

10. That people want and seek out support from those they trust, or that can relate to their experience or cultural context is well established for examples see:

    Hann, S., & Trewartha, C. (2015). Creating change: Mobilising New Zealand communities to prevent family violence. Auckland, New Zealand: New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, University of Auckland https://nzfvc.org.nz/issues-paper-8-creating-change-2015

    Report on Giving, Receiving and Seeking Help, Ministry of Social Development, 2010 https://thehub.swa.govt.nz/assets/documents/43039_Report-on-giving-receiving-seeking-help_0.pdf

11. Changing Lives one Home at a time, The Story of Ko Huiamano, 2019, Kootuitui Papakura, The Southern Initiative, https://www.tsi.nz/s/Kootuitui-Case-Study

12. https://www.skip.org.nz/

13. https://tacsi.org.au/work/family-by-family/

14. In the cases where relational and tikanga led practices are prioritised, most often in kaupapa Māori organisations, there has been challenges having these recognised and supported by the larger system, or valued within conventional service funding, reporting and accounting structures (though we recognise ongoing efforts to change this and examples of where these are being successful done are growing).

15. See for example Know Me Believe in Me. Kia mārama mai, kia whakapono mai, 2020, The Southern Initiative, Ministry of Education https://www.aucklandco-lab.nz/s/KnowMeBelieveinMeReportWeb2020.pdf and

    A rapid review of racism in schools: Working paper 2020, NZCER, https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/Racism%20in%20schools-Rapid%20review%20working%20paper-FINAL.pdf

16. Wai 2575 Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/wai-2575-health-services-and-outcomes-kaupapa-inquiry

17. http://www.aucklanddesignmanual.co.nz/design-subjects/maori-design/te_aranga_principles

18. https://www.tsi.nz/creating-home

19. New Zealand is currently under investing in primary prevention of family violence and sexual violence. For instance, in 2018/19, less than 1.9% of the $1.357 billion allocated by joint-venture agencies was directed at primary prevention initiatives (source Joint Venture fro Family and Sexual Violence).

20. Community well-being: Partnerships for community parks, Andrew Rutledge, Christchurch City Council, Presented at Taituarā, Partners in Well-being Forum May 2021, https://taituara.org.nz/Attachment?Action=Download&Attachment_id=2417

Suggested citation: Hagen, P., Tangaere, A., Beaton, S., Hadrup, A., Taniwha-Paoo, R., Te Whiu, D., (2021), Designing for equity and intergenerational wellbeing: Te Tokotoru, The Auckland Co-design Lab, The Southern Initiative.

Acknowledgements