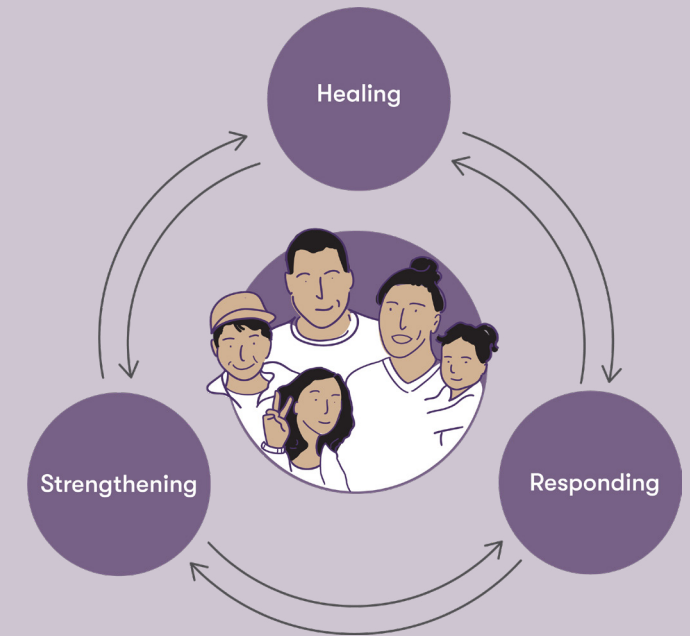


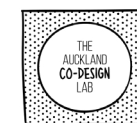
## TE TOKOTORU CASE STUDY

This is one of a series of case studies sharing how Te Tokotoru is being used by government agencies to rebalance action and investment to what makes the difference for whānau.



# Reorienting systems towards healing and strengthening: The use of Te Tokotoru with South Auckland tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.

A case study developed in conversation with Kimi Tangaere from the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board.



# Introduction

## About this case study

This case study shares how Te Tokotoru was used by the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board as part of a rangatahi-centred approach called Kotahi Te Whakaaro, to support south Auckland tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau involved in fleeing driver incidents.

It demonstrates how to reorient existing resources to strengthen tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau.

The South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board (SASWB) is a place-based initiative made up of 13 government agencies, set up to bring social sector leaders together to work in partnership with mana whenua, whānau and communities in an evidence-informed way. The SASWB works with whānau and mana whenua to develop high impact, cross-agency ways of working to meet complex and diverse needs, and to lift these up into government systems to improve equity and wellbeing.

Te Tokotoru is an evidence-based approach to investment that increases the long term impact of public sector funding through a more balanced and effective allocation of resources.

Te Tokotoru reflects seven years of learning from The Southern Initiative and Auckland Co-Design Lab, working alongside whānau in south Auckland on what supports wellbeing. It reflects practice-based evidence and research about what matters and makes the difference to whānau.

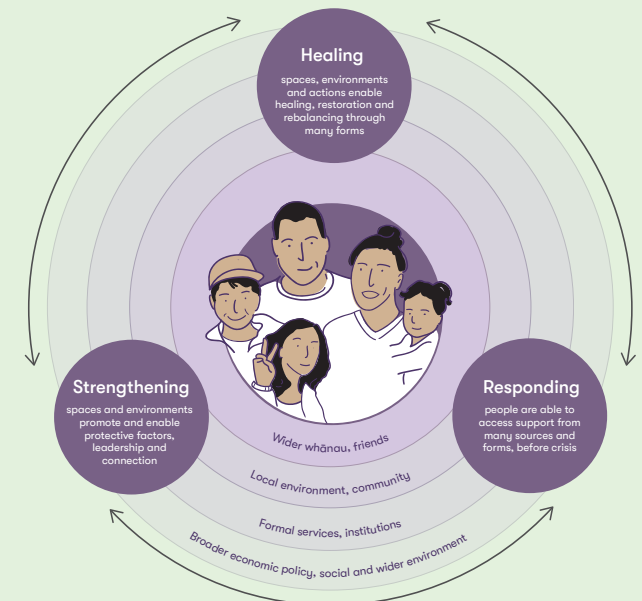
Te Tokotoru moves the public sector from a deficit focused, service-led, crisis response cycle, to focus on what matters to communities in place.

It recognises the importance of supporting the knowledge and networks that are already in communities, investing in locally led responses, and in what strengthens, heals and restores long term.

Our current service systems are not delivering for families, and Te Tokotoru provides an alternative investment approach, to achieve better outcomes over time.

Te Tokotoru can be used on the ground with whānau to identify what would make the difference for them, including how to enhance existing strengths, support restoration and address root causes of harm.

It can be used by government systems and service settings to rebalance action and investment to what matters to whānau, and to work in more joined up ways across the three connected domains of strengthening, healing and responding.



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

# Rebalancing to include healing and strengthening

The SASWB team was aware of the increasing involvement of tamariki and rangatahi in ram raids and other fleeing driver events in south Auckland. It decided to move away from approaches where the system decides what is good for tamariki and rangatahi, that are often punitive and focused on the offending, and focus instead on what is healing and strengthening for tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau, and what supports their aspirations. This approach has a greater chance of helping to address what is triggering such events, and shifting the trajectory for young people longer term.

Te Tokotoru helped the SASWB start with connecting and listening to tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau. The SASWB reached out and spoke with tamariki and rangatahi from different places and spaces within south Auckland, their whānau, the people that work with them, and a local school that is working in a strengths based way.

Engaging in whānau-led kōrero, the SASWB wanted to understand what healing and strengthening look like for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau, so that agencies and services can support these things.

*"For our rangatahi, there has been a lot of focus on 'What are we going to do to stop the offending, to stop these fleeing drivers?' The number one question everyone asks us is 'Why are they doing it?' It's complicated, complex and multi-layered. There's no one reason and in my opinion, things such as boot camps are not the answer."<sup>1</sup>*

Te Tokotoru recognises tamariki and rangatahi behaviour as manifestations of trauma and distress, which often have intergenerational roots.

*"This model moves you away from a typical response 'What are we going to do with this?' and makes you open your eyes to be a little bit broader around intergenerational wellbeing and equity."<sup>2</sup>*



The approach helped the SASWB to walk alongside whānau to understand what they consider to be healing and strengthening to their wellbeing, and to identify system conditions to support those things.

*"Rangatahi are so amazing, when you just have a chat with them, and there's a little bit of trust, and there's a little bit of room - they're so poetic in the way they talk about their experiences. You can envision that some of these experiences for these young people are pretty traumatic in their short space of life. But the way that they talk about it and their willingness to share is quite amazing."*

Te Tokotoru supported the SASWB to work differently with tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau, by sharing power, building trust and creating the conditions to share safely and openly. During the whānau-led kōrero, the SASWB team were mindful of the term 'healing', wanting to be careful not to imply that something is broken.

Tamariki and rangatahi wanted to be asked about 'cleansing' instead of 'healing' and 'maturing' instead of 'strengthening', and shared that in many spaces including their homes, they are not heard. This raises questions about how services and agencies can communicate differently with tamariki and rangatahi to hear what is happening for them and what they need.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Practice Foundations: Te Tokotoru - Reorienting towards healing and strengthening to better support rangatahi and their whānau with Kimi Tangaere.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from Practice Foundations: Te Tokotoru - Reorienting towards healing and strengthening to better support rangatahi and their whānau with Kimi Tangaere.

Te Tokotoru helped to unpack the episodic, in and out, short term nature of crisis response services from the experiences of tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau, and to find spaces and system conditions that support healing and strengthening beyond services.

The team captured what they heard from tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau in the report *Insights to Reorient Thinking & Resources For South Auckland Rangatahi Through Healing & Strengthening*. Evidence and Insights Analyst Kimi Tangaere can be viewed sharing these insights online [here](#).



The SASWB team reflected on what tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau had told them about the government system and noticed the following themes emerging:

- whānau work hard for what they need, often in spite of the system
- healing and strengthening actions are temporary
- a safe space is a healing and strengthening space
- whānau examples of healing and strengthening are interconnected
- healing and strengthening spaces are often described outside of the home.

Te Tokotoru has supported the SASWB to use these insights collectively for meaningful, whānau-led systems change.

*"The biggest issue is how do we lift out what we are hearing from whānau and lift it up to 'what does this mean for the system?' Te Tokotoru helps us do both. It helps us to hear what matters and connect that straight into what that could look like from a systems perspective."<sup>3</sup>*

The SASWB identified three system opportunities for translating these insights into actions within the system. The first is reframing how agencies talk about whānau to be more strengths-based. Te Tokotoru encourages government agencies to take responsibility for how their systems can entrench shame, blame and inequity. Part of the work across the 13 agencies is to shift from a deficit way of talking about whānau in south Auckland

to strengths-based language. For example moving away from language that describes whānau as 'high needs and vulnerable', to language that puts the onus back onto the system such as 'priority populations and whānau navigating complex systems'.

*"If we can change our thinking, we change our language, if we can change our language we can change our practice. That will help the system to decolonise our mindset<sup>4</sup>."*

The second system opportunity is **working differently with tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau, by taking a restorative approach**. The Kotahi Te Whakaaro prototype was established to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau involved in fleeing driver incidents. Instead of focusing on how to stop young people from reoffending, practitioners support tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau to be the whānau they want to be, by starting from a strengths-based position and building on the good things that exist and are happening in the whānau. This takes meaningful engagement, communication and work with tamariki and rangatahi.

*"Moana Jackson spoke about restoration as a process, it's not an event. The process has to be a healing and strengthening process, not just the things that you're doing. It costs nothing to change the discourse and the way that we're framing and speaking to our young people and giving them the opportunity to ask us questions is really important."<sup>5</sup>*

<sup>3</sup> Ishani Gupta. Quoted from an interview with Kimi Tangaere, Ishani Gupta, and Ann Wilkie held on 1 June 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Practice Foundations: Te Tokotoru - Reorienting towards healing and strengthening to better support rangatahi and their whānau with Kimi Tangaere.

As part of Kotahi Te Whakaaro, practitioners work with tamariki and rangatahi to explore 'You're here now, where do you want to go?' and capture this as a drawing or illustration to identify what will support them on their journey.

This way of working uses existing agency resources without formally involving whānau in systems that can be stigmatising, and that whānau do not want to be involved in. From the Kotahi Te Whakaaro prototype, 78% of rangatahi did not reoffend, 56% of tamariki who were not enrolled in school were re-enrolled and a 20% increase in wellbeing support entitlements occurred for whānau, as a result of undertaking 182 full entitlement checks<sup>5</sup>.

The third system opportunity involves the youth court communicating differently with rangatahi and prioritising healing and strengthening activities. The SASWB shared tamariki, rangatahi and whānau insights with Youth Court Judges, and Judges in Manukau asked for support to communicate differently with rangatahi. They are now using prompts for this developed by Angie Tangaere and the Auckland Co-Design Lab, including:

- what makes you feel rejuvenated
- what do you look forward to
- what makes you feel good
- what makes you feel connected to the people around you.

This has helped to create a more restorative process for young people, in which they have a voice. Through the leadership of a south Auckland Judge, the Youth Court made healing and strengthening actions a requirement in the Family Group Conference plans for young people and is pushing back on plans that do not have these included. Having healing and strengthening actions in the plans is helping the system to invest in what matters and what will make a difference for young people.

### Summary

Te Tokotoru helped the SASWB to walk alongside tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau to understand what is healing and strengthening for them. It has helped to lift what matters to tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau into government settings, to help create the system conditions to support wellbeing.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Practice Foundations: Te Tokotoru - Reorienting towards healing and strengthening to better support rangatahi and their whānau with Kimi Tangaere.

<sup>6</sup> South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board, Kotahi te Whakaaro - Learnings Report, October 2023.

### Acknowledgements

We acknowledge all who have contributed to the development of Te Tokotoru. We continue to develop and learn with Te Tokotoru and how it can support us to work differently in service of equity and intergenerational wellbeing.

If Te Tokotoru is informing your mahi and you would like share what you are learning please contact [penny.hagen@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:penny.hagen@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

**Our special thanks** to Rachael Trotman and Deane-Rose Ngatai-Tua for developing the Te Tokotoru case study series.

