

Submission on the Strategy for Children and Young People To Wellington City Council

May 2021

We would like to appear in person to support our submission

Contact person:

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Te Rūnanga Taiohi o te Kaunihera o Pōneke

Introduction

1. The Wellington City Youth Council (Youth Council) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Strategy for Children and Young People for Wellington City.
2. We would like to extend our appreciation in particular to the policy team behind the formation of this strategy for their engagement with Youth Council throughout this policy. The effort taken to involve members throughout the development of this policy, returning to our group on multiple occasions to seek guidance and incorporating the feedback given throughout this process was greatly appreciated.
3. We hope to see this high level of genuine engagement throughout the creation of relevant Council policies continued in the future.
4. Furthermore, we commend Council officer's inclusion of various more accessible forms of the strategy throughout their consultation process, such as the variant of the 'kids version' of the strategy.
5. Due to the collaboration between Council officers and Youth Council in the development of this strategy, Youth Council are strongly in support of the goals and principles of the Strategy for Children and Young People.

Overview of submission

6. The submission by Youth Council on the Strategy for Children and Young People will address the following topics:
 - a. Increased awareness among young people of the work and role of Council
 - b. Necessity for the development of a Youth Hub in the Central City
 - c. Improving access to the natural environment
 - d. Addressing child poverty and housing access
 - e. Inclusivity of mana whenua and other ethnic minorities
 - f. Development of libraries and opportunities for youth
 - g. Accessibility to decision making

Vision for children and young people

7. Youth Council acknowledges the desire for Wellington to exist as a place that young people feel connected and involved in.
8. In many ways, we believe that there are ample opportunities for tamariki and rangatahi to get involved in.
9. Despite this, we would like to see an increase in advertising to ensure that as many young people as possible are aware of the things going on in the city.
10. Youth Council appreciates the many green spaces that we have here in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. We believe that this space plays a crucial role in the development of young people in our city.
11. We also acknowledge that these spaces play a critical role in having positive mental and physical wellbeing.
12. We believe that whilst there are many facilities and programmes available to young people, the advertising around these could be improved.
13. There aren't many young people who are aware of the different activities and facilities offered by Council. We believe an improved advertising campaign would help ensure as many young people as possible know about the things that are on offer.
14. We believe that this will also improve both mental and physical wellbeing of young people in Wellington.
15. Youth Council believes that whilst there are some safe spaces in Wellington for young people to be, there isn't a clearly defined place where young people can just go to hang out.
16. We believe this issue needs to urgently be addressed to ensure that young people can feel safe and comfortable coming into the city - knowing they have a place that they can spend time in.
17. Youth Council strongly advocates for the implementation of a Youth Hub in the central city. We believe this facility (or floor of an existing building) could be a place where young people can convene, study, game, chat, and have access to services such as doctors, counsellors etc.
18. We believe that housing is another barrier that young people come across when progressing into adulthood. We would like to see even more affordable and warm, safe housing for young people to have a sense of security.

Where we are now

19. Once again, Youth Council acknowledges Council's role in providing facilities and programmes for young people to get involved in.
20. We think that because advertising hasn't been entirely effective, an increase in advertising will ensure many young people are aware of the facilities and programmes that are available.
21. Youth Council also acknowledges Council's work in ensuring that young people have access to (mostly) free natural environment activities. We believe that this is an advantage to young people, and we believe it promotes positive mental wellbeing.

Aspirations for young Wellingtonians

22. Youth Council acknowledges the need to reduce poverty amongst young people. We believe that this is a very important issue that needs to be urgently addressed.
23. Youth Council also agrees with the framework headings and sections as we believe that they are all fundamental aspects of ensuring that young people can thrive in Wellington.

Principles of the strategy

24. Youth Council strongly agrees that Te Tiriti o Waitangi and partnerships with mana whenua need to be taken into account when making any and all decisions.
25. We agree that Council should work with a diverse range of communities to ensure cultural wellbeing, particularly with Māori and Pasifika communities.
26. Youth Council agrees that the big decisions made today will impact future generations. This is why we believe that it is important to get the big decisions right early on, to ensure that future generations only benefit from our implementations
27. Youth Council also agrees with providing better education in schools to ensure that young people are educated about things such as the environment early on so that they know how to respond to changes when they are older. Doing so will raise awareness amongst young people, which will enable youth to be vigilant with the things that they do.

Necessity for the development of a Youth Hub

28. Spending free time in the central city is a common thing for children, young people and families. With the many attractions and events as well as stores and restaurants it has to offer. This can leave our citizens caught out in the city at all times of the day.
29. The Youth Council agrees with the approach of making the central city safer to hang out 24/7.
30. We highlight that it is commonly felt that Wellington City can feel unsafe for people, especially those who are part of the LGBTQI+ community, people of colour and women.
31. We believe this is not the type of feeling and atmosphere we want for our central city as it can lead to dissuasion of enjoying everything the city has to offer.
32. Being able to feel safe and seeing lower crime rates in the city will be something that all Wellingtonians will be pleased to see.
33. We strongly agree that a central youth hub as well as other safe, inclusive spaces are needed in our city. We believe it will be an impactful way of creating more safe places for children and young people that integrates them into the city environment.
34. Not only will it provide a safe, inclusive place for young people to hang out, but it has the potential to become a foundation for the bridge between Wellington City and our youth today.
35. These spaces offer a place where we can directly offer children-in-need support if they need it, as well as find out information about what the city can offer them.

Improving access to the natural environment

36. We agree that play and creative expression is important for our children and young people as well as exploring new things and delving into current interests.
37. We agree with the approach to support new, emerging, or growing recreational activities that young people enjoy.

38. This approach will be a good way to ensure that young people are able to enjoy and explore their interests more in accessible ways in the city. It will also help our children and young people feel as if the city is growing with them and their interests, creating a deeper feeling of connection.
39. Youth Council believes that being in touch with nature is an easy and simple way to improve one's physical and mental wellbeing.
40. We agree with the approach to increase our focus on initiatives that give our young people more chances to be in touch with the environment. Improved access to nature-rich environments is something we believe will be beneficial for all of Wellington.
41. We concur with the assessment that improvement of access to parks, recreation spaces and support of mental health and wellbeing services is needed. Partnering with relevant agencies to improve this access will be a good way to ensure Wellington is moving in the right direction, in a way young people will be happy with.

Addressing child poverty and housing barriers

42. Youth Council agrees that there is a rising problem of child poverty in Wellington.
43. We agree with the approach to advocate for child poverty issues on behalf of the community. We believe it is important for the problem to be acknowledged and understood throughout our communities to ensure we can learn how to tackle the problem accordingly and hopefully lead to more action.
44. We commend the approach to facilitate solutions for young people experiencing homelessness. This is something very important as it helps our young people feel like they are not alone and are supported by our Council. It will be good to see fewer young people on the streets and more in places where they can feel more supported and secure.
45. We are happy to see the approach to continue the City Housing community support work. This is a fantastic initiative that benefits a lot of struggling individuals in the city.
46. We hope to see in the future improvements on the condition of housing and safety in these buildings and areas.

47. Youth Council fully supports the approach to partner with relevant agencies on food security and encourage more kai markets across the city, suburbs and schools.
48. This is a good way to join hands with those who are experienced in these areas and support local communities in need. We are excited to see more community gardens, mara kai and fruit trees in the city.

Inclusivity of mana whenua and other ethnic minorities

49. Youth Council believes in the importance of partnering with mana whenua to progress initiatives that support tamariki and rangatahi.
50. We agree that Council should work with mana whenua to develop a plan to support the aspirations of tamariki and rangatahi and see the value in offering inclusive events that encourage all children and young people to participate.
51. It is vital that children and young people can have fun and socialise in a safe environment.
52. We also see the value in identifying specific support and programmes for young Pacific people, migrants and refugees. This is crucial in making and creating more diverse communities within Wellington City, but also in creating an inclusive environment where no one is at a disadvantage.
53. We hope to see Council showcasing young cultural performing arts groups and role models. This is because by giving children and young people a chance to be involved, they feel connected and that they can contribute to the positive cultural environment of our city.

Development of libraries and opportunities for youth

54. Youth Council strongly agrees in extending the reach of libraries through the Youth Engagement Plan.
55. It is important that education, knowledge and resources are accessible to our children and young people.
56. From these values we also concur that Council should refurbish the Central Library to be a safe and inclusive place for children and young people.
57. Again, in order to achieve the goal of creating pathways and developing our children and young people, we find it critical that Council builds a stronger,

strategic relationship with tertiary education providers to make Wellington a great place to study and live.

58. This will help in supporting young people to connect to employment, learning or volunteering opportunities

Accessibility to decision making

59. Youth Council acknowledges the importance of children and young people participating in change in our local communities. We believes it is crucial to make it easier for young people to have a say on Council decisions.
60. Focusing on digital inclusion at Council libraries and facilities will help create a more sustainable way of doing things, and educate children and young people about technology.
61. It is important to note that however this is implemented, it does not exclude children and young people who do not have an understanding of digital technology or that people who do not have access to technology are not negatively impacted.
62. We see immense value in involving young people in the design of aspects of the city that are important to them.
63. We believe that Council can leverage our unique status as capital city to help empower young people.
64. Youth Council also hopes to see that harm reduction policies support children and young people to make positive choices.

Conclusion

65. In summary, Youth Council supports the Strategy for Children and Young People. We also support the proposed 1-3 year timeline plan for the implementation of this strategy.
66. Youth Council believes that this strategy covers all aspects of the interactions between young people and the city itself. Many of these considerations have the potential to greatly change the trajectory of life for young people in Wellington, such as addressing issues of child poverty and access to housing, and ensuring that there is a safe space for youth in the central city through the creation of the Youth Hub.

67. Due to the importance of this strategy, we would urge Council to ensure that the work doesn't end here - the goals and outcomes of this strategy need to remain a priority, with clear timeline check-ins to ensure progress.
68. Youth Council hopes that through the implementation of this strategy, Te Whanganui-a-Tara will be a thriving and inviting city for all young people.