



Evidence Snapshot

October 2014

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Promoting Physical Activity at the Local Government Level: Literature Review

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for Agencies for Nutrition Action

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Ngā Takawaenga Hāpai Kai Hauora



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Literature Review

Background

Agencies for Nutrition Action (ANA) commissioned this literature review as part of its knowledge translation project. The knowledge translation project aims to help translate health promotion evidence into action.

This literature review provides background evidence to inform the snapshot on promoting physical activity at the local government level.

Introduction

Physical inactivity poses a serious and growing danger to our society – it damages our health, economy and environment, and limits the educational attainment and futures of our children (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014).

'Local government is one of the most important and powerful influences on the health and wellbeing of communities and populations. The decisions local government makes affect the determinants of health. As such, local government has the ability to improve population health and reduce inequalities in New Zealand' (Kessaram, 2013).

Local government can play a role in supporting regular physical activity through the provision of sport and recreation facilities, urban design and planning. Local government can also play a key role in the promotion of active lifestyles.

Local government can create environments that support physical activity by:

- changes to walking and cycling infrastructure (e.g. providing for pedestrians and cyclists as part of road upgrades and maintenance).
- neighbourhood planning and access to green space (e.g. developing communities with mixed land use, such as local shops and connected road networks).
- providing physical activity facilities (e.g. swimming pools and sport and recreation facilities).
- information dissemination and awareness programmes.

Methods

Purpose

The purpose of the review was to inform the evidence snapshot, which will equip those wishing to engage with local government with the rationale, evidence and tools for promoting physical activity.

Research questions

This evidence snapshot aims to answer the following questions:

1. Why should we focus on getting local government involved in the promotion of physical activity?
 - a. What is local government obliged to provide, if anything, in the physical activity space?
2. What factors influence physical activity at the local government level?
3. How and where can local government intervene to promote physical activity? Focusing on:
 - a. changes to walking and cycling infrastructure (e.g. providing for pedestrians and cyclists as part of road upgrades and maintenance)
 - b. incorporating physical activity considerations into local government strategic and operational activities
 - c. provision of green space for activity and play (e.g. parks, reserves, trails)
4. What is the likely effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of these interventions in promoting physical activity?

Search strategy

A search of the published literature was undertaken using the Scopus database. Scopus covers all journals

included in PubMed (including Medline) and Embase from 1996. A search was also undertaken using the Transport Research International Documentation (TRID) database which is the largest online bibliographic database of transportation research.

In addition to the database searches, internet searches were undertaken using Google and Google Scholar of key national and international websites.

Selection of key papers

A large number of potentially relevant material was found. The first stage of the selection process was to review the abstracts and select the papers and reports directly relevant to the research questions. A total of 55 papers and reports were identified and reviewed for this scan of which 44 were included in the final preparation of this report.

Analysis

The analysis was carried out in two stages: data extraction and data synthesis. Data extraction involved extracting and summarising relevant findings from the set of included papers and reports. The aim of data synthesis was to draw the findings together, and to present it in a way that answered each research question. This stage involved analysing the findings across papers and reports, identifying key areas of congruence, considering the strength of evidence, and examining possible reasons for any inconsistencies.

Limitations

This was a scan of the literature and as such was not a systematic or comprehensive review. It does not cover all of the material available on the topic and should not be viewed as exhaustive.

Research Questions

1. Why should we focus on getting local government involved in the promotion of physical activity?

'Local government is one of the most important and powerful influences on the health and wellbeing of communities and populations. The decisions local government makes affect the determinants of health. As such, local government has the ability to improve population health and reduce inequalities in New Zealand' (Kessaram, 2013).

There are many potential partners in the promotion of physical activity, including central government, education institutions, workplaces, private companies, health sector organisations, families, iwi, churches, recreation and sports clubs. Everyone can play a part however local government is uniquely placed to influence the environment in which we live, learn, work and play at a local level. The vision, plans and operation of local government impact our lives every single day.

Local government is responsible for regional land transport strategies (RLTS) and programmes (RLTP). These determine the type and number of transport options available, including public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure and support.

Local government also has a mandate to meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services including facilities for sport and recreation and places to be active, such as parks, trails and reserves.

Local government has influence over the urban design of towns and cities, the amount of green space, the intensity of housing, the provision and placement of services and amenities, the presence and type of footpaths, the placement of lighting and the connectivity of services to transport options.

Local government also has choices about the type of programmes and activities it supports and promotes. Last but not least, local government is a large employer in its own right and can provide opportunities for its own employees to be physically active.

Local government does not make decisions completely autonomously and, to a greater or lesser extent (depending on the decision), is influenced by national government policy directions. That said, with or without national policy leadership, local government can play a key role in supporting regular physical activity through:

- changes to walking and cycling infrastructure (e.g. providing for pedestrians and cyclists as part of road upgrades and maintenance).
- urban design, neighbourhood planning and access to green spaces (e.g. developing communities with mixed land use, such as local shops and connected road networks).
- providing physical activity, sport and recreation facilities.
- promoting active lifestyles through information dissemination and awareness programmes.

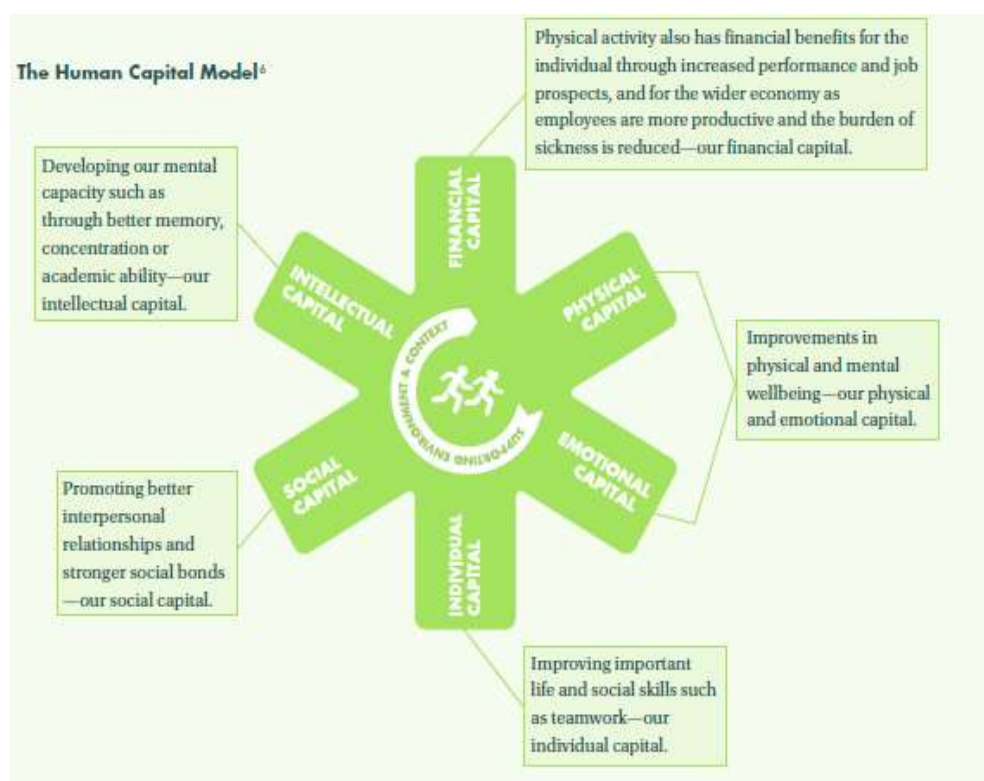
What are the benefits of physical activity?

There are many benefits to physical activity. While we are probably most familiar with the wider health benefits there are many other benefits that may be equally if not more persuasive for local government involvement.

Health benefits

- There are many health benefits to increasing physical activity at an individual and societal level. The benefits of regular physical activity for adults are well established. Physical activity has many benefits for the cardiovascular and musculoskeletal systems, as well as for the functioning of the metabolic, endocrine and immune systems (Ministry of Health, 2003). Physical activity is beneficial to health at all ages. It is especially important to the healthy development of children and young people; active ageing can make a dramatic difference to the well-being of older people (Edwards & Tsouros, 2006).
- The physical health benefits of physical activity are well known however there are wider benefits for individuals described below in the human capital model (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014):

Figure 1: Human Capital Model



In short, the evidence tells us:

- Active children do better. Physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development, it increases cognitive outcomes and school attainment, and improves social interaction and confidence.
- Active people do better. Physical activity reduces the risk of all-cause mortality by 30 percent, of heart disease by 20-35 percent, of diabetes by 35-50 percent and of dementia by 40-45 percent.
- Active workplaces do better. Physical activity programmes in the workplace have resulted in reductions of absenteeism between 30 percent and 50 percent. Active workers are also happier, cited as better team players and are visibly more productive.
- An active population drives a stronger economy. UK Active estimates that just a one percent reduction in the rates of inactivity each year for five years would save the UK around £1.2 billion (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014).

Costs of inactivity

The impacts of a physically inactive society are costly. It was estimated physical inactivity cost New Zealand \$1.3 billion in 2010. The costs of physical inactivity include direct health costs associated with treatment in the health care system, indirect health costs associated with living with disability/disease and dying prematurely and other costs associated with physical inactivity such as promoting activity and information campaigns relating to physical well-being. Direct costs attributed to avoidable diseases (associated with insufficient levels of physical inactivity) were \$614 million for New Zealand in 2010 (Market Economics Ltd, 2013).

Wider societal benefits

Good urban design and transport systems that promote active commuting, public transport, walking and cycling have multiple benefits. Along with promoting physical activity they make communities safer, more sustainable, increase 'liveability' and 'vibrancy' and enhance a community's appeal.

The built environment influences how people relate to each other, the opportunity for community to form, and the depth of our social networks. It regulates how much incidental exercise is possible through walking and cycling.

Buildings and streets contribute to reducing crime when buildings support eyes on the street, and shops and services put a functioning community in control of the public realm. Pattern, complexity, and harmony in the built environment can stimulate curiosity, discovery, and a sense that the world is meaningful. Beauty in nature, architecture and public places can lift spirits, raise endorphin levels, and improve physical and emotional health (International Making Cities Liveable, n.d.).

These wider benefits may be of more interest to local government than the individual benefits of physical activity per se. For example, research shows a community's appeal drives economic prosperity. After interviewing close to 43,000 people in 26 communities across the US over three years, the Soul of the Community research found three main qualities attach people to place: social offerings, such as entertainment venues and places to meet, openness (how welcoming a place is) and the aesthetics of an area (its physical beauty and availability of parks, playgrounds and green spaces). Attachment is linked to economic prosperity. Just as actively engaged employees are more productive and committed to the success of their organisations, highly attached residents are more likely to actively contribute to a community's growth (Knight Foundation, 2010).

Liveable and vibrant cities are being recognised by local government as important economically as cities and towns compete nationally and internationally for people and investment. A liveable city is an important investment for council. Creating vibrancy or liveability is high on councils' agenda. For example, the Government of South Australia includes creating a vibrant city as one of its seven strategic priorities. The outcomes of vibrancy include more people wanting to live and work in a city and more visitors wanting to spend time in the city (Government of South Australia, n.d.).

Councils often state liveability and sustainable development as goals. The outcomes of these goals also benefit physical activity. Community Research Connections has found there are frequent parallels between the liveability agenda and sustainable development. For example, reduced use of car transport, an increase in green space, and

opportunities for social capital and participatory planning regimes, are all improvements for sustainable development. The study concluded both concepts are crucial to the resilience, stability and future of communities (The Landscape Institute, 2014).

What are the benefits for local government of promoting physical activity?

The benefits of promoting physical activity which may be particularly relevant to the purpose of local government in New Zealand include:

Economic benefits

There are economic benefits to physical activity at an individual level and to environments that support physical activity and public transport.

In England the costs of lost productivity have been estimated at £6.5 billion per year from sickness absence and premature death. Physical activity programmes at work have been found to reduce absenteeism by up to 20 percent; physically active workers take 27 percent fewer sick days. Getting employees involved in a physical activity programme can also lead to net savings while boosting productivity (NICE, 2013).

The New Zealand Treasury estimates the cost of lost output because of absenteeism, presenteeism (working while unwell, but less productive), reduced hours and lack of participation in the labour force as a result of ill health together to be between \$4.127 billion and \$11.563 billion. The large range is the result of different estimates of productivity for presenteeism. The cost of absenteeism is relatively small at \$0.929 billion compared to presenteeism (Holt, 2010).

Cities that spend the least on providing mobility infrastructure for their inhabitants are medium or high density towns where trips are already being made mainly using public transport, walking and cycling. The proportion of community income used on transport rises from less than six percent in densely populated cities where most trips are made by walking, cycling and public transport to 12 percent in cities where the car is almost the exclusive mode of transport (Edwards & Tsouros, 2006). So providing good public and active transport options is cheaper for citizens and for cities.

Improved traffic flow and air quality

Reducing the number of short car journeys particularly those related to travel to and from school improves traffic flow and air quality (NICE, 2013).

Data from the New Zealand Household Travel Survey (NZHTS) show travel to school makes up around four percent of total trip legs in New Zealand (Ministry of Transport, 2013). Since the early 1990s there has been a decrease in the proportion of children walking to school, and a corresponding increase in the proportion travelling by car. In particular, the proportion of primary/intermediate age children travelling to school by car increased from 31 percent to 58 percent between 1989/90 to 2008-2011 (Ministry of Transport, 2013). Regional analysis in the Greater Wellington area showed that half of trips (50 percent) where children are driven to school are less than 2km long, and 85 percent of trips are less than 5km long (Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2014).

Enhanced social cohesion

Increasing levels of participation in sport and physical activity can contribute to social cohesion, neighbourhood revitalization and an increased sense of community identity. Green spaces, skateboarding parks, trails, paths and sports facilities provide a social focus and enhance people's perception of their neighbourhood. Providing equitable and safe opportunities for active living may also encourage the expansion of social networks. This is especially important for members of minority ethnic, racial and religious groups and for older residents (Edwards & Tsouros, 2006).

Other benefits include reducing health inequalities, increasing use of existing facilities (for example, use of school facilities by the community during school holidays) and reduced demand on health and social services (NICE, 2013). There is also some evidence that targeted physical activity programmes may reduce crime, particularly youth offending behaviour (Cameron & Macdougall, 2000).

Good employer

Local government makes a significant contribution to New Zealand's gross domestic product (GDP), manages significant resources and is a large employer in its own right. Councils employ 24,565 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff (Department of Internal Affairs, n.d.).

What if anything is local government obliged to provide in the physical activity space?

What is the role of local government?

Local government's role is to enable democratic decision making by, and for, local communities. Local government makes decisions about local issues and services having regard to local needs and priorities (Department of Internal Affairs, n.d.).

The requirements for local government are set out in the Local Government Act 2002 (Local Government Act 2002, 2014). The Act was amended in 2012 when one of the key changes was to change the purpose of local government, removing any reference to promoting wellbeing (social, economic, cultural and environmental). The new purpose of local government is to:

'meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses' (Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012, 2012).

There is also a requirement for local government to:

'enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities' (Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012, 2012).

The rationale for the changes was to 'contribute to the government's broader agenda to build a more competitive and productive economy, and improve the delivery of public services, by focusing councils on operating more efficiently and doing the things only councils can do'.

The government at the time felt existing local government law did not adequately focus councils to operate efficiently, to deliver the services only councils can provide or perform the roles only councils can perform. It was felt a focus on well-being could divert councils into areas already covered by central government and the private sector (Local Government Act 2002 Amendment Act 2012, 2012).

The Bill was referred to the Local Government and Environment Committee for consideration. The Committee was unable to agree that the bill be passed as there was disagreement, amongst other things, on the proposal to replace the 'four well-beings' (social, economic, environmental, and cultural) in the purpose. Concern was expressed by the Labour party and the Green party that replacing the reference to wellbeing would remove key responsibilities from local government and threaten the maintenance of local government activities that foster community cohesion and welfare (Local Government and Environment Committee, 2012).

However the Bill was enacted in December 2012 and all references to promoting well-being were removed from the Act as part of the Amendment (Local Government Act 2002, 2014).

While there may not be explicit requirements for local government to promote physical activity there are many opportunities to frame arguments for its inclusion.

Such opportunities could be based on:

- physical activity's contribution to the government's broader agenda to build a more competitive and productive economy.
- local government's requirement for action by, and on behalf of, communities.
- the requirement to meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses.

It might also be useful to frame its inclusion within the context of the government's intention of focusing councils on operating more efficiently and doing the things only councils can do.

A good place to start may be with the question, how can an environment that promotes physical activity assist local government to meet its objectives?

Or, put another way, what are the things that only councils can do, that support the government's broader economic agenda, are supported by local communities, are cost-effective and provide local infrastructure or services that would also promote physical activity?

In order to answer these questions it is useful to understand the function of local government.

Council core functions as set out in the Local Government Act

In performing its role, a local authority must have particular regard to the contribution that the following core services make to its communities:

- a) network infrastructure¹
- b) public transport services
- c) solid waste collection and disposal
- d) the avoidance or mitigation of natural hazards
- e) libraries, museums, reserves, recreational facilities, and other community infrastructure² (Local Government Act 2002, 2014).

Relationship with central government

There is an inherent tension between the fundamental role of local government, of autonomously responding to the needs and aspirations of each local community, and the involvement of local authorities in implementing policies determined at a national level to achieve national outcomes and objectives (Department of Internal Affairs, 2006).

An example of central government policy that explicitly sets out the expectations of local government is the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport Funding (GPS). The GPS directly influences policy and expenditure at a regional level by setting out the government's expected outcomes and priorities for investment in land transport. The government has three focus areas that are the priorities for this GPS (New Zealand Government, 2011):

- economic growth and productivity
- value for money
- road safety.

The GPS focuses on 'realigning transport expenditure to better support economic growth' with a major focus on 'moving people and freight between and within New Zealand's five largest cities' (New Zealand Government, 2011).

Regional land transport strategies and programmes

Regional councils are required by the Land Transport Management Act 2003 (LTMA), to establish and appoint members of regional transport committees. These committees prepare regional land transport strategies and regional land transport programmes and provide advice as requested by the regional council. Committee members must include:

- two representatives of the particular regional council
- one representative of each local council in the region
- one representative of the NZ Transport Agency
- one cultural representative
- one representative for each of the New Zealand Transport Strategy 2008 objectives (economic development, safety and personal security, public health, access and mobility, environmental sustainability).

¹ **Network infrastructure** means the provision of roads and other transport, water, wastewater, and storm water collection and management.

² **Community infrastructure** means a) land or development assets on land, owned or controlled by the territorial authority to provide public amenities; and b) includes land that the territorial authority will acquire for that purpose.

Regional land transport strategies (RLTS) establish the transport outcomes regions wish to achieve. Regional land transport programmes (RLTP) are developed by regional councils every three years. The content is guided by the RLTS and the GPS and prioritises activities proposed by councils in the region. The RLTP represents the region's bid for funding from the National Land Transport Fund, administered by the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA). Funding is not guaranteed just because projects are included in the RLTP. The final funding decisions rest with the NZTA.

Many land transport projects and activities are funded jointly by central and local government.

The LTMA also requires regional councils to plan for and deliver public transport activities. Under the Public Transport Management Act 2008, regional councils and others that provide public transport (for example Auckland Regional Transport Authority in Auckland) must prepare regional public transport plans.

There are opportunities and tools to influence regional land transport strategies, for example Environment Canterbury Regional Council (ECAN), Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) and Christchurch City Council (CCC) undertook a Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (HIA) on Canterbury's Regional Land Transport Strategy 2011 – 2041 (RLTS) (Environment Canterbury, Canterbury District Health Board, Christchurch City Council, 2010).

The HIA process engages many different stakeholders, particularly during the scoping and appraisal stages. This process allows diverse organisations to consider the impact of a policy on health and wellbeing and come up with mitigation recommendations. The main recommendation from the HIA was:

'The RLTS should support a strategic direction that enhances active and public transport and reduces car dependency'.

The other key recommendations of the HIA were to:

- improve mobility for the transport disadvantaged
- increase public understanding of the true costs of transport
- enhance urban design and land use planning to improve active lifestyles
- undertake education and marketing to increase awareness of the links between public health and transport
- reduce private vehicle dependence
- ensure regulation and enforcement supports public health benefits
- ensure funding and investment supports public health benefits
- improve active transport infrastructure
- enhance public transport services and infrastructure
- support increased energy efficiency and environmental sustainability
- support the efficient and effective movement of freight
- ensure effective representation.

Local government planning process

Planning processes are fundamental to the way local government carries out its duties and in order to work with local government it is essential to understand these processes. Councils are required under the Local Government Act to produce a Long Term Plan (LTP). The LTP replaces the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). Most councils are guided by these plans and have little flexibility to work outside of them.

Understanding the process in the region is important as each region may vary, for example the process in Auckland is slightly different after the amalgamation of the Auckland region councils (see Figure 2 below).

Understanding the planning process highlights key points and mechanisms to influence planning. All councils are required to provide opportunity for the public to have input into the LTP process and to annual plans. There are also opportunities for community boards and for Māori to have direct participation in planning.



Figure 2: Auckland Council's Planning Overview

What is local government currently doing?

During the 2000s there was significant work both regionally and nationally to develop comprehensive plans for physical activity. There was a proliferation of regional physical activity strategies driven by the release of the Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure Report (The Graham Report) (Ministerial Taskforce on Sport Fitness & Leisure, 2001). The report recommended the development of regional physical activity strategies and the formation of Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC). SPARC supported the development of these strategies regionally, examples include:

- Kaikoura Physical Activity Plan (Tasman Regional Sports Trust & Kaikoura District Council, 2008)
- Clutha Physical Activity Strategy (Allan, 2007)
- Whanganui Physical Activity Strategy (Whanganui DHB, Halberg Trust, Whanganui UCOL, Te Oranganui, Whanganui District Council, Whanganui Regional PHO, Sport and Recreation Wanganui, Whanganui Disability Resource Centre, 2007)

A postal survey of senior planners in New Zealand's Territorial Local Authorities (TLA), undertaken in 2004/05 found 59 percent of respondents reported their TLA had an overall plan or policy for physical activity, a quarter of which were still 'in development'. Most reported involvement in promoting physical activity, two-thirds with specific community programmes (Bullen & Lyne, 2006).

More recently Auckland has produced the [Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan 2014 -2024](#) for recreation and sport across the Auckland region. The plan was developed by Auckland Council and One Voice, Sport and Recreation, an independent coalition of agencies including Sport Auckland, Auckland Sports Coalition, Sport New Zealand, High Performance Sport New Zealand, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, He Oranga Poutama, Harbour Sport, Counties Manukau Sport, Sport Waitakere, Sport Auckland and the New Zealand Recreation Association (One Voice Sport and Recreation, 2014).

The plan identifies the wider stakeholders in physical activity promotion shown below in Figure 3:



Figure 3: The Auckland sport and recreation sector and industry

The plan shows the integration of other Auckland plans with the Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan 2014-2024 as shown below in Figure 4.

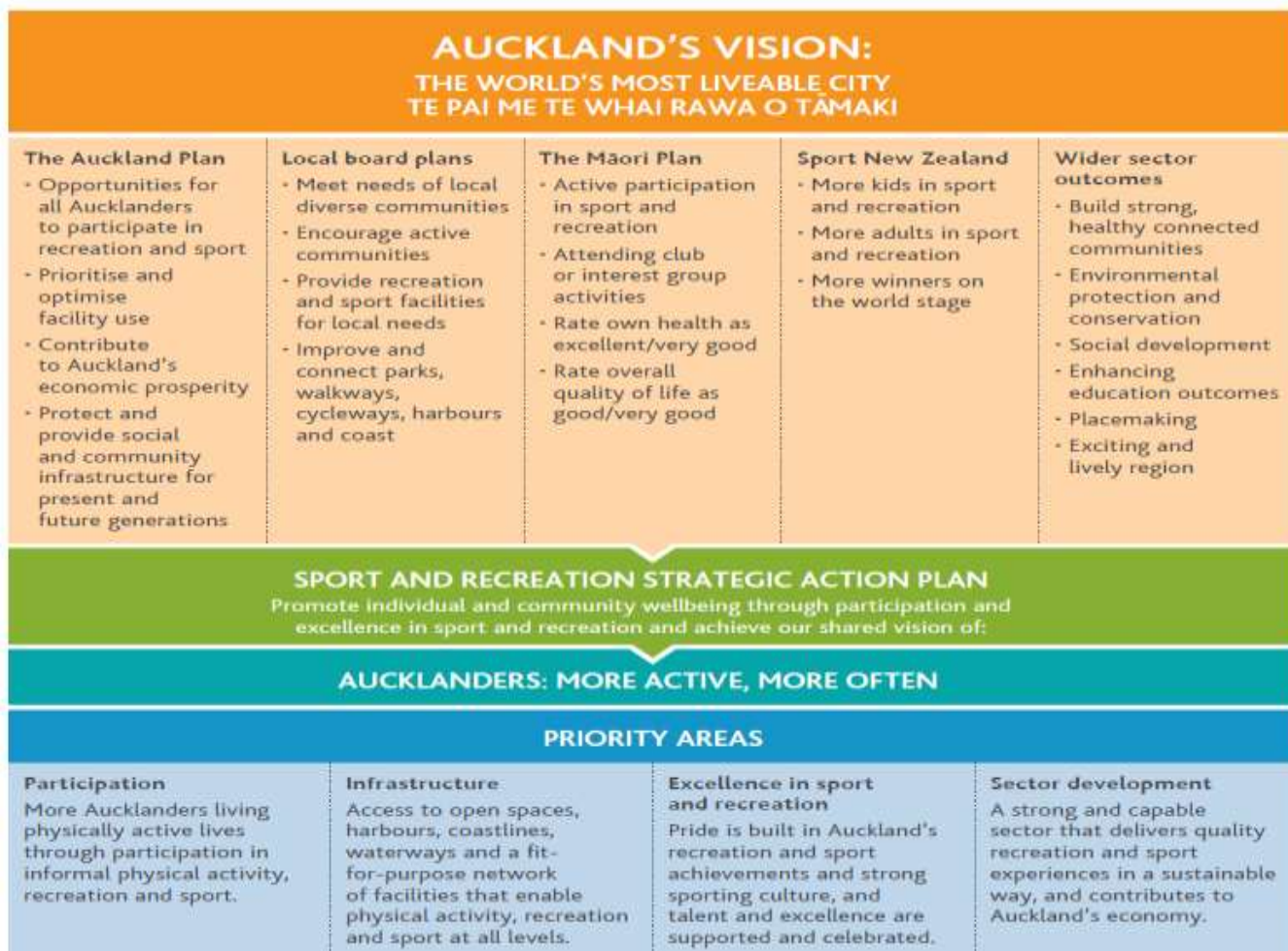


Figure 4: Context of the Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan

Plans for a similar One Voice process are currently underway in Wellington and Canterbury (H. Goodin, personal communication, September 25, 2014).

Each local government has its own plans and priorities. It was beyond the scope of this scan to undertake a detailed review of each authority. The following examples are intended as a starting point and are indicative of areas of interest. We suggest anyone wanting to work with local government becomes fully acquainted with the process, plans and key decision makers relevant to their own region.

City Plans

Some local government authorities have specific city plans. For example the [Christchurch City Plan](#) provides a framework for the management of land use and subdivision and the [Auckland Plan](#) sets out the Council's strategy to make Auckland the world's most liveable city (Christchurch City Council, n.d.) (Auckland Council, n.d.).

Cycleways

Many councils are investing in cycleways. Examples of cycleway projects include:

Christchurch City Council has committed to a [Major Cycleways project](#) which will create a network of 13 connected routes which link suburbs, education facilities, business and shopping areas as well as popular recreational destinations. The full project will cost \$68.3 million based on 2012 costings. Staff are still working through complex issues such as detailed route design and whether land purchase will be required. The Three Year Plan 2013-16, set aside \$34 million for cycleways, with the remainder of the cost falling in the 2017 and 2018 years (Christchurch City Council, n.d.).

'The Council wants to set a new standard with its Major Cycleways project, providing a network that addresses the safety concerns of the community. This project aims to elevate levels of service above what has been previously provided. We are talking about much more than simply painting lines on the roadside.'

In August 2011 the Dunedin City Council, with input from the community, adopted a [Strategic Cycle Network](#). The Strategic Cycle Network is a group of cycle routes that connect Dunedin's key destinations. The network is designed to provide greater connectivity and safety for cyclists. Identifying strategic routes means investment can be targeted to achieve the greatest benefit. Development of cycle facilities on the routes (such as cycle lanes, separated cycle paths, or shared paths) will be carried out over a 20-30 year period, based on priority and subject to funding (Dunedin City Council, n.d.).

Wellington City Council cycling budget for 2014/15 has been increased from \$1.3 million to \$4.3 million, an increase of 230 per cent. Subject to public consultation, the funding will focus on delivering strategic cycling routes and improving cycle safety city-wide (Wellington City Council, 2013).

Walking and Cycling Strategies

A stocktake of all walking and cycling strategies was undertaken for the NZTA by ViaStrada in 2008. This revealed there were 61 strategies prepared by 55 different councils (out of 85). The majority of councils had combined walking and cycling strategies. A few have separate strategies for walking and/or cycling (ViaStrada, 2008). This report noted a growing trend toward embedding walking and cycling strategies within other strategies.

Many regions have cycling and walking plans that link with Long Term Plans and Regional Land Transport Plans. For example the [Greater Wellington Regional Council Cycling Plan](#) (Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2008a) and [Walking Plan](#) (Greater Wellington Regional Council, 2008b).

One example of a combined strategy is the [Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy](#) developed by the Regional Land Transport Committee for the Taranaki region. This strategy identifies the diverse drivers for the strategy including a strong commitment to increasing tourism opportunities, improving access and mobility and improving public health and promoting more sustainable modes of transport. The strategy's vision was to provide greater transport choice and opportunities for people to discover and enjoy Taranaki's unique environment through walking and cycling (Taranaki Regional Council, 2007).

Model Communities

More recently, the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) has started the Model Communities programme to develop urban environments where walking or cycling is offered to the community as the easiest transport choice (NZTA 2010a). Hastings and New Plymouth were chosen as the first two walking and cycling model communities in mid-2010.

More details about Model Communities is available on [NZTA's website](#).

Destination Cycle/Walk Ways

There are a number of examples of local government involvement along with other organisations in developing and promoting destination cycle and walk ways. For example the [Great Harbour Way](#) (GHW) in Wellington, a 72km walk and cycle way following the entire length of Wellington's Harbour. The GHW is supported by the GHW Trust, comprising advocacy groups (Wellington Civic Trust, Cycle Aware Wellington, Living Streets Wellington), council organisations (Wellington Waterfront) and community organisations (Rotary Wellington).

Along with the regional and local city councils the GHW has support from private and public organisations from many areas, for example Department of Conservation, Te Papa, East by West Ferries, Fergs Kayaks, Wellington Tenth's Trust. This project is an example of the many potential benefits from such an initiative enabling visitors and locals to be active on a safe cycle/walk way, explore Wellington's culture, environment, attractions and vibrant city.

The [New Plymouth District Council Coastal Walkway](#) is another example of a multi-purpose destination walk and cycle way. This walkway links many council destinations including pools, art galleries, beaches, accommodation and the central business district.

Active Transport

For the health and physical activity sectors, active transport is attractive as a way for people to gain the health benefits from physical activity in a way that can often fit well with regular routines (for example, travelling to work or school) and take up relatively little extra time. In this way, active transport can overcome some of the major barriers to physical activity engagement such as lack of time and finding it hard to keep to a routine (Sullivan et al., 2003). Thus, transport-related physical activity (TPA) has become of greater interest to public health officials internationally and is quite explicitly recognised in the WHO global strategy on diet, physical activity and health (World Health Organization, 2004). Not least, this greater interest arises because encouraging 'active living' (i.e. incorporation of physical activity into everyday life such as transport) maybe cost-effective (Shephard, 2008). Furthermore, there is some evidence that promotion of 'lifestyle' physical activity such as walking and cycling is more cost-effective than structured exercise programmes (Garrard, 2009 and Sullivan & O'Fallon, 2010).

There are councils who are actively interested in active transport, for example in Christchurch the [Canterbury Active Transport \(CAT\) forum](#) was set up to encourage information sharing and cross-sector action in Canterbury between agencies with an interest in active transport. CAT includes representatives from such sectors as education, environment, health and disability, recreation, sport, tourism, transport and local and national government.

Tourism

There may be opportunities to promote and gain buy-in from local government for physical activity initiatives where they have the dual benefit of assisting with tourism targets. For example, Tourism New Zealand has identified specific focus areas of:

- focus on maximising value from international visitors
- bringing more international business events to New Zealand (Tourism New Zealand, 2013).

Interestingly, many strategies cite tourism ahead of health benefits for such initiatives as cycling and walking strategies.

International examples

Internationally, physical activity guidelines for local councils have been developed for example, Creating Active Communities in New South Wales, Australia (Department of Local Government, NSW Health Department, NSW Sport and Recreation & National Health Foundation of Australia (NSW Division), 2006).

There are also examples of comprehensive regional physical activity strategies including:

- **Active Western Australia**

The Active Living for All framework was developed to provide a coordinated and collaborative approach to ensuring physical activity opportunities exist for all Western Australians.

It comprises of two components:

- i. **Active Places** - Provide well planned and designed environments that support, encourage and enable active living.
- ii. **Active People** - Provide initiatives that promote positive behaviour change and opportunities to participate in active lifestyles (Government of Western Australia, 2011).

Other examples of plans and strategies:

- **An Australian Vision for Public Transport**

An advocacy document calling on the federal government to support active transport stating 'a sustainable and healthy future for Australia requires action to encourage more Australians to use active transport - walking, cycling and using public transport—more cost-effective than structured exercise programmes (Australian Local Government Association, Bus Industry Confederation, Cycling Promotion Fund, National Heart Foundation of Australia & International Association of Public Transport, 2010).

- **Everybody Active Physical Activity Strategy**

An advocacy document focusing on equity of access to physical activity and recreation opportunities, the economic benefits at all levels of government, the leadership role of local government and a call to start a conversation (British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association, n.d.).

2. What factors influence physical activity at the local government level?

What are the enablers to local government promoting physical activity?

Australian research identified the following enablers (and barriers) to local government promotion of physical activity.

Evidence

One of the best ways to support policy change at local government level is to present locally relevant evidence and a strong business case including (where possible) cost-effectiveness of solutions. Raising awareness about the health and economic burden of obesity and the role of local government in the solution is important at both the council and community level. Councils are more likely to support healthy policy change where there is evidence the issue is a relevant local concern and the intervention can be shown to be cost-effective. Building a groundswell of community support for local government policies to prevent obesity is another strategy, which in some cases is more powerful than evidence (Allender et al., 2009).

Evidence is needed that supports the issue as one of local importance. For local government 'evidence' means more than statistics about disease prevalence or incidence. While traditional prevalence data can put a health issue on the agenda, cost-benefit data can support a change in policy direction (Allender et al., 2009).

Relationships

Forming a close working relationship with council to provide leadership/support for a health in all policies approach would be a useful first step. Finding a champion within council or forming a collaborative working relationship with council to ensure the full range of physical activity supportive strategies are considered (Allender et al., 2009).

Policy priority/funding

When a policy area is supported by a higher tier of government, funding is often easier to secure at the local government level. For example, Allender et al. (2009) found the provision of funding from the state government has substantial influence on policy priorities at a local level.

The Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure Report (The Graham Report), released in January 2001 is a good example of high level policy being an enabler to local government introducing new policies. The Report included a number of findings and recommendations concerning the state of physical activity and sport in New Zealand. The Taskforce recommended the establishment of Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) whose tasks were to implement their recommendations and to provide the leadership that would make New Zealand a world leader in sport and physical activity. SPARC identified the need for more effective coordination in the planning and provision of physical activity and sport across regions as a priority. As a result SPARC was active in encouraging and facilitating the development of regional activity strategies and encouraged cooperation between the community and organisations to work together to achieve this goal within a cohesive regional framework (Ministerial Taskforce on Sport Fitness & Leisure, 2001).

Requirements under local government legislation are also powerful enablers of policy/ environmental change. Legislation at a national or state level can also influence the work of local government, for example, enforcement may be required on national legislation (Allender et al., 2009).

Council structure and support

A local government structure with strong leadership, good communication and support for cross department (joined up) work is more likely to enable policy responses that address the broad determinants of physical activity. This quote from qualitative research with council employees in Victoria, Australia demonstrates the importance of leadership for health:

'A good example of that is across our engineers who are technical minded people and trying to work with them with a roundabout and safety school crossings. We're thinking from a totally different perspective than they are. We're trying to make sure that it's useable and it's safe for kids to cross the road and they're trying to make sure it's useable for the traffic' (Allender et al., 2009).

Researchers in South Australia found that in order to establish the development of supportive environments for physical activity as core business on the local government's agenda, the environments needed to be framed as a strategic, rather than an operational, focus.

To maintain a strategic focus, an open organisational structure is needed to enable local government to look across all the various functions and departments, ask the strategic questions and work together to change the way things are done.

Strong leadership is also needed. In this South Australian example there was a strong policy function driven from the chief executive officer's office and an Integrated Local Area Planning Process to co-ordinate developments across the city (MacDougall, Wright & Atkinson, 2002).

Community lobbying

Community buy in on an issue and lobbying of local government can be a powerful enabler. Australian qualitative research with council employees described how community action can be more powerful in leading policy change than the evidence base for local government (Allender et al., 2009).

A US study identified staff resources and political support (including opposition from interest groups and lack of leadership) as top barriers to innovation (Dill & Howe, 2011).

The authors concluded that physical activity could be effectively framed in terms of other dominant concerns such as liveability, dynamic centres and economic development. Economic arguments and demonstrating other measurable benefits, such as improved quality of life, can be effective at convincing policy makers. In addition, research findings need to be translated to concise language that policy makers understand, focusing on findings and implications more than methods and limitations. Personalising the issue, perhaps through the use of anecdotes, may also be effective (Dill & Howe, 2011).

Leadership

Ideally local leadership would be supported by a strong nationally led plan. In 2013 the UK Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity recognised:

‘...only a strategic approach that has cross-party, multi-sector support can bring about the realignment of investment and change in policy and practice needed to tackle this issue’.

The Commission’s report recognised the importance of strong national leadership and called for action placing the physical activity agenda at the heart of national and local government priorities (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014).

The Commission acknowledged that a piecemeal approach to tackling physical inactivity has, at best, limited impact. Without long term cross-sector work and funding promising initiatives are all too often stifled. The Commission pointed to countries such as Finland and the Netherlands where such leadership has been effective.

For example, in 2002 a Finnish Government resolution required a commitment from all ministries to promote physical activity and align all aspects of physical activity policy (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014).

Another good example of the impact of strong national leadership and subsequent local government leadership and policy in New Zealand comes from the 2000 Ministerial Taskforce on Sport, Fitness and Leisure. The Taskforce recommendations released in January 2001 led to substantial changes in national and local government structures and policy including the establishment of Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) whose tasks were to implement the Taskforce recommendations and to provide the leadership. The impact of this national leadership is clear from the number of regional physical activity strategies published from 2001 to 2008 all involving local government.

3. How and where can local government intervene to promote physical activity?

Built environment

Levels of physical activity are strongly influenced by the built and natural environment. Environmental predictors or determinants of low levels of activity include urban design (density, connectivity, land-use mix); sidewalks, parks and exercise facilities; and the safety and aesthetics of an environment (Clark, Armstrong & Waters, 2010). Local government is responsible for many of these areas at a local level. Design elements in the built environment, such as street layout, land use, the location of recreation facilities, parks and public buildings and the transport system can either encourage or discourage physical activity. People are more active when they can easily access key destinations such as parks, green spaces, workplaces and shops.

Other barriers to active living include fears about crime and road safety, transport emissions and pollution, problems with access and/or a lack of recreation and sport facilities and negative attitudes about physical activity and active transport (Edwards & Tsouros, 2006).

Urban sprawl and a growing dependence on car use also impact physical activity. Urban sprawl is characterised by several land-use patterns, including:

- low-density land use, such as homes and buildings being spaced far apart and separated by wide roads, landscaping and parking lots
- separation of land use for different purposes, such as separate areas for shops, offices and recreation
- dependence on cars, with homes, shops, offices and recreation being separated by roadways and travelling to work, concerts or shops usually requiring a car (Edwards & Tsouros, 2006).

Streets and parks designed to be safer and more attractive were the most common changes people reported which would encourage them to walk more (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014).

What are the best options for local government policy?

In its briefing for local authorities and partner organisations on how to encourage people to be physically active the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended a wide-ranging programme of initiatives, involving all local authority departments. The briefing went on to recommend local authorities include changes to environmental and other policies and strategies, as well as interventions aimed at individuals or groups (NICE, 2013).

The briefing pointed out that different activities confer different benefits and appeal to different people. Whether or not people get involved depends on a range of factors, including:

- personal beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, preferences and perceptions about safety
- environmental factors (such as ease of access to facilities and open spaces, or whether roads encourage or discourage walking and cycling)
- social/cultural factors such as societal norms, peer influences and family priorities (NICE, 2013).

NICE recommends the following action plan for local authorities and partner organisations on how to encourage people to be physically active (NICE, 2013).

1. How physically active is your local population?

- Collate data for inactive groups and the needs of specific groups. Check the local joint strategic needs assessment.

2. Do local commissioning strategies and local policies support physical activity?

- In addition to specific physical activity strategies, ensure other strategies and policies that can impact on physical activity provide positive support.

3. What steps are being taken to ensure physical activity is incorporated into all appropriate policies, settings and plans?

4. What steps are being taken to ensure the local environment supports physical activity?

5. What type of training is available for (and used by) those involved in providing physical activity services?

6. To what extent do local workplaces encourage employees to be physically active?

7. How do local authority services help people to be physically active? Are the needs of all groups addressed?

8. Do local services encourage and empower groups of people and people with specific conditions to be physically active?

- Specific groups include: women before, during and after pregnancy, older adults, people who are overweight or obese and people at risk of cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes.

9. To what extent do local health services encourage people to be physically active?

10. How are local commissioning strategies and policies that support physical activity evaluated?

11. Who is the local councillor with responsibility for promoting physical activity?

Brennan Ramirez et al. (2006) suggested there is increasing evidence for the influence of built environments, land-use and transportation policies, and community resources on population activity levels has led to the development of evidence-based indicators of active-friendly communities. Researchers combined literature and expert reviews to narrow an enormous body of information into a promising initial set of practical and empirical indicators of activity-friendly communities.

The key indicators developed were:

| | |
|--|--|
| Land-use (environment) | Presence of integration between residential and commercial land uses in dense population areas |
| Facilities | Availability and accessibility of facilities or natural features for activity |
| Transportation (environment) | Availability and accessibility of competitive transport alternatives and infrastructure (for example, transit, sidewalks, bike lanes) |
| Aesthetics | Presence of attractions and comforts as well as absence of physical disorder |
| Travel patterns | Frequency of non-motorized transportation (variation by trip purpose and/or trip distance) |
| Social environment | Presence of protective social factors and absence of social disorder |
| Land use (economic) | Availability of local government funds for parks and recreation facilities |
| Transportation (economic) | Availability of local government and highway funds for sidewalks and bike lanes |
| Institutional and organisational policies | Availability of institutional or organisational incentives for travel by non-motorised transportation modes (for example, worksite reimbursement, walk to school programmes) |
| Promotion | Presence of community-wide campaigns to increase active living |

Another study has provided evidence that good access to urban green spaces is associated with higher use, higher physical activity levels and a lower likelihood of being overweight or obese (Coombes, Jones & Hillsdon, 2010).

The UK Cross Party Commission recommends the following three strategies (UK Government Cross Party Commission on Physical Activity, 2014):

1. Designing physical activity back into our everyday lives:

Active towns and cities

Reallocation of transport investment, providing long-term continuity of dedicated funding for walking and cycling as regular daily transport.

The Chief Medical Officer for England called for a doubling of walking and an eight-fold increase in cycling. A study by public health economists found that within 20 years this increase would lead to savings of roughly £17 billion (in 2010 prices) for the NHS in England and Wales.

Existing and planned new developments and infrastructure should be 'health-checked' to ensure walking, cycling, active recreation and other forms of physical activity are prioritised.

Local authorities have an important role to play in elevating the importance of physical activity within plans which are approved, especially in maximising the promotion of free or low cost facilities in their area. Design features which encourage active travel and recreational physical activity should be core components of all neighbourhoods to ensure the whole population is given equal opportunity to be physically active.

The evidence received and best practice from the World Health Organization, suggests the best designs will:

- increase the local availability of recreational infrastructure
- reduce traffic density and speed and increase provision for pedestrians and cyclists
- increase street connectivity and create pleasant street environments so people linger longer, particularly in town centres
- design neighbourhoods for mixed land use, with walking routes between residential areas and essential public services.

Active workplaces

Employers should be encouraged to support their employees, suppliers and visitors to be active while at work, or travelling to or from it.

2. Making physical activity a lifelong habit

- a) Active schools
- b) Sport

3. Proving success

- a) Develop standardised measures for physical activity
- b) Develop standardised evaluation for physical activity

Potential partners for local government

Sport New Zealand

Sport New Zealand (formerly SPARC) supports communities via its Active Communities investment. This funding supports innovative, community-level, collaborative and project-based ideas aimed at reducing barriers to participation in sport and recreation. Planning is currently underway for the development of the new 2015-2020 Community Sport Strategy. This will include a review of all Sport New Zealand's community investment priorities including Active Communities.

The Urban Design Forum NZ – (UDF)

UDF partners are the Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Engineering and Surveying Institutes and promote good urban design in New Zealand.

The purpose of the UDF is to:

- promote cross-disciplinary understanding of urban design amongst urban professionals
- raise awareness of the benefits of urban design at both national and local levels
- provide a forum for discussion of design-based approaches that are relevant to the development and management of New Zealand towns and cities.

Urban Design Protocol

The Urban Design Protocol, developed by the Ministry for the Environment in 2005 is currently under review. The Protocol supports the promotion of physical activity through good quality urban design. Specifically the Protocol says good quality urban design:

- creates safe, attractive and secure pathways and links between centres, landmarks and neighbourhoods
- facilitates green networks that link public and private open space
- places a high priority on walking, cycling and public transport
- anticipates travel demands and provides a sustainable choice of integrated transport modes
- improves accessibility to public services and facilities

- treats streets and other thoroughfares as positive spaces with multiple functions
- provides formal and informal opportunities for social and cultural interaction
- facilitates access to services and efficient movement of goods and people
- provides environments that encourage people to become more physically active (Ministry for the Environment, 2005).

What might local government be motivated to undertake?

As discussed earlier local government decisions will be influenced by both national policy and local support.

Recent Australian research in Victoria identified a range of possible regulatory interventions by local government to create supportive environments for physical activity based on advice from public health experts supplemented by evidence from the literature. The interventions were then tested with council staff for relevance and applicability (Allender et al., 2012). The council staff study considered improving environments for physical activity core business for local governments. The study found general support for interventions to improve environments for walking, cycling and active recreation and for the use of zoning provisions to maximize public transport use and destinations within walking distance (Allender et al., 2012).

There was support for interventions on:

1. **The walking environment** (including walking for leisure, walking as exercise and walking with a purpose for example to visit a local shop. It also included running and the use of outdoor park activities).
2. **The cycling environment** (including bicycle paths, footpaths and bicycle-only road lanes which allow the cyclist an easy option for using cycling as an alternate form of transport).
3. **Land-use (zoning) management** (the level of integration, within a given area, of different types of uses for physical space, including residential, office, retail/ commercial and public space. Land use is controlled by zoning ordinances that reflect political decisions most often made at the local level. Zoning is a term used in urban planning for a system of land-use regulation).
4. **Open spaces for physical activity** (including parks and reserves, sporting ovals, playgrounds and walking and bike tracks. This is separate to the walking environment and means parks, sports ovals and playgrounds) (Allender et al., 2012).

4. What is the likely effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of these interventions in promoting physical activity?

The Australian CO-OPS Collaboration produced an evidence resource for local government on obesity prevention (Clark et al., 2010). The CO-OPS evidence resource suggests the following considerations for implementation by councils:

- map out current opportunities for physical activity in the environment to identify where work is needed
- work internally with planners to ensure new developments prioritise active living
- insert point-of-decision prompts in all council buildings and encourage partner agencies to do so
- consider workplace health initiatives and internal physical activity policies incorporating changes to the built environment
- use planning tools such as logic models to assist in intervention development, implementation and evaluation
- reflect on the social determinants of physical activity and work to tackle them broadly
- consider incorporating other physical activity intervention research alongside environmental change to support people in using their active environment (Clark et al., 2010).

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance on the promotion and creation of physical environments (including the built and natural environment) that support increased levels of physical activity makes the following evidence-based recommendations, which were updated in April 2014 (NICE, 2008, 2014). The expert group considered all the recommended interventions were likely to be cost-effective (NICE, 2008). The summary below also includes the NICE briefing for local government on how to encourage people to be physically active (NICE, 2014).

Strategies, policies and plans

Those responsible for all planning should:

- involve communities and stakeholders throughout planning
- ensure planning applications for new developments always prioritise physical activity
- assess potential impact of proposals on physical activity in advance (NICE, 2008).

Implementing community design policies, aimed at creating 'liveable' developments that promote physical activity, results in environments more supportive of walking. Additionally, the degree of compliance with these policies (not just the intention to create liveable developments) appears to be associated with increased levels of walking for transport purposes – although walking for recreation does not appear to increase. (NICE, 2014).

Service planning and commissioning

Ensure local commissioning strategies and policies support physical activity, including those related to leisure, transport, housing, urban and rural development and local business strategies (NICE, 2013).

Transport

Planning and transport agencies should plan and provide a network for active transport and ensure priority is given to active modes of transport (pedestrians, cyclists etc.) through:

- re-allocation of road space (pavements, cycle lanes) to support physically active modes of transport
- restricted motor vehicle access and introduce road-user charges
- traffic calming and safe routes to schools (NICE, 2008).

Public open spaces

Designers and managers of open public spaces and public paths and planning and transport agencies (including local authorities) should:

- ensure open spaces and paths can be reached via active transport
- ensure open spaces and paths are well-maintained (NICE, 2008).

Upgrading and maintaining community playgrounds could increase levels of physical activity among local school children, but the effect may be restricted to those with a lower body mass index (BMI) (NICE, 2014).

Natural environment

Provide green spaces and play areas that stimulate children and safely challenge them (NICE, 2013).

Built environment

- design new developments to encourage physical activity
- encourage stair use by providing clear signage and stairwells that are well lit and decorated (NICE, 2013).

Buildings

Architects, designers, employers, planners should:

- ensure sites are well-linked with walking and cycling routes
- link new workplaces to walking and cycling networks
- signpost and position staircases for easy use in new and existing buildings (NICE, 2008).

Leisure and sport facilities

- ensure they are easy to reach and use
- ensure they are safe
- ensure they suit a range of ages, abilities and cultural norms (NICE, 2013).

Walking and cycling

- ensure there is a network of paths for walking and cycling between places locally
- reduce road danger and the perception of danger
- ensure other policies support walking and cycling

- use local data, communication and evaluation to develop programmes
- include practical support, information about options (including public transport links to support longer journeys), routes, cycle parking and individual support
- focus on key settings
- recognise the health benefits (NICE, 2013).

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Appendix 1 - Key Informant Interview Summary

What are local government's obligations in terms of promoting physical activity?

- Changes to the Local Government Act (LGA) means local government no longer has an obligation to promote 'social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of communities' and is now required to provide 'good quality local infrastructure, public services and regulatory functions at the least possible cost to households and business'.
- These changes to the LGA don't appear to have made a difference to how councils have been working so far but may make a difference in the next cycle of Annual Plans and Long Term Plans.
- Local government is not mandated to promote public health and has no legal obligation to do so.

Is local government interested in promoting physical activity?

- Some individuals, officials and councillors, have an interest in physical activity and health and are willing to work towards making council priorities fit with promoting physical activity, others do not.
- Politically sport and wellbeing comes up high on Councillor's radars when they are campaigning as they are the 'feel good' things that most people want.
- While councils do not see promoting physical activity as a priority many of the things local government is interested in can create physical activity opportunities e.g.
 - active transport to avoid traffic congestion
 - efficient transport systems
 - promoting safe transport options
 - creating liveable cities
 - creating access to recreational spaces
 - creating economic growth and development opportunities
 - healthy workplaces as they are more efficient and effective and therefore more likely to contribute to economic growth
 - a productive population to contribute to economic growth

Barriers local government face

- Financial constraints.
- Multiple other priorities.
- Councils are driven by Long Term Plans and Annual Plans, there is little flexibility for additional funding/support that is not already in the budget determined by these plans.
- A lack of infrastructure e.g. cycle ways, recreation facilities.
- A lack of space to create infrastructure e.g. narrow roads with no space for cycle ways.
- Cultural e.g. motorists impatience with cyclists.
- A lack of funding from central government e.g. NZTA has only 50-60 million allocated for cycling and walking.
- Poor public consultation processes which result in contentious situations and delays.
- Resource consent issues.
- Red tape and bureaucratic processes.
- Unanticipated and/or unpredictable costs e.g. earthquake strengthening/pressure on council resources so other things go on hold.
- Staffing problems, not enough staff and constantly changing staff.
- Expectations e.g. a facility must bring in an income.
- The conflicting expectations of citizens.

What can other organisations offer to local government?

- Expertise and knowledge.
- Links to specific community groups council might want to target.
- Cultural expertise.

- Manpower/your time.
- Support.

Why work with local government?

- Councils have the resources to consult with community.
- Good knowledge of the community and the available facilities.
- To help facilitate and achieve community outcomes rather than just economic outcomes.
- More efficient use of resources.
- To share and gain access to new resources including financial resources.

Where can local government have the biggest influence on physical activity outcomes?

- Active transport and public transport.
- Providing infrastructure that facilitates active transport.
- Providing the infrastructure for recreation e.g. open spaces/facilities – making them accessible for everyone.
- Ensuring future urban environments facilitate active lifestyles.

What is the best way to engage with local government?

Making the first moves

- Find advocates (key people who 'get it' and are sympathetic) at different levels within the council to work on your behalf and who can give you inside information.
- Be proactive about approaching anyone who may be sympathetic to your cause.
- Use your advocate to help you understand how the system works locally. Find out where, how and who makes decisions.
- Get 'inside' information so you know what is going on and when.
- Get in early with new councillors, to find out their interests and cash in on their fresh enthusiasm. They are often looking for something to champion and a way to make their mark. Get them on your side early.
- Try to create networks within council and be visible.
- Call and talk to councillors and council staff.
- Don't talk about health – talk other benefits that meet council priorities.
- Start with the most relevant team in council.
- Be aware that there are likely to be more hierarchical layers and bureaucracy in local government than in most other organisations.

Don't be shy – be visible

- Be visible, make sure people know who you are and they know you are able to help them, go to meetings, make approaches to people – get to know them, face-to-face contact is more persuasive than submissions (but submissions are still necessary).
- Attend public meetings (especially Annual Plan and Long Term Plan meetings). Speak at these meetings so council staff know who you are and what your views are. Use these meetings to find other allies and supporters from other sectors. Be positive.
- Work with your allies to strengthen your voice and diversify approaches to council.
- Do some of council's job for them e.g. Dunedin is building cycle ways but council has no plan to promote them. Health plans to do the promotion and fund some signage.
- Look for ways where your work can maximise and compliment what local government is doing.
- Go to places where councillors are, go to events/launches where councillors will be, read the paper, be aware of where councillors sit on particular issues.
- Invite council staff along if you are planning any meetings/forums and keep an eye out if they provide any opportunities for you to attend meetings.

Follow the formal processes

- Find out what the formal processes are and use them appropriately, don't miss an opportunity and make sure you are providing the right information at the right time.
- Make submissions to plans - Long Term Plans, Annual Plans etc. Councils are driven by these plans so make sure you have your say.
- In written and oral submissions – be positive, support what council is doing, and support them to be 'bolder'.
- Oral submissions are important especially with councillors - they have to listen.
- Make sure all submissions are constructive, reasoned and backed with evidence.

Use a personal approach

- Use every possible opportunity to build positive relationships, be opportunistic in developing positive relationships.
- Make an approach to councillors as a constituent and build a relationship as a constituent.
- Offer to lead projects.
- Try and find where councillors sit on a particular issue and go for those sitting on the fence and try to persuade them to support your case.
- Be in an agreement with councillors as much as possible and accentuate the values that you have in common.
- Councillors represent the voice of your community, go and meet with them.
- Keep the relationship going, don't just meet once, keep your issue alive, be proactive.
- Recognise that local government staff have a difficult job, many have multiple tasks, work in a different culture and can't always do what you can do. Don't demonise them - help them.

Get help from others

- There is a chance councillors see 'health professionals' more as a lobby group so engage/ get support from individuals and communities to help get your message across.
- Rally other people to add support to your cause. Get them to write individual submissions using their own words/experiences.
- For large projects target councillors, for small projects target those who work more at a community level.
- Use local organisations to help e.g. Residents Associations (someone from Council will always be present). Other possibilities include schools, college sports, and sports clubs.
- Look for assistance from 'Grants' teams if you are looking for funding. They are generally very supportive in assisting people with writing grant applications.
- Be aware that allies might come from unexpected places, don't miss an opportunity to use any potential allies.

Work with the community

- Get support from your local community. Councils may be more likely to respond to requests from the community than those from officials. Nothing is stronger than community voice with stakeholder expertise and support.
- Working with community groups will add strength and diversity to your voice and message.
- Highlight the benefits to the wider community for maximum impact.
- For longer term change e.g. infrastructure, you need to get communities and stakeholders on board with a good plan, on-going advocacy, find a councillor, work with the relevant team in council, submit every year to annual plan's.

Don't give up

- Recognise that it may take months and years to make progress, don't give up, be willing to make a long term investment.
- Remember 'squeaky wheels' get noticed.
- Try to develop relationships with roles rather than individuals.
- If the person you have developed a good relationship with moves to another role try to keep in touch, they may have an influence in their new role.
- Think of your relationships as capacity building.

Top Tips

- Know your council's priorities: read the annual plan, and make your message relevant to what council needs to achieve. Go easy on pushing 'health' messages – they are not a council priority.
- Economic prosperity is always a priority. Present how and what you want can contribute to the economic priorities. Be creative.
- Find an advocate/champion on the inside and nurture the relationship.
- Being on a working party is more valuable than writing submissions, don't say no to the opportunity.
- Be positive. Congratulate council on what it is doing well.
- Never rant or shout.
- Be proactive. Offer to help.
- Be well informed - read previous meeting minutes, look out for forums/media articles and get a feeling for what the general public's feeling is, do your research.
- Always show up.
- Be clear on what you want.
- Know your topic and have evidence to support what you want.
- Try to present funding solutions, look for funding elsewhere (may need to talk about ethics of gambling money etc), think about what else you might be able to bring to the table (don't expect council to fund it all). You are more likely to get past the first stage if you're able to contribute, think about who else would benefit and might support you e.g. corporate funders.
- Identify partners you can work with (others who will benefit) and build networks.
- Try to anticipate potential conflicts, think about who else it might be impacting.
- At a policy level, be clear about what you want, know who the other people are that can support your cause, and offer solutions.
- Find out who the opposition will be and have counter arguments and answers ready.
- Don't present problems. Don't complain (council is always dealing with complaints) and present things in a positive way. Congratulate council on the good work they are doing and present ways to enhance it.
- Be willing to give up ownership, if someone picks up your idea it is a success.
- Learn how to sell your idea. Always have a clear 'one pager' and a 30 second spiel ready to go.

Take home messages:

- Be visible, proactive, happy and positive, present solutions not problems and always use your best manners.
- Recognise that councils have difficult, complex and legislated tasks that are not public health.
- Be in for the long haul – good things take time.