

Healthy Auckland Together

Vision: A social and physical environment that supports people living in Auckland to eat well, live physically active lives and maintain a healthy body weight within their communities.

Healthy Auckland Together started in 2014, after a request from the three Auckland DHBs to Auckland Regional Public Health Service for a regional response to obesity. Together, the 21 agencies (including Auckland Council and Auckland Transport) have agreed a vision, goals and a 65-point regional action plan for the next five years.



Green spaces encourage walking

Goals:

- 1. improving nutrition
- 2. increasing physical activity
- 3. reducing obesity

Healthy Auckland Together is a coalition of health, local government, iwi and non-government (NGO) organisations. Partners are committed to making changes in the Auckland region to improve health. They will do this by making it easier for Aucklanders to eat better, exercise more and maintain a healthy weight. The coalition is focusing on collaboration, profile raising and monitoring progress across five areas: streets, parks and places; food environments and marketing; schools and early childhood education services; workplaces; and community settings.

Auckland Regional Public Health Service is responsible for the ‘backbone’ function of the coalition as well as leading some of the actions. The ‘backbone’ function includes all the set-up, research, preparation, coordination, systems, process and monitoring involved in creating the case for change and keeping the coalition engaged, cohesive and working towards its goals.

Local government was identified at the outset as a key partner in order to truly influence the environments in which we live our lives. Healthy Auckland Together built on the good relationships with council that already existed at an operational level. This made it an easier sell when first approaching key staff about joining the coalition. The council could see alignment with the Auckland Plan and the benefits in helping achieve some of the ambitious goals it contains, similarly with the implementation of the Auckland Sport and Recreation Strategic Action Plan (ARSAP) and the Parks and Open Space Strategic Action Plan (POSSAP). The Auckland Council is a key player in the coalition, with representatives from transport, policy, urban design and community services. Support from the top was also sought, with the chief executive signing an intention to collaborate.

The focus is on influencing a range of organisations to change local food environments – such as workplaces, schools, community sports clubs, marae and also changing neighbourhoods. Some communities are saturated with fast food outlets, especially near schools, and Healthy Auckland Together will raise this issue with local boards and councillors to look at opportunities for improving access to healthy food options and limit access to unhealthy food options.

Healthy Auckland Together is also supporting council action in the provision of good quality water fountains, community gardens and fruit in parks. It backs council’s strategy of adding nutrition policies into council contracts for facilities and into leases or licences for community organisations, sports clubs and potentially, for events.

Partners are also mapping and monitoring the food environment in high priority areas, so they can identify possible solutions.

“Reducing obesity won’t happen unless we work with local government to improve access to healthy food, particularly in low income neighbourhoods”

Dr Julia Peters

Healthy Auckland Together spokesperson.

Healthy Auckland Together

Successes to date:

At this early stage, the coalition has created a shared purpose and vision, agreed priorities, and a 65-point action plan. Partner agencies have agreed to lead and deliver on actions, and their chief executives have committed to collaborate on the action plan.

- Council has added research and evidence into the Auckland Design Manual to show the benefits of designing streets, parks and buildings that encourage physical activity.
- OneVoice Sport and Recreation Auckland (a coalition of central and local government, sport, health, education and recreation associations) has formally invited Healthy Auckland Together representation onto the group.
- Healthy Auckland Together actions that align and support the ASRSAP and POSSAP will be reported through the Auckland Plan.
- Auckland Council has reprioritised work programmes within the Parks, Sport and Recreation department and the Community Services - Service Strategy Unit to specifically support the Healthy Auckland Together plan.



Local food market

Where to next:

Healthy Auckland Together is moving from planning and coalition building to delivery. Its five-year plan focuses on changing infrastructure and policy in a range of settings – schools, workplaces, parks and streets, and communities – so it is easier to be physically active and choose healthier food.

This will be achieved through direct engagement with key decision makers and through creating public and community support for environmental change through the media and organisational networks.

As well as new initiatives, Healthy Auckland Together will also extend the impact of partners' existing programmes (for instance food guidelines) into the other organisations.

The next phase is to deliver on the 65 agreed projects over the next five years, and to engage with other stakeholders who can contribute to achieving Healthy Auckland Together's goals.

Keys to success:

- A strong coalition with agreed actions helps to build the case and to get support within their own organisation.
- Buy in from the top of all the partner organisations, with chief executives signing up to the coalition through signing an intention to collaborate.
- Sharing of responsibilities.
- Supporting strategic goals that can have a positive health impact.

Key learnings:

- Find the right person who will be a champion for the project within local government.
- Don't underestimate the human resource required for the backbone function.
- Find ways to maintain engagement and momentum.
- Keep open communication with a 'no surprises' policy.
- Any suggested changes to the food environment can result in negative publicity and accusations of 'nanny state' controls. Looking for positive stories, framing the issue to avoid negative reactions and getting support from others will be important.
- Some partners are focused on other priorities – active transport for instance. The coalition acknowledges there will be different priorities and that some partners can't and won't be involved in some profile raising or collaboration.
- There is no new money and budgets are shrinking – organisational commitment across teams contributes to its success, so everyone is doing their bit.
- The churn within organisations which means relationships can be built and then lost, and need to be rebuilt to maintain momentum.

For more information visit the [Healthy Auckland Together website](#).