ATTACH A

MINISTRY OF
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI

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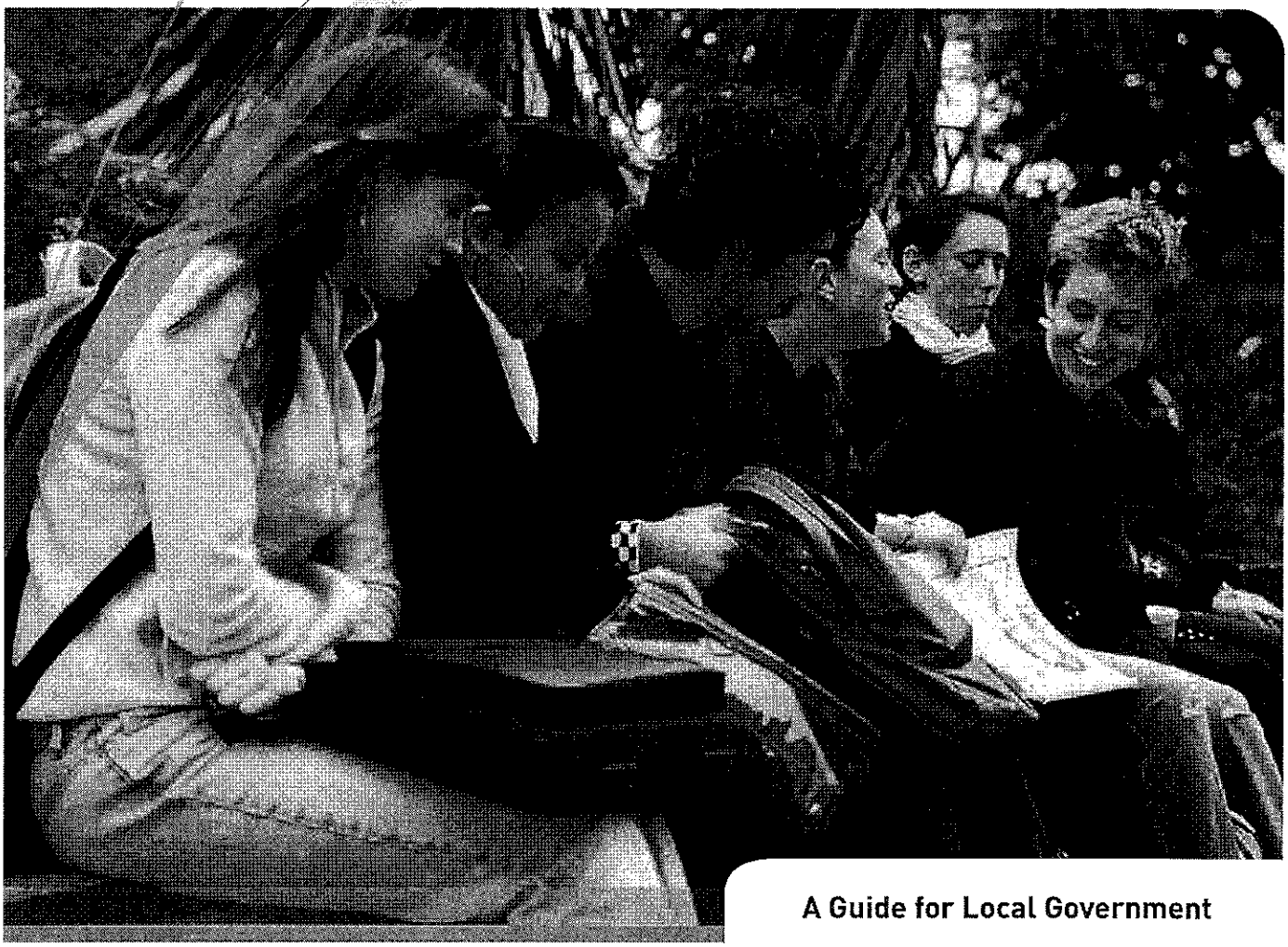

A Guide for Local Government

AN INTRODUCTION TO

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

This is a Ministry of Youth Development publication in association with:

Local Government New Zealand
te putahi matakeriri

MAYORS TASKFORCE FOR JOBS

THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
Te Tari Taiwhenua

INTRODUCTION

Lots of councils are doing great things around youth participation that are effective and have positive benefits for councils, communities and young people.

This guide builds on youth participation good practice already being undertaken by councils and young people. It offers some simple advice, tips and examples on why youth participation is important, how to do it, and what works. To find out more information on youth participation and local authorities visit the websites of the Department of Internal Affairs, Local Government New Zealand, Mayors Taskforce for Jobs and the Ministry of Youth Development - listed at the back of this guide.

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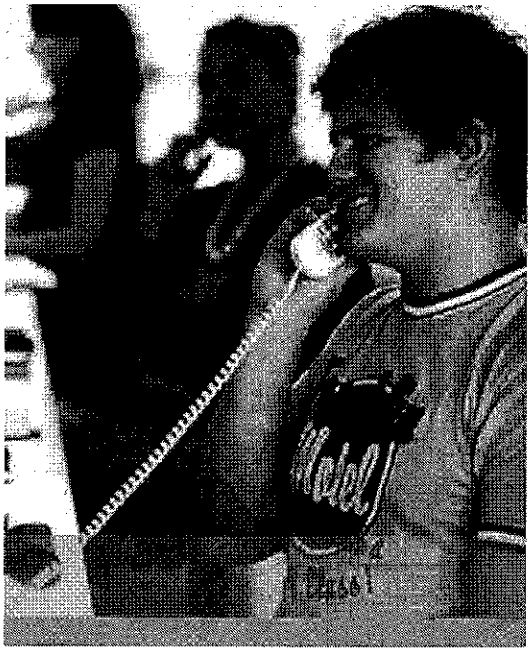


WHAT IS IT?

Youth participation is about:

- creating opportunities for young people to be involved in, and add value to your council's activities
- supporting young people to develop as leaders, advisors and decision-makers.

Effective youth participation is about young people:

- being informed
- influencing positive outcomes
- organising themselves
- making decisions or being involved in making decisions
- continuing to be involved in monitoring and follow up.[1]

Youth participation is driven by the interests and issues of the communities that young people live in. This can result in a variety of issues being addressed across the country by a diverse range of young people.

There are many forms of youth participation such as consultation, service provision and public service (e.g. volunteering). It is important to find the method that is most useful for each local authority and interesting to the young people in that area.

"Youth participation means young people sharing in the decision making which affects their own lives and the communities".[2]

"Remember...one size fits few".

CITY COUNCIL

1. (Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, 2002)
2. Herbert, N. (2000) Foundations of youth participation. McCreary Centre Society: British Columbia, Canada

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Youth participation can support councils to achieve community outcomes.

The Local Government Act 2002 requires consideration of the views of people effected by a matter, both now and in the future. This is especially important for addressing the needs of young people in Long Term Council Community Plans.

Youth participation makes young people aware of being a citizen in a democracy.

We want young people to become engaged and interested in politics and voting.

We want to support young people by giving them experience in decision making processes on matters that effect them.

Young people have a stake in local government, use services provided by councils, and are an integral part of the community but those young people under 18 are not able to vote.

Youth participation can mean a number of very different things. Each council needs to ask what it is they want from, or to provide young people.

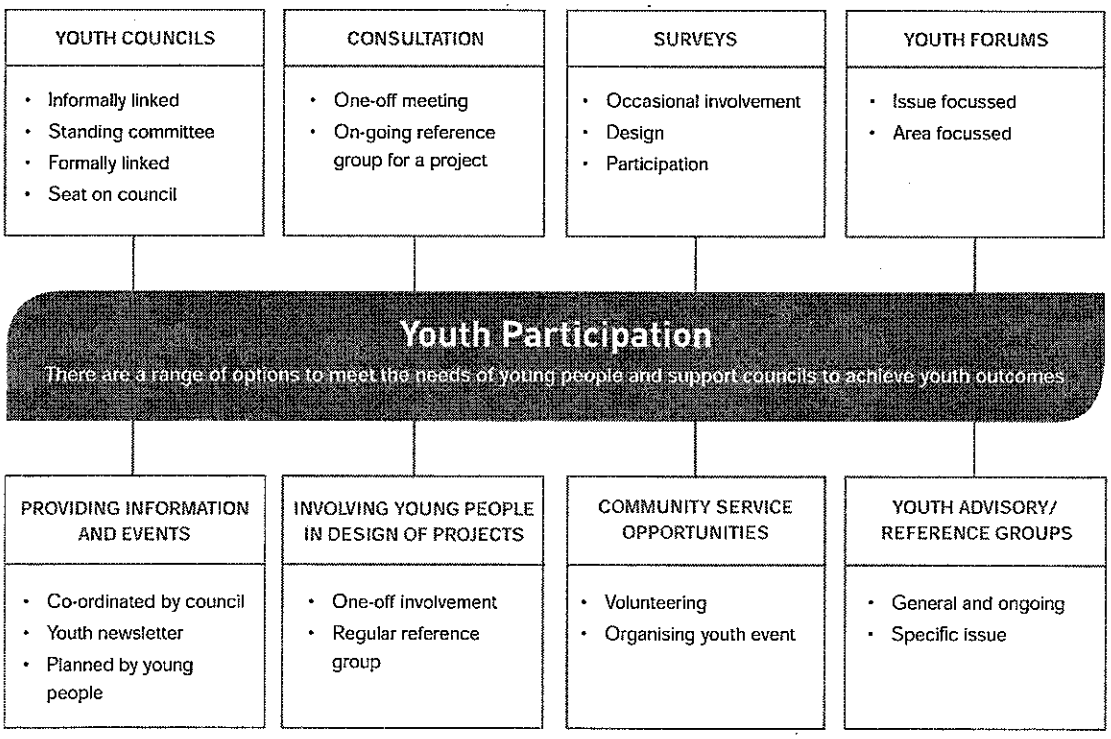
We want young people to become engaged and interested in politics and voting.

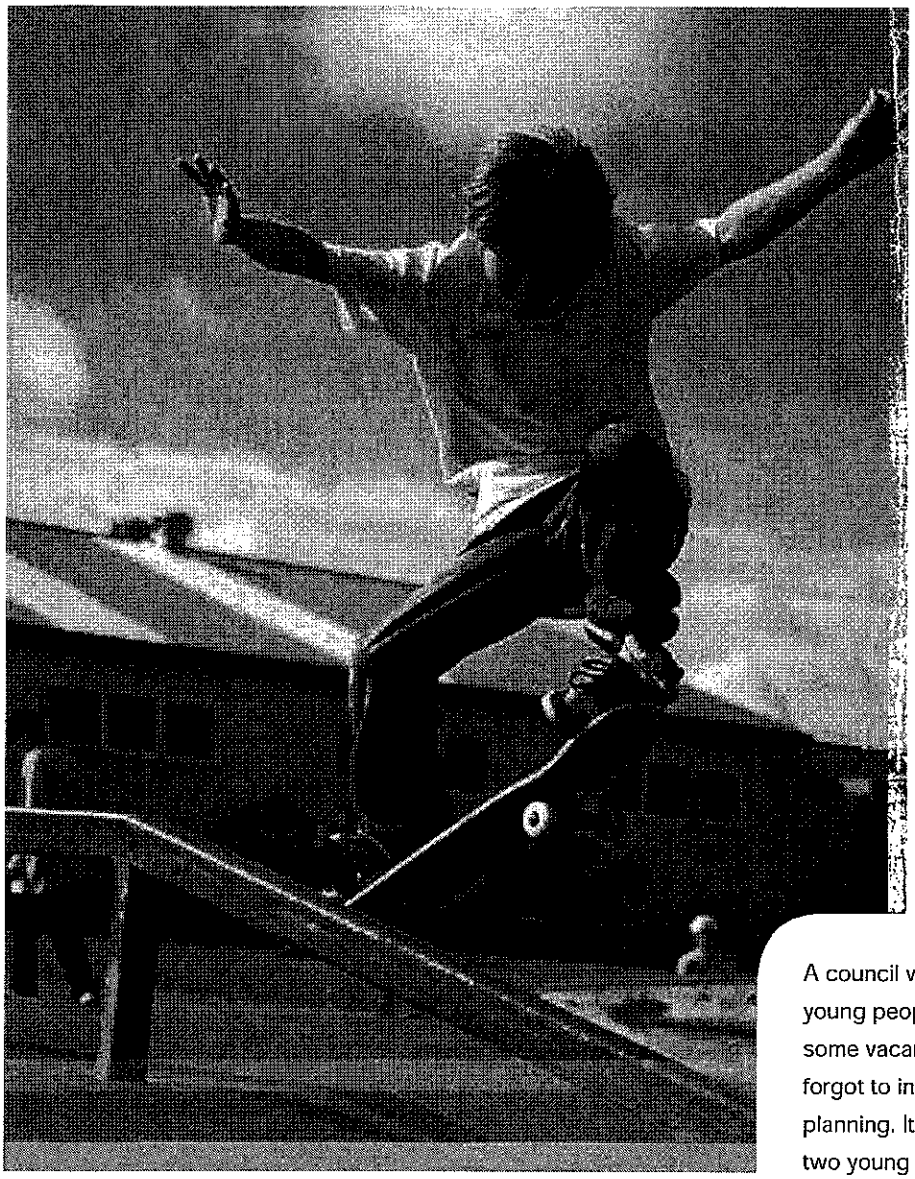
MAKING IT WORK

There are a number of ways you can make youth participation work, such as:

- **Organising** – opportunities for planning and organising events e.g. youth friendly consultation and surveys
- **Advocacy** – opportunities and training in highlighting an issue to the wider community e.g youth forums
- **Leadership** – training opportunities in leadership e.g. youth councils
- **Service** – opportunities to contribute to the wider community's wellbeing e.g youth community projects and volunteering
- **Governance** – opportunities to share in a group's decision making or policy making process e.g. youth councils, youth advisory groups.

Selecting a variety of methods of engagement will ensure a wider representation of young people in your area.





A council was keen to do something for its young people, so they built a skate park on some vacant council land. However they forgot to involve local young people in the planning. It is used about an hour a day by two young people and is covered in tags.

A neighbouring council involved local young skaters in the planning and designing of a skate park. It is pumping all day, every day, even at 8.00pm.

"A city which is attractive to young people, and which involves, values and acknowledges young people, creates benefits for the whole community".

CITY COUNCIL

"Local government is more than rates and rubbish removal, so it's important to talk with young people about what the Council actually does and how they are impacted by it".

DISTRICT COUNCIL

"Lots of young people don't even know what the council does – which is sad 'cause heaps of things are important for their lives".

YOUTH COUNCILLOR, 15 YEARS

"A benefit of youth participation is a strengthening of representative democracy by giving a voice to those unable to vote".

CITY COUNCIL

Getting young people involved

There are a number of ways of getting young people involved in decision making on council matters that affect them including:

- one off engagement with young people on a particular issue
- youth friendly consultations
- advisory/reference groups, youth forums and surveys
- youth councils.

So how do you contact young people aged 12 to 24 years old?

- local schools and alternative education programmes
- public notices, online forums and social networking sites e.g. Bebo and Facebook
- youth groups
- sports and recreation centres
- parents
- places of employment e.g. supermarkets
- marae, churches, ethnic clubs and societies
- through your existing networks.

Youth-friendly consultations

Youth friendly consultation with young people can occur in a number of ways:

- collaborate with schools to carry out certain parts of the consultation
- run youth forums and focus groups with different young people from across the community
- consult with existing youth advisory groups and see if they are able to go further afield to consult with other young people
- partner with young people to do the listening and talking with other young people.

Youth friendly consultations have a clear purpose and ensure young people are:

- given the choice to participate
- fully informed and aware of the purpose of the consultation
- listened to and taken seriously
- involved in the design and implementation of the consultation
- part of the decision-making throughout the process
- are kept informed of the results and outcomes.

"Youth are busy with school life, activities and social life. Don't expect commitment unless youth own it, see a purpose for it, get something out of it and have fun".

CITY COUNCIL

"... keep integrity with young people by being straight to the point and realistic".

DISTRICT COUNCIL

"The most successful way of consulting with youth, through our experience, has been talking with young people in settings where they normally congregate".

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Youth Councils

A Youth Council is an ongoing group of youth advisors that provide advice to the council and advocacy for young people in a particular region.

They may be formally linked with the existing council structure as a standing committee or have a seat on a community board.

Or they may be linked through having an elected council representative in attendance. They will be supported by a council staff member through training, administration support, access to venues, and information about council business and decisions.

Councils will have different ways of selecting young people as representatives for their youth council.

Establishing a successful youth council

Council commitment – it's important that:

- the full council is committed
- young people are involved from the beginning when planning the youth council
- a designated council staff member works alongside the youth council
- there is an adequate budget, meeting resources and staff support
- the focus is on real issues
- there is a process for the youth council's contributions to be acted upon.

"Talk about action and promises that are about real stuff that the council can do".

YOUTH COUNCILLOR, 16 YEARS

Support the Young People:

- select young people that reflect the diversity of the young people in your area
- acknowledge the differing values and cultures within the youth council
- provide the information and training they need to participate
- ensure their participation is by choice
- make sure that their participation is beneficial to them

"Having the youth council provides an ideal 'sounding board' to test ideas and get feedback about appropriate methods of consultation".

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Keep it youth-friendly:

- make sure the time and place to meet is suitable for young people. Consider transport options, and provide food for the members.
- spend time building a relationship with the young people
- develop a sense of identity within the group
- keep the youth council meetings challenging and enjoyable
- provide timely feedback
- support council members and staff to work with and alongside the young people.

"Young people tell us talking to them personally and interactive processes work best".

CITY COUNCIL

"Young people are very busy, and their position at youth council is usually voluntary. Make sure that they are not out of pocket for any expenses incurred from being involved".

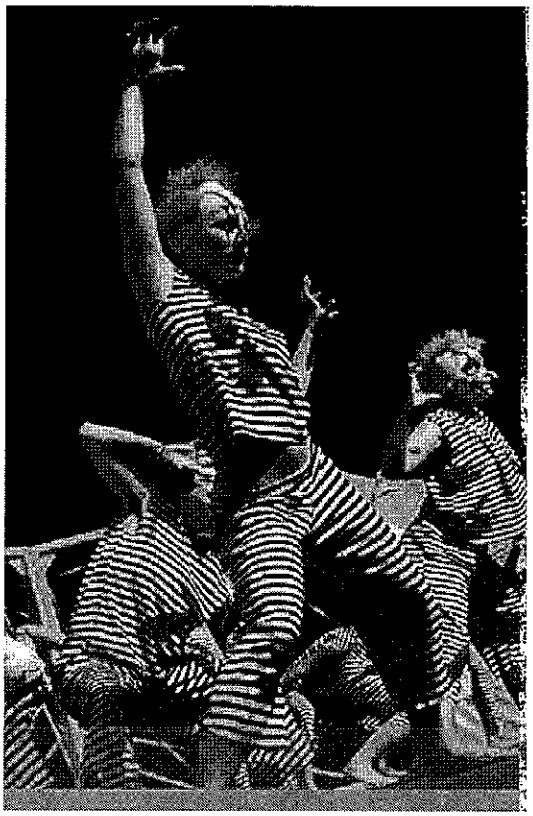
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR

"If your youth planning stuff takes ages to come out, let young people know it will be ages and where everything is at. If you don't hear then it is easy to assume the council has forgotten you".

FORMER YOUTH COUNCILLOR,

"We often talk about "young people" as though they are some homogeneous group like "the community" when of course, that's not true. Young people are incredibly diverse".

POLICY ANALYST, LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEW ZEALAND.



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Youth Advisory, Reference Groups and Fora

These may be organised on an 'as needs' basis to advise council on issues and events as they arise.

Provides a youth perspective and the opportunity for young people to develop a range of skills and abilities.

Work best with a designated staff member working alongside young people.

Examples of successful youth councils, youth fora and advisory groups

Shore Youth Council

Shore Youth Council is made up of representatives from each of the eleven secondary schools on the North Shore. Shore Youth Council reports directly to the full North Shore City Council and there is a youth council advocate who provides the link to ensure issues are shared, and there are opportunities for youth council presentations to Council.

Each Community Board has a nominated representative that liaises with the Shore Youth Council. The Youth Council has made submissions to relevant Auckland Regional Council and North Shore City Council committees, and to groups such as Auckland Regional Transport Authority, on areas of concern. They also provide a youth voice on strategy development, provide feedback on draft documents about the arts, libraries and Youth Destinations.

Shore Youth Council initiates projects that address identified needs eg, establishing regular youth performance nights, developing an arts exhibition for secondary students and contributing to the shore youth website.

Wellington City Youth Council

Wellington City is a popular area for young people, who come in to town to meet friends, go to the movies etc, but it was a really hard place to get home from – the last bus usually went before the last movie finished!

Wellington City Youth Council developed a proposal to submit to the Regional Council about providing a late night bus service that would address the needs of the young people by

providing a cost effective and safe service.

The Regional Council agreed to trial a service but they did not involve young people in the planning of the timetables and destinations and no-one used the service.

The Youth Council asked the Regional Council for an opportunity to develop an operational plan to address these issues. The Regional Council agreed to the plan and the current service was born. It is now one of the more profitable routes that runs in Wellington.

Clutha District Youth Council

Clutha District Youth Council is made up of representatives from each of the regions five main towns.

It is set up as a standing committee of the full council who sends a couple of councillors to the youth council meetings.

This means it is a permanent committee of the council able to table it's views with the same status as the corporate services, and development board committees.

It's objectives are to:

- encourage youth involvement in the planning and development of council services
- provide a youth perspective to the council on a range of issues covered by the council, as well as issues relating directly to youth
- act as consultative link between young people and council
- provide a forum where the views of young people are voiced and heard.

Stratford District Youth Council

Stratford District Youth Council was created to encourage youth participation in civic affairs, to provide a voice for youth and leadership on youth issues, to advocate for and support youth events, and to promote the development of accessible and responsive services for young people in the Stratford District.

This is a very active Youth Council whose completed projects include a Skate Park, a Wearable Arts competition, Stratford Idol, concerts, busking competitions, drug awareness pamphlets, helping out at the local A & P Shows, Youth Art exhibitions, the Christmas Parade and the yearly Youth Forum and Expo. It also supports the Youth Ambassador, Youth Citizens & Youth Honorary Awards.

One particularly successful series of events is "Get on the Bus". This is providing cheap transport to enable young people to travel out of town to participate in activities such as 10-pin bowling, movie nights, go-karting, laser sports, paintball and the maize maze.

Alexandra Youth Forum

Alexandra's youth forum meets fortnightly, attracting up to 30 young people. It is supported by the Alexandra Youth Trust, raises its own funding, and regularly reports to the District Council. The forum has successfully advocated for things young people wanted; a youth centre, a BMX bike park, and a tennis court with Astroturf in a prime location. They are very talented at pulling in community support to back their projects.

Upper Hutt Local Swimming Pool Advisory Group

The Upper Hutt City Council Swimming Pool (H20 Xtream) wanted input from children and young people on the way they ran their local swimming pool.

They set up an advisory group (Teen Board) of children and young people from a range of schools in the area. All new ideas for programmes or changes to the pool are presented to the Teen Board.

The Board is also encouraged to come up with their own ideas for activities and programmes.

The Board members have become advocates for programmes being run at the pool to their peers. Programmes and events to date have been successful.

Examples of successful youth-friendly consultations

Y-BUS – Youth Bus User Survey: Shore Youth Council

Shore Youth Council undertook a survey of their bus service, and produced recommendations about what young people wanted. They presented these to both the North Shore City Council and the Auckland Regional Transport Authority. Many of the recommendations were put into place and improved the bus service. Shore Youth Council received a Local Government award for this work.

Christchurch Children's Library

Christchurch Council links its planners with young people when redesigning its services.

When designing the children's library, planners toured the library with children as consultants, and showed them the draft plans.

Much to the designers surprise the children pointed out that they didn't actually want the planned large comfy two-seater couches, because strange adults might just sit beside them when they just wanted to read.

The children's library is always full.

Nelson Pioneers Park

In 2001, Nelson's youth council surveyed young people who wanted a new youth park. They successfully advocated for the park, and got involved in the planning and implementation of the youth park.

Council staff provided technical input and supported the project. Both staff and young people shared the decision-making. The youth council surveyed and held workshops with key stakeholders, young people and the community. Then helped draft and present the plan for community approval.

The resulting park is well designed and popular.

South Waikato Youth Council

South Waikato Youth Council was formed as part of South Waikato District Council's commitment to a collaborative Youth Strategy for the District, particularly with regard to 'Youth Participation and Youth Voices'.

The Youth Council has been involved in submissions to the Regional Council's Transport Plan on Strengthening Public Transport, the planning and implementation of local events, and evaluating outcomes. Events have included the Wild Food and Music Festival and the inter-school Top Town multi sport event. Young leaders also had the opportunity to be mentored by local businesses and entrepreneurs while planning and implementing these events.

The Youth Council has also engaged with the Raukawa Young Leaders which represents the Raukawa rohe. This is done in a purposeful way to support one another and to enhance the cultural responsiveness of the Youth Council, and its commitment to working with Tangata Whenua.

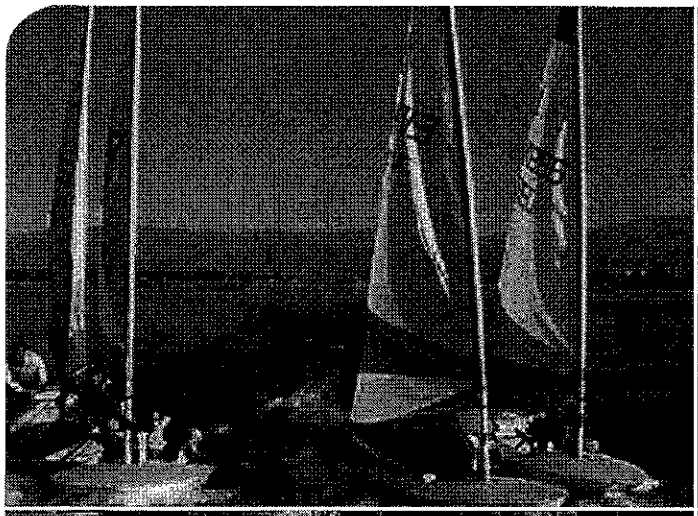
The Youth Council's work is done with the support of the South Waikato District Council, local High Schools, Waikato Youth Workers Collective, Waikato DHB, Safer Community Council and the Raukawa Trust Board. It is not only a whole of Council approach which has made the Youth Council a success, but also a high level of broad community commitment.

The National Youth Council Network

The Ministry of Youth Development coordinates the National Youth Council Network. It has around 200 youth councillors as members, and it aims to strengthen youth councils by giving them national networking opportunities to share ideas, experiences and learning from what works for youth councils.

The Network is a great opportunity for youth councillors to share the issues they are involved in and areas they are interested in. It is also a chance to reinforce the value of youth councils in providing a youth voice to local government.

It's important that as many youth councillors as possible sign up to the Network. Go to the Ministry of Youth Development website for more details: www.myd.govt.nz



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www.lgnz.co.nz

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