



EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS LIVING IN INNER CITY AUCKLAND

Co-Design Project

2015 / 2016

Prepared by: Jacqui Arnold

THANK YOU

A HUGE thank you to everyone who has contributed to this co-design project; especially our parents and their children for taking the time to meet with the design team and share their parenting story with us.

I also acknowledge the design team who came together with little or no experience in co-design but with enthusiasm for learning, and a passion to see the lives of our CBD families improve.

Design Team

Ania Biazik, Team leader, Community Outreach, Central City Library
Anjileena Dev, Healthy Baby, Healthy Future, The Asian Network Inc (TANI)
Annalise Myers, Consultant, Pointresearch
Bianca Harper, KINZ Myers Park
Francois Kayembe, Community Support Coordinator, Plunket
Jacqui Arnold, Project Manager, Plunket
Jane Bollard, Business and Community Development Manager, Plunket
Jane Ritchie, Clinical Leader, Plunket
Josi Wilson, Senior Advisor, Social Action Team, Community Investment, MSD, SKIP.
Julia White, OSCAR Manager, YMCA of Auckland Inc.

Our Supporters:

Auckland Council
Waitemata Local Board
Auckland District Council of Social Services
Comet Auckland
Chinese New Settlers
SHINE
Citizens Advice Bureau Auckland City
Auckland Regional Migrant Services
Auckland Women's Centre
St Patrick's Catholic Church

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About this work

Why are we doing this research?

Plunket families living in Auckland city appear to have concerns or difficulties in addition to the wellness and care of their family. Issues such as immigration, housing, finances, personal relationships, transport and study can all add to an already demanding situation of having a new baby or raising a family. This CBD project has been initiated and sponsored by Royal NZ Plunket Society and S.K.I.P, Ministry of Social Development to help everyone better understand the positive and/or negative experiences of raising children (under 5's) in Auckland CBD.

Who will benefit from this report?

This report is written for parents, community agencies, businesses, policy-makers in central and local government and other stakeholders who deliver services and operate within Auckland CBD. This report will identify learning's about inner city living whilst raising children that have been generated by undertaking a parent led design approach.

This report is best read in conjunction with our Project Tracker (Powerpoint) that provides an overview of the process of parent led design and the experiences and challenges our design team faced during this project.

What are the outcomes of this project?

This report provides a platform for exploring more options, generating more ideas, and working closely with parents to engage them in the solutions for their community. This report is not a plan of actions to be taken up by a service provider who will then go onto provide solutions for our parents, but the insights gained from the interviews could provide valuable learning for service providers.

BACKGROUND – Why parents in Auckland CBD

Plunket : Ministry of Social Development Partnership

Plunket has the privilege of connecting with families at the stage when a new baby arrives in the home. The relationship that develops between a family and a Plunket Nurse over the first 36 months, as baby is regularly checked, provides Plunket nurses with a glimpse of what living in Auckland CBD is like for parents raising children under 5.

As an organisation Plunket was keen to examine more closely what it was like for parents living in Auckland CBD with babies or children under 5. It was fortunate at the same time as Plunket were thinking along these lines, that S.K.I.P were looking for ways to support innovative, informal, parent-centred design projects that would provide them with insights from parents across New Zealand.

A multi-agency approach

In addition, community agencies operating within the CBD were finding it hard to connect with families either to provide information and support or even to invite them to central city events.

In June 2015 Jacqui Arnold, Project Manager met with and brought together community agencies who may be interested in being part of a CBD parent led design (co-design) project. The response was very positive and resulted in various levels of commitment to the project. Some were able to participate in the facilitation of interviews as part of the design team while others were happy to be kept in the loop and share the insights gathered through the process. Agencies wanted the insights and themes from the project but could not provide a human resource to undertake the journey with Plunket and SKIP.

The Design Team

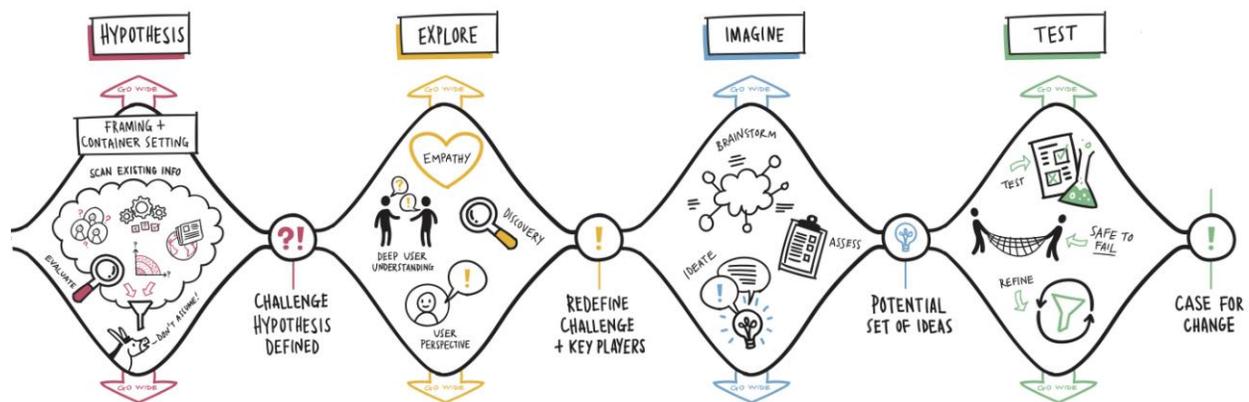
After a further two months of presenting to, talking with, and informing agencies on how valuable the information gleaned from this project will be to the way agencies operate and deliver their services, a design team was formed and this team came together for the first time in August 2015.

Methods – using the parent led design process

The parent led design (co-design) process was new to everyone in the design team, and we were reliant upon Josi Wilson, S.K.I.P to guide us through this process and bring us to a place whereby we would have ideas, initiatives and families who were engaged with us enough to be able to surface ideas to address the issues identified.

There is no set timeframe for the co-design process, and although this process has taken our Design Team 6 months, some projects can take as little as 1 or 2 days to achieve amazing outcomes for families.

The co-design process used looks like this:



Source: Auckland Co-design Lab

Stage 1

This project focused on the first, second and third diamonds. The aim is to go wide by hearing stories of people's lived experience in order to understand the problem we are trying to solve. This is about supplementing the existing quantitative data with qualitative data. This phase is all about getting a sound understanding of the issues before considering solutions

The design team was committed to learn about co-design, and began the process by framing and container setting. We agreed on the project focus, the intent of the project, the research population and the criteria for interviewees.

Statement of Intent: All parents have a strong sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Stage 2

Each member of the Design Team received Empathy Interview training, and this training provided the team with the skills to commence interviewing inner city parents.

The purpose was to interview parents early in the project and ask deep and open questions. For many of our parents these interviews gave them their first opportunity to talk about how they feel and how they were coping with being a new parent. For our design team we came away with rich, complex insights.

The strength of this project is families were able to talk freely and openly about their experiences. The team quickly established trust with parents and were humbled by the openness and frankness of the discussions.

Families commented on the informal nature of the process and how they felt at ease and listened to.

Connecting with Plunket families' required Ethics Committee approval and this was granted in July 2015. Plunket nurses then gave new parents the option of meeting with us. Finding and connecting with families who live in Auckland CBD and who had children under the age of 5 proved to be fairly easy via the Plunket database. However, there was concern within the design team that Plunket families who were contacted would be the families who were thriving in the community, as they were connected and supported by the Plunket structure.

This proved not to be the case and the majority of families interviewed felt disconnected from the CBD community, do not have a trustworthy support network, and were struggling as first time parents living in the CBD.

Results – Insights

The design team has completed 21 parent interviews for this project between October and December 2015 and during this journey the Design Team listened to many stories that cover every possible situation you could face as a parent. Each interview was recorded and transcribed.

Initial findings tell us that parents living in Auckland City are mainly migrants; they come from all over the world – Thailand, England, Russia, Pakistan, Indian, Hong Kong and China. Several of these mums and dads started as students in NZ, and have gone on to develop their careers, marry and have a baby. Some of these mums have become pregnant unexpectedly and due to cultural constraints the only option is to marry dad, and raise baby.

The parents we have met span the continuum of struggling to thriving.

Parents tell us that living in the city is at times difficult – things like, small apartments, safety issues, unsafe parks (no shade or age appropriate equipment), lots of homelessness, no warm dry place for parents to connect other than the library, and smoking being permitted on the streets is not a good environment for their child.

Parents who feel more comfortable living in the city tell us they like the convenience, they have everything on their doorstep, their baby enjoys seeing buses, trains and boats in the city, there are lovely parks and places to walk, these parents also have a car and this does provide them the freedom to leave the city when they want to.

All parents, no matter where they are on the continuum have one thing in common – little or no family support. The parents interviewed have various experiences – sometimes grandparents move into the parent's home and look after baby while mum returns to work, or they have grandparents living in the home for a period of up to 12 months. This can cause friction as grandparents try and raise the new baby in the culture they are used to, and the parents are often trying to raise their kiwi babies in the kiwi way.

Even the kiwi parents living in the city have little family support as they are detached from their families (some by choice), or their families live in other cities in NZ or overseas.

INSIGHTS FROM PARENT INTERVIEWS

Parents are staying at home with their babies because inner city Auckland is not orientated towards babies.

Parents want their children to have connections to their culture because the parents want to maintain the tradition that they valued growing up.

Even though parents are connected to the library they won't use it when their babies are tired and grumpy because they are afraid of being disruptive.

Parents are struggling to breastfeed their children in town because there are few places where they can go and be comfortable when their children are hungry and tired.

Parents are anxious being in their own home with their children because they are worried about upsetting the neighbours and building managers if their children make a noise.

Parents feel stressed because they are struggling to find social supports with people they can trust.

Migrant parents feel so unsupported because their families are overseas.

Mental well-being of parents is linked to their parenting challenges.

Inner city Auckland doesn't feel like a community because parents are socially isolated from other parents with children of similar age.

Parents love their babies but feel exhausted looking after them because they don't always feel confident that they have the right skills and knowledge

Parents live in a busy apartment block but don't know their neighbours.

Mum feels she can't rely on dad to look after the baby because she's not confident that dad knows how to do it.

Turning insights into concepts

One of the key challenges for the design team was to use the parents' stories we had heard and turn them into potential ideas.

The design team, parents and children came together on 26th January 2016 to walk through the insights, present the parents with design challenges and give the parents the opportunity to design solutions to the issues.

From this design day we identified three design challenges we wish to explore further.

- Grab a Granny
- New parents – Tiki Tour of the inner city
- Communal apartment space

These design challenges have the potential to change the way families live in Auckland CBD, and will give families a face and voice within a part of the city usually considered for businesses, and tourists.

What's next?

Our aim with this co-design project was to progress through the first three diamonds in the design chain. Expanding our understanding of the issues families face living in Auckland CBD with children under 5.

Our preliminary actions will be:

- Discuss the design challenges with the wider network of stakeholders, community agencies and with our inner city parents.
- Gather feedback from parents who could not attend the Design Day to see how the design challenge prototypes work for them as CBD parents raising children under 5.
- Design Team and parent representation on the Waitemata Local Board Child Friendly Steering Group.
- Identify the audience for distribution of information and ideas gathered from this project work.
- Determine how the next steps are coordinated and managed.
- Develop an action plan and further develop the prototypes created at the design sessions. .