



**SUPPORTING LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ASSESS
THE IMPACT OF THEIR ACTIVITIES ON
CHILDREN:
A LITERATURE REVIEW**

February 2008

Authors:
Nic Mason
Rachael Trotman

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1.0 Introduction

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) and AUT's Local Government Centre (LGC) are investigating how to support Territorial Local Authorities in New Zealand to consider the impact of their activities on children. The aims of this project are as follows:

- To identify issues for local government to consider when assessing the impact of a policy, decision or activity on children and young people aged 18 and under.
- To present effective methods for Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs) to identify their impacts on children and young people and to maximise positive impacts.
- To increase understanding of issues in implementing child impact assessment in TLAs.
- To undertake case studies on child impact assessment with three TLAs.

This report presents the findings of a targeted and small scale literature review undertaken to inform this project.

Ultimately, the project will promote the message that *'the best interest of the child'* can be achieved within the everyday business of New Zealand's local councils.

2.0 Scope of literature review

Child impact assessment is part of a much broader field of impact assessment, including social (including health) and environmental impact assessment. This review canvasses child impact assessment literature as it relates to local government, with the following parameters:

- Children and young people aged 18 years and under ('children' in this report).
- What is likely to support effective local authority assessment of impacts on children in terms of methods, processes and content?

The focus of this review is on processes that assess the potential impact of a proposed change (called *ex ante* assessment in the literature), rather than 'after the event' assessment or evaluation of actual results (*post ante* assessment).

3.0 Methods

The following methods were employed for this literature review.

1. Provision of relevant literature by OCC. A July 2007 New Zealand Discussion Paper on child impact assessment as it relates to central government policy making was particularly helpful. This was undertaken by John Angus for the Ministry of Social Development.
2. A general web search.
3. Web search of academic databases encompassing children, community development, health and social sciences and included:
 - Academic search premier
 - Australian/New Zealand reference centre
 - Cochrane library
 - ERIC
 - Google Scholar
 - Scopus
 - Social services abstracts
 - Sociological abstracts

4. Feedback from some members of the New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment (NZAIA)¹, and from several key figures in the field of children’s issues in New Zealand. These people were emailed to inform them of this review and wider project, and their advice was sought on material to include. These individuals were:

- James Baines & Nick Taylor (Taylor Baines & Associates, Christchurch)
- Dude Tuisamoa (Housing NZ Corporation, Northcote Project, Auckland)
- Jennifer Lam (Auckland District Health Board)
- Gerard Fitzgerald (Consultant)
- Alison Blaiklock (Health Promotion Forum of New Zealand)
- Save the Children (Wellington)
- Children's Issues Centre (University of Otago)
- James Newell (Monitoring and Evaluation Research Associates)
- Robin Kearns (University of Auckland)
- Claire Freeman (University of Otago).

4.0 Format

This literature review is structured in the following way.

Context

- What child impact assessment is and why it is considered important.
- New Zealand and local government context.

Weighing up whether to do child impact assessment

- Things to consider when contemplating child impact assessment.
- Key success factors for child impact assessment.

When doing it – what is good practice?

- Good practice guidance for child impact assessment.
- Some international approaches.

What it all means

- Implications for local authorities in New Zealand.

5.0 Context

5.1 What is child impact assessment?

“The job of child impact reporting is to offer a child-focused perspective...the challenge is to keep this firmly at the forefront...making children visible...and generating intersectoral...dialogue” (Hanna et al 2006:7).

Child impact assessment involves assessing a proposed policy, decision or activity against the UNCROC principle of “the best interests of the child” (Hanna et al 2006:1). It is designed to bring children’s issues and interests to the centre rather than the margins of decision making. Names given to this process are varied and include child impact assessment, child lens reports, child impact appraisals, child impact analysis, child accounting, child proofing and child impact reporting. Child impact assessment is the term used by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, is probably the term most used (Corrigan 2006:7) and is the term used in this report.

¹ See <http://www.nzaia.org.nz/>.

The information from a child impact assessment should be used to minimise or remove negative impacts and to maximise benefits. As with other types of impact assessment (see Kemm 2003), child impact assessment tries to predict consequences, thus informing and hopefully influencing decision making (Hanna et al 2006:2). Some child impact assessment happens after the fact to gauge actual impacts on children of a policy or activity.

5.2 Why assess impacts on children?

Key reasons for undertaking child impact assessments are varied. Hanna et al (2006) offer excellent and contemporary New Zealand perspectives on this matter. Internationally, Corrigan (2006) offers a current Irish viewpoint; Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) (2006) similarly provides leadership in this field; Payne (2007) proffers a recent English point of view, whilst Sylwander provides an earlier though still relevant Swedish outlook (2001).

The collective wisdom from these authors suggests a range of reasons why assessing the impact upon children of existing or new policies, legislation, regulations, budgets, organizational or administrative structures, facilities, initiatives, decision-making processes, guidelines and / or proposals is a useful proposition to consider. The encapsulation of this thinking is thus:

1. Children are largely excluded from decision making processes, with no voting ability and limited advocacy power except through adults.
2. Their greater use of and dependence on public services, the high probability of adverse effects on children when these fail, and their poor access to complaints mechanisms and redress.
3. Child wellbeing is as vital to the nation as a healthy environment, society and economy, yet is rarely given the same level of priority. A positive impact on children today is an investment in the society of the future.
4. Children are more likely than any other sector to experience poverty and its effects².
5. Children in New Zealand are clearly not doing well on a number of measures, partly through policies that ignore impacts on children³
6. Government structures and processes tend to fail children, with responsibilities fragmented across agencies, a low level of visibility of children in government and frequent prioritising of more influential political agendas.

Hodgkin (1999) argues that children's issues tend to get eclipsed by those of adults, and that for the reasons above children should receive priority among the many target groups for which proposals should be vetted. Mechanisms for child impact assessment can also have benefits in themselves, as:

- ⊙ The requirement sends a signal about the rights of children.
- ⊙ The process increases awareness of children's interests.
- ⊙ Over time these mechanisms may achieve a mainstreaming of consideration of children's interests into policy and practice (Corrigan: 2006).

In summing up the evidence, Angus (2007:2) has noted that child impact reporting is seen as one way of giving due regard to children in the nation's future, by increasing their profile in the political process to ensure better outcomes for all.

² Ministry of Social Development (2007:61. Table EC3.1). This data demonstrates that children aged <18 years were the single largest age grouping living in low-income households. In 2004, 23% New Zealand children lived in low-income housing

³ UNICEF (2007) found that New Zealand children were 16th of 24 OECD countries for an aggregate measure of 'material well-being' (based on pre-2006 figures). New Zealand children were 24th of 25 OECD countries for 'health and safety'; and 17th of 24 OECD countries for educational well-being. However, in some individual wellbeing measures New Zealand has done reasonably well.

5.3 The New Zealand and local government context

New Zealand's ratification of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (*UNCROC*) in 1993 provides one significant frame of reference towards the foundation for child impact assessment in this country. One *UNCROC* recommendation is to adopt child impact assessment for all policy that affects children (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2003).

UNCROC is also referenced in legislation on the role and responsibilities of New Zealand's Children's Commissioner, who is required to have regard to the Convention in her actions (Children's Commissioner's Act 2003). There is however no New Zealand legislation requiring child impact assessments, and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993 do not specifically address children and their rights (ibid:6).

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand's founding document between the English colonial representatives and New Zealand's indigenous Māori people, signed by many Māori tribes in 1840) has been legally interpreted as incorporating principles of partnership, protection and participation between the Crown and Maori. Article One – *Kawanatanga – Governance*, promotes the participation of Māori in all facets of governance, management and operational decision making. Article Two – *Tino Rangatiratanga – Maori control and self determination*, relates to the promotion by Maori of Maori aspirations. Article Three – *Oritetanga – Equity and citizenship*, requires the improvement of outcomes for Maori (Mental Health Foundation, 2004:19). These Treaty principles have been incorporated into some legislation and regulations which affect New Zealand children, such as the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000. Contemporarily, the Ministry of Health note that "Maori have on average the poorest health status of any ethnic group in New Zealand" (2007:4). A key demographic feature within Maori whanau is that there are greater numbers of tamariki (children) than in non-Maori families. These factors combined with the existing constitutional Treaty imperative provides important guidance and impetus in the New Zealand context of child impact reporting.

The *Agenda for Children* (Ministry for Social Development, 2002) proposed child impact reporting as a possible future development. In the Agenda's implementation plan: *Making it Happen*, Action Area 6: 'Improving Local Government and Community Planning for Children' specifically details in seven clauses how child-focused structures and processes might be enabled through councils, into which a child impact assessment could easily be incorporated. However, the *Agenda* has not yet been coherently implemented into New Zealand's public policy either nationally or locally.

Child impact assessments were included in the 2005 Human Rights Commission's *Priorities for Action 2005-2010*. Similarly, the *Every Child Counts* coalition of non government organisations advocated its use during the 2005 election (Every Child Counts 2007), and political favour is said to be growing as several political parties (Greens, United Future and Labour) indicate support for child impact assessment (Hanna et al 2006:2).

While internationally the focus of child impact assessment tends to be on national policy and legislative decisions, local government activities have major impacts on children's lives. In *Generating the Future? The state of local government planning for children and young people of New Zealand* (undated), Dunedin academic Claire Freeman and colleagues put forward a cogent argument for the imperative to involve children in local government, particularly in urban design and planning:

The inclusion of children and young people in the planning process provides planners with a win-win situation as benefits accrue to the children and young people concerned, the wide community and to planners themselves (Freeman et al, undated:12).

This local government and children focus is further illuminated through another Freeman-led report pertaining to how children use their local environments (Freeman et al, 2007). The research found that the single factor that most reduced a child's independent mobility was attendance at a school outside of their neighborhood. Concurrently, these children often experienced low levels of mobility even within their own local neighborhood. This report revealed the range of infrastructure which *significantly* affected children's lives, namely:

- Roads and other transport systems
- footpaths
- the siting of recreation and cultural facilities
- parks
- urban design, and
- local economic development

This infrastructure is largely led and/or determined through local councils. A recent report from the Sustainable Development Commission in the United Kingdom reiterates this very finding and identifies as the highest priorities for local authorities action on behalf of British children to be: road traffic, green space and climate change (2007:7).

The New Zealand Local Government Act (2002) sets out the purpose of local authorities as being (Part 2 Section 10):

- a. to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and
- b. to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities, in the present and for the future.

The three Treaty principles are clearly expressed in this legislation through provisions which foster the capacity for tangata whenua to meaningfully participate in council business. The Act also requires local authorities to anticipate the effects of its operational outputs on community wellbeing outcomes and to take a *sustainable development* approach to planning and decision-making. This approach means that consideration must be made of current and future community needs, and thus necessarily includes the views and experiences of children.

The concept of 'sustainable development' has been promoted internationally for over two decades. It is found in other local government legislation, including the Resource Management Act 1991. The previous government's *Sustainable Development for New Zealand: Programme for Action* (2003) stipulated the need to invest in children and young people so as to progress sustainable development aspirations in New Zealand:

All children and young people have the opportunity to participate, to succeed and to make contributions that benefit themselves and others, now and into the future (p.23).

Sustainability ambitions are again being mooted by the current New Zealand government, and are also relevant in this child impact assessment field of work.

However, the actual practice of seeking children's voices and perspectives into council business is still an emerging practice. Many councils in New Zealand have a youth council. The purpose and scope of decision-making varies for each youth council, though primarily it has been noted that Youth Council's "give feedback to the elected adult council about what youth issues the council should be looking into and providing comment to the council about council policy, from a youth perspective" (Children's Issues Centre, 2004:8). In many instances, youth councils are successful and beneficial to the local council, the youth community and the youth councillors themselves. However, this New Zealand report also notes that this is not always so, with varying levels of respect by adult staff and elected members from within councils being accorded to Youth

Council-derived recommendations. Most often, youth councils attract high-school aged children, and do not seek younger-aged children as members. Thus, those aged under 12 years can often be excluded from these decision-making structures, which is problematic in this child impact assessment context.

Above and beyond the usual rhetoric of 'taking care of children today will make for a better world tomorrow', some work is being undertaken in New Zealand where children are 'highlighted' within sustainability-orientated policies and programmes. A specific local government example is the *Northcote Child and Youth Development Project* – a consortium project within the Auckland Sustainable Cities Programme that involves community agencies alongside government departments and North Shore City Council. In an early evaluation of the Northcote project, a suggestion made by some interviewees towards the programmes' improvement was "for the youth group to be extended to include children in the 7-10 year age group" (Greenaway, Conway and Kaiwai, 2005:29). This was because the project had skewed into focusing upon the needs of local young people, to the exclusion of local children (personal communication, SHORE Research, February 2008). This can be a common phenomenon encountered by community-based projects with strict output-based, funder-driven imperatives: it is easier to draw upon existing youth advocacy networks, rather than to identify and develop relationships with local child advocacy networks. The final evaluation report (Greenaway and Kaiwai, 2006) found that the youth-focus had not altered in the *Northcote Child and Youth Development Project*:

More emphasis on whole child approaches is required as the main focus to date has been on youth ... more work needs to be done to create sustainable pathways for child and youth involvement in decision-making (Ibid:6)... other creative ways of involving younger children need to be explored (Ibid:39).

In the final evaluation of the Northcote project, both the first and second round of key informant interviews demonstrated that interviewees still did not share a working understanding of sustainable development, even after 3 years of working well together.

This important 'definitional' finding from a project steeped in sustainable development, children's rights and associated with local councils needs to be considered and adjusted for in any future child impact assessment work with councils.

A collaborative effort between central government and non-government agencies' expertise saw children aspirations being highlighted through the *Toolkit for child and youth participation in local government decision-making* (Local Government New Zealand, 2004). The degree to which this toolkit has been utilized has not been assessed to date. However, some local authorities have developed strategies for children and young people (for example Christchurch City, Hutt City, Rotorua District, Waitakere City, Auckland City, Nelson City) and a small number of these councils are exploring the potential of child impact assessment in their decision making.

Thus the New Zealand-wide strategic context in which child impact assessments might be undertaken could be considered 'promising'. That is, a small body of New Zealand-authored child-focused policies exists, which couple with the government's signature to the leading international children's convention. Collectively, these documents could serve to 'usher' and facilitate the eventuation of any child impact assessments being undertaken nationally or locally. The difficulty remains however, that financial resources and political will have yet to prove sufficient for assessments to occur.

6.0 Weighing up whether to do child impact assessment

This section presents issues for a local authority to think about when considering developing a child impact assessment process.

6.1 Relationship between child and other types of impact assessment

Many different forms of impact assessment exist in New Zealand and internationally. These have been broadly encapsulated into 'environmental' and 'social' camps. Environmentally-focused assessments have been present in New Zealand for sometime due to requirements within the Resource Management Act (1991) for councils to monitor impacts upon their local environment, for present and future management and possibly mitigation. Some of the 'sub-categories' of environmental impact assessment include biodiversity, climate change, forestry, fisheries, disasters and conflict (see: www.iaia.org). The Resource Management Act has also required social impact assessments of some new and significant developments, for example, new motorways, where warranted.

The 'social' assessment category has included family, indigenous, participation, gender and health impact assessments, which are receiving varying degrees of interest politically in New Zealand. For example, the New Zealand Families Commission has been steadily pursuing the idea of a 'Family's Impact Assessment' for some time. Additionally, considerable resources and expertise have recently been applied to developing Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in New Zealand, resulting in the development of a Health Impact Assessment Unit within the Ministry of Health.

Opportunities exist for child advocates to work with this health unit and/or the New Zealand Association of Impact Assessment to support local government to develop meaningful and integrated impact assessment systems. Indeed, the perception from some in the impact assessment field is that HIAs already include children's wellbeing needs. However, this belief masks some important concerns. For example, a number of councils have voiced resistance to becoming engaged in this field of work, seeing 'health' as being beyond their perimeters of responsibility (personal communication, Local Government New Zealand, 2007). Concurrently, subsuming child impact assessments within the broader health impact processes may not enhance children's visibility in council (or health) policy and planning. Indeed it may render children invisible again. Also, when contacting people that work in the field of impact assessments, significant reservation was expressed:

We have enough difficulty promoting the systemic use of impact assessment already without the impression being created here (in CIA) is yet another (implicitly different) assessment tool ... we really don't want to see in future Elderly Persons Impact Assessment (EPIA), Unmarried Parents Impact Assessment (UPIA), etc (personal communication, J Baines, 2008).

Whilst the New Zealand Association of Impact Assessments notes the relationship between environmental and social impact assessments in their Objectives and Ethical Guidelines, neither children nor children's needs are explicitly noted in their website information pages (see: <http://www.nzaia.org.nz/Info/Objectives.htm>).

This is the nub of the conundrum for decision-makers, child advocates and policy advisors alike: how to build child-related impact assessment into existing and projected council policy and practice in an integrated way, and potentially as part of an organisation's wider impact assessment and management considerations. Or, whether to strike out independently towards ensuring a child focus is sustained in existing and new policies and programmes. This challenge is more fully explored in Section 7 of this review.

6.2 Lack of literature on implementation of child impact assessments

“International experience with child impact assessments is still in its infancy, hence there is very little published literature evaluating the process or outcomes” (Hanna et al 2006:3).

Angus’ (2007) report reiterates this conclusion, adding that little material is available on the implementation of child impact assessments (p4). He notes that this “...reflects the fact that while child impact assessment has often been recommended, it has less often been implemented, and its impact on policy development and decision making has not been well evaluated” (ibid). Also, a trend for literature surrounding child impact assessment has been to focus on the reasons *why* it is important and necessary, rather than practical guides and methods for doing so.

Two notable exceptions are the Scottish and Canadian examples. In 2006, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People developed an initial-screening and full assessment Child Impact Assessment model, the latter following an 8-stage in-depth process. Edmonton City in Alberta, Canada developed a holistic ‘Child Friendly Edmonton’ child impact assessment tool whereby a pre-determined pre-assessment process is matched with local children’s values, which are then consolidated into a template for Edmonton City Council staff to use in their work programming:

It is the [Edmonton] Council’s belief that a city that is good for children is a city that is good for everybody” (Yates, 2005:376).

These two implementation examples are outlined further in Sections 7.7.2 and 7.7.5 respectively.

6.3 Participation of children

There is a large body of literature on how to achieve effective child and youth participation⁴. While children’s participation in child impact assessment is desirable, as Hanna et al note (2006:5), working with communities is far from easy; impact assessments tend to be “top down” processes; community relationships take time to build and decisions are often needed faster than these processes allow.

A further and significant issue is how to enable informed participation from children and young people on what are often complex issues. Meaningful participation takes time and children’s schedules of schooling, recreation, cultural and family commitments do not often allow for that indulgence. School-based programmes which are meaningfully integrated into the curriculum with local teachers’ support have been an option pursued by some councils on specific issues, such as environmental and stormwater management into the science and geographies’ curriculum (see Project Twin Streams, <http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/Abtcit/ne/twinstreams.asp>). In using this mechanism to meaningfully seek children’s opinion, significant forward planning is required, as well as a reliance on existing relationships with teachers, and an intimate knowledge of the curriculum and its sequencing in the school year so as it ‘times’ with the council policy development timelines.

Another imperative when seeking children’s opinions is managing their expectations as to the influence of their participation upon the eventual decision making. Tapp (in Children’s Issues Centre, 2004) found that children and young people’s recommendations ‘were not always

⁴ See for example Local Government New Zealand’s 2004 Toolkit for Child and Youth Participation at <http://www.lgnz.co.nz/projects/archive/toolkit/> and Child Friendly Cities information on participation at http://www.childfriendlycities.org/resources/block_1.html.

implemented and that they sometimes received no feedback as to why their recommendations were not successful' (p.9). This approach by adults will not encourage continuous interest from children and young people (or their families potentially) in council activities.

Over-consultation and surface level consultation where the same issues continue to be canvassed with little change resulting are also dangers for child impact assessment.

6.4 One of a range of tools

Child impact assessment is only one of a wide range of tools available to local government to place children more at the centre of its decision making. Another sophisticated approach is UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Toolkit Map (see Appendix Two). This 'system' has a series of case studies from across the globe, where cities have integrated the needs of children into their urban design and/or community planning. The studies date from the early 2000s and over 800 agencies and cities are affiliated with this work. However, the latest studies were posted in 2004.

Other supporting child advocacy tools can similarly elevate children's rights and needs to local government decision makers, such as:

- Child Advocate roles at staff and political levels (see for example Christchurch, Waitakere and Auckland Cities).
- Child Advocate roles external to council (see for example the Child Advocacy Group that exists in Manukau City which advises the Council on children's issues. It is a multi-agency group working to reduce child poverty and to promote an environment for children's health matters to be effectively addressed).
- A policy or strategy adopted by Council that sets out why and how the best interests of children will be taken into account.
- Council reporting processes which require the impacts on children to be considered and addressed.
- Particular processes that are triggered when decisions which are deemed to have a significant impact on children are being made.
- Resourcing a community-based agency or external body to undertake child impact assessments on key issues or decisions or as part of the policy function (see for example the United Kingdom's National Children's Bureau, which was funded to undertake child impact statements of selected legislative Bills in England.⁵ This work has now been transferred to *11 Million* – the English Children's Commissioner's office),

It is unlikely that child impact assessment will be successful in a local authority without some of the advocacy tools in place. Also, there can be negative aspects with each of these tools. These are more fully juxtaposed in the following 'Strengths and weaknesses of child impact assessment' Section.

6.5 Strengths and weaknesses of child impact assessment

This table is adapted from Hanna et al (2006), and has utilized the research from the British All Party Parliamentary Group for Children discussions held in April 2007, and Corrigan's (2006) work. It describes prospective strengths and corresponding weaknesses of undertaking child impact assessments.

⁵ See <http://www.ncb.org.uk>.

Table One: Strengths and Weaknesses of Child Impact Assessments

Strengths	Weaknesses
Decisions are informed by knowledge of what contributes to and detracts from children’s wellbeing and aspirations	Child impact reporting is not a panacea, and predicting all effects on children in all cases is impossible. Plus, children’s needs change. However, any legislative or policy development process has this susceptibility
It can increase intersectoral collaboration in the pursuit of better outcomes, as good outcomes for children fall across multiple organisations and sectors (ie., health, housing, justice, education etc)	Intersectoral collaboration is often difficult to build and maintain. The process used must work for all concerned, enhance the decision making process & promote collaboration rather than mire organizational processes down
Could support more transparent policy and decision making processes, and might improve accountability	Being visible does not guarantee being heard, and children and child advocates may be (repeatedly) disappointed by this aspect of democracy
Can avoid preventable blunders that can arise when children’s interests are overlooked	Practice can consist of a one off assessment near the end of the process
Expertise and infrastructure to support child impact assessments is available in New Zealand, e.g., Office of the Children’s Commissioner, academic centres, NGOs, Children’s Agenda, government’s commitment to UNCROC	These listed agencies have many existing responsibilities and roles cannot easily focus upon Child Impact Assessments.
Better coordination of efforts towards better outcomes and quality of life for children and families	‘Institutionalising’ the best interests of children means that the purpose can become obscured by the process.
A step-by-step assessment approach is particularly useful for upskilling policy and non-policy staff who may not know how to assess the potential impact of conceptual policy proposals	A lack of obligation on policy-makers to carry out Child Impact Assessments exists, as does the lack of sanctions where these assessments are not adhered to or not fully carried out. Quality can vary. Checklists and/or implication statements can become little more than compliance reporting.
New and existing local child-specific data is sourced, consolidated and used	There are often data issues and difficulties disaggregating data for children, and difficulties identifying specific impacts for children, due to complexity or lack of information available

Wyllie and Mulgrew (2006) investigated potential opportunities for and barriers to the uptake of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in central and local government agencies here in New Zealand. They identified multiple factors that can affect the uptake of HIA, some of which were inter-related. Some of the factors included knowledge of HIA, external support, skilled personnel, and perceived value for money. Their analysis also highlighted the importance of support from senior management and decision-makers as well as quality assurance issues (see Appendix One for this diagram). These strengths and weaknesses are relevant to the viability and implementation of child impact assessment in councils. However, due to Wyllie and Mulgrew taking an organisational focus, their analysis does not make mention of external / lay contributors to the assessment itself, which is vital in child impact assessment, specifically, that children participate.

Corrigan 2006 examined impact reporting in Ireland and internationally and concludes in relation to policy that:

There is currently a lack of concrete evidence that policy proofing or impact assessment in relation to children or other groups has demonstrably changed policy itself (2006:46).

She believed that the most common positive impact however has been to put the rights and interests of various groups onto the agenda and to raise awareness amongst officials and politicians of the rights and interests of these groups. Sustaining this awareness with the shifts of political and organisational (staff) turnover is, however, very challenging.

7.0 What is good Child Impact Assessment practice in councils?

This section presents good practice guidance on how to undertake child impact assessment in councils. A common theme in the literature is that child impact assessment is a process not a one-off (Payne 2000:11), and that it should be undertaken at key stages in the policy, project, legislative or decision making process so as to maximise its effect. From across the literature, six key steps have been identified which can support a child impact assessment being successfully manifest and implemented. Here, these have been tailored for a New Zealand local government environment.

Quality is vital in this process, and the right people need to be involved. Angus (2007:32) summarises the knowledge needed to undertake a robust assessment at the national level:

- Information about UNCROC and other relevant rights and outcome goals for children.
- Knowledge of children's views on the proposal.
- An understanding of the position of children and their interests and needs in respect of the proposal being assessed.
- Access to data relevant to the issue.
- Knowledge of the evidence base for predictions of impact.
- Understanding of the wider policy context.

This listing however, might be a little 'heavy-handed' for a council-based child advocate, especially the UNCROC-specific knowledge requirement, as rarely does a United Nations convention filter into New Zealand's local government environment.

Paraphrasing the Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment answer to this personnel and skill-based issue is useful here:

It is critical that each [Child Impact Assessment] is steered by a group of key people who, between them, know the policy, know about [Child Impact Assessment], know about [children's] issues and know about, and ideally are part of, the population affected. The right mix of people will increase the comprehensiveness of the [Child Impact Assessment], which in turn affects the policy development process (Ministry of Health, 2007:7).

The addendum for this literature review is that people with local government knowledge are also critical in the equation of delivering effective Child Impact Assessments within councils. Certainly the understanding of the wider legislative context in which councils operate is a useful lever, such as the imperatives of the Local Government Act 2002 as well as the localised policy context which could support the initiation of a Child Impact Assessment.

The first task for the assessment team is to agree and follow an assessment process. As with any project management tool, the process will necessarily be flexible. However, the development of a core, systematic process means that it can be replicated and/or modified for continuous organisational usage. The following table adapts Corrigan's work (2006:44-45) pertaining to the common features of a child impact assessment process.

Table Two: Common process steps

Screening

While it may be ideal to assess every policy, activity and decision, the resource and administrative burden makes this untenable. A screening or filtering process is common to most impact assessment procedures. A clear and transparent method for screening is required so that it can be easily replicated and measured (see 7.1 & 7.2).

Scoping

Scoping focuses on identifying the main aspects of the policy or decision that will be subjected to in-depth assessment (see 7.3 & 7.4).

Core questions

A coherent set of questions that can be adapted to different contexts is needed (see 7.5).

Assessment

The analytical process of carrying out the impact assessment. The methods used should be clearly explained and justified (see 7.5).

Consultation

Almost all impact assessment processes recommend consultation with key stakeholders on significant or substantial policies. In general the active involvement of children in issues that affect their lives is advocated (see 7.5).

Identify and/or develop alternatives

In all impact assessments the identification of alternative options to the proposal being considered is raised (see 7.6).

Reporting

All impact assessment mechanisms produce some form of report; included c a non-technical summary (see 7.6).

Monitor and evaluate

This is especially important in the early days of implementing child impact assessment when the effectiveness of the process itself needs to be evaluated (see 7.6).

This table highlights the detailed and complex nature of a rigorous impact assessment, as well as the significant levels of resourcing required. As noted earlier, the process may not be as linear as this table suggests due to unforeseen circumstances entering into the assessment equation over time.

The following subsections of this review (7.1 - 7.6) utilise Corrigan's headings. Her initial table (above) has been adjusted so that the nuances of New Zealand's local government needs and context have been integrated. Hence, in some instances, the headings are used in combination, so as to indicate the back-and-forth nature of the assessment exercise. Similarly, some headings are repeated, indicating the depth and complexity of the process' step. A Child Impact Assessment suitable for usage within a New Zealand council is the end result.

7.1 Screening: Assess the existing council planning and assessment processes

Once a team of people has been assembled, a first step for a local authority will be to view its current planning and assessments processes for three reasons:

1. how are children's interests currently being incorporated
2. how can these processes be extended, and
3. what other processes already work

In supporting this initial step, UNICEF has identified six questions for local authorities to ask themselves in relation to undertaking child impact assessments:⁶

- ⊙ Is there a process to ensure that the impact of proposals which will significantly affect children generally and groups of children is considered?
- ⊙ Is child impact assessment carried out early enough in decision making?
- ⊙ Is there regular evaluation of the actual impact on children of local government?
- ⊙ Do these processes of assessment and evaluation take into account all children, including marginalised and disadvantaged groups?
- ⊙ Do these processes involve children?
- ⊙ Are there in addition independent processes of child impact assessment and evaluation?

These questions can be used to begin or support discussion within a local authority as to what is in place now for children, and what might be needed.

7.2 Screening: Apply assessment selectively

The literature acknowledges the importance of avoiding bureaucratic burden in undertaking separate and discrete impact assessment processes for every possible major group and stakeholder served (or not served) by local government, such as children, migrants, older adults, disabled people, the environment etc. However, the argument still exists that children's issues are significantly eclipsed in the policy and decision-making processes of most New Zealand councils. The prudent approach therefore is that 'a targeted and selective approach is the most preferable assessment option, rather than running a ruler over every council policy initiative' (Angus, 2007:36):

Attention should be focused on policies, activities and decisions likely to have 'significant', direct or 'substantial' effects upon children (Corrigan, 2006:44).

It will be useful therefore to develop in-house criteria upon which to decide what council policy(s) to assess, as identified in the current Council Annual Plan. Primary criteria considerations may include timelines, staff availability - including the necessary mix of professional skills, and financial resources. What is useful to note is that within these prioritising decisions, it is often the less-obviously child-related areas where child impact assessment is most beneficial (Hanna et al 2006:4). For example, the review of a strand of council's water management or waste management strategies from a child's perspective may provide more sustainable wellbeing outcomes for children, than a playground policy review.

Part of these deliberations will be about 'timing': when can an assessment be most realistically undertaken and most meaningfully inserted into the decision-making process? This may fluctuate on a case-by-case basis for some time until a 'normative' space or timing is identified.

⁶ Accessible from http://www.childfriendlycities.org/resources/block_5.html

In summary, ‘a targeted and selective approach’ where the outcomes can positively affect children’s lives is an important starting point in deciding which policy(s) to assess. The policies or programmes selected need to sit within a broader strategic view, so that assessments do not become ‘knee-jerk’ exercises, but eventually, part of a longer-term commitment to a more child-friendly district, city or region.

7.3 Scoping: Ensure a clear Frame of Reference

Child impact assessment should be set within a clear frame of reference in terms of explicit intent and the drivers for it. A starting point for assessment tends to be the “*best interests of the child*”, as evidenced below:

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be of primary consideration.” Article 3(1) United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

UNCROC includes a right to education, family relationships, respect, treatment as an individual citizen and protection from violence, separation from parents, actions injurious to health, hazardous work and being generally exploited or abused.

In the New Zealand policy context, Angus (2007:38-39) suggests that the frame of reference for child impact assessment should also be the *best interests of the child*, with a full assessment needing to cover four dimensions:

1. The *rights* dimension (UNCROC principles, rights in international conventions or protocols signed by New Zealand, rights in New Zealand legislation).
2. The “*whole child*” perspective, which leads to questions about impacts on access, participation, knowledge, independence, respect and value accorded to children, impacts on key settings in which children spend time and on relationships children have.
3. The dimension of *development and wellbeing*, involving potential impact on attachment, belonging and stability of care, freedom from violence, abuse and neglect, physical health and mental wellbeing, development of knowledge and skills and of healthy social relationships (drawn from the Agenda for Children, Ministry of Social Development’s Statement of Intent, Kia Puawai (Early Intervention) and Youth Development Strategy).
4. The *economic* position of children, including impact on children’s standard of living, mainly in terms of family income but also cost of essential goods and services.

Alongside these economic and socially-orientated dimensions, environmental and cultural elements may also need to be integrated, where applicable to a proposal being fully assessed.

Within a local government environment however, the strategic context will be different, although adherence to the overriding principle of the ‘*best interests of the child*’ is critical. Individual local authority goals need to be reflected in the Child Impact Assessment frame of reference. These are contained in a council’s Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). Associated (socially-orientated) council strategies and policies can also usefully be connected with the assessment’s frame. This ‘linking’ approach can ensure that the Child Impact Assessment is related with locally-derived and mandated goals and operational imperatives. The bigger picture pertaining to New Zealand’s commitments towards sustainable development, and children’s place within this approach might also provide a useful lever to elevate an assessments’ frame of reference. These ‘bigger picture’ obligations are contained with the Local Government Act wellbeing aspirations, as well as in other central government strategic documents, previously outlined in Section 5.3.

However, the 'scale' of the strategic documentation for the frame of reference needs to be compatible with the proposed 'brief' or 'full' assessment: it may well be that a 'strategic-sledgehammer-approach' (citing every international convention, New Zealand and local strategic document pertaining to sustainable development, children and/or wellbeing) may be prohibitive or overwhelming for council decision-makers where an initial small-scale child impact assessment is being proposed. It may be more appropriate that the council's own children's policy and/or citation of recent council decisions which have positively affected children will be sufficient as a frame of reference.

In summary, a council's strategic context needs to 'frame' the Child Impact Assessment, with central acknowledgement of the *'best interests of the child'* being vital. This is because the 'sentiment' of this UNCROC statement is clear, internationally and nationally recognised, and concise.

7.4 Scoping: Determine the depth of assessment

Almost all impact assessment literature cited in this report differentiates between a 'brief / initial / abbreviated / low level' impact assessment and a 'full' impact assessment. Obviously, the latter will provide a more detailed appraisal of an issue. A thorough checklist example is that prepared for local metropolitan governments in London in 1995, involving eleven questions regarding children's participation, access and rights to health and wellbeing (see Section 7.7.4). For a variety of reasons however, it will not always be practicable to undertake a fuller assessment. Thus, checklists are often used as a form of abbreviated appraisal.

In Scotland and Northern Ireland the Commissioners for Children have developed a two stage process; first an initial appraisal via a 'Generic Initial Screening Form' and then if warranted a full impact analysis via the 'Children's Rights Impact assessment.' Both of these provide a useful starting point for a local authority⁷. A similar approach in New Zealand is undertaken by the Ministry of Health - Manatu Hauora in terms of health impact assessment, where a Health Lens Tool is used for a brief health impact assessment and a Health Appraisal Tool is used for a more in-depth assessment⁸. The Health Lens is used when time and resources are limited, and a scoping checklist is provided to help determine which level of assessment to use (2004:43).

This body of literature consistently proffers a series of questions for an assessment team to consider when scoping the assessment's focus. The Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment screening questions (Ministry of Health, 2007:11) have been modified and condensed to fit with this reports' child-focused and local government objectives:

- ⊙ What resources are available to undertake this impact assessment (staff and funding)?
- ⊙ What level of public and political interest exists and what concerns have already been raised?
- ⊙ How many children are likely to be affected and are there any specific population groups more or less affected?
- ⊙ What capacity to effect positive changes for children and 'add organisational-value' through the assessment process exist and for whom?
- ⊙ What are the potential adverse impacts if this assessment is not undertaken?
- ⊙ Is there a sufficiently robust knowledge base (including policy) that will support this analysis?
- ⊙ How will the outcomes from this assessment be evaluated, and by whom?
- ⊙ Therefore: what is the projected or potential significance of impact for children by undertaking this assessment... or, how will children's best interests be otherwise represented?

⁷ Accessible at <http://www.sccyp.org.uk>

⁸ Accessible at [http://www.nhc.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/700/\\$File/GuideToHIA.pdf](http://www.nhc.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/700/$File/GuideToHIA.pdf)

These questions are answered on a scale of 1-3 which can then steer the conclusion of whether to undertake a partial or full assessment. Definitions and language may need to be negotiated, especially where a child impact assessment is being undertaken with a 'less-obviously child-related' department e.g., water management colleagues. Terminology will differ across sectors, and words such as 'rights' and 'wellbeing' and 'sustainable development' will potentially have different concepts loaded onto them which would be usefully explored from the different perspectives.

Whichever 'depth' is determined, it will be useful to document why it is the most appropriate tool to be used, for future reference.

7.5 Core questions; Assessment; and Consultation, including methods

Both quantitative data and qualitative information will be needed to undertake any Child Impact Assessment. Previous work to date, especially the scoping will be useful information to include in this informational step. Additionally, new data may be required to 'round-out' the analysis. The existing supply of data and the anticipated informational requirements will determine what methods are followed towards fulfilling the assessment.

Firstly, the proposed policy and its relevant objectives need to be described so as to then 'match' these objectives with informational needs. The opening hypothesis of a Child Impact Assessment is:

With regard to the best interests of children, what are the likely positive and negative impacts of the proposal on children -including particular populations of children?

A 'typical' line of subsequent questioning was found in the literature to respond to this question. These are synthesised and adapted here so that children's and local government perspectives are paramount.

How are the following features of children's lives strengthened or mitigated in the proposal?

- ⦿ Social wellbeing, including education, housing, participation, family connection, safety, social support and cohesion, mental health.
- ⦿ Physical wellbeing, including health, biological factors such as age, sex, genes.
- ⦿ Individual/behavioural factors such as personal behaviours (diet, physical activity, alcohol, smoking), life skills, autonomy, self esteem and confidence, stress levels, educational attainment.
- ⦿ Environmental wellbeing, including quality of air, water and soil, pollution, waste disposal, land use, biodiversity, climate, urban design, energy, communication networks, noise.
- ⦿ Cultural and spiritual wellbeing, including expression of cultural values and practices, racism and discrimination, links with marae and cultural resources.
- ⦿ Economic wellbeing, including family income and access to essential goods and services.
- ⦿ Access to and quality of services such as public transport, health care, disability support services, social services, childcare, leisure services.

In summary, a Child Impact Assessment needs to answer the core question of *what are the likely positive and negative impacts of the proposal on children - including particular populations of children, and what are the alternatives that might mitigate the negative impacts and strengthen the positive impacts?*

The method(s) by which this information is gathered needs to be justified, as different methods reveal different depths and breadths of information. Whanau Ora Health Impact Assessment (Ministry of Health, 2007:20-21) provides a useful listing of method options:

- focus groups or focused hui
- population and regional analysis (quantitative or qualitative)
- scenario assessments (quantitative or qualitative)
- health hazard identification and classification (quantitative or qualitative)
- stakeholder workshops
- 'with-proposal' and 'without-proposal' scenarios
- surveys
- key informant interviews with kaumatua, experts, or with groups such as runanga, Maori Women's Welfare League and iwi tribal authorities
- brainstorming
- citizens' juries (inviting members of the public to hear evidence from experts and then make an assessment)
- Delphi processes (involving a panel of individual experts and key people engaged in consensus decision-making, where the group decides the weighting and scaling using an iterative process)
- environmental monitoring (quantitative or qualitative)
- risk assessment, risk communication and risk management
- cost-benefit analysis
- evaluation

One caution raised through the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (2007:10) discussions was that stakeholder seminars could lapse into lobbying events whereby representatives associated with particular points of view merely re-aired these perspectives rather than openly sharing information and 'bouncing ideas' with officials or elected members.

Additionally, the Children's Ombudsman in Sweden – Lena Nyberg – has a range of child-specific communication tools which she utilises when assessing local, regional and national policy from a child's perspective. She states: "young people have to be able to say what is important and describe a particular problem themselves" (All Party Parliamentary Group for Children, 2007:13). To this end, she utilises:

- the 'satisfied child index' (based on a private company's customer satisfaction index)
- the distribution of questionnaires in schools
- participation fora
- round table discussions
- a children's reference group (which includes children from the age of four years), and
- the internet

In summary, some of these methods are more resource-intensive options than others. When undertaking a Child Impact Assessment, the utilisation of one or two of these methods will be realistic. However, almost all of these methods are feasible in a local government environment because many of these techniques, relationships and/or data-sets will already be in existence.

7.6 Identifying and Developing Alternatives; Reporting; Monitoring and Evaluating

Hodgkin (1998), Sylwander (2001) and Corrigan's ideas (2006) on what a child impact assessment report needs to include are as follows.

- A description of the proposed policy (or issue, decision etc).
- A description of how it is likely to impact on children.
- A description of rationale and methods used.
- An indication of whether it is consistent or inconsistent with UNCROC: *how are the best interests of the child to be met*, and other relevant international treaties and national strategies?
- Identification of any disagreements or conflicts on the likely impact on children.
- How to avoid or mitigate predicted adverse impacts.
- An indication of the report's limitations (e.g. lack of information or expertise, assumptions made).
- Children's views.
- The results of the assessment and any alternatives or alterations advised.
- What next, i.e. what should happen and what needs to be monitored or evaluated after implementation.

The inclusion of a non-technical summary is advised by Corrigan, as is keeping reports concise without sacrificing essential aspects. The Swedish model (in 7.7.1) includes spelling out conflicts of interest between children's interests and other groups, and a cost/benefit analysis. These may be something to accumulate towards over time rather than to attempt initially.

Providing solutions is constructive and better facilitates the opportunity of the assessment findings being heard by decision makers. Creative communication of the findings is critical. A diversity of audiences will want to know what the outcome of their (passive or active) engagement in a child impact assessment has been. A communication 'tip' is that the inclusion of a local child's story to convey how a particular policy decision could impact in practice was a very powerful mechanism when shared with policy and/or decision-makers directly.

There is a catch in the monitoring of the assessment process and of the children's outcomes as both have noted as being very difficult to evaluate meaningfully: changes in children's lives happen slowly. However, a mechanism by which to 'track' outcomes for local children, perhaps through indicators, is important. Similarly, reporting on the assessment process itself is important to different (internal) audiences and needs to be given consideration in the final documentation and communication forthwith. Ideally, the process will be sufficiently robust to replicate at a future time, thus building a local body of knowledge about local children.

7.7 International examples

To illustrate the section above, the following summarises six approaches to child impact assessment, in Sweden, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Finland and the Cities of London, England, and Edmonton, Canada.

7.7.1 Swedish model

The following model was developed by the Children's Ombudsman in Sweden in 2000 (Sylwander 2001). Note that it has been adapted slightly from Angus' citation (2007) for the purposes of this review. At the centre of the model (Table Three) are the questions to ask about the proposal being assessed with the surrounding four general requirements for a good assessment feeding into this core assessment.

Table Three: Sylwander / Swedish model (2001)

<p>2. Preconditions</p> <p>Assessors are appropriately qualified, know about children's rights and can access how these rights are spelt out in policy, legislation and other avenues for the matter in hand.</p>	<p>1. UNCROC principles as the foundation (Articles 2, 3, 6 & 12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Best interests of the child ♦ Respect for children's views ♦ Non discrimination ♦ Right to life and development <p style="text-align: center;">⇕</p> <p>Questions relating to the current proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>What impact will the proposal have on the child/children?</i> ♦ <i>How does the proposal relate to the provisions of UNCROC?</i> ♦ <i>What problems or conflicts of interest may the proposal entail?</i> ♦ <i>How does the proposal affect, or is affected by, other factors?</i> <p>⇔ ♦ <i>What allowance has been made for the views of children and how have these viewpoints been obtained?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>What compensatory measures may be needed?</i> ♦ <i>What costs and benefits will the proposal entail from the viewpoint of society, individual persons and particular groups?</i> ♦ <i>Other issues of relevance?</i> <p style="text-align: center;">⇕</p> <p>4. Working process (adapted to fit the matter under review)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Charting/mapping ♦ Description ♦ Analysis ♦ Testing ♦ Consultation ♦ Evaluation 	<p>3. Scientific and evidence base</p> <p>Knowledge base to be able to understand and predict impacts on the UNCROC articles, including access to relevant research and evaluation.</p>
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7.7.2 Commissioner for Children initiatives in Scotland and Northern Ireland

The Commissioners for Children in Scotland and Northern Ireland have developed child rights impact assessment tools. Features of their tools as described by Angus (2007:10) are:

- A focus on children's rights using UNCROC's four principles as the framework, as well as the European Commission's statement on human rights, other international conventions and national and local law.
- The involvement of children as participants in the process.
- A two stage process; first an initial appraisal then a full analysis if warranted.
- Used for legislative proposals, policy, budget decisions, administrative changes and review of current planning and practice.
- A template approach to guide the process and content of what is reported.

The Scotland Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) model has eight steps to its child impact assessment process.

1. Identify – choose what proposals to assess; what to appraise; and what to do a full assessment of
2. Map – describe the proposal, its objectives and likely impact and determine which articles of UNCROC apply.
3. Gather information.
4. Consult with stakeholders, children and experts.
5. Analyse – assess the proposal for:
 - ⊙ Its impact on UNCROC and other rights.
 - ⊙ Its differential impact on groups of children.
 - ⊙ Any competing interests.
 - ⊙ Financial implications.And set out:
 - ⊙ Different views about impact.
 - ⊙ If any legal rights are breached or put at risk.
 - ⊙ Both negative and positive impacts.
6. Make recommendations.
7. Publicise.
8. Monitor and evaluate.

7.7.3 *Finnish model*

In Finland a handbook has recently been produced for local and central government agencies, who are required to do child impact assessments (STAKES 2007, referenced by Angus 2007:9). Unfortunately, this handbook has not been published in English. However, the press releases associated with this handbook suggest that this Finnish Child Impact Assessment:

- ⊙ Uses the best interests of the child as the framework (UNCROC).
- ⊙ Covers matters of rights and child development.
- ⊙ Includes direct impact on health, human relationships, housing and mobility, ease of everyday life, participation and equality.
- ⊙ Includes indirect impacts on family economy, on structures and services used by children, on family and community, and on social relationships generally.

7.7.4 *City of London, England*

A checklist was developed by the metropolitan authorities in London in 1995 (Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Children's Rights Office, 1995) as a mechanism for local policy and planning proposals to take account of children's issues and needs. It asks of its local planners and policy staff, to consider issues as diverse as child protection, access, opportunities, rights, deprivation and participation in services (see Appendix Three for the full listing of questions).

This comprehensive and progressive questioning approach is not thought to be any longer applied in the City of London. The dimensions and breadth of London's political responsibilities also preclude it being realistically transferable into the New Zealand local government context. However, the intent 13 years ago to integrate children's needs and issues into London's business is very impressive, hence its inclusion in this review.

7.7.5 City of Edmonton

The City of Edmonton local authority in Alberta, Canada developed a Child Impact Assessment Tool through which the impact of programmes, policies and initiatives on children and youth could be examined. This tool was strongly linked with the overarching council departments' *Integrated Service Strategy* document. This Child Impact Assessment process was required to be practical, simple to use, visible and visionary, with the goal of putting Edmonton at the leading edge of child-friendly cities (Yates 2005:372). The tool was designed to (ibid: 373):

- Educate various groups about children's services.
- Advocate for a child-friendly Edmonton.
- Integrate child-focused efforts into the business planning processes of the City.
- Focus on the key issues of importance to the children and youth of Edmonton.

The content of the tool was developed using Council's own goals as well as utilising international child frameworks such as UNCROC and UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities. Feedback from local children and young people also contributed to the tool's content. It involved five steps:

1. Programme selection – certain departmental programmes, policies, services and amenities were selected for assessment to pilot the tool.
2. Template application – use of a standard form/template to comment on the impact of the programme on children and youth that could be easily used by staff. This is a collaborative process involving individual rating, group discussion and facilitated mediation.
3. Improvements identified.
4. Decision points – decisions made in terms of if and how changes can be made to the programme.
5. Programmes enhanced – more child friendly outcomes and a more child friendly Edmonton.

However a political shift occurred which saw an adaptation to this approach with the subsequent *Child Friendly Lens*⁹ being less prescriptive and more user-friendly for council staff, with an eye to external businesses and community agencies' future usage. The *Lens* has five 'views':

- Children have voice, influence, and understand responsibility to themselves and others
- Children feel safe and are protected
- Children join in and participate freely
- Children play, have fun, make friends and develop skills
- Children feel welcome, respected, and have a sense of belonging

The document asks users to seek responses (on a scale 1-5) from a number of perspectives against a series of statements which are grouped with the five views (total = 40 statements). It may be that only one view is assessed, or any combination of views, depending on what proposal is being assessed. In this way, an overall assessment can be made as to the child-friendliness of a proposal. The responses can assist the self-directed evaluator to complete an "action" which is associated with each of the five views. There is no explicit monitoring or 'enforcement' of lens assessment results by another party.

The *Child Friendly Lens* sits within the overarching *Child Friendly Edmonton Strategy (2006)*. This latter document has 3 goals and 7 objectives which cumulatively interact to build a city-wide community of practice whereby children's issues, needs and strengths are integrated into core council business and beyond into other city agencies. A sample of actions within this wider Strategy includes:

⁹ see <http://www.edmonton.ca/CityGov/CommServices/ChildFriendly/ChildFriendlyLens.pdf>

- ⊙ the delivery of a 'status' report on Edmonton children and youth
- ⊙ advocacy, e.g., national child day, luncheon for community leaders to hear from child health advocates, external and internal partners with children's agencies
- ⊙ training of City of Edmonton staff with leading international colleagues including David Driskell¹⁰ and Carolyn Boswell¹¹
- ⊙ the employment of a Child Friendly Edmonton Coordinator
- ⊙ a cross-departmental committee to move forward this strategic agenda.

Thus, a menu of other approaches and organisational 'building blocks' support the *Lens*' utility, and vice versa, through the overall child-focussed strategic direction. Concurrently, the political will is very strong in Edmonton, with two of the twelve councillors nominated to support child-specific initiatives. Cumulatively, this creates a huge and supportive momentum for child-focussed action and change across the city (personal communication, Child Friendly Edmonton Coordinator, January 2008).

These examples collectively demonstrate the themes and practices which have been highlighted within this review. They consistently demonstrate the need for a systemic approach based on core child-focused (most often UNCROC-derived) values. This UNCROC focus may be because four of the six examples are delivered primarily at the national level. Edmonton and London were the only documented (in English) examples of a local government-led Child Impact Assessment process, although the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities certainly provides very good generic guidance for councils.

What can be *achieved* by Child Impact Assessments locally is another matter. Planning can yield only so many gains, it is the 'doing' where other benefits are realised. This practical application of Child Impact Assessments has been specifically explored through the pilot studies funded by the Office of the Children's Commission (New Zealand) which are to be analysed in a forthcoming report.

8.0 Implications for local authorities

In his assessment of child impact assessment potential for *central* government policy processes in New Zealand, Angus came to three main conclusions (2007:48):

- ⊙ Child impact assessment on its own will not put children at the centre of policy making.
- ⊙ There is not a strong case for implementing child impact assessment processes in any but a selective and negotiated way where criteria about scale, 'depth' and nature of impact are met.
- ⊙ Where those criteria are met, the evidence suggests that processes akin to those used for health impact assessment are the most likely to be effective in terms of uptake and impact.

An important implication in this central government context is the desirability of having a user-friendly process for determining when child impact assessment is needed and if so, to what level ('brief' or 'full' impact analysis).

There are further implications associated with undertaking child impact assessment as it relates to local government, which are that the assessment must be staged and grounded, as outlined in further detail below.

¹⁰ Author of *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth: A Manual for Participation* (2002)

¹¹ Head of the Children and Young People's Unit in the Mayor of London's Office of the Greater London Authority, United Kingdom

8.1 Staged process

“What is clear from overseas experience is that making child impact reporting an integral part of public policymaking is a long-term process; the first step is to gain the support and understanding of decision makers through an initial phase of education, discussion and debate (Hanna et al 2006:6).

Potentially, a number of things need to happen before a council will adopt and use a child impact assessment process. These include:

- gaining support at the highest organisational and political levels
- these people understanding the core importance of ‘considering the best interests of the child’
- adequate resourcing being available to undertake the assessment
- visibility of the assessment process
- clarity of what the assessment process actually entails, and
- a firm commitment to continuously undertake this assessment process.

This process may take some time and will need to be sustained by dedicated staff, resource, management and political advocates. A supportive strategic and policy environment is also necessary. Table Two (p.14) reflects the best child impact assessment process steps to follow in the New Zealand local government context.

8.2 Grounded process

The international literature relating to local government and child impact assessment tends to come from academic institutions and child-focused agencies, rather than local authorities themselves. Any system for local authority child impact assessment needs to be grounded in the day to day realities of Council experiences, namely in its policy and decision-making processes. The City of Edmonton experience is likely to be instructive for New Zealand local authorities.

Based on the literature available, the table below summarises what is most and least likely to be successful in supporting councils to undertake impact assessment that is in the “*best interests of the child*”. This Table already assumes that management and political support to undertake child impact assessment has been gained through their understanding of the core importance of a child’s best interests being able to be supported through their council.

Table Four: Helpful and Unhelpful Practices

Practices likely to support effective local authority child impact assessment	Practices less likely to support effective local authority child impact assessment
Only applying assessment to significant or high impact proposals: will the assessment have a palpable impact upon local children?	Undertaking assessments persistently on ‘fringe’ issues or only on child-specific policies e.g., Playground strategies (X) vs. water management strategies (✓)
Apply good organisational judgment about when to consistently begin a child impact assessment – not too early when proposals are too general, and not too late to influence directions	Bureaucratic processes involving many stages, many people, a lot of form filling, complex decision making chains and vague accountability
Pilot - develop an approach in a collaborative manner, trial it and evaluate it to see if it is worth refining and applying more widely (as in the Edmonton model)	Resource-intensive processes involving many staff, major funding of outside bodies, consultation processes that are inefficient and/or demanding on communities. Actual and perceived constraints on resources are a barrier for assessments: a perception that it adds work can be mitigated by targeting only some proposals and providing support.

Transparent processes that include consultation with stakeholders and good feedback loops that confirm the usefulness of the assessment and provide information about actual impacts	Lack of feedback processes as to whether the process is making a difference and having the desired effects
A supportive (policy) environment (e.g. a child advocate, a Children's Strategy or other similar policy platform)	Launching into a child impact assessment without a good strategic and policy platform to underpin it
The resources to do it – information, a knowledge base, staff resource, plus support from specialists. Informing and training a group of staff who can then mentor and train other staff is a very useful technique. This also means that a group of staff can unify around the child-specific aspirations.	Staff who are unsure or unconfident or who lack sufficient professional skills of how to undertake an assessment. Individual staff 'battling' to get child impact assessment on the agenda will often fail in the medium-long term
Involve child focused agencies and the local community sector; use local expertise and knowledge to fill-out the data needed	Exhausting external and internal support people with informational requests. Reciprocity needs to be exercised

9.0 Conclusion

Child impact assessment development and implementation is an ongoing process rather than a one-off or quick fix. It requires senior organisational commitment and adequate resourcing. It needs to be selectively ‘massaged’ into the organisation by a skilled group of staff. Above all, a practical and user-friendly process is needed which keeps the focus on the *best interests of children*, which presents solutions and alternatives, and that incorporates feedback loops and evaluation to determine whether the approach is making a positive difference. From all of the literature which has contributed to this review, the following table identifies key factors that are likely to support the successful consideration of children’s needs. The implications of these factors are then inferred for local authorities in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

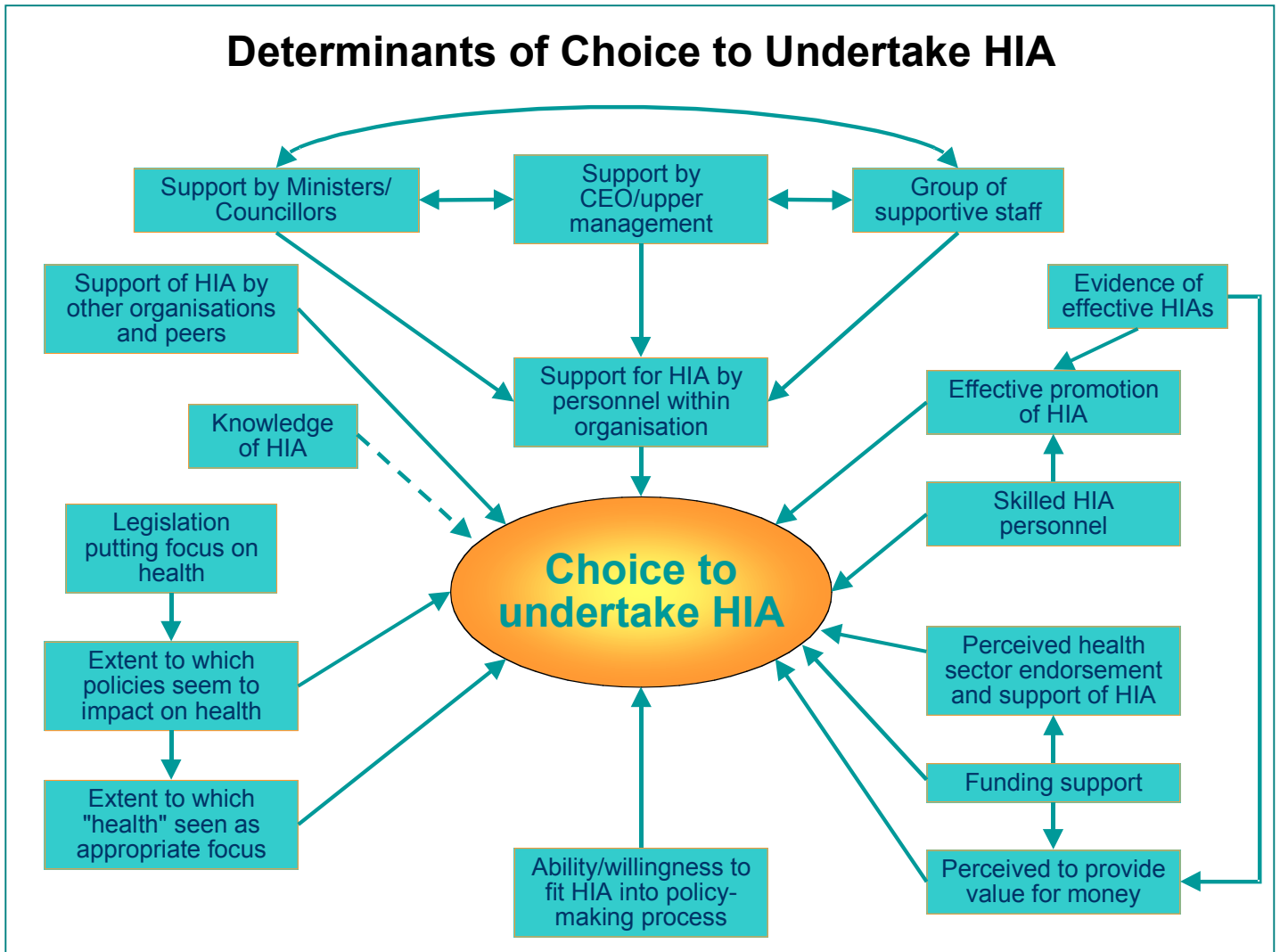
Table Five: Key success factors

Key success factor	Implications for local authorities
High level support for the process.	Chief Executive, senior management and political support. Political commitment in particular creates a powerful driver for action.
Clear processes which demonstrate objectivity, replication and credibility (vs. vested / lobbying-orientated processes) (see 7.0+ 7.1)	Identifying council processes which are analytical and that work well internally for similar purposes, and adapting and utilizing these
Staff with expertise in children’s rights & issues, and in assessment practices, analysis, and verbal and written communication skills (see 7.0)	May require councils to upskill staff in national and local child-focused policies, & in impact assessment processes and research techniques
Criteria which set out child impact assessment perimeters (see 7.2) including what a CIA should contain, who can be involved, and the reporting to occur.	Developing and adopting a Child Impact Assessment Guideline that utilizes existing methods and systems that are known across the organisation and that work
Assessments need to be carried out at points in the policy-making process where changes can be made, and ideally at the earliest ‘idea’ stages rather than at the latter decision-making phases (see 7.2)	Building child impact assessment in to decision making processes appropriately. Having staff and political ‘watchdogs’ for this (such as Child Advocates) can be helpful here.
A common frame of reference about children’s rights and outcomes which adds to the institution’s knowledge (see 7.3)	Localised child-specific strategies and policies are sourced and utilized, as well as the ‘ <i>best interest of the child</i> ’ being the central premise for action.
Identifying definitions and shared language. This may (necessarily) happen incrementally as different sectors and models are aligned, for example, children’s rights and sustainable development (see 7.4)	Using relevant policy and strategy, such as a council’s Children’s Strategy that draws across different ‘disciplines’ and departments within the council, as well as issue-specific policies e.g., water management strategies to support the process.
A brief outline of the ‘initial’ and ‘full’ assessment content, including core questions (see 7.5)	Examining the sample of international and New Zealand examples and adapting them for local inclusion
Good quality local data and evidence-based judgments that acknowledge and reflect the diversity of local children and their lives e.g., age, developmental stage, gender, (dis)ability, ethnicity, deprivation, locality (see 7.5)	Access to relevant information, good Council monitoring systems and good demographic information (for example State of the City/District reports). Relationships with researchers are important.
The meaningful participation of children wherever possible and appropriate (see 7.5)	Good consultation and engagement processes with a diversity of children and their families.
The meaningful participation of local agencies committed to children’s rights, including agencies other than ‘the usual suspects’ (see 7.5)	Instigate or build local networks of supportive child advocacy agencies

<p>A clear and regular watchdog or monitoring function to ensure high quality assessments are carried out, and that the findings are being considered by decision makers. This function can be undertaken in-house or externally (see 7.6)</p>	<p>Having internal and external ‘watchdogs’ such as child advocacy groups could be helpful here, although the sensitivity around external agencies being sustainably funded for such a critiquing function could fluctuate, depending on what was ‘served’ by the external agency.</p>
<p>Good communication during and after the assessment with a range of people so that effective knowledge-transfer can happen (see 7.6)</p>	<p>A variety of messages and messengers need to be identified over the course of the assessment</p>
<p>During and after implementation, the actual impact on children should be monitored and evaluated so as to demonstrate “added value” to the organisation and to local children (see 7.6)</p>	<p>Good monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes are required in any implementation plan. However, this has been found to be a very challenging aspects of child impact assessments, especially in monitoring ‘wins’ for a successful process and/or successful outcomes for children</p>

Appendix One: Supporting Factors for Undertaking Health Impact Assessment in New Zealand

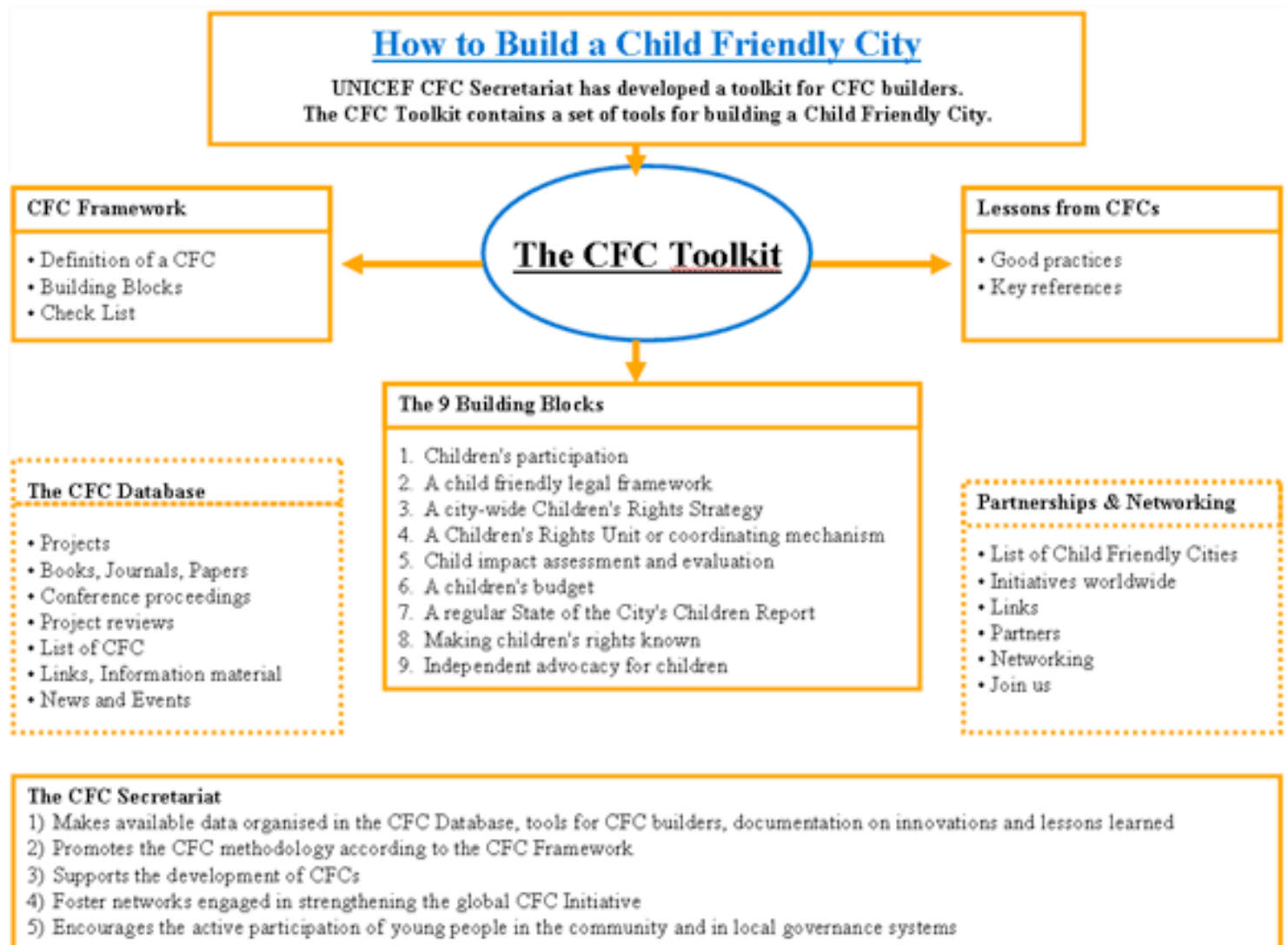
It is likely that many of the determinants below will also apply to child impact assessment for local authorities.



Source: Wyllie, A. and Mulgrew, L. (2006) "Research to Review Uptake of Health Impact Assessment", Research Report for the Public Health Advisory Committee, New Zealand, available from [http://www.phac.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/793/\\$File/research-review-uptake-hia-phoenix-apr06.doc](http://www.phac.health.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagescm/793/$File/research-review-uptake-hia-phoenix-apr06.doc)

Appendix Two: UNICEF's Child Friendly City Toolkit Map

Accessible from http://www.childfriendlycities.org/resources/index_toolkit_map.html



Appendix Three: Checklist for Children

Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Children's Rights Office, 1995.

Answer the following questions in relation to all local authority policy and planning proposals.

In answering the questions give specific examples, avoid general statements, do not answer only 'yes' or 'no', and if the question is not seen as relevant explain exactly why.

1. What *input* have children and young people of different ages had in the process of drawing up the proposals?

2. What provision is there for ensuring the *views of children and young people* who might be affected are sought and taken into account at all stages of the implementation of the proposals?

3. In what way do the proposals tackle *disadvantage and deprivation* faced by children suffering the effects of:

- poverty
- racism
- disability
- being unable to live with their own families
- homelessness
- refugee status
- rural isolation
- caring responsibilities
- family breakdown
- violence
- not receiving education

4. In what ways do the proposals promote and protect the *health and welfare* of children and young people of different ages, i.e.:

- birth – 4 years old?
- 5–7 years old?
- 8–12 years old?
- 13–15 years old?
- 16–17 years old?

5. What standards are to be following relating to *safety, staffing and supervision*?

How are these standards to be implemented and monitored? The proposals could:

- specify exactly which guidance and standards are being followed;
- specify process through which standards will be monitored;
- explain why, if guidance or other recognised standards exist but are not being followed, this is so.

6. How do the proposals address what support is being offered to *parents* to ensure they can provide their children with an adequate standard of living, help them bring up their children and prevent the possibility of family breakdown, including:

- material support
- social support
- information and advice
- training in parenting skills

7. How do the proposals ensure that there are more *opportunities for disabled children and young people* to take an active part in local activities?

- Have children and their families been consulted about their specific needs?
- Are plans for integrated service provision included and properly resourced?
- Do proposals take into account the different needs of children and young people with different physical disabilities and learning difficulties?
- Do proposals take into account the different needs of disabled children of different ages?

8. In what way do the proposals offer support to children and young people in *exercising their rights* to:

- freedom of expression
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- freedom of assembly and peaceful gatherings
- privacy and confidentiality
- practice their own culture, religion and language
- have access to information which enhances their education and development

9. How do the proposals enhance the *protection* you offer children and young people of all ages against:

- physical and mental violence
- sexual abuse or exploitation
- exploitation in employment
- drug abuse
- restriction of liberty

10. In what ways do the proposals contribute to ensuring that all children and young people have *access* to:

- good schools and education which meet their individual needs;
- good quality, appropriate, accessible health care services;
- play, leisure and cultural facilities which meet their own expressed needs.

11. In what ways does your agency ensure that the *service structure* reflects the needs of children and their families in terms of:

- planning
- resources
- discussion
- inter-agency working
- methods of decision-making

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Appendix Five: Listing of Tables in this review

Table One: Strengths and Weaknesses of Child Impact Assessments (p.12)

Table Two: Common process steps (p.14)

Table Three: Sylwander / Swedish model (2001) (p.21)

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