

Co-Designing
Poutokomanawa

The
Southern
Initiative


plunket
whānau āwhina



Co-Designing Poutokomanawa

A Warm and
Welcoming Place
for Whānau at
Manurewa Plunket
Family Centre

This name was suggested by a local mum who was also the artist of our mural. Poutokomanawa is the heart post or centre post in a whareniui [Māori meeting house]. The heart post connects the earth and sky and provides a strong, vital force and support system. The significance of naming our centre Poutokomanawa is that it will be a safe, stable and welcoming place for whānau. Our mahi is about supporting and strengthening whānau and putting them at the centre of what we do. Poutokomanawa is a place where whānau can find some peace, support and space so they can rest, think and connect with their community

— Plunket Manager



Kupu Whakataki

He manu korihi, he purapura taka,
kei whea mai ka rea e

The birds will fly, seeds will fall, where will they land, where will they seed?

Writing this preface several years on from the opening of the incredible Poutokomanawa enables us to stand back and understand the wider impact and ripples of this work. The design and development of Poutokomanawa was a bounded project, inside the walls of the Plunket Manurewa Family Centre. However, the learnings from this work has travelled far beyond those four walls. It permeates the spaces and places of new buildings and has inspired new ways of thinking and being for different organisations across Tāmaki Makaurau and beyond.

Te Paataka Koorero o Takaanini is one such example of the reach of the learnings and the inspiration of Poutokomanawa. This community facility in Takaanini is much more than a library or a community hub - it is a home away from home. A space that allows parents and others to feel warm, welcome and where they have the ability to shape what happens inside of that space. On entering, you are struck immediately by the presence of a large open kitchen - one of the 'five minimums' identified by whānau through the co-design of Poutokomanawa. Throughout the space, you can see other examples of the deliberate implementation of the learnings from Poutokomanawa.

The Three Carings, another critical learning identified by whānau through the process of redesigning Poutokomanawa, is supporting organisations like Work and Income to understand their role in supporting parents in the first 1,000 days. It is enabling them to think differently about how they care for space, how they care for each other as a team and how they therefore care for whānau.

These learnings continue to grow, manifest and seed in other new and extraordinary ways across Whānau Awhina Plunket itself.

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Introduction

How do we create spaces where parents feel welcome, where they feel they have a say in what's happening in the space, and they have all they need in a space to nurture their children for lifelong outcomes?

— The Southern Initiative team member

Whānau Awhina Plunket (Plunket) and The Southern Initiative (TSI) both aim to support better outcomes for tamariki and their whānau, particularly in the first 1,000 days. The planned renovation of the Manurewa Plunket Family Centre created an opportunity for us to work together on this aim.

In this collaboration, from 2017 to early 2019, TSI staff facilitated the Manurewa Plunket team and a group of local whānau through a co-design process, to redesign the Manurewa Plunket Family Centre and what occurs within it. This process represented a significant shift from the way Plunket's building projects were usually undertaken, where staff input was limited to a few key people, with little or no input from local whānau. The co-design process also helped to enable the Plunket team to shift from a service-led approach, in which staff and contractual arrangements determined what was delivered and how, toward a more whānau-centred approach, built around whānau voices, needs and wishes.

This report shares the story of this collaboration. Some key learnings are presented, followed by:

- [The project purpose and background](#)
- [The co-design process](#)
- [Whānau and staff priorities emerging](#)
- [Results of the co-design process](#)
- [Key learning and what next.](#)



Key Learnings

From Co-Designing Poutokomanawa

Critical reflection and evaluation feedback surfaced the following key learnings from this process:

Service-centred to whānau-centred

Organisations who work with whānau often assume they know what whānau need, despite significant differences in culture, background and life experiences.

This service-centred approach places power and control with service deliverers. There is often a strong focus on meeting prescribed contractual and funder reporting requirements. Whānau become 'clients' or passive recipients of services, rather than active partners.

A whānau-centred approach flips this model, with whānau voice, strengths, needs and lived experience becoming primary. Power and control is shared and whānau co-design and sometimes lead what is delivered and how.

Co-design challenges organisations to work in partnership with the people they serve – to sit with them, listen, discuss, plan and act together.

The co-design process is best facilitated by skilled outsiders, until co-design values, culture and capabilities are developed and embedded in an organisation.

Whānau-centred practice requires commitment, time, patience and persistence. It requires practitioners to be radically open and willing to change as it disrupts the status quo and 'the way we do things around here'.

Becoming whānau-centred is a big shift. It is not easy. However, it can lead to significantly better outcomes for whānau, staff and the organisation.

What works for whānau in a Plunket space

For whānau to feel comfortable in a space and be empowered to support outcomes for tamariki:

Five minimum conditions need to be in place: a welcoming space and presence; ability to connect; safe spaces for tamariki; nappy changing facilities and access to kitchen facilities

Three kinds of caring need to be present: caring for whānau; caring for the space and caring for staff

Staff need to build trusted relationships with whānau and deal with what is on top for them.

Whānau seek **authentic, enduring relationships**, rather than transactional engagement.

The way whānau feel in the space can have a **significant impact on their overall perception of the Plunket experience.**

The impact Plunket achieves with whānau is **directly affected by the strength of connection, culture, values and dynamics** of the team working with whānau.

Whānau are generally willing to engage and contribute to a Plunket space, what occurs within it and to connect with other whānau. They just need to be invited.

It is critical to **nurture peer-to-peer whānau support**, and a network of supportive relationships that will continue to support whānau beyond the Plunket experience.

Purpose & Background

Plunket has found that having safe, warm and welcoming places where whānau can drop-in during the day is an effective way to connect with families. It provides open clinics where whānau can go to access support. Plunket especially wants to reach and support those whānau whose home environments may be inadequate, unhealthy or unsafe.

TSI's Early Years Challenge¹ has also found that whānau want safe, welcoming spaces to parent outside of the home. The Early Years Challenge focused on better understanding the lived experience of parents in South Auckland and exploring the impact of toxic stress on child development.

Together, we sought the following outcomes from this project:

- 1 **Plunket's Manurewa Family Centre is a warm and welcoming space that meets whānau needs**
- 2 **Whānau are empowered to co-design the space, and what should be offered in the space**
- 3 **Whānau value the Plunket experience more, and it better meets their needs**
- 4 **Whānau are connected to wider support networks in Manurewa**
- 5 **Plunket staff are more empathetic, understand the importance of whānau lived experience and strengths, and can walk alongside whānau in Manurewa**
- 6 **Plunket is supported to move from a service-centred to a whānau-centred approach.**

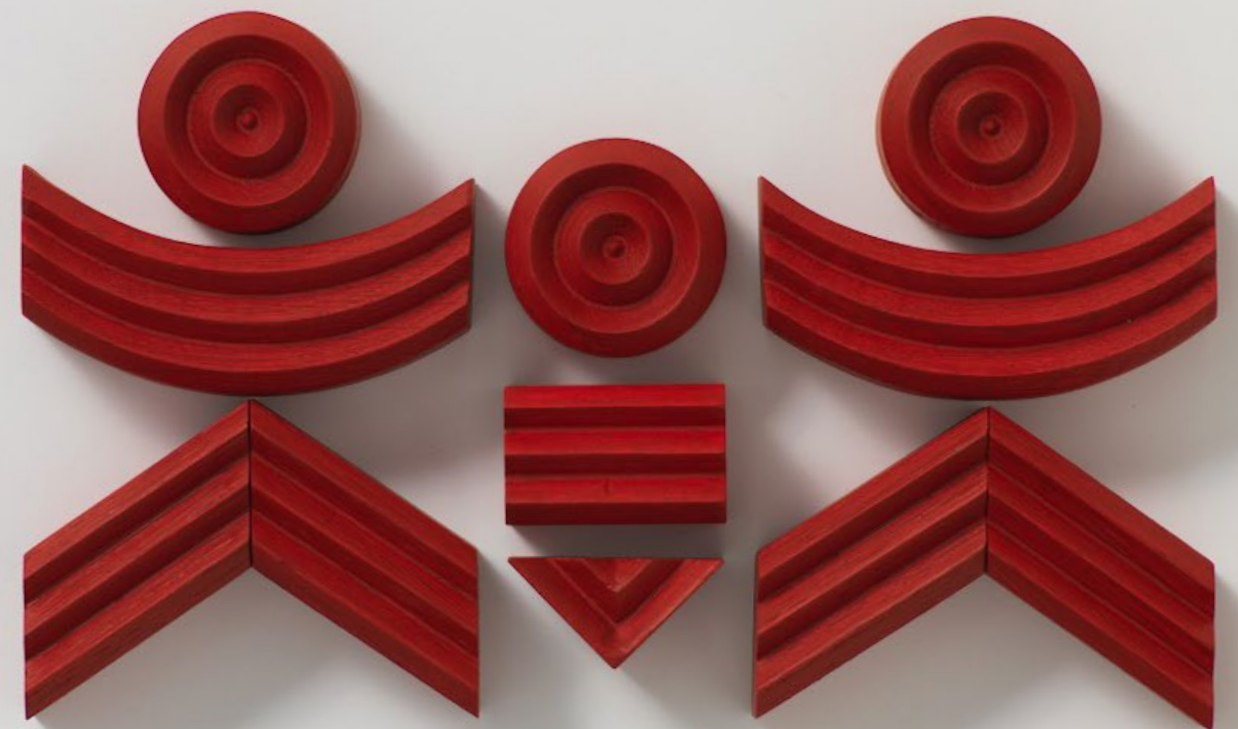
In this collaboration, TSI brought its experience in co-designing and testing solutions with whānau at the centre. It also brought Early Years Challenge insights, including data from 390 Manurewa whānau participating in the Growing Up in New Zealand Study, and statistical data and qualitative data from TSI's work with families.

Plunket brought its staff and volunteers, the Manurewa Family Centre facility, Plunket data and research, community and parent connections and a wide range of expertise. Plunket also employed a Community Support Coordinator to work with the Plunket team and TSI to engage with Manurewa whānau.

The Co-Design Process

TSI has developed a whānau centred co-design approach based on kaupapa Māori principles. The approach incorporates culturally-rooted practices that create mutual trust, learning, power sharing and momentum.

Manaakitanga	Nurturing whānau within a process that acknowledges and values them
Whanaungatanaga	Establishing authentic, meaningful relationships in culturally appropriate ways
Tino Rangatiratanga	Whānau have the autonomy to decide how and when they will participate, as well as decision making opportunities within the process
Mana	Recognising whānau are the experts in their own lives and have the ability to innovate for themselves
Ako	Enabling a positive mutually reinforcing and learning space



The co-design process involved four stages:

01 Frame



Clarify the challenge and key focus areas

Existing data and research was analysed and discussed. A hui with Plunket regional leaders developed questions and opportunities emerging from the data. A key design question emerged:

How might we create a Plunket experience that meets the needs of whānau, and that whānau value and prioritise?

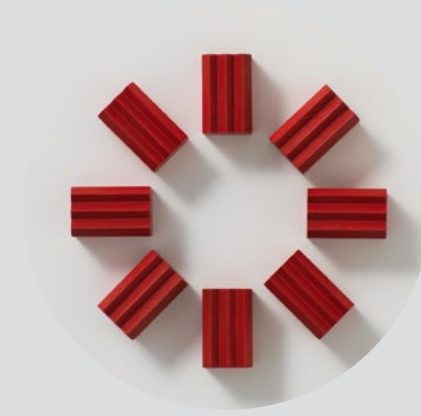
02 Explore



Develop new perspectives and insight by connecting with whānau

Plunket staff and TSI representatives connected with whānau to build genuine relationships, learn about lived experiences of whānau living in Manurewa and what it is like to parent in Manurewa. Some themes emerged which were linked with the questions in the Frame stage.

03 Imagine



Generate new ideas with parents and stakeholders

In this process several hui with whānau and staff occurred to:

- Continue to build and develop relationships with whānau
- Build staff capability to work in a whānau-centred way
- Develop creative and innovative thinking.

Some priorities started to emerge:

- The building of trust
- A feeling of safety and being cared for
- A bright safe place with everything we need
- Parent to parent support
- A positive supportive atmosphere
- A place that is easy to find and is inviting
- A bigger sign and a more colourful building
- The importance of Plunket's connection to its neighbours, including other local agencies and groups

04 Test



Test new ideas and prototypes in a low cost, low risk way

This process tested physical design ideas as well as the feel of the centre:

Some of the spaces at the centre were altered to be more homely and friendly (for example use of table cloths, chairs turned to face each other, playing music)

Ideas for the physical space were tested with staff and whānau

The space was decluttered and tidied.

There were a range of staff responses to co-design. People newer to the profession were 'Yeah we get it', through to 'I don't know why you are making us do this, we know what they need and I have decades of experience'. The default was to go back to a service-delivery model and 'this is the way we do things'.

— Plunket staff

As well as talking with whānau visiting Manurewa Plunket, TSI representatives and Plunket staff engaged with parents in local venues such as the library and supermarket. This enabled Plunket to engage whānau it would not normally have accessed.

Five co-design sessions with Manurewa whānau were facilitated, along with many conversations within and outside the Plunket centre, in which whānau identified what was required in the space to meet their immediate needs and aspirations. A small but committed whānau group participated throughout. Whānau and staff sessions were creative, using arts and crafts to envisage and design the space. Insight was also gained through TSI team members observing the space, and how whānau, staff and the space interact.

Training sessions were held for Plunket staff participating in the core team, to build capability around a whānau-centred approach and co-design methods. Staff were asked what a warm and welcoming space looks and feels like for them, and to relate that to the Plunket Centre. Email and verbal feedback was gained, and the team could also draw ideas on a floor plan. A Facebook group and blog was set up to gain staff feedback on specific issues.

The process tried to make visible the story of the place – its whakapapa or history and its culture. Making the culture of the centre and how it affected whānau visible was important, in order to support change.

Whānau Priorities

You can have the flashiest building on-site tomorrow, but if it is not warm and welcoming, and the atmosphere isn't right for whānau, and the invitation into the space isn't right, then whānau aren't going to utilise the space

— TSI Team Member

Most of us have said those bars on the windows are so uninviting... and a bit more colour too, better signage

— Whānau member

Site observation and whānau feedback identified five minimum conditions for creating spaces that enable parents to nurture and create better outcomes for their children.

Crucially, the Manurewa site only had one of these five minimum conditions in place – kitchen facilities were available, however these were not easily accessible by whānau.

Other wishes and aspirations expressed by whānau were as follows.

- Wayfinding signage so people know what is available and where to go once inside
- Peer-to-peer support in the space and beyond it
- Connecting with neighbours and other community supports in the area.

Whānau shared ideas for what else could happen in the space, including a parent support group for children with special needs; bringing agencies in to explain how they support whānau; First Aid for children; having child-care onsite while doing courses onsite; having parenting through separation and Victim Support onsite; nutrition advice and food preparation; and connecting with other local groups (for example Nathan Homestead's homemaking workshops).

Introducing the Five Minimums

What whānau need to parent outside the home





01

A welcoming space

that is light, bright, open, safe and warm, with genuinely warm welcoming staff who are understanding of tamariki and whānau needs. This includes actively hosting and welcoming whānau into the space, to help them find what they want and to connect with others in the space

02

Connection

A place to connect with other whānau and staff, or to just be in a space with others. Some whānau want to be around other people but may not want to talk or participate in formal programmes





03

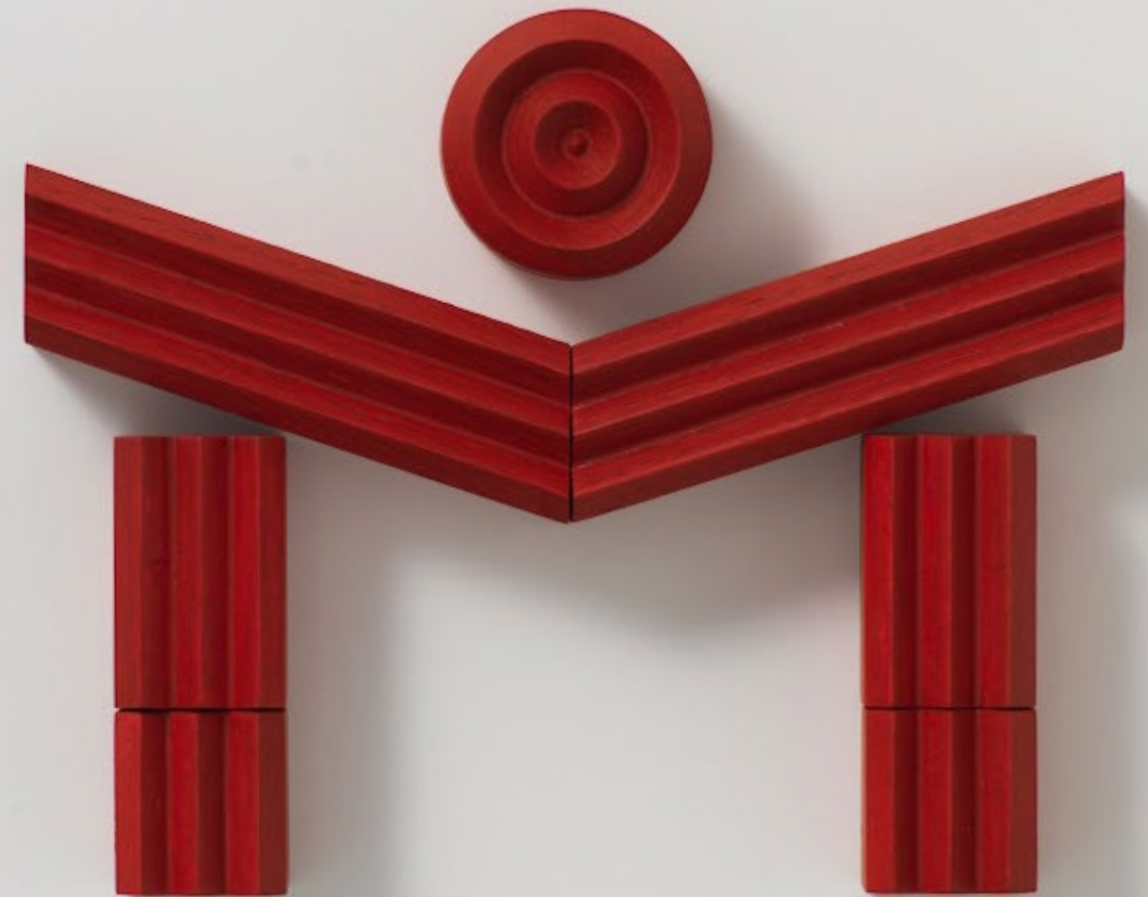
A safe place
for tamariki

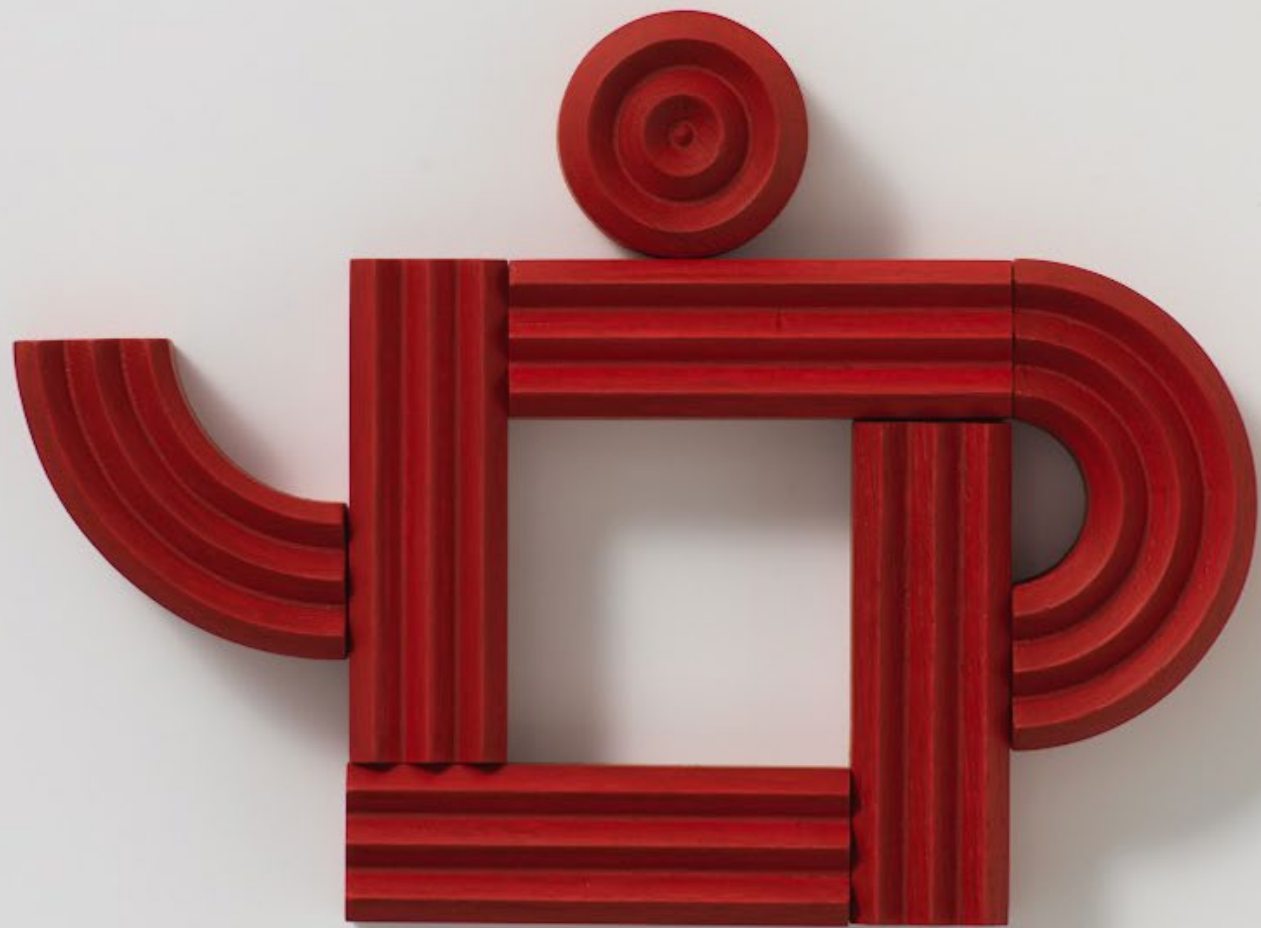
Safe spaces for
babies and for small
children, so parents
can have a break

04

Nappy changing
facilities

Including nappy
disposal





05

Accessible kitchen facilities

For heating and washing
bottles, accessing water
and preparing food for
both baby and caregiver

Staff Priorities

Staff priorities in the space overall were:

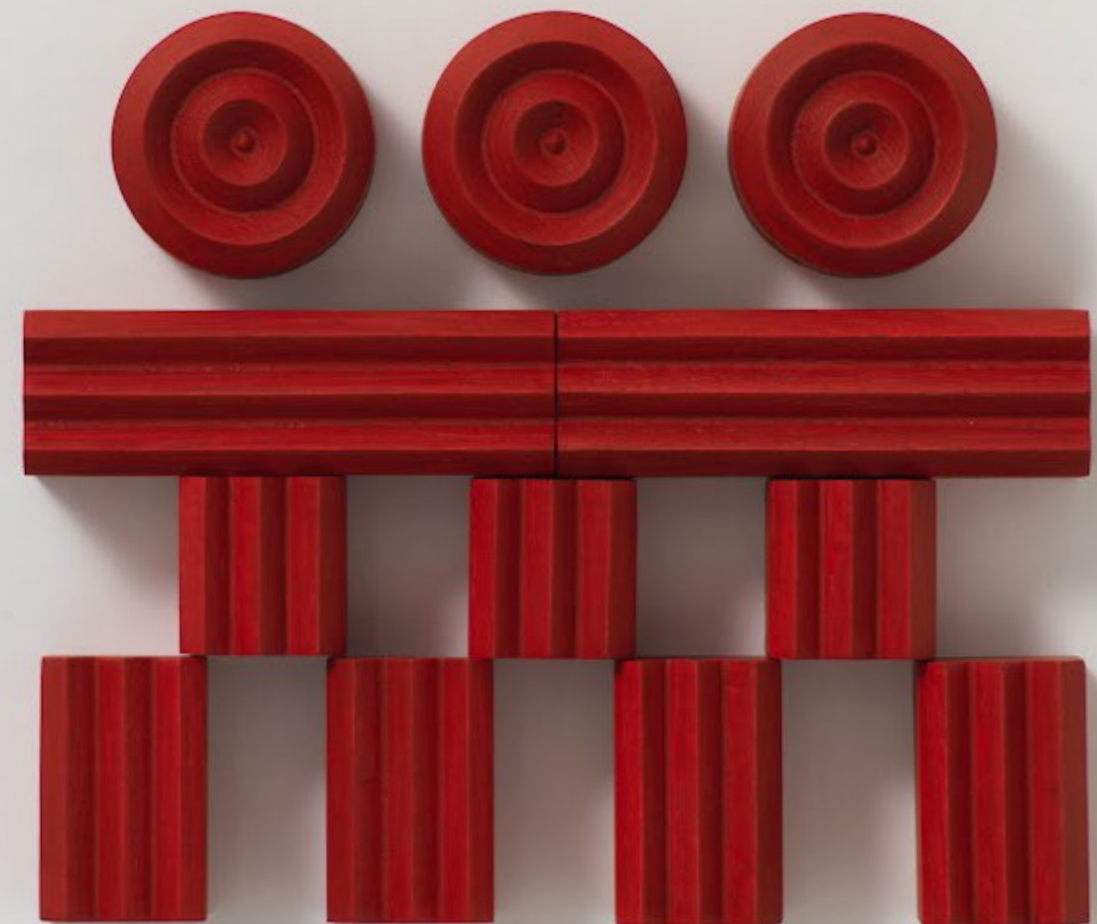
- Having shared spaces for staff to connect and mix (the three staff teams on site were siloed and disconnected and staff rarely came together as one team)
- Frosting on windows for privacy and storage
- Having cot beds on wheels (having places for sleep was an issue, with one rarely used bed taking up a whole room, and many steel cot beds for babies that looked institutional to whānau)
- Having a range of spaces available, including quiet space, space to store files and resources, and private spaces
- Some wanted grates on windows to remain, stating security reasons and that whānau felt safer with them there (however whānau wanted them gone, saying they made the place feel inhospitable)
- Some issues around making noise or not making noise
- Some staff wanted their own space just for staff, but the idea was to have shared space and remove barriers between staff and whānau.

Opportunities identified by Manurewa Plunket staff included:

- Closer working between clinical, parenting and community practitioners
- Developing new practice around engaging with families
- Attracting and working with volunteers and whānau leaders
- More collaboration with local partners such as libraries
- Better understanding the priorities and aspirations of Manurewa whānau through data and people's lived experience
- Prototyping and testing new ideas to explore what works.

Several staff wanted things to stay the same and were anxious about adapting to change. TSI observed that some staff wishes were more about staff needs and the ability to control what is happening in the space, than about whānau needs. While some staff put up barriers to change, they generally came around to the idea of trying things out through prototyping, as a way to get around a binary yes or no response. Keys to this shift were:

- Identifying the challenge or the need (such as a need for a baby or adult to sleep or to change a baby's nappy), then thinking creatively about the range of possible responses, rather than simply having a sleep room or not, or having a change table or not
- The resilience and skill of the leadership/co-design team, and particularly the Plunket staff.



Results of the Co-Design Process

The previous approach was: ‘Do you have an appointment?’ Now it is ‘How can we help?’ There is now someone in the space who can meet the needs of anyone who walks in the door

— Plunket staff

Whānau identified needs now reflected in the redeveloped space are: nappy changing facilities; no bars on windows; line of sight throughout the building; whānau access to two kitchen areas; wayfinding signage; and lots of colour. A natural outdoor playground is in development and whānau are involved in its design. A major reported shift is a focus on meeting whānau needs as they present themselves, rather than a clinical space based on appointments.

The biggest positive changes identified by staff were more mixing together as staff and with whānau in the space, along with the range of spaces available. There is frosting on window glass for privacy, and the intent is for the kitchen facilities to be used by groups to provide support and advice around nutrition, meal planning and healthy food preparation.

A 2018 evaluation of a broader Strengthening Communities Plunket project, funded by the Tindall Foundation, which included funding for this project, noted these achievements (pp40-43):

- A whānau-centred model of engagement has been developed, involving wider reach and connection with whānau that Plunket doesn't typically reach
- Changes are evident in the Plunket community team's behaviour, practice, and model of engagement with individuals, whānau and communities
- Whānau co-design of the Manurewa Family Centre with Plunket occurred. Plunket listened and responded to whānau feedback about the renovations, showing commitment and meaningful engagement
- Increased community leadership – some progress was made to develop volunteer parents' ability to mentor and support other parents in the community.

Out of this project came Poutokomanawa - a new name for Manurewa Plunket Family Centre

Project outcome	Results
Plunket's Manurewa Family Centre is a warm and welcoming space that meets whānau needs	The centre has completely transformed as a space and whānau feedback has mostly been accommodated. The five minimums will all be present once a half-time paid Kaitiaki role is recruited and a nappy disposal system is in place from late 2019. The three carings (for whānau, team and space) are being used as an induction process, which is a system change on site from this process. Communication and opportunities to work together through this project helped to connect Plunket's clinical and community teams.
Whānau are empowered to co-design the space, and what should be offered in the space	Whānau voice was integrated directly into the design and service offerings; the challenge will be how this whānau-centred approach is continued (see last section).
Whānau value the Plunket experience more, and it better meets their needs	See whānau response below. What is offered in the space has increased (e.g. smokefree cessation, midwife services, more clinical referral).
Whānau are connected to wider support networks in Manurewa	This is a work in progress. This project has highlighted the value of outreach work with whānau. Plunket has improved its reach and engagement with whānau and other community providers. The culture has shifted to doing what it takes to meet needs as they present.
Plunket staff are more empathetic	Staff have grown in confidence and capability around whānau-centred practice and staff have a greater understanding of whānau perspectives. This is also an ongoing work in progress.
Plunket move from a service delivery to a whānau-centred approach	Definite movement here, though again a work in progress as the community and staff change. The intent is for changes at the Manurewa site to influence the wider Plunket organisation around whānau-centred practice.

Most staff let go of resistance when they saw how nice the space was

— Plunket staff

The whole place looks completely different

— Whānau member

I am proud of what we've achieved, we have learned a huge amount, we can see the difference made for our families, and for our staff, we have learned from TSI. It has been a hard grind, challenging cultural norms that have existed for a long time, attitudes, mindsets, just the internal stuff felt hard. But now I catch myself saying – maybe we should talk to the families first and see what they want

— Plunket Manager

We are trying to develop a culture of looking after the space and each other. I haven't had any negative staff feedback. We interact with each other more across the services"

— Plunket staff

It feels like home right through from kitchen to bathroom

— Whānau member

We have grown from strength to strength

— Plunket staff

Whānau Feedback

A session with whānau invited feedback on the new look centre. Whānau described the centre as being bright, peaceful and positive, as being more open, as feeling inviting and having better visibility, accessibility and flow through the space. People described feeling more relaxed, having better access into the centre and when coming in, it being much easier to find what you need in the space. One person noted it was used as a community hub now and another described it as "a place of healing and learning".

One parent was impressed to see whānau feedback being invited: "I can't believe we get to have a say in this stuff; usually it's the bigwigs who make the calls".

When asked what has changed in the space, comments related to what now happens in the space and how people feel in the space: "You don't have to make an appointment you can just come in"; "You don't feel like you are going to be judged"; "It feels safe and comfortable, you don't feel so restricted"; "Feels like we are a bunch of friends catching up for a chat".

Further improvements were suggested by whānau: more waste disposal; music available; a vege garden outside; a nappy disposal system; wheelchair/pram access to the ramp outside; storage and a microwave in the second kitchen.

Staff Feedback

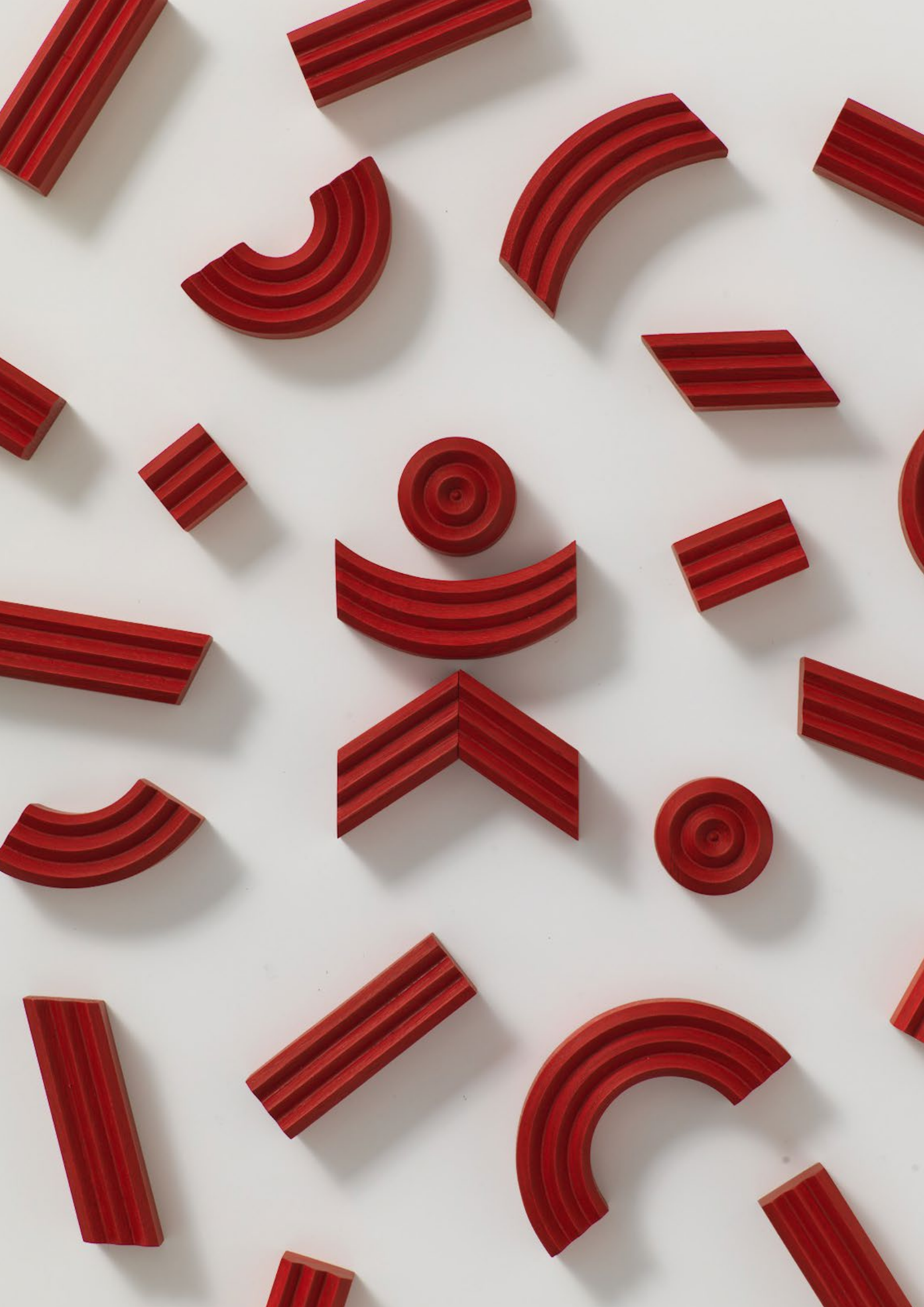
Staff have noticed more people walking in off the street and coming in for group sessions, now that there is a group space. The number of clinics has increased, a Community Support Coordinator has been employed and the Plunket Team Leader for South Auckland is now on-site once a week.

A significant change in the centre from the co-design process has been more connection among staff on-site and building a sense of team. The greatest benefit reported by the Manager has been the co-design experience, which while challenging, especially when working with staff who were resistant to change, has opened people up to new ideas and supported more creative thinking: "We do more looking outside of the box now. We support people with new and different ideas, we give people permission to try stuff".

This co-design process has also attracted interest from other Plunket teams who are looking at renovating their spaces. Whānau hui have been built into other Plunket engagement processes, including their Māori Strategy and the national 'Engaging Whānau' project.

For future co-design processes, staff reflected that buy-in from above is important and to take little steps. There needs to be willingness to have difficult conversations, disrupt people's thinking, challenge people, to be open-minded, non-judgemental, courageous, to stick with it and be supported to have those hard conversations. Co-design processes need to be properly resourced, to ensure undue pressure isn't placed on key people.

Communicating regularly and well across the organisation as a co-design process occurs is also important, especially when there are multiple teams. Plunket was also in a time of change and staff restructuring during the project. Some relitigating was needed in the project as people came and went, with different leaders, organisational silos and budgets being involved at different times.



Key Learning

Safe, trusted relationships are at the top of the list for whānau, and organisations need to build their capability to develop them

— TSI Team Member

We as Plunket think we are whānau oriented, but what that means can be difficult to understand. Staff with lots of ownership of a space can find it hard to adapt

— Plunket staff

In this project, Plunket staff worked in new ways by prototyping on site and supporting the integration of whānau voice into the design of the renovation. At the same time, despite Plunket being an organisation that aims to put whānau and tamariki at the centre of all they do, it was challenging for some Plunket staff to develop deep relationships with whānau and co-ordinate across the various Plunket teams. Restructuring, staff turnover and heavy workloads also impacted on the team's ability to engage. These factors resulted in low staff attendance for some sessions, ongoing changes to the core staff team involved, and a smaller group of whānau than desired being engaged in the process.

The Plunket team also reflected that it was difficult to see whānau as co-design partners, rather than prospective Well Child clients or playgroup participants. The experience in this project highlights that:

- A welcoming, whānau-centred culture is necessary for whānau to feel welcome in a space
- The internal values and kawa of the staff are mirrored in the whānau experience of a community space and a service
- Whānau are alert to the values and culture at play in a space
- Staff require confidence and capability building around whānau-centred design and practice.

Insights from working with the Manurewa Plunket team include:

- Staff and volunteers want to deliver quality services for families
- Change is challenging for some staff
- There is a need for integration across programmes, services and teams
- There is a need to help staff to care for the space, for each other, for whānau and to act on opportunities
- Whānau are waiting for an invitation to contribute or provide support in these spaces, but staff often don't look to whānau as a valuable resource who can help solve strategic and operational challenges
- Certain conditions enable change, which will be unique for each context. In this case, key conditions were a supportive regional Plunket leadership and a willingness in the co-design group to bend and change 'the rules'. Identifying the conditions required to enable change is important in any system change effort.

What Now

We talk about being whānau-centred to the wider Plunket leadership team, but we don't always necessarily walk it. We need to keep challenging ourselves about that

— Plunket Manager

Has enough capability been built, for Manurewa Plunket to continue to work in this way with whānau?

— TSI Team Member

There is national interest in this project. Becoming whānau-centred reflects Plunket's desire to innovate and respond differently, especially to whānau Māori and isolated or disengaged whānau. Resourcing and leadership is required, to challenge behaviours and structures that hold 'expert-led' and service-centred conditions in place.

For Manurewa Plunket, intentions are to:

- Sustain the positive changes and develop deeper relationships with whānau
- Focus on whakawhanaungatanga (relationship building) for staff on site, including regular team connection
- Take pulse checks – ask whānau and staff 'How do you feel when you are here?'
- Support whānau to design experiences that meet their immediate needs, reduce stress and build confidence and capability
- Support Manurewa whānau 'champions' to feel ownership in the space, who can welcome and support other whānau
- Connect whānau with each other and with community support

- Develop a deeper connection with local iwi and mana whenua
- Develop relationships with neighbours, other Plunket centres and groups who support whānau.
- Continue staff development focused on sharing power and control with whānau, and dealing with complexity
- Keep telling their story and sharing learning
- Continue to have brave conversations as a Manurewa team, with whānau, with Plunket more widely and with external stakeholders
- Strive to be whānau-centred and work with whānau as partners, to achieve their aspirations.

Plunket is currently in an exciting time of organisational change, working actively to strengthen its ability to achieve equitable outcomes and live out the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This project provides a rich local example of how Plunket can co-design a Plunket experience with whānau that can better meet their needs. TSI is continuing to partner with Plunket to embed the learning from this project into its mahi in South Auckland, and beyond.

This report was designed by Tyrone Ohia and the team at Extended Whānau.

At the centre of any home or community space are people. People are the building blocks that hold everything in place. People are the heart of any whare. The carved wooden blocks throughout this report are inspired by this, and evoke our pēpi and tai tamariki on their journey of learning and growing into this world.

A special thanks to Courtney Petley who crafted the blocks for us from reclaimed wood.

