



ACTIVE YOUTH WELLNESS PROGRAMME

CASE STUDY

—
SUPPORTING MĀORI AND PACIFICA
YOUTH'S HAUORA THROUGH
MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT.

ACTIVE YOUTH WELLNESS PROGRAMME



“It’s a lot more than a gym membership – it’s about health and wellbeing and exposing them to different people they may not have been exposed to previously and trying to make them better people at the end of the day – that’s been one of our drivers to motivate them.”

– CRAIG CARTER, CLM CEO

A desire to increase the engagement and wellbeing of local Māori and Pacifica youth was the driving force behind the Community Leisure Management’s (CLM’s) Active Youth Wellness Programme.

Developed by CLM with support from Aktive - Auckland Sport and Recreation, the programme involves a variety of activities and provides support for participants over an initial 20-week period all based on hauora (overall health and wellbeing). Youth registered for the programme participate in weekly group physical activity sessions, receive one-on-one support from CLM staff and have access to the recreation centre for 12 months following completion of the programme. Weekly sessions are supplemented with activities in the school holidays that involve workshops relating to Te Whare Tapa Whā (Māori health model), nutrition, personal development and opportunities to connect with their community including local police, sports teams and community organisations.

Important success factors for the programme include:

- creating regular opportunities for meaningful engagement with and between young people
- being flexible, because young people are busy
- setting short-term goals, because they help to keep young people engaged.

By the end of the programme, the 36 participants, aged between 14 and 18 years, had achieved greater levels of fitness along with increasing their overall enjoyment of physical activity. Participation in the programme also had the flow-on effect of self-reported improved performance at school, greater self-confidence, better time management skills and increased feelings of connection to their community.

GETTING STARTED

A large percentage of young people within the communities that CLM centres serve are Māori and Pacifica, and many experience barriers to participation in sport and active recreation.

With this in mind, to capitalise on the potential of these young people, the programme needed to be affordable and accessible.

As a result, CLM wanted to target Māori and Pacifica youth from the communities around CLM-managed facilities in the Auckland suburbs of Glen Innes, Otahuhu and Papakura. The programme’s overall goal was to engage local young people in a quality wellbeing experience.



THE INITIATIVE



The workshops offered leadership advice on how we can become more open about ourselves and help develop other leaders. I learned we can become role models if we set the tone and if we surround ourselves with a positive environment.”

– PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The CLM team engaged with Aktive Auckland’s HERA programme (focused on girls aged 10–18 years) to draw on its expertise for formatting the wellness programme. The team also received support through Aktive Auckland’s Targeted Populations Innovation and Development Fund to prioritise Pacifica youth.

The result was a multifaceted programme with a focus on hauora, delivered at each of the three identified CLM facilities (Glen Innes, Otahuhu and Papakura). Local schools and churches were asked to promote the programme and encourage their youth to apply, which resulted in 36 participants taking part – 12 at each facility.

The programme was delivered over 20 weeks, and, on completion, participants had access to the recreation centre facilities for 12 months.

The core component of the 20-week programme was the one-on-one support and small group fitness sessions. Each centre had a Youth Wellness Programme lead who was present at each session and the main contact for participants.

The programme started with a one-on-one session between the lead and each participant to discuss what they wanted to achieve and to set long-term and short-term goals for the 20 weeks. Small group fitness sessions ran once a week at each facility, and the activities offered varied from location to location, depending on timetables and what facilities were available (eg, pools, courts, gym). Breakfast was provided at the end of each session, which was another drawcard and provided an opportunity for group members to further develop connections with each other. Every four weeks, participants would have another one-on-one check in with the programme lead to track and reassess their goals.

In addition to the weekly sessions at each centre, the whole group (participants from all three locations) came together during the school holidays for a series of workshops and activities.

These activities took a holistic approach and provided support for the participants’ hauora, including developing a better understanding of the facets of hauora, developing leadership skills and connecting to their communities.

Workshops included goal setting, leadership coaching and personality profiling, which enabled students to gain a better understanding of themselves and others around them.

Another session was led by Scott Linklater, CLM’s Te Ha Māori, who took the group through the Aroora programme. The programme builds on the foundation of Mason Durie’s “Te Whare Tapa Whā” wellbeing model, which advocates a need for balance across each of the four areas of body (tinana), mind (hinengaro), social/emotional (whānau) and spirit (wairua). While many participants were of Pacific descent, they quickly saw how Aroora’s principles and values related to what they learned in church and through their own culture.

Community engagement also occurred with organisations as diverse as the local police, armed offenders squad and the Counties Manukau Steelers rugby team. The aim was to help participants learn about these jobs, the requirements to get involved and to develop connections with their local community.

IMPORTANT SUCCESS FACTORS



It's that sort of meaningful contact that gets them coming back the next time. We gave them a safe and welcoming environment and it helped to break down the barriers."

- KIEL TUI, CLM FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

You need to celebrate their success; set short-term goals instead of looking at the whole programme."

- KIEL TUI, CLM FITNESS INSTRUCTOR

Meaningful engagement

The CLM team learned it is challenging to keep students engaged over a 20-week period, therefore, it is essential to set up regular, meaningful and open communication channels. Engagement strategies and incentives included:

- motivational Instagram posts
- tagging students in social media posts
- being flexible with timetables
- providing weekly, personalised emails
- keeping the students' parents up to date (some parents even started going to the gym too)
- encouraging other students to remind their absent peers to go to the gym.

Being flexible

The team quickly learned to be flexible with classes and workshop times, because the busy students were juggling exams and other study and family commitments. Issues around transport were identified and solved by organising carpooling, while gathering the whole group together for workshops was easier to do in the school holidays when students had fewer commitments.

One of the requirements for the morning group workout was that participants had to turn up to at least 80 per cent of these sessions – an incentive was that, after their workout, they got breakfast.

Setting short-term goals

The programme was initially designed to run like a 20-week boot camp, but, after hearing what the applicants wanted, it became less about "running people into the ground" and more about skill development and setting short-term goals to see an improvement.

The opportunity to re-test their fitness levels every four weeks quickly showed participants how much they had improved over time, which helped keep them committed to the programme. This was also a good time to discuss other things going on in participants' lives, to help maintain engagement.

OUTCOMES



The course made me feel fitter and make new friends. It felt like the community has come together to become one big family."

- PARTICIPANT

Learning about time management skills really helped me with balancing school, waking up early and trying to find time to come to the gym. I think that it has helped me to handle stress and be organised."

- PARTICIPANT

The Active Youth Wellness programme has made positive steps towards its aims of increasing engagement and wellbeing of local youth.

Attendance and engagement over the 20-week programme was high, with participants attending over 80 per cent of the weekly sessions.

Participants highlighted that, through the programme, they felt more part of a community, both through the camaraderie between participants and opportunities to connect with other individuals and groups within their wider community.

Following the 20-week programme, students showed marked improvements in their fitness goals, with an overall 20 per cent increase in their fitness levels.

Aside from improved fitness levels, participants reported gaining other more holistic benefits from the programme. These included increased skill levels in other sports, better performance at school and an overall enjoyment of exercise. Participants also demonstrated greater self-confidence as they learned new skills and capabilities, and the programme leads reported participants' improved time management and organisational skills throughout the programme.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sport NZ would like to express special thanks to the organisations that developed these initiatives, for their willingness to share their stories, and for supporting more communities to benefit from sport and active recreation in Aotearoa.

