

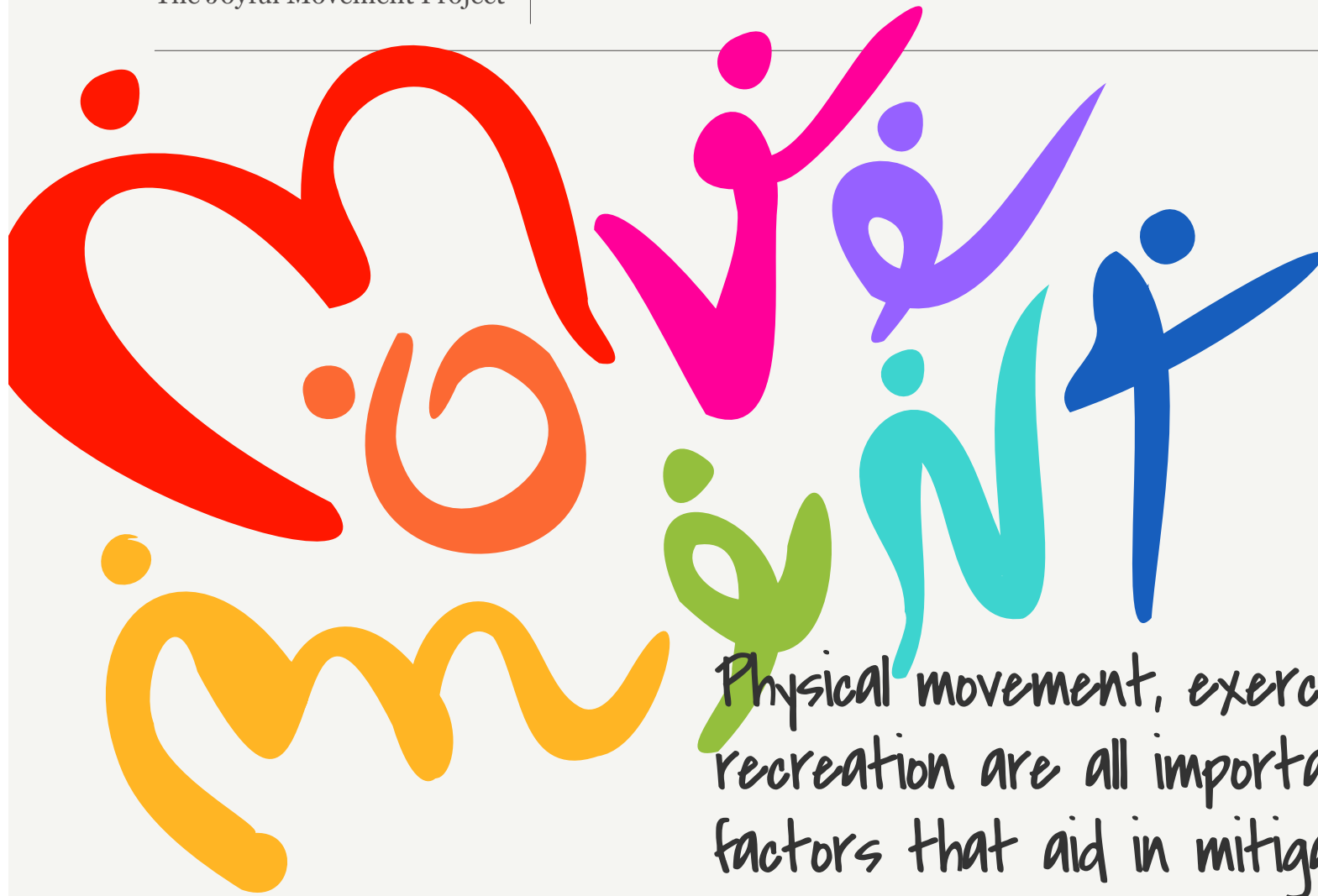
THE
JOYFUL
MOVEMENT
PROJECT



WHO
WE
ARE

Community Action on Youth and Drugs (CAYAD) was established in 1998 and is a national, Te Whatu Ora funded contract, with 21 sites across the motu. The Tāmaki Makaurau contract is nested in the Youth Empowerment team, within The Southern Initiative at Auckland Council. CAYAD projects are informed by local, cultural, and academic evidence. Our work includes improving policies, systems, and practices; community action to reduce supply of alcohol and other drugs; and increasing opportunities for young people to be healthy and reach their full potential.





Physical movement, exercise, and active recreation are all important protective factors that aid in mitigating harm. In its various forms, movement can serve as both a preventative and a treatment intervention that reduces use of alcohol and other drugs.

OUR PROCESS



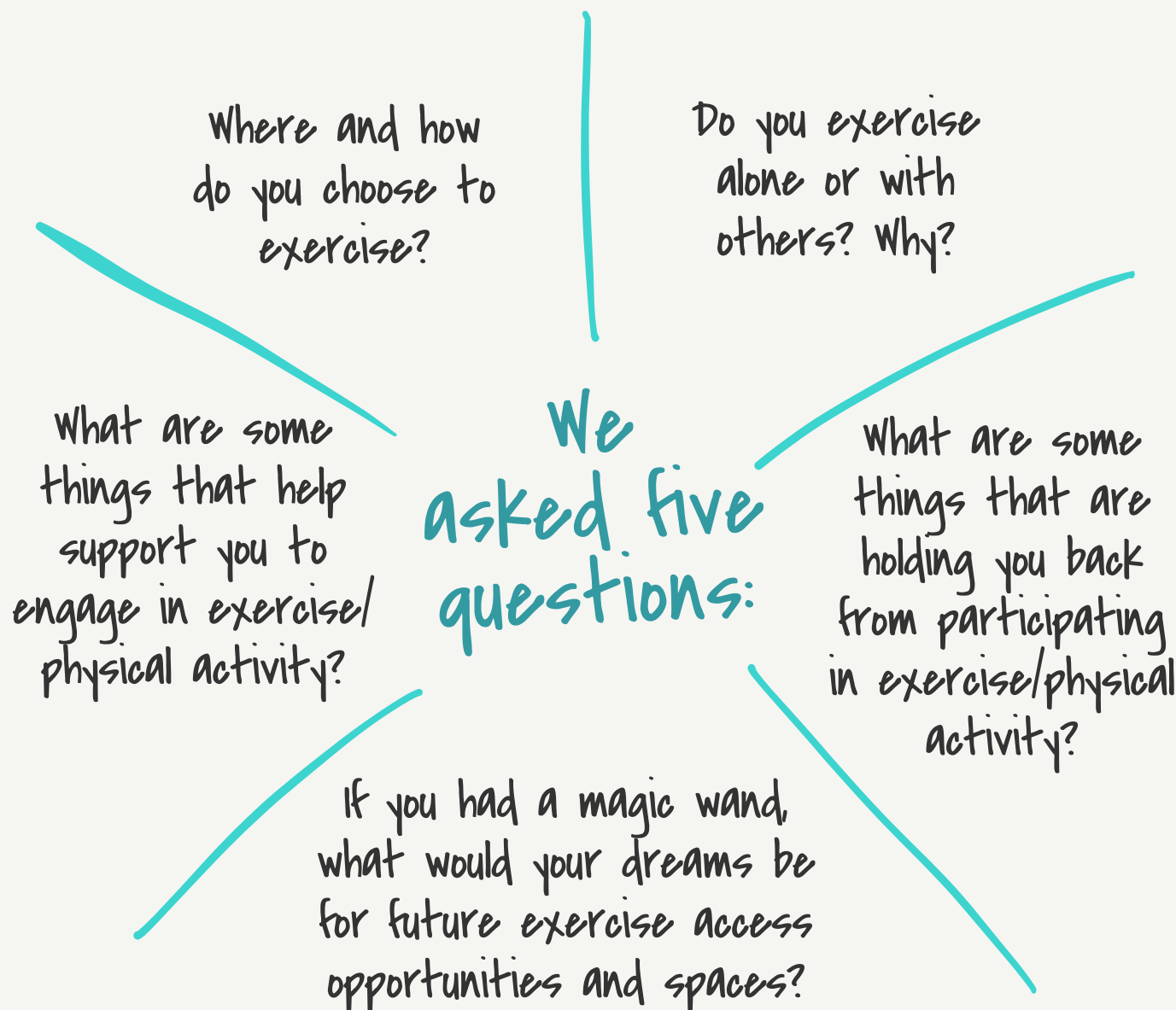
The Joyful Movement kaupapa is focused on creating opportunities for more Rainbow young people in Tāmaki Makaurau to participate in movement and fitness opportunities that bring them joy. Joyful movement is an approach to fitness and exercise that centres finding pleasure and enjoyment in the way we move our bodies. Movement and fitness should be a pleasurable experience and a tool for taking care of ourselves. Some days that might look like kapa haka with whānau, other days it looks like a quiet walk along the beach. Unfortunately, exercise is often painted as a punishment or a penance, rather than a celebration of our body's strength and versatility. Some community groups find it hard to find opportunities to move in affirming ways, resulting in it being difficult to take care of their physical health in the ways they would like to.

This project involved young people as community researchers running a listening campaign to hear the thoughts, ideas, experiences, and feelings of our Rainbow community members, and work collaboratively to turn these into action for our communities.

This project is youth-led with the support of CAYAD and Community Think. We recruited 8 Rainbow identified rangatahi to be our co-researchers. We talked to around 150 Rainbow young people about their experiences accessing exercise and movement opportunities in Tāmaki Makaurau. Some people filled in a survey, some talked to us through a focus group, and we ran several short interviews.

A group of twenty Rainbow identified people got together and analysed the data to look for commonalities and themes in what people were saying. This group was a mix of rangatahi, community elders, and sport and recreation professionals who were working in the field.

We grouped the voices into the following broad themes:

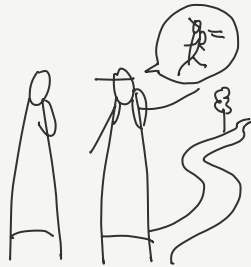


PEOPLE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MOVEMENT

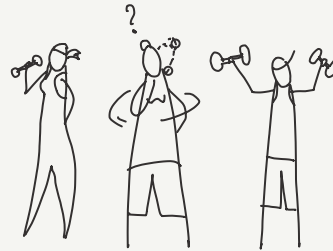


The Rainbow community in Tāmaki Makaurau are moving (and want to move) in lots of different ways to take care of themselves and their bodies. When we spoke to people about their relationship to movement, our conversations were centred around change and growth. People talked about being on a journey to a place of acceptance and self-love for themselves, feeling safe and secure in who they are and what they look like. People talked about their experience with exercise being primarily a mechanism to lose weight, or a “punishment for being chubby” and that they were actively trying to shift their mindset so that they could embrace movement as a tool for wellbeing and maintaining good mental health. Some people talked about exercising being a significant way in which they were able to influence their appearance and their gender presentation. For some people, it helped improve their self-esteem and confidence.

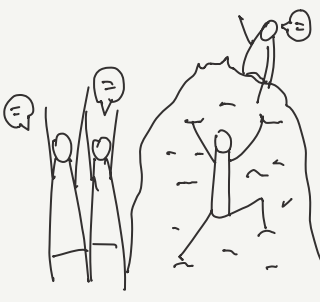




When we spoke to young people who were still at school, in general, they were more active and involved in group exercise and sports than those who had left school. There were opportunities to try a wider variety of movement through physical education (PE) classes or through extracurricular avenues (e.g. hockey, boxing, horse riding, soccer, dance, aerial ropes, rock climbing, karate). For many young people who were still at school, PE and walking to school were the main types of movement they engaged in.



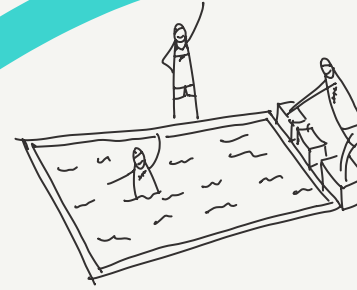
There was a general acknowledgement that the focus on gender in PE and in school sport spaces was prohibitive for them. Much of the conversation amongst young people who were still at school was around gendered uniforms, inadequate changing room facilities, and segregated sports teams being confusing and at odds with their identity (especially for non-binary students). People wanted the option to choose a style of uniform or to have the option to not wear uniforms at all. Students wished for single stall, gender neutral changing facilities, and mixed gender leagues. Teachers and their attitudes mattered too – those who showed allyship and worked to create safe, accepting environments helped in motivating the students to participate.



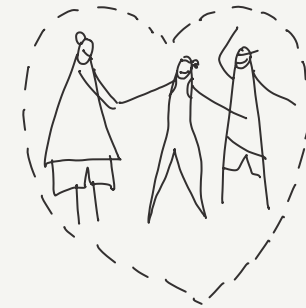
For the young people who had left school, there was less variety in the movement people were doing and a decrease in opportunities to exercise. Walking and tramping were popular and lots of people enjoyed connecting with the natural world. Some people were involved in circus and rock-climbing groups, and there were some organised Rainbow groups for swimming, rock climbing, badminton, and rugby. These people talked about exercise being a core part of their social life. Other movement styles were mentioned too: yoga, dance, poi, calisthenics, body weight, home gym, YouTube, gym, swimming, social futsal, and frisbee.



There was a group of people that described exercise as being a core part of managing the emotions and stress associated with the gender transition process. For example, some transmen we spoke to talked about the importance of structured exercise to increase their emotional wellbeing and improve their mental health. Others talked about how their gender affirming healthcare needs were impeding their ability to access exercise. Transmen talked about how binding¹ their chest area made them feel uncomfortable exercising and moving in public. Some people talked about how access to top surgery and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) had made it more comfortable for them to exercise, and that their level of movement and motivation had increased since reaching those milestones.



The types of clothing people wear was talked about too – people wanted to wear baggy clothing that hid their body, and exercise in cold environments so they didn't have to take their clothes off. For this reason, swimming was mentioned often because of the revealing clothing and the effort involved around accessing safe places to change. Lots of people would like to swim more but found it intimidating to do so. One transmasculine person shared a story around going to the pool with a group of his friends who had all had top surgery, and how much he enjoyed being with others who all had the same top surgery scars as he did.



For the most part, the people we talked to had lots of different ways and preferred methods of exercise, but opportunities for trans participation across the industry were much less readily available than they would like.

¹ Binding involves the use of tight fitting sports bras, shirts, ace bandages, or a specially made binder to provide a flat chest contour.

"Tight uniforms totally suck. Why can't I wear baggy clothes? It would be great to have a choice of uniform, like a masculine and feminine option, and an option on some days to not wear a uniform. My hockey team is a "girls team" even though I'm non binary. Why does it have to be a girl's uniform, why can't it just be a uniform?"



Relevant Kōrero:

"In my bedroom doing squats to living on a prayer"



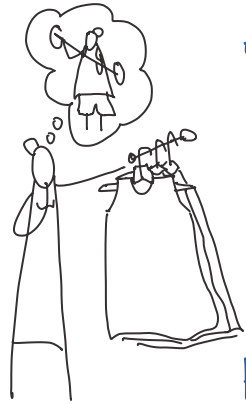
"No one talks about the societal and emotional impact of transition. It's a complete change which can be really hard for transguys. I've been on for two years. I really struggled in the beginning to handle my emotions. I took all my emotions out by going off at things. I think it's really important to have access to safe spaces to get that emotion out. I love going out for walks but gyms don't feel like safe spaces to do that because they are so cisnet, I have had a good experience at community leisure centres as they seem super family friendly"

"The fact that it helps my mental health when I've been feeling down. I also enjoy it, especially when I'm exercising via skateboarding or bouldering!!!! I also like that I've gotten muscley, and that it is helping my physical health which makes me want to continue to workout."



"Medical transition has helped a huge amount particularly for surgery. I also find myself much more comfortable in mixed teams than all male ones"





"I would love for more gender exclusive gym clothing such as baggier lightweight clothes in muted colours or swimming trunks that are available for women more readily. It would also be nice to be able to book private gym spaces so you can workout without people watching"

'Lack of motivation and energy, I feel like I have the time to exercise but end up defaulting to other things that feel easier like watching Netflix lol. It feels like it takes research and money to invest in starting out with a new form of exercise.'



'I don't do school pe alot of the time as teachers and the uniform even tho has been made unisex it not comfortable'

"usually alone because if I'm with other people I'll want to wear a binder and that doesn't go very well with exercise, but if I'm with people I trust I occasionally go rockclimbing at a gym."

'honestly the main reasons it's hard for me is dysphoria and how it effects my self confidence + how safe i feel as a (pretty obviously) trans person in the area in a semi-vulnerable state (tired from working out, not wearing a binder, probably feeling uncomfortable.)'

"Having had top surgery has changed my life in terms of feeling able to participate in activities where jumping and running are involved, because I don't get triggered by the dysphoria of chest movement, or injured/ breathless from binding to stop chest movement."



FEAR OF JUDGEMENT

One of the participants in our analysis session observed that the sport and exercise industry can be a vehicle for marginalisation. The exercise and sport industry holds and retains power by measuring people's bodies in accordance with a set of standards centring able-bodied, Pākehā, thin, wealthy, cisgender people.

The participants also noted that the sports industry is slow to change, and that there is an engrained culture of segregated, regulated gender norms that manifests in lots of different aspects of the service. These norms can show up when a gender-diverse person enters a gym changing room, for example. They may feel uncomfortable changing in front of cisgender people, due to dysphoria and fear of being judged or

targeted for being visibly transgender. Gender-neutral changing rooms – and individual changing cubicles – do not exist at many gyms yet.

Contributing to this localised marginalisation is the high-profile media debate that is happening around trans athletes and their inclusion in competitive-level sport. Sports are generally separated into 'male' and 'female' categories, which excludes non-binary folks; and forces binary transgender folks to meet cisgender physical requirements to participate. Participants talked about this power imbalance being intimidating, leading to apathy about getting started or feelings of being overwhelmed when attempting to access movement and exercise.



Some disempowering aspects of fitness that were mentioned during our community conversations:



- Changing rooms or bathrooms with a lack of privacy. Transmen pointed to some exercise facilities having only urinals in the bathroom and few clean, well-equipped cubicles that are not named as accessible bathrooms. Others talked about finding corners or spaces in changing rooms where they can feel concealed and have some privacy to get changed. Swimming pools and beaches are also places where people felt exposed and nervous. Some young people shared with us that their peers at school had made them feel uncomfortable in shared changing rooms, accusing them of looking or staring at them while they were getting changed because they identified as having a diverse sexuality.



- Mental modes and attitudes that are unwelcoming to fat, brown bodies and people who are beginners. Lack of representation of different bodies and body types across programme design and in marketing materials. Fear of being judged for being fat or because they are beginners.



- Exercise programmes and professionals that lean heavily into stereotypes around gender or gender segregation. People commented that the generally male = build muscle, female = cardio which does not take into consideration the unique needs of trans people or empower them to self-determine their goals and boundaries when it comes to their gender presentation.



- Fear of not being understood or judged by people when revealing their identity, or fears for their safety when having to reveal their identity. Fear that their pronouns, name, or gender will not be affirmed by others when accessing fitness spaces, but that by not disclosing their identity they would not get the correct or safe advice for their goals. Fear that staff and teachers would not call out or speak up when people used homophobic or transphobic language.



- Sports teams and clubs that are traditionally seen as male or female spaces and enforce traditional gender stereotypes or “toxic” ideology around gendered behaviour. People mentioned dance and pole dancing as examples of traditionally female spaces that can be prohibitive for people who are not petite, feminine, or very fit.



- Exercise and sport being expensive to access, particularly 1:1 tuition or consultation which some trans and non-binary people said they would prefer to have to feel safe to be open and honest about their needs.

A particularly strong voice in this project came from people who have lived experience of neurodivergence, chronic pain, and disability. People with neurodivergence shared with us that it was difficult to go into environments with loud music or flashing lights. Others talked about how their neurodivergence meant that they had specific needs when following a programme or participating in activities that were not always catered for or understood by providers. People living with mobility challenges or chronic pain talked about how there was an extra layer of difficulty for them when accessing services, as finding exercise professionals and spaces that had intersecting knowledge of the trans experience and disability was difficult. One person had a positive experience with a physio provider that was rainbow who had connected them with other transgender young people who were living with a disability. They had made friends and enjoyed the process until funding ran out.

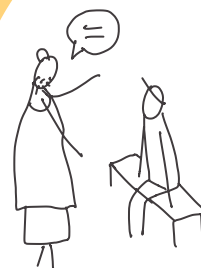
Some people who had positive, empowering experiences around accessing fitness talked about their trans identity being affirmed by those around them. One participant talked about how his friends at his Rainbow swimming group acknowledged his process and made a conscious effort to adjust their language immediately. He talked about how they were genuinely so happy to see him and interact with him outside of swimming, he described it as a completely positive experience. Another participant spoke about a Rainbow rock climbing group that they had joined where senior members of the club were working in collaboration with the facility to make changes to their practices and policies. One person said that they had had good experiences at a community centre gym as they tended to be more family friendly.



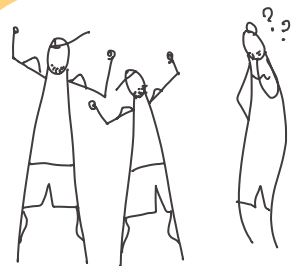
if there were places that maybe had teams/clubs that were just trans or specifically trans inclusive it would make a big difference. not only (for me personally) would i be more comfortable not wearing a binder (similar crowd, makes it easier to feel comfortable.) but i wouldn't worry about being in danger. also, in terms of team sports/group sports i can imagine it would be a big relief to have your true pronouns respected and be called your real name."



"The goal, or core values of exercise spaces being about genuine inclusion and finding the love of movement and exercise in itself, rather than as a means to an end."



"Exercise spaces and Personal trainers/leaders/captains etc equipped to support everyone within Rainbow communities - understanding the unique challenges and differences that may need to be tailored for a person, as well as comfortably holding the space as safe, consistently and speaking up when others express queerphobia in that space."



"Transphobia, homophobia. Crossfit is deeply transphobic, and my gym is striving to do better but that also involves a lot of my own labour. Workout standards are gendered, exercise spaces often drip with toxic masculinity. It's hard to figure out how to make changes to these spaces without just slapping a flag on them."



The culture surrounding the entire health and PE department at my school is a breeding ground

for general queerphobia. In fact, the captain of our schools first 15s rugby teams ripped up and stomped on a pride flag before throwing it in a toilet during our school pride week. It was heartbreaking to see the response from other teachers, especially in the sports department being so minimal. One teacher even asked me if it was "really that big of a deal" not understanding how that could make rainbow students at our school feel unsafe.



Body anxiety from a life of dysphoria and dysmorphia

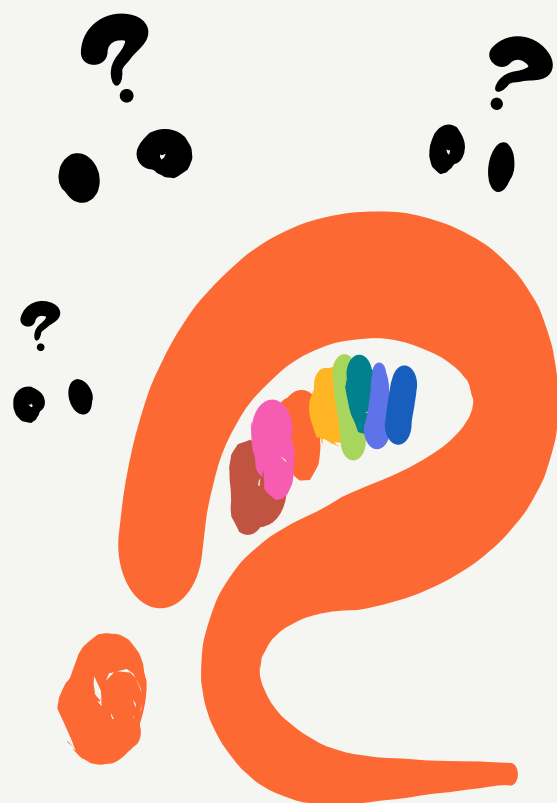
Worries about people judging me for my top surgery scars if I go swimming topless like I want to"



Fear of people finding out I'm trans and treating me /being unwelcome in that space. Cost of many groups such as paying for memberships to clubs and gyms. As a uni student living on student allowance while trying to save to pay back my top surgery costs it's hard to pay 12\$ a month for a membership to one place. (Rockclimbing)"



SAFETY

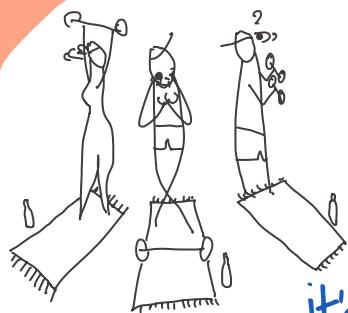


People spoke to us about not feeling safe while exercising and being “on guard” in fitness environments. They told us they had a fear that fitness spaces might lead to their trans identity being discovered by others which would lead to discrimination from other people using the gym or from the gym staff. Changing rooms, bathrooms, segregated sports teams, and the weights area of the gym were all places people said that they felt unsafe. People felt that their lack of knowledge or where to start when beginning fitness for the first time was also something that made them feel unsafe as they were worried both about the unfamiliar environment as well as knowing where and how to get started. People wished for transgender exercise professionals who have knowledge of both the community and knowledge of how to exercise safely.

We talked to a lot of trans and non-binary people who had a history of disordered eating and over exercising. A key tension pointed out was the process of accessing top surgery under the public health system – a milestone goal that is common amongst transmasculine people. There is a BMI target as condition of acceptance onto the waitlist.

People who do not meet the BMI criteria can seek private medical care, but for many, the cost for private care is insurmountable leading to them attempting to lose weight quickly to get access to the public funding.

Binding was another key safety tension. Trans and non-binary people who experience dysphoria around their upper body often alleviate this discomfort by wearing a compression vest, tape, or a specially designed binder that flattens their chest to masculinise their appearance. It is unsafe to bind while exercising as it can restrict breathing, movement, and can lead to injury. Even though the young people we spoke to knew and could articulate the risk of binding while exercising, many of them were still doing it and had been injured. Some of them talked about needing more knowledge about how to exercise safely while binding and to talk to other people with lived experience who could help them build a programme or structure that they could follow without it leading to injury. Exercising alongside people who understood what gender dysphoria is and how it makes it harder to workout was also appealing to some.



"some spaces like gyms aren't somewhere i feel comfortable, also being a trans man it's difficult physically and feel like i'm being judge, can't do sports with a binder"

"ribcage issues i have as a result of unsafe binding from the age of 12. other than that just dysphoria/self confidence issues and feeling afraid/vulnerable."



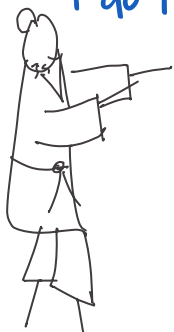
"it makes a difference when people have the right knowledge. Lot's of people i know who don't exercise have trouble knowing where to start. Because of the cishet gender roles of cardio = women and weights = men, people who don't understand the trans experience will give people advice that isn't right for them. Recently one of my friends (who is trans) went to buy some pants. He told the shop assistant that he didn't want a style that was hip hugging or tight around his thighs and they were like 'we got you' and helped him find some. Having people available on hand that get it and can give the right advice makes all the difference."



i'm not a huge fan of PE anyway but the system at my school is heavily gendered with many teachers who aren't open to LGBTQ+ issues. There is a lack of non gendered teams and changing facilities and it's just not a good environment



"I do karate to improve my fitness and also to be able to defend myself if something were to happen to me again"



"I would like to go to a gym and work out properly but I don't believe I'd feel safe - I feel dysphoric doing physical activity by myself let alone around other people. I wouldn't wear a binder at a gym which would also lead to misgendering and me feeling uncomfortable"



"I have a chronic neck condition which can make exercise difficult, and part of that means I have hyper mobility. Walking is good, but running isn't good for my knees, and as I am also a plus sized individual which also makes it harder to run"

Lack of time with uni studies and adhd making my planning ahead very bad



"Fear of people finding out I'm trans and treating me differently/ being unwelcome in that space."



"I'm insecure about my physical appearance and my weight and often workout clothes are tight and form fitting. Additionally, I find as a fem presenting person many people (usually men) stare at me which makes it weird"



SPACES AND ENVIRONMENTS

Feeling welcome was at the heart of conversations around spaces and environments. People wanted spaces that were authentically inclusive, gender affirming, with knowledgeable and kind staff available for help, advice, and encouragement. People wanted to know that homophobia and transphobia are not tolerated in that space and would be called out if overheard by staff or facilitators.

People wished for spaces and marketing materials that deconstructed messaging around gender, creating an open and inclusive approach to different movement styles where gendered behaviour and gender roles do not inform the basis of a class or programme. Some people were working to improve existing cultures and make tangible change in places that already had an established culture such as CrossFit or commercial gym



spaces. People told us that music, air-conditioned environments, and a visibly queer presence made the space feel more motivating.

People wanted fewer mirrors and less body scrutiny as it made it harder to focus on exercise when having to continually observe yourself. People shared with us that the focus on weight and weight loss were things that made fitness clubs or spaces intimidating and that there is a sense of morality attached to weight and weight loss that made fat people feel guilty and ashamed, decreasing their motivation and desire to join established programmes. This was also similar for people who had a disability or lower income. Accessible spaces and programmes were few and far between making it much harder to find a programme that will work for their needs or for their income bracket.

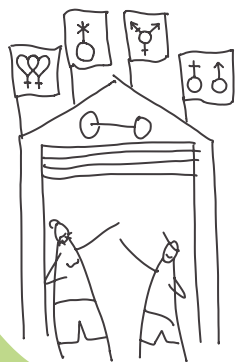
"Very recently I went to a pride roller disco which was awesome. You could tell it was a genuine pride event not just 'let's put some flags up because it's June'. It

wasn't just the Rainbow Flag, they had lesbian flags, non binary flag, the trans flag and the new multiple identities Rainbow flag. It had a queer energy that I can't explain. It made me excited to exercise for the first time in a long time - it should be fun"



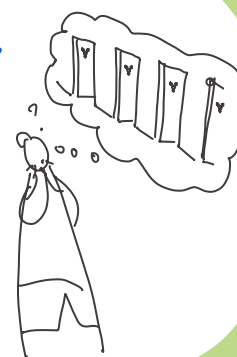
"My Flatmate is trans and recently started the process of transition. I asked for their permission to share this and they said sure. When they were discussing their gender dysphoria with their therapist, their therapist told them to go to the gym as muscles will give them gender euphoria. Basically equating that muscles = masculinity. My friend is non binary, transmasculine so big muscles wasn't actually the goal. They also hadn't started T yet which means that their body wouldn't respond to lifting weights and store muscle in the way she suggested. It was really unhelpful."

"Ones that don't contain such large amounts of queerphobia in the overarching culture such as school sports (especially in rugby). Spaces

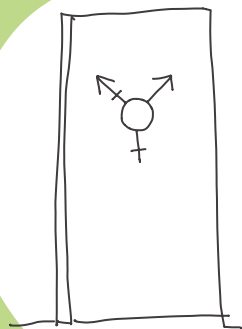


of openness and acceptance of every person being at a different fitness level and looking different. a place where people can help others with advice and guidance along with encouragement as well"

"When I research gyms to go to it's not just about locations and price, it's about does the facility have single stall changing rooms, sometimes it's just a big massive room. Some toilets only have a urinal."



"I would like to exercise in the gym with someone that could guide me through it respect me, I guess"



"Nongendered bathrooms/changing rooms, privacy screens, low-cost personal training type thing/access to someone with health knowledge, a service to match people with others interested in the same exercise"



"Specific time slots for queer participation at gyms and exercise facilities while ensuring the space is as safe as possible in this time. Specific classes aimed towards queer people and helping build confidence like dancing, boxing, swimming. Accessible classes like low intensity exercise instruction, based around people with limited mobility"

"Openly accepting lgbt spaces who make an effort rather than just a pride flag on the counter (tho that's a good start), less hesitation in sharing pronouns. Change in public's perception to accept trans individuals in exercise without undercurrents of unfairness. Cheaper access to sporting facilities."



"Having a queer zone or hour at gyms where we can safely exercise without judgement, neutral change rooms or cubicles for privacy, knowledgeable and supportive staff members"

"Some wear nice and cold so I could wear things like jumpers and sweat pants .and it would be indoors with all the equipment in areas do that no one would see you."

CONNECTION

AND

MOTIVATION



We noticed that for many people social connection is not a two-way street when centring fitness and movement. People talked about how when it comes to finding people to exercise with, being social and having strong relationships can lead to exercise, but exercise does not necessarily lead to strong social relationships. People talked about how trusted friends, family, and partners were key in motivating them to move but that new friendships through participating in exercise activities were harder to establish. For many young people, their parents and partners were important connections that motivated them to move.

There was a strong theme around feeling intimidated when accessing classes full of new people connected to the fear of facing judgement or being the only rainbow

person there. People talked about exercising alone or at night to avoid being seen by others. Judgement from others and being observed by others were both named regularly as demotivating factors. People talked about anxiety, dysphoria, and gendered spaces being things that made exercising alone more appealing. For some people it was more convenient and was a personal choice to exercise alone due to time constraints or busy schedules. For some people, the expectations around team sports were too intimidating both because of the competitiveness and because of ability level, while others thrived and were motivated by competition.

People talked about wanting others to understand why they might struggle to

participate or complete some movements if it drew attention to certain parts of their body. People talked about wanting to find a personal trainer who was trans or non-binary so that they could be open about how gender intersects with their experience accessing movement and fitness. For those involved in Rainbow groups, some people said that having LGBTIQ spaces helped with their motivation levels and made it easier for people beginning to join in.

Others told us that exercising with others helped them to feel motivated and that they felt safer. Some people needed to feel emotionally safe to exercise with others and that exercising was usually with people who they trust. People talked about wanting the people they exercise with to understand what gender dysphoria feels like and how it can decrease their level of enjoyment.



"I like to exercise by myself but I walk to school with my brother, my boyfriend, and my boyfriend's brother because I feel safer walking to school with other people and it's easier to exercise alone at home"

"To feel more supported and open to new people, it's hard to enter space with established community because you feel like nobody wants you there"



"I tend to stick to home workouts or (when I have gym memberships) go to the time gym during quieter times."

"I don't [exercise]. People at the gym are mean and other people outside can't stop staring"



"Last year I had a girlfriend at pony club. The others used to talk about us and I had to answer really personal questions like 'what do you do when you are alone', it's like god. It really made me enjoy it less and not want to go."



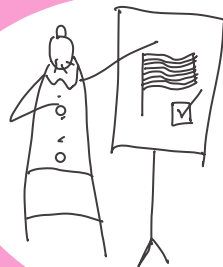
"I guess I feel a bit jealous when I go to the gym and see men working out together. I wish I had a group of friends that I could meet to do the same, encourage each other, shit talk. Not in a toxic way but just in a way that's like, I've got you, how's life, ya know?"

"Working out outside has been really relaxing and healing. Going for tramps with my partner. My main idea is having a relaxed space to exercise, gain knowledge, and not have to worry about societal expectations. A space that isn't about losing weight or gaining muscle"

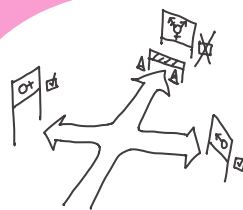
It is kind of hard to just get out there and learn so it would be nice if there were more diverse opportunities for sports aside from the regular school sports. If there were opportunities to try things like rock climbing, archery and other stuff. although they are expensive so easier said than done



'I like partnered sports and I wish more of them would be like climbing, where everyone does both roles, and acro, at the uni club I went to people try both/all roles and settle into a preference for what works for them, or do different things with different people'



"we have a trans teacher who is really interested in getting rainbow students into sport"



Because they massively gender everything, and as someone who is outside the gender binary this makes me feel horrible and like who I am isn't valid enough to do the sport or activity. An example of this is the fitness testing [at school] was gendered when I started, before my parents stepped in and changed it. Another example of something that is still happening is gendered sports teams. Like, I really wanted to join the rock climbing team at school but it was labelled the girls team.. which doesn't fit at all.

"Going along with people I know or being in a space where there is at least one other queer person (preferably without the queer person or anyone else knowing my identity) that shows me the group must be lgbt friendly without the focus being on me."

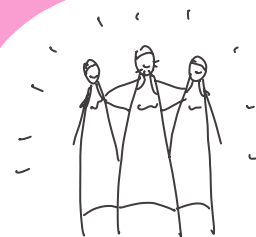


"Being in a routine, I'm quite a habitual person. I prefer exercising early in the morning and resting later."

"I usually exercise with others because it keeps me focused on having fun instead of being concerned about my weight or size"

Peer support is important, to encourage me to persevere. Being with other LGBTQI people feels easy and comfortable. Loving my authentic body."

I exercise alone. I find it's easier to organise and fit into my schedule than trying to match with someone else, and when I go to the gym with a friend we usually do different things anyway so it's not a social activity.



"I do yoga alone as it's a time for me to be with myself and my breath. I lift weight with some close friends and it's more fun. I run on my own because I'm slow. I swim with my best friend as I am comfortable around her."

"I don't really like competitive sports. I like playing for fun with other people and enjoy that time together. I still try playing the sport but I guess I just don't see myself being around a big crowd of people"

If there's an end result such as a cool photography location for example that usually motivates me. For swimming, it's probably the one sport I excel at and I don't like falling behind in it



Sometimes with my Mum because I like the time with her, and I'll go on walks my brother as well which is really nice. It boosts my mental health even more than just exercising does.

Final Notes and Acknowledgements:

Movement is important to the members of our Rainbow whānau, and for many of them it is central to maintaining their health and well-being. These are the key areas that we have noted significant potential to enhance the experience for this community when accessing exercise, sport, and recreation:



Growing Capability:

For trans and gender diverse people to feel that they have a space in the sport and fitness industry, they must see themselves reflected within it. We noted in our explorations that there are currently very few trans and non-binary people that hold exercise, nutrition, or movement expertise. Through creating pathways to study and internships in the industry, Rainbow communities across the region would have increased access to knowledge that is relevant, culturally appropriate, and sensitive to the needs of rainbow people. Connecting rainbow identified exercise professionals together to form a community of practice would mean expertise could be shared and collaboration increased to influence sustainable change.

Inclusive environments and spaces:

The young people we spoke to were highly attuned and perceptive to their environment; they can tell when spaces are authentically inclusive. They wanted personal trainers, teachers, and Kaimahi

who hold power in exercise spaces to actively demonstrate their allyship beyond surface level gestures (such as displaying flags or rainbow stickers in the venue – although these are a great start!) that are not reinforced by an inclusive and affirming culture change. At a policy and capability level, we recommend articulating clearly that trans and non-binary people are welcome in the facility or sports team, able to use the facility in whatever way affirms their gender identity, and that they will be met by kind, knowledgeable staff who will offer support or assistance should they need it. Other steps that were suggested by the young people we spoke to: calling out transphobia and homophobia when it is observed (including casual and colloquial slurs), taking steps to implement single person cubicles and gender-neutral changing options, reducing the number of mirrors in the exercise spaces, installing air conditioning, deconstructing messaging and marketing around gendered exercise (e.g. teams, uniforms, and classes), featuring Rainbow people and rainbow voices within marketing materials, de-centring weight and weight loss as the main driver of being physically active, normalising

the use and acceptance of neutral pronouns including mechanisms (e.g. sign up forms, badges) for people to indicate their pronouns and preferred names, and accessible opportunities for people living with a disability, chronic pain, and those new to exercise.

Programming for Rainbow Communities:

The Rainbow community want access to lots of different types of exercise opportunities. Just like the wider population, their needs are individual, diverse, and layered. Finding and maintaining a routine that works comes down to being able to try things without safety fears or judgement from others. Programmers might think about how the structures, policies, systems, and values of the program are intentional, visible, and enthusiastic about Rainbow inclusion. If Rainbow people feel that they are safe, welcomed, supported, and valued members of a class or team, they are more likely to have a positive experience and want to return. Through our conversations, we also learned that some subgroups of the community have some specific needs or

concerns around exercise. Many of the transmasculine people we spoke to were experiencing harm from binding and were facing barriers to exercise due to dysphoria linked to their upper body. They indicated to us that more support was needed for them to learn how to engage in physical activity safely while binding, and a need for more support in nutrition and sustainable, health-based approaches to weight loss.

uniforms for PE and School Sports:

For rangatahi still at school, their needs are very clear. Being allowed to wear gender affirming clothing and have the ability to self-select what uniform they wear to PE or their sports games was an important factor in feeling that they can be authentic to their gender identity. Some students suggested that their team may wear matching colours or t shirts as an alternative to gendered styles of uniform such as skirts or dresses. Students requested more mixed gender leagues and wanted to be able to choose which league they played in without any barriers, backlash, or reduction in opportunities.



It has been an honour and a pleasure to meet, speak with, and capture the experiences of Rainbow youth across the region. We are also thankful for the many sport and recreation professionals, teachers, coaches, sportspeople, and tertiary providers who have contributed their knowledge, expertise, time, and energy to this project. With such a motivated and excited rōpu, we are optimistic about the opportunity to affect meaningful, systemic change for the benefit of our rangatahi.

We'd like to give special thanks to our friends at Community Think who provided guidance, facilitation, and helped us to formulate our research questions. We are also grateful for the Rangatahi who worked with us and for the group that helped us to analyse the data.

If you would like to discuss or talk about the Joyful Movement project, please feel free to contact us at cayad@aklc.govt.nz

