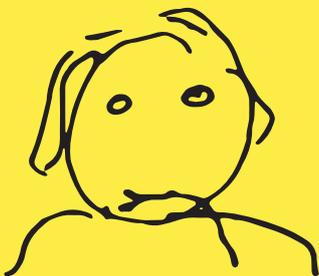
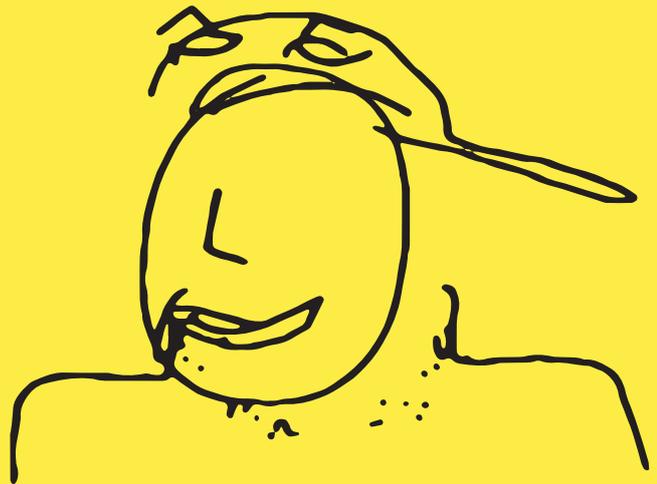
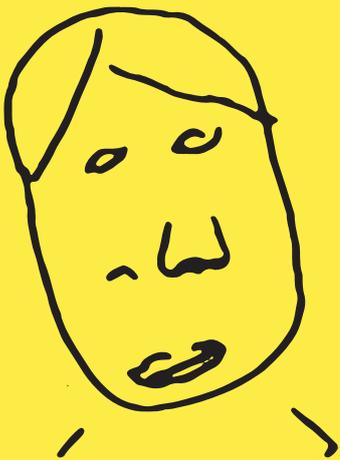
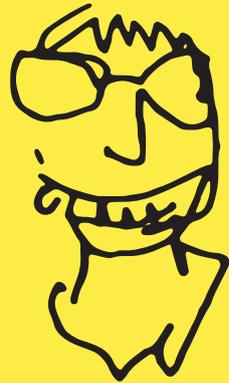
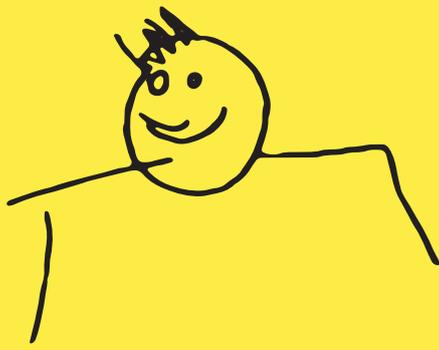
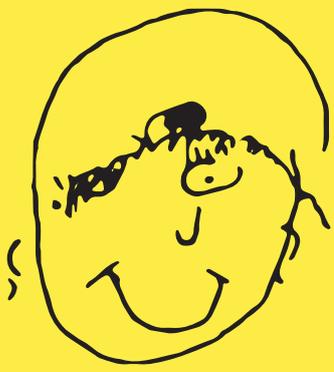


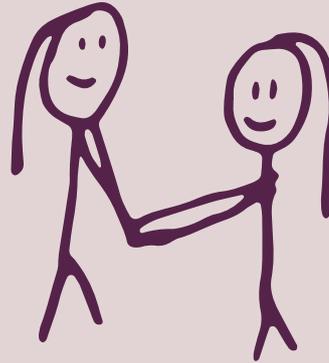
PLAY IN SOUTHLAND

Perceptions and experiences of play from
sector stakeholders, whānau and tamariki in
Invercargill and the wider Southland region



Blind portraits by 'Play huddle' attendees





Ko te ahurei o te tamaiti arahia ō tātou māhi.

Let the uniqueness of the child guide our work.

This report explores the findings of a study led by Innovation Unit and commissioned and supported by Sport New Zealand | Ihi Aotearoa.

Sport New Zealand is proud to be the kaitiaki/guardian of our country's Play, Active Recreation and Sport System. [sportnz.org.nz](https://www.sportnz.org.nz)

Innovation Unit is a not-for-profit social enterprise that works to develop new solutions for social issues and create impact at scale. [innovationunit.org](https://www.innovationunit.org)

**Front page drawing by a 'Play Huddle' attendee.
Above drawing by Libby, age 10.**

Thank you to the sector stakeholders, whānau/families, and tamariki/children who shared their precious play memories with us. Your experiences will help us to understand what it will take to give more children quality play experiences in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Thank you also to the team at Active Southland who did an amazing job of bringing together a great group of people across the sector and connecting us to tamariki and whānau in the community.

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my favourite way of playing is when I'm with my friends or family - mostly friends

State of Play

How might we create more quality play* experiences, and lay the foundations for a life-long love of being active?

Play is a vital part of children's physical and cognitive development, and helps them build the skills, competencies and attitudes they need to be active for life, including: fundamental movement skills, social and emotional connections, resilience, independence and leadership¹.

We know that children have the time, place, and permission to play in their communities, when:

- play is widely understood to be a crucial part of physical, cognitive, social/emotional and spiritual development for young people,
- adults understand their role in enabling play, and everyone shares responsibility for supporting play, and
- young people have access to varied playful experiences within their local environments, including risk-taking, challenge, and the opportunity to be active.

Sport New Zealand | Ihi Aotearoa is committed to increasing opportunities for children to access quality play experiences, and has started a project to explore what play looks like in Aotearoa, today.

To better understand different communities' perceptions and experiences of play, and what helps – or hinders – children's play, Sport New Zealand has partnered with Innovation Unit to help them hear from a diverse range of people across Aotearoa.

The findings will inform Sport New Zealand's planning and strategies for play, and spark a nation-wide conversation about the role of play in the wellbeing of young New Zealanders.

Play helps tamariki build social and emotional connections, resilience, independence and leadership skills.¹

Play statistics for tamariki in Southland:

97% have been physically active in the last 7 days² (national average is 95%).

12.4 hours spent being physically active in the last 7 days (national average is 10.9)

95% say that people in their life encourage them to take part in physical activity (national average 92%).

*For the purpose of this project, we decided to avoid defining what is and isn't within the scope of 'play', to instead hear how the communities themselves understood and described it.

What we did

Invercargill, Southland region

After exploring play in Ōtautahi, Christchurch, we then worked with the Active Southland team to hear from sector stakeholders, whānau and tamariki in the Southland community about their experiences and perceptions of play. Later this year, we will follow a similar process for three additional regions.

Play 'huddles'

We facilitated two workshops in Invercargill, one with regional partners (such as council, regional government agency and Trust staff) and one with wider sector stakeholders (including people with backgrounds in health, education and community work).

Intercept interviews with tamariki

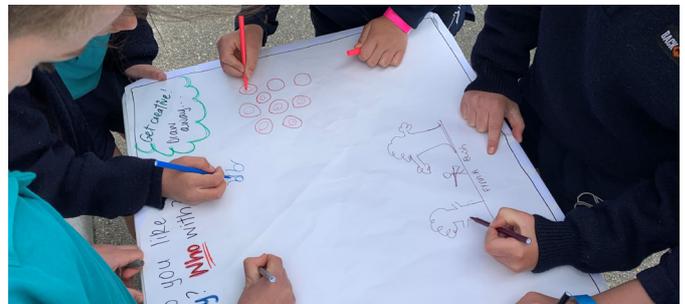
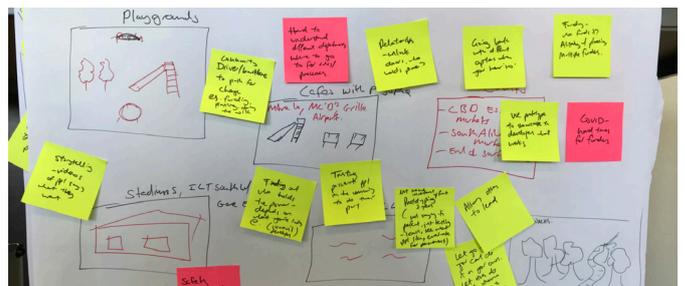
We attended the 'Tough Kid' event and talked with tamariki from one junior and one intermediate school about what play looks like for them. Two teachers at Fernworth School also kindly asked their students for their perspectives on our behalf.

Follow up calls with sector staff and parents

We held three follow-up calls with parents who live in the Southland region, as well as three sector staff who didn't attend the play 'huddles', to dive more deeply into their perceptions and experiences of play, or enabling play, in Southland.

Analysis

Finally, we spent time going through the collected data to explore common themes, tensions, and opportunities to consolidate the knowledge from the workshops and interviews into this report. For the purpose of this report, we have not specifically explored whānau Māori perspectives, as this will be the focus of a future piece of work by Sport New Zealand | Ihi Aotearoa.



Images from top: Regional Partners huddle, 'Play map' created in one huddle, tamariki drawing play pictures at Tough Kids, and making sense of the research data.

PLAY OVER TIME

What sector stakeholders, whānau and tamariki say play looks like today in Invercargill and the wider Southland region, and what's changed over time

Unique aspects of play in Southland

Community leadership, culture, and Southland pride

Invercargill and the wider Southland region is a tight-knit community, with relationships often spanning across generations. Many of the people we spoke with were proudly 'born and bred' Southlanders, and they spoke of the community's passion, resilience, and culture of mucking in to help each other out. It's clear that Southland peoples' pro-activity plays a fundamental role in creating new play opportunities in the region, and the close community ties help create a heightened sense of safety for families.

"Our people are leaderful. They see a problem, think of an idea, and get it done... 'too much hui and not enough doey' is not a Southland thing."

"We're Southlanders. We help each other out."

"We all know each other. We know our neighbours, and you bump into people at the supermarket - people are just a phone call away. It makes the community safer."

Supportive funders and stakeholders

Both regional and sector stakeholders identified how the uniquely high level of support from their stakeholders and funders helps them to create play opportunities. Examples included highlighting play in their strategies, increased collaboration across the sector, and heading in the right direction in community engagement around play.

Easy access to outdoor spaces and nature

The flat geography and smaller size of Invercargill means that playful outdoor spaces or activities are often within a 5-10 minute drive. We were told it has the highest percentage of parks per population, as well as the close-by towns and natural wonders of Gore and Queenstown. Due to the lower population density, backyards are also common, which allows space for children to play outside at home. The flat geography also makes for a more bike-friendly city.

Diverse and prolific facilities, events and programmes

Sector stakeholders talked about the 'amazing' free and paid local play spaces and activities for tamariki. Active Southland reported over 230 sport and recreational facilities³, and examples from the play huddles included: Dig This, sport complexes, velodromes and stadiums, ILT Kidszone, libraries, skateboard parks, Parks Week, cycleways, pump tracks and trails, holiday programmes, interactive art trails, frisbee golf, Play Pods, Splash Palace, and more.

It was noted that Invercargill has a particularly high ratio of playgrounds per person. The Southland region has more than 140 playground facilities available, not including school playgrounds³. Significantly more children in Southland reporting having played on a playground in the last 7 days (63%) compared to the national average (52%)².

However, many facilities are not in great condition and require ongoing upkeep. The decision to replace or remove playgrounds can also prove challenging when community members have personal ties to that facility (such as knowing or being related to the person who built it).

Play today

The tamariki, parents and stakeholders we spoke with described a huge verity of places, spaces and activities for play in Southland.

Southland children described playing on their own, with friends, classmates, neighbours, pets, siblings, other adults and family friends. The social part of playing was very important to most children.

On average, Southland children spend more time playing per week and less time on screens per day than the national averages².

Home

- **Toys** e.g. fire trucks, cars, trains, play-dough, dolls puzzles, Bay-blades
- **Front and back yards** e.g. backyards sports, soccer cricket, hide and seek, huts, pranks, trampolines
- **Imagination play** e.g. mermaids, dress ups, colouring/drawing

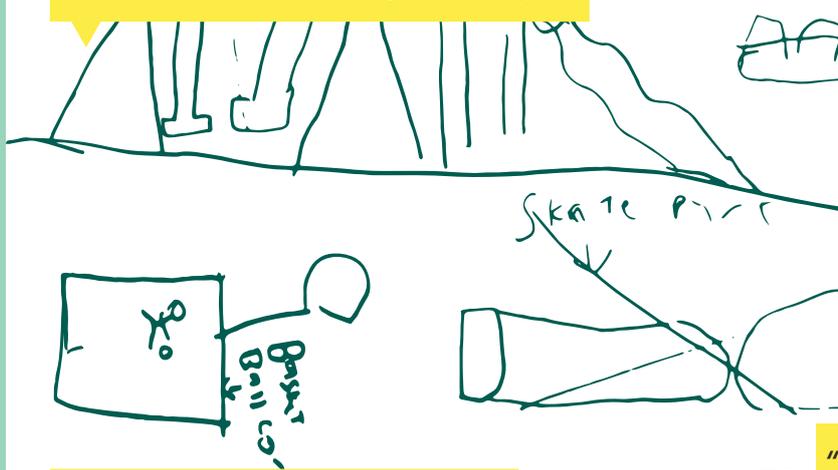
Neighbourhood

- **Local schools** e.g. feilds, playground and games: octopus, tag, Frisbees, sandpits, climbing trees
- **Streets** e.g. biking, scooters, Pokemon Go
- **Bus stops, libraries**

Wider community

- **Pools** e.g. swimming lessons, hydro slides
- **Sports fields/courts/parks/halls** e.g. soccer, rugby, ripper rugby, tennis, Frisbee golf, kites, boomerangs, hockey, dance, motorbiking, mountain biking, rock climbing, skateboarding
- **School trips, family trips** e.g. camping, Geocaching
- **Play parks** e.g. trampoline parks, Clip & Climb, Chipmunks, go carting
- **Cafes** e.g. Cabbage Tree, the Grill, Mitre 10 Mega
- **Nature spaces** e.g. mountains rivers, parks, black berry picking, riverbanks, hills
- **Events** e.g. Halloween, mystery trails, Family Fun Days

"Playing with my family at Queens Park. On the swings, slide and basketball court." - 10 year old boy



"I play tag with all my friends." - 11 year old girl



"Being with my friends. Being around lots of people you love." - Tamariki

"Bouncing from the trampoline onto a mattress." - Tamariki

"I'm sitting, I'm by myself, I'm at home. I like it because it's nice. School stops me from playing. School makes it less fun." - 11 year old boy





"Climbing trees with my friends." - Girl

"Play is doing something fun, anywhere in your house, on your phone, outside and with your toys." - 10 year old girl



"Going across a bridge and doing cartwheels with [my friend]. This is my favourite way to play because it is a challenge." - 7 year old girl



"Biking to the park or chip shop" - Tamariki

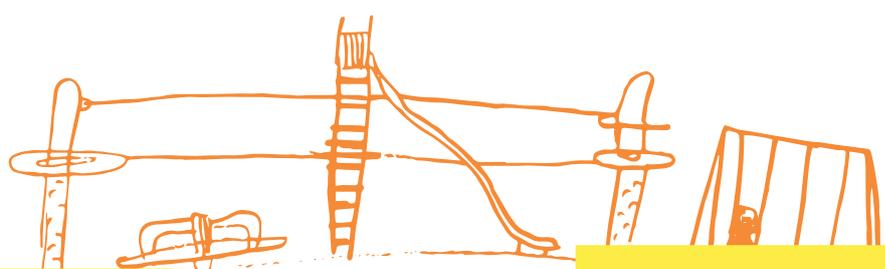
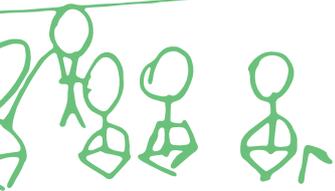
"Going to the park, having fun with family." - Girl



"Hide and seek - sometimes we have my mum and stepdad join in." - 10 year old boy



uck Duck Goose



"My favourite way of playing is when everything is just calm and chill and there is not screaming and yelling." - 10 year old girl

"On my pogo stick and playing with my sister at the park next to our house. My favourite way of playing is when people join in." - 10 year old boy



Play 'back then'

Similarly to Christchurch, the regional partners, sector stakeholders, and parents we spoke with said they remember play from their childhood in Southland being based on a high-trust model with their parents.

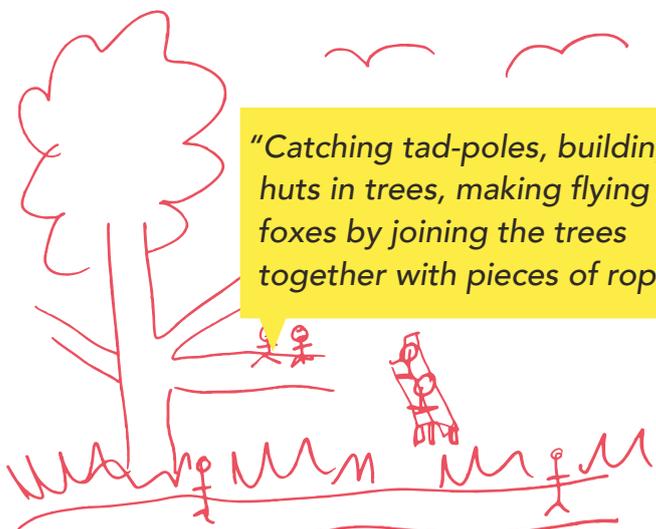
Play outdoors in nature was very common, as was playing with friends, siblings, neighbours and cousins. Play would often last all day with no parent involvement - the only instructions were to 'be home for dinner.' Taking risks and 'getting into trouble' were part of the fun, and injuries were not uncommon.

Illustrations by regional partners and sector stakeholders

"We were brought up with that high-trust model as kids - you go and play but if you're not home by tea time you won't be allowed to go again. We were allowed that little bit of give and take."



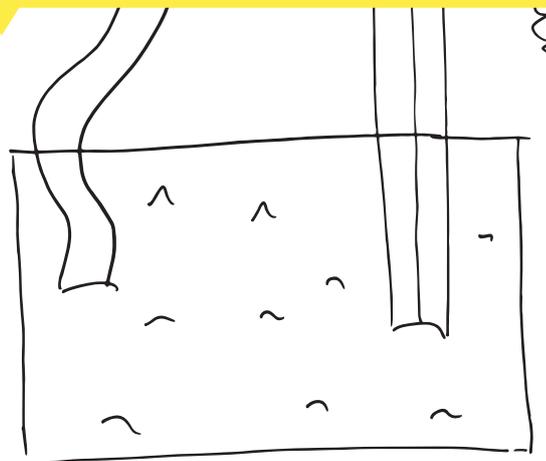
"Our play came from everywhere, not just from home. The whole day was out there playing - from the tennis courts to the playgrounds...everything just flowed."



"Catching tad-poles, building huts in trees, making flying foxes by joining the trees together with pieces of rope."



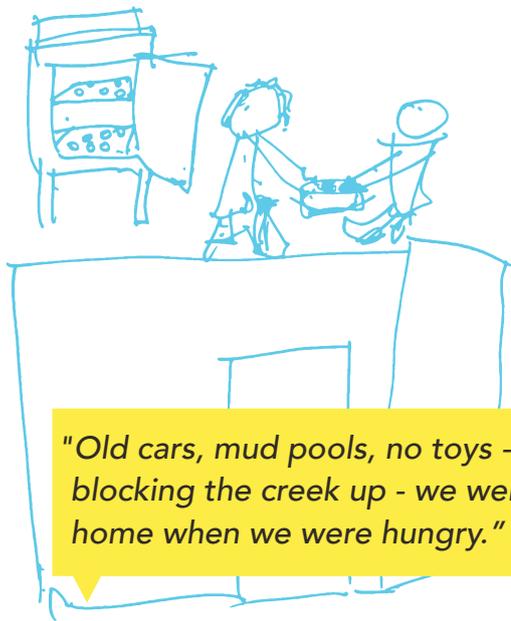
"No adults were involved and we were outside - it was risky play, no rules, no one checking if the swing was safe..."



"My friend and I in the garage wearing roller skates - pretending we were like American ninja warrior."



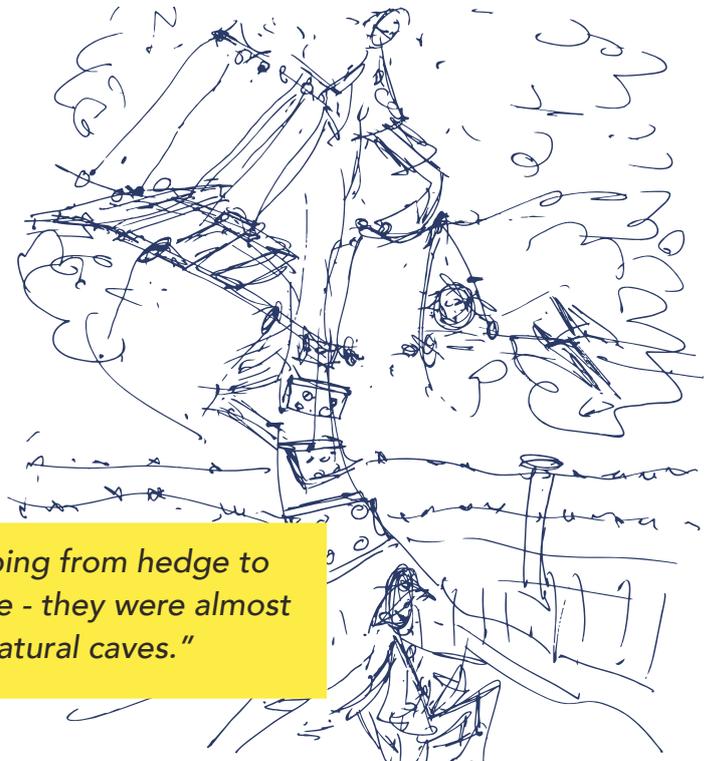
"Parents kicked the kids outside...we weren't allowed inside until it was dinner time"



"Teaching the pet lambs to jump on the farm - Dad hated it because when they grew up they jumped over the fence."

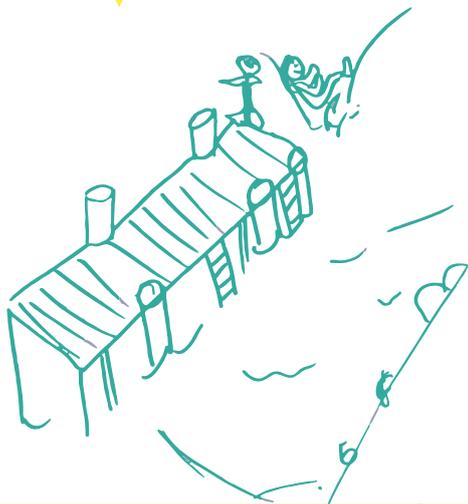


"Old cars, mud pools, no toys - blocking the creek up - we went home when we were hungry."



"Kids from the neighborhood playing games on the streets and playing cricket at night..."

"Jumping from hedge to hedge - they were almost like natural caves."



"Ōreti Beach - me and my two other brothers. Mum didn't like the water so she stayed in the car and flashed the lights when it was time to go."



"We had an old shed with a dirt floor in the back yard. My sister and I would go out into the shed, scrape the floor and create mud pies, baking etc."



What has stayed the same?

Spaces

Sector stakeholders and regional partners noted that there are still lots of outdoors spaces available for children and families to access, and that kids still love semi-private spaces such as hidey holes and huts. They also said that children still manage to play anywhere and everywhere.

Activities

The need for children to move, and be active hasn't changed - such as climbing, jumping, bouncing, and hiding. Games such as hop scotch, bulrush, and spot light are still popular, as are imagination play and water-games. Children still do things that challenge their basic motor and cognitive skills, such as going fast and taking risks, spinning until they're dizzy and sorting things into different colours and shapes.

Equipment

Although a lot of play-related equipment may look a little different, children still want to be able to slide, swing and climb in and on. Simple things such as wheels-based equipment (such as scooters, bikes and skateboards) are still popular.

Social

The need for children to socialise, feel connected, and be included or belong to a group hasn't changed. Children still play with their siblings, friends, and family (including animals) and are still influenced by the other adults in their lives such as teachers.

"My favourite way of playing is when other people are there." - 9 year old boy

Innate curiosity

Children's natural curiosity and desire to have fun hasn't changed.

"They're still happy with whatever." - Mother of two

Tag, playdough, park, playground, pranks, puzzles and hidden seek

Alleria, age 10

I'm playing hide and seek in the playground with my friends. My favourite way of playing is when I have friends to play with.

Mere, age 10

What has changed?

Safety focus, fewer injuries

Sector stakeholders, regional partners and some parents talked about the safety concerns and focus that parents have today. They reported less 'playground dramas' and 'fewer ice-packs' compared to when they were children and 'accidents just happened.' Some felt there is a loss of freedom in play today. Traffic and road-user behaviour is now a common safety concern that wasn't as much of an issue 'back then'.

"You know what you did, and how good it made you feel. But there's something that prevents you from doing that with your own kids." – Sector stakeholder

"There's no opportunity for kids to get into trouble, and then get out of trouble."
– Mother of one

More options and activities

Parents, sector stakeholders, and regional partners all saw that there is more verity in the play activities available today. However, some felt this also came with a lack of imagination required to play, and that more structured play is preferred by parents so that they can schedule in multiple different activities.

With the increase of indoor play spaces and increased safety concerns, they also saw less children playing in the streets or at schools.

"It's different to have to talk about play, it used to just happen." – Sector stakeholder

Time-poor parents

Sector stakeholders and regional partners saw that the new normal of both parents working can mean that parents have less time to be involved in or enable play. One parent talked about the pressure she felt to be involved in coaching and the challenge of juggling that with looking after three young children.

"Teachers aren't involved in coaching teams anymore, and there's a lack of available coaches. So there's a pressure to coach if you want your child to participate, but it's difficult if you work 9-5 and have three kids." – Mother of three

Other changes and influences

- Parents taking sport or play more seriously at earlier ages, along with increased inequity or access to sports
- Increase in travel (both good and bad)
- The influence of technology
- Loss of community
- COVID19

"Driving across town for sports - cars used to be more expensive so we didn't drive around as much." – Sector stakeholder

What might the future of play be?

Looking to the future, regional partners and sector stakeholders saw that play might include:

Opportunities for all

with no access, cost or social barriers for children and families to play. Sports are modified to focus on children's need for play, rather than winning.

Increased freedom and trust

for children to play and explore without structure or being reliant on parents.

Celebrated play spaces

such as destination play spaces, play hubs, pop-up and community play spaces where you can play regardless of the weather. Play is a priority in the community and is planned for.

Community and child-led

ideas and initiatives at a local level.

Intergenerational

events and opportunities that encourage the whole family to get involved - play for everyone at every age. Children continue to play as they transition between schools and get older.

Virtual

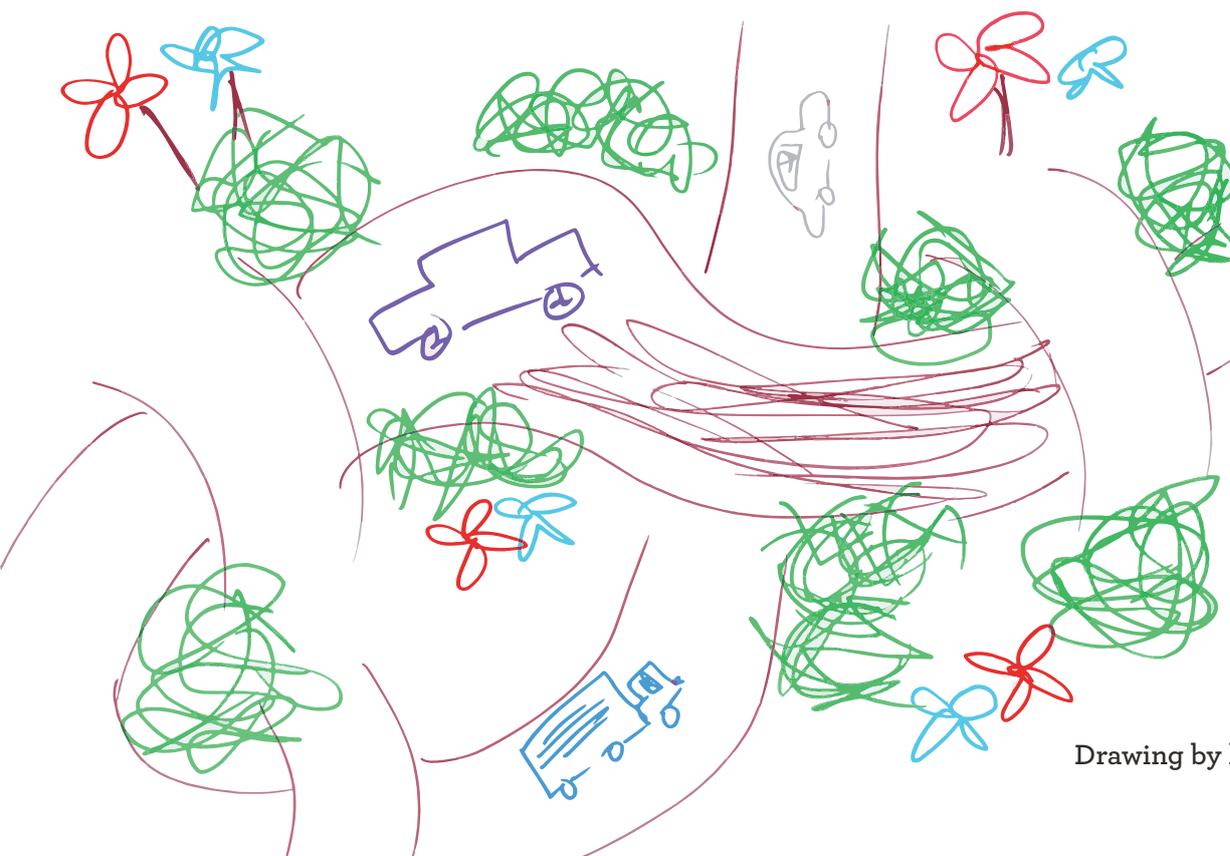
and online technology is leveraged and balanced with in-person experiences to encourage play.

Nature

is re-incorporated back into play.

Creative

initiatives and ways to encourage creativity and imagination.



Drawing by huddle attendee

INFLU- ENCES

The things that help, or get in the way of providing play experiences for those in the sector and Southland families

Sector influences

Community engagement, leadership and ownership

Both regional partners and sector stakeholders agreed that listening to whānau stories and feedback to understand their needs, as well as having champions at a local level, are strong enablers for creating play opportunities in Southland. One example was shared of capturing community members sharing their thoughts on video, which was used to influence decision makers by showcasing the desire for and potential impact of an initiative.

People also spoke about the need for those working in the sector to trust passionate people in the community to do their part, so that the community can take ownership of the idea.

Challenges raised were the time commitment to consult with the community, families' limited time to be involved, relying on volunteers, and difficulties knowing how to communicate an idea or opportunity to a particular community group.

*"Doing it ***with*** the community, not ***at*** them. Bring the community along so they have ownership and 'police' it themselves."*

- Regional partner

"Having the community behind you as a driver or backbone to push for change."

- Sector stakeholder

"The community is changing - it's more diverse. We have a role to support former refugees, but we're conscious that they have different wants."

- Sector stakeholder

Awareness, strategies and mandate for play

Regional partners and sector stakeholders shared how, within their organisation, having supportive management, as well as a mandate to re-imagine and activate play within communities is essential. This was often done through including play in organisational strategies and policies, so it could be used as a lens when looking at new initiatives.

Challenges included a lack of planning and advocacy around play, minimal time and resources allocated to play, opposing political wills or priorities, and other business units not seeing the relevance - or priority - of play in relation to their role. Health and safety and other policy processes along with other types of 'red tape' were also seen as barriers.

When working with other organisations, people said it helped to have stakeholders who also have play on their agenda, and have an invested interest in it.

"Other business units saying 'too busy' or 'what's the relevance to my role?'."

- Sector stakeholder

"A broader barrier is that in the community people don't necessarily think there is a need to activate play - they think it is something that just happens out of nothing."

- Regional partner

Existing networks and building trusted relationships

People told us that investing the time to network with like-minded people, finding out who holds the power, and building trusted collaborative relationships with strategic stakeholders (such as Councils, Regional Sports Trusts, Funders, infrastructure decision makers, and asset owners) can unlock doors when creating new play opportunities. As a highly connected region, people also noted how personal relationships (such as relatives) play a big part in getting things done.

Challenges included when individuals use their influence against an initiative, when minority rules, difficult personalities, or when it's difficult to understand the different departments or where to go for rules/processes.

Looking forward, one person said that they hope to work more with iwi to better reflect Māori values.

"I've taught in the community for 50 years so most people have a connection with me. We spend time nurturing our partnerships."
- Regional partner

Easy and available funding

Regional partners and sector stakeholders said that there is massive funding support for play. Examples included: Lotteries, community trusts, and Sport New Zealand. People also said that simple and easy application forms and funding for practical things like transport, uniforms and venues were a big help.

Interestingly, one funder noted that there's not currently a significant number of applications in the play space and that they usually come from more established organisations rather than community groups, schools, or individuals. This may be because some funding application processes were said to be easier than others. When application processes for smaller grants require highly detailed information, interview processes and long wait-times, people said this can cause some communities to shy away from applying as the time and effort required is more than the fund is worth.

Sector stakeholders also raised concerns that COVID19 may reduce the level of funding available.

"We have good funders, but it's not all about the money - we have a great community." - Regional partner

Positive, open mindsets

Sector stakeholders in particular spoke about how peoples' mindsets within organisations influence how easy it is to create play opportunities. When people are open to giving things a go and learning from initiatives, (e.g. trying things as a prototype or trial) this can help to showcase to others what could be, and what works. Prototyping was seen as a good way to test and learn without significant upfront investment, to showcase what can be done before implementing something more permanent.

Challenging mindsets included traditional thinking, fixed mindsets, negativity blocking an idea, a fear of change or risk-advertisement, and not being willing to try something new. When hearing 'no', one participant said it can help to go back with different options.

Providing equal opportunities

One sector stakeholder spoke about the challenge of providing equal opportunities across Southland, particularly across the 'divide' of north and south Invercargill.

"The privileged always get a lot of opportunities. An ice-skating rink was going to be put in and we fought to get it put down south instead, but it ended up being too expensive." – Sector stakeholder

"Cost isn't an issue at the moment, but I don't know how that will change with the three of them when they're older..."

– Mother of three

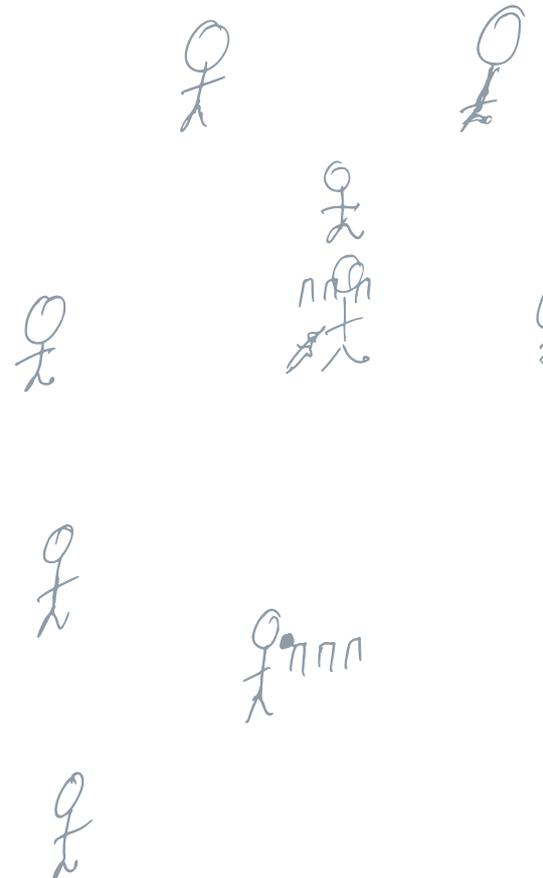
Weather

Parents, tamariki, regional partners and sector stakeholders all noted that the weather in Southland can sometimes pose challenges for play, especially organised events.

One funder talked about the importance of weather-proof spaces, and a parent thought it could be useful to have a few more inside parks/places for children to go and play when the weather isn't playing ball.

"The weather can hinder play - we get four seasons in one day." – Sector stakeholder

"When it starts to rain and it's time to go home" – 11 year old boy



Family influences

Parents' fear of judgement around safety

Regional partners and sector stakeholders spoke about how parents' perceptions around safety can influence the opportunities and permission children are given to play.

Interestingly, two of the parents we spoke with explained that for them, the fear was less about potential harm to their child, and more about their fear of being judged for letting their child take risks. The judgement they experienced was often subtle, and came from people they knew, such as other parents or grandparents. They saw that this behaviour was influenced by the bombardment of safety messages parents are fed from early on in their parenting journey.

One parent spoke about wanting to let their children roam further around the neighbourhood, but not feeling confident about what is appropriate for their ages and wanting clear guidance around this.

"You can feel other people looking at you thinking like, 'Oh my gosh, that mother is so negligent'...It's hard because you think, well, if I stopped them from doing anything that had any risk, they wouldn't have any coordination or bravery or any ability to climb or hang or jump off anything." - Mother of two

"If I could change one thing, it would be education. Through my job as a teacher I'm seeing 5 year olds come through with no sense of risk-taking." - Mother of one

"I sometimes explain [that] it's really good for their development to challenge themselves and to learn what they can do. There's a big difference between a 'learning injury' - little bumps or bruises - versus a life-changing injury. I just wish there was more awareness of that in the whole community..." - Mother of two

"If you turn up to A & E with a kid with a broken arm, there's that real judgment of, what are you doing, letting your child climb a tree and then you've got Oranga Tamariki on your case. That sense of fear for parents." - Mother of one

"I would let them roam further if I knew I was allowed...There's really no guidelines around anything. E.g. when your kids are getting older and you're trying to figure out, do we still bike on the footpath? Or do we have to bike on the road? At what age am I allowed to say, you can bike to school. It's really confusing, because there's no law...each family looks at things differently and sometimes it's quite hard to know, what's the right way?"

- Mother of two

Knowing the neighbours

Two parents talked about how the close-knit community, and knowing your immediate neighbours is a strong influence in enabling play for their tamariki. One parent noted that the Level 4 lock-down in 2020 was really helpful for getting out and about and getting to know their neighbours.

Knowing their neighbours meant that children:

- had more playmates,
- had more space to play in outside of their immediate home,
- were encouraged and supported to play by their (adult) neighbours, and
- could safely play on their neighbourhood streets.

"We're lucky that we have neighbors with young kids as well. It's like a second home - they just go back and forth - their house is our house and vice versa. It means you've got twice as big a space to play and lots of friends to play with. It means they're really active." - Mother of two

"We took him and went and talked to [our neighbours] and said he wanted to play safely in the cul-de-sac so could they go slowly down the driveways, and they've all respected that." - Mother of one

"[Our neighbour] across the road gave him a big strop, which is used for a million different things." - Mother of one

Play mates

Children described playmates as the biggest influence on their play experiences. Although not all children liked to play with others, the vast majority talked about how doing so made play the most fun.

Other children being rude, mean, annoying or not following the rules was frustrating for children, as was not having anyone to play with. They enjoyed play most when it was with their friends, their playmates were kind, and they got to play for a long time.

"When my friends get into an argument on cheating, who's not going to be the tagger, or who gets the ball." - 10 year old boy

"Play becomes less fun when someone gets bored and leaves in the middle of the game." - 10 year old boy

"My favourite way of playing is when I'm with my friends or family - mostly friends." - 10 year old girl

"My girl is extroverted and enjoys play with other people more. She comes to me if the neighbours are away." - Mother of two

*When my friend get into
on cheating, who's not go
tagger or who gets the ba
when were too tired.*

Alleria, age 10

Parent/family involvement

Parents had different perspectives on their involvement in play. On one hand, their children loved whole-family activities (such as trips to the beach), but on the other hand parents observed that their children had the most fun when they were left to explore and push their own boundaries.

One mother talked about knowing about the importance of child-led play, but that sometimes it's not that black and white, as a parent might instigate an activity before a child starts to lead it themselves.

"The whole point of play is just letting them be by themselves without you being there to oversee them..." - Mother of two

"When it's a whole family thing they love it. Like if it's a beautiful day and we go to the beach when we haven't been in a while..." - Mother of two

"When the adults are out of it - when it's completely child-led, I think that's the best type of play. When they're taking part in risky play particularly." - Mother of one

"Sometimes play might be adult-directed, but then it becomes child-led. Is that ok?" - Mother of two

an argument
ing to be the
ll, or sometimes

Travel distance (it's all relative)

One observation we made was how close most outdoor and activity spaces are in Invercargill - the people we spoke with often talked about measuring their commute to work in a number of minutes. The flip side is that Southlanders can have very high expectations around ease of access.

"The ease is a factor - how difficult something is to get to. We're lucky that everything is within a few minutes. But if it's on the other side of town at the busy traffic time, it's more of a headache. Whereas if you can whip in early and it's not too far it seems easier when you've got the three wee ones after school."

- Mother of three

Time/space to play in their own way

One mother talked about how her two children liked playing in very different ways - while her daughter loved leaving the house to do different activities and spending time with other people, her son was happiest when left to his own devices at home.

She shared how as a family they try not to over-commit to extra-curricular activities to leave space for the children to play in their own way.

"There is quite a lot of pressure to be doing extra-curricular activities, but we try to keep it to shared activities or just one, to two things." - Mother of two

Injury

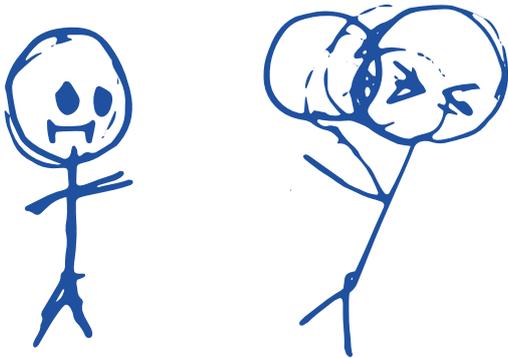
Children also described how someone hurting themselves often stops play.

"When someone gets hurt or falls over."

- 7 year old girl

"Breaking or spraining a limb."

- 11 year old tamariki



then we stop playing

Other family influences

Other influences mentioned by parents included:

- their child's energy to play - being tired, hungry, or sick or not having the energy to be creative,
- their child knowing other people in their sporting or activity teams,
- timing of activities when juggling multiple kids' needs, and
- their own understanding and passion around play.

Sector stakeholders also mentioned how technology, and dual household incomes can be both enablers and barriers of play for families.

"Last year I pulled them out of swimming lessons during the week - it was at 4:45 on a weeknight and you're on your own with three little ones in the middle of feeding time." - Mother of three

"Play is a real passion of mine. I've done a lot of post-grad work in it, so he's lucky he's got me." - Mother of one

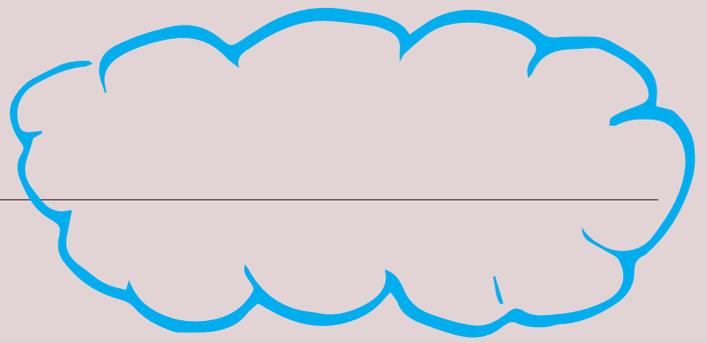
Other child barriers

Other barriers to play mentioned by children included:

- having to stay home and do house work,
- helping with gardening, and
- picking up rubbish.

NEXT STEPS

Opportunities for the Southland community and Sport New Zealand to consider moving forward



Opportunities

Build on community connectedness for play

As a tight-knit region, Southland is well positioned to champion play at a highly localised level. With existing community networks and a high number of local play facilities, such as playgrounds, neighbourhood pockets could become safe where children are encouraged to play with others outside of their home.

How might we create play neighbourhoods to increase the distance that children can safely roam and play freely together?

Address parents' fears around judgement

With fear of judgment being a major barrier for parents to allow their children to explore and push their boundaries, the Southland community could consider how it might raise awareness around the developmental benefits of risky-play. Providing opportunities for families to try challenging activities together in a safe environment could help to shift perceptions and fear around safety and risk, and give parents the confidence to have those conversations with others.

How might we increase awareness about the benefits and importance of risk-related play activities?

Close the gap

Although Invercargill is known for its proliferation of play facilities, an important challenge raised by a sector stakeholder was how it can be difficult to secure funding and opportunities for children and families living in south Invercargill. Future play funding and strategies could consider equity and access as a key criteria or focus area to be prioritised and addressed.

How might we create equal opportunities for play, regardless of where tamariki live in Southland?

Support the sector to co-design initiatives

Working closely with the community to understand their needs, as well as co-design initiatives and testing solutions with them, was seen as an important enabler in creating and sustaining play opportunities in Southland. With Southland's changing demographics this will be more important than ever. There is an opportunity to continue supporting funders and providers to build their understanding of these ways of working so they can meet families' changing needs over time.

How might we support our sector to engage with the community and make sure play opportunities meet families' diverse needs?

Make funding processes easier for less established groups and individuals

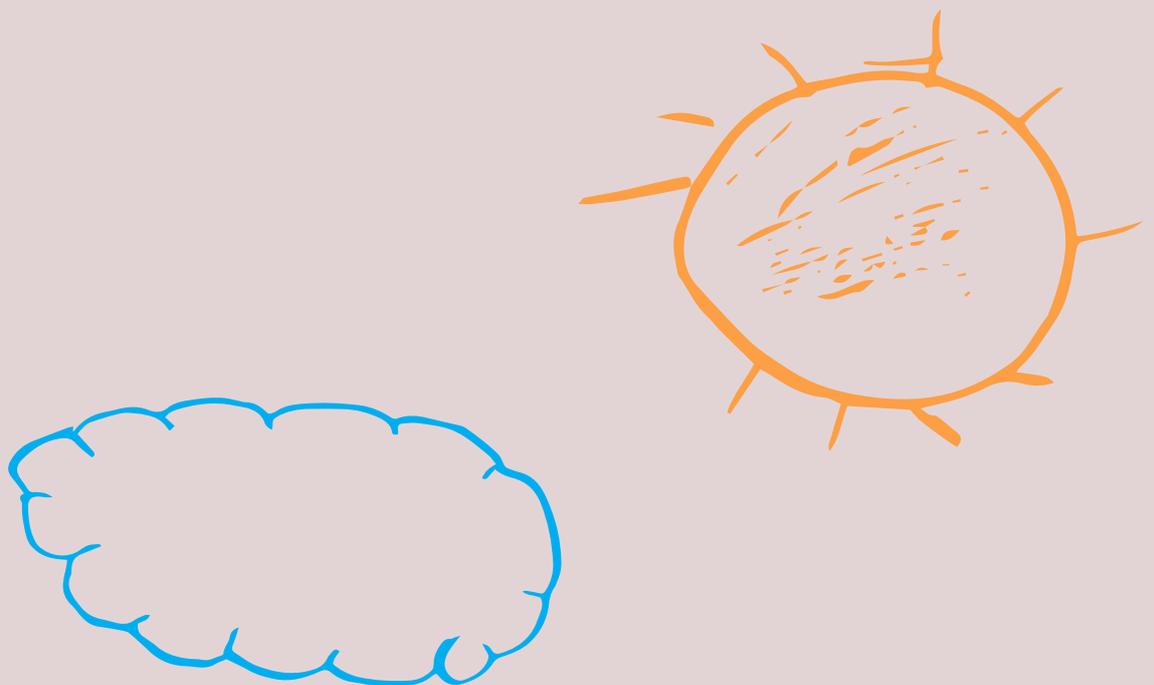
Southlanders' ability to come up with ideas and get things done is a strong asset and one that should be fostered. Although there is plenty of funding for play opportunities, there may be process barriers in place which prevent smaller groups, families or individuals from accessing the support they need to grow an idea. There may be an opportunity for funders to work together with community champions to understand how funding application processes could be made as simple as possible, so that new and diverse ideas are more easily brought to life across the region.

How might we support community champions to bring their local play ideas to life?

Explore the future of play, beyond facilities

The high number of play facilities in Invercargill is both an asset, and a challenge. As sector stakeholders told us, the increasing number of facilities that require ongoing upkeep, or are in a state of disrepair, can prove challenging when the surrounding community has close personal ties or memories to that space. There may be an opportunity for the community to come together and explore what they would like to see as the future of play in the region, with a focus on listening to the creativity of tamariki, celebrating Southland's unique culture and past, and enabling space for future play ideas, initiatives, and spaces to grow.

How might we explore the future of play for our region, while honouring our unique past?



References

1. Sport New Zealand. (2017). *Sport New Zealand Play Principles*. Source: <https://sportnz.org.nz/assets/Uploads/attachments/Sport-New-Zealand-Play-Principles-Nov-2017.pdf>
2. Active NZ. *The New Zealand Participation Survey 2017, 2018, 2019*.
3. Active Southland. 2020. *Southland Regional Spaces and Places Strategy*.

Today I'm playing on my pogo stick and
with my sister at the park next to
my favourite playing ~~men~~ ^{when} people join
when things go wrong when people
or I hurt myself

Tyler, age 10

Te Reo Māori glossary

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Kaitiaki | Guardian |
| Kaupapa | Purpose / initiative |
| Tamariki | Children |
| Tamaiti | Child |
| Oranga Tamariki | Ministry for Children |
| Ōtautahi | Christchurch, Canterbury |
| Mana whenua | Local tribe / custodians of the land |
| Whānau | Family / families |

*at I playing
or house.*

don't do in



Blind portraits by 'Play huddle' attendees

