



Better Together 2040

Monitoring and evaluation framework

Updated 2026



Northern
Beaches
Council

Better Together 2040 monitoring and evaluation framework

Updated 2026

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Purpose of this framework

Better Together 2040 is the Northern Beaches Council social sustainability strategy. It sets the long-term vision for a socially sustainable community, organised around 4 strategic directions: Safe, Inclusive, Diverse and Connected.

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework explains how progress against that vision is tracked, reported and used to inform future action. It was updated in 2026 to reflect the updated Better Together 2040 strategic framework, which introduced 'Diverse' as a fourth strategic direction (expanded from 3) and uncoupled the 8 community outcomes from any single direction.

The framework is designed to answer 2 questions:

- Is the strategy being delivered as intended?
- Is it making a difference to people's lives on the Northern Beaches?

These are different questions and they require different kinds of measurement. This framework provides both.

Rationale

Traditional implementation-focused Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are designed to address compliance, focusing on individual outputs rather than collective progress towards larger outcomes. They generally answer the question, 'did we do it?'.

Better Together goes a step further and adopts a results-based M&E systems framework that seeks to additionally answer, 'did we make a difference?'. This framework will:

- track progress toward deliverable objectives to maintain accountability
- provide feedback on how outputs contribute to overall strategy outcomes and targets.

How we measure success

Better Together 2040 measures success across 3 levels. Each level asks a different question and serves a different purpose.



The strategy succeeds when all 3 levels are moving in the right direction. The most important signal comes when the first 2 levels are positive but the third is not. This indicates that actions are being delivered and reaching the right people, but outcomes are not improving. This shows that the actions themselves need to change and the next cycle of action planning should respond to that evidence.

Theory of Change

The Better Together theory of change describes the logic connecting our actions to community changes. It is built around 4 elements.

Community drivers

These are the pressures and trends the strategy must respond to, drawn from the 2026 Community Profile. They include population change, housing affordability, mental health and social isolation, pockets of disadvantage and access to services and information.

Strategic directions

The 4 directions (Safe, Inclusive, Diverse and Connected) are the lenses through which we take action. They are not silos. Each direction contributes to all 8 outcomes. The directions organise our effort. Each direction has a targeted action plan.

Outputs

Outputs are what we do. They are organised into 4 categories that apply across all directions: strategic leadership, community capacity, access and inclusion, prevention and early intervention. The outputs bridge explains how each direction delivers through all 4 output categories.

Outcomes

The 8 outcomes describe the community conditions that Better Together is working towards. They are measured independently of any single direction, through the Community Views Survey and other data sources. They represent the combined effect of all directions, all outputs and the broader social system.



The outputs bridge

The outputs bridge connects the 4 strategic directions to the 8 shared outcomes.

Each direction delivers through all 4 output categories, but with different emphasis and focus. This means that every action in every direction's action plan can be classified by its output category. Those output categories then connect to the outcomes they contribute to.

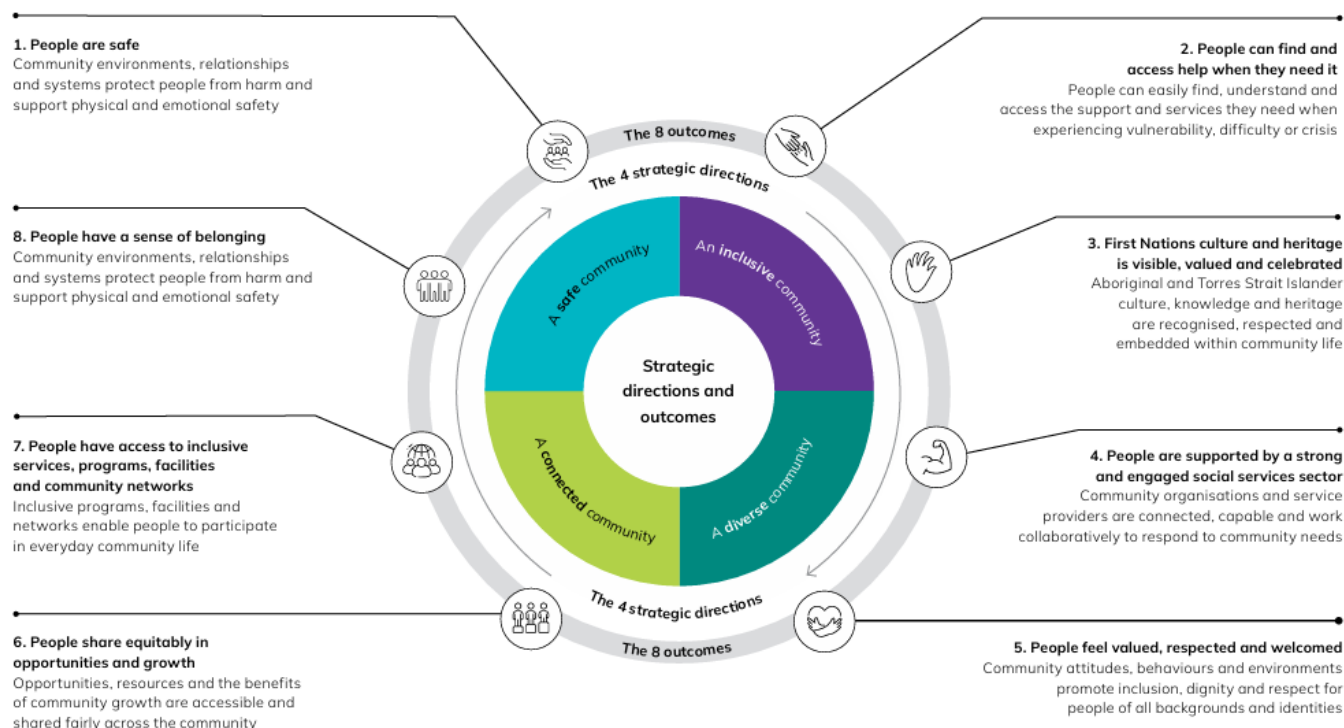
Strategic direction	Strategic leadership and governance	Community capacity and partnerships	Access and inclusion	Prevention and early intervention
Safe	Leading safety-related policy, planning and advocacy	Building the capacity of the local social services sector to respond to safety-related challenge	Reducing barriers to safety-related services and information	Addressing safety issues before they reach crisis point
Inclusive	Leading equity-focused policy, planning and advocacy	Building the capacity of the local social services sector to deliver inclusive services	Removing barriers to participation for priority populations	Identifying and addressing barriers before they become entrenched
Diverse	Leading culturally informed policy, planning and advocacy	Building sustained partnerships with culturally diverse communities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and LGBTQ+ communities	Ensuring services, information and community spaces are culturally safe and accessible	Engaging with diverse communities early, before barriers become entrenched
Connected	Leading policy, planning and advocacy on social infrastructure and community connection	Strengthening the volunteering culture and community networks that underpin connection	Reducing barriers to information, programs and community facilities	Identifying and responding to social isolation before it becomes entrenched

This table shows the connection between direction, output and activity. If an outcome is not improving, you can look across the relevant output categories for each direction to understand what is being done and whether it is sufficient.

The 8 outcomes

Figure 4: Strategic directions and outcomes

Better Together 2040 has 4 strategic directions and 8 outcomes to work towards a socially-sustainable and inclusive Northern Beaches.



The 8 outcomes describe the conditions that exist in a socially sustainable Northern Beaches community. They are community-level measures, not Council performance measures. No single organisation or team is responsible for any one outcome.

Outcomes are measured through the Community Views Survey (every 2 years) and supplementary data sources identified in the Performance Monitoring Plan.

Number	Outcome	What this means
1	People are safe	Community environments, relationships and systems protect people from harm and support physical and emotional safety
2	People can find and access help when they need it	People can easily find, understand and access the support and services they need when experiencing vulnerability, difficulty or crisis
3	First Nations culture and heritage is visible, valued and celebrated	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, knowledge and heritage are recognised, respected and embedded in community life
4	People are supported by a strong and engaged social services sector	Community organisations and service providers are connected, capable and working collaboratively to respond to community needs
5	People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Community attitudes, behaviours and environments promote inclusion, dignity and

Number	Outcome	What this means
		respect for people of all backgrounds and identities
6	People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Opportunities, resources and the benefits of community growth are accessible and shared fairly across the community
7	People have access to inclusive services, programs, facilities and community networks	Inclusive programs, facilities and networks enable people to participate in everyday community life
8	People have a sense of belonging	People have access to stable housing and neighbourhood environments that support long-term connection, wellbeing and participation in community life

Better Together evaluation process

Better Together uses an iterative evaluation process so that a cycle of continuous improvement is built in. This approach lets the strategy adapt to a changing context and to unforeseen change by moving continually through 3 stages: plan, manage and track. The cycle is completed over each 5-year period to keep the strategy relevant.



Stage	What happens in this stage
Plan	Define the vision, understand the local context and formulate strategy
Manage	Execute the strategy, and set outcomes, targets and actions
Track	Iterate, analyse progress, implement strategy, report on progress and apply the M&E framework

Performance monitoring

The Performance Monitoring Plan is the operational tool that sits behind this framework. It is a living document capturing the baseline value, target, data source, responsibility and reporting interval for each measure. Measures exist at all 3 levels of tracking.

Level 1: Output measures

Each direction action plan includes a set of committed actions. Delivery is reported annually against each action and identified as being delivered, in progress, deferred or not commenced. Business unit owners are responsible for providing updates at each reporting interval.

Level 2: Reach measures

Reach measures track whether work is getting to the 7 priority populations identified in Better Together. These are collected through program participation data, service records and the Community Views Survey.

Level 3: Community conditions

Outcome measures are collected every 2 years through the Northern Beaches Community Views Survey, supplemented by ABS Census data, NSW Government data and sector surveys. Baseline values for the 2026 refresh will be established using the most recent available data at the start of the new cycle.

At the end of each 5-year cycle, a comprehensive evaluation informs the next refresh.

Reporting interval	What is reported
Annual	Delivery and reach measures for targeted action plans tracked and monitored.
Every 2 years	Outcome measures from the Community Views Survey and supplementary data reported in the State of Wellbeing report.
Every 5 years	Comprehensive evaluation: all 3 levels, lessons learned and a refresh of action plans and reported in the Better Together progress and impact report.

Better Together reporting will not claim that a single direction caused an outcome to improve. What it will do is show the evidence at all 3 levels and allow people to determine whether the strategy is working.

Indicators by outcome

The following indicators sit under each outcome. For each one, the table shows what it measures, the tracking level, target direction, data source and how often it is reported.

Outcome	Indicator	What it measures	Tracking level	Desired trend	Data source	Frequency
Outcome 1 - People are safe	Percentage of residents who say they can participate in community life without feeling unsafe	Measures whether residents feel safe enough to take part in everyday community activities	Community experience	Increasing	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 1 - People are safe	Experience of safety by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations report different levels of safety compared to the broader community. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 1 - People are safe	Rate of major crime categories per 100,000	Measures the level of recorded serious crime in the area relative to population size	Community experience	Decreasing	BOCSAR	2 yearly
Outcome 2 - People can find and access help when they need it	Percentage of residents who say they know where to get help when they need it	Measures awareness of available support services and confidence in navigating the service system	Community experience	Increasing	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 2 - People can find and access help when they need it	Awareness of help by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations are as confident as others in knowing where to go for help. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 3 - First Nations culture and heritage is visible, valued and celebrated	Percentage of residents who have engaged with First Nations histories, cultures, arts or cultural	Measures community engagement with and understanding of First Nations histories, cultures and heritage through participation in	Community experience	Increasing	Community Views Survey	2 yearly

Outcome	Indicator	What it measures	Tracking level	Desired trend	Data source	Frequency
	events in the past 12 months	cultural events, arts and learning opportunities				
Outcome 4 - People are supported by a strong and engaged social services sector	Experience of high-quality health services	Measures whether residents believe local health services are effective, appropriate and meet their needs	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 4 - People are supported by a strong and engaged social services sector	Experience of health services by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations report different experiences of health service quality. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 5 - People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Experience of social cohesion	Measures residents' overall perception of cohesion within the Northern Beaches community	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 5 - People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Experience of social cohesion by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations experience the same level of social cohesion as the broader community. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 5 - People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Feeling valued as part of the Northern Beaches community	Measures the extent to which residents feel recognised, respected and included as members of the community	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 5 - People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Feeling valued by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations feel as valued as others. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly

Outcome	Indicator	What it measures	Tracking level	Desired trend	Data source	Frequency
Outcome 5 - People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Ability to participate without exclusion or discrimination	Measures whether residents feel able to take part in community life without experiencing exclusion, unfair treatment or discrimination	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 5 - People feel valued, respected and welcomed	Experience of exclusion or discrimination by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations report higher levels of exclusion or discrimination. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 6 - People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Experience of education opportunities	Measures residents' perceptions of access to education and learning opportunities that support personal development, skills and long-term participation in community and economic life	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 6 - People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Experience of education opportunities by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations perceive the same access to education. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points. Older people excluded from this disaggregation.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 6 - People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Experience of opportunity for all	Measures residents' perceptions of whether opportunities in the Northern Beaches are available fairly and equitably across the community	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 6 - People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Experience of opportunity by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations perceive the same level of opportunity. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly

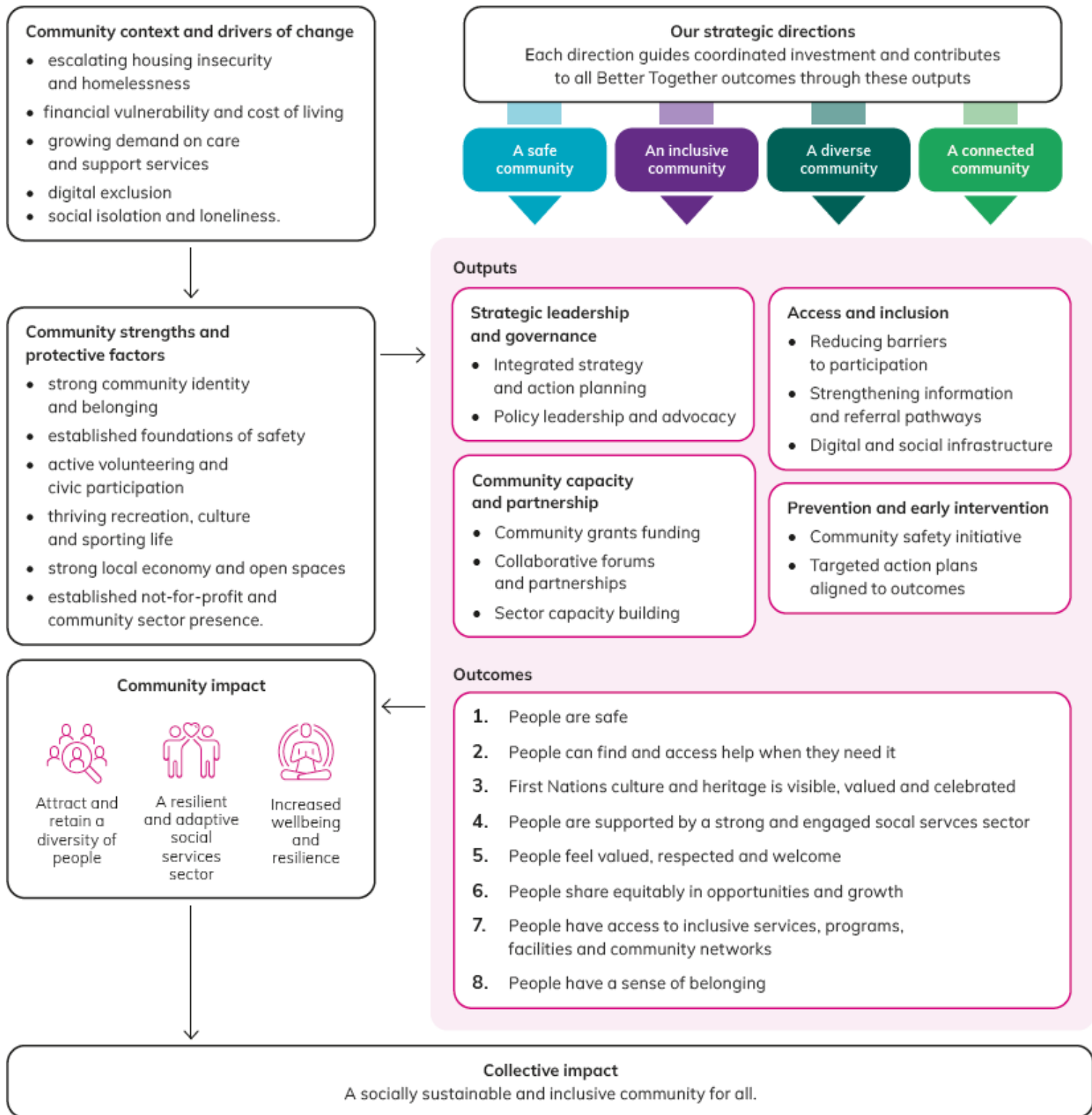
Outcome	Indicator	What it measures	Tracking level	Desired trend	Data source	Frequency
Outcome 6 - People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Experience of job prospects	Measures how residents rate local employment opportunities and their confidence in accessing meaningful work	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 6 - People share equitably in opportunities and growth	Experience of job prospects by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations rate job prospects differently. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points. Families excluded from this disaggregation.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 7 - People have access to inclusive services, programs, facilities and community networks	Percentage of residents who say they can access information about how they can participate in community activities	Measures how easy residents find it to access information that enables social participation and connection	Community experience	Increasing	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 7 - People have access to inclusive services, programs, facilities and community networks	Access to information by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations experience the same ease of access to information. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 7 - People have access to inclusive services, programs, facilities and community networks	Ability to participate without access barriers	Measures whether residents feel able to take part in community life without experiencing access barriers	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 7 - People have access to inclusive services, programs, facilities	Experience of access barriers by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations report different levels of access barriers. Population group score and	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly

Outcome	Indicator	What it measures	Tracking level	Desired trend	Data source	Frequency
and community networks		equity gap tracked as separate data points.				
Outcome 7 - People have access to inclusive services, programs, facilities and community networks	Volunteering	Measures participation in volunteering activities, including whether volunteering is reaching priority populations	Community experience	Increasing	ABS	5 yearly
Outcome 8 - People have a sense of belonging	Proportion of residents who feel a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood	Measures residents' perceived sense of belonging and connection to their local community, reflecting how strongly people feel accepted, included and part of neighbourhood life	Community experience	Increasing	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 8 - People have a sense of belonging	Belonging by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations experience the same sense of belonging. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 8 - People have a sense of belonging	Experience of strong sense of community	Measures how strongly residents perceive their local area as having a strong sense of community, including trust, connection and shared identity	Community experience	Improving	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 8 - People have a sense of belonging	Sense of community by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations experience the same sense of community. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly
Outcome 8 - People have a sense of belonging	Frequency of loneliness	Measures how often residents report feeling lonely, reflecting the	Community experience	Decreasing	Community Views Survey	2 yearly

Outcome	Indicator	What it measures	Tracking level	Desired trend	Data source	Frequency
		prevalence of loneliness across the community.				
Outcome 8 - People have a sense of belonging	Loneliness by priority population group	Tracks whether priority populations report different levels of loneliness. Population group score and equity gap tracked as separate data points.	Reach (equity gap)	Reducing gap	Community Views Survey	2 yearly

Appendix 1: Our theory of change

Our Theory of Change (ToC)



The theory of change shows how the conditions and strengths in our community connect, through our strategic directions and outputs, to the outcomes and collective impact we are working towards.

Community context and drivers of change

- escalating housing insecurity and homelessness
- financial vulnerability and cost of living
- growing demand on care and support services
- digital exclusion
- social isolation and loneliness.

Community strengths and protective factors

- strong community identity and belonging
- established foundations of safety
- active volunteering and civic participation
- thriving recreation, culture and sporting life
- strong local economy and open spaces
- established not-for-profit and community sector presence.

Our strategic directions

- a safe community
- an inclusive community
- a diverse community
- a connected community.

Outputs

Each direction guides coordinated investment and contributes to all Better Together outcomes through these outputs.

Outcomes

The 8 outcomes, listed earlier in this framework, describe the community conditions Better Together is working towards.

Collective impact

A socially sustainable and inclusive community for all.