



YOUTH TRANSITIONS OCTOBER 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs was briefed on 15 September 2011 by the Minister of Social Development and Employment and a group of officials on a new service that is being developed to replace the current Youth Transition Services. The purpose of this service is to improve the outcomes for at risk young people, 16-17 years of age who are NEET [not in Education, Employment or Training] or at risk of becoming NEET.

This service will be available to 16-17 year olds categorised as NEET. The Ministry of Education will provide the information on all young people leaving school to the Ministry of Social Development who will carry out a risk assessment based on factors such as qualifications, history of truancy and lack of destination post school. The young people will then be referred to the new service (currently called Youth Pipeline). Current YTS funding will be more focused on this high risk group of young people, rather than all young people, regardless of their risk of a poor transition from school. It is understood the new model will be available to approximately 13,000 young people classified as NEET, rather than to the 55,000 school leavers who are currently eligible to access YTS where it is available.

The new service will be funded for destination outcomes. Ideas for how this funding might be applied include:

- Administration, participation and organisation overheads
- Milestone achievement or interim destination
- Final destination payment when young person achieves a successful outcome such as
 - Return to education or training
 - Achieved NZQA level 2
 - Not on a benefit 3 months after their 18th birthday
 - Employment

Youth Transitions funding will no longer be available for a universal service to young people but overall more funding will be applied to the at risk group of young people. Regional Commissioners budgets for youth programmes will remain and other funding available for youth transitioning from compulsory schooling includes the Youth

Guarantee, training from the PTE sector, tertiary study funding, trade academies and employment programmes. There will be some funding available for existing services to change their focus, as phase 1 of this project to be implemented from December 2011 until 30 June 2012.

The service will remain voluntary and tenders will be called for in Feb 2012 for beginning July 2012.

TASKFORCE RESPONSE

1. School Leaver Data

The Taskforce supports the transfer of school leaver data by the Ministry of Education to local providers. It is important however, to ensure the data is sent frequently. Ideally the information would be sent as the young person left school or at the very least every 2 weeks. Young people are very mobile and once they have left school can be difficult to find if a long period has passed. In addition it is important for local providers to have accurate information, in a simple form and in a timely fashion in order to work with these young people.

We do not support the filtering of that information by government agencies. The more processes the data goes through the more chance there is of mistakes and long time lapses. Whilst we accept that agencies may wish to cross reference data for their own purposes this does not need to be done before the names and contact details are sent to local providers.

2. Targeting

The Taskforce believes that all school leaver data, via a contact centre, should be sent to local providers regardless of perceived need, school qualifications, or behaviour. It is our view that every young person should be entitled to support to transition from compulsory school to the next phase of their lives. This view is based on research which shows when a service is targeted to so called “at risk” these people are stigmatised, difficult to engage and do not feel part of a caring society. Often these young people have been categorised as trouble all their lives, having often come from “dysfunctional families” with severe problems to deal with and once categorised have gone on to fulfill those expectations.

This is not to say that the Taskforce does not believe that different processes and programmes are needed to deal with this group but rather that all young people should be given the option to engage with enablers in their communities in order to make a positive transition from compulsory education. We are not advocating any compulsion for a young person to be involved but that they should be aware of the services available and that communities are resourced to provide that support.

In addition we do not believe a universal system would be cost prohibitive.

3. Funding Model

The Taskforce believes there should be transparency and accountability in funding for services and programmes. All services and programmes need to be accountable for the funding they receive to ensure the desired outcomes are being achieved. This requires a contract which clearly states the purpose, aims, outputs and agreed outcomes for that funding. Accountability for seeing these contractual obligations are met rest with the funder. In the case of youth transitions it is important to be clear about outcome goals and aims.

The Taskforce believes the outcome goal should be “that every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own communities.” Services need to be able to ‘attribute’ their role in achieving this outcome and that it provides value for money. This is possible through a sound data collection and recording process which is regularly reviewed and shared with stakeholders and other interested parties.

The proposed ‘funding’ model is based on incentivised targets using a top-down outcome driven approach. In contrast, the social sector is largely values-driven and underpinned by clinical social-work and kaupapa Maori frameworks which inform how they work with young people (and their whanau/families). It is difficult to see how this incentivised approach will work in these situations.

Milestone and withholding payments can also lead to unintended outcomes such as the ‘too hard’ basket being left out (again), referral/placement priority rather than the best option for the young person. Moreover, it can also drive the re-categorising of ‘young people’ to achieve targets and holding on to clients who should be referred elsewhere.

The issue of ‘attribution’ of outcomes is also made difficult in community settings where referrals will be made because NEET youth will undoubtedly require multiple interventions. Because only one Provider can be attributed with the ‘milestone’ outcomes- even though it may have been another Provider(s) providing concurrent and/or critical interventions, this scenario certainly provides an opportunity for community dissatisfaction and perpetuation of Provider silos.

The Taskforce also believes it unfair to part-fund Providers and with-hold payments when they are working with the most at-risk young people in any community. This problem is compounded because the service is also ‘voluntary’ which means there is no compulsion for a young person to engage or remain engaged with a Provider. The incentive payment for young people engaged post-18 years also assumes young people particularly those in a training environment, will choose not to take up their legal entitlement to income support (benefit) at 18 years old, if they meet the criteria.

Finally, we believe the Taskforce model is based on universally acknowledged evidence that ‘youth transitions’ is not a linear process, but one of unpredictable change for *all* young people within the ‘youth’ cohort. It is a given, that the chosen target group of young people will be *more* difficult to place and retain in school, training or employment

and will therefore require the best support we can provide, backed up by evidence and best practice.

Therefore the Taskforce does not support ‘incentivised’ contracts or the withholding of payments.

The Taskforce does support contracts being put out to tender.

CONCLUSION

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs supports the current government drive to provide young people in education with greater variety of pathways to improve their educational outcomes – e.g. youth guarantee, academies, senior colleges, partnerships with polytechnics, LSV.

The Taskforce further supports the need to reduce the NEET figure and to provide specialist services to this group and to involve the Ministry of Education in the supplying of school leaver data as a directive rather than by the negotiation of school by school agreements. We also support a focus on service delivery and greater accountability from providers and government agencies.

The Taskforce however, remains committed to its Connections model which has at its heart the referral of all school leavers, via a national contact centre, to services and opportunities within their communities. We do not believe this is mutually exclusive of those classified as NEET or requires additional funding.

NEET young people who go on to benefit at 18 are not the result of poor youth transition providers but rather a failure in our whanau/family, health and education systems.

If a new youth service is to achieve the desired outcome of reducing 18 yr old beneficiaries by targeting the most at risk school leavers or non-attendees, it will need specialised, clinical staff. The Taskforce does not believe most current YTS providers have this capability without significant restructuring.

We propose a two stage process to support all our young people:

1. Focus on NEET with a proportion of the YTS current budget
2. Develop a single National Youth Transition Contract which would:
 - Develop a national contact centre to be available to all school leavers
 - Develop local services under the guidance of local governance groups.
3. As an interim measure we suggest that the South Island Work’n it Out model be extended (with a single YTS contract) to the whole of the South Island to test the model proposed in 2 above.