



# SUPPORTING YOUTH TRANSITIONS

An examination of what communities are doing to support their young people as they transition from school, training and employment.

Mayors Taskforce for Jobs

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## Executive Summary

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs commissioned this report as part of the strategy to achieve their goal that “all young people under 25 years be engaged in appropriate education, training, work or other activities that contribute to their long-term economic independence and well-being”.

This piece of work sits amongst a range of planned activities and initiatives being undertaken in 2010 to improve support systems and outcomes for young people in critical times of transition (from school, training and employment) in an environment of economic recession that further serves to make young people an even more vulnerable group within the labour market.

The research brief was to critically examine what particular communities were doing to support young people in their transition. The investigation was specifically to reveal what works and why, what are common challenges/ opportunities and identify who should hold the overarching responsibility for those not engaged in education, training or employment.

The report provides a brief overview of the landscape and identifies in two parts; the approaches taken by the New Zealand Government (education and employment assistance) and those taken by local communities (programmes and community based services) to support transitions. The community response includes data gathered from interviews with Providers working with young people as well as feedback from young people who participated in fora and focus groups around the country.

### Summary of findings

#### **Commonalities between Providers, and community programmes that support good transitions:**

1. Emphasis on using trained and skilled staff (all Providers identified STAFF as critical)
2. Successful organisations fully engage with schools, industry and community.
3. They engage with whanau and families, as far as possible.
4. They focus on building positive relationships with young people.
5. They use activities that young people relate to.
6. Genuinely holistic and provide support across a range of risk factors.
7. Majority have approximately 20 years experience - so have established networks, understanding of sector and linked to community/schools/other pathways.
8. Cultural relevance and positive reinforcement of Maoritanga.
9. Raised expectations and aspirations of the young people they work with.

#### **The Challenges in providing transitions support:**

1. Short-term political pressures do not fit with long term horizon of social prevention work.
2. Recognition that ‘youth disengagement’ is symptomatic of a range of factors and that collectively we must seek solutions to prevent disconnection in greater numbers or in younger age groups<sup>1</sup>.
3. Unclear lines of responsibility between government agencies<sup>2</sup> with numerous groups jointly responsible for achieving outcomes and reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> As was noted by several Providers, children as young 8 years old were presenting in their services.

<sup>2</sup> Mentioned: Ministries of Education, Social Development, Health and The Tertiary Education Commission.

4. Funding, particularly the commissioning and contracting process that creates competition and instability.
5. Funded for outcomes which in some cases difficult to prove and not particularly realistic for the high risk group they are working with or in this economy.
6. Collaboration and integrating services within communities.
7. Lack of long term evaluation of programmes and a national database that evidences what works in Aotearoa/New Zealand across the range of youth focussed interventions.
8. The effect of the economy negatively impacting on young people and their families.

### **Young People's thoughts on Transitions:**

Young people told us across the board that they found the process of 'transition' difficult. Whilst youth participants came from different backgrounds and community size, their concerns and feedback were remarkably similar. Key issues were:

1. They had limited or no access to good career information and resources (careers advice and people to talk to)
2. They lacked appropriate support to make decisions about pathways (parents and schools)
3. All wanted employment support (practical and financial skills)
4. A perceived lack of opportunities (in training and jobs)
5. All wanted work experience (hands-on and a stepping stone)

Young people also spoke at length of the social pressures facing them, as well as other perceived barriers that were unhelpful to the transition process such as 'age discrimination' and negative stereotyping of young people, family and whanau influence, financial worries and general disconnection from the school system.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Recommendation 1: Develop a national Youth Transitions Strategy and Action Plan**

*We recommend that a Youth Transitions Strategy and Action Plan be developed that will transcend short-term political gains and provide long term guidance and funding<sup>3</sup> to support every community within Local Authority boundaries in New Zealand<sup>4</sup>.*

*As a priority, the strategy needs to address the current challenges faced by Maori and Pacific Youth.*

### **Recommendation 2: The Ministry of Education in conjunction with schools, review career education policy and strategies with the view to improving the quality of career education in all schools.**

*The Ministry of Education should be held accountable and encouraged to provide improved and quality interventions, participate and collaborate with communities. Key areas of focus are:*

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<sup>3</sup> Obviously, funding is finite and these activities should be delivered within similar budgetary constraints.

<sup>4</sup> The Mayors Taskforce is advocating a process 'Youth Connections' which empowers communities to work with young people as they transition. This report is not yet released but will be made available on the website:  
<http://www.mayorstaskforceforjobs.co.nz/index.php>

- *MOE to share vital intelligence on school leavers*
- *Improved career information*
- *Better linkages to labour market information and networks*

**Recommendation 3: The Government in conjunction with MOE, TEC, employers and The Industry Training Federation develop new vocational education and training pathways.**

*To provide additional pathways for young people entering the training and or work environment.*

**Recommendation 4: Encourage local response to national Youth Strategy**

*Implement a clear community mandate to address local transition issues (in particular develop strategies to address those not engaged in the community), encourage collaboration and local aspirations.*

**Recommendation 5: Appropriate Funding allocated to address youth transition issues**

- *Appropriate funding to support transitions is integrated, cohesive, focuses on the long-term and is sustainable. Government agencies need to corroborate funding rounds, shared outcomes and reporting.*
- *Funding should also be made available to all communities in order to co-ordinate their local transition 'processes' (as distinct from delivering a service).*
- *Develop appropriate interventions to identify and work with young people who are at risk of disengagement.*
- *Local communities design initiatives that increase job/training opportunities - particularly for Maori and Pacific youth.*

**Recommendation 6: Workforce development.**

- *Funding should be allocated to organisations to support the recruitment and retention of quality staff through provision of professional development opportunities.*
- *Staff are recognised and supported to engage with their communities over and above the core relationship with a young person.*

**Recommendation 7: A universal evaluation tool and national database developed**

- *Develop a culturally relevant and appropriate evaluation framework that enables self assessment for Providers, to enhance self-awareness and identify capacity building opportunities<sup>5</sup>.*
- *Establish an independent group to administer funds to enable organisations to access support to do 'self evaluation' or engage independent evaluators.<sup>6</sup>*
- *Begin addressing the distinct lack of long-term evaluation on programmes supporting young people by establishing a national database of what is working around New Zealand. This can then be used to inform policy and practice.*

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<sup>5</sup> This process is separate from evaluating contractual outcomes outlined in service agreements/contracts

<sup>6</sup> Established in Christchurch c 1990s, the Reputation Bank was an initiative that provided funds to community organisations who wished to either self-evaluate their performance and measure success or engage an independent evaluator. The fund was regularly over subscribed.

## Methodology

It was noted in the literature that most of the discourse about disengagement and young people, is on adult terms defined by politicians, policy makers, teachers, parents. Therefore we set out to also consult with young people and look at *what is engaging* and *less engaging* when accessing support during times of transition. Taking that into consideration the research process deliberately sought to obtain:

1. Young People's views
2. Provider views
3. National and International perspectives via Literature review

We used a qualitative approach and involved the use of *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face), phone interviews and limited use of online feedback.

### The research questions were:

1. *Who and how are local communities supporting young people in their transition from school to training and employment opportunities?*
2. *What are current challenges and opportunities facing communities supporting the connection of young people to transitional opportunities?*
3. *How successful are organisations at meeting the needs of transitioning youth? How do they/we know?*

### Location of Youth Engagement Hui and Participant Organisations

Rohe/Region	Location of Youth Hui	Location of Participating Provider
<b>Te Taitokerau</b> (Northland)	-	Kaikohe, Whangarei
<b>Tamaki Makaurau</b> (Auckland)	Rodney, Papakura	Rodney, Auckland Central
<b>Waikato</b>		Hamilton
<b>Te Moana A Toi</b> (Tauranga, Whakatane)	Murupara, Whakatane	<sup>7</sup>
<b>Te Arawa</b>	Turangi, Taupo	Rotorua
<b>Te Tairāwhiti</b> (Gisborne)	-	Gisborne
<b>Takitimu</b> (Hastings, Napier, Wairarapa)	Central Hawkes Bay, Flaxmere, Hawkes Bay	Napier
<b>Te Tai Hauuru</b> (Taranaki, Whanganui, Taumarunui, Manawatu)	South Taranaki District, Stratford, Palmerston North, New Plymouth, Horowhenua	New Plymouth, Whanganui, Palmerston North
<b>Te Whanganui a Tara</b> (Wellington, Levin and Blenheim/Nelson)	Levin	Wellington Central, Porirua, Nelson
<b>Te Wai Pounamu</b> (Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill)	Greymouth	Christchurch, Southland

<sup>7</sup> The Provider identified within this rohe was invited on several occasions but due to frontline commitments was unable to complete the Provider interview.

## **Youth Fora and Youth Focus Groups**

A total of fourteen 'youth fora' and two 'transition support focus groups' provided data that has informed this project. Participants were invited to attend by key networks in each community to ensure there was a good mix of ages (15-24), background, current engagement activity and gender. Approximately, 270 young people participated within fora held around the country. Participants identified their main activity as either attending: Secondary School, Alternative Education, Training, Working or unemployed. A large number of young people were also engaged in part-time work or were looking for it. Comments made by young people will be incorporated into the body of the report and as highlighted 'youth comments' in the text boxes. The range of questions or conversation starters remained the same in each forum, but the direction was often led by the specific issues of each community.

The youth focus groups sought specific service information, with participants representing different service arms of key youth organisations in the Manawatu and Taranaki. The interview schedule is appended to the report.

### **On how Providers were selected:**

Eighteen Providers were drawn from the ten Te Puni Kōkiri rohe. The process of selection included whakawhanaungatanga (establishing relationships), making contact with existing key networks and links, expressions of interest were also posted via NZAAHD and Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) networks and investigation into groups funded by the Tertiary Education Commission and Work and Income regional offices. Contact was also made with branded Youth Transition Services to gain feedback and direction to providers in their areas.

This consultation process led to a number of organisations being identified. We wished to profile providers who had some or all of the following characteristics:

- A historical and/or national overview of their sector
- They are known to and by others and spoken of positively
- They have a profile and credibility within their sector
- They know their rohe/area well
- They are aware of the unique and special needs of their clients

After identifying a range of providers, the Team endeavoured to have at least two operators and/or distinct communities from each rohe to illustrate the range and scope of programmes being delivered from Kaikohe to Southland<sup>8</sup>. We wished to have a mix of small and large, metro and rural communities represented. It was intentional that the team focussed on 'community' providers that were established to address and respond to community need with programme delivery, as opposed to other organisations delivering nationally driven services such as Youth Transition Services (YTS) or structured youth programmes<sup>9</sup> such as Youth and Conservation Corps. However, within three rohe it was necessary to include providers that also hold YTS contracts, because YTS was just one

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<sup>8</sup> The team made contact with over forty five organisations in order to meet the project brief. Whilst we made every attempt to secure interviews with an operator in each rohe, it was simply not possible given the schedule, demands and often front-line role of many Service Managers.

<sup>9</sup> For more information please see the very comprehensive report released in 2009 by MYD on Structured Youth Programmes see <http://www.myd.govt.nz/working-with-young-people/youth-development-best-practice/structured-youth-development-programmes.html> (Retrieved December 2009).

particular service arm amongst a range of long-standing programmes that met the research brief.

Providers made the decision internally who would be interviewed. The majority of participants had been with their organisation for a number of years and were either Managers or Chief Executives, employed full time.

Participating organisations represent a range of legal frameworks such as: Charitable Trusts, Incorporated Societies, Registered Companies and Registered Private Training Establishments. The range of organisations show the diversity and commonalities of structures and processes to meet their specific community need.

### **Provider Interviews:**

These interviews were conducted *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face, where possible), or by telephone. Each provider was spoken to by a member of the team and asked a series of questions relating to the following topics:

- Organisational Information
- Staff Information
- Programme and Service Information
- Participants
- Infrastructure for Supporting Positive Transition Programmes

### **Literature Review:**

The Literature review examined a range of national and international lit on the topics of:

- Youth in Transition
- Youth Disengagement and Programme delivery
- Youth Development

### **Research Process:**

Each focus group, fora and interview was transcribed, and then collated to develop a summary of responses. Responses<sup>10</sup> were discussed within the Research Team and then sorted into common themes and key points by question. A draft report was then written up by the Project Manager, and then 'peer reviewed' by the Research Team.

Providers were asked to provide supplementary information if they were unable to provide it at the interview. This information was usually statistical, providing data on outcomes or participant demographics.

**The Research Team** was Bry Kopu (The BMK Group Ltd), Jan Francis and Mo Pettit (Mayors Taskforce for Jobs), Marcus Akuhata-Brown (Tukaha Global Consultancy Ltd) and Manu Caddie (Ahi International Ltd). Whilst Ms Kopu and The BMK Group Ltd team (Te Rehua Cameron, Marnie Reinfelds, Kiterangi Cameron and Alexis Andrew) undertook all of the investigatory work, the Project Team provided awhi, support and advice throughout the process.

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<sup>10</sup> Please note: Provider comments have been tagged with individual codes to maintain their anonymity e.g. IW1-17 or IT1-IT13

**Acknowledgements:** We would sincerely like to thank Te Puni Kōkiri and all of those who agreed to participate in this project. The generosity of the Providers was amazing, particularly in your sharing ideas and experiences. Your openness enabled a greater understanding of the challenges many of you face as you unleash the hidden talents and potential of many young people around Aotearoa/New Zealand.

A huge thank you must also be extended to the young people who also gave their time in fora and focus groups. Your korero added a much needed dimension to our understanding and a clear reminder that services should be about relevant and connected. Kia kaha!

Thank you.

## 1.0 Introduction

The aim of this report is to examine a range of different initiatives operating around NZ to illustrate what is available, what is working and what are challenges in supporting young people's transitions. The goal of all of the participating Mayors and the communities they represent is the full participation of young people in all aspects of civic and community life. They want happy, healthy and productive young people who are strong in their identity and know where they are going and how to access resources to get there! Importantly this report also provides practical examples of what communities are already doing up and down the country to make this a reality.

The report makes the links between what the literature says and what communities know, feel and act on through experience and values. It also makes the connection between what supports and what challenges the realisation of the full potential of young people, with recommendations to strengthen and address these issues.

At a time of public and philanthropic spending constraint, making sure funding is allocated to the best advantage of communities is a key issue.

Of course, Mayors and local authorities cannot support the ambitions of young people by working in isolation. It is necessary to build strong partnerships with communities, hapu and iwi to create an environment where young people's hidden talents are exposed and they feel empowered to achieve their potential.

## 2.0 The context; why focus on Young People?

### 2.1 Rationale 1: Mayors Taskforce For Jobs Vision

The Youth Transitions Vision is that *'every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own community'*. The Mayors Taskforce believes this is central to community well-being and should be the reality for *all* young people in *every* community in New Zealand. Every participating Mayor believes in the latent potential of their youth populations and wishes to enhance local opportunities to ensure young people are connected to and engaged in meaningful activities that lead to better choices and independence.

The most up to date research<sup>11</sup> and communities themselves tell us that parents, schools, peers and communities can make a big

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<sup>11</sup> We have undertaken many community fora and referred to New Zealand specific literature on this issue.

**Mayors and local authorities cannot support the ambitions of young people by working in isolation.**

**It is necessary to build strong partnerships with communities, hapu and iwi to create an environment where young people's hidden talents are exposed and they feel empowered to achieve their potential.**

difference by providing certain conditions which make it more likely that young people will thrive. Downstream, there are even bigger implications. The whole country benefits when young people grow up to be mentally healthy, well-educated employed, employable, non-violent, honest and law-abiding, drug-free and to become parents only once they have finished schooling and established careers.

## 2.2 Rationale 2: Young people told us, so we listened:

The youth fora and focus groups provided an important insight into what young people are thinking, feeling and perceiving about the issue of transitions. Common themes to emerge from the groups were:

On Transitions	Frequency	Comment
Young people and their families need good career advice and information	High	This was made across many groups. Young people believed there were gaps in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus and timing, needs to be earlier in school life</li> <li>Quality of info</li> <li>Scope and range of career choices beyond University/Polytechnic (Trades often not included)</li> <li>Parents and whanau often misinformed and need quality career advice too</li> </ul>
Young people want communities that are opportunity rich	High	This was mentioned at each hui. All young people want communities that have opportunities for them to be engaged in. There were BIG gaps in their perceptions about training and work. Many mentioned they would leave their home town to pursue opportunities elsewhere.
Schools not responding to the needs of all students	Med-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools were seen as not providing the necessary skills to transition well, or “not relevant to our future”.</li> <li>Often, career advice was poor</li> <li>Teachers expectations were low</li> <li>‘Gateway’ perceived by many young people as excellent, but needs to be available to more young people.</li> </ul>

### Key issues for young people:

*They need quality career advice, information and support*

*They want communities that are opportunity rich*

*They want support from people who genuinely care*

*They want schools to respond to the needs of all students*

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work experience is classed as an important stepping stone.</li> </ul>
Lack of support and not sure where to get help and support	High-Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young people felt somewhat unsure and others even felt 'isolated' in knowing what is available and where to begin to look in order to get help?</li> <li>Lack of support generally from family was also cited as an issue</li> </ul>
<b>Pressures or challenges facing young people</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Comment:</b>
Lack of training/ work opportunity to stay in community	High	This issue emerged in most hui, and was certainly a much larger concern for those smaller communities. Young people wanted to work but perceived a distinct lack of support to find or obtain jobs.
Drugs and Alcohol	High	This was the most common issue and was raised by each community. The concerns that emerged were regarding: access, availability, drinking culture and pressure.
Gangs- either fear or pressure of recruitment	Med High	This was a prevalent issue in six of the fourteen communities. The issue of fear (on street), pressure on recruitment and crime was raised consistently amongst communities.
Lack of supports	Med High	Prevalent comment relating to home, school or community
Financial pressures	Medium	<p>Young people feeling the pressure, this is felt by family</p> <p>Young People don't want (student) debts</p> <p>Often strong pressure to leave school and get job by family</p>
Unhelpful Societal stereotyping	Low-Medium	This included racism and also racial stereotypes.
Support staff are not 'youth friendly'	Low-medium	This was mainly directed at formal services such as Work and Income staff and teachers.

## ***Pressures and challenges facing young people:***

*Lack of training or work opportunities*

*Drugs and Alcohol*

*Gangs and violence*

*Lack of supports*

*Financial pressures*

*Society's negative stereotyping of young people is unhelpful*

*Support staff are not youth friendly or supportive*

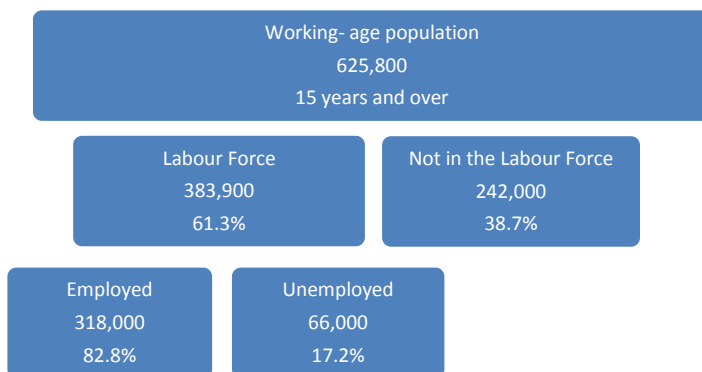
### 2.3 Rationale 3: The effect of the Economy on Young People

We acknowledge that the New Zealand economy entering recession has adversely affected many young people across industry, location and ethnicity. Whilst the path of the recession is difficult to predict, most experts agree that young people's vulnerability is because of their relative limited work experience, lack of skills and participation in industries (which are more likely to experience a fall in employment) in the short term.

However, the end of the worst phase of the recession looks to be in sight<sup>12</sup>. A key way to make sure that local economies recover well is to ensure that local people are educated and trained in the skills that employers need as we emerge from the downturn.

As at year end March 2010, there were 625,800 young people (aged 15 to 24), of whom 61.3% were in the labour force while 38.7% were not in the labour force. Of those participating, 82.8% were employed and 17.2 % were unemployed<sup>13</sup>. These results are illustrated below.

#### Summary of the youth labour market for the year to March 2010<sup>14</sup>



Youth unemployment measured 17.2% which is 5.0 % higher than the same time last year and 7.1 % higher than in 2005<sup>15</sup>. Whilst predicted that young people would bear the brunt of tough economic times we must pose the question; is it acceptable, when compared with the unemployment rate for all people, which was 6.4%, making the youth rate 2.6 times higher?

<sup>12</sup> LGA (2010)

<sup>13</sup> For more, see <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/lmr/lmr-quick-facts-youth.asp>  
Retrieved 20 May 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Labour (2010).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

As at June 2010, the

**Youth  
Unemployment  
Rate increases to  
18.2%.**

**Whilst labour market  
conditions have  
appeared to have  
improved overall, more  
experienced workers are  
finding employment  
first.**

**The unemployment rate  
for Maori and Pacific  
youth increased to  
30.3% and 30.6% up  
from 24.8% and 25.8%  
respectively in June  
2009.**

Source: Department of Labour, based on HLFS [www.dol.govt.nz/lmr/lmr-hlfs.asp](http://www.dol.govt.nz/lmr/lmr-hlfs.asp)

By ethnicity, the youth unemployment rate for both Māori and Pacific youth compared with European reveals a similarly alarming picture. Of even more concern are the rates for Māori and Pacific youth aged 15-19 years which indicates a 36.8% and 41.8% unemployment rate within their share of the labour force. This is clearly unacceptable.

**Table: Illustrating Unemployment rates by Ethnicity and Age Group<sup>16</sup>**

Year Ended	Ethnic Group (Total Response)	Labour Force Status	Age: 15-19	Age: 20-24
Mar 2010	Pakeha	Unemployment Rate (%)	21.2	9.1
	Māori	Unemployment Rate (%)	36.8	18.8
	Pacific	Unemployment Rate (%)	41.8	17.6
	Asian/Other	Unemployment Rate (%)	27.1	14.2

These statistics (when viewed in context of other social well-being indicators<sup>17</sup>) surely highlight the vulnerability of rangatahi Māori and Pacific youth within the labour market and provides a strong rationale to explore the issue of transition, the gaps and challenges and the need to address the systemic, cultural and structural barriers to gaining access and participation in the labour force.

## 2.4 Rationale 4: Current Issues ‘Youth in Transition & Disengagement’

### So, what do we mean by Youth Transitions?

Many of us have heard the expression ‘youth transitions’ either in relation to the branded Youth Transitions Service provided in many regions across New Zealand or in the developmental sense of young people transitioning from *adolescence to adulthood*. The growing literature base on the latter issue explores the various transitions to adult roles and responsibilities which can include: leaving home and school, forming relationships, getting a job and starting a family<sup>18</sup>. Whilst we fully acknowledge the

<sup>16</sup> Adapted from personal correspondence with the DOL Labour Market Information Analyst Team (27 May 2010), sourced from original data from the Household Labour Force Survey March Quarter 2010.

<sup>17</sup> See both: <http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/> and <http://www.nzinstitute.org/index.php/nzahead/> (Retrieved 30 May 2010)

<sup>18</sup> See: Ministry of Youth Development (2009), Rea & Callister (2009), Higgins *et al* (2008), Nairn *et al* (2007), Vaughn (2003), Vaughn & Boyd (2004), McLaren & Hill: Youth Transitions

### Research Team Comment:

*Complacency is simply not an option here.*

*Clearly the vulnerability of rangatahi Maori and Pacific youth provides a strong rationale to review the issue of transition, in order to address the systemic, cultural and structural barriers to gaining access and participation in the labour force.*

*On preventing further disengagement... we believe ‘tracking’ is crucial if we are to reduce the number of young people who are not engaged in our communities.*

*To say we simply do not know where they are ... is not good enough; they need to be on our radar and communities need to work out who is best to begin the process of re-engagement.*

importance of viewing young people in *context*, the focus of our report is largely focussed on the set of transitions that involves young people's participation in education, training and employment.

### **So what do we know?**

Whilst we are taking a more narrow definition, we believe 'transition' includes more than just the shift between school, to a Tertiary provider or employer – it also includes the broader period of when young people start to look for options, begin a job search, accumulate work experience and try to improve the match between the skills they learnt at school or training and those required in jobs<sup>19</sup>.

We also acknowledge as Higgins *et al* (2008) state, the transition from an Industrial Age in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to a Knowledge Age in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century means that forging a career path is fundamentally more difficult than it used to be. The pathway to navigating resources within the career landscape is often overloaded with choice and that decision-making is a process, not a one-off event, and is part of a life-course; choosing a post-school path is part of a wider lifestyle choice and is strongly shaped by context and culture; and decision-making is a social process, taking place in interaction with others. Vaughn (2003) asserts that we need to get beyond *linear* models of transition-to-work; she also suggests the preference to take more of a 'life-course' approach that puts young people's perspectives at the centre, in order to acknowledge the different meanings of life events and the different forms that can be given to adulthood.

We all inherently know that paid work has an important social role. It provides people with incomes to meet their basic needs and to contribute to their material comfort, and it gives them options for how they live their lives. Paid work is also important for the social contact and sense of self-worth or satisfaction it can give people.

So, what are some of the key influences of Career/Work<sup>20</sup> :-

- A number of factors influence adolescent choices about career - not only interests, but years of schooling, family income, parental education and job, and personality.
- Young people are more likely to succeed at work if they have spent more time at school, even if they have not received qualifications or have just scraped through.
- Young people are directly influenced by their parents' careers and level of education, especially in close, warm family/whanau.

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Report Series(2003)

<sup>19</sup> Also see, OECD: Jobs for Youth (2008) p 50

<sup>20</sup> Based on McLaren (2002) see also HRC (2010)

### **Research Team Comment:**

*The research team acknowledges that 'transitions' are not linear and that experimenting and sometimes making mistakes along the way is part of the journey for young people.*

*Therefore, we are not advocating a prescriptive community process to address transitions but rather encourage a localised response that is appropriate to each community. We believe Mayors can play a vital facilitation role in this respect.*

Because youth transition never occurs in isolation, we believe it is essential to look at the ways communities, parents, whanau/families can positively respond to supporting young people connect to educational and training opportunities in order to gain meaningful skills and qualifications; in order to pursue career paths that expand their horizons. The process of transition will support the effective navigation and negotiation of resources to lead happy, healthy and independent lives.

### **2.5 Rationale 5: Supporting young people who are particularly vulnerable; those not in education, training or employment**

Obviously, all young people experimenting and defining their pathway into adult-hood stand to face challenges but for young people who are particularly vulnerable they face innumerable risk and challenge in the short, medium and long term.

#### **Who are the ‘disengaged’ in NZ and how do we know?**

As at March 2010, the rate of those ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ (or NEET) broadly illustrates the degree of disengagement and vulnerability of young people in our communities. NEET youth are considered to be missing the opportunity to develop their potential at an age that heavily influences future outcomes. The Department of Labour (2009) states the NEET measurement serves as a good alternative to the traditional labour force participation rate, which is less relevant for youth given the high numbers of youth out of the labour force because they are at school or in tertiary study.

**Table: Illustrating NEET rates by Ethnicity and Age Group year End March 2010<sup>21</sup>**

<b>Year Ended</b>	<b>Ethnic Group (Total Response)</b>	<b>Labour Force Status</b>	<b>Age: 15-19</b>	<b>Age: 20-24</b>
Mar 2010	Pakeha	NEET Rate (%)	8.6	10.1
	Māori	NEET Rate (%)	17.5	17.7
	Pacific	NEET Rate (%)	12.4	16.8
	Asian/Other	NEET Rate (%)	5.0	11.7

These latest figures show once again the disproportion by ethnicity of youth disengagement in New Zealand. Māori youth have almost twice the level of disengagement to that of Pakeha youth (in both age brackets). The levels of rangatahi Māori are

<sup>21</sup> Adapted from personal correspondence with the DOL Labour Market Information Analyst Team (27 May 2010), sourced from original data from the Household Labour Force Survey March Quarter 2010.

**As at June 2010, the NEET rate declined marginally for the first time since June 2008.**

**There were 67,300 15-24 year olds who were NEET in the year to June 2010. This represented 10.7% of all 15-24 year olds down from 10.8% in March 2010.**

Source: DOL  
[www.dol.govt.nz/lmr/lmr-hlfs.asp](http://www.dol.govt.nz/lmr/lmr-hlfs.asp)

also closely followed by Pacific youth who fare slightly better in the younger age group.

The year-end figures show that 7.3% of youth aged 15 to 19 and 8.7% of those aged 20 to 24 years were NEET<sup>22</sup>. Among 15–19 year olds, there has been a strong upward trend in the male NEET rate in recent years, while the female rate has dropped, although there is evidence that it is starting to rise. A similar trend is also evident among youth aged 20 to 24 years.

### **Who is most vulnerable in the transitions between learning and employment?**

Obviously if we reflect on the statistics above, we can deduce that those most vulnerable in New Zealand are: Maori and Pacific Youth. However, if we look beyond the label NEET to the individual young people, we find a great variety of circumstance.<sup>23</sup> Numerically, these young people are a minority of the total. Within youth disengagement literature<sup>24</sup>, it is Sodha and Guglielmi (2009) that simply identify two distinct forms of disengagement – *active (acting out) and passive (withdrawing)*. Based on the literature<sup>25</sup>:

- Gender can play a role
- Age plays a role (rates increase with age)
- Race/Ethnicity is a factor
- Poverty is a cause and contributor (linked to educational status)
- Families in receipt of welfare
- Single parent
- Intergenerational disconnection, parents unemployed and Parent lacking formal school qualifications'

These factors are heavily influenced by history and the 'big picture' but with sensitive unpacking, this is where communities can collectively support young people and their families to minimise and prevent disengagement before it happens.

## **2.6 Rationale 6: Preparing Young People to take advantage of the recovery**

In the current economic climate, the Mayors Taskforce believes more than ever that the way that education, learning and employment choices for young people are commissioned must work well. Communities must make sure that service delivery at a local level gives young people increased options to continue in education or training at a time when the employment choices

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<sup>22</sup> DOL (2010), *op cit*

<sup>23</sup> Based on the challenge issued to local authorities in UK, see LGA (2009)

<sup>24</sup> See: Sodha and Guglielmi (2009), The Centre for Social Justice (2009), Higgins et al (2008)

<sup>25</sup> Note: We advise sensitive 'unpacking' of these factors rather than using it as a tick box to identify vulnerability.

### **Research Team**

#### **Comment:**

*If we look beyond the label of NEET to the individual young people, we find a great variety of circumstance.*

*We must use this time of economic challenge well to give young people entering the workforce the labour market skills they need to prosper when the recovery comes.*

are decreasing. We must use this time of economic challenge well to give young people entering the workforce the skills they need to prosper when the recovery comes.

### **3.0 So, what is being done to support young people in their transitions?**

This section is divided into two parts:

1. Government Measures to assist young people; and
2. Community Responses

#### **3.1 Part One: Central Government Measures to assist youth:**

The current government has several key tertiary education and employment initiatives<sup>26</sup> that seek to support young people in their transition. These are:

##### **Tertiary Education Initiative: Youth Guarantee**

The Youth Guarantee is a tertiary education initiative. While many 16 and 17 year olds will continue their education at school, Youth Guarantee recognises that others will be more motivated to achieve qualifications in a tertiary education setting. Its primary objectives are:

- To increase the educational achievement of 16 and 17 year olds not engaged in education, by providing them with improved access to study towards qualifications at levels 1 to 3 on the National Qualifications Framework in tertiary education.
- To improve transitions between school, tertiary education, and work<sup>27</sup>.

##### **Wage Subsidy: Job Ops Package**

Within the latest budget (May 2010), it was confirmed that an additional 26.7 million in young people in 2010/11 by expanding the successful Job Ops programme. The funding means the

<sup>26</sup> The Government is investing an additional \$61.1 million over the next two years to support New Zealanders into work through funding frontline staff and employment initiatives. This funding includes: \$26.7 million (\$16.7 million net) in 6,000 extra Job Ops places for disadvantaged young people in the 2010/11 financial year. \$21.8 million over two years to continue to pay for extra frontline Work and Income staff hired last year to help reduce unemployment levels. A \$12.6 million top-up for more employment assistance for the 2010/11 financial year. For more information <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/newsroom/factsheets/budget/2010/future-focus.html> (Retrieved 02 June 2010)

<sup>27</sup> For more information on Youth Guarantee see <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/jump-start+youth+guarantee+3> (Retrieved 25 May 2010)

#### **Research Team Comment:**

*If we are serious about supporting young people to make the best transitions possible then sharing information between agencies is crucial, as is early intervention both at school and when they leave.*

*Local networks need to be resourced and encouraged to communicate openly with one another.*

number of placements for 16-24 year olds with low or no qualifications will double from 6000 to 12,000. The programme was initiated by the National Government to help young New Zealanders stay in work through the recession by providing employers with a \$5000 subsidy to employ young people.

The focus on helping people affected by the recession continues, with extra funding of \$12.6 million in 2011/12 for Employment Assistance. This money goes into programmes like Straight to Work, encourages employers to take on beneficiaries through skills investment subsidies and mitigates long-term unemployment through schemes like Taskforce Green<sup>28</sup>.

### **The 90-Day Employment Trial<sup>29</sup>**

Effective 01 July, this initiative is part of a package to boost opportunities for people on the margins of the workforce who simply need an employer to give them a chance in a new job. In the current economic climate this will encourage small businesses to give a prospective employee a go without fear of costly and protracted legal proceedings if the relationship doesn't work out.

### **Community Max<sup>30</sup>**

This scheme supports the completion of projects that benefit the community or the environment and would not otherwise be done, while creating jobs for young people. Community Max provides assistance with: Wage subsidies, Supervision and Training expenses.

The expected outcome for Community Max is that the young person gains work experience and on the job skills that will eventually lead to unsubsidised employment. This scheme was launched by the Government in 2009, and recently announced it is investing a further \$17.4 million in Community Max programmes for Northland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato and the East Coast. This will provide for an addition 1,500 Community Max placements on top of the existing 3,000 placements. At the time of the launch, Minister Bennett said [Community Max] is a good opportunity for communities to play a part in addressing the serious issue of youth unemployment.

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<sup>28</sup> For more information on Job Ops see: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/job+ops+and+employment+assistance+extended>  
(Retrieved 25 May 2010)

<sup>29</sup> See: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/90+day+trial+period+starts+sunday>

<sup>30</sup> For more information on Community Max see [www.beehive.govt.nz/release/community+max+youth+work+communities](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/community+max+youth+work+communities)  
(Retrieved 25 May 2010)

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Community Max has been a very successful programme and used extensively by both local authorities and Maori organisations. The total placements (3,000) were reached well before expected.*

*86 Projects were within Maori organisations and over 400 jobs in 34 Councils.*

*82% of those completing, have remained off benefit.*

*There is no shortage of work to be done in our communities and it will be important in the future to find ways to support young people to remain in their communities and undertake some of this work.*

"This is all about providing opportunities - we see this as a very positive approach to addressing youth unemployment while helping fund useful community projects. Communities, through local councils, the Mayors Taskforce, iwi, and Pacific groups are being asked to identify regional projects for their young people to work on. I believe this is a win-win situation".<sup>31</sup>

The unexpected rapid uptake of the Community Max programme reflects not only the full subsidy provided but also the simplified application process and the trust placed with applicant groups.

### **Youth Transition Services**

Youth Transition Services (YTS) is a free service which assists young people into further education, training, work or other meaningful activities. The goal of the service is to improve a person's long-term independence and wellbeing. Currently there are 28 services branded under this umbrella.

### **Ministry of Youth Development<sup>32</sup>**

The Ministry's work involves keeping up to date on key issues affecting young people and promoting the government's Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa. In addition, it funds services for young people in local communities<sup>33</sup>. The Ministry of Youth Development is a unit of the Ministry of Social Development.

### **In-School Transition Initiatives: Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR) and Gateway**

STAR<sup>34</sup> gives schools considerable freedom to develop programmes that meet the needs of their students as the schools relate to STAR's objectives. These objectives are to:

- Facilitate transition to the workplace for students, particularly those intending to go straight into the workforce or those likely to leave school without any formal qualifications;
- Provide or purchase tertiary courses which will better meet students' needs, which will motivate them to achieve, and which will facilitate their smooth transition to further education, training or employment;

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<sup>31</sup> See: <http://beehive.govt.nz/release/community+max+youth+work+communities> (May 2010)

<sup>32</sup> For more information see <http://www.myd.govt.nz/about-myid/index.html> (retrieved 20 May 2010)

<sup>33</sup> This includes: Structured Youth Programmes: Conservation Corps and Youth Corps & Funding via the Youth Development Partnership Fund (administered by Ministry of Youth Development) and regional investments into 'workforce' development programmes.

### **Research Team Comment**

*Community Max illustrates that when young people are given an opportunity and a reason to participate (to obtain hands-on work experience and wages) and communities are given sufficient financial resources - it is completely possible to achieve positive outcomes.*

- Support students to explore career pathways and help them make informed decisions about their schooling and future work or study.

### Gateway<sup>35</sup>

Gateway is available to state and integrated secondary schools, and supports senior secondary students (Year 11 to Year 13+) undertaking structured workplace learning across a range of industries and businesses around New Zealand, while continuing to study at school.

Gateway delivery involves arranging structured workplace learning with the following characteristics:

- a formalised learning arrangement set in the workplace
- clear understandings about the knowledge and skills to be attained by learners
- clear understandings about the assessment method used (workplace learning).

***Young people told us Gateway was an excellent initiative and one they believed assisted in transitions.***

*Source: Youth Fora*

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<sup>35</sup> Retrieved May 2010, <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Funding/Fund-finder/Gateway/>

## 3.2 PART 2: Community Response

### *What are Providers doing to support young people in their transition?*

The eighteen participating providers were chosen from the ten Te Puni Kōkiri rohe, which begins in Te Taitokerau (Far North) and ends in largest region, Te Waipounamu (which begins in Kaikōura and goes south to Stewart Island). It was our intention to examine what different communities by: size, nature and location were doing to support their young people in their transitions. It was also deliberate that the team focussed on providers that were established to address and respond to community need with programme delivery, as opposed to other organisations delivering nationally driven or structured youth programmes or services- such as Youth Transition Services (YTS) or Youth and Conservation Corps. However, within three rohe it was necessary to include organisations that also hold YTS contracts. All three providers were established within the community prior to the YTS tender and had extensive experience delivering services to young people.

Participating providers represent a range of legal frameworks such as: Charitable Trusts, Incorporated Societies, Registered Companies and Registered Private Training Establishments. The range of organisations show the diversity and commonalities of structures and processes to meet their specific community need.

#### **On their Kaupapa (or Purpose for establishment)**

Whilst each organisation had its very own unique response to the communities they served, there were a number of striking similarities. The most prevalent of which was their level of resilience to survive the youth and community sector<sup>36</sup> and their commitment and passion for working with and for young people.

Providers discussed the changes over the years with some identifying radical change in their design and focus, with the majority stating their kaupapa or reason for establishment remained the same.

*The wording may be articulated more succinctly, but our kaupapa remains the same. (IW12)*

*Our kaupapa has remained the same, but the way we work is more pro-active. We made a deliberate choice to*

**“As a Kaupapa Maori organisation, ‘whanau ora’ is neither a new name nor kaupapa, this is our core business and we have been doing it for our whanau for over twenty one years”.** (IW17)

#### **Research Team Comment:**

*We support the move to acknowledge and recompense organisations who have been working in this way.*

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<sup>36</sup> All groups spoke about the adversity they face each year and the challenges of surviving various policy and funding changes with each new government. Many have seen the landscape change over the years and with it much casualty in the Youth and Tertiary Education sector.

*stop and reflect; then change our focus to that of prevention and the pro-active. (IT13)*

*Our kaupapa has always been strengths-based and focussed on rangatahi/ young people. (IT7)*

*As a Kaupapa Maori organisation, 'whanau ora' is neither a new name nor kaupapa, this is our core business and we have been doing it for our whanau for over twenty one years. (IW17)*

Six of the eighteen identified as Māori Providers, defined within this report as whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori organisations who:

- Provide or intend to provide services to one or more of the following: Māori individuals, whānau, hapū, iwi or Māori communities
- Are owned or governed by whānau, hapū, iwi or Māori organisations
- Have identifiable and clear accountabilities to whānau or hapū or Māori communities
- Are dedicated to meeting the needs of Māori clients<sup>37</sup>

#### **What has changed over the years?**

The majority of organisations have been in existence for 15 years or more, with eleven organisations established twenty years plus. This almost 'badge of honour' was worn with pride by all, who also believe their tenure has richly contributed to their strong networks, solid understanding of the sector and generally unflappable approach to braving the *funding and policy reforms* that are inevitable with political and administrative change.

Providers were asked, what has broadly changed over the years (since their inception), with many commenting:

*The issues facing our organisation are more complex and challenging. We are often confronted with deeply embedded social issues that are affecting families and whanau. Poverty has increased also; today it is much tougher for families. (IT1)*

*Generational differences are more apparent, not in a good way. (IT8)*

*The tertiary landscape has changed significantly and probably for the better. (IW9)*

*Nothing changed with TEC, they still completely fail Māori. (IW4)*

The most common response on changes within the sector they have experienced over the years is best encapsulated by:

**“The issues facing our organisation are more complex and challenging. We are confronted with deeply embedded social issues that are affecting families and whanau. Poverty has increased; today it is much tougher for families”. (IT1)**

<sup>37</sup> International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education (2002)

*Funding hasn't changed! It is still difficult to plan with current funding models. (IT7)*

*We understand the risk and rationale, but we have witnessed significant increases in administration, accountability, compliance and audit, but no extra money to fund it. (IW12)*

*Often we are asked to provide audit information in different ways - the same information. There is no integration. This takes a lot of time and energy. (IW4)*

This issue of compliance was noted in all interviews and accepted by most as a sign of the times, but clearly a source of frustration at the extra work required. On a positive note, many believed the proposed 'whanau ora' model<sup>38</sup> and 'integrated' contract approach may assist with this administration issue. A strong recommendation from the providers was all 'accountability, evaluation and audit requirements' need to be meaningfully linked across agencies to ensure improved service and outcomes for young people and their families.

What has become easier for providers across the board was:

*Positive change for us has happened both internally and externally. We know we have better processes and services, and we know our clients experience a better service! (IW12)*

*We have really been able to lift our professional services to another level. (IW4)*

*We really value our improved community relationships. We have worked hard to build awareness particularly with our schools and the Police. Ensuring people know what we do is important so we can work together more effectively. (IT6)*

Overwhelmingly, most providers are positive about the future in terms of their resiliency to survive policy and governmental change, but the annual drive to ensure they have sufficient funds to respond to community need is a genuine concern. Both the issue of sustainability and funding are discussed below, but it

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<sup>38</sup> Central to the Whanau Ora Model, is the support to build whanau capability, to strengthen whanau connections, to support the development of whanau leadership and to enhance best outcomes for them. The fundamental change for Government is that the approach will be underpinned by the integration of existing contracts into joint funding arrangements with other agencies. The inspiration for change will not be from advancing items on a checklist, activities and outputs to demonstrate compliance. Whanau ora, is not about bricks and mortar - about buildings and corporate branding. It is not about categorising problems or taking a deficit approach to our families in the greatest need. It is about doing things differently. We seek to minimise fragmentation, to reduce compliance and transactional costs, to encourage provider collaboration, to establish coherent and integrated services and to be motivated by the goal of positive whanau development. For more information see: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/whanau+ora+budget+2010> (Retrieved 02 June 2010)

#### **Research Team Comment:**

*We agree that accountability, evaluation and audit requirements need to be meaningfully linked across agencies to ensure improved service and outcomes are achieved.*

*Sharing best practice among providers is also essential if we are to achieve better outcomes overall.*

**“We understand risk and rationale, but we have witnessed significant increases in administration, accountability, compliance and audit, but no extra money to fund it”.**  
(IW12)

should be noted that providers require stability and flexibility in funding in order to effectively respond to their unique communities. The other issues such as: relationship management, compliance and administration are all things they are taking in their stride.

### **Strategic Planning for Sustainability**

All but one of the providers said they had formal planning processes<sup>39</sup>. These ranged from: annual to three yearly plans that provided strategic direction across all areas of their business. Most had business and operational plans which were updated and reviewed six monthly or annually. All providers believed they were cognisant of the issues facing the sector locally and nationally. The issue of sustainability was framed up by most in terms of ensuring funding avenues were stable and providing stability to their greatest assets, their staff. Succession planning was also mentioned as an issue, as was workforce capacity. Both, funding and workforce development are discussed in more depth below.

*We have invested in extra help with our planning to strengthen what we do, but also on areas we knew nothing about such as marketing. This has made a BIG difference for us. (IT6)*

*We have a basic plan. We stick to our kaupapa and we stick to our knitting. (IT7)*

*We have the whole lot! Three year strategic plan, tactical annual business and operational plans (reviewed 6 monthly). Our plans align with our funding and include consultation from our community, other organisations, young people and their families. We consult because we want to be relevant in the community; we are not afraid to reposition ourselves to meet the need. (IW12)*

### **On Funding**

The issue of funding drew out remarkably similar stories and experiences, with every single Provider - identifying funding and sustainability as an area of major concern.

Income generation varied between the groups, but all held contracts with at least one single government agency if not multiple contracts. Most had contracts with multiple agencies<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The one provider who didn't have strategic planning processes or documents, did say they had loose planning sessions in order to meet contracts, but operationally they preferred to be 're-active' and respond to their communities needs. They said they valued flexibility and had been under some pressure to conform by MSD, but they were resisting.

<sup>40</sup> Government agencies, these include: Ministry of Social Development (also includes Child Youth Family (CYF), Work and Income (WI), Family and Community Services (FACS), Ministry of Justice, Department of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Health. Others received funding from District Health Boards (DHB) and Public Health Organisations (PHO).

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Funding for community groups has been an on-going struggle since groups began delivering services on behalf of the NZ government.*

*Many organisations wish to use alternative delivery models, be able to advocate for their client group and challenge government policy.*

*This presents a tension for them when the major portion of their funding comes from central government.*

*The proposed Community Response Model which will see community fora making collective funding decisions could overcome some of the frustrations of community groups and provide recognition and sustainability for their work.*

that related to their speciality areas (health, justice, tertiary education or employment) as well as Local Authorities, Philanthropic Groups, Community sources (fundraising, donations and sponsorship), Partnerships and four mentioned income generation from user pays, either for Consultancy services (delivering training to external parties etc.) or programme delivery to groups (outside target group) and tithing<sup>41</sup>.

The majority of providers believed maintaining relationships with funders are critical to ensure clear communication and expectation is managed, nurtured and mutually beneficial.

*Relationships with funders are critical. Interestingly, two thirds of our funding is philanthropic, this allows flexibility. We put a lot of time into our 'partners' because we believe we have a shared goal of making our community a better place. (IT1)*

*We have noticed how important relationships with funders are. Fostering open communication channels creates mutual respect. We have seen how others have had run-ins and ended up ruining relationships, to their detriment. (IW12)*

*We have had tenuous relationships with funders. Some have no understanding of us or our workload. Managing corporate funding relationships are so much easier than government funders. (IW3)*

### **The key issues relating to funding were:**

#### **Sustainability**

The fundamental issue of *sustainability* was raised by the providers in every interview. As described above, many hold multiple contracts with agencies and all but one had formal funding strategies in place. The challenge for many in planning for sustainability was often frustrated by funding streams subject to short-term political pressures which often do not fit with long-term horizon of social prevention work.<sup>42</sup> The 'political appetite' or ideological drivers of the day, obviously influences social policy and subsequent commissioning process which seeks *outputs and outcomes* that may not be realistic in short-term. It was also perceived that taking the *short-term* 'top-down' approach is often to the detriment of evidenced based and consultative approaches preferred by communities. Many comments about sustainability mirrored those below:

<sup>41</sup> This was the case for one faith-based organisation.

<sup>42</sup> This also links to international research, refer Sodha and Guglielmi(2009), p17

#### **Research Team Comment:**

*Funding is often subject to short-term political pressures that don't fit with the long-term horizon of social prevention work.*

*Funding based on annual rounds provides little to no stability for staff and makes planning and service delivery difficult.*

**“To put it plainly... it is nerve wracking. We are responsible for the livelihood of our staff and the people we work with. Annual funding provides little security”.** (IW11)

*It is very tempting to apply for every new fund that turns up, because you think that will support the work we do, but often you have to jump through hoops and then the fund is only for one year! It is ludicrous when the issue you are meant to address is multi-faceted, involves intergenerational dysfunction and cannot be solved overnight. We can rattle off a number of fund initiatives that come and go, suddenly dropped in favour of new innovations???* (IW17)

*The issues of stability and sustainability are huge for us. We made a decision to step away from small funding rounds and those with short-term gains [on why?] because of the instability it creates for staff and clients; rather we focus our energy on three year plus contracts and planning 10 years out.* (IW 12)

*Income generation can be difficult. We take a long term sustainable approach and deliberately have formed partnerships and solid relationships.* (IT13)

Another sustainability issue identified by most organisations was the impact of annual funding rounds on their greatest assets - *their staff*<sup>43</sup>. Most cited recruitment and retention of (suitably trained) staff is made difficult by the lack of job security when subjected to twelve month contracts.

*To put it plainly... it is nerve wracking. We are responsible for the livelihood of our staff and the people we work with. Annual funding provides little security.* (IW11)

*We find it difficult to compete on salary and contractual terms in the market. Obviously, we want qualified staff in our team. But, we have directly lost staff to other organisations because they offer better wages and security.* (IW9)

*Difficult to build on our service when subjected to annual funding rounds. Continuity and building a strong team is obviously compromised.* (IT6)

*How long can you expect staff to stay in the sector with limited security? They [staff] tell us they need up to 3 years. When they leave we not only lose a trained team member but organisational knowledge is lost.* (IT13)

*Funding... often on a whim and a prayer!* (IT8)

### **Research Team Comment**

*The community sector has long been a major training ground for central and local government agencies, often at a cost to the organisation. This should be reflected in contracts with funding specified for training.*

**“One of the main issues we have with funding is the often ‘detached expertise’ of policy makers who dream this stuff up. By that we mean it is often patronising, lacking local evidence and bearing no relationship to our communities”.** (IT1)

**“Take for example the Fresh Start reforms and Innovation Fund. Projects are funded for 1 year and then expected to be sustainable. How? And *who* thought that up? ... Government departments have been failing our young people for years!”.** (IW17)

<sup>43</sup> Every single provider stated staff as their greatest asset.

## The disconnect between policy makers and communities:

Connected to the *political* is that funding and the contract model (or commissioning process) is often fragmented and perceived to be at the whim of policy makers. This issue was described by providers as a ‘disconnect’ between policy makers in Wellington and the realities of working at the coalface where you must have an intimate knowledge and experience on complex and systemic issues within communities to survive<sup>44</sup>.

*One of the main issues we have with funding is the often ‘detached expertise’ of policy makers who dream this stuff up. By that we mean it is often patronising, lacking local evidence and bearing no relationship to our communities. (IT1)*

*When we look at government reviews or evaluations it is often merely a stock-take or snap-shot. Communities are often by-passed and key questions or issues are missed. Perhaps, no-one is really willing to ask the right questions or the hard questions perhaps for fear of the answers???* (IW17)

*Take for example the Fresh Start reforms and the Innovation Fund. Great idea on surface, but projects are funded for 1 year only and then supposed to be sustainable. How? & who thought that up? Successful and effective groups cannot apply again. I have to ask if we are serious about supporting young people to make better choices in order to reduce youth offending then we need to make a long term investment into community solutions that work rather than perpetually seeking innovation and demanding sustainability in areas where government departments have been failing our young people for years. (IW17)*

*MTFJ should be encouraging policy makers and the Government to look at the long-term! Resources need to be allocated to communities that support sustainable development rather than the tempting short-term fixes. (IT13)*

*Funders and policy people are out of touch! (IW4)*

## The Funding and Contract model by nature instils competition but then also demands collaboration from communities.

This tension is often a point of conflict in communities, and one that has to be managed with intent by providers. Given the topic of our report, the example many gave was the tendering process for Youth Transition Services (in 2004/05). It was felt in many cases the process was not managed well and instead of bringing

<sup>44</sup> The majority of Providers stated this as an issue in one way or another.

## Research Team Comment:

*Communities have long memories and true collaboration needs to mean positive outcomes for all partners.*

**“Collaboration needs to come from the heart. It needs to be based on mutual respect and trust. The writing is on the wall we know... but a directive from MSD isn’t going to magically make people get along, trust one another and put aside grievances overnight...”** (IW17)

groups together to serve the interests of young people, still polarises some communities today. The most common thoughts are probably best expressed below:

*The funding environment is competitive. Funding is foisted upon us and between us. (IT1)*

*Collaboration needs to come from the heart. It needs to be based on mutual respect and trust. The writing is on the wall we know... but a directive from MSD isn't going to magically make people get along, trust each other and put aside grievances overnight... (IW17)*

### **Funding for Outcomes**

Everyone agreed this was an important shift in the thinking from capturing 'outputs' to actual 'outcomes'. Many groups stated, it should be noted that Government contract funding often does not fully fund an organisation. Most contracts fund particular outcomes and the immediate resources needed by the organisation to deliver that service. Whilst there are often minimal overheads included, this does not take into account high clinical, cultural and business compliances needed to sustain a healthy, sound and quality service for the community.

### **Burden of Proof/Evidence and Evaluation**

Supporting young people to a positive outcome(s) was the goal for all providers, however the **attribution** of 'outcomes' in some cases is difficult to prove where multiple interventions may be occurring in complex social settings<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, in some cases it was pointed out, that some contracted outcomes are simply not *realistic* for the high risk group of young people many are working with. This is best summed up by two experienced providers:

*We are faced with the fact we can't 100% prove our outcomes. Evaluating our service is important to us. We capture and analyse a range of data, seek individual client feedback, run youth and whanau workshops to ensure we are meeting the needs and ensuring the positive development of our young people... (IW12)*

*We have high quality 'qualitative' data from our whanau/families. We are trying to source funds for an external evaluation as it is difficult to ascertain our results as they are difficult to measure. We think it will be a empowering to have good evidence of our effectiveness. (IT1)*

The *attribution* issue directly leads into the need for consistent or universal evaluation of programmes to support providers and communities moving beyond capturing contractual 'outputs'

<sup>45</sup> On this topic also refer to the Ministry of Health [Evaluation of Youth One Stop Shops](#) (2009)

### **Research Team Comment:**

*There is still confusion around the definitions of outcomes and outputs.*

*Reporting needs to be able to reflect the collaborative efforts of providers, as a positive outcome.*

**“The funding environment is competitive. Funding is foisted upon us and between us”.** (IT1)

**“We are faced with the fact we cannot 100% prove our outcomes.”**  
(IW12)

(often disguised as ‘outcomes’) to demystify the process, the outcomes and assist with planning. There is strong evidence from the interviews that whilst the groups all had monitoring and evaluation processes, the scope and scale of the work they were doing wasn’t always captured or attributable to just them. It appeared most providers would welcome the opportunity to have an appropriate evaluation tool to assess their practice but cite either lack of necessary resources (human/tools) or the time, to undertake this work.

If ‘evaluation’ support was provided, it would then also enable a national evidence base on what works in supporting young people to be established. A current gap for the sector is access to best practice information and resource, essentially because of the distinct lack of long term evaluation of programmes in New Zealand<sup>46</sup>. Of the Providers there was only one who was critically analysing evaluations and feedback over the last 26 years. This group had a ‘research and development’ arm that has enabled them to undertake a comparative scoping project of current and past whanau they have worked with.

Therefore, we strongly believe that more support needs to be given to providers/communities by way of developing a culturally appropriate tool (to New Zealand) to self-evaluate performance and secondly to build up a national evidenced base on what works across the range of interventions being publically funded. This needs to happen sooner rather than later and should be made available to communities in the commissioning process to avoid adhoc funding and strike a balance between evidence-based and innovation.

### **3.3 So, who are the young people these organisations are supporting and how?**

For the purpose of this report we asked Providers to focus on the work they did specifically to support the transition of 16-17 year olds. It should be noted however, that most Providers either worked *one on one* or in groups with young people aged 10-24 and in some cases with entire whanau/families.

Whilst a number of transitional challenges were identified within each rohe (region), overwhelmingly, most said young people were keen to learn, want to work and wished to remain connected to their communities *if* there were opportunities for training and employment. Young people themselves said:

*Our sense of belonging to this community is no different to an adult. We want to know our contribution is valued and respected. (Forum 10)*

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<sup>46</sup> New Zealand is not alone in this area see: Sodha and Guglielmi (2009), MOH (2009) MYD (2009)

#### **Research Team Comment**

*We strongly believe that more support needs to be given to communities by way of developing a culturally appropriate tool to assist with self-evaluation. This would enable a national database on ‘what works’ to be built.*

*This needs to happen sooner rather than later and should be made available to communities (and funders) to avoid adhoc funding and strike a balance between evidenced-based and innovation.*

*Young people like learning and want to learn (Forum 11)*

*We need more opportunities... we want to stay on the Coast... but may not be able to... (Forum 15)*

When asked about the young people not engaged in employment, education or training (NEET) in their community, the majority of Providers said they believed it was significant issue, but most couldn't provide actual numbers<sup>47</sup>:

*Our experience of NEET is that it is really affecting our urban communities particularly our Maori and Pacific young people. (IW4)*

*This is a huge issue, and a major area of concern in our community. Basically, MOE is useless! (IT8)*

*The issue is widespread in our community; the economy is making things very difficult employment wise, we have a lack of training... so we have pockets of idle youth. (IT6)*

*There are a lot of young people not engaged in our community, for different reasons... (IW9)*

*We consider this as a significant issue... and it is widening to include those who have quals. (IT5)*

*We refer young people to a reputable training provider in our region and they tell us that 75% of their students left school between the ages of 12-14. The issue of 16-17 years olds as NEET is frankly the tip of the iceberg. (1W17)*

These comments raise a very valid point discussed with some providers that:

The size of the problem is difficult to quantify not because they are invisible, but because often NEET young people do not want to be contacted or have interventions thrust upon them. Families often enable this disconnection because of their own negative experiences with education and agencies such as Work and Income<sup>48</sup>.

A second more important point to note is that NEET aged 16-17 are 'the tip of the iceberg' and that the worrying issue for communities is the 12-15 age bracket, who have been out of formal activities for several years. They are the hard core 16-17 year olds who are the worrying group within those classed as NEET. What draws these young people out is often: youth justice issues, accessing youth health services, accessing youth

<sup>47</sup> The exception was organisations who were also YTS providers, who have access to school leavers' data and other MSD intelligence.

<sup>48</sup> This was expressed across several interviews, one focus group and community fora.

### **Research Team Comment:**

*The size of the NEET issue is hard to quantify not because these young people are invisible but because they often do not want to be engaged. There is no doubt there are number of enablers allowing this to happen.*

*16-17 year olds who are NEET are probably the 'tip of the iceberg' and largely symptomatic of a range of factors that contribute to disengagement.*

*Improving communication between those with pockets of knowledge about 'whereabouts' is also important.*

development or training programmes that are ‘relevant’ to them such as technology based or those related to the arts. As such, a large number of referrals to all Providers primarily came as voluntary ‘self referral’ (or Peers and Whanau) or as a compulsory intervention via:

- Police
- Child Youth Family
- Schools

From the many discussions held, it appears that there is significant community knowledge/intelligence about who is NEET, but it is the connection between these pockets of knowledge that seems to be missing in some communities. Only two communities informed us they had formed a ‘strategic’ group to intentionally address this issue and in both cases said they were in their infancy.

Interestingly in the youth focus groups, young people had varying views on whether NEET it was an issue in their communities or not:

*NEET are youth, our peers and our friends... but we don't see it as a big issue. (FG 1)*

*It is a BIG issue in our community, linked to alcohol and drugs, crime, dope and people who don't think school is for them. (FG 2)*

Given time constraints we were unable to unpack the discrepancy in views between the two groups. It should be noted they were from different communities (in Taranaki and Manawatu) and were comprised of slightly different ages. Another interesting point was that the perception of the NEET issue was in direct contrast to the interviewed Providers in each community. One could make assumptions that for the first group who were slightly older, that being NEET was a stage or phase and perhaps a part of transitioning. In comparison, the other group clearly had negative associations with the label NEET.

### **The effect of the economy on young people**

Both providers and young people themselves identified the recession and the effect of the current economy as a having a generally negative effect on young people with increased poverty posing a greater challenge than in previous years<sup>49</sup>. This was probably best expressed, by a seasoned Provider:

*Times were tough for our families in the 90's but we have seen a definite increase in poverty. The recession*

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<sup>49</sup> This was noted as an issue for young people living independently and for those still living with family/whanau

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Those considered NEET in communities are generally considered as ‘problems’ and often blamed for their situation, when in fact communities have not been able to provide adequately for their needs, particularly around education, jobs and training.*

**Overwhelmingly young people told us: they were keen to learn, want to work and wished to remain connected to their communities if there were opportunities for training and employment.**

*has served to make things even tougher. We have families where the deprivation is compounded by their isolation, lack of transport and general access to resources and support. (IT1)*

During the focus groups and fora, young people across the entire country were critically aware of youth vulnerability in the job market and expressed their worries about financial issues both personal and that of their family.

*We are finding things difficult... financially. Some have lost jobs due to the recession and under 16 year olds are finding it very hard to find to get work... (Forum 6)*

*Many of us (our families) are facing financial difficulties; some of our parents have lost jobs. Family stress has led to giving up school and hanging out on the streets. (Forum 9)*

*We need more financial support and opportunities to get jobs, its difficult as too young, inexperienced and sometimes unskilled. (Forum 3)*

*There is pressure from adults/parents to leave school and get a job, any job, not necessarily what you want to do. (Forum 7)*

*Parents pay only for needs not wants anymore. (Forum 1)*

*Most of us leave at Year 11. You leave school to get money. (Forum 2)*

*It's hard to find part time work or after school jobs. (Forum11)*

*Young people need income – 16-18 year olds are not eligible for funding and wary of student loans. Many parents can't get assistance and are on benefits themselves. (Forum 5)*

### **3.4 How are young people being supported in their transitions around New Zealand?**

Throughout the interviews it was apparent that each provider was extremely passionate about their work, their involvement with young people and the difference they hoped to make with each and every individual or whanau/family they worked with. The range and scope of programmes and services offered by Providers includes:

**“Many of us (our families) are facing financial difficulties; some of our parents have lost jobs. Family stress has led to giving up school and hanging out on the streets”.**

**(Forum 9)**

#### **Research Team Comment:**

*The key support for young people is an environment where they feel safe, secure and listened to. In general the NGO/Community sector is best suited to provide this environment as young people in transition want to move away from institutional frameworks.*

- Youth Training and Employment skills
- Health and development services
- Literacy and Numeracy
- Mentoring
- Alternate Education
- Recreation
- Social services
- Cultural support
- Youth Development<sup>50</sup>

Some providers offered a combination of services and programmes while others may have been a Youth Training provider which also employs a 'youth development' or kaupapa Māori approach in delivery.

### 3.5 Key Operational Themes:

Interestingly, given the range of operations there were a number of similarities and key themes that emerged from the discussions about how each Provider supported young people in their transitions; these have been sorted into the following headings:

#### Critical service element

The most common response from Providers regarding their operations was the identification of three key elements to how they supported young people accessing their programmes and services:

1. **Having the right people.** This means, those who are professionally trained, have a good understanding of sector and young people, have boundaries, are good role models and have a passion for working with and for young people. 'Good staff and teams' were described as 'the organisation's greatest asset' across the majority of interviews. In addition, having good governance and cultural support, such as kaumatua were also identified as important and pivotal to strengthening organisational knowledge and practice.
2. **Offering the right programmes and services.** Across the board organisations said being 'relevant' was a key to success. They ascertained that relevance through very consultative processes such as gaining feedback, focus groups, sector hui as well as looking at best practice nationally and analysis of service gaps.

<sup>50</sup> For the purpose of this report we refer to broad definitions of 'youth development' simply because most of the organisations talked about broad concepts whilst a few others directly referred to YD principles as underpinning their kaupapa and practice. See both MYD (2009) and McLaren, K (2002) for detailed analysis of approaches.

#### **Key elements to supporting young people are:**

*Having the 'right people' work with young people.*

*Offering the right programmes and services.*

*Staying true to your 'kaupapa'.*

*Experience and Connection to the community.*

*The ability to connect rangatahi to Te Ao Maori.*

*Encouraging Aspirations and Setting Expectations with and for young people.*

*The importance of whanau/family support.*

*Pastoral support that is holistic and strengths-based.*

*Community networking, robust accountability and sustainable funding are key supports for local providers*

3. **Staying true to your kaupapa.** ‘Sticking to your knitting’ as one Provider put it seemed to be a strength for those who have made it through 20 years of service. Being tempted to extend beyond capabilities and capacity levels was often where groups who *follow the money* came undone.

A more detailed explanation of these elements is appended to the document.

### **Experience and Connection to the community**

The majority of organisations interviewed have over 20 years experience working in their communities, so have established networks, a demonstrated understanding of the sector and experience working with young people. Younger organisations also identified strong networks and most had key staff that brought key relationships from previous roles that they were able to capitalise on.

What emerged as important wasn't that they *had* these networks, but that they didn't take them for granted. The ongoing commitment and value that Providers placed on relationships in order to facilitate wider support systems for their young people, was seen as core business. On the whole they were critically aware they were one of many groups in the community who are able to contribute to wrapping the right support around a young person who is in transition. Engaging with schools, industry, whanau and community are key transitional areas they focussed on.

*Relationships are key in this line of work. (IW15)*

*We whole heartedly support our team to build quality relationships in all aspects of their work. (IT1)*

*Whanaungatanga: making connections and knowing their whakapapa and building on the connection always works. (IW01)*

*Within the community everyone can and should support young people in their transition, each can have their role... not just YTS. (IW9)*

*We have made significant in-roads to building improved understanding about what we do. This required us to seek out relationships with schools, industry, the Police and other training providers. (IT6)*

### **Connection to Māoritanga**

Given the poor outcomes and current rates of disengagement of rangatahi Maori from the education system and labour market, it is important to highlight what communities are doing to re-

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Given the current rates of disengaged rangatahi Maori from the education system and labour market... a new approach is clearly needed.*

**“Providing culturally appropriate services is critical. We look holistically and work with the whanau to positive transformation and transition of rangatahi.”**

*(IT8)*

connect young people to opportunities in culturally relevant and safe environments.

Six of the eighteen Providers identified as a Maori or Kaupapa Maori Organisation. All identified an overarching kaupapa that essentially seeks to empower and positively improve outcomes for whānau, hapū and iwi. Their practice – is underpinned by traditional knowledge, tikanga and culturally bound values. A strong feature of their practice was to model these values and connect young people to Te Ao Maori.

*A core component of what we do is take them on a cultural journey, to enhance their understanding of the rohe and their whakapapa, linking them to who they are. (IT7)*

*Providing culturally appropriate services is critical. We look holistically and work with the whanau to support the positive transformation and transition of rangatahi. (IT8)*

*Loss of cultural identity and no connection to whanau or turangawaewae [are among the greatest challenges rangatahi face]. (IW01)*

*We have a sound understanding of the cultural dislocation and loss of identity for many whanau. Sadly, the disconnection from things Maori can also bring shame and fear. We are firmly committed to turning this around and empowering our rangatahi and whānau to facilitate a deeper understanding of their birthright as tangata whenua. We have developed a cultural competency framework based on Taranaki Tikanga, history and values. This enables our organisation to be clinically centred while maintaining a culturally responsive focus. (IW17)*

Of the remaining Providers, many also identified the need to connect rangatahi (and their whanau) with culturally appropriate and relevant services and programmes.

*The disconnection of young Maori in stats is appalling. We see the realities of lack of access to and the results of health inequalities every day. Currently 30% of our clients are rangatahi Maori using our health service, but form 87% of our youth development programmes. That tells us there is a lack of appropriate programmes for our rangatahi. Our challenge as a community (and service) is to appropriately meet that need. (IW3)*

*Tikanga Māori informs the work we do. In Kaikohe, 100% of our students are rangatahi Māori, so we need to ensure we have the right people who are credible and know their stuff. This works for our students. (IW11)*

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Whilst all Providers identified the need to make services relevant and accessible to Maori and Pacific youth, the capacity of non-Maori Providers to address cultural needs was not always possible.*

*This is where organisations working together could better respond to the cultural needs of the young person.*

**“... there is a lack of appropriate programmes for our rangatahi. Our challenge as a community (and service) is to appropriately meet that need”. (IW3)**

**“Tikanga Maori informs the work we do. In Kaikohe, 100% of our students are rangatahi Maori, so we need to ensure we have the right people who are credible and know their stuff. This works for our students”. (IW14)**

*We established our service to better meet the needs of our Pacific communities. Meeting cultural needs is an important focus for us. (IW14)*

### **Aspirations and Expectations**

All Providers had raised expectations of young people beyond contracted outcomes: of who they are, who they can be and what they can achieve. In fact, goal setting and personal plan development was a predominant activity used by most providers. All used assessment tools to establish where a young person was at and what their needs were. Although there was no consistency across the country in the tools they used (apart from those using HEADSS), the process in which they were used was ultimately to secure a plan that was owned by the young person, was achievable but also raises the bar in order to challenge old beliefs and behaviours.

*We ask our young people to dream what they want... and go for it, many haven't set goals before and there is a definite gap in aspiration. (IT13)*

*98% of our young people have previously failed and have no clear idea on what outcomes they can or want to achieve. We take this step by step and positively reinforce they can do it and achieve credit attainment and qualifications AND get meaningful employment. (IW4)*

*We believe in our young people and encourage them they CAN get unit standards, they CAN get quals and they CAN get jobs. We ask them to dream and then staircase a plan. (IT6)*

*Education is our priority. It provides a way out and a way up. (IT8)*

### **Importance of Whanau/Family Support**

Ensuring young people have good support systems as they transition is both intuitive and commonsense. From our own experiences we believe the place *where* young people get that support is either from family, whanau, their peers or other key adults in their lives. The literature also places whanau/family as a powerful influence on young people's lives/pathways and outcomes often in context of peers and wider community influences<sup>51</sup>. McLaren (2002) states 'young people who grow up with parents who score high on warmth and also high on setting reasonable boundaries (authoritative and nurturing) are most likely to experience positive outcomes in their emotional well-being, school success, self-esteem and avoiding drug use and

<sup>51</sup> See, McLaren (2002) and LGA (2009)

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Young people told us that they were often stereotyped the moment they entered secondary school and channelled into activities thought appropriate for them. In some cases this meant having very low expectations of them and so they behaved accordingly.*

*The key to lifting aspirations and expectations is to provide teachers with the tools and training to see past the stereotype, provide alternative learning styles and support and encourage all students to reach their full potential.*

**We believe in our young people and encourage them they CAN get unit standards, they CAN get quals and they CAN get jobs. We ask them to dream and then staircase a plan.”**  
(IT6)

illegal acts. Conversely, those who grow up with little warmth and little discipline show the greatest all-round poor outcomes’.

So, when asked how providers engaged with whanau/family, most agreed it was important and ideal, but in many cases proved to be impossible or difficult to engage with family members if the young person or the family weren’t agreeable. For Providers (Maori and one non-Maori) working with young people *and* their whanau was pivotal. Some discussed the tension between the notion of ‘youth development’ (individualistic) and ‘whanau development’ (collective) as sometimes distracting but ultimately you cannot separate the two.

Comments from Providers on this topic were:

*Our focus is on the family. We believe strengthening those intergenerational links and identity is important to build positive futures for all members. This is true for both Maori and Pakeha families we work with. (IT1)*

*Through our consultation we knew engaging with whanau was one of the keys to programme success. Our approach is holistic when working with our young people, whanau is part of that... so too is the wider community. (IT8)*

*Engaging with whanau can be problematic. We have very few young people who have any support from their families or even show they care about them. Where there are whanau, we definitely work with them all to develop support strategies. (IW4)*

*We know that while we are ‘youth’ focussed we need to work with whanau. We really try to encourage family involvement and buy in. On a practical level we have developed family days, leased a yard for a community garden, offer family counselling and parenting support. This is early days but we feel positive about the support we are also offering families. (IT6)*

*None. All of our young people have disassociated themselves from their homes and families. (IT5)*

*To support our trainees we have also started up a ‘whanau literacy’ programme. This supports the learning goals and achievement of all whanau members. (IW9)*

*Our organisation was formed from a whanau support group, so obviously we see the value and importance of engaging with whanau. For some of our programmes it is a MUST that whanau are involved. We encourage buy-in and look at whanau plans as well. (IT13)*

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Our approach is holistic when working with whanau, but it needs to be recognised that in some cases this will be a very long term investment requiring skilled workers who have an ability to gain trust and be there for the long haul.*

*Secondly, we cannot expect or demand overnight success. To do so, underestimates the complexity of families, often with inter-generational dysfunction rooted in historical and social injustice.*

*Identifying key people to lead the support of young people within family structures is critical, but not always an easy thing to do. So, while we acknowledge there will be many challenges to overcome, in the end this is the only approach that will give us sustainable outcomes.*

**‘Family has a profound effect for the simple reason that these are the closest bonds; and for most young people, are in place over a lifetime’.**

LGA (2009)

The compelling case made by most providers is that strengthening the support systems in young people's lives such as gaining whanau/family buy-in to their programme or training plan will assist and support young people in positive ways. The methods of engagement with whanau/family varies but most try to build relationships and set goals with members in real and practical ways.

### **Pastoral Support, 'holistic' and 'strengths-based'**

The majority of Providers also stated they also provide 'pastoral care and support' to all young people *where and when* it was required. This informal role was usually taken up by the staff member who was working directly with the young person. The perceived benefits gained from this support are that young people are better able to access information, resources and build up experience and confidence in their abilities. It was felt many young people did not have access to appropriate support people in their family or networks and this was a critical component of keeping young people engaged.

*Critical to our success is having passionate workers who look for opportunities for our young people and who assist them to overcome their issues. (IT13)*

*Critical to supporting young people is that young people know they are cared about. There is a need to maintain a good balance between being firm and showing you care for them. (IW15)*

*Building relationships with young people that are based on trust, with the ability to show boundaries and that you genuinely care is critical. (IT6)*

*Often it is the stuff outside course that drags our young people down... transport, relationships and health. We work with them to address these issues so they can come to course and achieve to the best of their ability. (IW4)*

*Whilst we are a training organisation we believe strongly in holistic care. We encourage personal responsibility but support them to take steps in the right direction, for example with health and dental checks, involvement in sport and going to court with them if need be. (IW9)*

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Young people needing extra support to make positive transitions usually require assistance with "living skills" which have not been learnt in the home or at school. Suddenly they are responsible for transport, housing, relationships, money etc. They need a kind of pastoral support to get through the first years away from the institutional environment and realise the importance of the training or work they are engaged in. Funding for this function is seldom articulated in contracts yet it is one of the key components to success and often very time-consuming.*

**Building relationships with young people that are based on trust, with the ability to show boundaries and that you genuinely care is critical (IT6)**

### 3.6 What are other common challenges to providing transition support?

#### Outcome Responsibility

Providers mentioned the unclear lines of responsibility with numerous players<sup>52</sup> jointly responsible for achieving broad outcomes relating to the support of young people. Often this was confusing and more often than not frustrating:

*We are sometimes confused who is mandated to do what and with whom? Sometimes the agencies appear to compete and clearly don't talk to each other about the outcomes they are contracting. (IW17)*

*Our board always views our services by sector and contract. But, in reality we are trying to work with young people holistically and work with them as such. We can't ignore certain aspects of their lives just because we don't have any funding for 'youth development' for example. (IW3)*

*There is lots of cross-over, who is responsible for health and well-being of those who left school at 15, 16 and 17? (IW11)*

#### Systemic Issues with the Ministry of Education and Schools

Any discussion about the issue of 'transition support' and who is vulnerable and NEET simply cannot avoid the *why* questions. Many participants discussed with the research team:

1. Why do we have so many disengaged and disaffected young people turned off by learning and education?
2. Why are they falling through the cracks at and upon leaving school?
3. What processes are in place to alert communities that a student needs extra support to re-engage with learning?
4. Why are so many young Maori and Pacific Island students failing in school and end up as a NEET statistic - at a rate double that of non-Maori?

Obviously the answers require complex and multi-faceted responses and there is no silver bullet. It is suggested in the literature<sup>53</sup> that the numbers of disengaged young people from schools is symptomatic of the systemic issues that plague the system. Providers themselves identified: truancy, curriculum issues, institutional racism, personnel, unwillingness of schools to collaborate, preference of some schools to focus on academic

<sup>52</sup> Common agencies mentioned were between those at Ministry of Social Development (Child Youth Family, Work and Income, Ministry of Youth Development), Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Health (DHB) and Ministry of Justice.

<sup>53</sup> Sodha and Guglielmi (2009)

**Failing to address structural and systemic issues in education will always frustrate transition support.... (IW17)**

**'Targets may measure success but are not a strong guide to how to best meet the needs of local young people'.**

LGA (2009)

pathways as some of the frustrations to the ‘transitions’ discussion. As one Provider said:

*Failing to address structural and systemic issues in education will always frustrate transition support, because it will continue to disadvantage those least resourced and vulnerable in the community and labour market... and for us that is our rangatahi Maori and Pacific youth. (IW17)*

A key issue in tackling transitions is the *connection* between school and other activities. Without appropriate and timely intelligence on *who* has left school and may be in need of support, our Providers have to use their networks and contacts to ‘pick up’ these young people. Whilst some communities have YTS, many do not. All of the Providers (with the exception of those who also hold YTS contracts) perceived the NEET issue to be huge and could only speak about their experience rather than any hard data they had. This disconnection between many schools in the community was viewed as a problem but also an opportunity to work smarter together.

A second emerging issue raised by many providers was that those ‘who’ are presenting as NEET in their communities are getting younger and younger.

*The biggest issue we see is that children as young as 8 and 9 are turning up on our doorstep for help. This is symptomatic of so many things but highlights some systemic issues with education and with parents who do not value education or have the skills to engage and negotiate with schools. (IT13)*

*We have 10 year olds present on our doorstep. (IW12)*

*We have a pile of 15 year olds not going back to school and they are just left sitting... doing nothing. (IW11)*

Within the literature, a fundamental problem identified in tackling disengagement is that politicians and policy makers have failed to recognise the extent to which the very visible problem of disengagement post-16 as one provider stated ‘is only the tip of the iceberg’. It is symptomatic of some deeper problems that run through our education system. Many of these young people have had poor experiences of the educational system and experiences of social deprivation that long predate their NEET status. It is clear we have a problem with disengagement among younger groups<sup>54</sup>.

It is difficult to disagree with this sentiment when we unpack the New Zealand experience via young people and Providers. What is positive however, is that good transitions seem to work best

### **Research Team Comment:**

*The Ministry of Education needs to share information and data collection more widely to ensure local communities can assist with the education of their young people recognising that school based learning is not the only way to obtain qualifications and knowledge.*

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<sup>54</sup> Sodha and Guglielmi (2009), p 7.

when communities are working together to minimise the systemic issues and look at prevention as well as interventions that re-connect young people to opportunities<sup>55</sup>.

### **3.7 So, what of current infrastructure for supporting transitions**

This set of questions drew a divided response from Providers about the way in which their communities were working to support the transition process. Some communities did not have any formal infrastructure, while others had a range of service providers and branded Youth Transition Services (YTS). Of those that had branded YTS there was a 50/50 split between very positive comments about YTS (and individuals who work there), and those that expressed dissatisfaction. In both cases the main reasons for supporting or dismissing the service were perceptions around:

- Quality of service and contact with young people
- Tangible results
- Credibility in the community

The Mayors Taskforce believes a universal tracking system of all school leavers would go a long way in finding and contacting these young people and reducing the NEET figure.

#### **Research Team Comment:**

*The Mayors Taskforce believes a 'universal' tracking system of all school leavers would better identify and alert local communities to those currently or at-risk of becoming NEET.*

#### *The benefits are:*

*A universal 'tracking system' is not stigmatised and there are direct benefits for young people particularly with pathway information and support.*

*Reliable data is given to communities so they can respond appropriately.*

*Able to identify those being supported by families and who are 'under' the radar and not known to authorities.*

*Contact with 'hard basket' youth may be improved because service is universal and not fronted by a government agency.*

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<sup>55</sup> See LGA (2010) and Sodha and Guglielmi (2009) for the UK response to these issues.

## 4.0 What are young people's thoughts about transitions?

Young people told us across the board that they found the process of 'transition' difficult. Whilst many participants came from different backgrounds and community size, their concerns and feedback were remarkably similar. The key points raised were:

1. **Limited access to good information and resources** (careers advice and people to talk to)
2. **Lack of support to make decisions about pathways** (parents and schools)
3. **All wanted employment support** (practical and financial skills)
4. **A perceived lack of opportunities** (in training and jobs)
5. **All wanted work experience** (hands-on experience)

Typical comments from fora include:

*We feel isolated – don't know what's out there- and jobs are limited. (Forum 11)*

*We need good career advice from someone who has the time, who is open and presents plenty of opportunities. (Forum 9)*

*No support to get into work or training in the district, we are often channelled into careers by parents and teachers who lack information on other options. Trades not given as an option. (Forum 6)*

*Don't want to get a student loan, want a job before going on to other study. (Forum 14)*

When asked about specific 'transition support'<sup>56</sup> they had received, young people were pretty straight up about what would improve support services:

*Have more course information and know what is available.*

*Timely action and quicker responses to your needs*

*Follow through*

*Less bullying from case workers and more listening to our needs instead of wanting to tick box and get rid of us.*

<sup>56</sup> Note: this was generalised and posed to young people as 'getting help from other sources' or 'external support' so could be from: Careers Advisers, Career Expos, Tertiary Providers, YTS or Work and Income.

### Research Team Comment:

*There needs to be a complete overhaul of the upper secondary education with pathways to vocational education and training clearly defined and articulated. Credits towards trades or employment should be recognised as a valid educational path given the same status and resources as university and other tertiary institutional study is.*

**We feel isolated – don't know what is out there – and jobs are limited.**  
(Forum 11)

**No support to get into work or training in the district, we are often channelled into careers by parents and teachers who lack information on other options. Trades not given as an option.**

(Forum 6)

*Need more role models of those who are achieving, celebrate their success.*

*Opportunities to gain 'hands on' experience.*

*For young people not doing anything Post out info, call and visit them.*

*Focus on 14-19 year olds as they need a lot of time and people should focus on them as they have THE most issues in their lives.*

#### **4.1 Some of the other things that young people identified as getting in the way of making successful transitions:**

Overwhelming numbers of young people in the fora and focus groups spoke about the pressures of growing up and making decisions about their futures. Many shouldered worries about finances, community level and domestic violence and an underlying fear about where they were going to end up - because of a perceived (or real) lack of opportunities. The absence of opportunity and 'youth-specific' things to do was another hot topic for young people, it was explained that this gap was often filled with under-age drinking and other anti-social behaviour.

We have summarised the concerns of these young people to provide a richer understanding of the world that many young people are navigating in communities around New Zealand.

##### **Social pressures (Alcohol and Drugs, Violence and Gangs)**

This area was the most commonly spoken about issue facing young people across the country. At every forum the availability of drugs and alcohol was a concern for many young people. The *over use* and *abuse* of drugs and alcohol was seen as a direct saboteur to going down the 'right' pathway. A connected social issue was also the fear of violence and gangs. Mentioned in eight communities, this was also seen as a negative aspect of their lives and served to undermine opportunities for their positive development.

*There is easy access to alcohol and cannabis from around 12 years or younger, but aware of drugs and alcohol from much younger. (Forum 9)*

*There is easy access to alcohol, as young as 11. Access to cannabis is often easier, easy to get into drugs and easy to make money off dealing. (Forum 2)*

*Violence is a part of life – very visible- we are often scared in our environment because of harassment,*

##### **Research Team Comment:**

*Young people are dealing with complex issues and lifestyle options which prevent them from making good decisions about their future. There needs to be community responses to support them to make alternative choices and address the issues of drugs, alcohol, gangs and family violence.*

**“There is easy access to alcohol, as young as 11. Access to cannabis is often easier, easy to get into drugs and easy to make money off dealing”.**

Forum 2

violence, turf wars and gangs. There is pressure to join gangs from about 12 years old. (Forum 8)

You don't need a gang - they need you! There is pressure from about 11 on to get into gang, alcohol and drugs. (Forum 3)

Gangs/bullying are part of life, some under 14, but not a big part of our town. Alcohol and cannabis easy to get from 13 or younger. Alcohol culture: events equal drinking. (Forum 6)

### On Family and expectations

The idea of whanau/family support was raised in most cases as well. For some, parents were seen as good support and in others were seen as enabling their failure. Teachers are regarded as pivotal to success within the education setting.

*There is a lack of skills amongst our parents. We need encouragement to reach our potential, young people do have dreams and need encouragement and support to achieve them. (Forum 8).*

*Wish expectations were higher of us.... (Forum 10)*

*Need teachers who care and want you to succeed, older teachers in particular have low expectations (Forum 2)*

*Parents have helped us in our search for opportunities- some support good and some not so good. (Both Focus groups)*

### Stereotyping and Racism

The issue of negative stereotyping was raised across many fora and general consensus was that it was unhelpful to young people transitioning into employment or participating in the community. Comments on this topic are:

*Society says ALL young people are bad (Forum 11)*

*You are stereotyped from the moment you start at secondary school - this is then difficult to change e.g. you're Maori therefore you must smoke - big Pacific boy therefore must like rugby and be good at it. (Forum 2)*

*Young people judged on their age not on their abilities. (Forum 1)*

*Some cultural appreciation [is needed] which leads to understanding of identity and lifts expectations. (Forum 2)*

### Research Team

#### Comment:

Young people are dealing with complex issues and lifestyle options which prevent them from making good decisions about their future. There needs to be community responses to support them to make alternative choices and to address the issues of drugs, alcohol, gangs and family violence.

**“Young people are judged on their age not abilities”** Forum 1

**“You are stereotyped from the moment you start school”.** Forum 2

**“The media focuses on stereotypes; they are suspicious of young people. But, sometimes it's just young people hanging out together”.** Forum 6

*Feel a failure if you stay here... there is a lot of judgement from people.(Forum 6)*

*We have some race issues, depends on Teachers commitment. (Forum 11)*

*The media focuses on stereotypes; they are suspicious of young people. But, sometimes it's just groups of people hanging out together. (Forum 6)*

## **Transport**

The issue of transport was a concern and perceived as a genuine barrier for many young people, particularly in rural communities looking to get into training or employment.

*You drive without licences because of the cost, and drive unwarranted and non registered cars. (Forum 1)*

*Transport is a big issue. (Forum 10)*

*Need to get a licence young, because of our location many drive on learners or restricted. (Forum 11)*

*Transport is an issue for us. (Forum 9)*

## **5.0 Whose responsibility is it to support good Youth Transitions?**

To ascertain a community perspective on who has the mandate or should have the overarching statutory responsibility for 16-17 year olds transitioning between education, training or employment, we posed the question to Providers: *Which government agency should have the primary responsibility for the transition of 16-18 year olds?*

We received a range of different answers, with one Provider advocating:

*The portfolio responsibility should sit directly under the Prime Minister. This would show our country the importance placed on our young people, who are our future! I also believe the 'red tape' and 'buck passing' between current Ministries would be eliminated if the PM gave instruction. The PMs direct oversight would stop the wastage of our young people's potential. (IT1)*

Several others said it should be a 'joint responsibility', as most saw a role for education, social development (CYF and Work and Income) and health. Some mentioned they thought it should either be MOE or MSD, but were nervous about giving the role to one particular agency given their perceived failure of young

### **Research Team Comment:**

*We agree with communities that collectively we need to celebrate success and acknowledge young people's contribution to society, in order to counteract much of the negative stereotypes. Good examples named by young people were: Youth Week celebrations, Trade Gradations etc...)*

**'Young People are the future of our nation...**

**It is our responsibility as leaders and adults to get them off to a good start in life. These outcomes demonstrate we are not doing a good enough job... Investing wisely in our youth provides economic and social benefits for us all'.**

**Rick Boven, The New Zealand Institute (2010)**

people already (MOE and TEC) or extending the power and purse of MSD.

Most concurred that it was a community issue that required local solutions and support from central government to address systemic issues and funding. In some communities with branded YTS, it was felt the community or sector mandate had been compromised because they felt YTS was paid to lead, but were failing dismally to bring groups together in order to develop a local strategy.

So, whilst a consensus viewpoint was not achieved, it certainly highlights the complexity of transitions and the opportunity for communities to seize the mandate they have within council boundaries to begin unpacking the issues, plan and take local action in partnership with funders.

The Taskforce is aware of changing international models that support young people in transition. In the United Kingdom example<sup>57</sup> councils are taking over responsibility for commissioning and funding education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds. This transfer of power and funding from a national quango (the Learning and Skills Council) to local authorities, means that councils now have overall responsibility for making sure that all young people aged 14-19 in their area have access to a wide range of services that are tailored to their needs and ambitions. We believe this is a very interesting model to place the mandate and responsibility back to local authorities and are interested in following the developments over the next year.

## 6.0 What are the distinct opportunities that present?

There are a number of opportunities identified by young people and communities to improve the support of young people as they transition. These have been summarised as follows:

### Young people told us:

- They need and want *work experience*; they all told us they wanted opportunities to gain *'hands-on'* experience.
- They *need better career advice* and information about potential pathways (this was across the board).
- *They need better support* that opens up more opportunities and connections

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<sup>57</sup> LGA (2010)

### **Research Team Comment:**

*We believe there is an opportunity for many communities to work more strategically and collaboratively to address the myriad of issues raised within this report.*

*This is the focus for the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs and one that requires leadership and co-ordination.*

*A collaborative process could be facilitated by Mayors and allow groups (who may normally be competitive) to sit and discuss: what is best for their young people, how can they obtain the most value for young people, and of course, how they can achieve it – together.*

**'The issues discussed are personal and local, anchored in community influences and attitudes. Local Authorities are often better placed than others in the Public Sector to ensure the most effective provision for young people in their community'.**

LGA (2009)

- *They want better treatment, communication* and want to be treated with respect
- *Timely* action and support

Young people clearly want to be connected and supported to get ‘hands on’ experience and quality information. This support needs to be ‘youth friendly’ and connected to employers and opportunities that can bolster their work experience.

Young people want multiple opportunities and experiences to work out their pathway. This appears to be frustrated by an imposed ‘linear’ transition pathway or service expectation that demands that. Young people often have a lot going on in their lives and sometimes need support to unravel these issues before they can think about getting a job.

**Community Providers told us:**

- That the Government and communities themselves need to address and *invest in the cause of ‘disconnection’* not just short-term band-aids.
- There needs to be financial stability and better integration in commissioning process.
- They need workforce development, particularly in ‘youth work’.
- An appropriate Cultural Competency Framework to better meet the needs of Rangatahi Maori and their whanau needs to be promoted. A linked issue raised is to address institutional racism and access to services.
- Those providing activities that are relevant to young people (and industry) are most successful.

**Providers also identified ways in which the Mayors Taskforce could support transitions:**

A gap identified by several Providers was leadership and collaboration in communities to systematically address the local ‘transition’ issues<sup>58</sup>. There is certainly evidence of sector commitment to high quality service provision and relationship management, but little ‘collective planning’ that steps back from operational issues and looks at the big picture. The mandate to drive this forward was somewhat confusing for communities and leads into the issue to follow, on who is responsible for disconnected youth.

**Providers also wanted the Mayors Taskforce to:**

- Encourage and promote the POSITIVE stories about young people in communities and the media

<sup>58</sup> One experienced Provider did mention they had set up a Youth Sector Taskforce to look at the ‘big picture’ and look at better ways to work together.

**Research Team  
Comment:**

*We support the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, Dr Judy McGregor in her call for a ‘youth to work’ strategy which transcends short term political gains and provides long term guidance and funding.*

*Such a strategy would be able to address the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.*

**“We need to ensure there is appropriate support for young people. To do this we will take a co-ordinated and strategic whole of community approach”.**

*Len Brown, Mayor of Manakau*

- Advocate on behalf of communities and young people. Challenge TEC and other Ministries to think about the value to young people
- Promote long term strategy and commitments
- Support research and evaluation

### Youth Transitions Strategy

Another significant opportunity identified by the team, is the development of a **Youth Transitions Strategy** that addresses the roles, responsibilities and commitment to every young person in New Zealand. A similar and timely recommendation has also been posed by the Human Rights Commission in their latest EEO report, *What Next? National Conversations about Work*<sup>59</sup>. The report led by Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, Dr Judy McGregor unequivocally says ‘Youth employment needs to be a top priority’ and similarly recommends a youth-to-work plan for every individual young New Zealander to improve their employment prospects and choices<sup>60</sup>.

Whilst we agree the development of a plan is fundamental in relation to employment we also believe it should include the broader support one gets when young people begin to look for options, begin a training or job search and try and improve their skills to get employment. Therefore, we believe an overarching strategy that will transcend short-term political gains and provide long term guidance and funding<sup>61</sup> to support local communities is essential.

The Youth Transitions Strategy must include the following components:

1. Ministry of Education (MOE) participation and collaboration (MOE holds vital intelligence on school leavers);
2. A ‘Tracking’ component for all school-leavers to enable communities to identify, and take action with a particular focus on those who are most vulnerable in their community;
3. A clear community mandate to address local transition issues (in particular develop strategies to address those not engaged in the community), encourage collaboration and local aspirations;
4. Appropriate funding to support transitions (to include local co-ordination of the transition ‘process’); and
5. An appropriate evaluation framework that provides self assessment and the building of a national database to inform policy and practice.

<sup>59</sup> See, Human Rights Commission, *What Next? National Conversations about Work* (2010), retrieved: <http://www.neon.org.nz/> July 2010.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p33

<sup>61</sup> Obviously, funding is finite and these activities should be delivered within similar budgetary constraints.

### **Research Team Comment:**

*Youth Transitions is a critical time for young people and communities of varying size, location and demographic are doing their best to meet the needs of their youth and rangatahi populations.*

## **‘Youth Employment needs to be a top priority’**

**Equal Employment  
Opportunities  
Commissioner, Dr Judy  
McGregor**

Source: *What Next? National  
Conversations about Work*  
(2010)

## 7.0 Conclusion

The aim of this report was to examine a range of different initiatives operating around NZ to illustrate what is available, what is working and what are challenges in supporting young people's transitions. The outcome of that investigation leaves little doubt that 'youth transitions' is a critical time for young people and that communities of varying size, location and demographics are doing their best to meet the needs of their youth/rangatahi populations.

The report makes the links between what the literature says and what communities know, feel and act on through experience and values. It also makes the connection between *what supports* and *what challenges* the realisation of the full potential of young people, with recommendations to strengthen and address these issues.

Youth Transitions cannot be viewed as linear or in isolation of the many social issues and contexts to which young people are navigating in 2010. Young people expressed their concern about financial pressures, lack of support and information about pathways and opportunities. They all mentioned their desire to get work experience and be a part of the community in which they live. On top of these 'transition' basics, they also felt the negative impression many communities have of youth as well as considerable exposure to alcohol, drugs and violence (domestic and community level) and the pressure of gangs which served to undermine the attempts of some to get on the 'right' pathway. It appears young people's experience of 'transitions' was often not a positive one, fraught with patchy support, information and opportunities.

Importantly, all of the Providers interviewed believed that supporting young people with quality information, trained staff and relevant programmes and services that are relevant (to young people and the needs of the local economy) was paramount. Core business for many was developing an individual plan that promoted the positives and unpacked the challenges they had to learning, living and contributing. In doing so, all believed they provided positive opportunities to build skills, confidence and connect them to paid work or more specialised training. In addition, other well-being aspects were addressed including health, accommodation, relationships and the positive connection to Maoritanga.

Looking to the future, a number of recommendations have been made to better support communities to address 'youth transitions' at local and central government levels. A core focus for the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs is the development of a national 'youth transitions' strategy, which will address many of the challenges facing young people and their communities

### **Research Team Comment:**

***'It appears from conversations with young people, that their experience of transitions was often not a positive one, fraught with patchy support, information and opportunities.'***

***A national Youth Transitions Strategy and action plan will provide a definitive outline on WHO is responsible for particular aspects of supporting transitions and assign a mandate to communities to develop local solutions'.***

outlined in this report. It will also provide a definitive outline on who is responsible for particular aspects of supporting transitions and assign a mandate to communities to develop local solutions. A unified approach would also provide a stronger rationale for groups to work together to ensure seamless transition support for their young people, as they navigate their way around the complex array of choices and pathways into adulthood.

## Recommendations:

### **Recommendation 1: Develop a national Youth Transitions Strategy and Action Plan**

*We recommend that a Youth Transitions Strategy and Action Plan be developed that will transcend short-term political gains and provide long term guidance and funding<sup>62</sup> to support every community within Local Authority boundaries in New Zealand<sup>63</sup>.*

*As a priority, the strategy needs to address the current challenges faced by Maori and Pacific Youth.*

### **Recommendation 2: The Ministry of Education in conjunction with schools, review career education policy and strategies with the view to improving the quality of career education in all schools.**

*The Ministry of Education should be held accountable and encouraged to provide improved and quality interventions, participate and collaborate with communities. Key areas of focus are:*

- *MOE to share vital intelligence on school leavers*
- *Improved career information*
- *Better linkages to labour market information and networks*

### **Recommendation 3: The Government in conjunction with MOE, TEC, employers and The Industry Training Federation develop new vocational education and training pathways.**

*To provide additional pathways for young people entering the training and or work environment.*

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<sup>62</sup> Obviously, funding is finite and these activities should be delivered within similar budgetary constraints.

<sup>63</sup> The Mayors Taskforce is advocating a process 'Youth Connections' which empowers communities to work with young people as they transition. This report is not yet released but will be made available on the website: <http://www.mayorstaskforceforjobs.co.nz/index.php>

### **Research Team Comment:**

***'A unified approach would also provide a stronger rationale for groups to work together to ensure seamless transition support for their young people, as they navigate their way around the complex array of choices and pathways into adulthood'.***

#### **Recommendation 4: Encourage local response to national Youth Strategy**

*Implement a clear community mandate to address local transition issues (in particular develop strategies to address those not engaged in the community), encourage collaboration and local aspirations.*

#### **Recommendation 5: Appropriate Funding allocated to address youth transition issues**

- *Appropriate funding to support transitions is integrated, cohesive, focuses on the long-term and is sustainable. Government agencies need to corroborate funding rounds, shared outcomes and reporting.*
- *Funding should also be made available to all communities in order to co-ordinate their local transition 'processes' (as distinct from delivering a service).*
- *Develop appropriate interventions to identify and work with young people who are at risk of disengagement.*
- *Local communities design initiatives that increase job/training opportunities - particularly for Maori and Pacific youth.*

#### **Recommendation 6: Workforce development.**

- *Funding should be allocated to organisations to support the recruitment and retention of quality staff through provision of professional development opportunities.*
- *Staff are recognised and supported to engage with their communities over and above the core relationship with a young person.*

#### **Recommendation 7: A universal evaluation tool and national database developed**

- *Develop a culturally relevant and appropriate evaluation framework that enables self assessment for Providers, to enhance self-awareness and identify capacity building opportunities<sup>64</sup>.*
- *Establish an independent group to administer funds to enable organisations to access support to do 'self evaluation' or engage independent evaluators.<sup>65</sup>*
- *Begin addressing the distinct lack of long-term evaluation on programmes supporting young people by establishing a national database of what is working around New Zealand. This can then be used to inform policy and practice.*

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<sup>64</sup> This process is separate from evaluating contractual outcomes outlined in service agreement /contracts

<sup>65</sup> Established in Christchurch c 1990s, the Reputation Bank was an initiative that provided funds to community organisations who wished to either self-evaluate their performance and measure success or engage an independent evaluator. The fund was regularly over subscribed.

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## Appendix 1:

**Key Operational Themes:** The following themes emerged when Providers were asked about ensuring young people gained the most value from their programmes and services:

### **1) How having the ‘right’ people, adds value to the intervention and to young people:**

Having the ‘right’ staff was named as the most critical to ‘programme/service’ success for Providers. Quality of intervention/interaction was enhanced by:

- Those staff who had ‘specialist skills’ in their field, which made them more credible;
- Staff involved in ‘vocational’ training areas, direct links to industry were important;
- Staff role modelling expected behaviour and leading by example;
- Provide critical support that may be missing in family through forming good relationships;
- Having clear boundaries and ethical practice; and
- Accessing regular supervision (clinical and cultural).

### **2) Offering the ‘right’ programmes and services:**

Providers are involved in a range of different interventions that seek to meet the needs of young people in their communities. Some services have a ‘universal’ focus such as improving access to ‘health care’ for all young people and others are specifically targeted to ‘disengaged’ youth. Ascertaining the ‘relevance’ for their services/programmes was via: sector experience, identification of need/gaps in the community, listening to young people (and their families) and looking at what the rest of the sector is doing (nationally). Services include:

**2a) Youth Training:** A number of Providers are delivering training which enables those with low qualifications to build foundation skills, literacy language and numeracy and vocational skills. The key driver for all interviewed was the re-engagement of young people back to education and learning. It was noted: providing ‘relevant’ programmes in this area increased the interest and attention of young people and allowed Providers to address core issues such as Literacy and Numeracy. Courses which particularly captured attention of young people were those related to the Arts, Technology and Recreation. One provider said:

*“The reality is: ALL of our courses are essentially ‘literacy and numeracy’ programmes. We use the course as a means to motivate young people to join, set goals and complete unit standards and qualifications. We are always looking for innovative and relevant courses to meet the needs of our community” (IW9).*

Youth training was also seen as a valuable means to ‘staircase’ young people onto more specialised training or into ‘sustainable’ and meaningful employment.

*“Young people can achieve with the right support and the right programmes. They deserve ‘long-term’ employment and not to be forced into a job to make the books look good. (IW4)*

**2b) Mentoring:** Several Providers mentioned the role of ‘mentors’ and ‘coaches’ in their programmes. For some it was the role of the ‘paid staff’ and for others using ‘peer mentoring’.

*Tuakana and Teina (A peer mentoring approach):* This is a ‘kaupapa Maori’ approach based on the concept of ‘whanaungatanga’ (relationships) and ‘ako’ (learning and teaching). Traditionally it refers to younger (teina) and older (tuakana) siblings, and the reciprocal relationship of *learning and teaching*. This ‘peer’ concept was being used effectively by Providers to build leadership, reinforce learning, model behaviour and build strong relationships between programmes.

**2c) Health and Social Services:** Offering both ‘one on one’ clinical and support services as well as those offered to small groups. Programmes that offered an opportunity for young people to address ‘socialisation’ issues were also seen as important. Providers noted that most young people wanted to engage and do better, but often they didn’t know how. Provision of accessible services that were ‘youth friendly’ was a high priority for this group.

**2d) Connection to Maoritanga:** A number of Providers offered programmes that were underpinned by their commitment to working with Maori whanau, hapū and iwi. Central to this approach is building a positive connection to things Maori and providing opportunities to connect to physical (and historical), spiritual and traditional values and concepts. Providers also strongly advocated the teaching and learning of ‘whakapapa’ and ‘whanaungatanga’ (genealogy, kinship, connection and relationships) as a core component to strengthening rangatahi Māori.

**2e) Youth Development:** A number of Providers also offered programmes they described as ‘youth development’. Most aligned with the principles of positive youth development<sup>66</sup> and varied in content and duration. Commonly, Providers used a ‘strengths-based’ approach which supports young people in an empowering way as opposed to the deficit approach which looks at young people as ‘problems’.

### **3) Staying true to your ‘kaupapa’ or ‘purpose’:**

An organisational strength for many Providers was the fact that many were able to identify their core strengths and stay true to their kaupapa. Some said, whilst it was tempting to follow ‘new’ opportunities and funding it was generally a mistake to do so, because it often stretched capacity and ventured into areas where they didn’t quite have the capability.

Staying true to your kaupapa is enhanced when organisations have effective planning and evaluation processes. Most mentioned ‘strategic’ sessions as very helpful to keeping on track, knowing the landscape and where they can access ‘specialist’ services.

Provision of ‘quality’ services was a key focus when delivering to young people (and their families) and this is best when organisations know their limits, but more importantly where their heart and vision lies.

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<sup>66</sup> As outlined in the national *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (2002), see <http://www.nzahd.org.nz/index.php/youth-development/youth-development-strategy/the-principles>

## Appendix 2:

### YOUTH TRANSITIONS PROVIDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### Organisation Information

1. How long has the organisation been running? What has changed in this time? What has made it harder/easier?
2. Why was the organisation established? Has the primary purpose changed or stayed the same since it began?
3. What type of organisation are you/ legal status? (e.g. PTE, Charitable Trust, Incorporated Society, company, etc.)
4. What kind of planning processes does your organisation have in place?
5. How does the organisation generate income?

#### Staff Information

1. How many are employed in the organisation?
2. What type of roles do they have?
3. What is the salary range within the organisation? For frontline workers?
4. What type of qualifications do employees have?
5. What are the most common/important staff development needs?
6. What kind of staff turnover have you had? Why? How easy is it to find good staff?

#### Programme/Service Information

1. How many programmes do you run?
2. How do you ascertain the need for programmes?
3. Do you have any issues with funders? How are they addressed?
4. How long have particular programmes been running?
5. What outcomes have you achieved from the programmes?
6. What do you think are the critical success factors?
7. What are the biggest barriers to realising the potential of the programme/participants?
8. What would improve these programmes?
9. What could you do to improve your/staff performance/effectiveness?
10. Who do you think should fund these programmes (and how)?

#### Participants

1. Who are NEET in your community and how big is it an issue?
2. How do young people enter your service? (self-referral, agency referral, entry criteria, etc.)
3. What is the target group for the programme/service? Do you have stats on their demographic profile?
4. What outcomes are priorities for this group? (e.g. qualifications, employment placement, sustained employment, developmental needs met, etc.)
5. How do you measure success with a client/student?
6. What kind of role, if any, do whanau members (or other key stakeholders) have in the programme/service?
7. Do you use a formal assessment tool to identify strengths, interests and needs? (please explain)
8. Do you use a formal planning tool to identify priority activities/resources for the client? (please explain)
9. How long do you usually have a formal relationship with a client/student for?
10. What kind of external support would/does help clients/students succeed best?

### **Infrastructure for Supporting Positive Transition Programmes**

1. Which agencies/organisations do you work most closely with?
2. What institutions support the sustainable development of youth transitions?
3. What is your relationship with YTS? How effective is YTS in your experience? What could be done to improve YTS? What works well about it?
4. Which government agency should have primary responsibility for the transition of 16-18 year olds?
5. What do you think the MTFJ could do to support the successful transition and connection of young people to their communities?

## Focus Group Questions:

### Rangatahi Information

What age group are you?

12-14	15	16	17	18+

How do you describe yourself?

Maori	Pakeha	NZ	Pacific	Other

Are you currently in?

School	Alt Ed	Training	Employed	Not in anything organised
				For how long?

Are you currently looking to move into?

School	Alt Ed	Training	Employment	Other activity

Have you ever been out of school, training or employment?

Yes, if so how long?	No
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Have you looked for or received any help or support to *look for* training, employment or going back to school?

<p>Yes, By whom?</p> <p>Whanau</p> <p>Peers</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Career Services</p> <p>School</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Why?</p>
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1. How did you hear about that support service?

- Eg: Word of mouth
- Peers
- Parents
- School
- Careers
- Marketing: Flyers/Posters etc..
- Other

2. If you have received support, what was *good* about that support?

3. What was *not so good* about the support or service?

(NB: Separate school from other providers)

4. What would improve programmes and services supporting young people to find training or employment or go back to school?

- 5. *On being NEET.....(Not in Education/Employment or Training)***
- a) Who are NEET in your community and how big is it an issue?**
  - b) What kind of role, if any, do your whanau have in the programme/service?**
  - c) What kind of external support would/does help clients/students succeed best?**
  - d) What motivates you to achieve your goals?**
  - e) What do you think holds you back to achieving your goals?**



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**August 2010**