



Youth Connections

A model to support young people to transition positively from school to further education, training or employment

**Report to Minister of Social Development and Employment
July 2010**

SUMMARY

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs proposes a model that tracks all school leavers and connects them to opportunities within their own communities. The model is based on Local Authority boundaries and relies on community support and collaboration across central and local Government agencies.

Based on our experience working with existing models, the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs recommends that:

Youth Connections be seen as a process not a service.

Key Points

1. *Youth Connections* tracks and refers all school leavers – 16-17 year olds (up to 18), including those younger who have been exempted and/or expelled.
2. **A National Call Centre** receives all leavers' data (names and contact details) from all secondary schools, including the Correspondence School, alternative education and distance learning providers.
3. The Call Centre contacts and assesses all school leavers.
4. Those deemed in need of further support to transition to further education, training or work, are referred to local providers within each Local Authority.
5. *Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forums and Local Authority Providers' Forums* accept responsibility for their young people (particularly those at risk and/or NEET) and are mandated to work collaboratively to ensure appropriate services and identify gaps. These forums decide the appropriate delivery mechanism for the referrals in their communities and contracts are let accordingly.

6. *Youth Connections National Forum* would oversee the implementation of the Call Centre and receive data from around the country to ensure an overview of Youth Connections throughout the country.
7. This model depends on Ministry of Education school leaver data being provided to the National Call Centre.
8. This model fits alongside and compliments other Government programmes such as TOP's, Youth Guarantee, Service and Trades Academies, Whanau Ora and the Community Response Model.
9. This model can be provided within the current funding available for Youth Transitions within the Ministry of Social Development.
10. This model could be put in place for the 2011-2012 financial year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

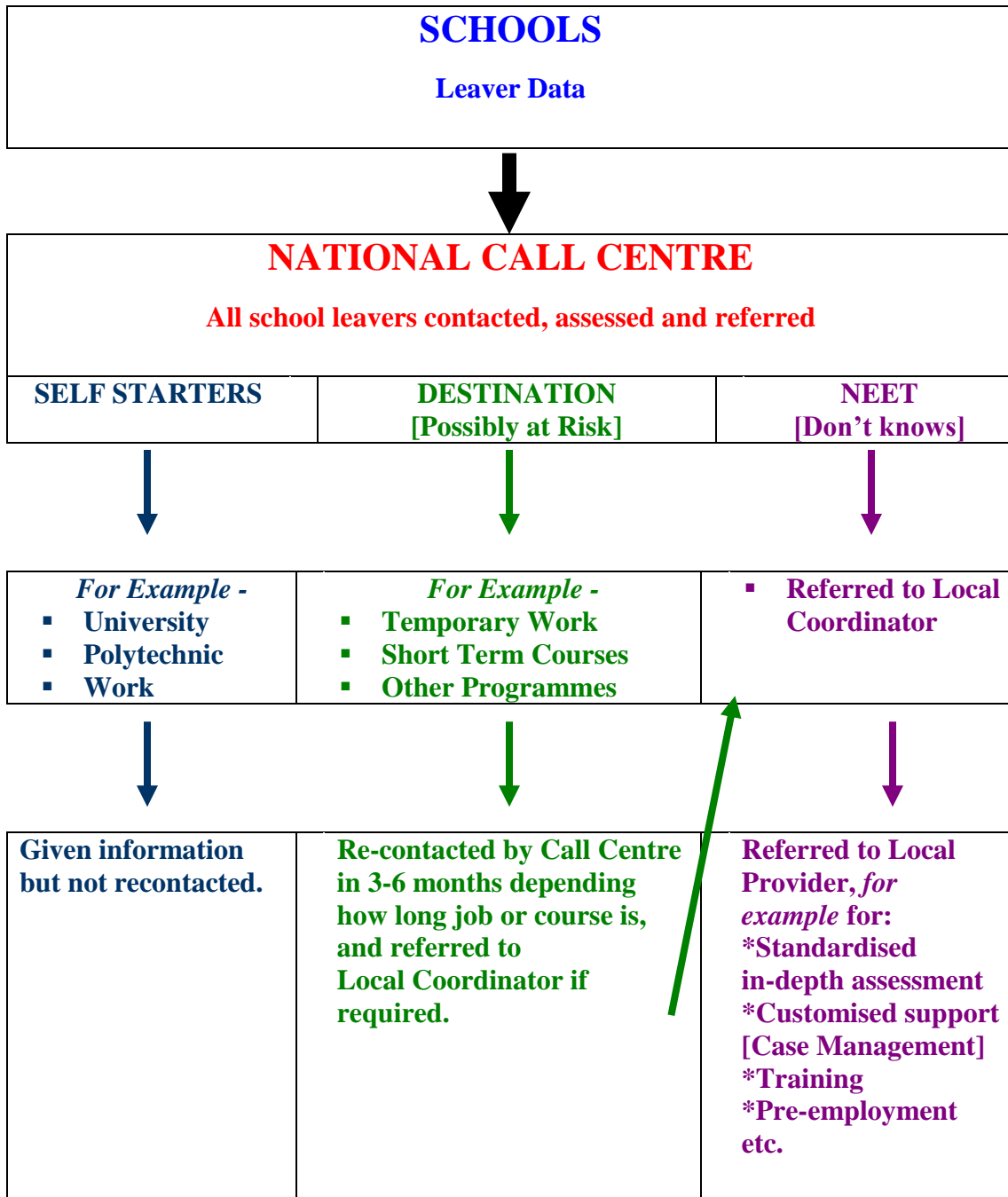
1. That a community consultation process, in all Local Authorities is undertaken so communities can determine the best way to provide for the NEET and other at risk young people referred to them by the Call Centre, and establish the *Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*. This consultation would require independent facilitation and need to be informed by information currently available from Council LTCCP's, local services mapping and other sources held by Government agencies and community organisations in Local Authority areas.
2. That this consultation results in contracts being let for the provision of local services, in a manner determined by the Forum, but likely to be by tender.
3. That a contract is developed and offered for the National Call Centre contract.
4. That the timeframe for this consultation, discussion and enhancement, be from August to December 2010, with delivery to begin in July 2011.

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs, as an independent body, would be available to contract and manage the facilitation, for the community consultation, given the necessary resources.

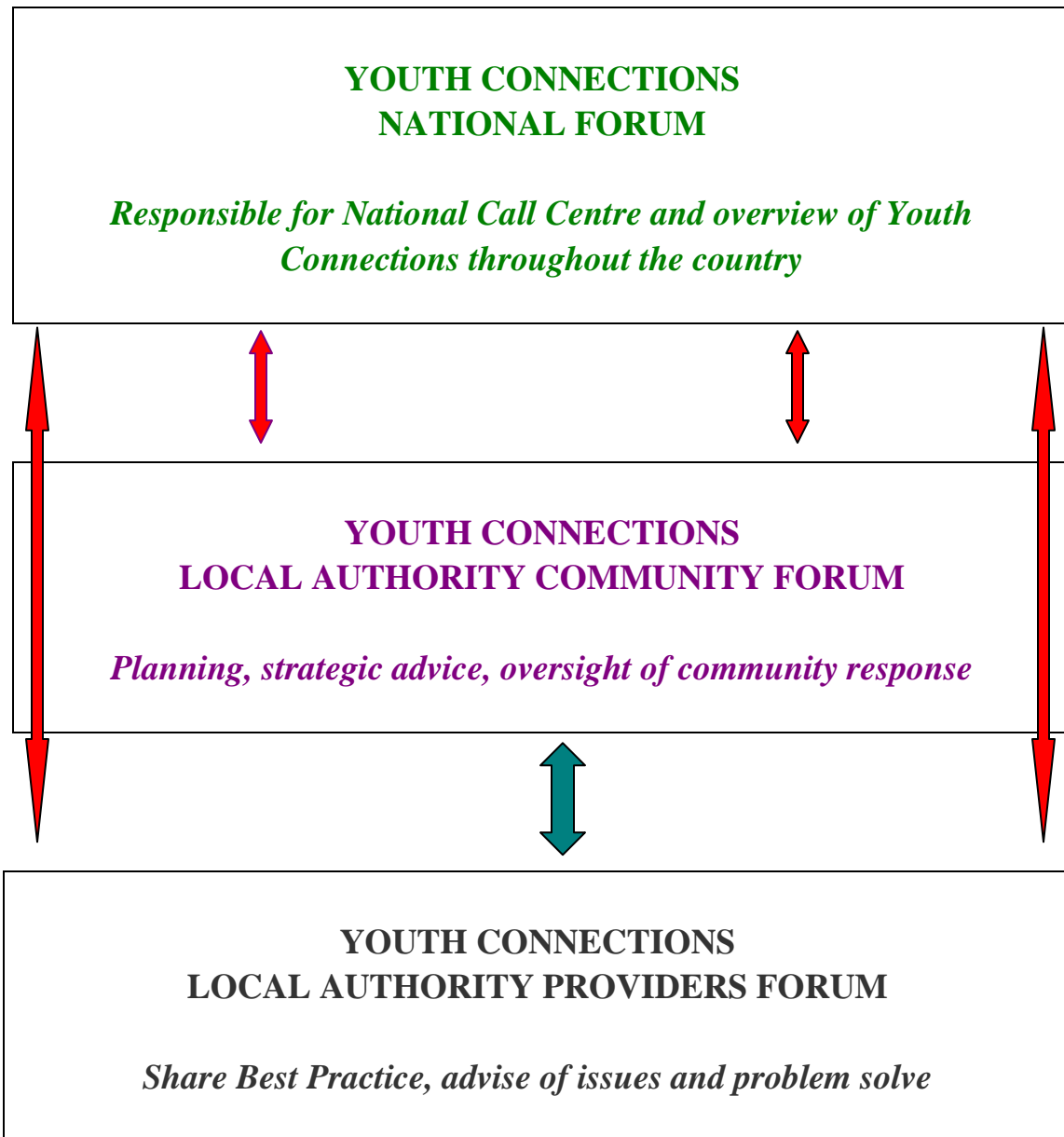
YOUTH CONNECTIONS

GOAL

“That every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own community”



YOUTH CONNECTIONS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



YOUTH TRANSITIONS REPORT

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Minister of Social Development and Employment with recommendations to enable support to be provided to young people transitioning from school to further education, training or work, using current arrangements and within current funding arrangements.

BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 2000, The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs has worked with Mayors to provide active leadership to ensure young people make positive and successful transitions from school to further education, training or work. Through its various partnerships and networks, the Taskforce has provided information and support to Mayors to enhance this leadership role. Mayors have been active in their communities through not only the Youth Transition Services (YTS) set up by the Government, but also in the variety of services and networks that support young people in their communities.

Councils have provided staff to participate in Strategic Management groups, coordinate consultation, undertake research, provide support and advocacy for providers and align purposes and processes with their Long Term Council Community Plans.

Through this work we now have a body of information to inform the future direction of Youth Transitions and wider support for young people in local communities.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

It is widely recognised that young people who make a positive transition from school to the next independent phase of their lives, achieve well and become productive members of their communities.¹ Our first job is very important for our future prosperity. In the past this occurred with the support of family, friends and informal contacts. These connections are now, in many cases, not available to young people. Families are more transient, jobs and training are often not available in communities where young people live and they have to move to areas where there is little personal support. In addition, skills and qualifications required for work are higher than those needed in the past. Recent research also shows considerable change in the nature of transitions for young people, and that Government plays an important role in shaping outcomes, through economic and labour market policies that influence the provision of opportunities and challenges that enable young people to develop their skills and abilities.

(Rea and Callister – 2009)

For these reasons more formal processes have been set up to support our young people in this transition. A number of services which help make the connections, support the young person and inform them of their options are available around the country. Many

¹ There is a large volume of research to support our contentions which we can provide links to, should this be of interest.

of these have been set up in conjunction with the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs and Local Authorities, recognising the leadership role of Mayors and the desirability of providing information and support, in the first instance, to young people within the communities they live. There are a number of models reflecting the difference in communities and there are also some areas with no access to these services.

The Mayors Taskforce is committed to delivering support for young people transitioning from school into the community in every Local Authority, to achieve the vision agreed with the Ministry of Social Development that: ***Every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own community.***

We believe mandating local communities is the only way to improve the outcomes for our young people and reduce the estimated 10-20% of young people deemed NEET (not in employment, education or training) between the ages of 16-18. This view is shared by overseas research and processes in the UK and the USA.
(See MSD evaluation of YTS)

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION?

The first Youth Transition Services began in 2005 and by 2007 fourteen services were operating around the North Island with funding from the Ministry of Social Development, branded and networked through a common data base and delivery mechanism. Initially they were required to develop Strategic Plans and have Strategic Steering Groups. In many areas this requirement has lapsed and the Steering Groups are either not operating or have lost their effectiveness. Over the last 3 years a number of other services have grown out of local needs but are not part of the Youth Transition Service brand. There are currently 13 Local Authorities not covered by any recognised services.

Since 2005 the services have developed and changed to the needs of their communities. Whilst there are some key services common to most providers, local differences mean it is difficult to assess how effective the various services are. Many do not contact all school leavers but target “at risk” young people with a degree of sorting happening at the school. An evaluation in 2008 found all services were delivering to their contracts, were well respected and achieving good outcomes. It also noted that while services varied between sites, the activities being carried out by YTS providers were more similar than different. Whilst the evaluation noted that young people and key stakeholders agreed that the one-on-one mentoring and support of YTS coaches was the key to achieving successful outcomes for young people and that maintaining relationships between youth and their coaches was equally important, it is the view of the Taskforce that services have become very broad and have developed mandates wider than the now agreed vision of ***Every school leaver has the support to connect to opportunities within their own community.***

This is not a criticism of the current providers as they were not engaged to achieve this vision but rather to provide services to “at risk” young people and contracted to deliver “interventions” to a defined number of young people within a defined age group.

This has resulted in YTS’s developing a myriad of services to suit their client group. However, if we are to make a political decision that **all** school leavers should be

supported to the next stage of their lives, the current models are unsustainable, too expensive to replicate across the country, and often shift the responsibility from community solutions to individual providers. For these reasons the Mayors Taskforce is recommending changes to the current model.

The Taskforce therefore contends that key outcomes need to be re-visited and the idea of a “service” changed. We are talking about a “**process**” not a service or programme. Further, it is our contention that the \$12.7 million allocated to this output in the Ministry’s budget is sufficient to provide “Connections” to all young people in New Zealand. However, this funding needs to be a long term commitment with any contracts being secured on an on-going basis.

CONNECTIONS PROCESS RATHER THAN SERVICE

Before any community can ensure young people connect to local opportunities, service providers need to know who and where these school leavers are. For this reason we believe all young people need to be contacted on leaving school, whether at the end of the year or during the school year and whether through expulsion, non-attendance or any other reason. This needs to be a structured approach, universal and nation wide.² We believe the Call Centre model currently running in Otago/Southland could be adapted to deliver across the country. This could be done at a National Call Centre. This is the “connection” part of our model and should be funded from the Youth Transition budget.

If a young person is deemed, from that contact, to require further assistance they are referred to the appropriate local provider. We estimate on the basis of the Otago/Southland model that such a Connection Service could cost approximately \$7million, including the local connector person. Local providers will be funded for their services through regional budgets across agencies, and boosted by the \$5.7million savings from the current allocation to Youth Transitions.

Note: These figures are estimates only.

The model relies, firstly on the Call Centre making the appropriate referral to the local community and secondly on the local referral point being with people (groups or individuals) who are:

- Youth focused
- Well trained in youth assessment
- Have the knowledge and ability to refer young people with complex needs to those best able to attend to their needs, for example, to administer a qualified standardised in-depth assessment (e.g. HEADS)
- Professionally qualified and supervised

The model also relies on a Strategic Management group (*Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*) undertaking planning and ensuring schools, employers, communities and stakeholders more effectively connect and work together to procure the best outcomes for young people. This group would in this way, identify any gaps in services needed in their communities.

² This view has also been supported by the 15 fora the Taskforce has run across the country. Full notes from the fora are available.

A facilitated Providers Group would also enable closer coordination of services and collaboration between providers over time.

Initially a National Steering Group may be required.

The proposed model has a number of advantages, including:

- Reduced workload for schools
- Provides “fit for purpose” information to service providers
- Includes all school leavers
- Provides accurate, valuable data for Strategic Planning
- Schools are able to provide accurate destination reports for school leavers to their Boards
- Encourages collaboration between Government agencies and between Providers by signaling a mandate for community responsibility

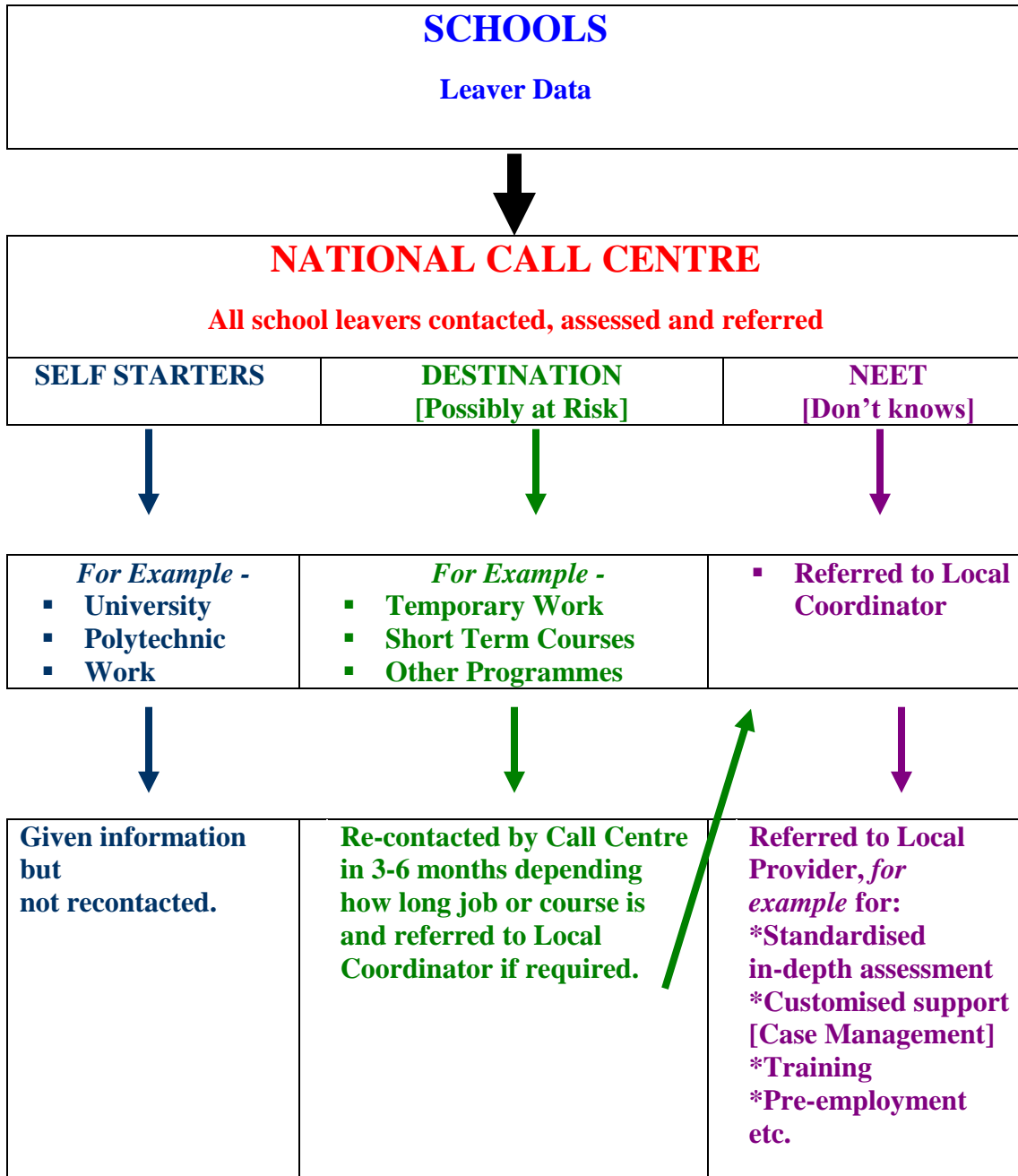
The Mayors Taskforce suggests that this new model be called ***Youth Connections***. Current Youth Transition Services could become service providers under this model.

This model is largely based on the Otago/Southland Work’n it’ Out project. Education Taranaki and the West Coast Youth Workers Collective have also researched the best way to work with their communities and come up with similar models. These reports are available if required.

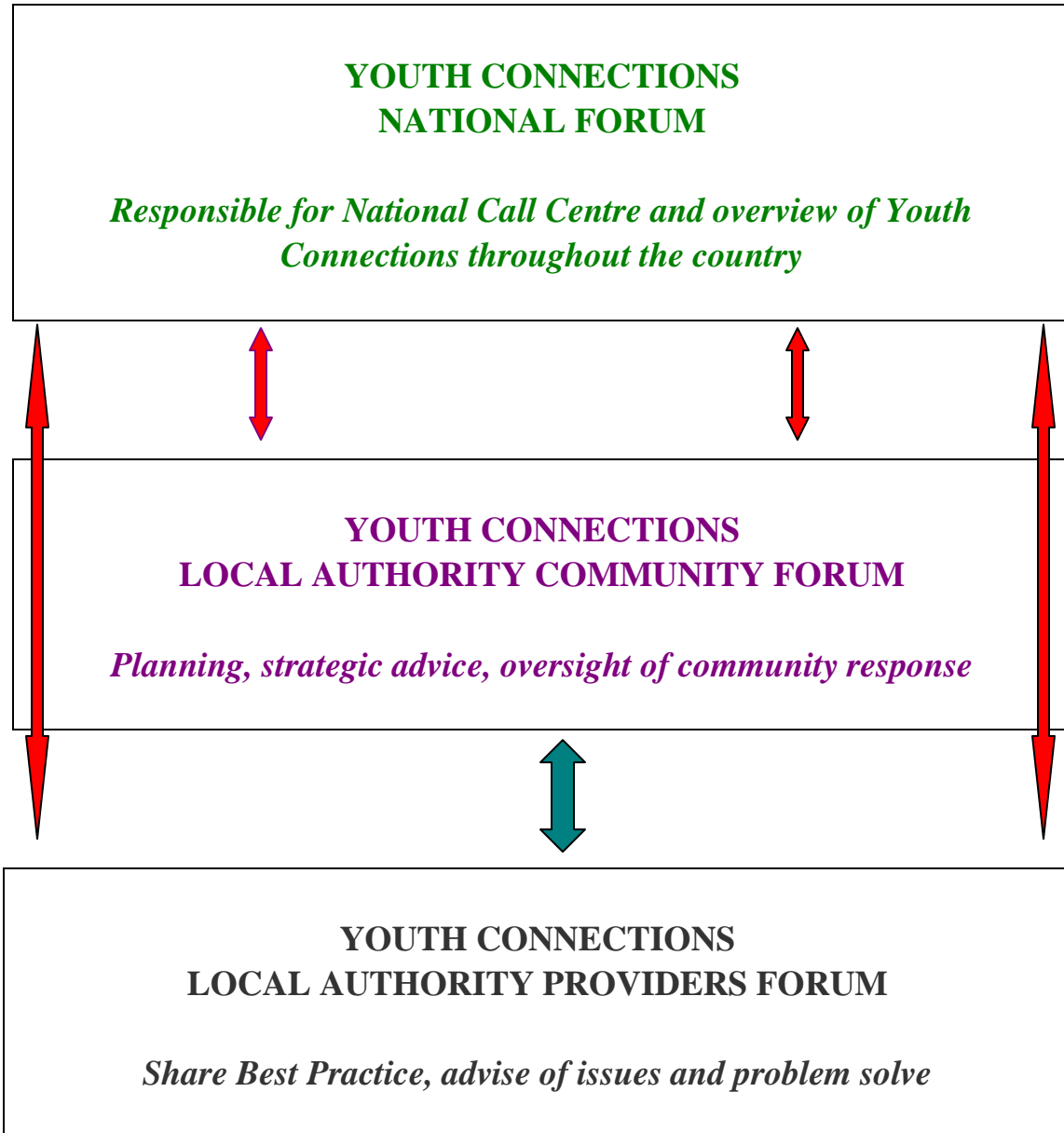
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YOUTH CONNECTIONS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



MAYORS SUPPORT

Mayors spoken to for this report all support a model which has a “back office – contact centre” type tracking function with a local response to those young people identified as needing further assistance. Furthermore, there was general support to limit YTS to a tracking and referral system for school leavers aged 16-17 (i.e. up to the age of 18), or those younger with school exemptions. This is recognition that those under 16 are legally the responsibility of schools and those over 18 have the opportunity to access services, including a benefit, from Work and Income. This may not be ideal given the high needs of some young people under the age of 16 (some young people do not even get to secondary school) or over the age of 18, but it is our belief that this is where we should start, and assess the impact on the other age groups through the information and planning of the *Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*.

After discussion with Councils’ involved in current Youth Transition Services the following were deemed essential Best Practice and should be common to all *Youth Connections*.

1. An independent provider (Call Centre) (not a Government agency, Service Provider or funder) contacts all school leavers, who are referred appropriately as per the model above.
2. Local communities determine the best services for their at risk and/or NEET young people using existing community assets and services.
3. *Youth Connections* needs to be marketed to **all** young people and not seen as for those “at risk”.
4. To have a Strategic Steering Group (*Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*) in each Local Authority, with an independent Chair – that is the Chair should not be either a Service Provider or a funder. In most instances the Council could undertake this function, ideally the Mayor but otherwise a Councillor of the Council Officials on the group. The group should consist of representatives from Principals, central and local Government, business and community organisations. The coordination and implementation of actions from this group needs to be funded and it is recommended that this is part of the baseline funding for *Youth Connections*.
5. All aggregated information from service providers should be shared with the *Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*.
6. A facilitated providers forum (*Youth Connections Local Authority Providers Forum*) to share Best Practice, work collaboratively and find local solutions.
7. Planning processes for *Youth Connections* (e.g. review of strategic plan etc.) should be aligned with Council annual planning and/or the 3 year reviews of Community Outcomes within Long Term Council Community Plans. This would reduce consultation demands and ensure that Youth Transitions are viewed in the wider community context.

FUNCTIONS

1. *Youth Connections Phone Contact*

All school leavers in a Local Authority area are contacted for information as to their intended destinations. Our preference is for a National Call Centre because we believe greater efficiencies can be achieved with a consistent “youth focused” integrated service. Those unsure of their destination are referred to an appropriate local provider. That provider is informed of the referral and the referral is followed up within a specified time.

2. *Youth Connections Local Provider*

How local communities provide for those referred to them should be determined by local communities. However, our research into transition support (to be released soon) indicates that the first referral point is crucial and that people in this position (groups or individuals) should be:

- Youth focused
- Well trained in youth assessment
- Have the ability to refer young people with complex needs to those best able to attend to their needs, for example, to administer a qualified standardised in-depth assessment (e.g. HEADS)
- Professionally qualified and supervised

GOVERNANCE

1. *Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*

A group representative of Principals, local and central Government agencies, business and community organisations receives data from the Connections phone contact and provides planning and strategic advice about the needs of young people transitioning from school in the local authority area. Advocacy for services where gaps are identified would be part of this role. Local Authorities are the best placed part of the public sector to bring together coherent plans and work in partnership with all sectors. In fact local Authorities are already charged with this function, being required under the Local Government Act 2002, to develop long term plans for their communities. The group would meet at least quarterly or as determined by the participants, and would look holistically at “youth transitioning” within their area.

2. *Youth Connections Local Authority Providers Forum*

A facilitated forum of all Youth Transition Service providers within the Local Authority to share information and ideas, collaborate on projects and programmes and problem solve. The group should hold at least quarterly forums, or as determined by the participants. A representative from this group should be on the *Youth Connections Local Authority Community Forum*. Funding would be required for the coordination of this group.

Youth Connections National Strategic Steering Group

This group would oversee the implementation of the *Youth Connections* Call Centre and receive data from around the country and make recommendations for funding and improvements. The group would meet quarterly.

The Steering Group could be made up of:

- Mayors Taskforce for Jobs
- Council representatives (3)
- Provider representatives(3)
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Youth Development
- Career Services
- Te Puni Kokiri
- Tertiary Education Commission

This group may not need to continue past the first 2 years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Taskforce therefore makes the following recommendations as a way to transition to this new model over a 12month period.

1. That a community consultation process, in all Local Authorities is undertaken so communities can determine the best way to provide for the NEET and other at risk young people referred to them by the Call Centre and establish the ***Youth Connections*** Local Authority Community Forum. This consultation would require independent facilitation and need to be informed by information currently available from Council LTCCP's, local services mapping and other sources held by Government agencies and community organisations in Local Authority areas.
2. That this consultation results in contracts being let for the provision of local services, in a manner determined by the Forum, but likely to be by tender.
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4. That the timeframe for this consultation, discussion and enhancement, be from August to December 2010, with delivery to begin in July 2011.

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs, as an independent body, would be available to contract and manage the facilitation, for the community consultation, given the necessary resources.

CONCLUSION

Mayors around the country are working together to ensure the young people in their communities make successful transitions from school to work, education or training.

This is also reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Government which states:

“the core area of common interest for the Government and the Taskforce is maximising local employment opportunities for young people and ensuring their successful transitions to education, training or employment”

The Taskforce acknowledges the Government’s commitment to this work and we are keen to be involved in the expansion of the services to include all young people in New Zealand.

Representing almost all of the Councils around the country, the Taskforce has a very effective network which can provide information, advice and wisdom on the best way forward for these services.