



Final Evaluation Report

**Social Sector Trials –
Trialling New Approaches
to Social Sector Change**

May 2013



AUTHORS

Prepared by the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation

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The authors express deepest appreciation to all Trials stakeholders for their generous input and trust

DISCLAIMER

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Executive Summary

The Social Sector Trials (the Trials) were set up to test a new approach to improving service delivery by reorganising funding and decision-making processes across the social sector, and shifting control to local levels.

Focused on 12-18 year olds, the high-level outcomes for the first six Trials are to:

- reduce truancy
- reduce offending by young people
- reduce alcohol and drug abuse by young people
- increase participation of young people in education, training or employment.

The Trials were implemented in a partnership between the Ministries of Social Development (MSD), Justice, Health, Education and New Zealand Police ('partner agencies'). In March 2011, six communities were chosen to implement the Trials. Initially a two-year programme, the current locations have been extended to 30 June 2014. In addition, 10 new locations will implement Trials in July 2013 for two years.

This is the third and final evaluation report of the Trials.¹ It outlines key findings on the Trials progress between March 2011 and February 2013. Key achievements of the Trials, challenges and lessons learned for the future are identified.

Evidence is drawn from two previous evaluation reports, monthly reports, Trials Action Plans, significant change stories, two organisational surveys and financial data. Three independent reports were also commissioned as part of the final evaluation, including a community stakeholder report and a government stakeholder report, both undertaken by Martin, Jenkins and Associates Limited, and a report by Next Step Research outlining a proposed outcome measurement framework for future monitoring and reporting on the Trials.

The key evaluation findings covered in the report are summarised below.

Establishment and implementation of the Trials

Governance

At the national level, a Joint Venture Board (JVB) was established to govern the Trials. The JVB consisted of the Chief Executives of the five partner agencies. The Director: Social Sector Trials is responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the Trials. Staff within each contributing agency support the Director in this role.

The Trials are funded through cross-agency contributions of funding to support the administration of the Trials, the transfer of relevant contracts to the control of the Trial Leads, funding for new initiatives ('seed funding'), and through contribution of resources 'in-kind'.

The financial contributions, including non-departmental and departmental funding, from parties are transferred into the appropriations "Trialling New Approaches to Social Sector Change" in Vote Social Development. The Minister of Health is the appropriating Minister (Minister responsible for the Trial appropriations) [SOC Min (12) 27/1 refers].

¹ This is the final report on the evaluation of the initial two year programme in the six Trials locations. Further evaluation reports may be commissioned following the future expansion and roll-out of the Trials.

Trial leads roles included: planning social service delivery for young people, managing relevant contracts and funding that are within the scope of the programme, overseeing resources-in-kind, developing networks, engaging with the community and influencing social services outside of their direct control (like statutory services).

At the local level, Trial leads in all six locations established a governance group to support the planning and implementation of Trials activities. Governance groups were typically made up of young people, the local Mayor, school principals, iwi, police, council representatives, government agencies and other community leaders.

Planning and Development

Each Trial lead, supported by their governance group, consulted their community to create Action Plans² detailing problems faced by young people in their community and the activities they would implement to achieve the high-level Trials outcomes. Feedback from interviews reveals that design of these Action Plans was built on a combination of the following:

- needs analysis
- statistical data, research and guidance from relevant government agencies
- identification of government contracts within scope
- harnessing existing community knowledge and intelligence about issues and what is likely to work in the community.

Each Trial location took a different approach to their Action Plans, using a 'local solutions to local problems' philosophy. This has made the design and operation of the Trials different in each location. Trials locations valued the opportunity and flexibility to shape a government sponsored initiative in a way that would fit local needs, resulting in pride and ownership of the Trials design and initiatives. However, some Trials locations did experience problems collecting a wide range of input into the Action Plans, for example, from young people or local businesses, which made it harder for them to ensure the Plans were relevant to everyone in their community.

Implementation

The Trials also sought to test the effect of two different operational models for transferring the control of resources, decision-making authority and accountability from government agencies to a local authority.

In three of the six locations a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) model operated and under this model a lead NGO was given authority via contractual arrangements to deliver the Trials. Under the Committed Individual (CI) model that operated in the other three CI locations, a public servant was employed to deliver the Trials.

The differences between these two models were more evident at the beginning of the Trials. The CI leads had to develop relationships with and rely on the organisations involved in the Trials while the lead NGOs were able to rely more on the resources and expertise of their organisations. There were also key differences in the sources of funding contributions secured in kind by the CI and lead NGO models. However, defining the Trials locations as CI-led or NGO-led does not appear to be a meaningful distinction. Stakeholders viewed the skills and networks of the individual Trial leads as driving the success and direction of the Trials rather than the merits of either operating model (CI or NGO). Moreover, differences between the two models have diminished as the Trials progressed, as the focus shifted more to the outcomes of the Trials as opposed to their initial implementation.

² Governance groups drew information from a mixture of community consultation, existing research, young people's views, and youth focused providers to develop the Action Plans.

Key achievements of the Trials

All stakeholders involved in the evaluation commented on the significance of the Trials in creating a tangible opportunity for agencies, services, and individuals in local communities to work collaboratively, share resources, and facilitate better outcomes for young people. Governance group structures are working effectively and facilitate collaboration and coordination of services, and as a result stakeholders report that young people are experiencing a more seamless and responsive delivery of social services.

Key achievements identified by the evaluation are summarised below.

The Trials have improved community collaboration

- Improved collaboration between local organisations, NGOs, and local and central government agencies was identified by stakeholders as a key success of the Trials at a local level. Trial leads and governance group members report that the Trials have provided a platform for networking and relationship-building between key community stakeholders, building trust and a shared sense of purpose.
- Governance group structures have been instrumental to this, with regular governance meetings focusing on joint actions providing an opportunity for stakeholders to better understand each other's business, leading to better collaboration to achieve outcomes and a positive climate for decision-making at a local level. It has also led to increased accountability at a community level – with community organisation representatives in Trials locations now routinely meeting to discuss and share their work programme and explain the actions they have taken to respond to young people's issues.
- At a national level the close and direct link between governance (Ministers and JVB) and front line operations (Trial leads) has been seen as crucial to the operation of the Trials to date. The regular, high quality meetings and information exchange between these two groups has been an important mechanism within the model for the Trial leads to overcome operational 'blockages' that could be barriers to collaboration. The JVB was also able give advice and direction on how the initiatives should be coordinated, and how they could fit together at an operational level, as well as clarity on their relative priority if any conflicts arose.

The Trials have increased community responsiveness to issues faced by young people

- In the six Trials locations, increased community collaboration has 'snowballed' into increased community awareness and ability to effectively identify and address local issues, and provide more coordinated service delivery to young people and their families. Trial leads and governance group members reported that sharing of information between community organisations has strengthened each Trial's ability to proactively identify issues, identify gaps, and develop tailored solutions. By promoting collaborative rather than competitive arrangements and encouraging partnerships with community leaders and non-government agencies, stakeholders felt that the Trials have enabled communities and government to find new ways of working together.
- In each of the six locations, Trial leads secured additional financial support for each Trial through government and community sources. This suggests that a further effect of improved community collaboration as a result of the Trials has been greater mobilisation of local resources toward issues faced by young people.

There is now a broader base of services aimed at young people in each Trial location

- Stakeholders indicate that the Trials have supported the local provision of new and improved services targeted at young people in a more coordinated manner. These services have included a wide range of activities, events and programmes that seek to engage young people and contribute to the Trials high-level outcomes.

- Each Trial location created new youth focussed positions or expanded existing ones (often to provide high intensity case management services to young people). In addition, each Trial location also provides a range of lower intensity services, as well as programmes aimed at young people outside of the target age group of the Trials, their families and the broader local community.
- Areas of youth service development identified by stakeholders to have improved as a direct result of the Trials includes:
 - planning and development of youth services by community stakeholders and organisations
 - increased community buy-in and wider participation in youth service planning
 - more services available specifically for young people in their area
 - greater confidence amongst Trials stakeholders and the wider community that the services delivered will improve outcomes for at risk young people.

The Trials have made progress in achieving outcomes for young people and the wider community

- After two years of operation, stakeholders in each of the six Trials locations report positive results for many young people as a result of Trials activities. These stakeholders have also identified changes in behaviour and attitude amongst young people involved in the Trials, as well as improved confidence and motivation.
- Strong support for the Trials was expressed by community stakeholders involved in the evaluation, noting that it was making a 'difference' within their community. These stakeholders commonly talked about the Trials as a catalyst for change, and a way of demonstrating to the community and government what can be achieved when communities are given the flexibility and power to reconfigure and influence the use of resources in their community.
- While most young people interviewed for the evaluation did not have a strong understanding of the Trials, all were aware of at least some of the activities, projects or youth focussed positions associated with the Trials.
- A number of young people interviewed for the evaluation reported an improved sense of belonging and an increased feeling of responsibility for others around them. Some had been given the opportunity to act in leadership roles through Trials activities and valued the opportunity to act as a role model to others.

Challenges

A range of initial and on-going barriers were identified through the evaluation as potentially constraining the ability of Trials locations to develop and deliver ideal youth service delivery, including the following.

Barriers to collaboration during the establishment of the Trials

- Transparency, leadership and credibility were important to collaboration and the Trials success. However the Trials locations faced challenges to collaboration in the establishment phase, for example:
 - some community stakeholders reported there was a lack of communication and transparency in the process for recruiting Trial leads (in particular NGOs)
 - the short time frames for the establishment of the Trials meant Trial leads felt they had not had enough time to consult the wider community and gain perspectives from all young people-focused providers when establishing their Action Plans
 - there were some difficulties in establishing structures and processes for the Trials in order to facilitate people working together.

The narrow scope and focus of the Trials

- Overall, interviewees felt that the Trial was offering a good opportunity to trial a new way of working for a well-defined group: 12 to 18 year olds. However, stakeholders commonly reported that narrowly focusing the Trials on young people aged between 12-18 years was limiting their ability to achieve against the expected high-level outcomes (eg did not always fit with the problems identified by the community or their preferred approach for addressing these problems). For example, being able to reach out to children or adults was important and beneficial as problems started earlier for some young people.
- Since establishment of the Trials, all six Trials locations also reported frustration about having to focus on four high-level Trials outcomes when the problems facing young people are often interrelated and not confined to the four outcomes the Trials were focused on. The Trial leads reported the tight focus did not encourage the holistic response needed to more effectively influence positive outcomes for young people in their communities. The focus on achieving the high-level Trials outcomes meant that some programmes or services provided by the Trials may not be sustainable over the long-term and may be less community relevant.

Ensuring joint governance and ownership of the Trials

- Translating joint Ministerial ownership through to shared ownership at the participating agency level has been challenging for all agencies involved in the Trials. Some community and government stakeholders commented that bureaucratic complexities and the different mandates of partner agencies have made close collaboration difficult. At the operational level, agency objectives, priorities and practices differ and do not necessarily align with the Trials objectives or the narrow focus on young people's needs, and has resulted in some instances of particular government agencies not fully cooperating at the local level.
- In addition, some stakeholders reported that the location of the Joint Venture Director³ within MSD had created a perception that the Trials are primarily owned and led by MSD. As a result, some agencies see themselves as less central to the Trials and this could have negative consequences on their commitment.

Multiple government initiatives and priorities causing operational confusion

- Stakeholders repeatedly identified a number of government initiatives that have an operational overlap with the Trials. In addition, changes in government priorities and funding at the local and central government levels over the Trials period created multiplicity and duplication of initiatives in Trials locations. Stakeholders felt there were opportunities for improvement on this front, using the governance group as a vehicle for this.

Integration of funding activities

- To give Trial leads flexibility in using the funding to best meet local needs, a key feature of the Trials was the transference of in-scope financial contributions, including non-departmental and departmental funding, from parties into a single appropriation. In practice, stakeholders reported that integrating funding had proven to be a significant challenge for the Trials and it has not been fully achieved.

Drawbacks of the NGO and CI operating models

- Some stakeholders were concerned that more well-established lead NGOs may become over-stretched by doing a lot of the Trials delivery themselves, and felt it was important this did not occur at the expense of the delivery of the lead NGO's core work and existing quality standards.

³ This is now referred to as the Director: Social Sector Trials.

Equally, stakeholders also felt it was important that lead NGOs were not delivering services at the expense of engaging with other local providers to pick up some of the Trials work.

- With less operational and administrative support than the lead NGOs, some stakeholders were concerned that CI leads may be overextended due to the high-level of service participation and delivery they were involved in.

Difficulties in obtaining relevant outcome data

- A key challenge in the current evaluation of the Trials is the lack of locally relevant outcome indicators and baseline data. Beyond self-reported information from interviews with community and government stakeholders and young people involved in the Trials, there is currently no robust or consistent means of collecting data to measure or monitor the progress of the Trials against specific targets associated with their high-level young people outcomes. This needs to be addressed to enable the impact of the Trials to be measured in the future.

Lessons for the future

The evaluation highlights several 'lessons learned' and recommendations for the future of the Trials.

Key success factors for achieving outcomes through the Trials

- From analysis of interviews with community and government stakeholders, the evaluation has identified a number of interdependent factors that are critical to the success of the Trials model. These include:
 - having national leadership, including high level Ministerial engagement and interest, and a clear mandate for the Trials
 - finding skilled and competent Trial leads in Trials communities who can work collaboratively
 - clear structures, processes and roles at both local and national levels
 - an on-going close and direct link between governance group and front line operational staff
 - 'fit for purpose' activities, reflecting community needs and intended outcomes
 - secure funding and resources to assist in providing continuity of service
 - shared responsibility for the Trials across key community stakeholders and partner agencies.
- These key success factors should be considered when establishing new Trials locations as they provide a useful indication of what it takes to make the Trials model work on the ground. The type of community may also be important as all the Trials locations were in small, rural, geographically defined and tight knit communities.

Further work is needed to enable future monitoring and measurement of Trials outcomes

- To improve monitoring and reporting on the impact of the Trials the following actions are proposed:
 - maintain and enhance national outcome indicators
 - strengthen and standardise local outcome indicators
 - develop a new set of intermediate outcome indicators
 - improve the wider government data infrastructure and analytical capability.

These actions are discussed further in the body of the report.

Considerations for the future evaluation of the Trials

- It is important that any future evaluation work on the extension of current Trials locations and expansion to new locations articulates how it supports the future development of the Trials. This

includes supporting the Trial leads to understand what difference they are making. The timing of the evaluation work needs to align to key project dates and deliverables, so it can inform the decision making process.

- Any future evaluation of the Trials needs to be adequately resourced to achieve its purpose. If decision-makers want a more accurate assessment of the impact of the Trials, more resource will need to be allocated to monitoring and evaluation at the local and the national level. Consideration should also be given to establishing an interagency evaluation team, in addition to the Evaluation Steering Group. This would further support the intention that agencies participating in the Trials operate collaboratively at a national and local level and that each agency 'own' the outcomes sought.

Introduction

Purpose of the Report

This is the third and final evaluation report for the Social Sector Trials ('the Trials').⁴ It outlines key findings on the Trials progress towards their intended outcomes between March 2011 and February 2013, and provides insights into changes made across Trials location following the initial implementation. As well as achievements, challenges associated with the Trials and lessons learned for the future are also identified.

Background to the Social Sector Trials

Purpose

The Trials were set up to test a new approach to improving social service delivery. The approach involved focussing on a set of desired social outcomes for a target group, reorganising funding and decision-making processes across the social sector, and shifting the control of service delivery to local levels. The Trials were implemented in a partnership between the Ministries of Social Development (MSD), Justice, Health, Education and New Zealand Police ('partner agencies').

The Trials also sought to test the effect of two different operational models for transferring the control of resources, decision-making authority and accountability from government agencies to a local authority.

In March 2011, six communities ('Trials locations') were chosen to implement the Trials, and two different Trials operational models were implemented across these locations:

- a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) model – where a lead NGO was given authority via contractual arrangements to deliver the Trials (Levin, Gore and Tokoroa)
- a Committed Individual (CI) model – where a public servant is employed to deliver the Trials (Kawerau, Taumarunui and Te Kuiti).

Initially a two-year programme, the current locations have been extended to 30 June 2014. In addition 10 new locations will implement Trials in July 2013 for two years.

Expected outcomes

Focussed on 12-18 year olds, the high-level outcomes for the first six Trials are to:

- reduce truancy
- reduce offending by young people
- reduce alcohol and drug abuse by young people
- increase participation of young people in education, training or employment.

Each outcomes also had a number of associated targets against which progress was to be measured (for example, 'reduced truancy' has the measure of a 25 per cent reduction in unjustified absences at secondary schools, and a 30 per cent reduction in intermittent absences) These are outlined in Appendix 1. This report does not report on these measures. Further discussion about data and measurement is provided in the 'Methodology' and 'Lessons for the Future' sections.

⁴ This is the final report on the evaluation of the initial two year programme in the six Trials locations. Further evaluation reports may be commissioned following the future extension and expansion of the Trials.

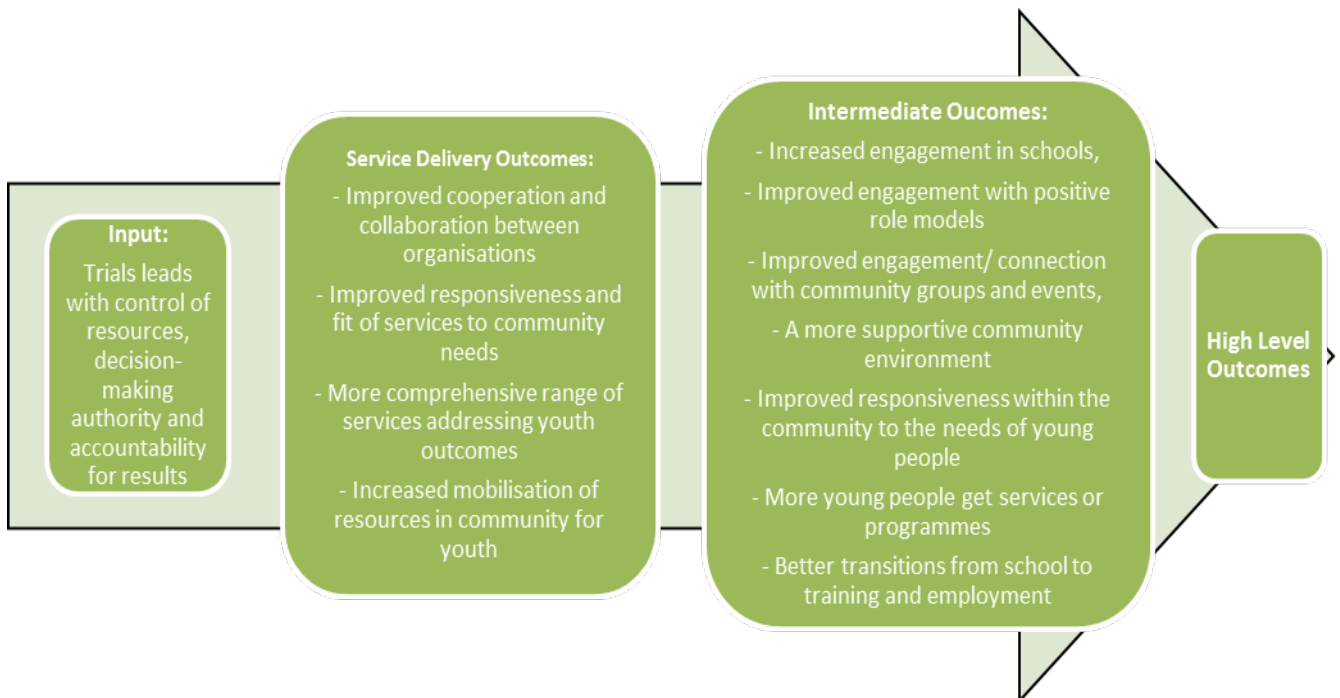
Theory of change

Figure 1 outlines the high level Theory of Change for the Trials. Within this context the Trials intended to test:

- the effect of transferring the control of resources, decision-making authority and accountability from government agencies to a locally based CI or lead NGO
- the barriers that exist to cross-agency service delivery at the local level and ways to overcome this within current system parameters
- the use of a Joint Venture Board as an innovative model for cross-agency governance of collaborative initiatives with shared outcomes.

More specifically, the model sought to test whether the Trials could provide a more comprehensive range of services that target the needs of young people in the community, improve youth engagement in positive social activities and influence long-term outcomes for young people.

Figure 1: Theory of Change for the Social Sector Trials



Evaluating the Trials

The Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (CSRE) within MSD conducted the evaluation, led by a joint agency Trials Evaluation Steering group.

The evaluation of the Trials has been carried out in three phases:

Establishment report

The July 2011 establishment report⁵ outlined challenges and successes in establishing the Trial at each of the six locations, and provided evidence to support further decision-making for key stakeholders. A key finding from this report was that many community organisations were engaged positively in the Trials. The report also highlighted that the CI and lead NGO models contributed to differences in the Trial leads' initial relationship with the community and to existing administrative arrangements. Stakeholder feedback in this initial report was confident that many of the barriers present when establishing the Trials would be addressed as the Trials progressed.

Implementation report

The implementation report⁶ (April 2012) examined how the Trials were operating in practice, including the specific tasks and outputs of each of the Trials initiatives, barriers and opportunities encountered in each of the Trials locations, and early outcomes reported by stakeholders and Trial leads. It found that stakeholders were optimistic about the Trials and reported that early successes had buoyed their confidence of making a positive difference. Governance groups were highly motivated, productive and innovative. A further key finding of this report was that delivery of social services under the Trials was well informed and better integrated across the youth sector. However, the report also highlighted that stakeholders acknowledged some ingrained issues would take time to shift and were uncertain what outcomes could be expected from the Trials or what outcome measures were appropriate.

Final evaluation report⁷

The current report investigates the progress of the Trials made towards their high-level outcomes between March 2011 and February 2013. It also identifies key success factors or barriers of the Trials in each of the six locations. In addition to the original evaluation data sources that are discussed overleaf in the 'Methodology' section, it draws on the two previous evaluations, a snapshot of preliminary progress (completed in Oct 2012⁸) and three independent reports: a community stakeholder report and a government stakeholder report undertaken by Martin, Jenkins and Associates Limited and a report by Next Step Research on the outcome measurement framework.

⁵ Stakeholder perceptions of the Establishment of Trailing New Approaches to Social Sector Change. EDRMS A5365372.

⁶ Social Sector Trials Implementation Evaluation: Summary – Stakeholder perception of the Trials. EDRMS A6109084.

⁷ While this report is presented as the final evaluation of the Trials, it is expected that following the expansion of the Trials to the 10 new locations and the extension of the Trials in the six existing locations, the evaluation will also be expanded in the future.

⁸ Social Sector Trials Snapshot: Preliminary data on progress towards outcomes. EDRMS A6495959.

Methodology

Research questions

The evaluation of the Trials seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Have the Trials made a significant contribution to achieving outcomes for young people in the Trials communities?
2. Did the Trials lead to a better system of service delivery?
3. What were the similarities and differences between the Committed Individual (CI) and lead Non-Government Organisation (NGO) models in practice?
4. What barriers and opportunities were found when implementing the Trials?

Data sources

The evaluation used a wide range of data from the Trials communities and from central government stakeholder. Some data was previously analysed and included in the evaluation reports, others were analysed for first time in this report. The strength of the data lies in its richness and variety of topics covered. The weakness of the data is its potential to be biased, inconsistent and disconnected. Table 1 summarises each data source.

Table 1: Evaluation data sources

Evaluation Data Sources			
Data	Sources	Period	Description
Establishment, Implementation and Preliminary Progress towards Outcomes Snapshot	Trials community stakeholders service providers and young people	July 2011, April 2012, August 2012	Mixed-methods approach that included stakeholder interviews, youth interviews, documentation review, surveys, and observations
Progress Towards Outcomes Fieldwork	Trials communities stakeholders and central government stakeholders (CEs and other key contacts from each agency and Director: Social Sector Trials)	December 2012, February 2013 ⁹	Community and government stakeholder views on the progress of the Trials
Trials Action Plans ¹⁰	Trials governance groups	July 2011	The Trials Action Plans, which were used to gather a sense of the six Trials communities from and the changes they sought through the Trials. The Plans outline what each regional location has created to implement their Trial.

⁹ Martin, Jenkins and Associates Limited undertook the fieldwork.

¹⁰ Available online at <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/initiatives/social-sector-Trials/>

Monthly Reports	Trial leads	March 2011 to December 2012/January 2013	Monthly reports submitted by the Trials locations to Trials Programme Manager. They outlined what had happened in each location that month, progress against Action Plans, and challenges faced by the Trial lead.
Most Significant Change Stories	Trial leads	Between March and December 2012	Significant change stories submitted by the Trial leads describing some of the key successes of the Trials in their communities
Financial Data	Trial leads and Trial Programme Manager	March 2011 to December 2012	Financial data submitted by Trials lead throughout March 2011 to February 2013, which also contained information of where resources came from

Three independent reports were also commissioned as part of the final evaluation:

- Martin, Jenkins and Associates Limited were contracted to undertake the fieldwork component of this report through community stakeholder interviews (December 2012) and government stakeholder interviews (February 2013).
- Next Step Research was commissioned to review and propose a way forward for the monitoring of the Trials, particularly with regard to the national outcome indicators.

These data sources drawn on for the evaluation provide local-level information about inputs, activities and outputs of the Trials, and provide insights into ‘how’ changes may have occurred as a result of the Trials, including examples of positive results for some young people. However, as reported in previous evaluation reports, there are several limitations to this evidence:

- There is currently no available means of collecting data that provides detailed, reliable and comparable information to use for monitoring and reporting of Trials outcomes and impacts. This means there is no baseline information that can be used to provide a before and after assessment of impacts at the Trials locations, or to compare Trials performance with non-Trials performance. There is also a general consensus that ground-level reporting does not easily align with the high-level indicators. This report provides recommendations for how this gap can be addressed going forward (see ‘Lessons for the Future’ chapter).
- There is a mismatch between qualitative, local-level ‘intelligence’ on the operation of the Trials that forms the basis of the evaluation, and the high-level outcome measures for the Trials. The local, qualitative nature of the data means it has the potential to be biased, inconsistent and/or disconnected from any administrative data.

This report should be read with these data limitations in mind.¹¹

¹¹ Considering these limitations, MSD has also commissioned a further report to propose a way forward for the monitoring of the Trials, particularly with regard to the national high-level indicators.

Findings

This chapter presents findings from the final evaluation of the Trials. The findings report on ‘on the ground’ signs of changes made towards the Trials intended outcomes and insights into how the Trials have operated across the six locations.

Establishment and implementation of the Trials¹²

Operating Model

The Trials sought to test the effect of two different operational models for transferring the control of resources, decision-making authority and accountability from government agencies to a local authority, with three Trials locations implementing the NGO model, and the other three locations implementing a CI model.

At the heart of the two operating models is the appointment of a ‘Trial lead’ who is responsible for the delivery of the Trials. Trial leads facilitated service delivery through supporting decision-making at the local level, building networks and strengthening coordination amongst government and community stakeholders. In locations operating an NGO model, the Trial lead was a local NGO. In CI model locations, the Trial lead was employed as a public servant (by MSD) to deliver the Trials.

Community feedback on the performance of the Trial leads was positive across all sites in the last phase of the evaluation, and stakeholders highlighted the following achievements of the Trial leads:

- mobilising the right people to make the Trials work in their community
- showing commitment to the Trials by actively planning and implementing different aspects of the Trials action plan, including direct support to young people
- driving the Trials by remaining focused on the Trials purpose and motivating others to do the same
- possessing an ability to form extensive networks of people and helping build bridges between these groups
- personal integrity and work ethic.

Reflecting on their experiences of the Trials, stakeholders also identified several key characteristics of a successful Trial lead:

- the ability to operate at multiple levels: with diverse stakeholders within the community; with government agencies at a local level; with central government agencies and political representatives
- strong relationships, networks, credibility and mana within the community
- experience in working with communities and in the social sector more generally
- ability to mobilise and motivate the right people to ensure Trials worked in the community
- strong communication skills and experience in talking with people at different levels
- strong project management, governance and inter-personal skills.

Defining groups as CI-led or NGO-led does not appear to be a meaningful distinction. Stakeholders viewed the skills and networks of the individual Trial leads as driving the success and direction of the

¹² Previous evaluations of the Trials provide more comprehensive and detailed feedback into the Trials’ establishment and implementation.

Trials rather than the merits of either operating model (CI or NGO). As a result, stakeholders found it difficult to compare the relative benefits of the two operating models, identifying only a small number of advantages and disadvantages associated with the operation of the two models (Table 2). However, all stakeholders reported that the operating model used in their location was the most appropriate for their particular community.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of Trials operating models identified by stakeholders

	CI Model	Lead NGO Model
Advantages	Independence from key community stakeholders (in that they are not part of an NGO) can allow hard decisions and better accountability.	Ready access to infrastructures (eg management, administrative support and existing working relationships with in-house providers) and funding support for initiatives
Disadvantages	Higher administrative loads and less formal managerial, operational or collegial support on the ground	The perception/concern of 'patch protection' had the potential to complicate information sharing and accountability

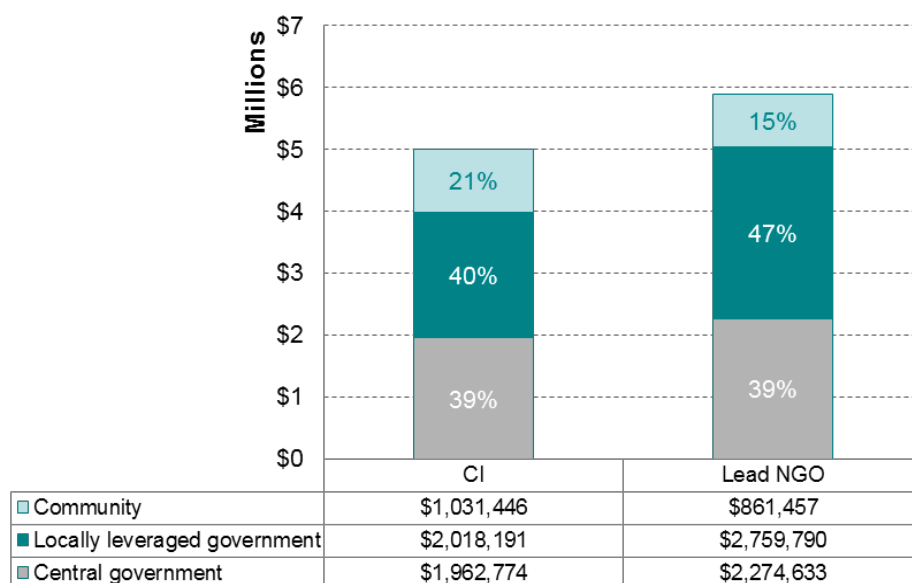
Indeed differences between the two operating models were more evident at the beginning of the Trials. Initially, the different models influenced the community's perception of the role of the Trial lead and the lead's relationship with the community and central government agencies which, in turn, influenced the implementation approach of the Trials in each location. For example, CI leads tended to work directly from the interagency teams to put their ideas into effect or hired people as needed. The NGO leads – with high functioning organisations already in place, and staffed by people with the skills to work effectively with young people – tended to work through people who were redeployed by the NGO in expanded youth focussed roles. However, as the Trials progressed, with the focus switched more to the outcomes and goals of the Trials, the difference between the two models in this respect gradually diminished.

However, there were also key differences in the sources of funding contributions secured by the CI and lead NGO models. The following graphs outline the sources and intended purpose of funding contributions secured in kind by the CI and lead NGO models.

By the end of 2012, both models had been allocated the same proportion of centrally allocated funding from partner agencies (Figure 2). Lead NGO locations secured a higher proportion of locally leveraged government contributions, while CI locations secured a higher proportion of contributions (21 per cent) from community sources. It should be noted that the higher proportion of locally leveraged government contributions of lead NGO locations was largely due to the contributions secured by Levin.¹³ Figure 3 outlines Trials funding contributions by location.

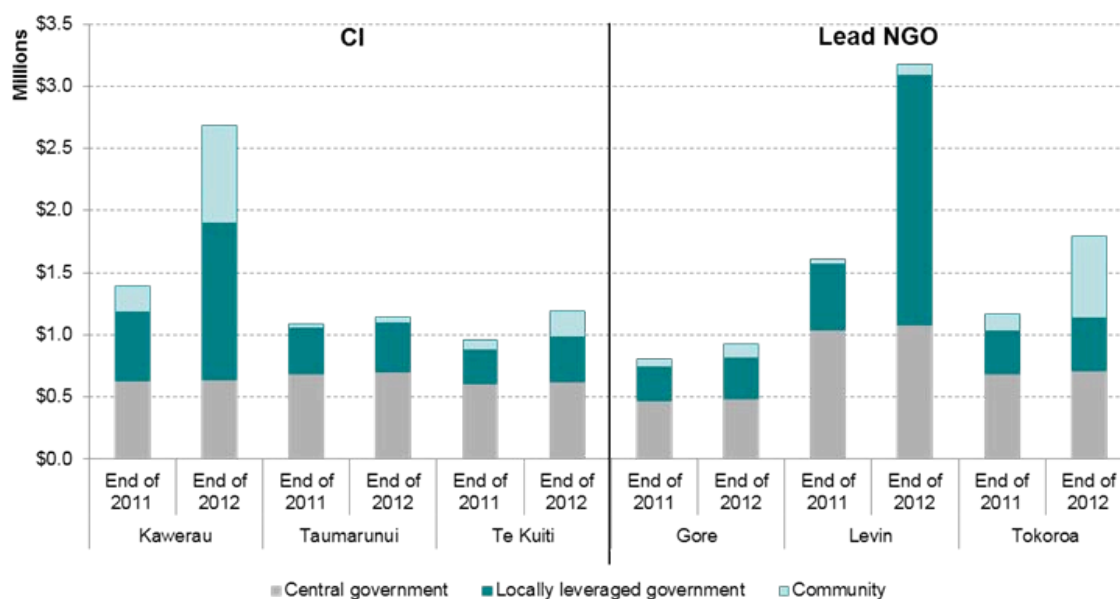
¹³ Sixty three per cent of contributions secured by Levin were from locally leveraged government agencies, including \$1.2m from the Ministry of Education.

Figure 2: Accumulation of secured contributions at the end of 2012 by type of source



SOURCE: Ministry of Social Development, 2013

Figure 3: Accumulation of secured contributions by location



SOURCE: Ministry of Social Development, 2013

The majority of contributions secured by lead NGO locations were in the form of financial support (75 per cent), with in-kind contributions accounting for 26 per cent. For CI locations, the percentages were 46 per cent and 53 per cent respectively. Vouchers and products accounted for less than half a per cent of contributions.

In terms of challenges presented by either of the operating models, some stakeholders were concerned that more well-established lead NGOs may become over-stretched by doing a lot of the Trials delivery themselves, and felt it was important this did not occur at the expense of the delivery of the lead NGO's core work and existing quality standards. Equally, stakeholders also felt it was important that lead NGOs were not delivering services at the expense of engaging with other local providers to pick up some of the Trials work. It was also noted by some stakeholders that having an

NGO as the Trial lead creates a perception that the NGO is favoured over other NGOs (for example, when making funding decisions), and that 'patch protection' issues had the potential to complicate information sharing and accountability.

Some stakeholders were that concerned CI leads had a lack of support structures and as a result had high administrative loads and no formal managerial or operational support on the ground. There was a concern that this could lead CI leads to suffer 'burn-out' and 'isolate' them from potential peers.

Governance

At the national level, a Joint Venture Board (JVB) was established to govern the Trials. The JVB consisted of the Chief Executives of the five partner agencies. The Director: Social Sector Trials is responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the Trials. Staff within each contributing agency support the Director in this role.

The Trials are funded through cross-agency contributions of funding to support the administration of the Trials, the transfer of relevant contracts to the control of the Trial Leads, funding for new initiatives ('seed funding'), and through contribution of resources 'in-kind'.

The financial contributions, including non-departmental and departmental funding, from parties are transferred into the appropriations "Trialling New Approaches to Social Sector Change" in Vote Social Development. The Minister of Health is the appropriating Minister (Minister responsible for the Trial appropriations) [SOC Min (12) 27/1 refers].

Trial leads roles included: planning social service delivery for young people, managing relevant contracts and funding that are within the scope of the programme, overseeing resources-in-kind, developing networks, engaging with the community and influencing social services outside of their direct control (like statutory services)

At the local level, Trial leads in all six locations established a governance group to support the planning and implementation of Trials activities. Governance groups were typically made up of young people, the local Mayor, school principals, iwi, police, council representatives, government agencies and other community leaders.

Stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation felt the various governance arrangements were critical to effective implementation of the Trials as it brought together all agencies around specific sector results, while modelling government expectations of collaboration at all levels. At a national level the JVB and Ministers have been an important mechanism within the model for the Trial leads to overcome operational 'blockages' – having a group of Chief Executives overseeing the Trials has been critical to ensuring there is progress on the ground. Moreover a sub-group of Ministers being enthusiastic and supporting the Trials has been invaluable.

At the local level having influential decision makers within governance groups was seen as critical to gaining traction within the community. In addition, stakeholders commented that the governance groups gave the Trials 'status' within their communities and helped to leverage additional resources to allow quick Trials-related actions.

Key aspects of the governance groups that stakeholders felt supported the achievement of Trials are:

- each group is chaired by a high status local stakeholder (the Mayor in five out of the six sites) giving visibility and mandate to the group
- membership is drawn from across key stakeholder groups in each case the membership is seen as including all critical players effectively spreading ownership of the Trials across multiple agencies

- diverse membership is also valued by governance group members for incorporating a range of perspectives, members described their governance group as operating with high trust – with all members able to contribute openly and debate ideas

Stakeholders also noted several challenges with the governance groups. In some locations, certain group members appeared to be less committed to the Trials on an individual or organisation level, and as a result would often not attend meetings (for example, some government agency stakeholders from whom the Trials are not directly significant to their organisational mandate). In locations where this was occurring other Trial leads and other governance group members reported that whilst this was not significantly impacting on the Trials overall, it meant that they were making less traction in particular sectors those members were responsible for representing.

In addition to governance groups, Trial leads also established working groups or sub-groups to initiate and support specific actions outlined in the strategy or the action plan. Working group membership was drawn from government agencies and NGOs aligned to the Trials outcomes.

All Trial leads interviewed as part of the evaluation reported that the governance and working group structures enabled them to access and leverage the skills and knowledge of a diverse group of stakeholders, while also ensuring that the Trials objectives were widely understood. This effectively shifted knowledge, reach and ownership of the Trials from government, to the community as a whole.

Action Plans

The key output of the Trials design phase was an Action Plan¹⁴ for each site: each Action Plan is different, reflecting the differing needs and priorities of the six Trials communities¹⁵. Each Trial lead and governance group consulted their community to create Action Plans detailing problems faced by young people in their community and the activities they would implement to address the high-level Trials outcomes.

Each Trial location took a different approach to their Action Plans, using a ‘local solutions to local problems’ philosophy. This has made the design and operation of the Trials different in each location. Trials locations valued the opportunity and flexibility to shape a government sponsored initiative in a way that would fit local needs, resulting in pride and ownership of the Trials design and initiatives.

Some Trials locations did experience problems collecting a wide range of input into the Action Plans from young people or from local businesses, which made it harder for them to ensure the Plans were relevant to their community. Common challenges and opportunities described in the six Action Plans are provided in more detail in Appendix 2.

Progress against Action Plan activities were provided in quarterly ‘traffic light’ reports within existing monthly Trials reports. In many cases the Action Plans have resulted in realignment, revival and refocusing of predominantly existing activities as illustrated in Levin’s Action Plan (which represents the biggest shift in provision of activities from before the Trials) and Tokoroa’s revival of the Youth Mentoring Programme (CLUBS) which had operated in Tokoroa in the 1980s.

Regardless of whether or not the Action Plans constitute a change in the mix of activities, all Trial leads reported that a key outcome of the development of the Action Plan was improved discussion and dialogue between stakeholders and agreement on the type of initiatives that were required to respond to issues facing young people in their community. Trial leads and governance group members reported that working together to develop Action Plans had brought key stakeholders ‘around the table’, resulting in a better understanding of gaps in service provision and opportunities for improvement.

¹⁴ Leads and governance groups drew information from a mixture of community consultation, existing research, young people’s views, and youth focused providers to develop the Action Plans.

¹⁵ As an example, the types of activities listed in the Action Plans range from school-based programmes (eg breakfast clubs, students at risk initiatives, career planning, truancy) to community-based programmes (eg creation of hubs/community centres; youth mentoring programmes) to family focused programmes (eg regular sports activities)

Youth Focussed Positions

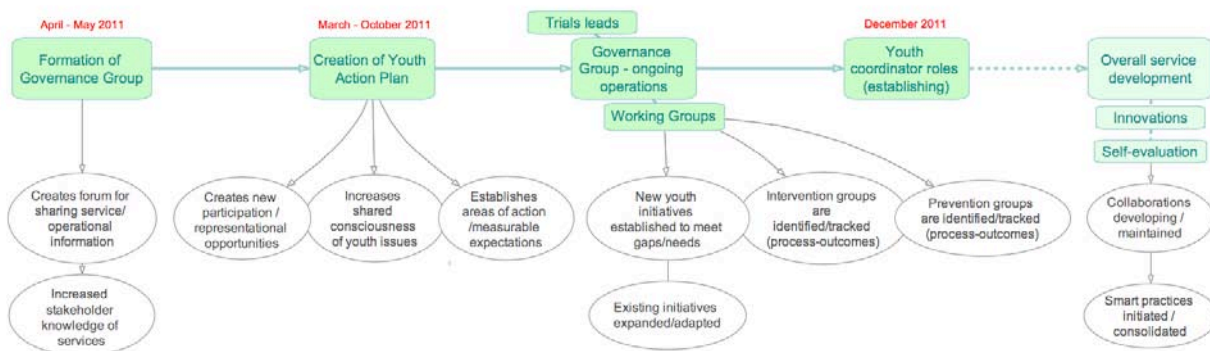
All six trials locations have established one or more new dedicated youth focussed role, or built on existing positions within the community. The dedicated roles can take a number forms, including:

- youth participation/activities coordinators focusing on many young people
- youth mentors focusing on a smaller more intensive relationship with a group of young people
- youth specialists working with particularly troubled young people.

Trials stakeholders report that the recruitment of these roles were to ensure that youth issues were at the forefront of community decision-making.

Figure 3 below presents a general overview of how the six locations established and implemented the Trials.

Figure 3: Establishment and Implementation of the Social Sector Trials



Key achievements of the Trials

The Trials have improved community collaboration

Improved collaboration between local organisations, NGOs, local and central government agencies was identified by stakeholders as a key success of the Trials at a local level. Trial leads and governance group members report that the Trials have provided a platform for networking and relationship-building between key community stakeholders, building trust and a shared sense of purpose. Most stakeholders felt the Trials had made positive changes to service delivery in their local community. They reported great improvements in cooperation and collaboration between NGOs, local and central government agencies, and amongst themselves. They commented that the Trials empowered them to more effectively identify and address local issues and this had resulted in a significantly better system of coordinated service delivery for young people and their families.

Local leadership from Trial leads was instrumental to this. Gaining community input and goodwill was one of the first steps that Trial leads took in implementing the Trials. This involved community consultation, workshops and connecting to existing community forums (ie Kawerau Engaging Youth). Throughout, Trial leads had a focus on what the community wanted to achieve for young people, which was reflected in the Trials Action Plans.

Interestingly, [I] have received lots of positive feedback [from] down the street about the need for better opportunities for young people and the Trials [in] helping to make that happen which is great that people know that an initiative is happening – Te Kuiti monthly report (May 2011)

Governance groups were also instrumental to collaboration. Regular governance meetings focusing on joint actions provided an opportunity for stakeholders to better understand each other's business, leading to better collaboration to achieve outcomes and a positive climate for decision-making at a local level. It has also led to increased accountability at a community level – with community organisation representatives in Trials locations now routinely meeting to discuss and share their work programme and explain the actions they have taken to respond young people's issues. Stakeholders reported that this increased interagency collaboration facilitated more effective information sharing, alignment of goals and activities, and connected the Trials to national programmes with similar aims (ie Community Response Model¹⁶ and Whānau Ora). It enabled Trial leads and local organisations to better understand the needs of young people, and to explore creative and pragmatic solutions. These solutions further improved the Trials fit and responsiveness to their community. Every "success story"¹⁷ submitted by the Trial leads identified interagency cooperation as the ultimate enabler and foundation of the accomplishment presented.

Sometimes cooperation and collaboration between organisations was hard won. Trial leads were at times faced with local agency representatives who did not regularly attend governance group or sub-group meetings, or who did not see the Trials outcomes as critical to their own organisations' work programme.

If there are people who feel they are being forced into the project against their will then they only need to do the minimum required and wait it out until the project finishes. Others may feel that they don't want to fully invest because at the end of project they might perceive that they will be left with nothing. This is especially true for clients and organisations working with the Youth Specialist – Gore monthly report (April 2012)

Another challenge was the lack of information flow within some of the organisations involved in the Trials. This occurred both locally (ie a principal not talking to the school board) and in central government (ie high staff turnover) and was a particular problem when the geographical boundaries of government agencies differed from one another, or when agency representatives were based hours away from the Trials location. Central government, the JVB and the Trials Programme Manager were relied on heavily in such situations.

At a national level close and direct link between governance (Ministers and JVB) and front line operations (Trial leads) has been seen as crucial to the operation of the Trials to date. The regular, high quality meetings and information exchange between these two groups have been an important mechanism within the model for the Trial leads to overcome operational 'blockages' that could be barriers to collaboration. The JVB was also able give advice and direction on how the initiatives should be coordinated, and how they could fit together at an operational level, as well as clarity on their relative priority if any conflicts arose.

There is also less evidence of increased collaboration between partner agencies as a result of the Trials, with some stakeholders commenting that different agency mandates make this difficult. This has affected the ability of Trial leads to balance the local and national environments the Trials operate within. Trial leads also commented on the requirement to balance the long-term care of their community relationships against the "quick win" of engaging an influential central government agency.

The Trials have increased community responsiveness to issues faced by young people

In the six Trials locations, increased community collaboration has 'snowballed' into increased community awareness and ability to effectively identify and address local issues, and provide more coordinated service delivery to young people and their families. Trial leads and governance group members reported that sharing of information between community organisations has strengthened each Trial's ability to proactively identify issues and gaps, and to develop tailored solutions. By

¹⁶ Gore and Kawerau.

¹⁷ Significant change story.

promoting collaborative rather than competitive arrangements and encouraging partnerships with community leaders and non-government agencies, stakeholders felt that the Trials have enabled communities and government to find new ways of working together.

Government stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation were impressed by the level of responsiveness demonstrated by the Trials locations and the willingness of Trial leads and local stakeholders to go beyond the Trials outcomes. This was seen as a reflection of the potential of the Trials and a taste of what is possible when communities are given the mandate, authority and flexibility to make decisions at the local level.

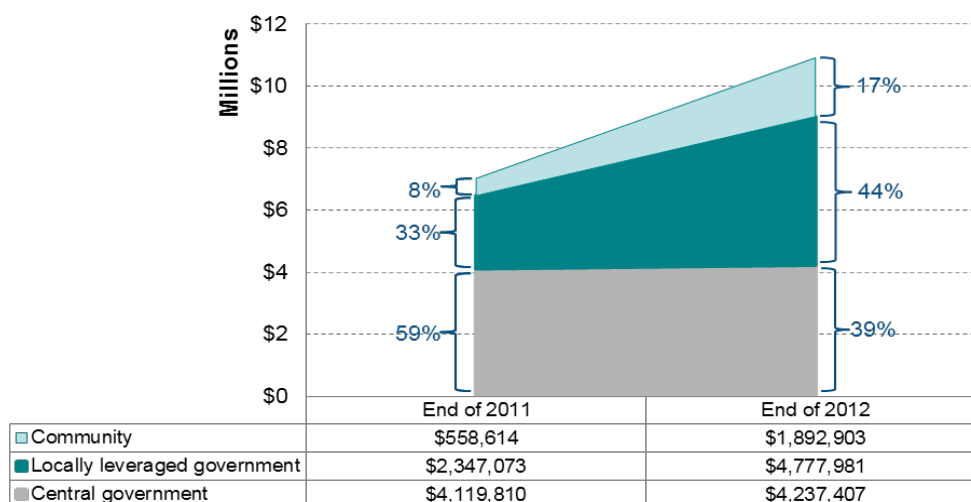
It may be scope creep, but it reflects that the community is thinking critically about the bigger picture and investing in responding to emerging issues. They are using the mechanisms put in place within the Trials, but for responding to a wider set of issues.

In each of the six locations, Trial leads secured additional financial support for each Trial through government and community sources. Initially, Trials locations were predominately funded by centrally allocated funding from partner agencies (including initial funding for setting up the Trials and transferred government contracts). By the end of 2012 the majority of contributions had been secured locally by the Trial leads:

- from locally leveraged government sources¹⁸ (partner agencies and other government agencies)
- from community sources (including district councils, businesses, schools, tertiary institutes, Primary Health Organisations, NGOs, iwi, and members of the local community).

As a result, between the end of 2011 and the end of 2012 the Trials have substantially increased the amount (from \$2.91 million to \$6.67 million, or by 130 per cent) of new financial contributions secured from locally leveraged government and community sources, as shown in Figure 4. This suggests that a further effect of the Trials has been greater mobilisation of local resources toward issues faced by young people.

Figure 4: Accumulated secured financial contributions at the end of 2012 by source type (Mar 2011 – Dec 2012)



SOURCE: Ministry of Social Development, 2013

In addition, all new funding contributions have been provided as financial input, in-kind contributions¹⁹, or vouchers and products. Locally leveraged government funding consisted of 80 per cent financial

¹⁸ This is in addition to the centrally allocated funding that the Trials started with.

¹⁹ Physical or human resources offered to support the Trials.

support and 20 per cent in-kind contributions. In contrast, 81 per cent of funding from community sources consisted of in-kind contributions, 18 per cent was in the form of financial support, and one per cent from vouchers and products.

Increased community awareness of the Trials helped improve the availability of local resources through employing community members and volunteers, engaging local businesses, and building capacity in the community. For example:

- in Levin, local businesses provided supplies for the school holiday barbeque
- in Gore, two providers worked together to recruit mentors from within the community, as the area initially had difficulty recruiting mentors. Following media coverage and an information evening, ten people signed up as 'interested in training to be a mentor'.

There is now a broader base of service aimed at young people in each Trial location

Stakeholders, Action Plans and monthly Trials reports indicate that the Trials have supported the local provision of new and improved services targeted at young people in a more coordinated manner. These services have included a wide range of activities, events and programmes that seek to engage young people and contribute to the Trials high-level outcomes.

Each Trial generally provides a range of services, varying across high, medium and low intensity.

- High intensity services involve 1:1 case management, where services worked specifically with the relatively small number of young people with high risk factors, such as being disengaged from education and employment, in trouble with the Police and/or undertaking risky behaviour (including alcohol and drug abuse). Each Trial created new youth focussed roles²⁰ or expanded an existing one. This type of support is often described as 'wrap-around' or ongoing intensive support that seeks to 'transform' the life opportunities and aspirations of these at risk young people. The nature of any specific intervention provided under such support is often not as important as the ongoing, long-term contact it provides a young person with a Youth Coordinator or Counsellor, which are often seen as a trusted adult or role model for the young person to engage with.
- Medium intensity services address certain behavioural issues, needs and/or learning difficulties and include a number of programmes young people were required to attend on a regular basis to address specific issues such as truancy or offending.
- Low intensity interventions include programmes for a large group of young people aimed at increasing engagement in school, such as breakfast clubs, holiday programmes, sports and cultural events, and school-based health services. Together with community events and campaigns, such as youth weeks and magazines, these low-intensity interventions were identified as useful ways of engaging young people, raising community awareness and mobilising community resources on behalf of youth.

Each Trial location also provides programmes aimed at young people outside of the target age group of the Trials, their families and the broader local community, for example, support aimed at:

- 'other' young people; where possible a number of Trials areas sought to develop interventions aimed at all young people, including primary school or early childhood aged children
- the wider community, often provided through a mix of activities and supports. Some activities were quite simple, such as Levin's school holiday barbeque which aimed to keep young people busy during school holidays and increase the number of young people the Trials engaged with. Other services were more complex, such as Kawerau's 'Wellness Centre' which brought together a range of health-related services into a central hub located at a local school.

Areas of youth service development identified by stakeholders to have improved as a direct result of the Trials includes:

²⁰ These include youth participation/activities coordinators focusing on many young people; youth mentors focusing on a smaller more intensive relationship with a group of young people; and youth specialists working with particularly troubled young people.

- planning and development of youth services by community stakeholders and organisations
- increased community buy-in and wider participation in youth service planning
- more services available specifically for young people in their area
- greater confidence amongst Trials stakeholders and the wider community that the services delivered will improve outcomes for at risk young people.

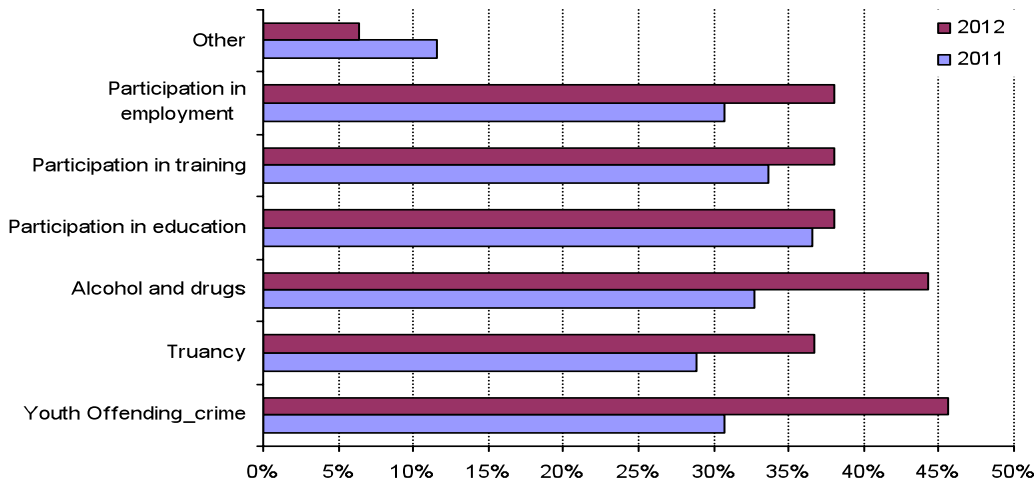
The Trials have made progress in achieving outcomes for young people and the wider community

After two years of operation, stakeholders in each of the six Trials locations report positive results for many young people as a result of Trials activities. These stakeholders have also identified changes in behaviour and attitude amongst young people involved in the Trials, as well as improved confidence and motivation.

Strong support for the Trials was expressed by community stakeholders involved in the evaluation, noting that it was making a ‘difference’ within their community. These stakeholders commonly talked about the Trials as a catalyst for change, and a way of demonstrating to the community and government what can be achieved when communities are given the flexibility and power to reconfigure and influence the use of resources in their community.

Most of the Trials activities aimed at more than one high-level outcome. From the stakeholders’ point of view, high-level outcomes were often interrelated as were the problems they addressed. The 2011 and 2012 Trials surveys together show that of the 537 Trials related programmes and services mentioned, most (72 per cent) had components that addressed education, training, or employment. Slightly over half (56 per cent) of the programmes had AOD prevention components, 56 per cent also addressed offending, and under half (47 per cent) addressed truancy outcomes (Figure 5).²¹

Figure 5: Extent to which Trials programmes addressed high-level outcomes



SOURCE: 2011 and 2012 Trials organisational surveys²²

It is unclear the extent to which young people in the programmes benefited from these activities due to the lack of available outcomes data (discussed further in ‘Lessons for the Future’ chapter). However,

²¹ These figures do not add to 100 per cent as many programmes and services addressed multiple outcomes.

²² In 2011, organisations providing services and programmes for youth in the Trials areas were surveyed to gain a wider understanding of the types of services and programmes being run and how agencies collaborate within their communities to improve youth outcomes. The follow-up survey was conducted in 2012

qualitative evidence from Trials stakeholders and monthly reports provides some detail about how Trials locations sought to address the high-level outcomes and stakeholder perception of successes against these outcomes:

Reducing offending

- Trials sought to reduce offending by providing either highly targeted or community level programmes.
- Some Trials locations measured success in reduced offending by obtaining feedback from the community. For example, shop owners reported that less young people loitered around their shops as a result of Levin's school holiday barbeque. Other locations used existing population level data to track outcomes. For example, Taumarunui's wrap-around youth offending programme, DRIVE, used Police data to report that after about a half-year of operation, 10 out of the 12 young people in the programme had no offences, and 15 out of 20 had not come to Police attention during the October–January 2012 quarter.

Reducing truancy

- There are convincing, although not verified, figures at the individual and population level that truancy has reduced in some Trials locations.
- In each area it was decided to initially focus on reducing truancy and providing school based services, and as such progress against this outcome is much more advanced. The common approach to reducing truancy in Trials locations was to work closely with schools, including primary schools as truancy is often perceived to start early. The Tokoroa campaign "It's not okay to miss a day" Truancy Awareness Week was both highly targeted (inviting 35 families of truant children to the Community Education Expo where they were linked into support services) and aimed at the wider community (encouraging local businesses to adopt a truancy free zone). Tokoroa reported impressive anecdotal evidence of individual successes ("*one 14 year old student has gone from [zero] per cent attendance at the start of the process in 2011, to 54 per cent at the beginning 2012 [to] 71 per cent*" reported in June 2012").
- Gore monitored their success against this outcome using population level data. They reported a reduction in truancy rates following implementation of the Trials with unjustified absences dropping from 12 per cent down to four per cent – a decrease of 66.5 per cent. Intermittent unjustified absences dropped from 10.1 per cent to 3.1 per cent – a decrease of 69.4 per cent. However as this information comes from the monthly reports, it was incomplete (lacked dates) and could not be substantiated at the time of the evaluation.

Reducing alcohol and drug abuse

- Drug and alcohol treatment and counselling was an important element of service delivery in all Trials locations. There are some instances of individual success stories, but no data at the service or Trials levels. Progress towards this outcome was often through increasing access to services (ie Kawerau's Wellness Centre, increasing collaboration between services, or Taumarunui's AOD network).

Increasing participation in education, training and employment

- Trial leads reported success in increasing participation in education, training and employment at both the individual level and at different programme/group level. However, there is no data available on the impact of Trials activities in increasing youth participation in education, training and employment.

Other outcomes of the Trials

Qualitative evidence suggests that the Trials also worked to engage young people with positive role models, community groups and events, and school, as well as improving transitions from school to training and employment. For example, there was evidence that the Trials were:

- *increasing engagement in school*: Many programmes were aimed at increasing engagement in school, such as breakfast clubs, holiday programmes, sports and cultural events, and school

based health services. Trial leads often specified the numbers of young people involved in these programmes and services as a positive sign of their engagement.

- *increasing engagement with positive role models*: Each Trial location incorporated opportunities for young people to engage with positive role models. All of the youth worker and mentoring programmes were focused on this and a number of other initiatives incorporated elements of mentoring. There was anecdotal evidence about the positive effectiveness of mentoring for individual youth.
- *improving the transitions between school and employment*: There was compelling evidence from stakeholders that the Trials were having a positive impact on transitions from school into employment for some young people. For example, Te Kuiti arranged for trade training and Tokoroa launched a Broadcasting, Media and Music technology programme that included a numeracy and literacy component for 16-17 year old NEET youth. Links were also created between schools, Work and Income offices and local training providers, through a memorandum of understanding (MoU), which was particularly useful when targeting young people that may have been out of school or truanting for some time. For example, the Kawerau career pathway had ten youth workers from across the community each case managing exit plans for four to five young people.

While most young people interviewed for the evaluation did not have a strong understanding of the Trials, all were aware of at least some of the activities, projects or youth focussed roles associated with the Trials. When asked what had been the benefits of these activities for young people in their community, they described a community that 'cared about young people', 'offered a range of activities for young people', 'a range of individuals who they could go to get help' and overall 'positive energy in the community'.

A number of young people interviewed for the evaluation reported an improved sense of belonging and an increased feeling of responsibility for others around them. Some had been given the opportunity to act in leadership roles through Trials activities and valued the opportunity to act as a role model to others. Some of the young people also commented on the value of being actively involved in the Trials – formally through a governance group or informally through conversations with Trial leads and other staff involved in the Trials.

Challenges

A range of initial and on-going barriers were identified through the evaluation as potentially constraining the ability of Trials locations to develop and deliver the type and/or extent of services required on the ground.

Barriers to collaboration during the establishment of the Trials

Transparency, leadership and credibility were important to collaboration and the Trials success. However faced by the Trials locations faced challenges to collaboration in the establishment phase, for example:

- some community stakeholders reported there was a lack of communication and transparency in the process for recruiting Trial leads (in particular NGOs)
- the short time frames for the establishment of the Trials meant Trial leads felt they had not had enough time to consult the wider community and gain perspectives from all young people-focused providers when establishing their Action Plans. These leads felt this impacted on levels of community collaboration towards the Trials, transparency and the credibility of the Trials
- there were some difficulties in establishing structures and processes for the Trials in order to facilitate people working together (eg a lack of clarity around how the Trials would link in with other national initiatives such as Whānau Ora and the limited the ability of government agencies to change their processes to support local Trials initiatives). Some of challenges were specific to

Lead NGOs (eg overcoming any perceived conflict of interest between the Trials governance groups and the interests of Lead NGOs). Others challenges were specific to CIs (eg ensuring the CIs were seen as impartial by consulting widely with the community but not over-extended).

The narrow scope and focus of the Trials

Overall, interviewees felt that the Trials were offering a good opportunity to trial a new way of working for a well-defined group: 12 to 18 year olds. However, stakeholders commonly reported that narrowly focusing the Trials on young people aged between 12-18 years was limiting their ability to achieve against the expected high-level outcomes. They reported that this requirement to focus on young people aged 12-18 years did not always fit with the problems identified by the community or their preferred approach for addressing these problems (eg whānau-centred delivery or holistic approach). Some Trials locations wanted to (and did) provide programmes and services to engage young people at earlier ages, knowing that some problems started earlier for some young people (ie AOD abuse can be a family related problem). Therefore, being able to reach out to children or adults was important and beneficial.

Since establishment of the Trials, all six Trials locations also reported frustration about having to focus on all four high-level Trials outcomes. Stakeholders have noted that the problems facing young people are often interrelated and not confined to the four outcomes the Trials were focused on (eg they also included mental health problems, teen pregnancy, and suicide). The Trial leads reported the tight focus did not encourage the holistic response needed to more effectively influence positive outcomes for young people in their communities. The focus on achieving the high-level Trials outcomes meant that some programmes or services provided by the Trials may not be sustainable over the long-term and may be less community relevant.

Ensuring joint governance and ownership of the Trials

Support and backing from central government was seen as critical to the Trials. Bureaucratic barriers such as privacy issues, contracts, funding and operating models have presented an ongoing challenge to this. For example, Trial leads feel that there has been a lack of transparency around new government initiatives (ie Youth Services, changes to District Truancy contracts) that impact on the Trials, and how these new initiatives and the Trials may relate to one another. This has made it more difficult to adapt contracts to fit community needs and increased the risk of not reaching a particular group of young people (ie Māori) because relevant providers are not involved in the Trials.

Translating joint Ministerial ownership through to shared ownership at the participating agency level has been challenging for all agencies involved in the Trials. Some community and government stakeholders commented that bureaucratic complexities and the different mandates of partner agencies have made close collaboration difficult. At the operational level, agency objectives, priorities and practices differ and do not necessarily align with the Trials objectives or the narrow focus on young people's needs, and has resulted in instances of particular government agencies not fully cooperating at the local level.

In addition, some stakeholders reported that the location of the Joint Venture Director within MSD had created a perception that the Trials are primarily owned and led by MSD. As a result, some agencies see themselves as less central to the Trials and this can have negative consequences on their commitment or future funding of the Trials.

Multiple government initiatives and priorities causing operational confusion

Stakeholders repeatedly identified a number of government initiatives that have an operational overlap with the Trials (for example, Youth Services). In addition, changes in government priorities and funding at the local and central government levels over the Trials period creating multiplicity and duplication of initiatives in Trials locations. Stakeholders felt there were opportunities for improvement on this front, using the governance group as a vehicle for this.

Integration of funding activities

Integration of in-scope government contracts into a single appropriation is a key feature of the Trials design, with the intention of giving Trial leads flexibility in using the funding to best meet local needs. However stakeholders report that integrating funding had proven to be a significant challenge for the Trials and it has not been fully achieved. Reasons given for this were:

- a number of government contracts were not included because they were not strictly in scope
- the limited leverage available to government agencies that have a devolved operating model (eg Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education²³) to influence the way funding is used in particular communities
- difficulty in separating out funding intended for small Trials sites when contracts are funded for service provision across wider regions.

Difficulties in obtaining relevant outcome data

A key challenge in the current evaluation of the Trials is the lack of locally relevant and robust outcome data. Over the first two years of the Trials concerns have been expressed about the ability of the national outcome indicators to accurately reflect the impact of the Trials on the ground in the six distinct geographical communities. There is also a general consensus that local reporting for each of the indicators does not easily align with the national-level indicators (or across each Trial's area). Beyond self-reported information from interviews with community and government stakeholders and young people involved in the Trials, there is currently no means in place to collect robust or consistent data to measure or monitor the progress of the Trials against specific targets associated with their high-level young people outcomes. This has resulted in questions about the real differences the Trials are making. The ability to collect relevant and robust outcome data needs to be addressed to enable the impact of the Trials to be measured more effectively in the future.

Lessons for the Future

The evaluation highlights several 'lesson learned' and recommendations for the future of the Trials.

Key success factors for achieving outcomes through the Trials

From analysis of interviews with community and government stakeholders, the evaluation has identified a number of interdependent factors that are critical to the success of the Trials model. These include having:

- *national leadership, including high level Ministerial engagement and interest, and a clear mandate for the Trials:* The Trial leads and governance group members all emphasised the importance of national interest and central government commitment in ensuring operational and regional level support and commitment to the Trials. They reported that strong interest from Ministers and Chief Executives at the national level was a catalyst for promoting and sustaining engagement at the regional and local level. In addition, Trial leads and stakeholders noted that the desired outcomes of the trials and the imperative for change needs to be clearly stated and agreed to facilitate full agency engagement, cooperation and participation
- *an on-going close and direct link between governance group (Ministers and JVB) and front line operational staff (Trial leads):* regular, high quality meetings and information exchange between these two groups was seen as crucial to the operation of the Trials to date. Linked to this is the ability to escalate issues from an operational level to governance level to overcome blockages if they cannot be resolved locally

²³ For example, schools are self-managing and there are limits as to what the Ministry of Education can direct them to do.

- *clear structures, processes and roles at both local and national levels*, with the evaluation highlighting that the establishment of governance groups and working groups ensured ongoing cross-agency and local collaboration towards the Trials, as well as operational efficiencies within more joined-up and strategic actions at the local level. In addition, stakeholders noted that each individual agency's priorities and practices need to be understood by all participating agencies in order to understand the potential strengths and limitations of each agency's contribution. Trial leads, government and community stakeholders also reported that clear, transparent and frequent communication and information flows were essential to overcoming operational blockages
- *'fit for purpose' activities, reflecting community needs and intended outcomes*, ensuring that the Action Plan and its associated activities have been put together with the purpose of achieving Trials outcomes was critical to the success of the model at the local level
- *secure funding and resources to assist in providing continuity of service*, with Trial leads and governance group members emphasising that access to funding and resources in kind was central to their ability to deliver on Action Plans. They expressed concern that insecure funding could have a negative impact on their ability to continue valuable activities and initiatives. In particular, key roles such as youth coordinators require secure, ongoing funding to retain high quality personnel
- *high quality local leadership that is able to work collaboratively*: local implementation appears to be dependent on a skilled Lead with well established local networks.. It was apparent that the skills and networks of the Trial leads enabled the sites to deliver better results for their communities. The capacity and capability of the Trial leads is, therefore, an integral part of the Trials success
- *shared responsibility for the Trials across key community stakeholders*, with Trial leads, governance group members and community members all reporting the need for continuing shared responsibility for Trials operation in order to maintain (and continue to improve) inter-agency working – that is, ongoing commitment and participation by a wide range of government agencies at the local level. This includes on-going support from partner agencies either in cash or kind to cover costs associated with administration and governance of the Trials.

These key success factors should be considered when establishing new Trials locations, as they provide a useful indication of what it takes to make the Trials model work on the ground. The type of community may also be important. The current Trials are located in small, rural, geographically defined, and tight knit communities. Future expansion is planned for larger, more urban communities and it is unclear what the implications of this will be.

Further work is needed to enable future monitoring and measurement of Trials outcomes

Both the current and proposed national outcome indicators are not sufficiently sensitive, nor designed, to monitor what are generally 'small' changes in the six Trials areas. Without improved alignment of local and national indicators there will continue to be a difference of opinion about the impact of the Trials. Next Step Research was commissioned to review and propose a way forward for the monitoring of the Trials particularly with regard to the national outcome indicators. To improve monitoring and reporting on the impact of the Trials, four broad options are proposed for consideration, which are outlined below. These options are not mutually exclusive and progress can be made against all four options to strengthen overall reporting on the Trials.

1. Maintain and enhance national outcome indicators

While several attempts have been made to strengthen the national outcome indicators, it is clear that any proposed changes will not represent a significant step forward in their ability to measure the impact of the Trials. National level outcome indicators clearly have a role to play but need to be used in conjunction with other information – particularly at the local level.

Systems and processes need to be standardised so that local and national offices are generating the same data. Government agencies supporting the Trials will need to allocate more analytical resource to help local leads collate and analyse outcome data.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that any national outcome indicator can be used in a consistent manner at both the local and national level

2. Strengthen and standardise local outcome indicators

Increased standardisation in the use of local indicators is necessary to more clearly show the impacts being achieved by the Trials. Local indicators should relate to the core short-term outputs being delivered (in part or completely) by the Trials; such as whether the Trials have been able to:

- increase participation of young people in positive activities
- engage the broader community, including businesses, in youth-focused activities
- provide new or extended services or facilities for young people (not previously available).

Local Action Plans, or supporting documentation, also need to specifically set out expectations for individual activities and interventions and how they will achieve the outcomes being sought.

Recommendation 2: Provide additional monitoring and evaluation resource at the national level to support local Trial leads to strengthen, standardise and use local outcome indicators. This could include data management infrastructure.

3. Develop a new set of intermediate outcome indicators

Currently, there is no consistent monitoring of how the attitudes and perceptions of young people, and the attitudes and perceptions of the wider community and/or key stakeholders toward young people are changing as a result of the Trials. While this would require additional resource at either the local or national level to undertake primary research at agreed intervals to monitor changing attitudes and perceptions, it would address a critical information gap in monitoring the impact of the Trials.

Recommendation 3: Investigate the cost of a full research programme to support the Trials (or to use existing surveys where possible).

4. Improve the wider government data infrastructure and advanced analytics capability

The Social Sector Trials could examine whether advances being made linking different agencies administrative data and advanced analytics can support better measurement of young people's outcomes. For example, once identified and segmented, cohorts of young people could be more easily tracked as they progress through and leave formal education, enter tertiary education and/or employment, whether in their local area or elsewhere in New Zealand, and/or as they come into contact with other government services (eg Work and Income, Police, Justice, Health, etc).

Building such an integrated data infrastructure and analytical capability is likely to be beyond the current scope (timeline) of the Trials.

Recommendation 4: Investigate the feasibility of tracking the outcomes of a cohort of young people who have participated in the Trials.

Considerations for the future evaluation of the Trials

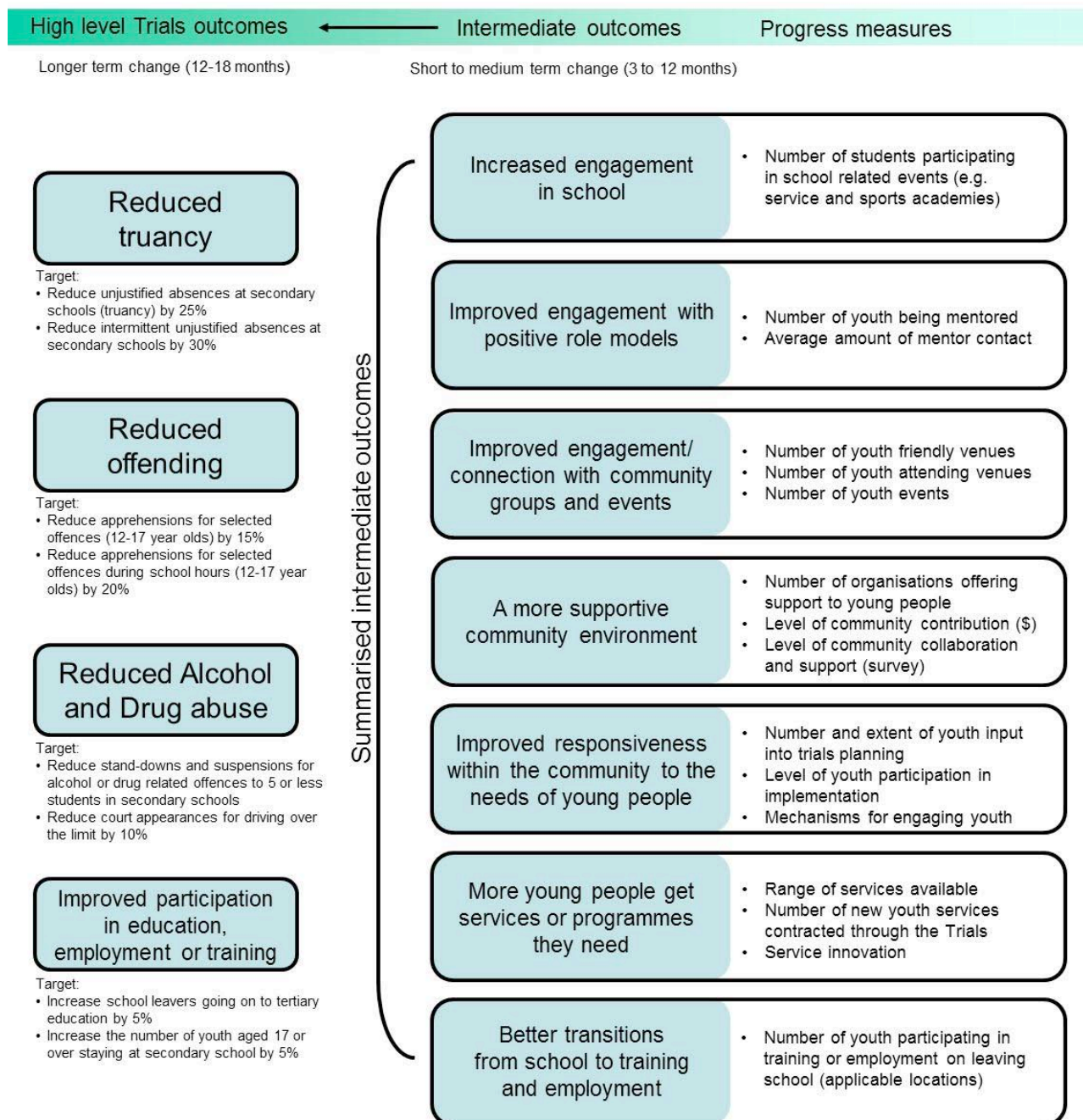
It is important that any future evaluation work on the extension of current Trials locations and expansion to new locations articulates how it supports the future development of the Trials. This includes supporting the Trial leads to understand what difference they are making and that the timing of the evaluation work is aligned to key project dates and deliverables, so it can inform the decision making process.

Any future evaluation of the Trials needs to be adequately resourced to achieve its purpose. If decision-makers want a more accurate assessment of the impact of the Trials more resource will need to be allocated to monitoring and evaluation. Consideration should also be given to establishing an interagency evaluation team, in addition to the Evaluation Steering Group. This would further support the intention that agencies participating in the Trials operate collaboratively at a national and local level and that each agency 'own' the outcomes sought.

Appendix 1: Framework for Monitoring Progress toward Outcomes

Social Sector Trials Framework for Monitoring Progress towards Outcomes (Figure 6) shows the four high-level Trials outcomes and related targets, intermediate outcomes and progress measures. No data was collected for the progress measures.

Figure 6: Social Sector Trials Framework for Monitoring Progress towards Outcomes Diagram (partial)



Appendix 2: Communities before the Trials

In the Trials Action Plan, each Trial's governance group described their community before the Trials. Table 3 summarises the landscape of the Trials communities as captured in the Trials Action Plans, and Table 4 summarises the barriers and opportunities existing as the communities saw them.

These Action Plans highlighted that at each of the six Trials locations, educational achievement of young people was below the national average and this was of primary concern. Most Plans described their communities as small and rural and predominantly surrounded by farmland. Levin was the only exception, describing themselves as the largest town in the Horowhenua; as such, their actions were much more inclusive of neighbouring towns than the other five Action Plans.

Table 3: Landscape of the Trials Communities based on Trials Action Plans

Landscape of the Trials Communities summarised from the Trials Action Plans	
Location	
Kawerau (Kawerau District)	<p>Kawerau is a rural industrial community facing the consequences of economic downturn.</p> <p>One of the major issues facing young people is that the environment does not provide a high level of positive engagement. Youth suicide is a topical and troubling issue.</p> <p>Only 42% of 17.5 year olds are still at school and only a third of school leavers have NCEA Level 2 or above. Truancy rates are of concern.</p> <p>Youth crime is decreasing in Kawerau, alcohol and drug offending is high on a percentage basis.</p>
Taumarunui (Ruapehu District)	<p>Taumarunui is predominantly a farming community town. Around one quarter of young people leave the community at the end of their primary education to attend boarding schools outside the region.</p> <p>Educational attainment is poor and students are underachieving in comparison to the rest of New Zealand. Only 38% went on to tertiary education in 2009 (compared to 52% for New Zealand).</p> <p>Average attendance at Taumarunui High School was 75% in May 2011, well short of the 92% attendance rates set by the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Youth crime is gradually increasing in Taumarunui, and makes up 30% of all crime.</p>
Te Kuiti (Waitomo District)	<p>Te Kuiti is a small, rurally isolated town surrounded by Waikato farmland. There is a lack of collective vision for youth development in the community.</p> <p>In 2009, young people were more likely to leave school with no formal attainment (15%) when compared to the national average (5%), and tertiary follow on was low at 20% (compared to 52% nationally).</p> <p>Apprehension data is varied, but violence accounts for a much larger proportion of the total apprehensions than the national average (25% compared 16% nationally).</p>
Gore (Gore District)	<p>Gore is a service township for surrounding farming communities. School rolls have been increasing as more families move into the area.</p> <p>In 2006, those aged 15 years or over had lower levels of post-school qualifications than the New Zealand population (28.9% compared to 39.9%).</p> <p>Educational attainment is positive, with two-thirds of 17.5 year olds still at school, and 65% of school leavers going on to tertiary education in 2009.</p> <p>The number of court appearances by young people has been increasing. Youth apprehensions made up 41% of all apprehensions in 2010.</p>
Levin (Horowhenua District)	<p>Levin is the largest town in the Horowhenua District. There are limited employment options for young people and many leave the area once they have finished school.</p> <p>Student participation in Levin has improved in recent times but truancy remains an issue.</p> <p>Between 2004 and 2008, 42% of school leavers went onto tertiary study (national average = 53%).</p>

Tokoroa (South Waikato District)	<p>Huge redundancies and down scaling of timber industries in recent times has seen the population fall and unemployment increase. This has had social and economic impacts on the community.</p> <p>In 2006, only 22.1% of the population aged over 15 years had a post-school qualification, much lower than the New Zealand average (39.9%).</p> <p>Truancy figures show a significant number of young people are not engaged at school.</p> <p>A quarter of youth apprehensions are related directly to drugs and anti-social behaviour.</p>
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Table 4: Opportunities and Barriers existing in the Trials communities based on the Trials Action Plans

Barriers and Opportunities existing in the Trials communities based on the Trials Action Plans		
Location	Barriers	Opportunities
<p>Kawerau (Kawerau District)</p> <p><i>Feedback received from community consultation.</i></p>	<p>Youth and community issues</p> <p>Lack of knowledge within the community about social support for families.</p> <p>Resources that are contracted to Kawerau and are not locally managed can be difficult to track and mobilise in a timely manner.</p> <p>Information regarding young people and their families is not shared so duplication of services occurs.</p> <p>Gaps in services / capacity</p> <p>A lack of community responsive programs and educational facilities, including after-hours activities.</p> <p>The current truancy service could be optimised.</p> <p>Poor service coordination across a continuum of service provision. Lack of communication between agencies in a timely manner.</p> <p>Resources for high risk young people need to ensure strong long term interventions.</p>	<p>Resources / Strengths</p> <p>Strong leadership and a willingness from key agencies to collaborate for the wellbeing of young people.</p> <p>Kawerau District Council is supportive and proactive in the health, social service and educational communities.</p> <p>Nga Iwi are actively participating and leading areas of a provider delivery.</p>
<p>Taumarunui (Ruapehu District)</p> <p><i>Information drawn from community interface and existing research, programmes and initiatives.</i></p>	<p>Youth and community issues</p> <p>Taumarunui has a culture of sending youth out of town for secondary schooling, creating a deficit.</p> <p>No structured youth voice within the community. Many youth do not have the resources or support at home.</p> <p>Intergenerational unemployment, alcohol/substance abuse and crime/gang violence.</p> <p>Gaps in services / capacity</p> <p>Insufficient activities and holiday programmes.</p> <p>The Alternative Education scheme struggles to cater for demand.</p> <p>Difficulty of attracting the right skill level to live and work in Taumarunui.</p> <p>Employment opportunities for young people are scarce.</p>	<p>Resources / Strengths</p> <p>Strong community.</p> <p>Youth have been identified as part of the Council's long-term plan.</p> <p>Employment, Education and Training</p> <p>Employment opportunities exist in early education, nursing, social work and aged care.</p> <p>Underutilised subsidies for cadetships / apprenticeships.</p> <p>Educational opportunities for Māori with Whānau trusts</p>

<p>Te Kuiti (Waitomo District)</p> <p><i>Feedback received from consultation with young people in the community.</i></p>	<p>Youth and community issues</p> <p>No strong youth voice within the community.</p> <p>Distance / transport from tertiary education.</p> <p>Too easy to access drugs and alcohol in the community. Gang affiliations affect perceptions of youth.</p> <p>Gaps in services / capacity</p> <p>No apprenticeships available – or not well advertised. Limited access to careers advice for young people.</p> <p>No community youth forums or formal mentoring or leadership programmes.</p> <p>Lack of youth space or time out zone – the youth centre is now closed.</p> <p>Current youth services are generally reactive and in the crisis phase.</p>	<p>Resources / Strengths</p> <p>Friendly, small, safe, close-knit community.</p> <p>Plenty of sports.</p> <p>Employment, Education and Training</p> <p>Gateway, a structured workplace learning program, is offered to secondary school students. It is designed to strengthen the pathway from school to work.</p>
<p>Gore (Gore District)</p> <p><i>Issues identified by the CNT Youth Coordinator.</i></p>	<p>Youth and community issues</p> <p>Many young people lack supportive positive role models. Engagement needs to be non-threatening and non-judgemental.</p> <p>Some services operate out of Invercargill, meaning some families do not have the means to access them. Young people often don't know what is available and how to access services.</p> <p>Gaps in services / capacity</p> <p>The Gore District Alcohol Strategy needs to be implemented and monitored.</p> <p>A need for wrap-around type support for young people and more sustainable funding from government.</p> <p>An increase in, and better promotion of, parenting programmes such as Incredible Years and GAIN.</p> <p>10 places at Alternative Education are not always adequate for the demand on services.</p>	<p>Resources / Strengths</p> <p>A willingness to work in a collaborative way to support the development of on-going and new initiatives.</p> <p>Excellent relationships between agencies and service providers. Effective networks are already in place.</p> <p>The Gore District Council has been working to develop their Youth Council.</p> <p>Employment, Education and Training</p> <p>There are numerous services available for young people to access, including youth groups/centres, alternative education, mentoring services (eg Work'n it Out).</p> <p>The Youth Worker Trust runs effective one to one and group programmes.</p>
<p>Levin (Horowhenua District)</p> <p><i>Feedback received from community consultation.</i></p>	<p>Youth and community issues</p> <p>The Youth Network needs to be used as a collaboration point for NGOs, providers and government agencies.</p> <p>Pacific Island families experience difficulty in accessing assistance within the community and at school.</p> <p>Family connections are often broken down leaving young people and parents isolated.</p> <p>Gaps in services / capacity</p> <p>Lack of wrap-around services to support young people.</p> <p>Lack of alcohol and drug counsellors – only 0.5 FTE.</p> <p>Counselling services for children are lacking, especially when adverse life events occur, such trauma or grief.</p> <p>When a young person reaches 16 in Alternative Education, there are limited training programmes available.</p> <p>Truants are not consistently monitored or mentored to reach outcomes.</p>	<p>Resources / Strengths</p> <p>Levin youth workers have a strong affiliation to iwi and Pacific Island communities.</p> <p>There is a willingness from service providers to work towards better collaboration.</p> <p>Horowhenua District Council continues to implement the Youth Strategy. A Youth Network is established.</p> <p>Employment, Education and Training</p> <p>Horowhenua Service Academy, and the Youth Transition Service helps students / young people prepare and move into further education, training and work.</p>

<p>Tokoroa (South Waikato District)</p> <p><i>Feedback received from the Community Advisory group.</i></p>	<p>Youth and community issues</p> <p>Initiatives for youth development should include whānau development; the two should not exist in isolation. Young people need to be part of decision making processes.</p> <p>Tackling seemingly smaller issues is crucial eg children's breakfast, access to correct uniforms.</p> <p>Gaps in services / capacity</p> <p>Services need to be streamlined in their approach.</p> <p>There are a number of agencies working with the same families in an incoherent way.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement is important. Strategic initiatives in the past have failed to be as effective as they could have been because of poor consistency in stakeholder attendance.</p>	<p>Resources / Strengths</p> <p>Tokoroa's residents are industrious, resilient and innovative.</p>
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