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Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora

Youth Transition Services Process and Outcomes Evaluation Final Report

Centre for Social Research and Evaluation
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Executive summary

In 2002 the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) estimated that 10-17% of young people aged 15-19 were not participating in formal education, training or work[1]. This lack of participation is commonly known as "youth inactivity".

Youth Transitions Services

The Youth Transitions Services (YTS) initiative was established in 2004 to support the Government's goal (shared with the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs) of having all 15-19 year-olds in work, education, training or other activities that contribute to their long-term economic independence and wellbeing. Five services were implemented in 2004/2005, five more in 2005/2006, and the remainder more recently. The service is now in operation in 14 locations across the country.

Each YTS has four core functions:

(1) following-up school leavers and engaging with the young people who are at risk of prolonged disengagement from work, education or training
(2) providing these at-risk youth with customised support and guidance to facilitate their re-engagement into appropriate work, education or training
(3) identifying and supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people
(4) providing a forum for ongoing strategic planning and co-ordination of services for young people.

Each young person enrolling with YTS is firstly registered and then assessed to determine the level of support they require. Based on this assessment each young person is allocated to "follow up", if they need minimal assistance, or "customised support" if they need intensive support. YTS will exit the youth if they are believed to be on a pathway to sustainable employment.

The evaluation

The Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (CSRE) at MSD has undertaken a process and outcomes evaluation of the YTS initiative between December 2005 and March 2008, covering the first 10 services across 10 locations.

The objectives of the YTS evaluation were to:

i. assess whether YTS has increased the number of 15-19 year old youth on a "sustainable employment pathway"
ii. investigate whether YTS has enhanced the economic independence and wellbeing of young people
iii. collect and analyse information about how YTS was operating in order to improve service delivery.

The evaluation used detailed information from both the YTS database and the Work and Income administrative working age benefit data for the outcome evaluation, supplemented by interviews, surveys and focus groups with young people, service providers and other stakeholders.

[1] This estimate is based on data from the Household Economic Survey (HES), the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) and the 1996 Census.

Youth outcomes

Between January 2005 and March 2008 YTS providers offered 22,900 interventions to 10,286 participants, of which two-thirds were successfully completed. The most common were career guidance and help with Curriculum Vitae preparation.

Of the 10,286 young people who exited, 61% left with a positive outcome[2]. Employment was the most common positive outcome from the services provided by YTS, followed by enrolment in tertiary education, return to school and enrolment in a private training establishment. Other youth with positive outcomes were in alternative education, other types of training, apprenticeship or had been referred to another agency that continued to provide them with assistance or support. Māori and Pacific young people jointly made up two-thirds of those who exited from YTS and accounted for 50% of those who left with positive outcomes.

The evaluation sought to compare outcomes for youth participants in YTS with those in similar areas that had no YTS service. Over the period of the evaluation the proportion of 18-19 year old young people receiving working age benefits in both YTS and comparison sites declined, but analysis appeared to indicate that the proportion in YTS sites declined slightly further than in comparison sites. Small numbers enrolled in YTS and time constraints meant the overall impact of YTS on benefit receipt could not be confirmed.

YTS services

Over a third of young people were referred to YTS by their schools and slightly fewer referred themselves. The rest were referred by their families, friends, other community organisations, or government agencies. Most commonly, schools referred students who were likely to leave school without a qualification, students who were frequently absent or truant, and students with low academic performance.

While services varied somewhat between sites, the activities being carried out by YTS providers were very similar. Providers reported that they were:

- developing relationships with schools to facilitate school leaver follow up
- contacting school leavers to identify those who need assistance
- conducting assessments with young people who require customised support and using this information to help them develop an individualised plan with each young person
- providing practical support and encouragement to young people to help them carry out their individualised plans
- referring young people to interventions to reduce their barriers to activity
- assisting young people to find and complete useful training
- helping young people to develop skills in searching for and securing employment
- providing support for young people while they undertake work, training or education.

Young people and key stakeholders agreed that the one-on-one mentoring and support of YTS coaches was the key to achieving successful outcomes for young people. Following up with young people once they engaged with YTS was an important aspect of the service and was integral to maintaining relationships between youth and their coaches.

[2] A positive, or successful outcome is defined as a "young person maintains ongoing involvement in education, training or employment and no longer requires the support of YTS to remain engaged in that activity". This could include any enduring meaningful activity that contributes to a youth's economic independence and wellbeing in their long-term employment pathway – such as, but are not limited to, paid employment, apprenticeship, training towards a profession, returning to school, enrolment with tertiary education institutes, and referring to another agency that continues to support the youth.

YTS was well received by youth participants who appreciated the flexible approach of the service and many indicated that they had developed a rapport with YTS coaches. Following engagement with the programme they expressed more confidence in themselves, a clearer vision for the future and a greater sense of purpose. They had learned where and how to access services and reported improved employability.

Networking and communication

In many communities young people need help accessing opportunities such as jobs and training courses. YTS can act as a bridge between youth and the organisations that provide those opportunities. Building and maintaining relationships with organisations that refer youth to YTS, take referrals from YTS, and provide training and labour market opportunities for youth are essential activities for YTS.

Schools were the most common referral source for youths using YTS. Contacting and building relationships with schools was an important part of the YTS strategy and providers worked hard to develop relationships with schools in their area.

Employers and training providers are another set of key stakeholders for YTS. Employers and training providers interviewed for the evaluation reported that the quality of the YTS staff they worked with affected their relationship with YTS and their satisfaction with YTS as a whole. Most employers and training providers were satisfied with their relationships with YTS, and with the information provided by YTS about the young people referred to them. Overall, they valued the service YTS provides to youth.

Community stakeholders liaised with YTS providers as required and through regular community network meetings. They were generally satisfied with the relationship they had with YTS providers and considered that liaison with YTS had been positive.

Supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people was extremely important in areas where the existing services could not meet the needs of youth in the communities. YTS providers identified gaps and then advocated for and supported the development of initiatives to fill them. These included local cadetships for paid employment, training courses designed to prepare youth for a profession, and services to remove barriers to engagement.

Co-ordination

YTS built a strong reputation based on what it offered to youth and the community. YTS worked in collaboration and co-ordination with other service providers at site level. Towards the end of the evaluation period, community stakeholders saw YTS as an integral part of the local youth development strategy and as a key point of contact for youth-focused services in the community.

YTS providers were also conscious of the need to co-ordinate with other, related government initiatives designed to support young people’s transitions from school to the workplace, further education or training.

Service delivery model

MSD contracted YTS providers to implement the programme. While there was a national service delivery model, YTS providers were supported to develop a responsive, local approach to service delivery. Evaluation data showed that the preferred YTS service delivery model was to have one service provider, preferably supported by a strong steering group of stakeholders.

An important aspect of YTS service delivery is how YTS providers chose to target at-risk youth. Options included providing intensive case management for a smaller number of youth with major issues or less intensive case management to the wider at-risk youth populations. Providers made a range of decisions about where to target their services.

Conclusion

The evaluation found that youth participants, community stakeholders, high schools, employers and training providers were very positive about YTS. Overall, YTS effectively networked and co-ordinated with key stakeholders in providing high-quality services to youth and, wherever they could, supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people. YTS was seen by local community stakeholders as a part of the local youth development strategy complementary to other youth-focused services.

The evaluation identified the following components of a YTS good practice model:

- service delivery needs to be undertaken by one service provider at each location so that responsibilities are clear and use of resources can be optimised
- YTS staff are positive and have a friendly attitude, are flexible in dealing with stakeholders and youth, have access to ongoing training, and have local knowledge and experience
- YTS staff build rapport with the youth participants and tailor the service to meet their individual needs
- the location is visible, with room for youth to socialise
- funding is sustainable so that stakeholders can be confident of building long-term relationships
- local formal and informal networks, actively built and maintained, include as many schools as possible, and a wide range of employers and training providers
- YTS is visible in the community, maintains community consultation and is supported by a strong and representative steering group.

Considerations for future development

To further develop or enhance YTS it may be useful to consider:

- promoting and sharing good practice among all parties involved in YTS to enable efficient targeting and following up all at risk youth, especially hard-to-reach youth
- aligning future YTS with other youth-focused government and non-government initiatives, such as Schools Plus and other youth development initiatives
- prioritising YTS tasks within each territorial local authority to develop local youth development strategies focusing on prevention and early intervention
- enhancing the YTS database to host youth information from multiple sources and provide customised data linking youth outcomes to interventions by the service, in order to determine key factors for positive youth outcomes.

Chapter 1 Background

1.1 Need for a transition service for youth

In 2002 the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) estimated that 10-17% of young people aged 15-19 were not participating in formal education, training or work[3], this lack of participation has been commonly known as youth inactivity. Māori and Pacific youth were over-represented among those who face difficulties in the transition from school to further education, training and employment.

Successful transitions from school to work, training or further education depend on the development of individual capacity, and matching this with appropriate opportunities. While most young people are able to achieve a successful transition without specific government intervention, some face difficulties. This is an important issue because of the high social and economic costs associated with poor transition outcomes.

Internationally, countries including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) have introduced youth transition programmes. Research in Canada and Australia shows that experience of part-time work while at school, completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent, high occupational aspirations, prudent career planning, participation in work preparation programmes and development of job-related skills all facilitate a successful transition from school to work (Applied Research Branch 2000; Zeman *et al*. 2004; de Broucker 2005; Marks 2006; Taylor and Nelms 2006, 2007; Hango and de Broucker 2007).

In the UK, the Jobcentre Plus and the "New Deal for Young People" programmes have both helped young people move from inactivity to employment (Riley *et al*. 2007; Beal *et al.* 2008). In the US, participation in transition programmes enhanced young people's cognitive competence, social behaviour, academic and professional achievement and self-confidence (Lowry, 1989; Blackorby and Wagner 1996; Johnson *et al* 2002; Johnson, 2004; Skyles *et al.* 2007; Beckett 2008; Zarrett and Lemer 2008).

1.2 Youth Transition Services

The Youth Transition Services (YTS) initiative was established in 2004 to support the Government's goal (shared with the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs) of having all 15-19 year-old youth in work, education or training or other activities that contribute to their long-term economic independence and wellbeing. Five services were implemented in 2004/05, five more in 2005/06, and the remainder more recently. Fourteen YTS providers are now in operation across the country.

Each YTS provider is supported by a steering group made up of key stakeholders, such as representatives from community organisations, local authorities and government agencies.

[3] This estimate is based on data from the Household Economic Survey (HES), the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS) and the 1996 Census.

Each YTS has four core functions:

(1) following-up school leavers and engaging with the young people who are at risk of prolonged disengagement from work, education or training
(2) providing these at-risk youth with customised support and guidance to facilitate their re-engagement into appropriate work, education or training
(3) identifying and supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people
(4) providing a forum for ongoing strategic planning and co-ordination of services for young people.

A national database was developed as a case management tool to capture information on young people who participate in YTS. The database became fully operational in July 2006 and data on participating youth have been retrospectively entered. The outcome evaluation of YTS for youth who participated in the service draws mainly on this source of information.

1.3 The YTS business processes

Under the standard YTS business processes (Appendix 3), each young person enrolling with YTS first signs a form in order to be registered. A YTS coach then conducts a needs assessment to determine what level of support they require, and allocates each young person to "follow up", if they need minimal assistance, or "customised support" if they need intensive support. Youth on follow up status can be transferred to customised support status if required. YTS coaches will "exit" a youth if they have been placed into a meaningful activity (such as employment, training or education) for an appropriate period of time, depending on a young person's transitioning needs. The transition pathways for youth engaged with YTS are shown in Appendix 2.

1.4 The evaluation of YTS

The Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (CSRE) at MSD has undertaken a process and outcomes evaluation of the YTS initiative between December 2005 and March 2008.

The objectives of the YTS evaluation were to:

i. assess whether YTS has increased the number of 15-19 year old youth on a "sustainable employment pathway"
ii. investigate whether YTS has enhanced the economic independence and wellbeing of young people
iii. collect and analyse information about how YTS was operating in order to improve service delivery.

The evaluation sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Did YTS increase the number of 15-19 year old youth on a "sustainable employment pathway"?
2. Has YTS increased young people's qualifications, skills and experience?
3. Have barriers to youth engagement been reduced?
4. Have youth been supported into work, training, education or other activities?
5. Have youth been placed in work, training or education or other activities?
6. Have individualised development plans been created and modified as needed?
7. Were the needs of youth accurately assessed, with strengths and barriers identified?

8. Were target youth contacted and engaged?
9. Did YTS identify and support the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people?
10. Did YTS provide a forum for ongoing strategic planning and co-ordination for services for young people?

1.5 Methodology

A programme logic was prepared at the outset of the evaluation and informed the research design (see Appendix 1). The evaluation used a mixed-method design focusing on the first 10 YTS sites called Stages 1 and 2, all of which are on New Zealand's North Island.

The evaluation team used detailed information from both the YTS database and the Work and Income administrative working age benefit data for the outcome evaluation. The analysis focused on statistics such as types and frequencies of YTS interventions completed by youth participants, and their employment, training and education outcomes at exit. We also compared the proportion of youth in receipt of working age benefits at the age of 18 in YTS and non-YTS locations for an examination of YTS impact.

Other data sources for the evaluation included:

- a literature review of at-risk youth issues and transition services in New Zealand and overseas
- focus groups and three follow up telephone interviews with 160 YTS participants (completed between September 2006 and February 2008)
- two visits to each YTS site and interviews with YTS managers and coaches (completed between early 2006 and late 2007)
- focus groups and telephone interviews with local YTS steering groups and key community stakeholders (undertaken from March to August 2007)
- an online survey of high schools in Territorial Local Authority (TLA) catchments that had some involvement with YTS (undertaken during November 2007)
- a telephone survey of employers and different types of training providers working in partnership with YTS (undertaken between February and March 2008).

Detailed information on data collection and analysis is included in Appendix 5.

1.6 The outline of the report

This report presents the findings of the process and outcomes evaluation in the following sections:

- **Chapter 2 Youth data sources**
  Description of data used for the evaluation of youth participant experiences and outcomes**.**

- **Chapter 3 Youth outcomes**
  Findings on outcomes for YTS youth participants, contributing factors to youth outcomes and the impact of YTS on the proportion of youth receiving working age benefits.

- **Chapter 4 Providing services to youth**
  Description of services provided by YTS as reported by youth themselves, YTS providers, and other key stakeholders.

This chapter focuses on the first two core functions of YTS:

(1) following-up school leavers and engaging with the young people who are at risk of prolonged disengagement from work, education or training

(2) providing these at-risk youth with customised support and guidance to facilitate their re-engagement into appropriate work, education or training.

- **Chapter 5 Networking and co-ordination**

  Description of how YTS has networked and built relationships with community organisations such as councils, government agencies, employers, training providers and schools.

  This chapter focuses on the third and fourth core functions of YTS:

  (3) identifying and supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people; and

  (4) providing a forum for ongoing strategic planning and co-ordination of services for young people.

- **Chapter 6 Discussion**

  Discussion of findings addressing the aspects of YTS that worked well and those that could benefit from improvement, including suggestions for a good practice model.

- **Chapter 7 Future consideration for YTS**

  Areas for further development and enhancement of YTS in the current youth-focused policy environment, in light of the evaluation findings.

- **Chapter 8 Conclusions**

  Conclusion of the process and outcomes evaluation of YTS.

Chapter 2 Youth data sources

2.1 Outcome evaluation participant profile

The YTS database shows that 10,286 young people enrolled with and exited from 12 stage 1 and 2 YTS sites between January 2005 and March 2008. Of these youth, 4,611 exited from customised support, 4,707 exited from follow up, another 967 exited from registered status. The presentation of outcomes for YTS participants includes all these youth (Appendix 6).

There was a gender balance among YTS participants, with similar numbers of males and females (Table 2.1). Almost three-quarters of YTS participants were 17-19 years old when they left the service, and a further 15% were aged 20 or older. Māori youth made up the largest group, accounting for almost 40% of all youth participants, followed by New Zealand European (25.5%) and Pacific youth (13.7%)[4]. The disproportionate representation of Māori and Pacific youth shows that these two groups used the service more than other ethnic groups.

Table 2.1 Demographics of YTS participants for outcome evaluation

Gender	No	%	Ethnicity	No	%	Age	No	%
Females	5125	49.8	**Māori**	4109	39.9	**≤14**	112	1.1
Males	5161	50.2	**Pacific**	1412	13.7	**15**	124	1.2
			Asian	507	4.9	**16**	878	8.5
			NZ European	2621	25.5	**17**	1938	18.8
			Other	647	6.3	**18**	3203	31.1
			Unknown	990	9.6	**19**	2462	23.9
						≥20	1569	15.3

2.2 In-depth interview participant profile

Around 160 young people took part in focus group discussions between September and November 2006 and as many as possible were interviewed three times over the following period of 16-18 months. The number of those who could be contacted declined from 119 at the first follow up telephone interviews in December 2006-January 2007, to 25 at the final follow up interview in February 2008. Youth telephone contact details became less and less reliable over time with many discarding or selling their cell phones and others moving away from their homes. In phase one, most of the youth interviewed were still actively involved with YTS. At the time of the phase three interviews, most had exited the programme and had not been in contact with YTS for a number of months.

The age, gender and ethnic composition of these youth participants were similar to those participants for the outcome evaluation. Information from the focus groups and telephone interviews was used for the process evaluation of YTS. It was supplemented by information collected from YTS site visits, focus groups and telephone interviews with local YTS steering groups and key community stakeholders, the survey of schools, and telephone interviews with employers and various training providers working with YTS.

[4] The Level One Priority Rule of Statistics New Zealand was used for determining the ethnicity of YTS youth participants, in which Māori takes the highest priority, followed by Pacific, Asian, others and New Zealand European when a participant has multiple ethnicities.

Chapter 3 Youth outcomes

Evaluation Objective One: Assess whether YTS has increased the number of 15-19 year old youth on a sustainable employment pathway.

Evaluation Objective Two: Investigate whether YTS has enhanced the economic independence and wellbeing of young people.

This section of the report presents findings focused on meaningful or positive outcomes for YTS participants that contribute to their long-term economic independence and wellbeing on their sustainable employment pathway.

3.1 Specific interventions completed

Between January 2005 and March 2008 YTS providers offered 22,900 interventions[5] to 10,286 participants, of which 15,117 (66%) were successfully completed (Figure 3.1). The most common were career guidance and help with Curriculum Vitae (CV) preparation (26% of all interventions). Personal development, confidence building and motivation, job search skills and driver licence preparation each accounted for approximately 10% of all interventions. Mentoring, numeracy or literacy courses and work experience together accounted for around 9% (see Appendix 7 for more details).

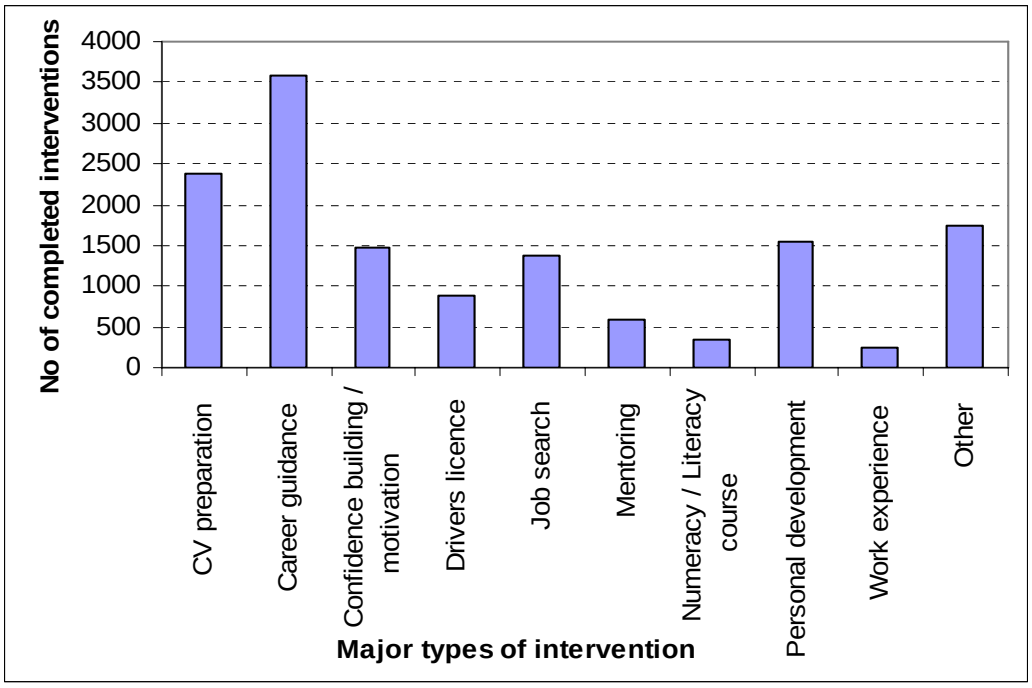

Figure 3.1 Interventions completed by youth enrolled with YTS

It would be useful to be able to link these interventions to the youth outcomes at exit in order to gain a more complete picture of the YTS impact. This functionality, however, is not a "direct association" reporting function in the YTS database, since the later was developed originally as a case management tool and later enhanced as a data repository with some reporting functions. Any future enhancement of the database should enable this function so that possible causal relationships can be adequately assessed.

[5] Interventions refer to specific assistance and/or support that YTS coaches provided to and/or arranged for the youth participants in order to remove their barriers to engagement.

3.2 Outcomes for youth participants

Of the 10,286 young people who exited, 6,314 (61.4%) left with a positive outcome[6]. The remainder had either left the area, could not be contacted or did not want to participate (33.2%) or had an unknown outcome for some other reason (5.4%) (Table 3.1). Employment was the most common positive outcome from the services provided by YTS for 19% of those who exited, followed by enrolment in tertiary education (15.6%), return to school (13.6%) and enrolment in a private training establishment (8.5%). The remaining youth with positive outcomes were in alternative education, other training, apprenticeship or had been referred to another agency that continued to provide assistance or support to the youth (Appendix 6 gives youth participants' outcomes by ethnicity and gender).

Table 3.1 Youth participants exited from YTS to 31 March 2008 by outcome

Positive outcomes	Number	%
Return to school	1398	13.6
Tertiary education	1606	15.6
Employment	1988	19.3
Private training establishment	875	8.5
Other type of training	198	1.9
Alternative secondary education	84	0.8
Apprenticeship	79	0.8
Referred to other agency	86	0.8
Subtotal	**6314**	**61.4**
Other outcomes		
Could not contact	2029	19.7
Does not wish to participate	625	6.1
Left area	758	7.4
Outside YTS age range	189	1.8
Deceased	7	0.1
Other	364	3.5
Subtotal	**3972**	**38.6**
Total	**10286**	**100.0**

3.3 Outcomes for youth participants by type of support

Table 3.2 shows the outcomes for all youth who exited YTS. The percentage of youth who exited with positive outcomes was much higher for those who exited from follow up (70.8%), than for those who exited from customised support (54.2%). Youth who only received follow up generally had fewer barriers to engagement than those who also received customised support. This result was not surprising, given that youth who also received customised support generally required more intensive services. There was no information on how these outcomes were maintained over time, but the youth focus group and interview data indicated a tendency for the positive outcomes to be maintained over a period of up to 18 months.

Table 3.2 Outcomes for youth who exited YTS from registered, follow up, and customised support statuses

[6] A positive, or successful outcome is defined as a "young person maintains ongoing involvement in education, training or employment and no longer requires the support of YTS to remain engaged in that activity". This could include any enduring meaningful activity that contributes to a youth's economic independence and wellbeing in their long-term employment pathway – such as, but are not limited to, paid employment, apprenticeship, training towards a profession, returning to school, enrolment with tertiary education institutes, and referring to another agency that continues to support the youth.

Outcome type	Registered	Follow up	Customised support	Total by outcome type
Positive outcomes	497	3,263	2,553	6,313
Other outcomes	471	1,348	2,154	3,973
Subtotal by exit from status	968	4,611	4,707	10,286
% positive outcome	51.4	70.8	54.2	61.4

As shown in the transition pathways through YTS in Appendix 2, it was possible for the youth to exit with meaningful positive outcomes without going through the follow up or customised support service delivery phases. A total of 497 youth exited from YTS with positive outcomes while still on registered status. These youth either received actual support or assistance from YTS coaches prior to their registration with the service, or received support prior to being allocated a follow up or customised support status. Hence, they were able to exit with positive outcomes before being allocated to follow up or customised support. This showed that YTS coaches were, on occasions, prepared to bypass the standard business process for the benefit of young people using the service. This phenomenon may not be too surprising, as YTS has been tailored to meet the specific needs of its youth participants.

3.4 Outcomes for youth participants by ethnicity

Māori and Pacific young people jointly made up 65.5% of those who exited from YTS, and accounted for 50% of those who left with positive outcomes. The proportion with positive outcomes within those groups (58%) was slightly lower than those within other ethnic groups (64-68%) (Figure 3.2) (Youth outcomes by ethnicity by gender are shown graphically in Appendix 8). This indicates that some Māori and Pacific youth may have needed more intensive support to achieve desirable outcomes. More Māori youth, by absolute number, than any other ethnic group who participated in YTS left with positive outcomes (Figure 3.2).

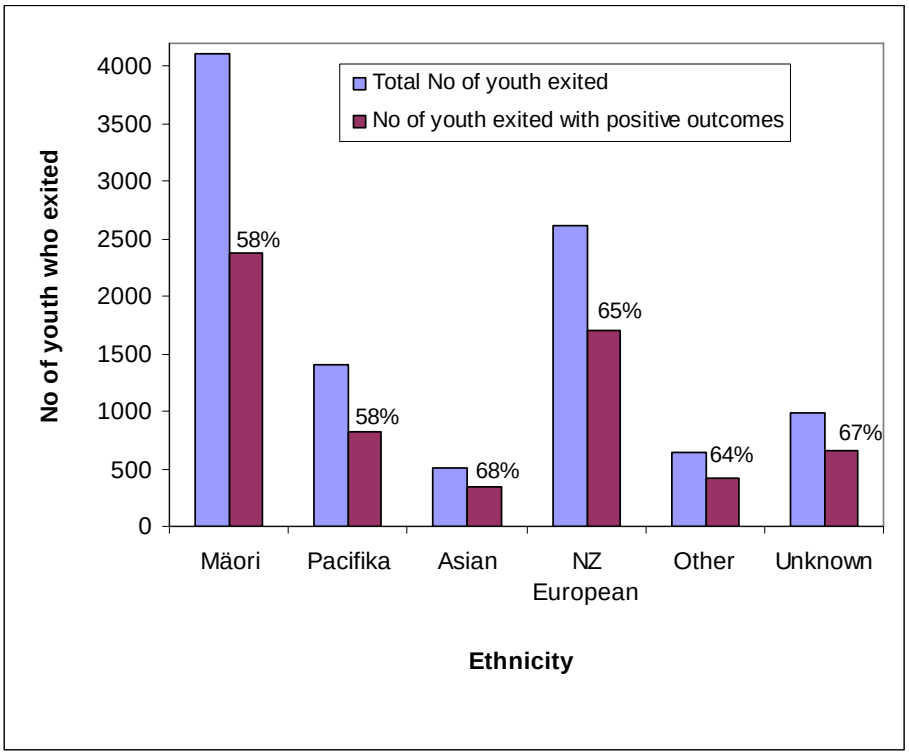

Figure 3.2 Number of youth who exited from YTS with positive outcomes in relation to the total number of youth by ethnicity

3.5 Contributors to positive youth outcomes

The engagement continuum is a numeric tool used by YTS providers for rating participants. Ratings are set between 1 and 8. Youth at the highest risk of disengagement are rated 1, while youth rated 8 are on a sustainable pathway towards economic independence. YTS coaches give youth an engagement rating when they first enrol. The coaches review the rating when youth complete an intervention, when they experience a significant change in their circumstances and when they exit the service. While each rating is based on the same 1 to 8 scale, they are relatively subjective. Consequently, it is more useful to use the change in engagement rating from entry to exit, than the actual ratings themselves.

We used a logistic regression analysis to understand whether positive youth outcomes at exit were associated with certain characteristics of youth participants. We considered ethnicity, age, gender, enrolment duration in months, engagement rating on entry, and change in engagement rating from entry to exit[7].

Results show that engagement rating on entry and change in the continuum rating were the only variables that served as good indicators of positive youth outcomes at exit. There is significantly greater positive change in engagement rating for youth who exited with positive outcomes than for those who exited with other outcomes (Figure 3.3). Youth with greater positive change in engagement continuum rating tended to have positive outcomes, while those with no or little change in continuum rating tended to have other outcomes. The change in engagement rating appears to be a reliable indicator for positive outcomes. It was possible for YTS coaches to give a greater change in continuum rating intuitively to youth who left with positive outcomes in some occasions. However, the coaches were trained to use the ratings independently of the outcomes and they did so.

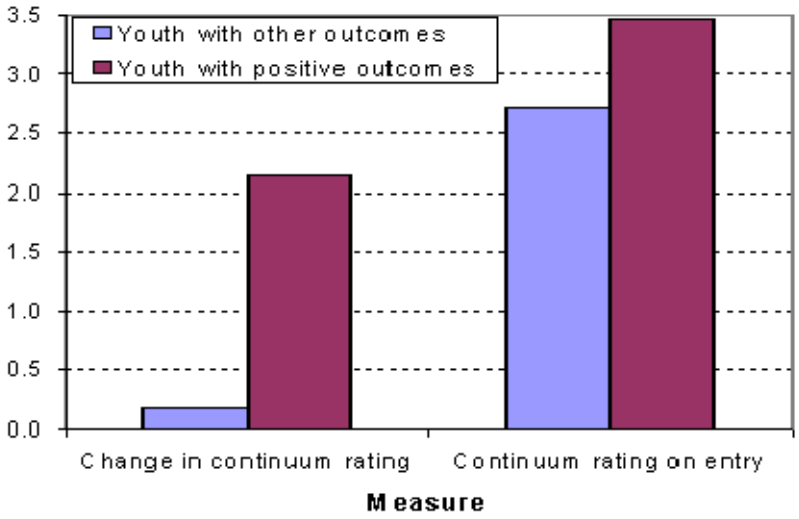

Figure 3.3 Youth outcomes in relation to continuum rating on entry and change in continuum rating

Youth with a higher level of engagement rating on entry would naturally have found it easier to transition into positive outcomes or may require less input from YTS for a positive outcome to be achieved. This suggests that youth with a low level of engagement rating on

[7] Details of methods and results from the analyses are listed in Appendix 9, including logistic regression methodologies, t-tests, frequency distributions of continuum rating on entry and change in continuum rating for both the group of youth exited with positive outcomes and those with other outcomes.

entry would require more assistance from YTS to achieve a positive outcome than those with a higher level of engagement rating on entry.

The findings from these analyses suggest that the continuum rating:

- for participating youth should continue to be used to indicate where they are in terms of relative risk of disengagement
- on entry indicates how easy or difficult it will be to assist an at-risk youth in their transition into positive outcomes
- change can serve as an indication of the average degree of improvement towards positive outcomes
- was effectively used by YTS coaches in rating youths' overall ability to transition to positive outcomes and therefore use of the continuum should be continued and encouraged.

3.6 Estimation of the YTS impact on youth

The outcomes for youth participants shown in previous sections provided no indication of what outcomes youth would have had without YTS. To measure the impact of YTS on young people, we compared YTS sites with five non-YTS sites deemed to have similar proportions of youth aged 15-19 considered to be inactive since 2001 (for detailed discussion of the methodology and rationale, see Section 4 in Appendix 5).

For youth who received YTS support at the age of 16, logic suggests the impact of YTS would be evident two years later if a smaller proportion of youth who used the service received working age benefits when they turned 18. Accordingly, the proportion of youth in receipt of working age benefits at the age of 18 would be lower for YTS sites than for non-YTS sites. This type of impact analysis was conducted for youth aged 16, 17 and 18. All these analyses demonstrated a similar pattern, so only the graph for youth aged 17 has been shown below (Figure 3.4).

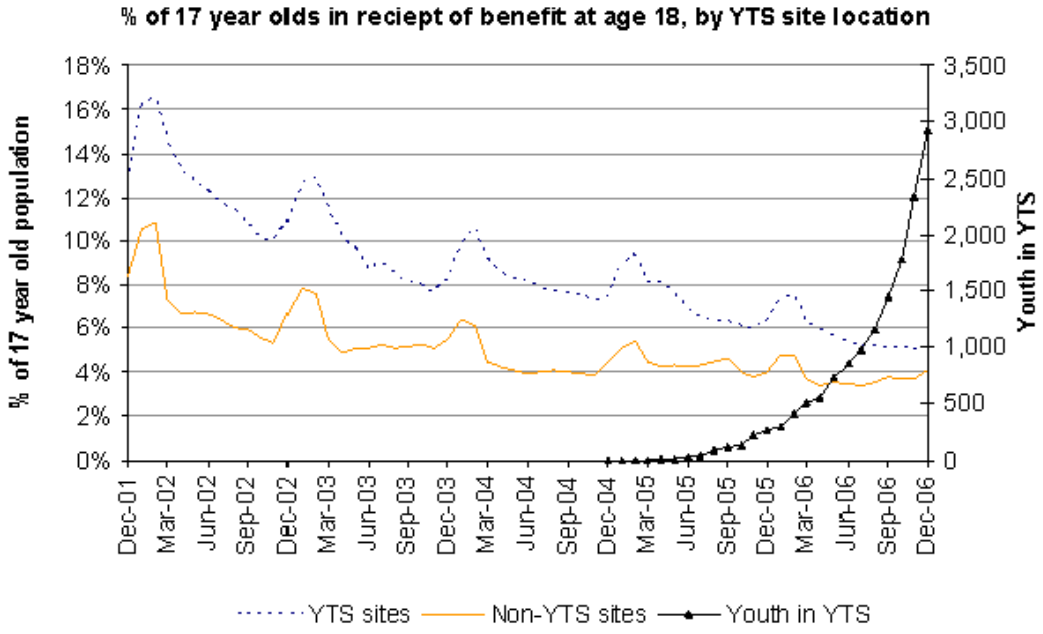

Figure 3.4 Proportion of youth at age 18 taking up working age benefits for both YTS and non-YTS sites. The horizontal axis shows the time when youth had access to YTS at age 17

Over the past seven years, the proportion of youth aged 18 on working age benefits declined for both YTS and non-YTS sites (Figure 3.4). Since the beginning of 2006, when YTS began to engage more at-risk youth as service delivery capacity increased, the proportion of youth receiving a benefit continued to decline in the YTS sites, whereas the proportion appeared to flatten in non-YTS sites. The difference between YTS and non-YTS sites appears to become slightly smaller in the period towards the end of 2006, when YTS sites became fully operational, and greater numbers of youth were receiving YTS assistance and support.

Due to time constraints it was not feasible to determine whether the gap will finally close beyond 2007. The overall impact of YTS on youth outcomes (that being, proportion of youth aged 18 and 19 in receipt of working age benefits) could not be clearly shown with the current data. The failure to confirm any YTS impact using this approach could also be due to the small number of at-risk youth who participated in YTS, relatively representing a small proportion of the total youth population.

3.7 Conclusion

The available outcome data suggests that good progress has been made towards meeting evaluation objectives i and ii. YTS has effectively engaged the majority of the youth participants in meaningful activities such as paid employment, training and education, which are all indicators of the long-term economic independence and wellbeing in their sustainable employment pathway. YTS increased the number of 15-19 year old youth in these sustainable pathways.

3.8 Key findings on youth outcomes

The evaluation found that of the 10,286 youth participants who enrolled in and left YTS, 6,314 or 61.4% had positive outcomes. Māori youth were the largest ethnic group using YTS. The engagement continuum as a tool has been effective in both assessing caseload and predicting youth outcomes. It should continue to be used in future YTS operations.

Completion of interventions
The youth participants successfully completed a range of interventions designed for them, focusing on career guidance, confidence building and motivation. This helped remove some barriers to engagement, increased their participation in meaningful activities and contributed to their long-term economic independence.

Engagement continuum rating on entry
A high (positive) rating on the engagement continuum on entry generally indicated that the youth would require less assistance from YTS staff in their transition into long-term economic independence. In contrast, a young person with a low engagement continuum rating on entry generally required intensive support from YTS in their transition. Hence, engagement continuum rating on entry was a effective tool for managing the workload/caseload allocation and management with these youth.

Change in engagement continuum rating from entry to exit
Youth with greater change in the engagement continuum rating from entry to exit tend to have positive outcomes. In contrast, youth with no or little change in continuum rating from entry to exit tended to have other outcomes. Hence, the change in the rating may be used as an indicator for positive outcomes.

The impact of YTS on youth outcomes
The impact of YTS on the proportion of youth in receipt of working age benefits has not been confirmed in a comparison of YTS sites with non-YTS sites. However, this is mainly due to the time constraints on data collection and the small number of at-risk youth participating in YTS, relative to the large number of total youth population in YTS sites.

Chapter 4 Providing services to youth

Evaluation Objective Three: Collect and analyse information about how YTS was operating in order to improve service delivery.

This section of the report analyses how YTS provided services to youth, focusing on the first two core functions of YTS: (1) following-up school leavers and engaging with the young people who are at risk of prolonged disengagement from work, education or training; and (2) providing these at-risk youth with customised support and guidance to facilitate their re-engagement into appropriate work, education or training.

4.1 Youth on entry to YTS

4.1.1 Referral sources

The YTS database shows that most youth either self-referred (35%) or were referred by their schools (39%). The remaining 26% were referred by their families, friends, other community organisations, or government agencies. A small proportion, about 1%, was referred from the police or the courts. Only 10% of youth who took part in the interviews and focus groups reported that they were referred from schools. This could be the result of youth preferring to report themselves as self-referred, or a difference in definition of referral source between YTS staff and youth.

4.1.2 Engaging young people

YTS providers used a variety of methods to engage young people. Most YTS providers signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with local schools and received referrals from them; others had informal agreements. One provider had “terms of reference” with all schools in their respective regions, which both sides believed would suit them better. The MoUs generally clarified the roles and responsibilities of schools and the YTS providers, established protocols and principles for both parties, formalised their relationship, and reduced the chances for any misunderstanding between them by creating the opportunities for a two-way communication. They visited schools to meet staff and identify names and contact details of school leavers. They then contacted each young person to assess their need for assistance and established a relationship.

YTS providers also made great efforts to reach and provide services to at-risk youth in remote areas and areas with poor public transport, as well as youth with health problems restricting their mobility. A typical issue for such young people to engage in work, training or education was lack of driver licence or other transport. Some YTS providers added a mobile component and provided regular home visits to young people who had difficulty with transport to and from YTS offices. They also provided regular transport assistance to enable youth to attend training courses, cadetships and other apprenticeship programmes.

Due to the limited resources faced by YTS providers, they had to strike a balance between helping more at-risk youth in general and engaging more hard-to-reach youth or youth with additional challenges like mental health issues. The needs of at-risk youth in remote areas or areas with poor public transport need to be specially considered for the future enhancement of the service. Addressing this issue is essential to achieve the shared goal of Government and the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs of engaging every youth in meaningful activities. Youth with multiple needs and/or problems, compounded with family dysfunction and financial

hardships, were generally hard to support even with the collaboration of multiple agencies. Work in this area would take up substantial resources; hence new initiatives may be needed to adequately address this issue.

Another issue YTS providers faced at an earlier stage was that some school staff were reluctant to provide the contact details of their students for possible breach of their confidentiality. This situation has been substantially improved; such that is no longer an issue for the schools that have contact with YTS. For possible future expansions of YTS, this needs to be proactively addressed.

4.1.3 Characteristics of youth referred to YTS

The likelihood of youth exiting with a positive outcome was influenced in part by their characteristics at referral. At the initial focus groups with the youth client cohort, many youth said that they had negative experiences at school. One youth said, ”I left school before I got kicked out, because I had already had a warning.”

Before they were enrolled with YTS most youth were just “hanging around” and “not doing much.” As one youth said, “I feel I’ve changed my lifestyle. Like back in school I used to kick it back, relax, skip class or wag with my mates.”

To many of them, YTS venues offered a safety net when they had nowhere to go or nothing to do, or a place they could regard as their second home. Alternatively, some saw YTS as a place to seek comfort or have someone to talk to when they felt lonely or faced family issues.

The young people did not have any clear idea about what they were going to do in the future, or had not thought about it at all before engaging with YTS. Some expressed regret about not trying sufficiently hard while at school. They reported wasting opportunities to learn, and realising this only when they became involved with YTS. Around a third thought that they had limited opportunities available to them if they wanted to change their situation, and some were disappointed they had not been given a second chance at school.

Thirty-five schools described the groups of students they referred to YTS. As shown in Figure 4.1, they were given five options and asked to tick all that applied. Thirty-one referred students likely to leave school without a qualification, 24 referred students who were frequently absent or truant, while 17 referred students with low academic performance. Thirteen referred students with behavioural issues and 12 referred students who had family problems. Most schools were satisfied with the referral process, although some suggested that YTS could work with students “who have not reached leaving age and for whom school is no longer suitable”.

Steering group members thought that consideration should be given to lowering the age at which young people could access YTS and assisting “special needs transition students” with work placements.

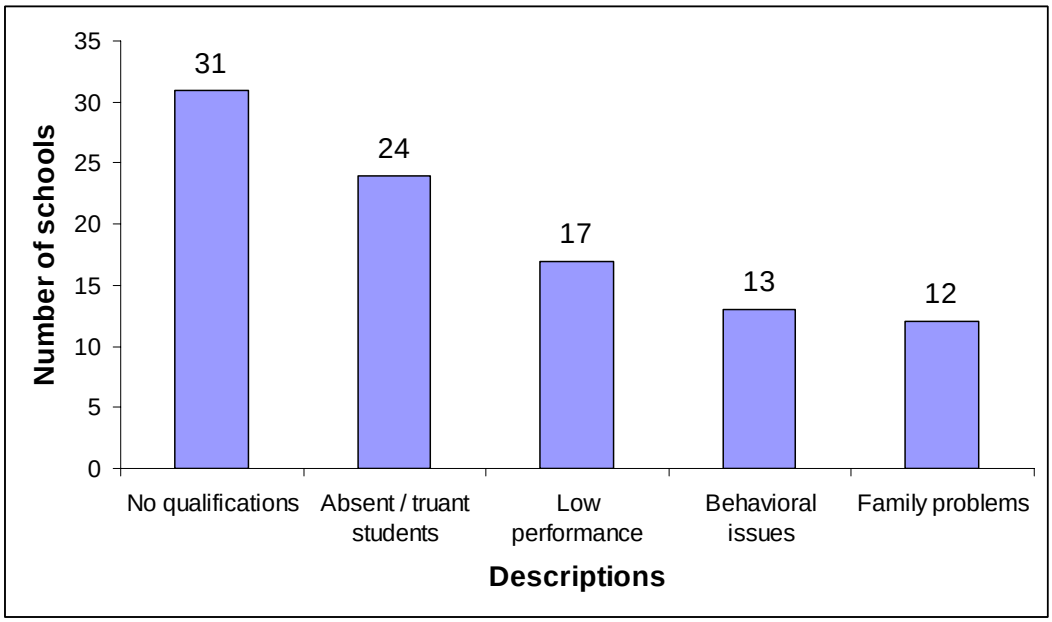

Figure 4.1 Number of schools who reported that these statements describe the students they refer to YTS

4.1.4 Roles of schools in meeting young people's needs

Many of the young people who participated in the focus groups and interviews exhibited early stage problems and the current services were not geared for early intervention – for example, drug and alcohol counselling. These problems were not isolated from other family-related issues so service provision for these young people could be complex. YTS made the real difference for these young people – they smiled and felt good about themselves and felt empowered. The key was the one-on-one mentoring and support, working alongside them and with them. Many of them were labelled as "bad kids" at school and YTS was able to turn this around and help them sort out their lives.

Schools do not always provide courses that meet young people's needs. Alternative education courses offer a good option for those youth who do not well fit into the current mainstream education. There is a need, however, for other kinds of education arrangements or courses to be integrated into the current school system so that the "difficult" young people are not left outside the education streams with an impression of "this is where bad kids go". These arrangements or courses would meet the specific needs of young people who would not be able to complete the mainstream education but who also would not want to attend the well-known alternatives education courses. The Schools Plus initiative may go some way towards addressing these needs.

The OECD report[8] (2008) on youth showed that lack of school education was the main cause for subsequent youth disengagement in the labour market and dependence on benefits. This has contributed to recent policy changes in New Zealand designed to retain youth at school. These included the reinforcement of early leaving exemption to the age of 16 in high schools in early 2007, and the recent announcement of the Schools Plus initiative by the Ministry of Education. The Schools Plus initiative is charged with helping retain all young people in the education system until the age of 18, through exploring alternative forms of education that can be offered in combinations with specific career-oriented training and youth apprenticeships. This new initiative is designed to support the further education of at-

[8] Jobs for Youth: New Zealand (*Des employs pour les jeunes*), OECD 2008.

risk youth. However, it has to be determined how it is going to work with these at-risk youth and how YTS could be incorporated into such a new education model.

4.2 Support and assistance provided by YTS

4.2.1 Services reported by providers and stakeholders

The list of specific interventions YTS provided, shown in section 3.1, indicates the kind of support youth participants generally received. Interventions were mostly tailored to remove young people's barriers to engagement in work, training, education and other meaningful activities. Below are more details on how these interventions were delivered by YTS providers.

All YTS providers conduct formal assessments or have formal action or career plans in place for each young person. Some providers used additional tools to help assess need and develop an action plan. These included:

- Pathway Plan - to enable the provider to understand each youth's current situation and document their goals for the future
- Action Framework - to help youth think realistically about their future and identify activities needed to move towards their goals
- Transition Action Plan - to focus on a long-term goal and set out the actions required to achieve it
- Home Education/Employment Activities Drugs Sexuality Suicide [and depression] (HEADSS) - a holistic youth health assessment tool that includes health, education, employment, drug and alcohol, and suicide indicators
- Future Selves - an online computer programme for participant needs assessment.

While the "flavour" of the services is different in each area, the activities being carried out by YTS providers were very similar. Providers reported that they were:

- developing relationships with schools to facilitate school leaver follow up
- contacting school leavers to identify those who need assistance
- conducting assessments with young people who require customised support and helping them develop an individualised plan with each young person
- providing practical support and encouragement to young people to help them carry out their individualised plans
- referring young people to interventions to reduce their barriers to activity
- assisting young people to find and complete useful training
- helping young people to develop skills in searching for and securing employment
- providing support for young people while they undertake work, training or education.

4.2.2 Examples of support provided to youth participants

YTS providers also gave examples of ways in which they supported young people in the community:

- contacted truancy services for young people
- set up stalls at community events to reach out to young people, their parents, caregivers

and other influencers

- participated in school activities such as career expos
- advertised in the media, distributed newsletters, flyers and brochures
- added young people to a mailing list containing information on jobs and training opportunities
- assisted young people in receiving entitlements and wage subsidies from Work and Income
- engaged young people in Council cadetships
- developed motivational workshops for young people
- acknowledged and celebrated young people for engaging in programmes or completing activities/courses (for example, awarding them with a certificate of completion)
- delivered services such as Ready 4 Work, Education to Employment Pilot, Future Selves and Moving on Up
- initiated discussions with government agencies on the lack of training opportunities for young people in the region
- increased their knowledge of and links with employment, education and training providers in the region as well as with relevant programmes, such as mental health services, anger management, drug and alcohol counselling and rehabilitation
- prepared directories of local services.

Both the steering groups and community stakeholders acknowledged that YTS services complement other service provision available to youth in the community including:

- increased provision of specific counselling and therapies in schools and for families
- the development of youth directories that list all services for young people in a specific area
- closer links between schools and other services for young people
- motivation for some young people to return to school
- noticeable improvement in self-confidence among young people
- youth engaging with YTS, who might otherwise not have engaged with any organisation
- being responsive to the needs of individual young people
- anecdotal evidence of reduction in truancy and offending, as well as youth crime
- advocating for young people to access services.

4.3 Youth relationship with coaches

4.3.1 One-on-one mentoring and support

Young people, employers and community stakeholders agreed that one-on-one mentoring and support of YTS coaches was the key to achieving successful outcomes for young people. Throughout the focus groups and interviews, youth participants were very positive about their coaches and their relationships with them. As one youth said, “I would not change the tutors (YTS coaches) ... they were there for us from day one ... they are like family to us now.”

Young people appreciated the easy-going and friendly approach of YTS coaches, and responded well to the mentoring style provided. One youth said, “He’s [YTS coach] pretty motivational … he praises me.”

Some of them had family difficulties and most were too young to receive government assistance when they first made contact with YTS. They recounted unhappy experiences in schools where their behaviour had led them into problems, and appreciated the attention of YTS staff. With the one-on-one guidance and support provided by YTS they felt encouraged, motivated, valued and respected. YTS participation helped them to focus on making positive changes for their future. One of the success factors of YTS was for young people to know that they could trust and rely on their coaches. As one youth said, “The best thing YTS did for me was being there, always having time to help me.”

4.3.2 Regular contact and follow up from YTS coaches

Following up young people once they engaged with YTS was an important aspect of the service and was integral to maintaining relationships between youth and their coaches. Most YTS providers actively followed up young people through visits and telephone calls and tried to stay in touch with them until they had completed their transitions. Nine YTS providers had introduced alternative techniques such as sending young people text messages, inviting them to visit the Bebo website and contacting their family/whānau. When young people did not do well after leaving the programme, most providers encouraged them to re-engage with YTS.

Young people were happy with the follow up from YTS staff, which they described as “constant and persistent” and an important part of the service. With regular follow up, they felt valued and supported. Follow up was through regular telephone calls, information about job or course opportunities, and being available either on site or by telephone. One youth said, “Yeah they ring me on a daily basis almost … to see how you’re going, what you get up to. To see if you’re alive still.”

YTS providers were unable to contact around a fifth of the young people who had engaged with the service at some point. The providers noted that they could not reach all young people because:

- YTS is a voluntary service and you can not compel young people to enrol
- young people from families in financial hardship and/or in remote areas cannot afford transport costs
- youth contact details, especially cell phone numbers, change frequently
- some young people leave home without leaving contact details.

Community organisations agreed that finding means to track young people more effectively would benefit all parties, particularly the young people themselves.

4.4 Employer and training provider views on YTS services to youth

Twenty-seven of the 45 employers and training providers interviewed rated YTS highly (four or five on a five point scale) for providing ongoing support to youth. Eleven gave YTS a three for ongoing support; six rated it at one or a two. Similarly, 29 of 45 rated YTS’ mentoring of youth at four or five. Nine gave YTS a three for mentoring and again six rated it at one or two. One training provider said, “The ongoing support, once they are in education. They [YTS] do that a lot and they keep in contact, even after the placements.”

Many of the employers and training providers working with YTS have procedures in place to provide their own intensive support to young people. Seventeen thought that participants would have completed training or secured the job without YTS referral and support. Ten

found the YTS support valuable, but said their own organisation would provide it if YTS did not, so youth would have completed the training successfully anyway. However, the ongoing support from YTS to the young people they referred allowed the employers and training providers to relocate their resources to their core business, thus enhancing the mutual trust and collaboration. One training provider said, “They would have the same chance, if [YTS] don’t chase them up then I would chase them up, but it’s easier for me if they do it.”

Twelve employers and training providers said that the youth would not have completed the training or secured the job without YTS training and support. Eight were unsure, or were unable to generalise across the youth YTS had referred. One employer said:

> Probably because a lot of them, without [YTS], they wouldn’t have enough confidence. They wouldn’t be able to prepare for job interviews and they wouldn’t have CVs organised. [YTS] teaches them to make a good first impression.

The suitability of the young people for the activity to which they were referred was important. Employers and training providers identified other characteristics of youth who were successful in the courses or jobs to which they were referred. These are listed in Table 4.1 and include positive attitude, motivation, interest in being there, willingness to learn and overall suitability.

YTS provided young people with support in these areas. The YTS database shows that 4,807 (21%) of the interventions with youth were to help with career guidance, 3,347 (15%) were to help with CV preparation, and 2,175 (10%) were to help with confidence and motivation (Appendix 7). This agreed with the findings from the current survey that personal qualities (for example, positive attitude, motivation) and career goal are the most important factors for success (Table 4.1). The employers and training providers interviewed also found that other characteristics, such as willingness to learn, support from home, and timeliness and punctuality, are areas where YTS can work with youth to meet the expectations of these respondents.

Table 4.1 Characteristics of young people who have been the most successful, as identified by employers and training providers

Characteristics of successful youth	Frequency
Personal qualities (for example, positive attitude, motivation)	21
Career goal	12
Interest, desire to be there	6
Willingness to learn	5
Support from home	5
Timeliness and punctuality	4
Otherwise successful youth who just need support	3
Suitable for us overall	1
Older	1

Whenever possible, it is important for YTS to involve a young person's family/whānau in their development and transitioning planning. Employers and training providers reported that support from home or from parents was a common characteristic of successful youth referred by YTS.

Like community organisations, these employers and training providers recognised some of the practical challenges facing YTS and young people, with poor transport in many areas. They made suggestions to accommodate this:

> Have more YTS offices throughout large districts in order to provide services for transient youth.
>
> Provide help with transport for youth.
>
> They have to address some of the geographical problems in the Far North, like transport to and from the training they're enrolling people in.
>
> Help the youth with driving licences. That's often their biggest thing. There's quite a protocol about who can get a free one, but I think all should be eligible.

4.5 Youth perspective on the effectiveness of services

The YTS participants appreciated its flexible approach and believed that they had developed a rapport with YTS coaches. Following engagement with the programme, they had more confidence in themselves, a clearer vision for the future, and a greater sense of purpose. They had learned where and how to access services and reported improved employability. In their opinion, YTS had helped them to:

- identify needs and goals
- work out career plans
- develop new skills such as preparing a CV, attending an interview, and getting organised
- find jobs and appropriate training courses
- increase their self-confidence and motivation.

Ten interview participants said that just supporting them was the best thing YTS did. The type of support youth most valued varied considerably. Some thought the support YTS gave them with practical things, like help with transport and getting a driver licence, was best. Others thought the personal support their coaches offered them was more valuable. Some

participants said that helping them to find work was the best thing YTS did; others named help with writing CVs, finding a course, career planning and job interviews.

Young people were also asked about what worked well for them at YTS in the focus groups, and during the phase one and two interviews. They named very similar things then, as they did a year later in phase three. Youth most valued things like personal support to build confidence and motivation; practical help with driver licences, and referrals to jobs and courses. This range of services covered many aspects of the core functions of YTS.

Youth participants identified some areas for improvement. Some suggested that there should be more YTS offices throughout large districts so that young people who moved frequently could continue their access. Some thought that YTS could expand mobile services to increase coverage, especially in remote areas.

Through feedback directly to YTS providers during implementation, youth have also identified gaps in service provision in their regions such as the need for additional drug and alcohol rehabilitation and counselling facilities and disability services. Feedback from youth has been used to advocate for and initiate new services in some locations.

Other youth would like YTS to provide more space in the office for private one-on-one meetings with their coaches. They also desired more private rooms and computer facilities in the YTS office, especially a space for youth to socialise. A mixture of career-focused and recreational activities would attract more at-risk youth and encourage them to engage with YTS. Promotion of YTS was important and youth would like the locations to be more visible to the passers-by.

4.6 Outcomes for the youth respondents

Overall, the findings of the youth focus groups and interviews were positive. Young people believed that YTS was making a real difference to their lives. One youth said:

> Everything that I'm doing now is because of [YTS coach] … Well, it's true. If it wasn't for [YTS coach] I would probably be… I don't know, roaming the street, ripping off houses, cars. I'd probably be in jail if it wasn't for her. …They're like … they actually care. They don't just say that they care, they do.

Most of the youth who participated in the final interviews, 19 out of 25, said that YTS was helpful or very helpful in assisting them to find work, education or career training. Most, 17 of 25, said that they had been referred to a work or training opportunity by YTS. Furthermore, 18 of the 25 were confident or very confident in their ability to find training and employment independently in the future.

Most youth focus group and interview participants appeared to be doing well over time, with their engagement relatively stable in meaningful activities such as work, training, returning to school or taking up tertiary education. In the third phase of interviews, three-quarters of the young people interviewed said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their current employment, training or educational status. Most had goals for the future and two-thirds were confident or very confident about achieving them.

Two youth who exited YTS due to loss of contact and did not wish to participate in YTS were struggling and felt desperate in job hunting when they were interviewed. They even asked the interviewer to help them find a job. The interviewer advised both of them to re-engage with YTS. These two incidents suggested that life could be hard for those at-risk youth without YTS support.

The youth who participated in focus groups and follow up interviews were asked to rate themselves on several personal qualities relevant to their economic and social wellbeing before and after their involvement with YTS, including:

- self-confidence and motivation
- communication skills
- job interview skills.

The youth rated themselves higher in all these areas after their involvement with YTS. For some the increase in motivation and self-confidence was enhanced by being in employment or training. For others, the improvement was greatest when the youth were still involved intensively with YTS. Some youth who had not been in contact with YTS for some time had become less confident in their job interview and communication skills. This underscored the value of the ongoing support provided by YTS. One youth said, “I was never confident about achieving anything, but when I started to come to [YTS provider] it really helped me to be more confident.”

Very few young people were involved with other community organisations such as cultural groups and sporting teams. Increasing youth participation in society and the community is one of the intended outcomes for youth who have used YTS, but was not a major focus for most of the young people. They were more focused on getting a job or training opportunity.

4.7 Quality of YTS staff and their ongoing upskilling

Youth focus group and interview participants overwhelmingly appreciated the high level of professional competence, easy-going and non-judgemental attitudes of YTS coaches. They enjoyed the one-on-one rapport established with the coaches and felt the genuine care and empathy from these YTS staff. To them, YTS staff knew their jobs really well and had the relevant skills and expertise to engage and assist at-risk youth. This finding agreed with that from interviews with YTS providers (managers and coaches) on how YTS staff members were recruited.

The criteria used for YTS staff recruitment were similar to those the youth participants described when talking about the personal attributes of the YTS coaches. These attributes include a positive and friendly attitude, respect and cultural awareness for youth, knowledge of the local community and local services, commitment to developing relationships and effective communication. The availability of suitable staff should be considered in deciding when and where to establish new services.

YTS providers employed staff who were trained for youth work, were youth-friendly, had experience working with youth, were well-known locally and had good existing networks or ties within the local communities. For example, some providers deliberately recruited former youth workers or case managers from government agencies so that they could help better co-ordinate their services with these agencies. Other YTS providers employed staff who had previously worked in schools so that they could engage schools more effectively and proactively via the existing networks. One YTS provider employed a staff member who was a former YTS participant, which provided a good example of YTS success and created a strong link between the service and the at-risk youth.

YTS providers offered ongoing training and upskilling for their YTS staff and were keen to retain staff who were committed to the youth participants. All providers were willing to allocate time and resources for this. Some providers offered a mechanism for the team

leader role to be regularly rotated among all YTS coaches so that they had opportunities to develop their leadership skills. One YTS provider specifically designed an in-work training course called National Youth Worker Certificate for YTS workers, which included a few days' intensive training followed by an extended period developing required skills on the YTS jobs. YTS coaches were all encouraged to take the course while at work and there was no conflict between the training and their routine YTS tasks, since they were closely related.

4.8 Conclusion

Overall, YTS was well received by youth participants, as shown by the overwhelmingly positive findings of the youth focus groups and interviews. Young people, YTS providers and other key community stakeholders all believed that the service effectively followed up and assisted the at-risk youth to make an easier and more successful transition into work, training, and education. The experiences reported by all evaluation participants contribute to a good YTS practice model presented in Chapter 6.

4.9 Key factors in engaging and supporting youth

Good relationships and communication
Young people, schools, employers, training providers and other stakeholders all commented on the value of good communication and the need to establish quality relationships. Most YTS performed well in this area.

One-to-one mentoring and tailored services
YTS coaches were the key to young people achieving positive transitions. Young people appreciated the easy-going, friendly approach of YTS coaches and responded well to the mentoring style provided.

YTS has been able to tailor services to individual needs. This has been particularly important in dealing with young people who have not felt listened to in the past. YTS has been able to be responsive to each community's characteristics.

Quality of staff
YTS often deals with young people from challenging backgrounds. It also serves a high proportion of Māori and Pacific young people. Young people, employers, training providers, schools and community groups all spoke highly of the calibre and appropriateness of YTS staff.

Nature of referrals
Young people entering YTS were most often self-referred or referred by schools. Schools often referred students with high needs and multiple challenges. Notwithstanding this, young people who engaged with YTS had a good chance of achieving a positive outcome.

Regular contact and follow up
Young people, schools, employers, training providers and other stakeholders all stressed the importance of regular and ongoing follow up and support to maintain engagement and ensure a smooth transition to a sustainable employment pathway.

Ability to use service as a safety net
One of the strengths of YTS is its ability to provide for young people who see themselves as having few options. Young people often used the service as a place to socialise, valuing the sense of security and acceptance it offered.

Chapter 5 Networking and co-ordination

Evaluation Objective Three: Collect and analyse information on how YTS was operating in order to improve service delivery.

To address evaluation Objective Three, this section reports on how YTS built relationships with community organisations and employers to put the remaining two core functions of YTS into operation: identifying and supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people; and providing a forum for ongoing strategic planning and co-ordination of services for young people.

5.1 Importance of building relationships

In many communities youth need help accessing opportunities such as jobs and training courses. YTS can act as a bridge between youth and the organisations that provide those opportunities. Building and maintaining relationships with organisations that refer youth to YTS, taking referrals from YTS, and providing training and labour market opportunities for youth are the essential activities underlying core functions three and four.

For example, most of the 45 employers and training providers interviewed had employed or trained between one and five young people referred to them by YTS in the past year. Given the large number of youth engaged with YTS, it is critical that the service maintains links to many of these organisations so that youth can be referred to suitable employment or training placements.

5.2 Contacting organisations and initiating relationships

5.2.1 Schools

Schools were the most common referral source for youth using YTS. Contacting and building relationships with schools was an important part of the YTS strategy. Half of the schools that responded to the survey (20 out of 42) had frequent or very frequent contact with YTS. Fifteen had infrequent contact. Twenty-two of the 35 schools that had contact with YTS described their relationship as positive or fairly positive. Six said their relationship with YTS was “very limited” or “non-existent”. Two wanted a closer working relationship than the one they had at present. Schools engaged with YTS primarily to meet the needs of their students. They saw YTS as a service that could help them do this.

Thirty-six of the 42 schools interacted in some way with YTS. The most common activities were interacting with a liaison person and distributing information and/or registration forms to students on behalf of the YTS. Few attended YTS forums or meetings, or invited YTS staff to the school (Figure 5.1).

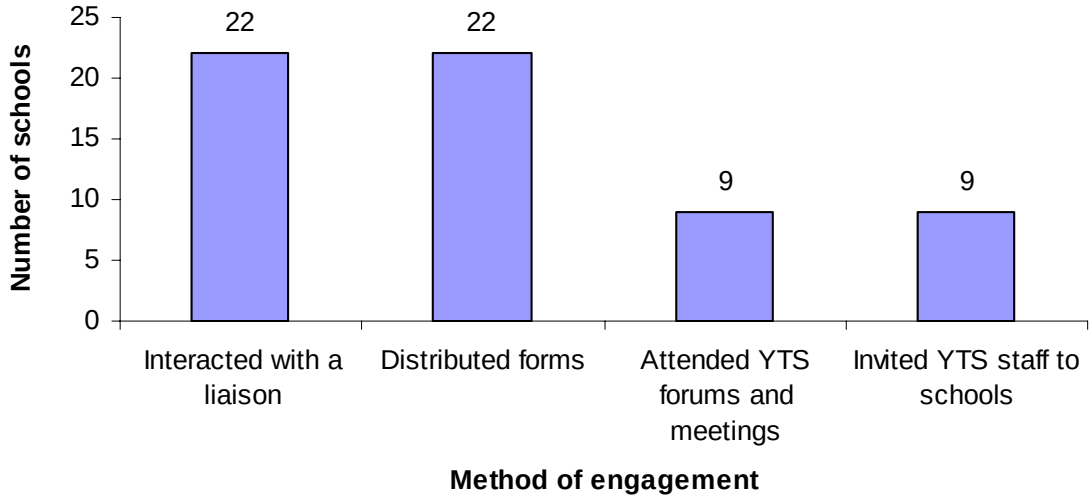

Figure 5.1 Ways in which schools engaged with the YTS

Seventeen out of 42 schools had a formal agreement with the YTS, while 12 had an informal agreement. Four schools did not know whether there was such an agreement; five had no agreement and one school was looking forward to establishing an agreement with YTS. All those with some kind of agreement found it helpful or very helpful.

Schools surveyed appreciated the efforts YTS staff made. However, some suggested that monthly meetings to share information about students and informing schools of job contacts available for students would be helpful. Some thought that YTS could do more follow up with students in family or neighbourhood locations.

YTS has made considerable progress in contacting and building relationships with schools. YTS providers have established relationships with many schools. Nevertheless, there is room for further development in this vital area.

5.2.2 Employers and training providers

Twenty-five of the 45 employers and training providers interviewed said their relationships with YTS began when a YTS staff person called them. Ten made first contact with YTS themselves. Five first established a relationship with YTS through contact at meetings, workshops or conferences, and four had a pre-existing relationship with the organisation providing YTS in their area.

Employers and training providers reported that the quality of the YTS staff they worked with affected their relationship with YTS and their satisfaction with YTS as a whole. Nine employers and training providers were very satisfied with the quality of YTS staff. One training provider said, “I’ve been quite happy with the people who work there. They are good to us and easy to work with. That’s one of their biggest assets.”

Most employers and training providers were satisfied with their relationships with YTS and valued the service YTS provides to youth. They favoured expansion of the YTS initiative as one provider said:

> [We need] more of them! They are connective; we have our hands full with working with our people and it really helps to have a service to go through to do the initial work with the youth, like literacy, numeracy and so on.

5.3 Communication

Effective communication was essential to maintaining relationships with the organisations mentioned above. Much communication was achieved through community networks. All YTS providers had established contacts with the local community stakeholders prior to gaining YTS contracts. Some communities had fully operational networks that YTS could link with and support. In other communities, YTS had to take the lead in developing new networks. Both steering groups and community stakeholder groups reported that they had noticed improved community stakeholder networks since the advent of YTS.

5.3.1 Role of the steering group

Each YTS is supported by a steering group (sometimes called a reference group, an advisory group, a strategic implementation group or a think tank). Steering groups are typically made up of representatives from local government, Work and Income, MSD, community groups, runanga, employers, schools, ministries of Education, Youth Development and Māori Development and Career Services.

Steering groups typically fulfilled several roles, including:

- providing strategic and operational advice
- monitoring the implementation of YTS three-year strategic plan
- disseminating YTS information
- providing access to steering group networks
- conducting gap analyses
- helping prioritise key actions
- linking YTS to related forums or initiatives.

Most steering groups had developed a close working relationship with YTS providers, characterised by good partnership, trust, understanding, commitment, respect and confidentiality. They believed that experience gained and lessons learned from YTS needed to be shared nationally. Providers also needed clearer indications of funding into the future.

YTS providers who met with steering groups on a monthly or bi-monthly basis appeared to be better served by their steering group than providers who met with their steering groups less often. Some steering groups thought that accountability and reporting processes between YTS providers and steering groups should be tightened.

YTS steering groups saw YTS as a major component of local youth development strategies. Community stakeholders believed that the YTS initiative has benefited from being a part of over-arching youth transition and youth development strategies that are occurring regionally. The key benefits were through access to wider networks, shared resources and the partnership that comes with having a shared vision.

5.3.2 Communication with community stakeholders

Community stakeholders liaised with YTS providers as required and through regular community network meetings. A small number of community providers and organisations attended these meetings to share ideas and network, in order to improve services for young people. Community stakeholders also disseminated information about YTS services and liaised informally with steering group members. Community stakeholders were generally satisfied with the relationship they had with YTS providers and considered that liaison with YTS had been positive.

Community stakeholders noted that the YTS initiative required a considerable amount of effort in networking, promotion and relationship building in order to get it up and running. They believed that, with the networks now built, YTS providers are able to focus more attention on the creation of new opportunities for young people in the communities.

5.3.3 Communication about services

Many of the employers and training providers reported that their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with YTS was based on the effectiveness of YTS' communication, including giving descriptions of the services YTS actually provides. Fourteen participants made recommendations about improving communication. Overall, however, providers were positive about their communication with YTS.

Providing or supporting a forum for ongoing strategic development of local services is a core function of YTS, yet some providers still do not think they are being heard by YTS. They made comments such as:

> They should be making greater contact with existing training providers in the area. They have a really good relationship with those providers. They should be involved in the regional planning strategy, not just trying to fill [that role] themselves.
>
> [YTS should have] better communication, attending meetings and giving more information about what they actually provide.

5.3.4 Communication about young people

Table 5.1 shows what employers and training providers thought was the most important information YTS gave them about young people referred. The information YTS provided about the youth's current situation and their goals and their plans saved training providers time. It also meant providers were better able to tailor their services to meet each individual's needs.

> The child's background, YTS has to be honest about whether they have any problems, behavioural… A good kid and something happened to them, or otherwise – we have to know that before they come here so that we can work with them.

Training providers and employers were most interested in information about youths' goals and their background.

> A little bit about their background so I can understand where they are coming from and what support they need.

> Most of the ones they send, they give me a little background but it's more that they get across that person's personal strengths and where they want to go.

Table 5.1 Most important information about youth for training providers and employers

Most important information	Number
Goals, what they want to do	10
Youths' background and history	10
Youths' current situation	4
Services YTS is providing to youth	4
Basic contact information	3
All information relevant to the course	1
Information about competency	1

This information helped training providers ensure that youth received the help that they needed and ensured the safety of the staff. When youth had challenges like gang involvement, if training providers knew about it, they could plan to deal with those challenges.

> Nowadays, background information is really important; I need to know about the issues that they have so I can put them in with the appropriate tutors who can help them deal with their issues. YTS always gives us the information up front.

Training providers and employers appreciated it when YTS followed up with them about youth who had been referred both to and from YTS. Seven of 45 informants said that YTS follow up was the main reason they were satisfied with their relationship with YTS. As one said:

> They are in communication with us on an ongoing basis, they follow up very well on a weekly basis to ensure things are running smoothly. They are immediate with their responses.

A few wanted more information on young people's progress and made comments such as:

> Improving follow up with us, to check on how that student is doing in their study. That would be great. I wouldn't know if they are going right to the student, we wouldn't know about it in this office.

Of the 45 participants, 25 thought YTS provided information about youth extremely well or somewhat well. Most employers and training providers were satisfied with the communication they had from YTS about the young people referred to them. One said:

> It's awesome; they have good communication, good matching with the kind of people they bring through to us… They are really good at communicating with people about the young people they have…

Seven were neutral, and 10 thought YTS did not provide information very well. Four training providers or employers said that YTS does not give them enough or any information.

Interview participants were asked whether they thought YTS:

- prepared youth for training and employment
- helped create work, training and education opportunities for youth
- assisted youth in connecting with community groups, such as sports clubs
- provided a career counselling service similar to schools.

Table 5.2 Employer and training providers' perceptions of YTS' roles and responsibilities

Function	Yes		No		Don't know	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Prepare youth for training and/or employment	33	75	7	16	4	9
Help create work, training and education opportunities for youth	32	73	7	16	5	11
Assist youth to connect with community groups (for example, sports clubs, community clubs)	30	68	2	5	12	27
Provide a career counselling service similar to schools	25	57	4	9	15	34

While a majority of informants thought that each function was part of the YTS role, they were less certain about whether YTS provides career counselling and helps youth connect to community groups.

5.4 Development of opportunities for youth

Supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people was extremely important in areas where the existing services could not meet the needs of youth in the communities. YTS providers identified gaps and then advocated for and supported the development of initiatives to fill them. These included local cadetships for paid employment, training courses designed to prepare youth for an occupation, and services to remove barriers to engagement.

Some YTS providers lobbied Work and Income and other government departments for the development of labour market opportunities for youth, and eventually received funding for their YTS participants. Other youth-focused initiatives or new services were developed with substantial input from local YTS providers. These were new work, training or education opportunities, or other opportunities that help youth remove their barriers to engagement in their employment pathway. For example, with the support of a YTS provider, the Ministry of Māori Development (Te Puni Kōkiri: TPK) developed a specific strategy for Māori youth in a region. This service was fully accessible by local youth and YTS staff made good use of it to meet the specific needs of their Māori participants.

In some areas, training and employment opportunities for young people were limited which restricted options available to YTS and the young people it served. Employers and training providers, steering group members and community stakeholders were of the view that Government needs to help develop industry opportunities for youth. They made comments such as:

> More youth training opportunities should be identified and made accessible.

Employers should be encouraged to improve their outlook on young people and recruit more of them.

For example, two YTS providers identified the need for mental health or drug and alcohol services in schools. These services were sometimes available in the community but often not for youth under 18. Drug and alcohol addictions are one of the major contributors to serious youth offending. YTS providers brought these issues to their steering groups and sought support from the community, realizing no single agency was able to resolve the issue. Discussion about the feasibility of a new service and opportunities to better resource existing services, with support from the council, mayor, government departments, and non-government organisations (NGOs), led to the establishment of new drug and alcohol services for youth of all ages in the community.

5.5 Co-ordination of services

5.5.1 Co-ordination of services within communities

Initially, YTS providers in some locations were not viewed positively by other community agencies. Some agencies that bid unsuccessfully for YTS contracts found it hard to immediately adjust from competition to collaboration. Some community service providers may have seen YTS as competing with them for young clients. Some schools thought that YTS wanted to take their students away from the mainstream education. Most importantly, some of the community stakeholders were not at all clear about the role of YTS when it was first established.

YTS has now built a strong reputation and brand based on what it has offered to youth and the community. It addressed the needs of those youth who would not have been so well assisted without YTS. Instead of competing, YTS worked in collaboration and co-ordination with other service providers. Towards the end of the evaluation period, community stakeholders saw YTS as an integral part of the local youth development strategy and as a key point of contact for youth-focused services in the community. YTS was complementary to other social services and became a service local communities could rely on. The local councils all listed YTS as part of the services they offer to the youth in their strategic long-term council community plan. They had regular meetings, community hui or other mechanisms to co-ordinate their youth-focused services and related activities.

5.5.2 Co-ordination between national and community efforts

YTS was implemented in collaboration with local communities to ensure coherence with regional labour market needs, which involved substantial input from the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs. YTS faces the challenge of linking and co-ordinating with both local communities and national programmes. Over recent years, the Government has launched initiatives to encourage more youth to pursue vocational studies and to smooth the school-to-employment transition for youth at-risk of disengagement. Some of them are listed below.

- Gateway - introduced as a pilot work-based learning initiative in 2001 and is being progressively rolled out nationwide to strengthen the pathway from secondary school to workplace learning and vocational post-secondary education.

- Modern Apprenticeship Scheme - launched in 2001 to attract youth to professions in which they are under-represented and to help raise the profile of apprenticeship training
- Tertiary Education Strategy (2007-2012) - recently adopted by Government and is expected to be fully operational in 2008. The strategy aims to improve the quality and labour market relevance of tertiary studies. The crucial change concerns the shift away from a system in which funding is based on student intakes, to one based on labour market outcomes.
- Schools Plus initiative - recently announced by the Ministry of Education and aims to increase young people's participation and achievement in education and training, thereby contributing to New Zealand's economic and social development. It underpins a flexible schooling system that will include access to a wider range of learning pathways through and beyond schools. The goal is to have all young people participating in education, skills or other structured learning, relevant to their abilities and needs, until they reach the age of 18.
- Unified Skills Strategy - launched by the Ministry of Economic Development in April 2008 and aims to deliver a unified approach to ensure New Zealanders and organisations are able to develop and use the skills that will be needed in the workplaces of the future. One of the six Unified Skills Strategy work streams focuses on young workers to ensure that all young people in work, in transition to work, and in tertiary education and training have a coherent set of learning opportunities, along with the appropriate support mechanisms to achieve sustainable skill and career outcomes.

These initiatives have been accompanied by a renewed emphasis on career guidance, particularly for youth making tertiary education decisions, through a number of initiatives launched by Career Services[9] and a reinforcement of the roles of both schools and StudyLink[10]. The recognition of vocational learning experiences – including out-of-school ones – in the new qualifications system and the imminent introduction of a new curriculum more focused on work-relevant skills may also contribute to increased engagement of pupils at risk of early school leaving.

5.6 Service delivery model and infrastructure

MSD contracted with and supported YTS providers to implement the programme. While there was a national service delivery model, YTS providers were encouraged to develop a responsive, local approach to service delivery. The MSD contract managers were supported in promoting community-ownership of YTS, which has allowed for each YTS to be developed in a way that has best suited the local communities. We conducted site visits to document how YTS was delivered by each YTS provider. These observations indicated that there were four principal modes of YTS service delivery:

- lead provider solely responsible for all aspects of service delivery
- lead provider and another service provider sharing service delivery responsibilities
- provider(s) delivering services in association with City Councils
- lead provider sub-contracting out service delivery to another organisation(s).

[9] Career Services is the leading provider of career information, advice and guidance in New Zealand – it is a crown entity that reports to the Minister of Education

[10] StudyLink is a service of the MSD, which seeks to ensure that students get the finance and support they are entitled to so they can complete their study.

Feedback from all YTS participants and stakeholders through focus groups and interviews suggests that all these service delivery models did provide good services to the young people. However, it was clear that the mode of delivery involving only one provider was less likely to cause confusion for young people, their families and community service agencies. Consequently, the preferred mode of YTS service delivery would be to have only one service provider. However, this could involve monitoring, supervision and support being achieved through other arrangements within the community, especially where there exists a strong steering group.

An important aspect of YTS service delivery is how providers chose to target at-risk youth. They could choose to provide intensive case management for a smaller number of youth participants with major issues, or less intensive case management to the wider at-risk youth populations. One provider initially provided intensive wrap-around services to a small group of youth, but later changed to provide services to all at-risk youth in the community (the intensive wrap-around service was still provided when there were sufficient resources). Providers will always need to strike a balance between providing the service to more youth with fewer issues, and fewer youth with more issues.

However, it is possible that some form of longer-term funding arrangements could encourage YTS providers to maximise use of the available resources. Sustainability of funding is essential in maintaining the functionality of the service for the existing YTS providers. Some YTS providers believed it is crucial for funding to be sustained so that work done in establishing the infrastructure would not be wasted. This was especially true given the service has been well received by all stakeholders from youth participants to schools, community organisations, employers and training providers. Providers generally perceived some level of uncertainty on future funding, and said they would appreciate some level of certainty for longer-term funding arrangements.

As a new government initiative, YTS has taken considerable resources to be developed and become fully functional. The service delivery infrastructure has been well established in all YTS locations under evaluation. The achievements of the service are shown both by the youth participants who have been helped to transition into positive outcomes such as work, training and education, and by the social capital accumulated through provision of the service. The concept of, and mechanism for assisting at-risk youth has become well embedded in the communities where YTS now operates.

5.7 Conclusion

The evaluation found that community stakeholders, high schools, employers and training providers were very positive about YTS. Overall, YTS effectively networked and co-ordinated with key stakeholders in providing high-quality services to youth and, wherever they could, supporting the development of appropriate labour market, education and training opportunities for young people. YTS was seen by local community stakeholders as a part of the local youth development strategy, complementary to other youth-focused services. Many of the local youth-focused initiatives or new services were developed with substantial input from local YTS providers.

5.8 Key factors in building and maintaining relationships with organisations

Good publicity
A high level of visibility and ongoing publicity about YTS in the community raises awareness of the service among young people, schools, employers, training providers and community organisations.

Good communication
Good communication builds trust and strengthens relationships between organisations. Communication is required about the services YTS provides, the young people YTS refers to employers, training providers and other agencies, and services offered by other community agencies. Communication is improved where privacy issues have been addressed.

Co-ordination with schools
Engagement with schools is an essential aspect of YTS work. Connections with schools provide an opportunity to talk with staff and students, exchange information about community services, job and training opportunities and report on students' progress.

Co-ordination with community organisations
Community organisations provide a range of employment-related services, as well as drop-in centres, counselling and health services. Good relationships with these services increase options for youth enrolled with YTS.

Maintaining an active steering group
YTS providers who met with their steering group on a monthly or bi-monthly basis appear to be better served by their steering group, than providers who meet with their steering group less often.

High quality staff
The quality of the staff interacting with employers and training providers affects their relationship with YTS; having high quality staff working with these organisations contributes to positive relationships.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Services for youth leading to positive outcomes

The most useful aspects of YTS for youth appeared to be help with career guidance, motivation and confidence building, along with job search skills. In addition, YTS provided links to other services, support with transport to and from YTS, and to and from work and training opportunities (Appendix 7). These were the most common interventions provided by YTS and were reported by youth, employers and training providers as the most useful.

Developing a strong one-on-one relationship between the youth and their coach is essential to achieving a positive outcome. This relies on strong communication, trust, regular contact and a caring attitude. It enables coaches to tailor services to provide the support and assistance that youth need the most.

Regular follow up of young people is important to maintaining their engagement with YTS. Relationships with coaches are strengthened by regular contact and youth value the extra motivation that frequent contact provides.

YTS achievements in providing services to youth include:
- 15,117 completed interventions with youth
- 61.4% of youth exiting YTS with positive outcomes
- services provided by YTS are viewed positively throughout the community.

6.2 Engaging youth

Strong relationships with schools and good publicity within the community are important to engaging target youth. Once a service is established, people need to know that it is there. Some YTS staff have developed innovative ways to publicise their service. For example, the YTS coaches paid regular visits to the local schools and conducted workshops on what YTS can offer to interact with the students. This enabled the relationship to be developed prior to youth formally enrolled with the voluntary service. However, more could be done through the media and on-site advertising. The large proportion of YTS youth who self-referred shows the importance of maintaining a positive community profile. More publicity about YTS would increase visibility and community awareness.

The facilities available at YTS sites need to be adequate to provide services to youth and to attract them to spend time at YTS. Youth valued having an area to socialise and computer access. These facilities make YTS a more attractive location for youth, which could increase engagement.

Accessing the service can be a challenge for young people in remote areas or in areas with poor public transport. One option would be to expand the number of services in such areas and in areas of high social need, rather than simply rolling out the service nationwide.

YTS achievements in engaging youth include:
- a total of 10,286 youth have used and exited YTS since December 2004
- 65.5% of youth exiting YTS are Māori and Pacific young people – both ethnic groups are over-represented in the population of youth at risk of poor transitions
- a large proportion of YTS participants enrolled by self-referral

6.3 Networking and building relationships

Engaging the community as early as possible in the implementation of YTS helps develop strong relationships with community stakeholders. This can set the foundation for continued collaboration and co-ordination of services. An active steering group with community representation plays an important role in maintaining community involvement. Steering groups that meet monthly or bi-monthly serve YTS better in giving good local direction and strategic advice, enabling YTS to respond to community needs.

Establishing a positive and mutually respectful relationship with local schools is of paramount importance. This can be difficult given the demands on schools and the number of other programmes operating to support young people. Some YTS staff have worked with schools to formalise their relationship through MoUs: others chose to have informal agreements with transition or careers staff within the school. Both arrangements can work well and both depend more on the quality of the relationship than on formal procedures. Although all YTS providers have attempted to develop relationships with local schools, some have been more successful than others. Continued work in this area is important in maintaining YTS' ability to reach at-risk school leavers.

Relationships with schools, employers and training providers may be strongest when they are formalised through MoUs. However, that is not always a practical option. While informal agreements can be effective in maintaining working relationships, it is important that they are between YTS and other organisations as a whole, and not just between individuals in each organisation. This provides some protection from disruption caused by personnel changes.

YTS should also consider the role families and youth can play in planning processes in their community. These two groups are the most affected by their local YTS providers so their input to strategic direction and suggestions for improvement could prove valuable.

Having high quality staff contributes to a good relationship between YTS and youth, as well as between YTS and community stakeholders. In the early stages, staff must work hard to establish good working relationships with existing training providers, community and health services and potential employers. Attributes such as a positive and friendly attitude, knowledge of the local community and local services, commitment to developing relationships and effective communication are important to staff succeeding in these areas. The availability of suitable staff should be considered in deciding when and where to establish new services.

Good communication about the services YTS provides, and about the youth referred by YTS, builds trust and strengthens relationships between organisations. It is essential in maintaining those relationships over time. While YTS is communicating well with some community stakeholders there is room for improvement, particularly in raising awareness of the services YTS provides.

The availability of a good range of training and educational services, support services and employment opportunities enhances the work of YTS. Strong community networks and the inclusion of employer representatives in steering groups could increase the number and variety of opportunities available to YTS youth.

Achievements in building relationships and networking include:

- strong relationships have been built with some schools, sometimes including MoUs
- a network of training providers and employers is committed to working with YTS
- all training providers and employers interviewed are willing to employ and train YTS youth in the future.

6.4 Good practice model

The evaluation has identified several aspects that lead to success in the four core functions of YTS. These form the components of the good practice model described below.

Service delivery model: the service needs to be undertaken by one service provider at each location so that responsibilities are clear and use of resources can be optimised.

Suitable staff: YTS staff are positive and have a friendly attitude, are flexible in dealing with stakeholders and youth, have access to ongoing training and have local knowledge and experience.

One-on-one mentoring: YTS staff build rapport with the youth participants and tailor the services to meet their individual needs.

Facilities: the location is visible, with room for youth to socialise.

Infrastructure: sustainable funding provides stakeholders confidence for building long-term relationships.

Community network: the network includes as many schools as possible (preferably all), and a wide range of employers and training providers. It is maintained through an involved steering group and YTS actively engages other organisations to create both informal and formal relationships.

Community involvement: YTS is visible in the community. There is community consultation in early implementation and that continues throughout the life of the service, the steering group is representative of the community and, wherever possible, includes local authority representation.

Chapter 7 Considerations for future development

Promoting and sharing good practice and the service delivery model

The good practice and service delivery model described in the previous section should be shared and promoted among current and future YTS providers. This could aid the development of a comprehensive mechanism to follow up all at-risk youth and fully engage them, addressing privacy issues and improving relationships with schools.

Aligning and linking YTS with other initiatives focusing on youth

The Government has recently launched a series of new initiatives to address issues with the current education system and disengagement of at-risk youth. These include the Gateway programme, the Modern Apprenticeship scheme, the Tertiary Education Strategy, the Unified Skills Strategy, and the Schools Plus initiative. Further aligning and linking the YTS initiative with these youth-focused government initiatives could be mutually beneficial. For instance, the Schools Plus initiative being developed by the Ministry of Education aims to have all young people participating in education, skills or other structured learning, relevant to their abilities and needs, until they reach the age of 18, a goal which is complementary to YTS. Though linking with these initiatives has been achieved to some extent, there is room for further development.

Prioritising YTS tasks within each territorial authority to develop local youth strategies

YTS providers had to strike a balance between reaching every at-risk youth and providing the service to fewer youth with more hard-to-address issues, based on the priorities in the community. The development of local youth strategies within territorial authorities could help improve service co-ordination and provision, with key priorities being identified. Youth strategies might therefore focus on:

- number of youth to be engaged
- quality of services and outcomes
- engagement of youth without positive outcomes (engagement is positive for these youth to prevent them from becoming engaged in undesirable activity)
- balance between service delivery volumes (numbers) and outcomes (results).

Sharing information on at-risk youth population and individuals

Greater communication and information sharing should be encouraged among YTS providers, community agencies, government departments, schools and NGOs in order to effectively target and engage all at-risk youth. Establishing a mechanism for regular information exchange and communication could improve YTS knowledge of all at-risk youth, especially the hard-to-reach youth. Sharing youth information between these agencies will also help to co-ordinate service delivery to youth and to identify courses of action most appropriate to the young people. Part of the Local Services Mapping (LSM) exercises undertaken by Family and Community Services within the MSD aim to co-ordinate all youth-related services by government agencies. Eventually this will lead to a better mechanism for co-ordination between the Government and local communities.

Enhancing and further developing the YTS database

The YTS database has proved an extremely valuable tool in monitoring and reporting activities, as well as helping to evaluate youth outcomes. However, like most tools it could be further enhanced. More comprehensive information could be collected from youth and other sources so that the database would provide a more complete picture of youth using YTS. Additional reporting functionality would enable the users to link youth outcomes to the quantity and quality of interventions or other inputs from YTS providers.

Enhancing and expanding YTS

Existing YTS providers could be supported to provide services to more youth from neighbouring locations or to target more hard-to-reach venerable youth. Given YTS has well-established networks and mechanisms for service co-ordination, and is achieving positive outcomes, the service could be used more widely to benefit the whole country. Local communities are now seeing YTS as an integral part of their youth development strategies.

Assessing YTS outcomes in terms of social impact

It would be highly desirable to collect individual and family information, as well as labour market and education outcomes for youth who received YTS support. Establishing a control group of youth with similar characteristics would enable a more appropriate assessment of YTS impact. More information on YTS youth outcomes could be gathered by following youth participants for three years or more to assess if the youth outcomes can be maintained over time. Ideally, this information should be linked to the Work and Income working age benefit data to enable a small-scale trial to study who benefits most from YTS and what are the key factors impacting on YTS success. The social impact of YTS could also be measured by comparing YTS sites with non-YTS sites in youth benefit take-up rate at the ages of 18 and 19, using the Work and Income benefit data and unemployment rates.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

Overall, YTS has been positively viewed and enthusiastically embraced by youth participants and other stakeholders. YTS providers have adequately addressed all four core function areas of the service within their capacity. More than 61% of the young people engaged by the initiative have exited with positive outcomes, which included paid employment, training, return to school and tertiary education. These outcomes contribute to youths' economic independence and wellbeing in their sustainable employment pathway.

YTS has built relationships with community organisations such as schools, training providers and employers in order to provide opportunities for youth to enter employment, training or further education. The evaluation has identified a range of factors that have contributed to the success of YTS, as well as areas where the service can be further developed.

Future directions of YTS may focus on promoting and sharing good practice among key stakeholders, aligning future YTS with other youth-focused government initiatives such as Schools Plus, developing local youth development strategies with emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and potentially enhancing the YTS database to enable the identification of key interventions leading to positive youth outcomes.

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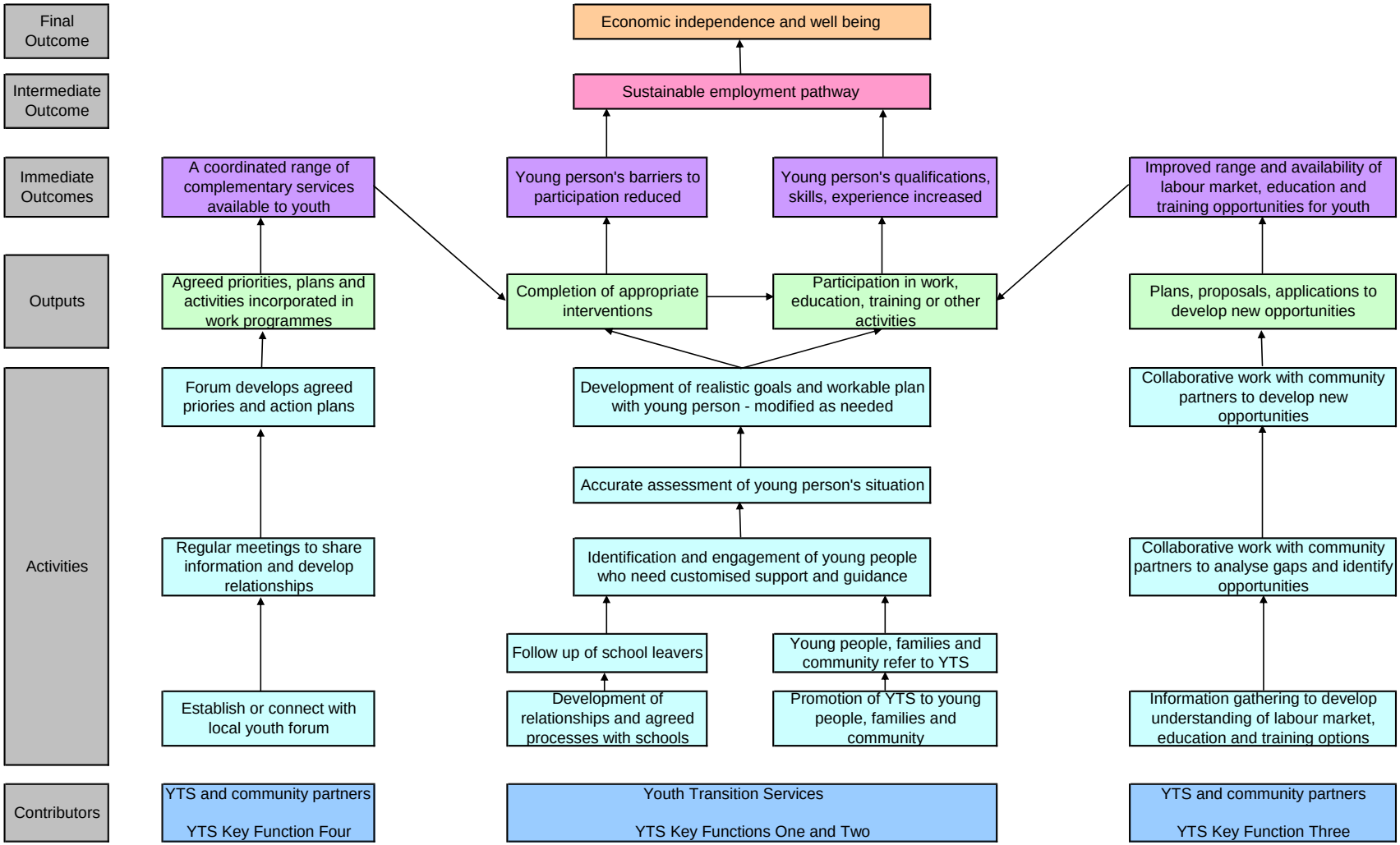
Appendix 1 Programme logic

Youth Transition Services Programme Logic Model



Appendix 2 Transition pathways for youth though YTS

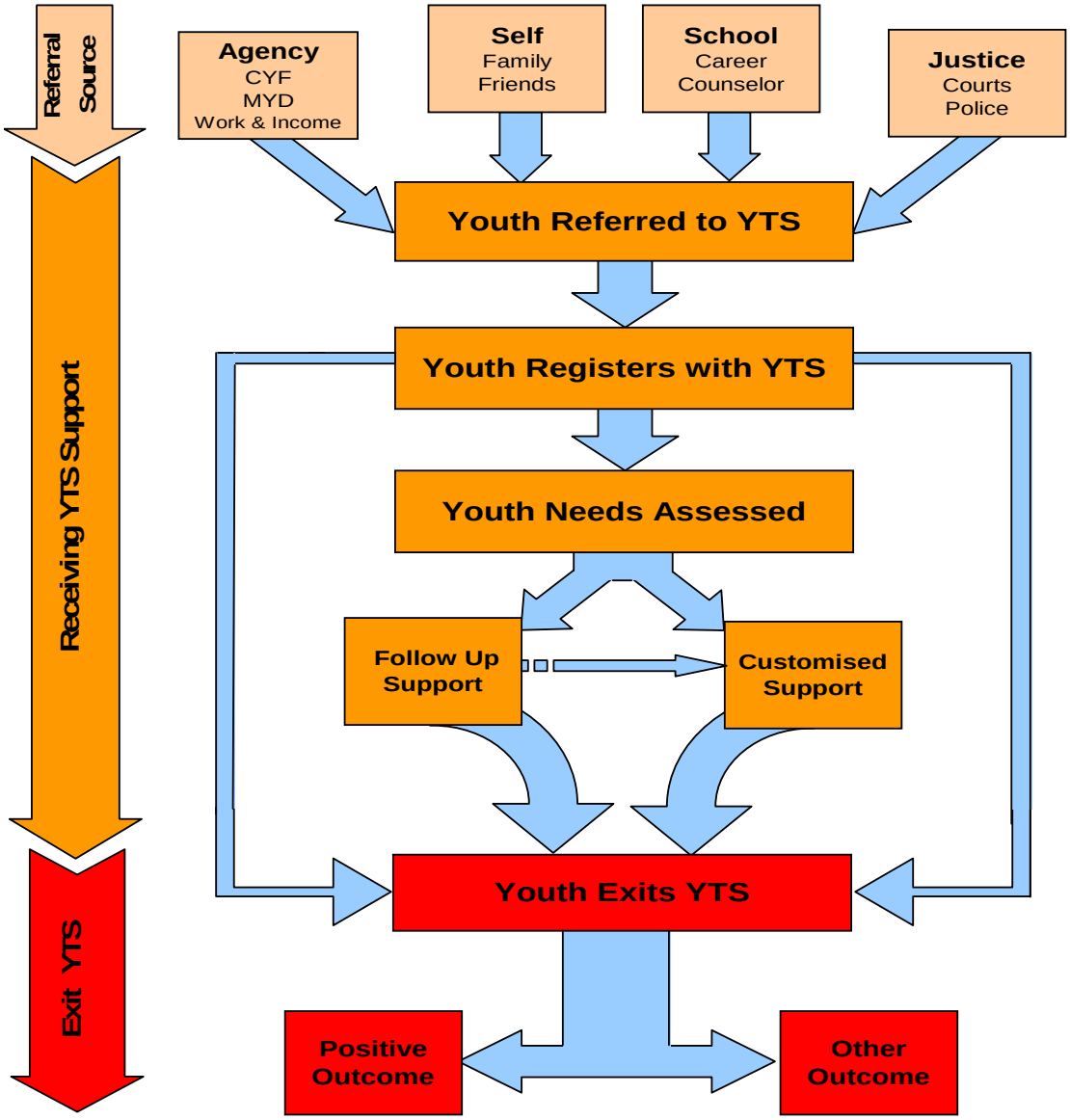
The diagram shown on the next page demonstrates how youth make a transition with the assistance of the Youth Transition Services (YTS). According to the YTS business processes (Appendix 3), a young person enrolled with the service is assigned one of the following four statuses: registered, follow up, customised support, and exited. With a standard procedure, a young person must sign a registration form to enrol with the service before receiving any support. This gives them a registered status. Within one or two weeks of registration, a YTS coach will undertake a needs assessment for the young person to determine how much support they require to assist their overall transition to full economic independence. The youth is then allocated the status of either follow up or customised support (but not both).

Generally speaking, if the youth has a career plan and feels reasonably confident to make a transition themselves they will be allocated follow up status and YTS coaches will only help if required. If they need more intensive support, they will be given customised support status. This is when YTS expends most of its effort, as shown in the diagram. Once on customised support, the youth will receive ongoing assistance from YTS coaches until they exit YTS. A young person can change their status from follow up to customised support, but not the other way round. YTS coaches will “exit” a youth if they have been placed into a meaningful activity (such as employment, training or education) for a sufficiently long period. YTS coaches will also “exit” the youth if they have left the area, do not wish to participate any more, or can not be contacted for various reasons.

Two ways that young people can bypass the standard flow serves to illustrate the flexibility of the core initiative relative to the standard business processes shown in Appendix 3. Rather than enrolling with YTS first, as shown in the main pathway, a small proportion of youth may have received sufficient support or assistance from YTS coaches prior to registration. By the time they physically sign the registration form, they might be ready to exit from the service with a specific outcome, as shown by the narrow arrow in the diagram. Alternatively, they might have registered with YTS first, but have received sufficient support from YTS coaches prior to being assigned to follow up or customised support status. In both cases, it is possible for the youth to exit with a meaningful outcome without going to the follow up or customised support status.

A national database was developed as a case management tool to capture information on young people who participate in YTS. The database became fully operational in July 2006, with data on participating youth having been retrospectively entered prior to the “go live” date. Consequently, the database is not considered robust for time periods earlier than 1 July 2006. The outcome evaluation of YTS for youth who participated in the service draws mainly on the “reliable” database source of information.

The youth pathways through YTS are shown in the following figure.


Referral Source
Agency
CYF
MYD
Work & Income
Self
Family
Friends
School
Career
Counselor
Justice
Courts
Police
Youth Referred to YTS
Youth Registers with YTS
Youth Needs Assessed
Follow Up Support
Customised Support
Youth Exits YTS
Positive Outcome
Other Outcome
Receiving YTS Support
Exit YTS

Appendix 3 The YTS business processes

The complete YTS business processes are diagrammatically shown in the Diagram “Complete high level business processes” on the next page. Upon referral or initial contact, YTS first registers a young person prior to providing any assistance to them. This ensures that the young person has signed the registration form indicating their willingness to receive support from YTS and for their personal information to be entered into the YTS database.

Then the YTS coaches determine the young person’s enrolment status as either “follow up” or “customised support’. To accurately determine the level of support or YTS involvement, the YTS provider needs to speak with the young person directly. This enables them to obtain any additional information required to assign enrolment status.

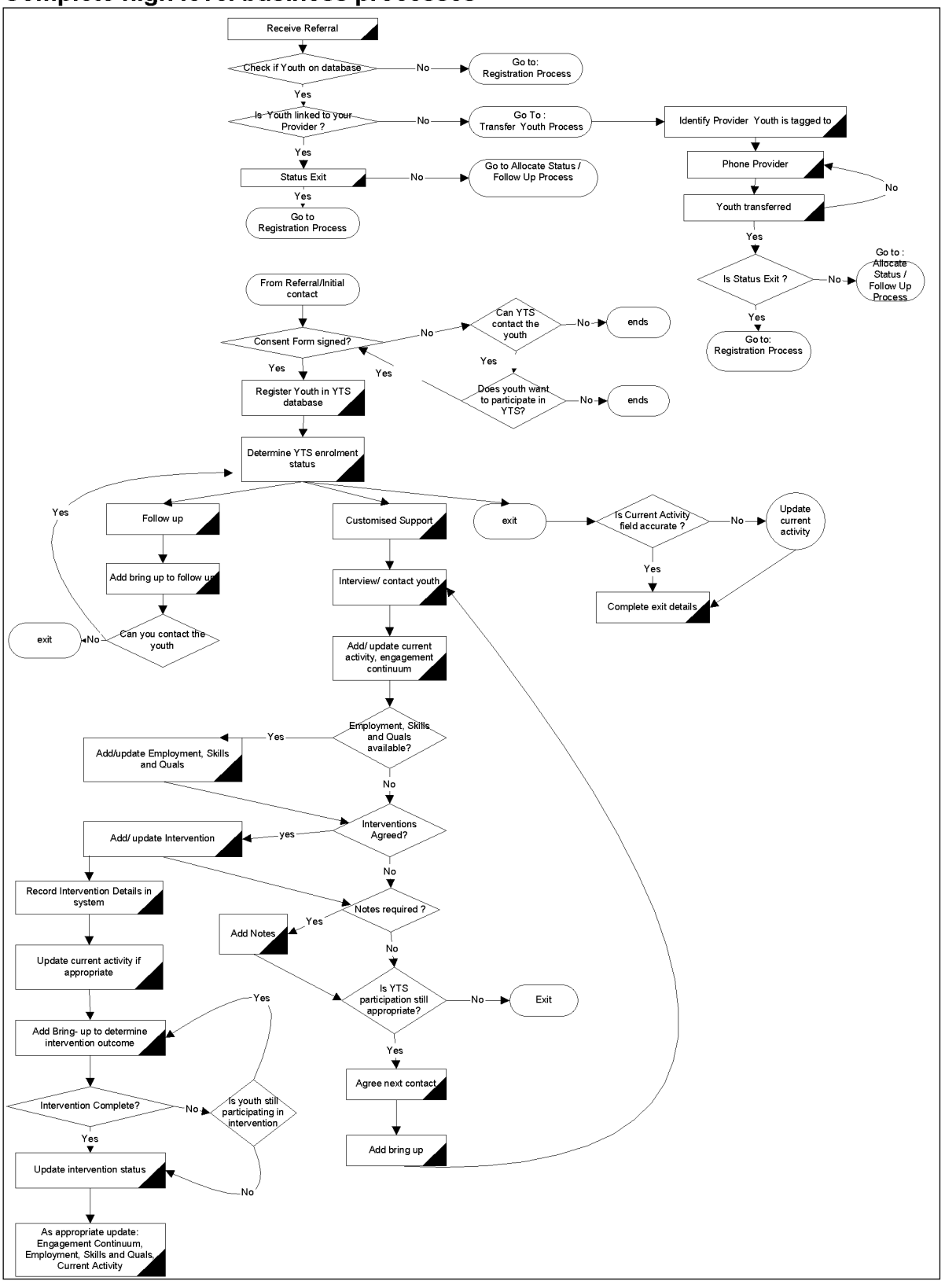
Follow up requires the YTS provider to make personal contact with the youth, to ensure they will or have transitioned into work, education, training or some other meaningful activity. Youth will be allocated a follow up status if they have a plan or destination post-secondary school, and have no significant issues making them at risk of long-term inactivity. The YTS provider contacts the youth to ensure they start the activity (work, education or training) as intended. If the youth (for whatever reason) is unable, or has not started an activity, their status is reviewed. If they are deemed at risk of not transitioning into work, education, training or some other meaningful activity, the YTS provider will change their status to customised support.

Customised support means the youth is receiving intensive support from the YTS. Youth will be allocated customised support status if they do not have a plan or destination post-secondary school, and/or have significant issues or barriers placing them at risk of long-term inactivity. The YTS provider provides intensive support, including mentoring, coaching, counselling and interventions to help transition the youth into work, education, training or some other meaningful activity. Customised support may continue post-transition to ensure the youth remains in the activity; that is, customised support can include in-work or in-training support.

Once a youth is assigned an enrolment status of customised support this cannot be changed back to registered or follow up. The status must remain customised support until the youth exits the YTS service (level of support may diminish as youth progress to in-work or in-training support). A youth’s enrolment status can be changed from follow up to customised support, but not vice versa, since the YTS coaches would need to provide ongoing assistance and support until the youth is able to exit from the service.

A youth will generally exit from follow up or customised support as soon as the YTS provider confirms the youth has started their pre-determined pathway of education, training, employment or other meaningful activity and has full confidence in the youth’s ability to stay committed to their transition plan. However, there are also various reasons why the young people may not receive any support from the service and simply be “exited” (for example, lost contact, the young person does not wish to participate, has moved to another area, or is outside YTS age range).

Complete high level business processes



Appendix 4 The engagement continuum

Purpose of the continuum
The purpose of the engagement continuum is to indicate a young person's progress while they are working with Youth Transition Services (YTS). It has been designed with input from YTS staff. Some YTS providers have also found the continuum levels useful for workload management, as a higher level of input is usually required by young people at the lower end (high risk) of the continuum.

When to use the continuum
The engagement continuum is only to be used for youth with an enrolment status of customised support. It is not an assessment tool. YTS providers should use their own assessment tools to determine a young person's strengths and needs. Once this assessment is made, the YTS coach will then determine where the youth best fits on the engagement continuum and enter this number onto the YTS database.

The engagement continuum must be reviewed when:

- the youth completes an intervention
- any significant change occurs in the youth's personal circumstances
- the youth exits the service.

Deciding where a young person fits on the continuum
A young person can enter the YTS service at any point on the continuum, and can move in either direction according to changes in their personal situation and activities. Each point on the continuum has a description, which covers a number of factors such as current activity, future plans and family support. The YTS staff member or coach should use their own judgment to decide which description best fits the current situation of the youth. It is unlikely that any young person will fit any description exactly, so the worker should look for a fit with four or more factors in the description.

Scale of the engagement continuum
The engagement continuum scale takes any possible value ranging from 1 to 8, with 1 indicating youth with high risk of disengagement, while 8 indicating youth with economic independence. Given the rating by each YTS staff is relatively subjective, it is more meaningful to use the change in engagement continuum scales of the youth from entry to exit from the service, rather than the actual ratings themselves. The following passage provides a brief description of what each of the 8 points indicate.

Engagement continuum = 1

- Young person has no clear plan or direction for the future and may be reluctant to engage with YTS
- Young person is not currently participating in any meaningful activity[11]

[11] Meaningful activity can include, but is not limited to work, training or education. Other meaningful activities might include involvement in sport, cultural or community groups and activities.

- Young person has experienced prolonged disengagement from work, school, education, or training[12]
- Young person does not have any qualifications, skills or work experience
- Young person has few self-management skills[13]
- Young person does not have positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person has issues which require input from other social services[14].

Engagement continuum = 2

- Young person has no clear plan or direction for the future; however, the young person is willing to engage with YTS and investigate options
- Young person is not currently participating in any meaningful activity
- Young person has had a short to medium period out of work, school, education, or training
- Young person does not have formal qualifications, skills or work experience
- Young person has few self-management skills
- Young person does not have positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person has issues which required input from other social services.

Engagement continuum = 3

- Young person has a tentative/short-term plan or direction for the future, and is beginning to trial options
- Young person has some engagement in a meaningful activity
- Young person has had a short period out of work, school, education or training
- Young person has some formal qualifications, skills or work experience
- Young person is beginning to develop self-management skills
- Young person has limited positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person is actively working to address issues with other services.

Engagement continuum = 4

- Young person is beginning to develop a long-term plan or direction for the future, and is actively trialling options
- Young person has some engagement in meaningful activity
- Young person is actively seeking or has recently engaged in work, school, education, or training
- Young person has some qualifications, skills or work experience
- Young person is developing self-management skills

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[12] It is up to the worker to decide whether the young person has a short, medium or prolonged period of inactivity – based on their experience and recognising that each young person's individual circumstances may affect the impact of any period of disengagement. The length of time disengaged is only one factor to consider when assigning a continuum rating, and is no more important than any of the other factors.

[13] Self-management skills are the skills that young people need to successfully transition into adult life, such as time management, forward planning and ability to deal with difficult situations.

[14] For example, Mental Health Services, CYFS, CAYAD or Police.

- Young person has limited positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person is actively working to address issues with other services.

Engagement continuum = 5

- Young person has decided on a clear direction, and a plan for achieving this goal is being developed
- Young person is engaged in meaningful activity
- Young person has recently engaged in work, school, education, or training
- Young person has some qualifications, skills or work experience
- Young person has developed some self-management skills and applies them from time to time in daily life
- Young person has some positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person is actively working to address issues with other services.

Engagement continuum = 6

- Young person has a clear direction and plan for the future
- Young person is engaged in meaningful activity
- Young person is engaged in work, education, training or other activities in line with their plan
- Young person is seeking to develop some qualifications, skills or experience in line with their future direction
- Young person has developed some self-management skills and applies them regularly in daily life
- Young person has positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person has resolved or is managing issues that were being addressed with other services.

Engagement continuum = 7

- Young person has a clear direction and plan for the future which provides a pathway to sustainable employment
- Young person feels connected to their community through engagement in meaningful activity
- Young person has been engaged in work, education or training activities in line with their plan for at least 3 months
- Young person has gained qualifications, skills or experience which relate to their future direction
- Young person is consistently able to apply self-management skills in daily life
- Young person has positive, significant input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person has resolved or is managing issues that were being with other services.

Engagement continuum = 8

- Young person has a clear plan and direction for the future and is on a pathway to sustainable employment
- Young person feels connected to their community through engagement in meaningful activity
- Young person has been fully engaged in appropriate work, education or training activities in line with their plan for at least 6 months
- Young person has gained qualifications, skills or experience which will contribute to their future direction
- Young person is consistently able to apply self-management skills in daily life
- Young person has significant positive input or support from their family, whänau or other significant adult(s)
- Young person has resolved or is managing issues that were being addressed with other services
- Young person no longer needs the support of Youth Transition Services.

Appendix 5 Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-method design, focusing on the first 10 YTS sites. The main research methods were:

- qualitative data collection at YTS sites through:
  - longitudinal research with a cohort of youth through focus groups and interviews over a 12-month period
  - two site visits to providers in December 2005/January 2006 and July/August 2007
  - interviews with YTS staff and Work and Income staff
  - interviews and surveys with YTS stakeholders; including schools, employers and community organisations
- analysis of Work and Income and YTS databases
- document and literature review.

1. The sites

Five sites became operational during 2005 and five became operational during 2006 – all located in the North Island of New Zealand. The sites are:

Stage One	Stage Two
Whangarei	Far North
Waitakere	Manukau
Rotorua	Hamilton
New Plymouth	Gisborne
Porirua	Hutt Valley

2. Qualitative data

2.1 Longitudinal study with young people on YTS

The research with young people was designed to provide information on current status and involvement with YTS, including:

- enrolment status
- satisfaction with current activity
- engagement with community groups
- frequency of contact with YTS
- outcomes of involvement with YTS, including:
  - referrals
  - suitability of referrals
  - personal qualities
  - knowledge of training, education and employment opportunities
- views on the YTS service, including:
  - relationship with coaches
  - quality of support

- most and least valuable parts of the service
- opinions of community awareness of YTS
- areas for improvement.

2.2 Focus groups and interviews with young people

The research was carried out in four phases:

- Initial focus groups: 22 focus groups involving 159 participants held from September to November 2006.
- First phase of follow up telephone interviews: 119 youth interviewed from December 2006 to January 2007. Eighty-five of them were focus group participants, while 35 did not participate in the focus groups and had exited from YTS at the time of the interviews.
- Second phase interviews: 61 youth interviewed from July to August 2007.
- Third and final phase interviews: 25 youth interviewed in February 2008.

The majority of the focus group participants were Māori (75%), followed by New Zealand European (15%) and Pacific (10%). The participants were evenly distributed by gender. Most of them were in the target group of 15 to 19 years of age, with a few over 20 (they were 19 or younger when they joined YTS). They varied in the length of time engaged with YTS, the level of support required, and the clarity of individual career goals.

Interviewers tried to contact all focus group participants for the first phase of follow up interviews. Another 35 youth, who had exited from YTS prior to the initial focus groups, were also recruited for the telephone interviews to gain an understanding of their life post-engagement with YTS. Only young people who had successfully completed an interview in previous interview phases were contacted for follow up. The focus groups took between one, and one and a half hours. Interviews in all three phases took between ten and fifteen minutes.

2.3 Interviews with YTS staff and Work and Income staff

Interviews were completed between June and August 2007 with 12 YTS providers at 10 YTS sites. Eighty-five people worked at the 12 sites as either a manager, coach or administrator. All managers were interviewed and in some cases, coaches and administrators contributed to a discussion about the performance of the service over the previous 12 months.

2.4 Survey with schools

In November 2007, an online survey was emailed to all secondary schools in areas across the North Island where contracted YTS providers operate. Out of a total of 103 schools contacted, 42 (or 41 per cent) responded – which, when considering November is the end of school year and the direct lead-up to the long summer recess, the level of response was reasonable.

The survey contained ten questions relating to three key issues:

- the agreement, engagement and relationship between schools and YTS
- the YTS referral process used by schools
- the role of YTS in benefiting the school community.

Of the 10 questions, six were closed and four were open-ended. Space for comments was provided at the end of each closed question.

The survey was posted online using a survey service (www.surveymonkey.com) that collected the responses. Potential respondents were given 10 days to complete the survey. Non-respondents were sent three follow up reminder emails about the survey.

Responses and comments were analysed for commonalities and differences in the views held by respondents and the implications of those views. This involved:

- identifying themes corresponding with the evaluation questions
- coding each of the themes with an appropriate label
- categorising the themes in relation to the three key issues mentioned above.

The data has some limitations. Because only 42 schools responded, the findings can not be generalised to all schools in the area. Respondents gave their individual views, which may not represent those of other staff or of the school as a whole. No information was available on the role the respondent played in the school or on their experience with YTS.

2.5 Interviews with employers and training providers working with YTS

YTS providers were asked to send their employer and training provider contacts in these categories to the evaluation team. The resulting list of 148 contacts was reduced to 95 contacts spread evenly between the three organisation types and the twelve YTS locations.

The interview guide was entered into Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) software for use by the interviewer. Over the course of two weeks, the interviewer attempted to contact each of these organisations. Some of the contact details provided were out-of–date, resulting in those providers no longer being used by the organisation, and some had no knowledge of YTS. Eleven contacts were ineligible for that reason and one refused to participate.

In all, 45 interviews were completed with a relatively even spread over YTS locations and organisation types. Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and Private Training Establishments (PTEs) were better represented than employers in both the original sample and the completed interview list. The resulting data was coded and analysed for common themes related to the evaluation of YTS. For open-ended questions, where a response encompassed two categories, it was counted in both.

The interviews aimed to gather information on:
- relationships with their local YTS provider
- outcomes from their relationship with YTS
- satisfaction with the service provided by YTS
- suggestions for improving YTS.

The ability to draw conclusions based on information gathered from these interviews is limited by the fact that all contacts in the sample were provided by YTS providers. This is particularly relevant to examining the data on employers' and training providers' relationships with YTS,

because organisations that have not heard of YTS or worked with YTS could not have been included in the sample.

2.6 Interviews and focus groups with YTS steering groups and community stakeholders

Ten focus groups involving 46 steering group members across 12 provider sites were undertaken in April and May 2007. Three additional steering group members from two sites were interviewed by telephone.

Nine focus groups involving 59 participants across 10 provider sites were undertaken, and 10 community stakeholders from three sites were interviewed by telephone. A small number of participants, many of whom were willing to be interviewed by telephone at a later date, withdrew from the interviews citing urgent and unanticipated matters. These telephone interviews were conducted between June and August 2007.

Community stakeholders are agencies or corporations that work in partnership with YTS providers to deliver and co-ordinate services for young people in the community. Their membership can be the same as for steering groups, but they focus more on the operational side of YTS. Most attended community network meetings that YTS providers also attended.

A structured interview guide was developed and iteratively refined as the interviews progressed. Prior to the commencement of the interview, participants were requested to complete a short questionnaire designed to gather demographic information.

The telephone interview guides used with individual members of steering groups and community stakeholder groups were a modified version of the original focus group interview guides.

3. Analysis of Work and Income and YTS databases

The outcome evaluation is in its early stages. It has adopted a dual approach:

- Directly measuring immediate outcomes for young people who participated in the programme using information from the YTS database (for example, number of interventions completed, number of participating youth engaged in employment, training, tertiary education, school or other activities).
- Comparing outcomes for young people at sites that were on an original list of possible YTS sites, but where such a service is not yet in place.

It took some time for YTS to set up and become fully operational and for staff to become familiar with the database once it was developed and deployed. Reliable data for this evaluation was only available for 18 months (from July 2006 to December 2007), which was not long enough to clearly demonstrate:

- progression differences for young people who used the service
- differences in the take-up rate of youth benefits at age 18 or 19 between YTS and non-YTS sites.

4. Methodologies for the Outcome Evaluation

Two steps are needed to demonstrate the impact of the YTS initiative on youth outcomes. The first is to examine outcomes for YTS programme participants. The second is to determine what difference YTS has made to these youth outcomes, for which we need to estimate the counterfactual outcomes of the YTS participants.

4.1 Outcomes of YTS participants

Due to information availability, the evaluation has focused primarily on describing the outcomes of YTS programme participants. Immediate and short-term outcomes included in the analyses are: number of interventions completed and number of participating youth who were exited from YTS into employment, training, tertiary education, return to school or engaged with another agency referred to by YTS service provider. This information was directly obtained from the YTS database. The limitation of only looking at YTS participants' outcomes is that it provides no information on what would have happened in the absence of YTS. In other words, it is not possible to know the extent to which YTS helped to change participants' outcomes.

4.2 Impact analysis (estimation of counterfactual outcomes)

Methodologies for impact analysis

To answer the question "Did YTS help improve outcomes of the programme participants?", it is necessary to estimate the impact of YTS on youth outcomes. To do this we need to compare the outcomes of YTS participants to the outcomes they would have achieved without YTS. For example, one way to estimate YTS impact would be to compare participants' outcomes to the outcomes of a similar group of non-participants. The most well-known approach for this purpose is randomised control trial (RCT), which involves randomly allocating potential participants into a control and treatment group. The way the YTS programme was implemented (that being, all youth – including at-risk youth – within YTS sites could access the service), has meant that it was not possible to directly estimate its impact on participants' outcomes. There was no control group in YTS sites.

Another approach is to demonstrate the impact of YTS by comparing youth outcomes at locations where YTS were operated (YTS sites) with those in similar locations where no YTS was operating (non-YTS sites). This would involve the use of a RCT approach, in which either the target locations, represented by Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs), are allocated one of the two treatments: YTS and non-YTS. The two types of TLAs should have similar characteristics deemed to influence the effectiveness of YTS (for example, number of youth, youth unemployment, and presence of universities or other tertiary institutions). The idea is to roll-out YTS to one type of TLAs only, and use the other as a naturally occurring control group.

The following features, however, made random allocation of TLAs unrealistic:

- Selective roll-out: TLAs that were selected for YTS sites were specifically chosen for, among other things, their high rates of youth inactivity. TLAs that are most suitable for random allocation to YTS and non-YTS sites all received the treatment more or less simultaneously, since Government wanted to invest the available funds where the youth are in most need of such services.

- Fast roll-out (implementation): YTS was implemented in three phases. This could potentially allow us to compare the outcomes between TLAs from two different implementation phases to estimate the impact of YTS. However, implementation proceeded too quickly (at approximately only 12 month intervals) to allow enough time for the outcomes to arise.

As a consequence, the only "control" type of non-YTS sites (TLAs) we can use are those short-listed for selection, but were not selected, that are similar to YTS sites in socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics. These unselected short-listed sites (Christchurch City, Dunedin City, Tauranga City, Papakura District, and Invercargill City) were thus used as comparison sites for impact analysis.

Aggregate time-series analysis

Because of the issues described above, and the time and resources available to the project, we proceeded to develop a time-series difference in differences analysis for the estimation of YTS impact using youth benefit take-up data. The idea for this analysis is to monitor trends in outcome values for all young people in YTS sites and non-YTS sites before and after the implementation of YTS. It is hoped that the effect of the programme on the small group of participants in TLAs with YTS sites will be reflected in the overall trends. This requires either the proportion of young people in each TLA, or the effect of the YTS intervention, to be reasonably large. If the YTS effect is only modest to moderate, and the proportion of young people participating is small, time-series analysis may not necessarily detect the impact of the programme.

Based on the YTS intervention logic, two outcomes measures were considered: school "drop out" rates and benefit take-up rates. Data on school leavers was only available from the Ministry of Education (MOE) on an annual basis, which is not appropriate for this time-series analysis. Therefore, we decided to use benefit take-up data – the proportion of young people in each local authority receiving benefit – as the outcome for time-series analysis.

Lagged time-series analysis

Many of the programme participants were too young to receive a working age benefit at the time of participation, given that YTS intervention mostly targeted at-risk youth in schools and school leavers. Hence, we decided to analyse benefit take-up rates at various lagged time periods (mainly 1-2 years). For example, for young people aged 15, we examine the proportion of them taking up benefit at ages 16, 17 and 18. The main assumption is that by intervening early to support at-risk youth to remain in school or engaged with meaningful activities such as work, further training or tertiary education, YTS helps prevent these youth from needing to take up a benefit once they leave school or reach 18 years of age. For any specific lagged time interval (for example, 1-3 years), the proportion of young people at certain ages (16 to 18 years old) in receipt of benefit at a TLA can be derived by the formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of young people in receipt of a benefit for years after turning that age}}{\text{Total number of young people in the same TLA at the time}}$$

We used the Benefit Dynamics Dataset (BDD) to derive the number of young people of a given age who are in receipt of benefit by TLA. The BDD is a cleaned version of MSD administrative

data and can be used to analyse patterns of benefit receipt by various demographic and benefit characteristics (for example, benefit type). We were then able to match clients' home addresses to their TLA. To derive the number of youth of a given age who are present in the population at a given time, we used a customised Statistics NZ series: *Estimated resident population by single year of age and TLA* as at June of each year from 1996 to 2007. Linear interpolation was used to estimate the intervening months.

Modelling techniques would have been applied to the series if the descriptive analysis had suggested that there had been a significant impact. Descriptive statistics, however, suggested that the effects, if any, of YTS were not reflected in the time-series. Therefore, it was decided to not continue with time-series modelling.

4.3 Data availability

Stages 1 and 2 YTS took time to set up and become fully functional. Similarly, the development of the YTS database progressed slowly, with a temporary Excel spreadsheet having been instituted as the initial case management tool/data collection mechanism while the YTS database was being developed. By the time everything was developed and deployed from July 2006 onwards, only 18 months were available for the evaluation to measure outcomes through until December 2007. Due to the short time period, there are too few quality data points that can be used to demonstrate (1) what difference has been made for youth who used the service, and (2) what difference has been made in youth benefit take-up rate at age of 18 and/or 19 between YTS and non-YTS sites.

Since YTS is not restricted to Work and Income clients, analysis using matched-comparison-groups (MSD administrative benefit data versus YTS data) is not possible. A data-match between the YTS database and MSD youth benefit data, which captures information on part of the YTS participants, has shown a low number of matches between these two data sources for individuals who claimed they were referred to the service by their Work and Income case managers. The expected effect of YTS would not be immediately evident to participants, which in part reflected the long duration of the youth engagement (service receipt) with YTS (average of 6 to 7 months), when the YTS participants may well be in receipt of a benefit for income support. This also reflected a key aspect of the intervention logic of YTS: by investing in preventative services, poor outcomes in the medium- to long-term (ie receiving a benefit and being "inactive") may be avoided.

Another complication is that the number of youth participating in YTS is only part of the at-risk youth group (mainly school leavers) and is too small in comparison to the total youth population within each TLA. The impact of the service is thus hard to detect at the TLA level. The historically low unemployment rate over the past couple of years has made things even more difficult in differentiating the youth outcomes between the YTS sites and non-YTS sites.

Future evaluation of YTS outcomes will require a longer time of data collection for youth accessing the service and taking up benefits. Better quality data at necessary small area levels (TLAs) are especially needed, such as official unemployment rate for youth aged 18 or 19 in each of the related TLAs for both the YTS group and the comparison group.

5. Document and literature review

A brief literature review was completed on youth transition programmes in Australia, Canada, the UK and the US. The review focused specifically on research design and evaluation.

Appendix 6 Youth outcomes

The table below shows the outcomes and ethnicities of all youth who exited YTS during the evaluation period, from December 2004 to March 2008, as recorded in the YTS database.

Appendix table 6.1 Youth outcomes

Outcome type for exit	Māori		Pacific		Asian		NZ European		Other		Unknown		Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	#	%
Positive outcomes														
Return to school	346	215	128	105	50	44	201	110	39	54	59	47	1398	13.6
Tertiary education	159	111	116	105	108	105	301	190	87	77	125	122	1606	15.6
Employment	414	437	69	124	14	9	296	311	40	75	81	118	1988	19.3
Private training	255	212	66	64	2	8	90	87	6	11	31	43	875	8.5
Other type of training	61	55	6	11	0	1	26	20	6	2	4	6	198	1.9
Alternative secondary education	19	33	4	7	0	0	4	7	0	6	2	2	84	0.8
Apprenticeship	3	12	1	4	1	2	3	34	2	2	1	14	79	0.8
Referred to other agency	21	23	7	5	1	1	9	8	1	5	2	3	86	0.8
Subtotal	**1278**	**1098**	**397**	**425**	**176**	**170**	**930**	**767**	**181**	**232**	**305**	**355**	**6314**	**61.4**
Unknown outcomes														
Could not contact	354	393	141	196	51	59	220	256	71	84	78	126	2029	19.7
Does not wish to participate	151	113	36	55	12	7	83	104	4	9	18	33	625	6.1
Left area	208	209	44	44	11	13	73	70	20	24	19	23	758	7.4
Outside YTS age range	57	75	1	4	0	1	18	23	1	4	4	1	189	1.8
Deceased	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	7	0.1
Other	90	80	23	46	7	0	38	36	9	7	12	16	364	3.5
Subtotal	**862**	**871**	**245**	**345**	**81**	**80**	**433**	**491**	**106**	**128**	**131**	**199**	**3972**	**38.6**
Total by ethnicity	**2140**	**1969**	**642**	**770**	**257**	**250**	**1363**	**1258**	**287**	**360**	**436**	**554**	**10286**	**100**
% positive outcomes	59.7	55.8	61.8	55.2	68.5	68.0	68.2	61.0	63.1	64.4	70.0	64.1		

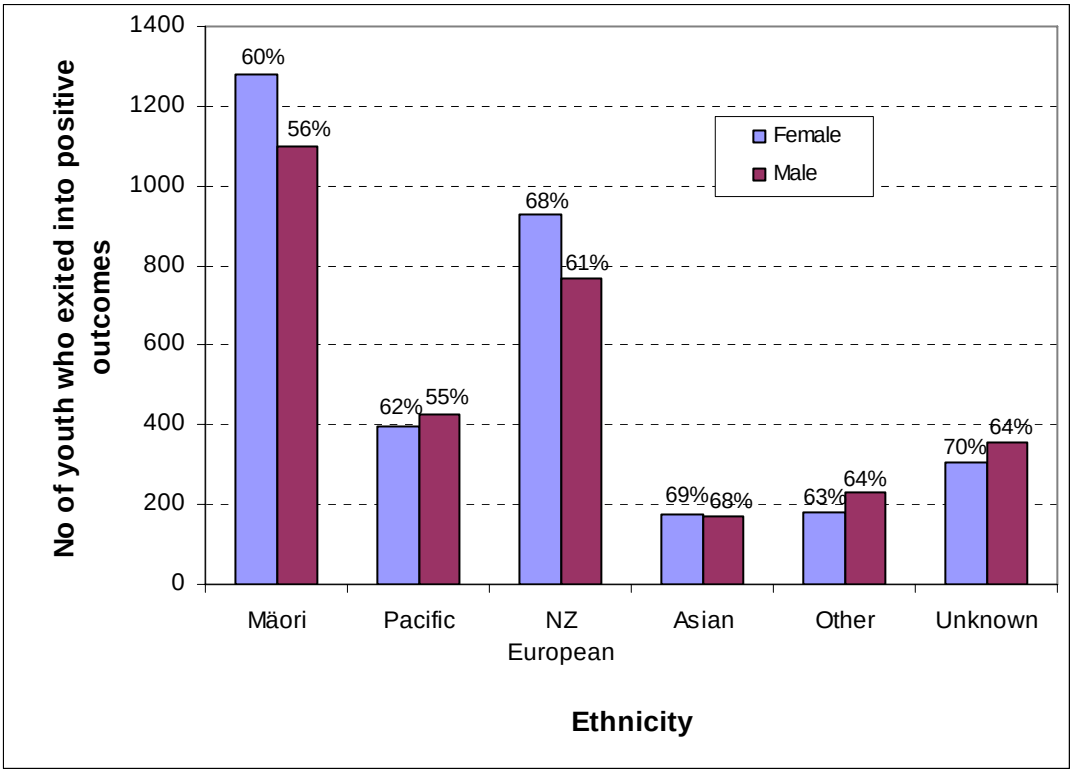
Appendix 7 Interventions

The table below shows all interventions, including completed, uncompleted and attempted interventions, recorded in the YTS database from December 2004 to March 2008.

Appendix table 7.1 Interventions

Type of interventions offered	Completed interventions		Uncompleted interventions		Attempted interventions		Total interventions	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Career Guidance	3576	23.7	942	21.1	291	8.8	4807	21.0
CV Preparation	2386	15.8	820	18.3	141	4.3	3347	14.6
Other	1751	11.6	383	8.6	582	17.6	2716	11.9
Personal Development	1556	10.3	264	5.9	475	14.3	2295	10.0
Confidence Building and Motivation	1466	9.7	252	5.6	457	13.8	2175	9.5
Job Search	1364	9.0	334	7.5	443	13.4	2141	9.3
Driver Licence	874	5.8	982	22.0	350	10.6	2206	9.6
Mentoring	601	4.0	32	0.7	83	2.5	716	3.1
Numeracy/Literacy Course	334	2.2	172	3.8	69	2.1	575	2.5
Work Experience	242	1.6	60	1.3	106	3.2	408	1.8
Health Assistance	198	1.3	34	0.8	43	1.3	275	1.2
Counselling	181	1.2	65	1.5	71	2.1	316	1.4
Financial Assistance	142	0.9	55	1.2	15	0.5	212	0.9
Drug/Alcohol Services	127	0.8	18	0.4	34	1.0	179	0.8
Budgeting	85	0.6	12	0.3	106	3.2	203	0.9
Legal Assistance	78	0.5	15	0.3	2	0.1	95	0.4
Family Violence Support	54	0.4	8	0.2	3	0.1	65	0.3
Accommodation Assistance	50	0.3	18	0.4	7	0.2	75	0.3
Mental Health Services	29	0.2	7	0.2	29	0.9	65	0.3
Ethnic/Migrant Support	14	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	0.1
Disability Assistance	9	0.1	0	0.0	6	0.2	15	0.1
Total	**15117**		**4473**		**3313**		**22900**	**100**
%	66.0		19.5		14.5			

Appendix 8 Youth with positive outcomes



Appendix figure 8.1 Youth who exited YTS with positive outcomes divided by ethnicity and gender

Appendix 9 Statistical analysis techniques

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to understand whether positive youth outcomes at exit are associated with certain characteristics of the youth participant. The dependent variable was dichotomous, taking the value of 1 for positive outcomes or 0 for other outcomes. The independent or explanatory variables included ethnicity, age, gender, enrolment duration, engagement continuum rating on entry, and change in continuum rating from entry to exit. The last two variables were recorded on 4,483 of the total 10,286 youth who exited. Thus, the logistic regression analysis was performed using information on these 4,483 youth.

Results show that among all variables and their interactions, engagement continuum rating on entry, and change in the continuum rating, are the only variables that serve as good predictors of positive youth outcomes at exit.

Appendix table 9.1 Logistic regression analysis results

Effect	DF	Wald Chi-Square	P r > Chi-Square
Ethnicity	5	1.19	0.95
Gender	1	0.00	0.98
Age	6	7.83	0.25
Ethnicity × gender	5	4.26	0.51
Ethnicity × age	27	23.16	0.68
Gender × age	6	2.60	0.86
Ethnicity × gender × age	25	16.57	0.90
Engagement duration	1	0.00	0.99
Change in continuum rating	1	664.76	0.00
Engagement rating on entry	1	1064.07	0.00

A t-test for group means also showed that there is significantly greater positive change in engagement continuum rating for youth exited with positive outcomes, relative to those exited with other outcomes (see table below).

Appendix table 9.2 t-test results

Statistics	Change in engagement rating			Engagement rating on entry		
	Positive outcomes	Other outcomes	Difference	Positive outcomes	Other outcomes	Difference
No of youth	2434	2047		2048	2435	
Mean	2.142	0.178	1.963	3.47	2.72	0.76
Standard Deviation	1.876	1.617	1.758	1.43	1.32	1.38
Standard Error	0.038	0.036	0.053	0.029	0.029	0.041
t Value			37.74			18.36
DF			4478			4437
Pr > t Value			0.000			0.000

Youth with greater positive change in engagement continuum rating tended to have positive outcomes, while youth with no or little change in continuum rating tended to have other outcomes. Hence, the change in engagement continuum rating may be used as a reliable indicator for positive outcomes. YTS providers should be encouraged to continue to use this rating in their future engagement with youth.

Engagement rating on entry also provides a good indication of likely outcomes for the participating youth, with low rating on entry more likely to lead to other outcomes and higher level of rating on entry more likely to lead to positive outcomes. Naturally, youth with a higher level of continuum rating on entry would generally be easier to transition into positive outcomes or would require less input from YTS when a positive outcome is being aimed for. This suggests that youth with a low level of continuum rating on entry would require more assistance from YTS to achieve a positive outcome, than those with a higher level of continuum rating on entry.