MINISTRY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI
Administered by the Ministry of Social Development

"It just hits different, yeah, like knowing that he actually cares."

A Qualitative Evaluation of the Ministry of Youth Development – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi [Youth Development] Full-Time Equivalent Youth Worker/Practitioner Pilot

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Executive summary

Background

- The aim of the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi [Youth Development] Full-Time Equivalent Youth Worker/Practitioner Pilot (FTE Pilot) was to demonstrate how good youth work practice and quality early intervention and prevention youth development services can stymie young people's risk factors from escalating and support young people to achieve positive long-term outcome.

- The FTE Pilot operated from January 2023 through June 2025, with ten funded youth workers/practitioners providing tailored support and increased one-to-one contact time to a total of 1,500 young people with moderate needs.

- Intended outcomes for young people as a result of the FTE Pilot included increased wellbeing, capability and resilience, strengthening youth identity, sense of belonging, and social connectedness with their peers, whānau and communities.

- This process evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which the FTE Pilot has been designed in support of good youth work practice and implemented as intended. It also aimed to assess the extent to which the FTE Pilot is achieving short term outcomes for young people.

- The evaluation used a mixed methods approach comprising (primarily) a qualitative case study component, conducting semi structured interviews with provider managers, youth workers/ practitioners, young people, and Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) - Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi national office staff; as well as some integration of quantitative reporting data from participant and provider surveys to help triangulate findings.

- The evaluation can be used to inform MYD, sector partners, agencies, and other stakeholders on what works to achieve positive outcomes for cohorts of young people with moderate needs*. Lessons from the evaluation may also contribute to future MYD investment decisions, including informing funding criteria and provider reporting measures.

*While Oranga Tamariki provides support for the most vulnerable young people, the FTE Pilot is designed to work with young people at the "top of the cliff" to stay engaged in school and positively participate in the wider community, for example, through involvement in sports, cultural, faith, or other interest groups. Young people with moderate needs might be going through struggles around their mental and physical health, sexuality, and cultural connection, or could be coping with other challenges in their lives such as family breakdown, bullying, and isolation.

Key findings

The FTE Pilot has supported youth workers/practitioners to develop meaningful relationships with young people and contribute to significant improvements in their lives. Being in a dedicated FTE role enabled youth workers to focus entirely on young people and the quality of the youth work practice is evident in the praise young people had for their youth workers and the outcomes they described. Youth workers incorporated strong cultural frameworks into their everyday practice and approached young people in a flexible and empathetic way.

It is noted that the FTE Pilot was a time-bound funding initiative, with contracts expiring on Monday 30 June 2025. MYD will consider how the findings contained in this report will be reflected as part of MYD's evolving cycle of evidence, to inform future planning and funding of youth development programmes.

Design

- The design of the FTE Pilot is largely in line with good youth work practice and a positive youth development approach in terms of the focus on strength-based practice, moderate needs, and the focus on (relatively) long-term relationships.

- The preventative approach was endorsed by youth workers and helped young people deal with issues before they escalated. The high levels of trust developed and tailored one-to-one support for a minimum of ten weeks were effective in matching the needs of young people, although this minimum could be extended (see conclusions).

- The design would have benefited from consultation with the priority cohorts and young people in general to ensure the FTE Pilot was adapted to meet the needs of different groups and providers were equipped with the skills needed. Greater emphasis on established youth development providers in the procurement would have led to a more consistent implementation.

- Providers endorsed the NZQA qualification requirement, the focus on moderate needs, and the one-to-one mentoring approach. Some youth workers/practitioners struggled with the requirement to see 60 young people a year, spending 20-25 hours per week in one-to-one work, and the length of the programme. Some youth workers/practitioners felt their salaries could have been higher and this sentiment was acknowledged by MYD staff who noted that the salaries only just met or were below the recommendations MYD set.

Implementation

- Youth workers/practitioners and managers had worked in the youth development space for varying time periods, between nine months and 22 years. They had a mixture of qualifications, with half having a youth development level 4 qualification, and the rest in areas outside of the youth development field.

Regular access to supervision was common, though this was not always formalised.

- Youth workers/practitioners were confident working with rangatahi Māori but showed more uncertainty with meeting the youth development needs of young people who identified with some of MYD's other priority cohorts, suggesting some additional training/resources is needed. Youth workers worked on a range of areas meeting the moderate need criteria, such as emotional regulation, housing, employment, re-engagement with school, health care access, and social skills.

- Some youth workers and managers struggled with young people appearing to meet the moderate needs criteria initially. However, over time it transpired they had more complex needs.

- Youth workers/practitioners discussed having considerable variability in their sessions with young people, but there were some common threads. These included whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga, check-ins, working on goals, applying frameworks, and focusing on physical and mental wellness. This was in the context of a range of activities including supporting re-engagement with education, going to the gym, CV writing, and learning to make barista-style coffee.

- Frameworks and progress indicators were clearly embedded in everyday practice. These included HEeADSSS (a comprehensive psychosocial assessment tool identifying risk and protective factors), Cultural HEeADSS (CHEeADSSS), Te Whare Tapa Whā (a wellbeing model based on the four walls of a wharenui), and Hua Oranga (a one-page Māori health outcome measure).

- Youth workers/practitioners felt the key factors to achieving good outcomes were being youth-centric in their practice, ensuring youth have voice, being honest, and applying a cultural lens across their work.

- Managers generally reported that support from MYD was positive, and help was available when needed. Staff were positive about the FTE Pilot overall, particularly its flexibility in terms of how they could tailor services to young people. A couple of staff struggled with lack of support and guidance initially. Suggested improvements to the FTE Pilot from youth workers/practitioners and managers were minor but included the provision of more educational resources and the ability to exercise more flexibility with the prescribed age range and the administrative/reporting requirements.

Short-term outcomes for young people

- Young people felt close to their youth workers/practitioners, often equating them with family and clearly valued their non-judgemental support and honest engagement. Such feelings of support by key adults are strongly related to positive social outcomes.

- Young people highlighted the importance of mentors engaging with genuine care, honesty, and humour, and providing a safe space. In terms of supporting a relational approach to youth work, it is clear from young people's comments that youth workers achieved this goal.

- Young people experienced a range of outcomes including improvements to home life, increased confidence, better relationships, improvement in mental health such as anxiety or depression, and re-engagement with school or training.

- Overall, young people reported considerable improvements to their lives as a result of their participation in the FTE Pilot. Only two young people did not feel improvements in their life were attributable to their participation in the programme.

Recommendations

- Greater emphasis should be given to established youth development practice in the procurement to ensure youth workers and managers are equipped with the skills to work effectively with young people. Across MYD, consistency during the procurement, implementation, and evaluation stages will help ensure collective understanding of expectations and outcomes.

- Consultation with the priority cohorts and the provider community on the design will help ensure any future pilot is adapted to meet the needs of different groups and providers are equipped with the skills needed.

- Communication with providers is important. There is a need for clearer and more consistent messaging regarding what is a firm requirement of the FTE Pilot (or any funding stream) and where there is some flexibility on criteria. While many conversations were had about softer aspects of the criteria, providers ultimately and understandably relied on what was written in their contracts. There is an opportunity for MYD to provide greater guidance as part of the ongoing engagement with providers.

- Building trusting relationships with young people with moderate needs is critical to achieving outcomes. The FTE Pilot demonstrated some challenges with achieving both relationship-building and mentoring within a short period of ten weeks. Extending the engagement time by another two to five weeks could enhance outcomes but will have flow-on effects to the number of young people practitioners could work with (i.e. 60 may be too high in this instance).

- There is an opportunity to work with providers on the design of reporting to avoid youth workers feeling overburdened and so they can focus on service delivery. Some flexibility in reporting may be helpful, acknowledging that young people's assessment of needs may change from 'moderate' to 'high' during their engagement with the service.

- There is some work to be done on lifting sector capability. This could include the provision of training and/or resources on working with rainbow youth, mental

health conditions, and different cultures. A couple of youth workers felt quite lost when starting the FTE Pilot as they had not worked in that type of role before and/or they didn't feel well supported. More regular supervision and access to training could help in these situations.

- More all-provider hui/opportunities for shared learning across providers should be considered. One manager commented that it would have been helpful to learn from other providers about how they were managing the moderate needs category, and this sentiment was echoed by MYD staff. This is a opportunity for MYD to consider with its future investments in youth development.

Introduction

MYD typically uses a programme funding model, supporting provider organisations to deliver programmes and services. The FTE Pilot represented a new approach where instead of funding programmes, it was the FTE position that was funded to support good youth development practice and the youth workers themselves who are walking alongside young people. Motivation for the new approach came largely from a desire to evidence the effectiveness of positive youth development practice, the relationships between youth workers and young people, and the difference that has made to their health and social outcomes.

The aim of the FTE Pilot was to show how effective youth work practices and quality youth development services could prevent risk factors from escalating and help young people achieve positive long-term outcomes.

In 2022, MYD sought proposals for the FTE Pilot to:

- promote the use of a positive youth development approach to increase the wellbeing of young people across Aotearoa New Zealand so they are better able to succeed in, contribute to, and enjoy life.

- increase youth worker/practitioner one-to-one contact time with young people (aged 12-24 years) with needs that are considered moderate rather than high.

Moderate needs include one or more of the following:

a) disengaged or disengaging from school i.e., history of truancy, school stand-downs, suspensions, or experience of alternative education

b) limited family support and/or connection to a positive role model

c) struggling to be accepted/isolated from peers

d) family or individual dependence on Work and Income

e) lacks emotional regulation

f) mental health needs such as anxiety or depression without successful ongoing management by a mental health professional

g) experimentation with substance use.

The FTE Pilot operated from January 2023 through June 2025, with ten funded youth workers/practitioners providing tailored one-to-one supports to 1,500 total young people with moderate needs. Each of the five participating providers had dedicated two FTE youth workers/practitioners to support 300 young people (120 participants during each 12-month period) throughout the 2.5-year period. Each FTE must have had a minimum

1:1 contact time of 20-25 hours with an eligible participant per week. Priority cohorts of participants aged 12-24 years include:

- rangatahi Māori
- Pacific young people
- rainbow young people
- disabled young people.

Intended outcomes for the FTE Pilot include increased wellbeing, capability and resilience, strengthening youth identity, sense of belonging, and social connectedness with their peers, whānau and communities (see Figure 1 for intervention logic model of the broader F22 budget bid – there was no discrete logic model for the FTE Pilot).

As part of regular reporting, providers completed case studies, entry and exit assessments, and provider update reports, and support young people to complete participant feedback surveys. Some of this data is incorporated into the evaluation.

Overview of successful FTE Pilot providers:

MYD contracted five providers as follows:

Provider Name	**Service Delivery Locations**	**Provider Description**
Kirikiriroa Family Services Trust (KFST)	Waikato (office in Hamilton)	KFST delivers services from a 'by Māori for all' perspective using a Kaupapa Māori model of delivery. The KFST holistic model of care includes Te Whare Tapa Whā, Te Wheke, and Pōwhiri models of engagement. Its youth development approach aims to understand, educate, and engage young people in productive activities through competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring. Two kaimahi are in place to begin conducting FTE Pilot activities starting Tuesday 31 January 2023.
Taulanga U*	South/Central/ West Auckland and Counties Manakau (office in Favona/Auckland)	Taulanga U uses the foundation of Tongan cultural values of 'Faa'I kavei koula' (four golden threads) to provide services. Services to young people are based on a Akoako Tika (Thriving Youth) youth development framework that empowers and enables young people to strengthen their capacity and capabilities including identity, confidence, pride, and resilience. Two kaimahi are in place to begin conducting FTE Pilot activities starting Tuesday 07 February 2023.
Tuhiata Mahi Ora Trust	Northland (office in Kaitaia)	Tuhiata Mahi Ora co-designs services with young people so that they determine where to focus their joint efforts. It incorporates Youth Development Principles from the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa and a Māori mental health measurement tool, Hua Oranga, into their work with young people. Two kaimahi are in place to begin

		conducting FTE Pilot activities starting Tuesday 31 January 2023.
Zeal Education Trust (Zeal)	West Auckland and Waikato (offices in Henderson/Auckland and Hamilton)	Zeal creates an open drop-in space five days a week to support and enable young people establish a sense of belonging and social connection while providing holistic wrap-around care. It uses the Te Whare Tapa Whā and Fonofale models of health to guide their work with young people. Two kaimahi are in place to begin conducting FTE Pilot activities starting Tuesday 31 January 2023.
Taiohi Tūrama - Rotorua Centre for Youth	Bay of Plenty (office in Rotorua)	RCYCT delivers services using a Youth One Stop Shop model that supports young people to reach their full potential. The organisation is guided by the principles of Whakapapa, Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, and Wairuatanga. The Code of Ethics for Youth Work and the Principles of Mana Taiohi guide youth development services. Two kaimahi will be hired by RCYCT and are anticipated to be in place to begin conducting dedicated FTE Pilot activities in March 2023. Services in February and March 2023 will be provided to young people in a modified format using existing staff resources.

* Taulanga U exited the FTE Pilot early and their data was excluded from the evaluation.

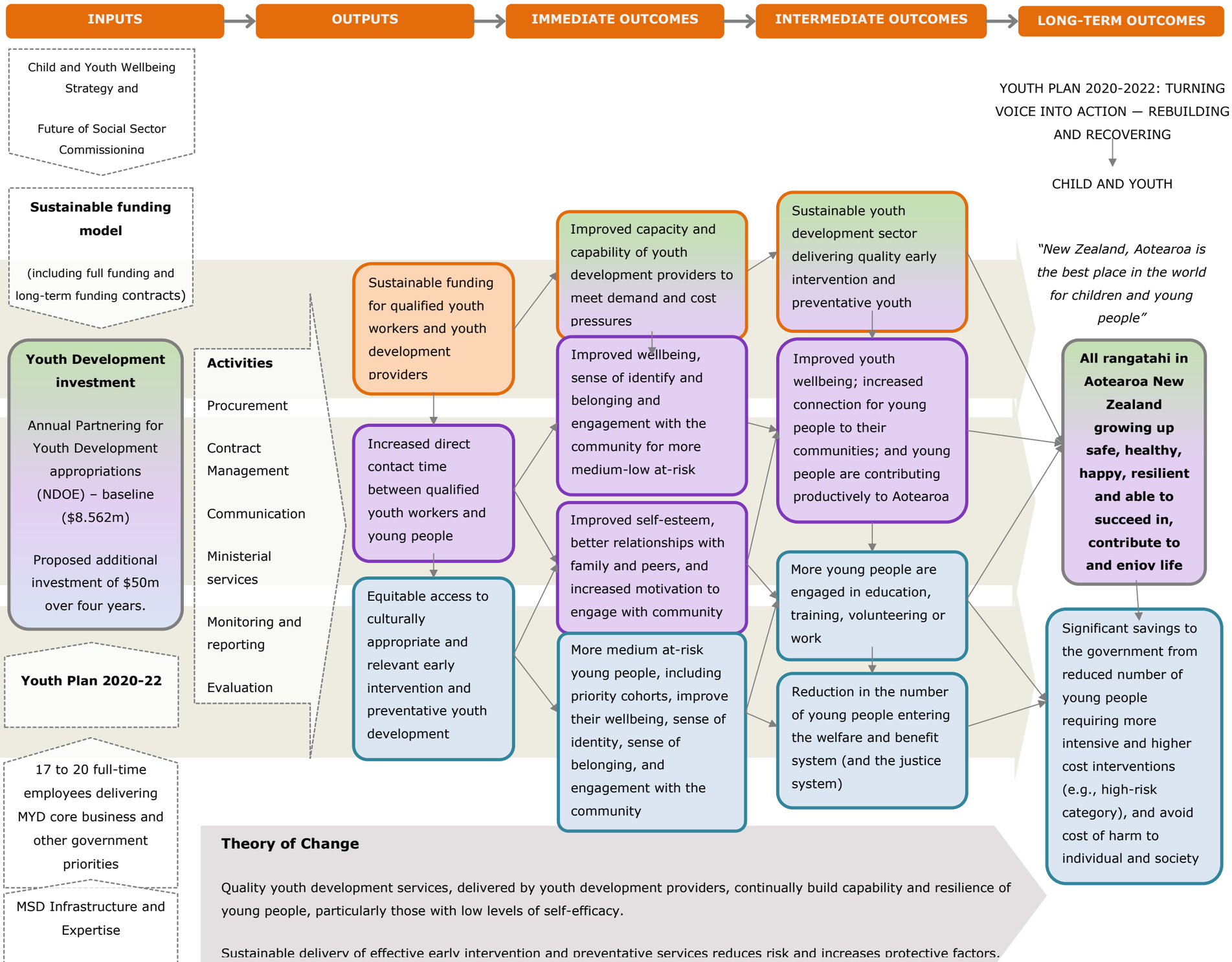
Figure 1. Intervention logic for budget initiatives 2022

Summary This initiative will ensure funding for additional full-time equivalent qualified youth workers to support the sustainability of youth development providers and improve the quality of youth development services by increasing direct contact time of qualified youth workers with young people.

Problem statement The youth development sector is facing unprecedented **sustainability** challenges. The demand for services from young people almost doubled in the last ten years, while the annual youth development budget (~$10 million) remained stable. Providers are facing cost pressures. They also have difficulty looking for funding from other sources, including business and philanthropic organisations, which have been impacted by COVID-19. The government currently contributes only approximately 30% of the total service cost.

The current **quality** of youth development services is not aligned with best practice. The high FTE: client ratio (e.g., 1:1,000) is ineffective to meet the complex needs of young people.

Current services are inequitably accessible by vulnerable young people, e.g., rangatahi Māori; and Pacific; rainbow; disabled young people; young women; and young people living in the regions; and from ethnic communities. This is leading to poor outcomes for these cohorts.



Methodology

In 2023, MYD began designing a process evaluation of the FTE Pilot to explore its design, implementation, and short-term outcomes. An introductory hui with providers in May 2023 was used to inform providers of the evaluation method and facilitate their input, buy-in, and identification of best practice approaches for the recruitment of young people. Following the hui, providers were provided with an outline of the evaluation as well as the proposed overall questions, sub-evaluation questions, and initial interview guides for their review and feedback. The evaluation was guided by the following key evaluation questions (KEQs), which were developed by MYD in consultation with the participating providers.

KEQs

- To what extent does the design of the FTE funding model support good youth work practice?

- To what extent is the FTE Pilot operating as intended (i.e., increased direct contact time, better quality interactions, targeting young people with moderate needs, applying appropriate assessment tools, etc)?

- How might the FTE Pilot be refined to improve outcomes for young people with moderate needs (including the priority cohorts)?

- To what extent is the FTE pilot achieving the intended short-term outcomes for young people?

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, focusing on qualitative case studies. It included semi-structured interviews with provider managers, youth workers, practitioners, young people, and MYD national office staff. Quantitative data from participant and provider surveys was also integrated to triangulate the findings. A literature review on positive youth development practice was conducted to support the evaluation (see Appendix 1).

The evaluation plan was reviewed by the Ministry of Social Development – Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora Ethics Panel on Friday 04 August 2023. For confidentiality purposes, data has been pooled and analysed as a single data set. Young people's names (even pseudonyms) have not been included and youth workers' names have been changed.

Recruitment

We used a mixture of convenience sampling and snowball sampling to recruit young people. Youth workers identified potentially interested young people for a mixture of in person focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews depending on their interest. Providers were supplied with information sheets and consent forms for all stakeholders and asked to assist by contacting potential interested young people and providing them with an information sheet and consent form, which explained both the purpose of the evaluation and the individual's right to opt out of participating in

interviews for the evaluation. This also included the evaluator's contact details so that individuals could advise MYD if they wished to opt out of interviews.

Sample frame

Interviews were conducted with the following breakdown of participants at each of the four sites. Priority was given to young people from the priority cohorts, though no participant identified as being from a priority group outside of rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people, or young women.

Stakeholder type	Total participants
FTE Youth worker	7
Manager	3
Young person	26
MYD staff	2

Note, one manager and one youth worker resigned during the course of the evaluation, resulting in a lower than anticipated number of total participants.

Interviews

Focus groups and interviews assessed the design, implementation, and outcomes of the FTE Pilot at all four sites. Interviews with youth workers and managers were conducted online. Additionally, two interviews were conducted with MYD National office staff to explore features of the design and implementation of the FTE funding model. Interviews and focus groups with young people were predominantly conducted kanohi ki te kanohi, in accordance with a Te Ao Māori world view and with the wishes of participating managers and youth workers. Online interviews were conducted with five young people due to time constraints. Each interview/focus group began with general conversation, introductions, and the sharing of kai before getting into the formalities of the information sheet and consent forms. Offering time and space to introduce ourselves and build genuine rapport before the more formal interview process begins reflects manaakitanga.

Analysis

The qualitative component used thematic analysis, an approach which categorises participant accounts based on shared patterns of information (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis drew on Denzin and Lincoln's (2013) concept of writing as analysis, which acknowledges that considerable information is obtained through thinking and writing. Social constructionism underlies the epistemological stance of the evaluation, an approach that argues that how people understand their reality is based on their social context and interactions with others (Lyons & Chamberlain, 2006).

Demographics

Most young people who participated in the evaluation were Māori (62%, see Figure 3). This is not dissimilar from the overall figures providers reported on with 65% of FTE Pilot participants identifying as rangatahi Māori and 29% as Pacific young people. Most young

people who participated in the evaluation identified as woman/girl/wāhine (73%). Two providers operated in Hamilton, so most participants were from Waikato (38%, see Figure 4). The age range varied with the largest cohort (35%) from the 18-20 age group (see Figure 5).

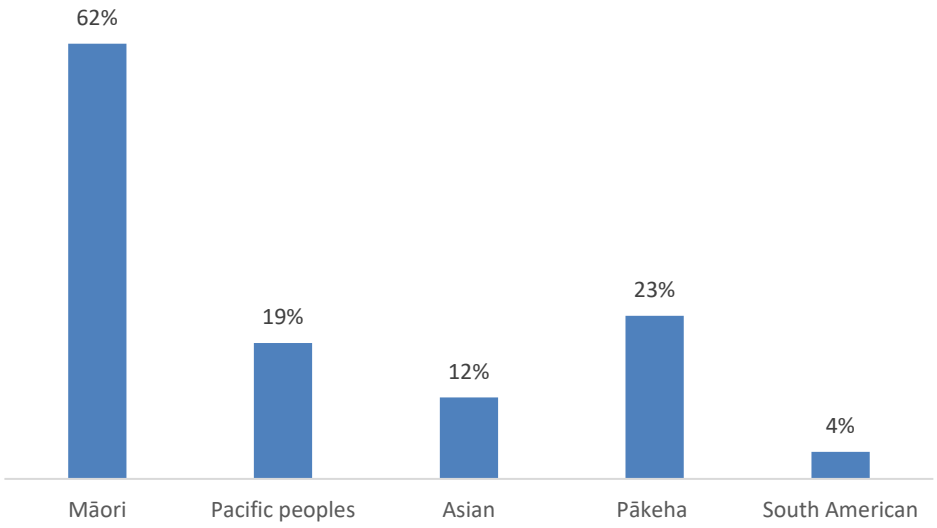


Figure 3. Ethnicity of young people.

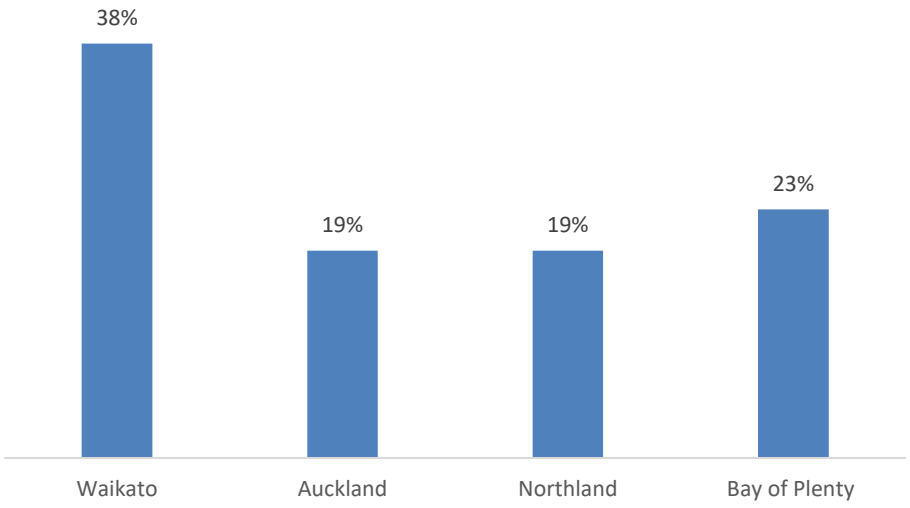


Figure 4. Location of young people.

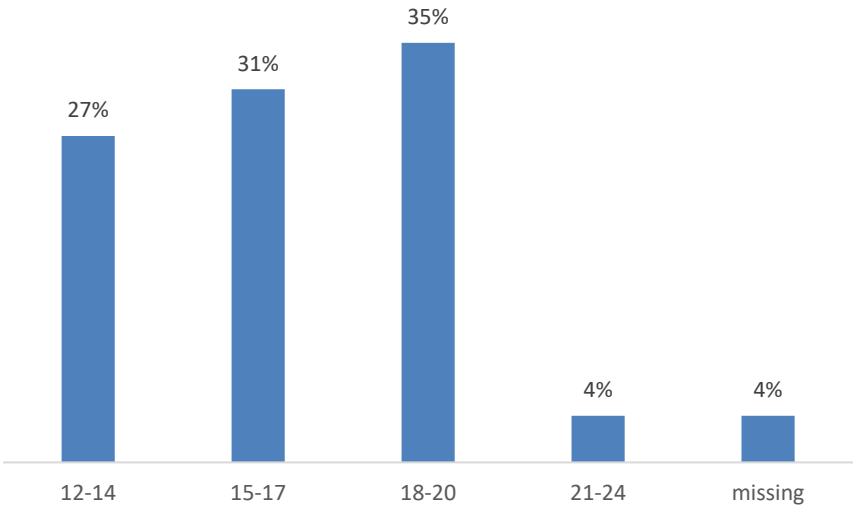


Figure 5. Age of young people (years).

Results

Design

Managers appreciated having dedicated FTE, though this introduced some complexities.

Managers described generally positive experiences of having dedicated FTE workers, describing them as part of their whānau, but there were some details to work through, such as the perceived rigidity of the FTE role compared to other roles. For example, Participant Six (manager) talked about not being able to switch youth workers into different roles:

> *"I remember saying like 'ohh, we have a range of services and when we work with a young person, we can bring this person, this person, and then we can all do it all together.' And so, it was just around being mindful. No, it's these two only and it's around. Identifying the right referral for this kaupapa."*

Participant 12 (manager) similarly noted there was some difficulty communicating to other staff that the FTE roles were fixed, and they could not be simply moved to other projects:

> "*Because they're so used to being able to give them parts or different projects."*

While the parameters of the FTE role may have caused confusion or tension with other staff, ultimately having a dedicated role was reported as being beneficial especially with regard to having time and space to invest in establishing relationships with young people without having to meet competing priorities. Participant 12 (manager) noted:

> *"And I see a difference in the quality of the relationships that are built, because they're not distracted by the other things that need to happen. Their job are those kids."*

Participant 11 (manager) discussed the benefits of having both male and female FTE workers from a cultural perspective and noted the support they were able to provide each other:

> "*It's been great. Yeah, it's been really exciting to be able to have-I think having the two youth workers has been invaluable because of the support that they provide and also the cultural component as well, them being able to support each other. We've again, we're really fortunate in terms of having a male and a female. So that gives us greater options in terms of being able to offer a different experience to our taiohi and just having that dedicated, you know mild to moderate space. It's been great."*

Adapting to the new model had some drawbacks in terms of needing to clearly communicate the parameters of the roles to other staff, but managers were positive about the potential of having two dedicated youth workers and the impact on relationship quality. They expressed their hope that the FTE Pilot would continue.

MYD consulted on some, but not all components of the design.

Research into costings was done by looking at the largest employer of full-time youth worker positions, Oranga Tamariki, then collecting relevant costings for salaries, training, and activities from providers. MYD conducted research nationally and internationally on ratios of youth workers to young people. However, while there was information for primary aged children, there was little about teenagers. MYD used this information to decide on a budget, a ratio of contact time, and a ratio of youth workers to young people and established that over 12 months, one FTE should be able to connect with at least 60 people and have face-to-face contact time for at least 25 hours a week. MYD did not consult with the priority cohorts, including young people, in the design; as Participant One described, *"Dare I say none. In terms of the pilot, because it was a small pilot, we didn't go out and consult at all really with young people."* This lack of consultation had ramifications for the ability of the FTE Pilot to cater to all of the priority cohorts (see p29).

The procurement involved an open tender round that MYD staff felt could have been improved.

MYD staff reflected that the open tender model for procuring providers was not necessarily the right approach for the FTE Pilot. Participant One (MYD staff) reflected on the fact that, despite seemingly offering providers an equal chance, open procurement processes often favoured strong written applicants. This resulted in picking an application that was well-written and made sense on paper as opposed to having experience in service delivery. Participant One felt that because the FTE Pilot was so small with a limited pool of funding, it would have made sense to use a more selective process based on MYD's history and relationships with good youth development

organisations. Participant 14 (MYD staff) similarly reflected on the procurement process:

> *"If we would go back and revisit how we procured…what questions we asked, how we evaluated proposals, because these five providers, they're sort of all over the place. And so, it's worked fairly well. But I suspect we really at the beginning, we wanted youth development providers…. not necessarily social worker type organisations and quite prescribed clinical type people."*

Participant One (MYD staff) also suggested that once providers were selected, MYD could have co-designed the delivery of the FTE Pilot with them:

> *"So, it would have been beneficial to then do exactly what we suggest they do with young people and actually co-design the delivery of that and then write the contract."*

Given the strong focus on good youth development practice for the FTE Pilot, it would make sense to utilise existing relationships and apply a procurement process that weighted experienced youth development organisations more heavily in future.

The requirement that youth workers engage with 60 young people a year resulted in some tension with MYD.

MYD's contracts stipulated that youth workers were required to engage with 60 young people per year. This differed from verbal conversations with MYD, which created confusion and stress for some youth workers. While it was in the contracts as a requirement to work with 60 young people per year, Participant 14 (MYD staff) pointed out that there was some flexibility with this number. They stated that despite consistent messaging to providers from contract management that this number was being piloted and that as long as they were focusing one-to-one support this number should not be too much of a concern, it was not interpreted this way by providers. Participant 14 noted in reflection:

> "*What I think we probably could have done better is that I don't think that our contract really reflects some of those soft areas."*

Despite this, Participant 14 noted that most of the providers were meeting or almost meeting the target, though this came at a cost:

> "*All of them seem to feel a bit under pressure and, and there's recurring conversations about the need to exit young people so that new young people can enter."*

Concern about having to exit young people came up again when discussing the length of the programme (below).

Youth workers and managers had a range of views on the requirement to see 60 young people per year, but the majority felt it was achievable. A couple of youth workers believed it was unrealistic and would lead to low quality interactions with young people.

For example, Participant Two (youth worker) felt it was not conducive to good outcomes for young people and they were not experiencing the full benefits of the programme:

> "*Sometimes I've had to stretch myself completely just to ensure that the young person gets even an inch of like what this programme could be like for them."*

Youth workers generally divided the 60 into 15 young people per term. Participant 3 (youth worker) suggested that ten per term would be a more sustainable number to ensure high quality youth mentoring. Other managers and youth workers generally felt 60 was an achievable number, though one manager noted that only one of her youth workers was able to do so easily and the other youth worker took a longer time to develop relationships with young people, which affected her ability to meet that number.

Overall, 60 was seen as an achievable number by the majority of youth workers and managers, but there was clearly room for improvement in terms of communicating the flexibility of this figure contractually.

Youth workers were positive about the focus on one-to-one mentoring, but some struggled with the 20-25 hours per week requirement.

The FTE Pilot was designed to enable youth workers to spend 20-25 hours per week working directly with young people. The other 10-15 hours is set aside for work to support this, e.g., admin, reporting, supervision, and training. As Participant One (MYD staff) put it, the purpose is for the FTE to*:*

> *"Actually be building a relationship and spending time with young people and not doing other things."*

While youth workers enjoyed the focus on one-to-one mentoring, some struggled to meet the 20–25-hour mark.

Youth workers generally reported working with each young person for an hour to an hour and a half, once a week. This was consistent with what young people reported (see below). Participant Five (youth worker) described spending more time with young people earlier on in the programme to build rapport, however this was a struggle when managing multiple new young people:

> "*Um, more so in the beginning. I try and spend as much as I can throughout the start there. So that's where I've been having a little bit of trouble cause I've taken on maybe about eight rangatahi in the last week now, so they're new to the service. I wanna spend as much time as I can. One, because you wanna build the rapport as quickly as possible so they know it's just not. I'm just gonna go and see him for an hour or a week and I'll catch up with him next week and. It's just to build that relationship. So more so at the beginning there it'll be two to three times a week, really dependent on their schedule and if they're still in schoolwork, you know just other factors"*.

Participant Five was aware of the time needed to build relationships with young people, but it was evidently difficult to do so in the context of a busy caseload.

One youth worker also described spending more time with young people who lived rurally due to the transport time involved, for example, Participant Eight stated:

> "*So, cause a lot of, I have a lot of young people who live in rural areas. So that could mean that I have to travel sometimes over an hour to get to them. And so, um, those ones, I tend to spend more, more time with them because, um, they're in such isolated areas. Um, they don't get to go out and I guess engage with other people out of, you know, out of home. So that could look like a few hours for me, being out two or three hours.*"

While rural young people are not one of the priority cohorts for the FTE Pilot, young people living in the regions are one of MYD's priority cohorts, so the importance of serving this community should be factored into the one-to-one contact time requirement.

Youth workers were generally positive about the focus on one-to-one mentoring, but wanted more flexibility to engage in group work and some found the requirement for 20-25 hours contact time a week difficult to achieve. Participant Nine (youth worker) described struggling to keep up with the 20 hours when young people were not engaged:

> "*Ohh that can be a struggle. That can be a struggle…It can just be kinda hard to keep up with that 20 hours cause all I'm thinking of is 20/20/20 keep up with 20 hours for these young people. Hey and that could be kinda hard when they're not engaging or anything.*"

Participant 13 (youth worker) similarly expressed:

> "*One-to-one is good. Just, uh, 25 hours a week. Try and get all those kids in at once. I can't do it.*"

The possibility of doing small group work in addition to one-to-one work was another area of ambiguity for youth workers with a couple pointing out that this would enhance their work by building social connections with young people with goals and interests in common. Participant 14 (MYD staff) explained that there had been a lot of discussion with youth workers and managers around one-to-one versus group work, but this flexibility was again not embedded in contracts:

> *"There's a level of flexibility that is embedded within the pilot, but only to a reasonable extent. And even as I say that the whole question is, well, what does reasonable mean? And so, we've tried to paint the picture…But I feel like that's an area that's has been a constant discussion."*

Some youth workers and managers felt ten weeks was too short a minimum but felt pressured to exit young people early.

One of the requirements of the FTE Pilot is that youth workers engage with young people for a minimum of ten weeks. Participant One (MYD staff) discussed how the ten-week minimum was decided on and the tension between good youth development practice and contracting and reporting requirements. Participant One noted that ten weeks is still a relatively short period of time in a young person's life, a sentiment that was echoed by youth workers (see below). While ten weeks was a pragmatic approach from a reporting perspective, Participant One noted it was not necessarily consistent with good youth work practice:

> "*For me there's a bit of tension between our contracting and our performance reporting we need to do to make contract payments and good practice human relational work."*

Some youth workers also felt ten weeks was not long enough to achieve good outcomes with young people. While this was a minimum period of engagement, some felt they had to exit them at this stage to ensure they could keep up with new referrals. Participant 14 (MYD staff) reflected on the difficulty providers were having with feeling the need to exit young people after ten weeks:

> "*What we have had an issue with providers is that they have come back and said, 'we can't exit people after ten weeks.' And we keep saying, 'we never asked you to.'…But providers have struggled a little bit with feeling the need to exit after ten weeks."*

While exiting young people after ten weeks was not prescribed by MYD, it's clear from youth workers' comments that they often did not feel they could manage their caseload unless they exited young people at this time. For some youth workers, ten weeks was seen as just enough time to build a connection with young people. For example, Participant Two stated:

> *"I definitely don't think ten weeks is enough time. I just don't think it's like viable, like feasible or for us...It takes us ten weeks to get to know these young people."*

Youth workers also noted that there was variability in how much time young people needed, with some young people only needing shorter periods such as six weeks and one youth worker noted that it would be good to be able to include those young people. Participant 11 (manager) suggested a slightly longer minimum:

> *"We've thought that a, you know, a longer period, maybe 12-15 weeks would be a better length of time. It also allows for things like tangi and those winter months when we've had COVID or our taiohi gets sick… We possibly thought that the 12-15 weeks would be a better time frame."*

Youth worker's salaries were not in keeping with the intentions of the FTE Pilot and some youth workers felt their work was not adequately compensated.

One participant explained that because youth work is an unregulated sector, there are no standard salary bands compared to something like social work. They pointed out that the average salary for an Oranga Tamariki youth worker was $57,000.00, but there was considerable variability amongst organisations depending on their size and what they could afford. Part of the FTE Pilot was attempting to establish some baselines, as Participant One (MYD staff) described:

> *"The sector is quite immature in terms of its professionalisation and not trying to regulate the sector, but actually establish some baselines that people can work to over time so we can lift the standard for everybody."*

Participant 14 (MYD staff) explained that this intention was not necessarily reflected in practice, with providers barely reaching the minimum that MYD wanted youth workers to be paid:

> *"I think we said at minimum $65,000.00…But I think providers are probably at the lower end of the youth worker salaries and then are eating up the rest of the money in overhead, admin, transport, all those other things."*

This appeared to be the case, with managers reporting allocating the $100,000.00 towards salaries, professional development, supervision, cars/petrol, and training. Participant 11 (manager) pointed out that the contract's guidance was clear, so they stuck to the percentages included.

Youth workers varied in how they perceived their salary. Some felt it was adequate while others felt that youth workers in general did not get paid sufficiently given the 24/7 nature of the job. There was a repeated feeling that youth work, like other professions such as teaching, involved a level of responsibility above and beyond a traditional 9-5 role. For example, Participant Two (youth worker) stated:

> *"I personally think that youth workers in general don't get paid enough…It's not just a 40-hour job, it's a 24/7 job…Young people need someone all the time. And so, yeah, I definitely think it should be more."*

They suggested at least $70,000.00 or $80,000.00 would be more appropriate. Participant Four reiterated that it was more than a 9-5 job:

> *"If I'm being frank, I don't think any of us get paid what we deserve considering the amount of time and effort we put into our roles. Because you know, even at 5:00pm when we're supposed to go home, this doesn't shut off. We're still worried, if we're still concerned and we're still thinking about what's going to happen tomorrow. So yeah, it's definitely not a 40-hour."*

Youth workers were passionate about their work, but there was a sense of unsustainability in their reflections on their salary and working hours. This was

reinforced by a couple of youth workers talking about the importance of self-care to maintain good youth work practice amidst their busy caseloads. Participant Five (youth worker) identified the problem as the lack of recognition of youth work as a profession and the consequent low salary. They pointed out that even though youth work has an important preventative function in society, this still was not recognised:

> *"Like, it's not so much a recognised profession, I suppose, youth mentoring, you know, um, we're actually preventing kids from stealing your stuff, you know, it's as simple as that, you know, or stealing your car and crashing into your shop…We've got such delicate lives in our hands, basically. And I think that sort of transfers into our salary as well."*

The lack of recognition of youth work as a profession translated to difficulty hiring and retaining youth workers at that salary for one manager, due to the lack of youth workers with a NZQA level 4 qualification. This manager felt constrained by the suggested funding allocation and that there was a need to compensate youth workers for the additional training they had done. Despite this, they were supportive of the qualification requirement. Participant 11 (manager) explained:

> *"Particularly when you know having the requirement for a Level 4, which I completely endorse, but to find youth workers, because youth work hasn't been professionalised for that long…And so, yeah, being able to um, I suppose reflect the additional mahi in training that they've done to work in this specific area would be good."*

Implementation

Youth workers and managers applied MYD's eligibility criteria equivalently but used different methods.

Youth workers had different systems for applying the eligibility criteria for young people. Some of this was done by managers and some by youth workers themselves. Participant Five (youth worker) described working with the family and whānau to determine eligibility:

> *"I will, you know, go through with the rangatahi and the whānau. 'Why are you here?' You know. And a little bit about the whakapapa… I do mention our criteria, so obviously we have to tick one of seven boxes, whether it's you know regulation around emotions, disengaging from school. So, whatever it might be".*

Participant Eight (youth worker) explained that their manager dealt with the eligibility criteria, but referrals did not always accurately reflect the young persons' needs, echoing concerns reported earlier about the moderate needs criteria:

> "*I don't determine it. That's determined by our team lead Okay. So, she will, yeah, she. So, she'll look through the referral, will then be like, OK, yeah, this person is suitable for that. Yeah. But then sometimes, you know, I could have like the referral doesn't actually match the individual. Like you know, once we kind of do meet the individual, then they get comfortable with you and then then they*

> *start sharing more obviously, then you find out more. And sometimes it's, yeah, it does change, like I said, it does turn. It can sometimes turn into like a bit of a complex young person."*

One provider had a triage system where another staff member would send through referrals meeting the criteria, while another regularly received referrals through other services that they offered. Even where youth workers were not directly involved in the eligibility decision, they had some awareness of MYD's criteria. One youth worker expressed difficulty with working with young people with any mental health issues so they were not given these referrals, suggesting some additional training could be appropriate.

Youth workers and managers had been engaged with the sector for varying time periods.

Youth workers and managers varied in how long they had been working in the youth development space. The range included from nine months for one youth worker to 22 years for one manager. Most commonly, evaluation participants reported working in the sector for between two and five years.

Some staff had a NZQA level 4 youth work qualification, while others had different educational backgrounds.

One of the requirements for the FTE Pilot was that youth workers have or are completing a relevant NZQA level 4 qualification. Staff had a mixture of qualifications, some within youth work and some outside the youth work sphere. Some had or were completing their Level 4 youth work qualification, while others had qualifications in other fields such as health promotion, music, or Te Ao Māori. Participant Five (youth worker) expressed that he was completing his level four training but wasn't sure of the value of it beyond confirming experience he already had:

> *"At the moment I'm going through a Level four youth workers certificate with career force at the moment. So, sort of pending on where I'm going with that one. I'm not having issues around the capability around it, but it's very much asking what I've already done in terms of stating my evidence in order to get a certificate to say that I can do these things. So, I want to actually go into something where I'm learning and gaining things. Not just saying, yeah, I've done this and here's the evidence sort of thing, but another topic."*

All managers were positive about the inclusion of the qualification requirement and felt it was important to recognise the distinct skills needed to work in youth development. For example, Participant Six (manager) stated:

> "*I love the fact that you have to have some kind of formal training to understand what you're working with, because rangatahi aren't adults. They're not, you know. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach*."

Life-skills, lived experience, and cultural knowledge, particularly Te Ao Māori knowledge was also raised by one youth worker and manager as important tools to effectively relate to young people. Participant 13 (youth worker) noted:

> "*Life skills is a good one. I mean, if you have the tohu, kapai. But working with the kids, it's a lot of life skills. You can't just walk out of uni and think that books gonna work on these kids. You need to have some background in it you kind of relate to the kids*."

Participant 11 (manager) similarly expressed about their youth workers:

> *"They bring with them that, you know, the wealth and experience that they've had in terms of their own lived experience and their cultural component as well."*

Cultural knowledge and safe practices were important to all providers, and this reflected the intentions of the FTE Pilot to engage effectively with the priority cohorts. While the FTE Pilot focuses on the NZQA qualification requirement, it was heartening to see providers also emphasising the value of cultural knowledge in their practice and this was reflected in the cultural supervision some youth workers received.

Youth workers had regular access to both clinical and cultural supervision.

Regular access to supervision appeared to be common across providers. More clinical and cultural supervision were discussed by youth workers and managers to support their practice. Participant Four (youth worker), for example, commented:

> *"So, I get clinical supervision from my manager here. And a huge thing for me coming into this organisation was to receive cultural supervision, which has been outsourced and supported by my organisation*."

Participant Eight (youth worker) similarly commented:

> *"They do bicultural supervision nationally within New Zealand…When I need that support, I can just go to them."*

Not all supervision was structured, however, and some youth workers received it in an ad hoc manner. For example, Participant Six (manager) noted:

> "*We haven't really formalised a sit-down supervision individually, but they do have access to that when needed."*

Not all youth workers had access to adequate support/supervision. Participant Three (youth worker) pointed out that when they initially started, there were a lot of staff changes and there was little support from management:

> "*So always having to hear, you know, we're supposed to do it like this and then someone else is taking over the role and it should be done like this. And it was kind of like everyone and I know at the end I was like, 'oh, so I still don't know what to do.'"*

Access to more structured, regular supervision may have helped some youth workers who initially struggled with their roles.

Youth workers felt confident working with rangatahi Māori but were less confident with other priority cohorts.

The majority of youth workers were Māori and found it easy to establish a natural connection with rangatahi Māori and, in some cases, Pacific young people. Te Ao Māori frameworks such as Te Whare Tapa Wha (a wellbeing model based on the four walls of a wharenui) and Hua Oranga (a one-page Māori health outcome measure) were frequently mentioned by youth workers and managers as guiding their practice and it was clear that Te Ao Maōri constructs, such as whanaungatanga, whakapapa, and manaakitanga were central to everyday practice. Youth workers generally applied a universal approach to young people regardless of the priority cohort they belonged to. As Participant Three (youth worker) described:

> *"I don't think there is anything different that I'm doing…I really try and make everyone, you know, everything. Every young person's equal here… how I'll talk to one young person, I would talk to the other kind of thing and maybe that is wrong. Maybe I should have a different approach. But it seemed to work."*

Participant Five (youth worker) noted that Te Ao Māori concepts could be used with other cultures too, if young people were comfortable with it. For example:

> "*Like for instance, having a pepeha, Yep, that's a Māori concept. But I've had a Pākehā kid who has used the exact same concept. And where do you call home? You know, where is your maunga? Where is your awa? Where do you go to the water? What beach do you love the most? So again, it's, I wouldn't say it's so much adapting, but it's inclusive in the way that I that use that model and it works for any ethnicity*."

However, some youth workers did not find it as easy when working with non-Māori young people. Not having culture in common made it difficult to establish whanaungatanga and build a relationship from there. Participant Two (youth worker) stated:

> "*For me, I found it that, like, it has been a little bit difficult mentoring those that aren't from like, aren't Māori like me. Yeah, but it hasn't been impossible. And so, if anything, yeah, just learning that like they did have different upbringings. Therefore, I try to navigate my conversation in a way that they might understand a little bit better or like asking them like, where does that come from?*"

There was a lot of discussion about learning from other young people about their culture and identity. Honesty was brought up as a way of addressing lack of understanding. Participant Two (youth worker) talked about overcoming difficulties in understanding other cultures by being open with young people:

> "*I'm just pretty honest with them and tell them like, hey, like, I don't really get it. Can you explain to me so that I can help understand you a lot better, therefore I*

can be better for you. Yeah. And yeah. So, if anything it has been a little bit difficult, but when I have those honest conversations with them it does help."

In terms of working with rangatahi Māori, youth workers and managers discussed the benefits of nature. Connecting with nature was considered important in helping the young person's sense of identity in relation to Te Taiao. Participant 11 (manager) stated:

"*So, it'll be things like you know, really supporting our taiohi with their identity, being able to link them and to be able to understand their pepeha or draw on their pepeha and their whakapapa, being able to go down to the lake. I mean we have beautiful taonga or treasures here in terms of our ngahere, our forest, our lakes, being able to go down there and you know, do that cleansing process and you know, if that's where the young person is at. But just really being out in nature."*

There was limited engagement with rainbow young people amongst youth workers, which was unfortunate given this was a priority cohort of the pilot and this group have unique needs and challenges. However, despite the lack of engagement, youth workers and managers appeared to be invested in improving in this area. Participant Six (manager) discussed receiving training from Rainbow Youth kaimahi last year. They discussed the need to reduce barriers for other (non-Māori) priority cohorts:

"Because there's so many other services around where our rangatahi Māori can access if they wanted to, but there's a real limited resources for the rest and obviously 90% of rangatahi accessing our service are Māori. So, it's just, how do we kind of reduce some of those barriers for our other priority groups?"

Where youth workers had engaged with rainbow young people, their discussions focused on the importance of learning alongside them, being honest if they made mistakes, and building confidence. Participant Eight (youth worker) reflected on the apparent shyness of some young rainbow people, noting that they have *"Not been very confident to be themselves."* As a result, youth workers have spent time supporting these young people to be more *"confident… with what they identify as".* Participant 12 (manager) noted the limitations of their service in responding to rainbow young people:

"*But yeah, so, I think if we had a more rainbow friendly presence, they may be quicker to come out and say, you know who they really are in terms of their sexuality. But they need to, they need to figure us out. Cause we're all heterosexual, we're all kind of so-called "normal people", so they need to figure out whether we're safe 'normal people' in terms of their sexual identity."*

There was some, albeit limited, discussion about working with disabled young people and different definitions of disability including mental health conditions. One youth worker (Participant Nine) noted the importance of showing up consistently for disabled young people and simply being with them to build connection without the expectation of conversation:

"*Keeping regular contact like regular contact, regular and being real like real. Um stern and um real blunt with them… I have some with Asperger's syndrome and Asperger's and autism and…sometimes our whole session is just us staying by*

each other, not saying anything. And just spending that time because they know that we're there."

While youth workers and managers endorsed the focus on moderate needs, the category was hard to navigate in practice.

During the 2023/2024 year, providers reported in their regular reporting that the most common moderate need addressed with participants was disengagement from school i.e., history of truancy, school stand-downs, suspensions, or experience of alternative education, followed by limited family support and/or connection to a positive role model. These needs were reflected in evaluation data in the goals and outcomes young people discussed (see young people's experiences of the FTE Pilot).

As part of the evaluation, youth workers and managers were positive about the focus on moderate needs and seemed to carefully consider the criteria in their work. Participant Six (manager) discussed the importance of focusing on lower risk groups, in the context of traditional services catering to higher needs. This is where the FTE Pilot, with its focus on a previously underserved cohort was seen as important:

"*The resource goes to that high-risk group… So, our low to moderate aren't bad enough. Well, they're not unwell enough...They haven't caused enough trouble…I really, really like this model in terms of low to moderate*."

Participant 11 (manager) similarly reflected on the benefits of investing in lower-level services in being able to steer young people towards a positive trajectory and outcomes. They noted the difficulties in helping young people when they reach a more intensive level of need:

"Yeah, I think one of the key things is seeing what impact, what outcomes can be achieved with taiohi that are not at the bottom of the cliff…which again is really exciting. So again, traditionally pūtea has been focused on those that are involved in those higher-level services that means that our taiohi are not eligible at the moment and it's really difficult to sort of um alter their pathway for them."

Another youth worker reflected on the unique benefit of the FTE Pilot's early intervention model, which shifts the focus away from crisis responses to prevention. Participant Eight (youth worker) for example, discussed the benefits of early intervention:

"We're kinda engaging with them at a good time before you know, it escalates into something where they're needing, you know, some very, high support… So yeah, I find that really good. It's a good time to capture those young people when they, you know, needing those moderate needs."

Some youth workers reported on the importance of whakawhanaungatanga in enabling an accurate assessment of a young person's level of need. Young people were referred to the FTE Pilot upon the initial proviso of having moderate needs. However, after establishing a relationship of trust, youth workers sometimes realised that young people had higher or more complex needs. Participant 11 (manager) discussed:

> *"The other thing is that when we're working with taiohi and we do go through and we do a comprehensive sort of intro to service in our triage process, we often find that there's more underneath the surface because of that whakawhaunangatanga that we do, people will open up. And so, we sometimes find ourselves working with a higher level of complexity than what we thought we would be doing even though we've gone through and done that initial assessment process and we've explained the criteria and the rest of it."*

Conversely, some young people presented as having higher needs, but were reassessed as having more moderate needs once youth workers talked with them. Participant 12 (manager) shared:

> *"Some of the referrals that come in, they are ticking everything from behavioural to you know to mental health just ticking everything housing. And then when you sit down with the rangatahi it's like, do we need to change our referral form? Because this is saying that you've got so many needs that we wouldn't be able to work with you. But when I sit with you, you're actually okay and all you're looking for is somebody to help you get into work. We can do that."*

Whakawhanaungatanga (building strong relationships) is essential to effective youth work. Categorising young people too early restricts youth workers' ability to assess their needs accurately. This creates challenges, as these young people may not fit reporting criteria, yet youth workers are reluctant to exit them from the programme.

Young people's goals were consistent with the scope of the FTE Pilot.

Common goals that youth workers worked with young people on included emotional regulation, housing, employment, re-engagement with school, health care access, and social skills. Staff similarly described a range of intended outcomes from the FTE Pilot from their perspective. These included seeing young people achieve their goals, confidence, voice, overcoming social anxiety, social connection, work-readiness, and emotional regulation. One youth worker (Participant Nine) found physical activity was a useful vehicle for addressing emotional regulation:

> *"A lot of them haven't. Like a lot of my young fellas kind of deal with lack of emotional regulation and anger management and everything like that. They're not really necessarily having an outlet for it. So, I've noticed that with like gym going to the gym or being like active, they've managed to kinda calm down and chill out a bit. So that's been awesome."*

Some youth workers and managers also signalled the importance of acknowledging young people's experiences and opinions or voice. For example, Participant 12 (manager) stated: *"They actually do feel like they have a valid voice for one and in the space with their mentors and that their voice holds weight."* Similarly, Participant 13 (youth worker) commented, *"Just making sure the rangatahi feel safe. And they have a voice. They can be heard, and they are listened to. They do have a voice."*

Youth workers incorporated cultural practices, check-ins, goal setting, frameworks, and physical and mental wellbeing into sessions.

Youth workers reported varied activities in their sessions, though there were some common components underlying each session. These included whakawhanaungatanga and manaakitanga, check-ins, working on goals, applying conceptual frameworks to measure progress, and focusing on physical and mental wellbeing. Youth workers discussed the importance of whakawhanaungatanga in building relationships with young people and sharing kai to facilitate discussion. For example, Participant 11 (manager):

> "*Yeah, so, the whakawhanaungatanga is really important and also manaakitanga. So, if, for example, a taiohi comes in and they haven't had kai that day, then we start with the basics in terms of you know, making sure that there's kai for them and that that relationship is solid."*

Participant 5 (youth worker) also discussed the importance of whakawhanaungatanga, especially at the beginning of programmes:

> "*Again, that sort of depends on whether we're at the start of the programme or towards the end. At the start, I basically base my thing around engagement in terms of our relationship, getting comfortable talking about what they wanna talk about*."

The importance of checking in with young people was also emphasised by several youth workers. This typically involved asking young people to rate their wellbeing on a numerical scale and adapting their session to suit the current state of the young person. If young people gave low ratings, youth workers would first focus on unpacking that before moving on to more structured activities. Participant Two (youth worker) described how checking in was a regular part of their work:

> "*So, every session's different. I usually start with like a check-in… We check in with our young people by doing just like a quick one-to-five how we're feeling… And for us it just helps us figure out how the day's gonna be or how the session's gonna be."*

While responding to immediate issues faced by the young person in their current situation, youth workers also emphasised the importance of supporting them to work towards their goals. Participant Three (youth worker) described varying working on goals with more fun activities:

> "*Today we're gonna do some working towards our goals and everything, and then the next time we meet up that week, we're going to do something fun, like an activity and all of that. But yeah, it does change, you know."*

Beyond their one-to-one work, youth workers described spending a lot of time on administrative tasks including planning sessions and case notes, networking with other providers, self-care to ensure they were in the best position to provide support, and setting up post-programme support. Youth workers discussed a range of activities as

part of their sessions including supporting re-engagement with education, going to the gym, CV writing, and learning to make barista style coffee.

As part of regular reporting providers similarly discussed supporting young people with activities including 1:1 mentoring, CV writing, educational pathway support, social service referrals, personal skills development, goal setting, work experience, driver's licenses, gym, and music. During the 2023/24 year, providers reported over 80% of participants created individualised development plans.

Culturally-grounded frameworks guided practice.

In order to measure progress and guide their sessions, youth workers and managers discussed using several frameworks and progress indicators, including:

- HEeADSSS (a comprehensive psychosocial assessment tool identifying risk and protective factors: Home, Education/Employment, Eating, Activities, Drugs, Sexuality, Suicidal ideation and Safety;)
- Cultural HEeADSS (CHEeADSSS)
- Te Whare Tapa Whā (a wellbeing model based on the four walls of a wharenui)
- Hua Oranga (a one-page Māori health outcome measure).

Youth workers felt the HEeADSSS assessment was a useful way to unpack different areas of a young person's life and could be used in an ongoing process where youth workers could understand young people's needs and risks in greater detail as they built rapport. Participant Four (youth worker) commented:

> *"It's a tool to use where we're able to ask questions and have a conversation about what's really going on."*

Te Whare Tapa Whā was seen by some youth workers as a universal approach to working with young people and its English equivalent (progress indicators) could be applied where necessary. The Hua Oranga was also used by one organisation which is based around Te Whare Tapa Whā. Participant Eight (youth worker) explained how working through the Hua Oranga guided practice and goal setting:

> "*Maybe for the first few weeks we'll focus on you know taha whānau or what can we do to strengthen that or what are some things that you're finding challenging in that space. … once we've kinda achieved goals in those spaces then we'll work on the next taha, you know? What does it look like when it comes to taha wairua, you know, what are your values?"*

It seemed that these predominantly culturally-grounded frameworks were an everyday part of youth work practice, with one exception of a youth worker who noted that the frameworks were more of a management tool.

Positive outcomes were attributed to being youth-centric, respecting youth voice and embedding cultural practices.

When asked what youth workers thought contributed to positive outcomes for young people, they described being youth-centric in their practice, ensuring youth have voice, the importance of honesty, and having a cultural lens across their work. Participant Five (youth worker) described the significance of working specifically with young people, in contrast to other roles where the family might have more involvement:

> *"I think what works for any individual that walks through our doors is that they are that and they're an individual and it's about them. So, it's not about mum… So really validating them and their worth. I think for me being the contributing factor to them making significant progress for themselves and for them in the community as well."*

Youth workers also identified the importance of creating an environment where young people were comfortable to express their voice and ensuring they felt valued as important factors in making progress. Participant Eight (youth worker) described this:

> *"It's just spending time with those young people just so they have, so their voices can be heard, I guess. So, they have someone comfortable just to talk…I think that's all it is…having time for those young people and those young people feeling like they've been valued. Heard."*

Finally, the significance of whakawhanaungatanga and culture was valued in ensuring positive outcomes. Because the majority of taiohi across providers were Māori, providers embedded Te Ao Māori practices in their work as a matter of course. Participant 11 (manager) explained the importance of making sure young people's experiences were grounded in Te Ao Māori:

> "*Making sure that we have that cultural lens across everything that we do, making sure that we've got, for example, whakapapa whakawhanaungatanga, manaakitanga, and wairuatanga which are some of our key principles that underpin our practice."*

Managers felt well supported by MYD.

Managers generally reported that support from MYD was positive, and help was available when needed. For example, Participant 12 (manager) stated:

> "*Ohh, it's been great. So, every time we've had a question or every time I've been asked… when I've needed to seek clarity, I've always got it."*

And Participant Six (manager) stated:

> "*Just always open for questions, real understanding of the context of bringing in a kind of a new contract, patient, very, very patient with us. But just the clarity from the start has been really good."*

Youth workers and managers were generally positive about the FTE Pilot.

Most youth workers and managers were very positive about the FTE Pilot, however a couple struggled at the beginning. Some youth workers/managers described the flexibility of the FTE Pilot as being one of the best aspects of it. They felt their contracts were sufficiently flexible to allow them to focus entirely on young people and apply the right tools from a youth development perspective, tailoring services to specific young people, as opposed to other contracts which have had to meet more prescriptive outcomes. Participant Four (youth worker), for example, commented:

> "*I've, I feel extremely privileged to be the first kaiārahi of (provider) and to be a part of this pilot. The flexibility we've been able to have to really do what we need to do for the benefit of our whānau has been hugely important for me. Yeah, I think it's great.*"

Participant Five (youth worker) similarly commented on the benefits of the flexibility of the FTE Pilot and the perceived benefits from other youth workers of the approach adopted by it:

> "*Oh. I really enjoy it…Like I said, the flexibility of it…I network with a few, I've got a few friends within the community too. So, they're quite envious of what we actually have in front of us as in terms of the pilot, in just the capabilities that we can work with them.*"

There was a sense, reflected in Participant Five (manager's) comment that youth workers could: *"Do what they need to do to make it work for the kid."*

Two youth workers, however, described struggling with the FTE Pilot initially and not knowing what they were doing and, for example, wanting more guidance from MYD in the form of educational resources to share with young people. Participant Two (youth worker), for example, talked about working through the initial mentoring period using trial and error:

> *"I definitely went into it being like, 'what the heck do I do? Like, I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm gonna try and pretend.'"*

And Participant Three (youth worker) struggled with trying to meet the different requirements of the FTE Pilot such as the target of working with 60 young people and balancing the administrative side with the practical components:

> *"I would be lying if I said I wasn't. I didn't struggle a bit last year, I think it took me, it took me a while to try and find my flow. Um, you know, there's a lot of requirements needed for this pilot. And then trying to find, I guess, my own style of mentoring.…Um. So yeah, it was. It was a massive, it was a massive struggle last year."*

These issues highlight the need for more regular access to support and supervision from management for some youth workers, as well as the need for clarity around contractual

requirements from MYD mentioned earlier. On a broader scale these issues may also reflect a gap between a well-articulated funding application and the reality of actual capability at a delivery level.

Participant 14 (MYD staff) felt the that despite the range of operating models, the FTE Pilot had been implemented fairly consistently and well, with one exception being the provider who exited early. They noted that while the FTE Pilot itself was quite prescriptive, the range of operating models was significant and went beyond the typical MYD funding scope:

> "*Even though the pilot is quite prescriptive, the organisations that have implemented it, and the type of organisation they are, the models that they use, it runs the gamut.*"

Improvements to the FTE Pilot included attention to the reporting requirements.

Suggested improvements to the FTE Pilot were minor, but included the provision of more educational resources, attention to the administrative/reporting requirements, and flexibility with age range. Participant Two (youth worker), for example, struggled initially with their practice and suggested that having more resources for young people when they started would have been helpful:

> *"But I think it would have been helpful if we had at least some stuff, some resources, whether it's, I don't know, budgeting stuff for our young people like budget team resources for them and teaching them how to finance and whether it's like resources around their mental health and coping strategies and like you know, those kind of resources."*

Whether this is something MYD could have provided or they themselves could have acquired initially, they were unsure.

A few youth workers/managers commented on the difficulty of managing the administrative side of the work, including the surveys and excel spreadsheets. Participant Two (youth worker), for example, commented:

> *"I would say like the exit surveys and stuff or like, if anything it's not that they need improving. I think it's more that it's hard to do them with kids. Um, look, I've tried my best to get all the surveys, exit surveys. But often times like things happen and, I can't get in contact with the kids anymore. Or like they've moved, and I can't. And I've sent it to them and they're not filling it out or I don't know if they're filling it out because I can't see if the results have been put in and stuff like that."*

This is a difficult issue to overcome, as while MYD may seek to limit the administrative burden to participants, it is also important to have authentic youth voice in relation to the programme. While MYD can adjust the surveys to make them as youth-friendly as possible, if providers are having difficulties completing the reporting with young people, this is likely impacting the quality of data coming through.

Flexibility with the age range was also noted by a couple of youth workers as a way to improve the FTE Pilot with Participant Five commenting:

> *"Um, I've got rangatahi that I've been working with who are 12. We've got younger siblings that are about 10-11 years old that are going through real hard times at school, which would prevent my work, if you know what I mean. It would prevent things from progressing at a later stage or the earlier stage."*

Lowering the age range for programme participation is feedback MYD frequently receives about its programmes and may be a useful future discussion given the preventative nature of its work.

Participant 12 (manager) suggested it would be beneficial to have more all-provider hui to help learn from each other, like the initial hui MYD held to discuss and design the evaluation. This sentiment was mirrored by Participant 1 (MYD staff):

> "I *would have liked to have seen how we could have built a community of learning/community of practice between the 10 youth workers and the providers and how they might have got together and shared strengths and worked with each other*".

From the provider reports, some of the key challenges for providers included capacity and staffing, resourcing, and responding to increased demand for services.

From an MYD perspective, Participant 14 (MYD staff) suggested that greater consistency in terms of staff involvement at the design, implementation, and evaluation phase would have improved outcomes as it was disjointed, and this created confusion and lack of cohesion at certain stages of the implementation:

"Think through not only who's involved at each stage, but what that will mean for the quality and the consistency throughout the whole cycle."

Young people valued their mentors and experienced a range of positive outcomes, including re-engagement with school, improved confidence, home stability, and mood improvements.

For confidentiality purposes, young people's identities have been completely anonymised and are only referred to as "young person" in the next section. Youth workers names have been changed.

Young people participated in the pilot for many reasons, including disengagement with school, confidence issues, mental health, family conflict, and homelessness.

Young people in the evaluation reported participating in the FTE Pilot for a variety of reasons. These included:

- Lack of confidence
- Homelessness
- Violence, conflict, or instability at home
- Anxiety and depression
- Disengagement from school
- Difficulty transitioning from school to university
- Substance use
- Lacking a supportive figure.

The young people who participated in the evaluation identified similar reasons for engaging in the FTE Pilot as those captured by provider reporting.

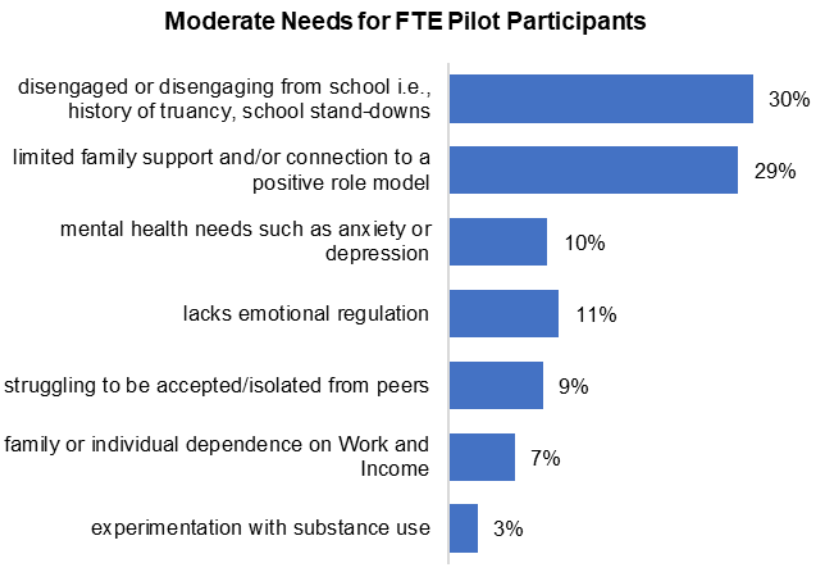


Figure 6. Moderate Needs for FTE Pilot Participants

Young people considered their mentors to be like family, and highly valued their manaakitanga, honesty, and humour, and the sense of safety they instilled into their practice.

The relationship between the young person and their mentor was primary to the young people's experiences of the FTE Pilot programme, with many considering them to be like family. Young people highlighted the importance of genuine care, honesty, humour, and being in a safe space. In terms of supporting a relational approach to youth work, it is clear from young people's comments that youth workers achieved this goal. Young people described close relationships with their youth workers and for many, there was a familial like bond, with mentors variably described as aunties, big sisters or brothers, and mothers. One young person described the trust with their mentor and how this enabled a familial bond:

> "*We love him. He's like family. He's probably the only person we trust, like, we trust him more than our own family.*"

Young people also expressed their fondness for the genuine care their mentors provided them with. One young person stated:

> "*He's all good. He's mean. He actually cares, like, you know. So, yeah. And he, like he shows it, like you can tell, like, just by talking to him and all that you can tell he actually cares. And it just hits different, yeah, like knowing that he actually cares and gives, cares. Yeah. No, he's all right. He's mean as.*"

Young people reflected on the safe environment their programme/mentor provided. One young person reflected:

> "*But since I've been coming to (provider), I've always felt like I can go somewhere to talk about it because they're always here…If I was feeling a certain way about myself or other people, I'd know just to come here and they'd, like, you know, they got me.*"

Young people appreciated their mentor's honesty (even if they were firm) and integrity, and their mentor being true to themselves. One young person described the balanced and frank approach their mentor took:

> *"I like that she's straight up about things, like she takes in consideration of two different point of views, not just hers or not just someone else's, you know, like, she looks at it from all perspectives on certain situations and she has the best advice.*

Finally, mentors' sense of humour was reported as being appreciated by several young people, who felt that it helped to establish a bond between them. When describing their mentor, one young person said:

> *"Okay, now, first of all, he's funny. First of all, he's funny. Second of all, he's cool. Like he's cool, he's funny, he's got a cool as personality, he's got sense of humour. I love his sense of humour. I really do. It's just like when we're playing chess. Oh, man, he makes me laugh a lot."*

The combination of humour with honesty, safety, and a familial bond contributed to successful relationships between youth workers and young people and enabled them to work together productively on goals.

Goals

From the provider reports, some of the key challenges for young people included:

- disengagement from education and career pathways
- mental health, with many providers highlighting young people's struggles with anxiety
- social disconnection from peers and others
- social media and use of cell phones.

The evaluation indicated that young people's main goals were around education and employment, though there were some goals around increased confidence and mental health as well. The latter are reflected in the outcomes section below.

Re-engaging with education was a common goal.

Many young people had goals to engage or re-engage with education and training, in line with the moderate needs criteria. For some, any engagement with school was an achievement:

> *"My number one was getting to school. That was a big one. At least even if it was one period, or just, yeah, getting to school was the big one."*

Others simply wanted to make it through the year: "*getting myself through school this year."* For other young people, improving grades was the focus of education:

> *"Another one was for good grades in school because, like, year 9, year 8, year 7, bit of year 10, it was, like, real not so great grades… in the 30% to 60%. So, I think it's just been, like, trying to manage time, get everything done, coming up with techniques to make sure that it's completed to a good standard."*

Finishing school or graduating was another goal, for example one young person commented:

> *"My goal was graduating. I want to be the second person to graduate out of my family, because, yeah, I want to be a good girl."*

Getting young people back into some form of education, whether it was a small step like going to one period or focusing on improving grades was a common focus for youth workers who supported young people through different mechanisms, such as setting up meetings with schools, helping with studying, and helping young people work through challenges with classmates.

Employment was important to young people.

Young people were keen to enter the job market to either save money themselves or to help support their families. One young person stated:

> *"But anyway, but the main goal that I'm trying to figure out is get a job, because I really want a job. I want money, like I'm desperate*."

Another young person reflected on how getting a job was a lot of effort: "*The other one, getting a job, that's quite lots of work."* Some young people wanted to get jobs to support their family, highlighting the financial insecurity of some families and the additional strain this placed on young people:

> "*I want to get a job and that…Just any job so I can help my mum with the rent. And help my mum pay the bills. I'm not, I'm young, but still, I love, if I want to stay under the roof, I will help my mum. If we need to look for another house, I'll help my mum. Yeah. That's what I want to do. My goals."*

As part of the 2023/2024 reporting requirements, 234 young people reported on the goals they worked on with their youth worker. Again, these mirror the outcomes young people discussed below.

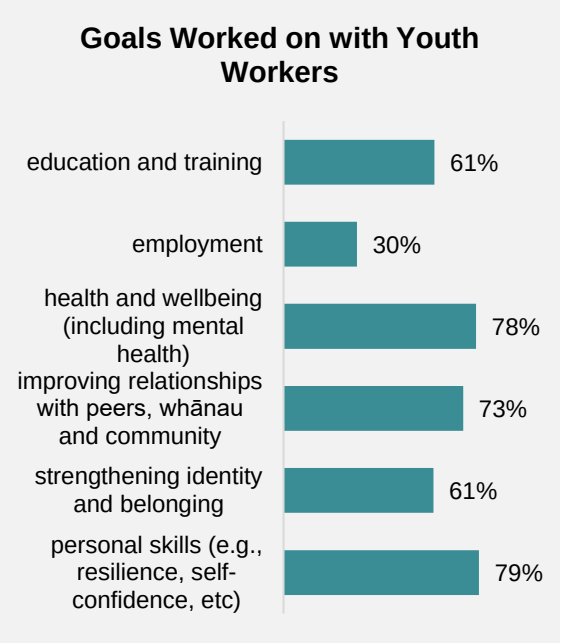


Figure 7. Goals from reporting data

Young people valued talking, being in nature and participating in activities.

Young people described talking in different contexts such as nature, while sharing kai, or in the car. This seemed to provide a casual context for young people to share what was going on in their lives. They also described participating in different activities.

Young people enjoyed being in the car and in nature.

Place was an important aspect of young people's mentoring sessions. Going somewhere in the car was discussed by several young people as a means for discussion. One young person said:

> *"But, yeah, other times when I'm with Kate and we go places, we're usually talking in the car or going somewhere."*

For another young person, going for drives was also a place they could work through mental health issues:

> *"Just, like, go for drives, and just, yeah, chat and she, Kate, she gives me breathing techniques to help with my anxiety sometimes and just, yeah. Good to talk."*

Another young person similarly discussed riding in the car as central to their experience:

> *"And yeah, that's pretty much us. And we just go rides around town. She comes and picks me up."*

The destination did not seem to matter to young people, it appeared they were content with just the process of going somewhere. It seemed driving in the car provided a relaxed environment for discussion and perhaps some novelty and distraction for young people who sometimes described their day-to-day lives as monotonous.

Young people also frequently discussed being in nature with their mentors and for some this was a healing space. One young person described their time with their mentor:

> *"So, sometimes we're in school and then sometimes we're out of school, just going for walks because I like being with water, that's my safe space and sometimes we'd go out to a lake and just talk there because I felt more, like, more, what's the word called? More peaceful there."*

Some young people had stressful home lives and were living with financial strain and family conflict. Getting away from home and school was restorative for them and helped them feel comfortable opening up to youth workers. Even if it was just a drive around town, young people appreciated going somewhere to talk. Young people described walks on the beach, visiting rivers and waterfalls, and going to the lake all as opportunities to talk. For some young people, going to other places was simply a good alternative to doing nothing at home. For example, one young person said:

"*We get to like go places, like beaches and water holes, like, you know, get out of Hamilton, do something instead of staying in bed all day doing nothing."*

Talking about life and goals was central to these experiences.

Young people felt comfortable talking through problems.

Young people discussed working through life situations and goals with their mentors. This might be in the context of a walk in nature or over some kai. Such experiences were important as many young people did not have a supportive adult in their lives they felt they could talk to. One young person described how comfortable they felt talking with her mentor and how even though it was "chill", it was still helpful:

> *"She would just sit down with me and then we'll just have a talk and then she would just help me give me advice on how to deal with that situation or if something's come up, like I'll just talk to her about it and I'll feel safe about talking to her about it. And as I said before, she would just take me out for like, lunch or just do something really chill, but it would still help me in a way."*

Young people discussed how comfortable they were discussing goals and other parts of life with their mentors and how they could talk to anyone involved in the programme about anything, even if it was not the topic they originally came to discuss. Being able to check in and receive a little bit of advice on any topic was helpful to young people. Going through goal progress might involve sharing kai and young people appreciated being held accountable for their progress even if it was sometimes confronting.

Games and activities facilitated bonding and sharing.

While the FTE Pilot focuses on one-to-one mentoring, young people also enjoyed games and activities with peers as part of the programme. Activities provided a way for young people to share their concerns in a relaxed context. One young person discussed playing chess and going to the gym as a way to facilitate discussion about their mental health:

> *"The type of stuff I do here with my mentor is, well, we…play chess, go gym, talk about things that needs to be brought off the chest. There's also a few things that has been discussed, like how's my mentality been; how am I dealing with my depression and, yeah."*

Activities such as the gym, karaoke, basketball, or ping pong provided young people with the opportunity to build social connections with peers, meet new people, and connect with their youth worker and facilitate more substantial conversations.

Outcomes for young people included re-engagement with school, improved confidence, increased home stability, and mood improvements.

As part of the reporting requirements, participants were surveyed about which outcomes they believe they have achieved through participation in the FTE Pilot. The following represents the outcomes 234 young people identified having achieved from categories MYD provided (Figure 8).

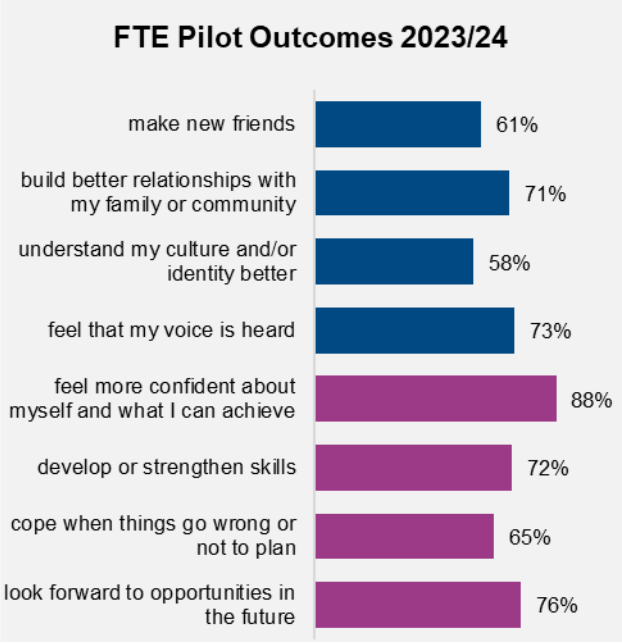


Figure 8. Outcomes from provider reporting

Key achievements and outcomes for young people, as reported by providers in their regular reporting and analysed by MYD included:

- education, training, and employment, through participant's individualised development plans and education, training, and employment goals

- general wellbeing, such as gaining coping mechanisms to use when things go wrong.

Improvements in confidence were common.

Young people frequently reported improvements in their confidence as part of the programme, whether this was a general feeling or related to a specific aspect of their lives. Some young people described their confidence on a numerical scale and explained that their confidence level was now at an eight or a ten out of ten compared to previously being a three. Young people learned not to doubt themselves and felt more comfortable speaking to others, for example:

> *"I've noticed that I've been a lot more confident in speaking to people and, like, being out there, if you know what I mean. Like, not being shy, as shy as I was before I came here because, like, they made it, like, they showed me easier ways with talking to people and getting to know other people. Yeah, because I was a pretty awkward person but now, I'm, like, you know, I'm a social butterfly I reckon but, yeah."*

Some young people experienced increased stability at home.

Some young people were dealing with unstable home environments or did not have a home at all when they encountered the FTE Pilot. One young person, for example, was homeless before being referred to the FTE Pilot. They reflected on how their mentor helped with their day-to-day needs including food:

> *"And, like, if I need a curry, he'll come bring it to me, to where I stay now, and that's the house that they sussed it out for me. That's where I live now."*

For two other young people, they were struggling with unsuitable accommodation with their family. Their mentor was able to get them into a motel:

> *"I guess, like, the main, when we first met him, the main goal that we wanted was not our own house, but like, you know, motel, like what we're in right now."*

Other young people struggled with relationships at home, and this made for an unstable environment. The FTE Pilot helped one young person maintain a better relationship with their mum so that home felt more secure:

> *"Like, my relationship with my mum is way better too… Like, yeah, my relationship with my mum. My at-home life, I'm in a stable house now. So, yeah, it's just been good."*

Youth workers helped young people manage relationships with family and helped coordinate accommodation for young people where needed, providing them with a stable platform to engage with on their goals.

Young people strengthened relationships with friends and family.

Young people talked about having strengthened relationships with friends and family because of their time in the FTE Pilot. One young person, for example, talked about changes to their relationships with friends and their parents. Participating in the programme helped this young person to learn skills to open up with their parents and strengthen their relationship. They were also able to identify the negative influence of their former friend group and find more suitable friends to spend time with instead:

> *"I've switched to new friends because they were so much of a bad influence on me. So, I've made better friends and I have made a better connection with both of my parents and my family, but mainly my parents, because I was a bit of a naughty child back then, but I've learnt that the more honest I am with my parents, the more they'll trust me…So, I have become more open and honest with my mum. I've talked to her about things that I wouldn't have, like, last year I wouldn't have told her the things I've told her."*

This was similarly reported by another young person who identified the positive influence their peers had on them:

> "*I was probably hanging around with some wrong people or whatever, but now I just hang out with people that do good things, and you do good things really. Like, having your mates that work, well then, you're gonna want to go to work."*

Young people talked about making new friends through the programme as well as reconnecting with old ones, because they were able to mirror the skills they learned through one-to-one time mentoring time. For some young people, these new friendships, amid challenging times, were life-affirming. One young person spoke about how they learned that if talking to their youth worker was beneficial, then opening up to their friends would be as well:

> "*But after the programme, I felt more comfortable, I guess, reaching out to, like, my friends because, yeah, I had friends, but I wasn't being very, like, open about struggles and things like that. But after the programme I realised, like, 'Oh, well, I just have to talk to Caitlin', and she literally helped me. Like, my friends on the outside, they wouldn't know what's going on, like, if I don't tell them and I feel like that programme really opened my eyes, to it."*

A couple of young people reflected that they felt heard in their relationships with one commenting: *"happier, but and relationships within, like communication. I feel like I can be heard."*

Improvements in mood were frequently reported.

Improvement in mood and mental health as a function of the programme were commonly reported by young people. Strong relationships with youth workers and achieving goals appeared to generate feelings of contentment for young people or in some cases, a sense of elation. One young person reflected on how much things had changed since being depressed at the start of the programme:

> "*It's going to sound like a bit sad and all that, but I was a bit like you know, depressed and a bit not all there, because of how rough it was and all that, but ever since coming through here and well hang out with Aata yeah, like you know he's all right. I don't know, it's just better and, I don't know, happier. And I wasn't as, I'm not as bad as what I used to be*."

While not all young people could identify what it was that helped improve their mood, simply spending time with youth workers, adults who were non-judgemental, appeared to contribute. Another young person noted the improvement in their mood and decrease in suicidal ideation. They also highlighted the preventative nature of youth work as they no longer wanted to participate in vandalism*:*

> *"When I first started here actually, I was a zero. But looking that way it's like ten hundred hit the mark. But, yeah, no, it helped me out real, a lot actually. It's like one of the best programmes I've actually been on…Okay. Well, I haven't actually thought suicidal, or like, you know, wanting to do a bit of property vandalism or, like, you know, wanting to think that, 'I can't do it.'"*

The FTE Pilot was life-changing for some young people.

Several young people spoke about how their whole life had transformed as a result of the FTE Pilot. Participating in it improved their overall wellbeing and they were able to reflect on the shift from feeling disconnected to feeling like themselves again. One young person reflected on their time in the programme:

> "*Basically, get my life back on track…Like I was just like lost and wasn't myself for a while, because of everything that was going on. And she just helped me get myself back basically, yeah*."

Another young person reflected on the overall improvement to themselves as an "upgraded version." Multiple areas of life were improved as a result of young people's time with their mentors, reflecting the holistic approach to wellbeing youth workers took and the underlying frameworks. For example, one young person spoke about the multiple realms of life that had improved because of their work with their mentor:

> "*But a lot of it like involves like home life, and like my environment and my energy and stuff…has just made our lives so much more happier and just feel like healthier, and just like in a lot of ways though, like just made us feel better and like put us in a good place than we used to be, and how we used to be*."

Young people regained a sense of their own identity, for example, one young person described how they felt in touch with their true self again:

> "*Honestly, I feel great… I'm actually feeling great. I'm actually feeling myself again."*

Generally, young people noted the personal growth they had achieved since participating in the programme, for example:

> "*Great. Feel amazing. Feel like not only Caitlin, but mainly Caitlin has, like, helped me, I don't know, it's like she shaped me into, like, the person that I am today. Like she's had an impact on it. And I like it."*

Some young people became re-engaged with school and training.

Helping young people access education or training was central to youth workers' practice and one of the key criteria for entry into the FTE Pilot. These efforts appeared to be successful with several young people discussing becoming re-engaged with school or training through the programme. For some young people, re-engaging with education meant finding a new school and youth workers worked on supporting the transition through coping strategies or attention to mental health:

> *"I've been able to go to school. I, because I changed schools and it was Kate's idea to help put that in place. But, yeah, it's helped me go to school, helped calm my anxiety down a little bit and just, yeah. It's been, made life a bit easier, actually*."

Being back in school gave young people a sense of pride with one young person nothing that they were back in school and on a positive trajectory: *"Good. Like, I'm on a good path at the moment. I'm back into school. I'm going to school all the time, yeah*." For other young people, participating in the FTE Pilot helped set them up with other educational and training experiences, with youth workers supporting them to complete application forms and set up appointments. One young person described how participating in the programme increased their initiative and how, supported by their youth worker, they were able to have an appointment with an educational provider:

> "*Since I participated in the programme, I found myself taking action into, like, things that I achieve to do, if that makes sense. So, like, again with the NZMA, she, like, helped me with, like, the forms and stuff and I ended up going in and having an appointment with them. So, I think if it wasn't for Caitlin then I wouldn't have, like, known about NZMA, but yeah."*

Two young people reported no changes as a result of the FTE Pilot.

A couple of young people reported no changes in their lives since participating in the programme or felt achievements they had made as part of the programme were attributable primarily to themselves and not to their mentor. One young person stated: *"I don't notice much changes in my life since I've been here"* and another felt that while their relationships had improved, this was not attributable to the programme.

Young people's feedback on the FTE Pilot included wanting more food and longer sessions.

Young people generally did not have much they would change about the FTE Pilot, however there were a few suggestions, including providing more food and longer sessions. For example, one young person commented:

> "*Probably the length of the meeting or meetings that we have, because I found them too short. I had lots to talk about with her. Sometimes I just, sometimes it just feels like we were, you know, just getting started and we're just getting into it, and then we had to wrap it up, because she had other things to do, but, which is understandable."*

This sense of feeling rushed reflects the busy schedules youth workers described as they attempted to meet their required hours and targets with young people. Another young person wanted a more structured schedule for their sessions:

> "*I think it would have been cooler if it was like a scheduled like programme, like more structured kind of vibe. Hmm yeah, cause like we would always like check up on each other's. And I was like, 'hey, when are you free this week?' It's like 'I'm free this day' and like, 'ohh, sweet, we'll meet up this day.' I feel like if you had like a designated day or like a time slot for each other it would have been like a lot more easier in terms of like the programme".*

Again, while not having a regular meeting time could be considered flexible, it was also likely related to the packed schedules youth workers had and the difficulty they described fitting all the young people into a week.

One young person wanted more proactive check-ins when they missed a session, again suggesting that the business of youth workers meant they may not have had time to follow up when a session was missed:

> *"Sort of, like, a weekly, kind of, thing. Yeah, like, if there's a time where I'm not here for the week, like, just messaging and be like, 'Hey, is everything all good?' you know."*

A couple of young people emphasised the importance of keeping the programme casual, for example:

> "*I feel like for me it was really good, just the way that it was just very casual instead of being like strictly very professional, professional, sorry, she's very casual. And it just made me feel a little bit more relaxed when I came to the sessions…If my only thing would be just to keep it maybe casual."*

The sense of casualness about the programme speaks to the successful relationship-building work of youth workers, enabling young people to open up and work through issues in a comfortable and safe space.

Conclusions

The FTE Pilot has supported youth workers/practitioners to develop meaningful relationships with young people and contribute to significant improvements in their lives. Being in a dedicated FTE role enabled youth workers to focus entirely on young people and the quality of the youth work practice is evident in the praise young people had for their youth workers and the outcomes they described. Youth workers are incorporating strong cultural frameworks into their everyday practice and approaching young people in a flexible and empathetic way.

It is noted that the FTE pilot was a time-bound funding initiative, with contracts expiring on Monday 30 June 2025. MYD will consider how the findings contained in this report will be reflected as part of MYD's evolving cycle of evidence, to inform future planning and funding of youth development programmes.

To what extent does the design of the FTE funding model support good youth work practice?

- The design of the FTE Pilot was largely in line with good youth work practice and a Positive Youth Development approach in terms of the focus on strength-based practice, moderate needs, and the basis in long-term relationships. The preventative approach was endorsed by youth workers and helped young people deal with issues before they escalated. The high levels of trust developed and tailored one-to-one support for a minimum of ten weeks were effective in matching the needs of young people, although this minimum could be extended (see below).

- The design would have benefited from consultation with the priority cohorts and young people in general.

- The procurement involved an open tender round that, on reflection by MYD staff, did not necessarily achieve the anticipated result. Greater emphasis on established youth development practice in the procurement may have led to youth work staff who felt more capable and supported to carry out their roles.
- Youth workers and managers largely supported the focus on moderate needs, and this is in line with preventative strength-based practice. However, staff had difficulty navigating situations where needs were greater than previously presented and didn't want to exit young people in these situations. There is an opportunity for greater guidance about managing these situations and perhaps flexibility in reporting where young people are initially identified as having moderate needs.

- The target of seeing 60 young people per year was seen as manageable by some, but unsustainable by other youth workers who felt it was not supportive of good youth work practice. There is a need for greater communication around what parts of the contract are 'hard' and what areas have some flexibility.

- The focus on one-to-one mentoring was endorsed by staff and young people enjoyed having one-to-one time, but there was a need for greater clarity on the use of small group work.

- The ten-week minimum was seen as too short by some youth workers who felt pressured to exit young people at this point. It was not sufficient for MYD to clarify that this was a minimum, as keeping young people engaged for longer affected youth worker's abilities to work with other young people. If this period was extended (for example to 12-15 weeks as one manager suggested), there would need to be a consideration of the flow-on effects to the number of young people practitioners could work with.

- Despite the intentions of the FTE Pilot to provide a more sustainable funding model, the salaries of youth workers were not as high as MYD staff had envisioned. Some youth workers were happy with their salary, but others felt it did not reflect the 24-hour nature of their job and the level of responsibility. One youth worker suggested $70,000.00-$80,000.00 would be a more appropriate salary.

- In general, the broader intervention logic appeared sound with the focus on long term one-to-one time resulting in meaningful relationships and positive outcomes for almost all young people who participated in the evaluation. The areas of the logic model that appeared weak or required more data were "Equitable access to culturally appropriate and relevant early intervention and preventative youth development services" given youth workers appeared to struggle with providing services to young people in other priority cohorts, as well as the sustainable funding component, given salaries were not as high as MYD anticipated.

To what extent is the FTE Pilot operating as intended?

- All managers were positive about the inclusion of the qualification requirement, and this is consistent with efforts towards professionalisation of the industry, however not all staff had the NZQA qualification, and one manager highlighted the difficulty in recruiting staff with that qualification for the salary they offered. This requirement should continue to be a part of any future investment in youth development, but it may require some flexibility due to difficulty recruiting kaimahi with this qualification.

- Access to support/supervision was common, except for one provider where two youth workers felt there was little support when starting their role. For some providers, supervision was on an as-needed basis, but this could have been more structured to provide ongoing support to youth workers.

- Youth workers were adept in working with rangatahi Māori but could have benefited from more training for working with other priority cohorts such as Pacific young people, disabled young people, and rainbow young people.

- The goals youth workers worked on were consistent with the definition of moderate needs outlined in contracts, e.g., disengaged from school, lacking social connection, mental health needs, and limited family support.

- Sessions varied but were generally grounded in frameworks such as Te Whare Tapa Wha and incorporated whanaungatanga and manaakitanga. They involved goal-setting, check-ins and talking through problems, as well as fun activities and time in nature. In terms of the definition of youth work provided in the literature review (see Appendix 1), youth workers were clearly applying the following principles:

    1. The relationship between the youth worker and the young person that is both voluntary and developmental in nature.

    2. Recognition of social context, including family, whānau, hapū, iwi, peers, the wider community and a long-term intergenerational awareness.

    3. Actively supporting the participation of young people.

    4. Prioritising being friendly and fun, maintaining ethical behaviour.

    5. Unique Aotearoa New Zealand-specific cultural approaches, such as mana-enhancing.

- Youth workers highlighted the importance of being youth-centric in their practice, ensuring youth have voice, the importance of honesty, and having a cultural lens across their work in achieving positive outcomes for young people.

- Managers generally reported that support from MYD was positive, and help was available when needed.

To what extent is the FTE Pilot achieving the intended short-term outcomes for young people?

- Young people felt close to their mentors, often equating them with family, and clearly valued their non-judgemental support and honest engagement. Such feelings of support by key adults are strongly related to positive social outcomes (DuBois et al. 2011).

- Young people highlighted the importance of genuine care, honesty, humour and being in a safe space. In terms of supporting a relational approach to youth work, it is clear from young people's comments that youth workers achieved this goal.

- Young people experienced a range of outcomes including improvements to home life, increased confidence, better relationships, improvement in mental health such as anxiety or depression, and re-engagement with school or training. These outcomes are consistent with the goals young people worked on in the reporting (Figure 7).

- Overall, young people reported considerable improvements to their lives as a result of being part of the FTE Pilot. Only two young people did not feel improvements in their life were attributable to their participation in the programme.

Recommendations: How might the FTE Pilot be refined to improve outcomes for young people with moderate needs?

- Greater emphasis should be given to established youth development practice in the procurement to ensure youth workers and managers are equipped with the skills to work effectively with young people. Across MYD, consistency during the procurement, implementation and evaluation stages will help ensure collective understanding of expectations and outcomes.

- Consultation with the priority cohorts and the provider community on the design will help ensure any future pilot is adapted to meet the needs of different groups and providers are equipped with the skills needed.

- Communication with providers is important. There was a need for clearer and more consistent messaging regarding what is a firm requirement of the FTE Pilot (or any funding stream) and where there is some flexibility on criteria. While many conversations were had about softer aspects of the criteria, providers ultimately and understandably relied on what was written in their contracts. There is an opportunity for MYD to provide greater guidance as part of the ongoing engagement with providers.

- Building trusting relationships with young people with moderate needs is critical to achieving outcomes. The FTE Pilot demonstrated some challenges with achieving both relationship-building and mentoring within a short period of ten weeks. Extending the engagement time by another two to five weeks could enhance outcomes but will have flow-on effects to the number of young people practitioners could work with (i.e. 60 may be too high in this instance).

- There is an opportunity to work with providers on the design of reporting to avoid youth workers feeling overburdened and to focus on and create more space for service delivery. Some flexibility in reporting may be helpful, acknowledging that young people's assessment of needs may change from 'moderate' to 'high' during their engagement with the service.

- There is some work to be done on lifting sector capability. This could include the provision of training and/or resources on working with rainbow youth, mental health conditions, and different cultures. A couple of youth workers felt quite lost when starting the FTE Pilot as they had not worked in that type of role before and/or they didn't feel well supported. More regular supervision and access to training could help in these situations.

- More all-provider hui/opportunities for shared learning across providers should be considered. One manager commented that it would have been helpful to learn from other providers about how they were managing the moderate needs category, and this sentiment was echoed by MYD staff. This is a clear opportunity for MYD to consider with its future investments in youth development.

Limitations

- This is a pilot programme and there was no control group using the previous funding model, so it is not possible to determine the extent to which outcomes were attributable to the FTE funding model.

- Recruitment efforts were reliant upon providers engaging with young people and choosing appropriate participants which may have biased the sampling.

- Young people volunteered for participation in the study so there is a level of self-selection bias present.

- No young people identified as being from the disabled or rainbow communities. The evaluation is therefore unable to draw conclusions on the suitability of the FTE Pilot to these groups.

- One of the providers was excluded from the evaluation as they exited the FTE Pilot early, so there is an absence of insights into the experience of Pacific young people.

- Findings reflect the perspectives of those who participated in the evaluation and cannot be considered representative or generalisable to those who did not participate.

- Managers and youth worker/practitioners may have presented a more positive view of the FTE Pilot because they wanted it to continue.

Appendix 1. Positive Youth Development Interventions in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Ministry of Youth Development (MYD)- Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi is committed to supporting the community to deliver positive youth development programmes to young people aged 12-24 years. Previous MYD funding for youth sector organisations has been contributory, meaning programmes have been partially funded by MYD with additional funding required from other sources to support programme delivery. By contrast, the current pilot (the [Youth Development] Full-time Equivalent Youth Worker/Practitioner Pilot (FTE Pilot) involves fully funding two youth workers for 2.5 years at five providers (ten youth workers in total). This approach is being evaluated to determine whether the design and implementation of the FTE Pilot is supporting positive outcomes for the young people involved. The aim of this brief literature review is to support this evaluation by examining the effectiveness of youth development interventions in Aotearoa New Zealand with a particular emphasis on positive youth development approaches. The review will explore what positive youth development is, the evidence base for this approach both internationally and locally, challenges for the Aotearoa New Zealand youth work sector, and the relevance to the current evaluation.

What is youth development?

MYD defines youth development as the developmental process that occurs during adolescence where young people transition to adulthood, hopefully with the skills, attitudes, and values needed to succeed (2009). The field of youth development refers to the practice of positively supporting this process. Youth development practice moved rapidly forward despite an initial absence of evidence, and this has remained something of a problem. There is, for example, no single definition of what constitutes a youth development programme, and this lack of clarity contributes to conflicting findings in the literature (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Broadly, youth development programmes provide experiences that facilitate young people's holistic growth (Deane & Harre, 2014). They can comprise any number of formats, including outdoor adventure programmes, art or cultural programmes, community service, or life-skill mentoring (MYD, 2009). For the purposes of this review, we adopt the same definition used by Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016:

> *"Youth development programs are developmentally appropriate programs designed to prepare adolescents for productive adulthood by providing opportunities and supports to help them gain the competencies and knowledge needed to meet the increasing challenges they will face as they mature."*

The term 'youth Work' itself is also contentious, with Mundy-McPherson et al. (2012) arguing that it is essential for the development of the sector that the term is used with more consistency. In 2021, Ara Taiohi Incorporated (the peak body for youth development in Aotearoa) published a report specifically on defining youth work (Baxter, Zintl, & Hurst, 2021). They considered 21 definitions and ultimately landed on the following key components of a definition of Youth Work in Aotearoa:

1. The relationship between the youth worker and the young person is both voluntary and developmental in nature.

2. Recognition of social context, including family, whānau, hapū, iwi, peers, the wider community, and a long-term intergenerational awareness.

3. Actively supporting the participation of young people.

4. Prioritising being friendly and fun, maintaining ethical behaviour.

5. Unique Aotearoa-specific cultural approaches, such as mana-enhancing practice.

In terms of youth work as a preventative approach, Sonneveld et al. (2021) conducted a synthesis of six practice-based studies and propose five key ways in which professional youth work may prevent individual and social problems. First, supporting the development of social skills, essential to promoting healthy relationships and reducing future conflict (Bergin et al., 2003). Second, self-mastery where young people gain greater control over their lives, so they are able to solve problems independently and avoid future problems (Laffra & en Nikken, 2014). Third, young people with a supportive social environment perform better and report fewer problems (Cavanaugh & Buehler, 2015). Fourth, civic participation has positive well-being outcomes for young people (Ince, Van Yperen, & Valkestijn, 2018). And fifth, helping connect young people with other social or health services can prevent long-term issues.

What is positive youth development?

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a systems-based approach to understanding youth development that emphasises young people's inherent strengths (Deane & Dutton, 2020). PYD stands in stark contrast to previous deficit-based models of youth development that perpetuate ideas such as the storm and stress myth of adolescent development where this period is understood to be inherently tumultuous (Deane & Dutton, 2020). These approaches were dominant until the 1980s and were focused on the prevention of problem behaviours such as teenage pregnancy and drug use (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Such conceptualisations of young people (as problems to be fixed) are not supported by the literature, which finds that most young people are happy and healthy (Deane & Dutton, 2020).

PYD approaches are grounded in the belief that all young people have the potential to develop positively, and the programmes can provide supportive opportunities for this to occur (Mercier, 2019). The PYD perspective is different from other approaches in that it focuses on all young people thriving, not just the survival of those in severe hardship (Deane and Dutton, 2020). PYD posits that the combination of a young person's strengths with a well-resourced and supportive context leads to both individuals and communities thriving. This context includes positive connections and opportunities both within and outside of youth development programmes (Deane & Dutton, 2020). PYD aims to understand, educate, and engage young people in learning opportunities rather than correct or cure maladaptive behaviour. Development is understood as holistic, contextually grounded, relational, and always changing. Strengthening the individual person requires attention to their community.

Youth development programmes are understood as a critical opportunity to facilitate PYD (Lerner et. al., 2005; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). One of the most famous models of PYD is the Five Cs model (Mercier, 2019). The Five Cs comprise competence, confidence, connection, caring, and character. When these are all present the sixth C of contribution can be achieved. Considerable research has been undertaken on this model in the United States, primarily utilising quantitative methodologies. The Five Cs can be understood as the anticipated outcomes of PYD programmes and more broadly as signs of thriving. Mercier (2022) explored how outcomes were defined by young people and staff in Aotearoa and whether the Five Cs model was an appropriate outcomes framework. Based on their findings they developed new definitions of the Five Cs for Aotearoa New Zealand (Table 1).

Table 1. Mercier's (2022) Aotearoa definitions of the Five Cs.

Competence	Development, demonstration, enjoyment, and celebration of interpersonal, vocational, self-management, goal-setting, leadership, and helping skills
Confidence	Sense of global and domain specific efficacy. Appraisal of one's development and future. Positive engagement in relationships and activities.
Connection	The experience of bi-directional relationships with peers, whānau, community and adults, culture, land, environment, and whakapapa characterised by care and a sense of belonging and value. These are central to the young person's sense of individual and collective self.
Character	A sense of identity, culture, values, and worth (individual and collective) within familial, cultural, community, and societal domains
Creativity	Innovation, expression, and discovery in various domains and contexts including identity.
Contribution	Undertaking agentic actions and activities (present and future) that enhance and influence self, whānau, family, community, and culture that are recognised and valued.

Across multiple perspectives, even beyond PYD, there is a collective understanding of the most critical factors underlying PYD (Deane and Dutton, 2020). On an individual level, these include self-efficacy (driven by feelings of mastery) and self-regulation skills. At school, it is the existence of an engaging, safe, positive environment with supportive peers and adults who demonstrate high expectations alongside clear boundaries. And in terms of family, it is positive relationships, effective parenting skills, and specifically, family cohesion. Relationships are a central component of youth development, particularly with family/whānau who are a key source of nurturing (Deane, Dutton, and Kerekere, 2019). While there is not a standard set of PYD outcomes, some of those explored in the research include the Five Cs, psychological resilience, self-esteem, positive outlook, and self-efficacy (Mercier et al., 2019).

What does the research say?

While it is logical to assume that early intervention in young people's development has long-term benefits for their wellbeing, up until recently, robust Aotearoa New Zealand-based evaluations to support this claim have been relatively scarce (Ministry of Youth Development – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi, 2009). Indeed, a systematic review of the

impact of youth work for young people in 2012 found no studies met the eligibility criteria (Mundy-McPherson, Fouche´, & Elliot, 2012). There is, however, a growing body of evidence of the effectiveness of PYD programmes with a multitude of evaluation studies being conducted overseas and several in Aotearoa New Zealand (Deane and Dutton, 2020). Much of this research is quantitative, but there is some qualitative and mixed methods research present too.

The research suggests that PYD programmes can contribute to positive outcomes for young people (Deane, Dutton, & Kerekere, 2019). Much of this research has been conducted on outdoor education programmes, and evaluations of these studies suggest that these environments can be associated with sustained outcomes. For example, Grocott and Hunter (2009) explored global and specific self-esteem on a ten-day sailing voyage. They conducted their tests on the first day of the voyage, the last day, and three months after the voyage. They found participants experienced global and specific self-esteem improvements following the voyage. Further, they found this effect was sustained three months after the voyage.

The following research and evaluation studies are primarily Aotearoa New Zealand-based. A significant amount of research has been dedicated to an outdoor education programme designed for high-school students who demonstrate low self-efficacy. The programme includes a wilderness experience, community contribution, and mentoring (Mercier et al., 2019). This programme has been extensively evaluated through a range of qualitative and quantitative studies (e.g. Furness, Williams, Veale, & Gardner, 2017 or Chapman, Deane, Harre, Courtney, & Moore, 2017). Self-efficacy, resilience, and wellbeing have all been identified as outcomes of the programme.

Same Other studies examining PYD in an Aotearoa New Zealand context include Mercier et al. (2019) who conducted an evaluation of a youth development outdoor education program utilising PYD, specifically the Five Cs model. They examined a year-long outdoor education program aimed at 11- to 13-year-olds. The programme consisted of five outdoor challenge activities; 20 hours of community service; and 20 hours dedicated to developing a new hobby. Teachers or school coordinators facilitated participation. The researchers spoke to young people, teachers, and parents to determine if and how participation in the programme contributed to PYD outcomes. Participants discussed all Five Cs and the sixth C of contribution in relation to their participation in the programme, suggesting the programme did achieve PYD outcomes for young people.

Arahanga-Doyle et al. (2019) similarly conducted a study investigating the relationship between social identity and three PYD outcomes (psychological resilience, self-esteem, and positive outlook) via a group sailing voyage. They found support for their first hypothesis where resilience, self-esteem, and positive outlook all increased between the first and last day of the voyage. Social or collective identity did not predict changes in self-esteem. Rangatahi Māori displayed lower levels of resilience and self-esteem compared to their New Zealand European counterparts. At time 2, these differences were no longer observed. Rangatahi Māori showed greater improvements than New Zealand European young people by two-three times. Both these studies were limited by their lack of long-term follow-up, making it impossible to determine whether gains were maintained.

These are promising findings highlighting the potential of PYD programmes. However, it is important to note that this research is based on discrete outdoor education programmes that occur over a defined number of days. There is little research and evaluation of longer-term youth work programmes which young people attend in addition to their regular day-to-day activities.

There have been some international evaluations of one-to-on mentoring programmes, but the extent to which these are grounded in PYD approaches is questionable as they draw primarily on studies with volunteer or non-professional mentors. DuBois et al. (2002) for example, conducted a much-cited meta-analytic review of mentoring programs for youth and found an overall modest or small benefit for the average young person. However, significantly better impacts were found where theoretically grounded best practice was used, and strong relationships were formed between young people and mentors. Features of programmes were significant predictors of effect size and included ongoing training for mentors, structured activities for mentors and youth, as well as expectations for frequency of contact, mechanisms for support and involvement of parents, and monitoring of overall program implementation. There was also a strong link between beneficial outcomes for young people and the quality of relationships between mentors and young people. Further, the largest effect sizes were identified for young people experiencing environmental risk and disadvantage such as low family socioeconomic status.

The mechanisms of action behind effective youth development programmes have become a key focus of PYD research (Deane and Dutton, 2020). Understanding what aspects of a programme are critical for success is important when analysing outcomes to enhance impact and efficiency (Chapman, Deane, Harré, Courtney, and Moore, 2017; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). PYD programmes generally incorporate skill-building and leadership opportunities, as well as supportive relationships and opportunities for empowerment (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2016). Lerner et al. (2014) suggest that three factors (the "Big 3") can be found in high quality PYD programmes. These include positive and sustained relationships with adults; skill-building activities; and leadership opportunities. Together with a young person's strengths, these factors facilitate PYD via the Five Cs, which are known to increase contribution and lower levels of risk behaviours e.g., delinquency and substance use (Lerner et al., 2014).

More broadly, in their 'Positive Youth Development in Aotearoa' publication, The Wayne Francis Charitable Trust (2021) identify three key approaches to enhance youth (and community) development. They stress that interventions should be strength-based, relationships should be respectful, and that approaches support young people's agency and participation. They identify two key outcomes, developing the whole person and developing connected communities.

In a report examining the effectiveness of mental health promotion programmes aimed at young people, Ball (2010) described the characteristics of successful interventions and found they should:

1) take a holistic approach to young people's lives, understanding them in their context

2) be culturally and socially appropriate, being tailored to age, gender, and culture

3) integrate multiple domains (i.e., family, school, community)

4) be long-term (i.e., from several months to years) with consistent mentors being important to effective interventions

5) be based in theory and research

6) involve youth in the design and delivery of programmes

7) have a skilled and competent workforce with high aspirations of young people.

There are many potential components of PYD programmes, but some of the key features include, taking a strength-based approach that considers the whole person and their context, skill-building activities, and sustained and positive relationships with adults. When such components are successfully delivered, young people can expect to achieve improvements in psychological resilience, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sense of connectedness.

Professionalisation and sustainability

Youth work has only begun to develop professionally in the last few decades. The development of national bodies and training has assisted with this (Bell, 2013). Ara Taiohi Incorporated (Ara Taiohi) provides an important voice and platform for research and training, as well as developing the Code of Ethics, an agreed set of guidelines for youth work in Aotearoa New Zealand to ensure that youth work is carried out in a safe, skilled, ethical manner. In recent years there has been a massive increase in the number of youth workers obtaining qualifications (Deane et al., 2019). In 2006 only half of youth workers had a qualification of some kind (including diplomas or degrees in unrelated fields). In 2015 78% of youth workers were qualified with 38% having a youth work specific qualification.

To support professionalisation and create a strong youth worker sector there is a need for youth workers to be adequately compensated (Bell, 2013). Despite significant progress in the youth development sector, with reference to the work of Ara Taiohi, lack of resourcing has negatively influenced the work conditions and work quality of youth workers and passion is not enough to overcome this (Deane et al., 2019). Martin (2006), as cited by Deane et al. (2019), reported that lack of self-care, support, and access to training were significant concerns for youth workers. Time pressures, inadequate resourcing, and financial concerns culminate to create significant barriers to training and support for youth workers (Deane et al., 2019). This naturally has flow-on effects for the quality of practice. Martin (2006) reported that lack of time and financial resources were the primary barriers to youth workers accessing training. Deane et al. (2019) argue that it is crucial to provide accessible and research-based training, education, support, and supervision for youth workers because they have the potential to have a significant influence over young people’s development.

Supporting priority cohorts

Deane et al. (2019) found that while young people reported overwhelmingly positive outcomes, one of the most common recommendations was cultural responsiveness in programming. They argue that we must invest in and value youth development approaches that are based on Māori youth development models and understand these alongside Western approaches. Such approaches should affirm young people's mauri, enhance their mana, be underscored by manaakitanga, facilitate whanaungatanga, be mindful of young people's whakapapa, and be informed by diverse mātauranga.

Deane et al. (2019) suggest that the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA) (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002) may have first established a shift from a deficit-focused model of youth development to one that is strength-based in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, despite this shift, they note that some researchers still contend that underlying the YDSA is a deficit-focused Western risk philosophy. Beals (2015) notes that while the YDSA contended that the strength-based approach was consistent with a Kaupapa Māori approach, the strategy was ultimately informed by Western psychology and a focus on risk. Beals (2015) argues that young people would achieve better outcomes if policymakers and practitioners reflected on the oppressive nature of Western models and instead used them only in conjunction with indigenous models.

PYD is a Western model, however some researchers have found it to be broadly consistent with a Te Ao Māori perspective (Arahanga-Doyle et al. 2019; Deane et al., 2019). The study cited earlier by Arahanga-Doyle et al. (2019) featured a sailing voyage predominantly catering to rangatahi Māori. The voyage incorporated several Māori constructs such as whanaungatanga, collective identity, and place with Māori participants showing marked improvements in self-esteem and resilience at the conclusion of the voyage. By contrast to this explicit focus on Māori wellbeing, a study by Hollis, Deane, Moore & Harré (2011) found that Māori participants in one programme overall enjoyed being treated in a culturally neutral way that didn't single them out as Māori. The authors explain this with regard to the negative stereotypes participants were aware of about young Māori. Despite these stereotypes, participants still reported pride in their Māori identity, the importance of having Māori instructors, and suggested the programme incorporate more cultural opportunities. Participants also discussed instances of cultural conflict, where instructors were unfamiliar with aspects of Māori culture, and these occurred when participants had non-Māori instructors.

There is limited research on best practice for youth development services working with rainbow young people. One publication from Ara Taiohi (2016, as cited in Deane et al. 2019) explored how the youth sector supports rainbow young people. They found that while support organisations were doing a great job at collaborating with each other, the sector was vulnerable and unsustainable due to its reliance on young people and volunteers as staff.

There is also little research on youth development for Pacific young people. Sanders, Munford, Thimasarn-Anwar, Liebenbergc, and Ungar (2015) conducted a study on the role of PYD in building resilience and wellbeing in at-risk youth. They found that Pacific young people and rangatahi Māori demonstrated higher levels of wellbeing and resilience compared to Pākehā young people. The authors suggest it is cultural resources that are protective for Pacific young people and rangatahi Māori and that services must be delivered with specific attention to young people's cultural connections.

The only available research on youth work for disabled young people that was identified was a small-scale survey conducted in 2013 by the UK Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Disabled young people told the team that people's expectations of their everyday life achievements were too low. They found that good youth work practice helped develop resilience, skills, and provided a challenge. They note that there was no national data to show how many disabled young people participate in youth work. The same is true of Aotearoa New Zealand. Young people appreciated sessions that were targeted at particular disabled groups as they could have their needs accommodated while not feeling concerned about the views of their peers. The most successful programmes worked on developing ambition and motivation. Such programmes also enabled young people to practice relationship and communication skills in a safe setting. They found successful youth work programmes developed young people's resilience and motivation and took them out of their unchallenging comfort zones. Programmes that allowed young people to have a say in their activities were also successful. Weaker programmes included those that were unchallenging and repetitive, included activities that focused only on social skills but neglected to build young people's autonomy, and those that didn't develop over time and failed to account for young people's context outside of the programme.

There is a growing body of research and evaluation evidence supporting positive outcomes for young people from PYD programmes. High quality PYD programmes are those that involve positive and sustained relationships with adults; skill-building activities; and leadership opportunities. There is, however, an absence of evidence in assessing the effect of one-on-on programmes with professional youth workers. The current evaluation draws on the available evidence in considering how well the design and implementation of the FTE Pilot contributes to good youth work practice and positive outcomes for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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