



MINISTRY OF  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO TAIOHI

*Administered by the Ministry of Social Development*

# Structured Youth Development Programmes

## A Review of Evidence

**A report undertaken for the Ministry of Youth  
Development**

**Public release: September 2009**

*“The right activities within effective programmes with meaningful goal setting and personal planning provides the best platforms for positive youth development”*

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Review Background, Citation, Purpose and Methods**

In late February 2009, the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) commenced a review to identify what is currently known about good practice in structured youth development programmes. This report was substantially completed in July 2009, and publicly released on the MYD website in September 2009.

The lead author was Rachel Winthrop, then Principal Analyst at MYD. This report has been subsequently amended and made available to the public, particularly aimed at providers of structured youth development programmes.

Bibliographically, this report can be cited thus:

- Ministry of Youth Development (2009), *Structured Youth Development Programmes: A Review of Evidence* ('A report undertaken for the Ministry of Youth Development, September 2009'), Wellington: Ministry of Youth Development

This review is intended to help MYD assess the continued relevancy of its existing structured programmes - MYD contracts with 45 providers of 131 structured youth development programmes, delivering in 68 locations - and inform future programme purchasing decisions. It has been issued publicly as a background MYD discussion paper to inform New Zealand youth development programme planning more generally.

Although the review is of relevance to structured youth development programmes generally, its genesis was in consideration of two structured youth development programmes currently funded by MYD: the New Zealand Conservation Corps (NZCC) and the Youth Services Corp (YSC), both of which are funded through MYD's Services for Young People (SFYP) fund. The general aim of the two structured programmes is to "build the confidence, motivation and self esteem of the young people by involving them in practical educational activity of benefit to themselves and of value to their communities, and improving ongoing movement into further ETE [employment, training or educational] outcomes".<sup>1</sup>

This review does not involve a critique or evaluation of either programme; rather, the programmes are of interest because they are illustrative of the current approach taken by MYD to the provision of structured youth development programmes and provide a useful focus and comparison point for the evidence identified.

The review draws primarily on existing, published literature about young people, their needs, and how best to intervene with them. New Zealand-based literature is used when available, although most is international, and all is drawn from a range of disciplines. Both to supplement this literature and to assist with its interpretation, the expertise of various youth development specialists has been drawn on, both within, and external to, MYD.

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<sup>1</sup> Report to the Minister of Youth Affairs (March 2003), *Vote Youth Development: Fiscally neutral amendments* Wellington: Ministry of Youth Development, p7

## Youth Development and its Emergence as a Field of Human Endeavour

Broadly speaking, 'youth development' refers to the developmental process associated with adolescence; the period one enters as a child and emerges from as an adult, ideally able to avoid the choices and behaviours that limit future potential and more or less equipped with the skills, attitudes, competencies and values needed to successfully navigate adult life.<sup>2</sup> What constitutes 'necessary skills, attitudes, competencies and values' is the focus of a great deal of attention in the literature and is conceptualised, confusingly, in a multitude of ways. The literature variously describes models of skills and competencies, of personal and social assets, of resilience, and of developmental outcomes, to name but a few of the approaches taken.

It is now widely accepted that the process of youth development, and the related acquisition of skills/competencies/assets, occurs through repeated exposure to 'positive' people and experiences which, in turn, provide young people with the opportunity to gain and refine these skills etc.<sup>3</sup> There are four settings or environments in which young people naturally exist and where they can potentially access helpful people and have positive developmental experiences. These are:

- the family and whanau
- the community
- the school, university, training institution or workplace
- peers.

Each of these environments exerts a different amount of influence over individual young people, with family being the most powerful at all stages of adolescent development. Negative experiences in one (or more) of these environments can be counteracted by other stronger/more positive environments. More broadly, young people's development is also influenced by the wider economic, social and cultural contexts within which they grow up.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond describing the adolescent developmental process, the term 'youth development' is also used to refer to a field of human endeavour intended to positively support the adolescent developmental process. Like other forms of social intervention before it, youth development emerged as an appealing and theoretically useful idea, with practice moving rapidly ahead of its conceptual or evidential base. A parallel can be drawn between this situation and, for example, that faced previously by the prevention field.<sup>5</sup> In

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<sup>2</sup> McLaren, K (2002), *Building Strength: A review of research on how to achieve good outcomes for young people in their families, peer groups, schools, careers and communities* Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this report, terms like 'positive' or 'successful' youth development, 'doing well' and so forth, alongside terms like 'struggling' have been used, although such terminology is often vague and somewhat subjective. In the context of this report, Eccles and Gootman's (2002) conceptualisation of 'positive' or 'successful' development is drawn upon to imply that the young person is headed on a positive trajectory towards finding a meaningful and productive place within their cultural milieu. Where terms like 'struggling' are used, this implies the young person is on a trajectory that is not likely to lead to this outcome or is experiencing considerable challenges in progressing along this positive trajectory.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Youth Development (2002), *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*, Wellington: Ministry of Youth Development

<sup>5</sup> Benson, P. L. and Saito, R. N (2000), The scientific foundations of youth development, pp123-147. In Public/Private Ventures (ed), *Youth development: Issues, challenges and directions*, Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures

about 1960, prevention became an approach that promulgated programmes, professions and professionals. Accountability issues emerged and the field is now being underpinned by a unifying prevention science. Youth development, it seems, is now at the crossroads faced by the prevention field decades earlier.<sup>6</sup>

The state of knowledge about positive youth development depends on your perspective.<sup>7</sup> “On the one hand, from the perspective of commonsense, it is clear that active attention to a youth’s developmental needs has a high probability of paying off in terms of increasing a youth’s successes in life and decreasing his or her serious problems”.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the body of evidence about effective interventions is quite limited and one could contend that there “are many small studies, but few are large and methodologically stringent enough to persuade a sceptic”.<sup>9</sup> It is quite possible for someone to ‘support’ youth development but not be convinced that social programmes can do much to accomplish it.<sup>10</sup>

However limited the evidence base for youth development, considerable progress has been made since the above comments were made in 2000 and there is an accumulating body of evidence showing that individual social programmes can demonstrably facilitate positive youth development. There is also a limited but growing body of evidence about how to create effective programmes to support positive youth development. Arguably for the first time, it is now possible to analyse the youth development literature in a way that allows some conclusions, however limited, to be drawn about effective practice.

## **Review Findings - Facilitating Youth Development through Programmes**

### *Programme Participants*

All young people need access to the people, settings and experiences that facilitate positive development. The literature suggests that young people who live in settings that are developmentally opportunity-rich, even when they are deemed at-risk, experience greater positive development than those young people who live in communities that are poor in such supports and opportunities.<sup>11</sup> Youth development programmes have a role to play in both of these settings. In developmentally opportunity-rich communities, youth development programmes may supplement an existing, comprehensive array of developmental opportunities. In opportunity-poor settings, youth development programmes may well represent a primary source of positive developmental opportunities.

A key question to ask about MYD’s SFYP fund is ‘who is likely to make a poor transition to adulthood *without* the intensive support provided by a structured youth development programme?’.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit, pp7-16

<sup>8</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit, p12

<sup>9</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit, p13

<sup>10</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit

<sup>11</sup> See Eccles, J. and Gootman, J. A [eds], Committee of Community Level Programs for Youth (2002), *Community programs to promote youth development: Report on the Committee of Community Level Programs for Youth, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press

This necessitates consideration of who is most in need of assistance and who is most likely to benefit from this kind of programme. In summary, it would seem the group most appropriately targeted for participation in programmes like NZCC and YSC are those young people who lack strong attachments to pro-social settings, who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from positive activities, and who need to develop foundational skills, attitudes, values and competencies in order to be able to successfully participate in educational or employment-related activities.

### *Goals and Outcomes of Youth Development Programmes*

Providing young people with the opportunities and supports that foster broad, holistic development is the primary purpose of youth development activity. At the individual programme level, there will be extensive variability in the specific goals and outcomes set, reflecting both the variability in focus of different programmes and the lack of a unified youth development framework. Ultimately, all programmes should reflect some aspect of this overarching theme of broad developmental growth.

The stated aims and outcomes of the SFYP fund, and the NZCC and YSC programmes specifically, are consistent with the youth development literature. Having said that, the current conceptualisation of what constitutes appropriate youth development activity is so broad that very few things could actually be considered inconsistent or out-of-scope. While this breadth in aims and outcomes is arguably appropriate in respect of the SFYP fund, it seems less helpful at the programme level.

Having such broad programme aims and outcomes potentially encourages programmes to 'do everything' and 'be everyone' with young people. The risk, when this happens, is that very little is achieved because efforts are too dispersed and lack the intensity and/or the focus needed to facilitate specific outcomes. A single programme cannot undo all of the harm that some young people have already experienced nor accomplish what multiple institutions with infinitely greater resources have failed to do in the decade or more previously.<sup>12</sup> This review contends that a youth development programme like NZCC/YSC, targeting the kind of young person described previously, can most usefully contribute to young people's lives in the following way:

- by helping participants aspire to a life that includes positive and full economic and social participation
- by helping participants identify what their particular path to positive and full economic and social participation may look like, and the steps towards those goals
- by helping participants form *enduring* connections with positive people and settings that will help them to achieve positive and full economic and social participation *beyond* the duration of the programme
- by helping to instil the knowledge and basic practices necessary for them to successfully carry out their next steps
- by increasing young people's motivation, confidence and self efficacy sufficiently in order for them to carry out their next steps.

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<sup>12</sup> Higgins, J (2003), *Labour market programmes for young people: A review*. Youth Transitions Report Series 2003. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development

### *Characteristics of Effective Youth Development Programmes*

One of the seemingly few explicitly articulated and agreed-upon elements of youth development practice involves the use of a strengths-based approach. The use of a strengths-based approach is, typically, what makes youth development practice effective. The absence of a strengths-based approach would certainly qualify as ineffective practice.

That said, what constitutes a 'strengths-based approach' is not uniformly understood. The first three bullet points below represent consistently-agreed elements of a strengths-based approach; the fourth is the subject of some debate but is arguably the most useful of the conceptualisations provided in the literature:

- the use of a competence- rather than a deficit-based paradigm: young people are viewed as being 'at potential' rather than 'at risk' or as problems to be fixed
- taking a holistic view of young people
- taking an ecological view: recognising the influence of the different environments or settings that young people exist in
- taking a dual focus of enhancing young people's protective factors *and* building their capacity to resist risk factors: ie, take a dual promotion and prevention focus.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the use of a strengths-based approach, what constitutes an effective youth development programme (or even what constitutes a youth development programme as opposed to some other form of youth-focused programme) has yet to be agreed. The information below draws together existing conceptual and evidential information to describe what is currently believed to represent good youth development practice.

#### Choice of Activities

The activities included within a youth development programme are important because they are the way programmes attract young people. Activities are also important because they are the vehicle through which young people gain access to the people and experiences that facilitate desired developmental outcomes or assets. For positive youth development to occur, young people need a range of opportunities including opportunities to:

- experience supportive adult relationships
- learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviours
- feel a sense of belonging and being valued
- develop a sense of mattering
- develop positive social values and norms
- build and master skills
- develop confidence in one's abilities to master one's environment (a sense of personal efficacy)
- make a contribution to one's community.

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<sup>13</sup> It is sometimes argued that a strengths-based approach involves a sole focus on building strengths or protective factors, with the amelioration of specific problems or risks the domain of prevention-focused activities

There is no such thing as ‘the best’ or ‘most youth development-ish’ activity; rather, activities may be considered more, less or equally relevant depending on their appeal to a particular group of young people, their ability to provide or create needed experiences, and the extent to which the experiences they provide can facilitate desired developmental outcomes. A combination of activities, rather than a single activity, appears the best way of responding to the breadth and diversity of young people’s interests and needs.

### How Activities are Conducted

The way in which an activity is conducted, and the nature of the setting(s) in which it is conducted, is more important to outcome achievement than the activity *per se*. Effective youth development programmes incorporate as many of the following features as possible:

- have high aspirations for, and expectations of, young people
- are well planned, with activities deliberately designed to progressively build on existing skills and competencies
- have high quality activities delivered by a skilled and confident workforce
- have skilled and empathetic staff who stay long enough to build trusting relationships with young people
- have a ‘deliberate learning environment’
- have staff who interact with young people in a way that maximises opportunities for learning and growth
- meaningfully involve young people in choosing and designing activities
- have increasing opportunities for young people to make decisions and to take on leadership roles as they mature and gain more expertise
- structure that is developmentally, culturally and environmentally appropriate
- have clear expectations for behaviour
- provide emotional and moral support
- provide physical and psychological safety
- have strong links between families, schools, and broader community resources.

There are a number of other programmatic elements likely to influence a programme’s effectiveness including programme duration, intensity and course size, as well as the inclusion and conduct of activities like assessment, goal setting and personal planning. The youth development literature provides relatively little discussion of, or empirical evidence on, the relative contributions of any of these elements or activities.

While the youth development literature quite strongly emphasises the value of longer programmes over shorter ones, the evidential basis for this assertion appears weak or nonexistent for most kinds of youth development programmes except mentoring where it does appear to hold true. The very limited information identified on programme intensity or ‘dosage’ lends some support to the value of greater rather than lower programme intensity levels. Optimal course size seems to be influenced by a number of factors including programme type, participant age and needs, staff ability, and programme

resources; providers may well be best placed to determine what group size would be optimal for a given programme.<sup>14</sup>

While the literature emphasises the importance of programmes being responsive to participants' needs and building on their strengths, it provides very little specific comment on how individual needs, strengths or aspirations might be determined. Formal assessment, which can support this process, can be simple and conducted from a strengths-based perspective, however, the quality of any assessment activity is dependent on the ability of the assessor to elicit and interpret the information and then act on findings. This is likely to have training and resource implications for providers, and in turn, for programme funders. Further, there is no guarantee that even good assessment will reveal information relevant to participant safety or support needs.

The review contends that comprehensive personal planning, incorporating meaningful goal setting activities, is a critical element of a structured youth development programme. Ultimately, successful youth development means that young people are engaged in positive settings and activities over the long term, not just the short term, and programmes have a contribution to make beyond simply an initial post programme placement. A programme may achieve the target of 70% ETE post programme placement in the absence of personal planning activities, (a sympathetic labour market or good contacts with training organisations should suffice), but failure to help young people think about their longer term aspirations and the steps necessary for goal actualisation not only represents a wasted opportunity, it also means longer term success is left to chance more than is necessary.

#### *Fit between Youth Development and ETE Programmes*

NZCC and YSC seek to establish in young people a core platform of practices, competencies, values, resources and so forth necessary not only for successful adult economic and social participation but also seemingly for successful participation in training, education and employment. Viewed in this way, they sit lower on a 'staircasing' framework than ETE programmes and complement, rather than replicate, ETE activities.

#### **Conclusions**

The evidence reviewed demonstrates that effective youth development programmes can have a positive impact on youth development. As it currently stands, however, the evidence does not appear to live up to the considerable enthusiasm that proponents of the youth development field express for it. When done well, the impact of youth development programmes appears positive but modest.

There are two points that need to be made in respect to this conclusion. The first is that this picture of programme accomplishment seems largely consistent with the accomplishments of other disciplines or fields of practice that seek to effect change in the lives of young people. The literature suggests ETE programmes have had modest effects on employment levels and earnings of young people. Areas like youth justice and offending have similarly struggled to develop programmes where positive gains in

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<sup>14</sup> Moore, K. A. with Bowie, L., Garrett, S. B., Kinukawa, A., McKinney, K., Redd, Z., Theokas, C. and Wilson, B. (2006). Program implementation: What do we know? *Child Trends*. [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org), retrieved May 2009

areas like motivation, efficacy and pro-social behaviour are maintained post programme or even generalised back into young people's settings where those programmes are residential.

The second, and arguably more important point, is that youth development is still in its infancy. Knowledge of 'what works', although increasing, remains limited and the application of that knowledge within the sector appears variable at best. What seemingly represents a modest contribution today may in time deliver more substantial returns, especially as the quantity and quality of evaluation and synthesis work increases and that knowledge is more consistently translated into practice.

The challenge for MYD is ensuring the programmes it funds reflect current knowledge of 'what works', and more broadly, ensuring sufficient standardisation occurs across the programmes to support accountability and efficiency, while still allowing providers enough flexibility to be able to respond to the divergent needs of different localities and of individual participants. There is clearly an inherent tension between flexibility and standardisation. On the one hand, a 'one size fits all' programme will never meet the needs of all young people and providers must be able to adapt their activities to reflect the particular young people that are participating in their programme at any one time. On the other, programmes need to consistently reflect what is known about effective youth development practice and consistently achieve what was intended with the public money that funds them, which implies a degree of standardisation alongside comprehensive, effective monitoring processes.

Regardless of the challenge involved, there is now enough known about best practice in youth development work to make the application of that knowledge in practice a reasonable expectation. At the same time, it is recognised that a gap does exist between best practice and what is practiced currently by some in New Zealand's youth development sector. This gap, which in some cases may be quite substantial, will take time and effort to close.

## **Recommendations**

Post-report preparation note: *MYD is currently considering these recommendations as far as its work programme is concerned. It should not be assumed that MYD will necessarily be undertaking or meeting all of the report recommendations although this report, as a whole, is informing MYD Services and Policy work in 2009/10.*

MYD has an important role to play in facilitating the application of best practice across the youth development sector. The changes needed to support effective practice are twofold. Action is needed to ensure best practice principles for youth development are consistently applied by those receiving MYD funding. More fundamentally, action also appears necessary to ensure the programmes designed and subsequently purchased by MYD are consistent with more generic principles of effective programme design and delivery.

In terms of the generic programme design and delivery issues, MYD needs, firstly, to clarify its own expectations regarding various aspects of programme design and delivery and, secondly, to align its own practices with those expectations. Specific actions MYD can undertake could include:

- confirm the intended programme participant group and communicating this information to providers<sup>15</sup>
- more narrowly define the areas of young people's lives that MYD's structured programmes are expected to effect change in
- explicitly articulate the logic by which the programmes are expected to achieve intended outcomes and communicate this logic to providers to help guide their choices of activities
- ensure that programme deliverables, including outcomes at programme exit and at three months, reflect this scope and logic
- provide rationales for the programme deliverables outlined in service contracts to help providers understand why they are being asked to perform particular activities and to guide their choices of related activities
- improve the tools MYD requires providers to use for individual deliverables<sup>16</sup>
- build a monitoring framework, together with meaningful measures, that reflects the intended programme scope and deliverables, desired activities and practices, and intended outcomes.

In terms of the application of best practice youth development principles, MYD can:

- encourage providers to use a wider or different range of activities, taking account of their appeal to young people and their efficacy in bringing about desired developmental outcomes<sup>17</sup>
- require providers to conduct activities that will build participants' connections with positive people that endure beyond the duration of the course
- require providers to conduct activities that will help participants identify and move towards their longer term goals, rather than simply their short term goals
- require providers to demonstrate both conceptually and practically how their activities provide meaningful developmental opportunities<sup>18</sup>
- require providers to demonstrate both conceptually and practically how their service projects benefit the community
- require providers to demonstrably incorporate into their programmes features of activities/ settings associated with effective practice
- require providers to articulate and apply a model of practice that optimises the learning and growth that occurs from activities
- consider alternative models to the current standard 20 week programme model<sup>19</sup>
- consider providing additional assistance to those young people who remain unsupported in their natural settings at the end of the main programme.

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<sup>15</sup> Whether this reflects the profile outlined in the current report or some other sub-group

<sup>16</sup> For example, goal setting and personal planning tools

<sup>17</sup> Activities do not need to be conservation- or outdoor-based to be developmentally useful

<sup>18</sup> Especially in terms of how they increase aspirations, build enduring connections, and better-place them to carry out activities beyond the duration of the programme

<sup>19</sup> Given there seems no evidential reason to endorse this particular model over others

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) is responsible for promoting the interests of young people aged between 12 and 24 years. It does this through the provision of advice to government; the facilitation of young people's input into selected government processes; the development and sharing of an evidence base on youth development and the funding of youth development programmes and services.

MYD, in the 2008/09 financial year, contracted with 45 providers of 131 structured youth development programmes, delivered in 68 locations. Although the review is of relevance to structured youth development programmes generally, its genesis was in consideration of a significant subset of this MYD-funded activity: two structured youth development programmes currently funded by MYD: the New Zealand Conservation Corps (NZCC) and the Youth Services Corp (YSC), both of which are funded through MYD's Services for Young People (SFYP) fund.

MYD currently funds through its Services for Young People (SFYP) fund: the NZ Conservation Corps (NZCC) and the Youth Services Corps (YSC). At approximately \$8 million per annum, the SFYP fund comprises the bulk of the Ministry's total annual funding and is a significant component of MYD's activities. Involving a budget of approximately \$3.7 million and \$1.5 million respectively for the 2009 financial year, in combination, the NZCC and the YSC represent the largest spend within the SFYP fund.

#### *NZ Conservation Corps and Youth Services Corps*

The NZCC was established in New Zealand in 1989, modelled largely on a Californian Conservation Corps programme developed in the United States in the late seventies.<sup>20</sup> At the time of implementation, NZCC was linked to the government's Employment and Training Strategy.<sup>21</sup> The YSC was introduced in 1995, modelled on the NZCC, and established out of the then Prime Minister's Taskforce on Youth Employment.<sup>22</sup> The general aim of both programmes is to "...build the confidence, motivation and self esteem of the young people by involving them in practical educational activity of benefit to themselves and of value to their communities, and improving ongoing movement into further ETE [employment, training or educational] outcomes".<sup>23</sup>

Young people aged between 12 and 24 years are eligible to participate in programmes funded through MYD's SFYP fund. For the NZCC and YSC, this has in practice become 16-24 year olds because it is this age group and not the broader (younger) group who are legally able to participate in activities other than school. Young people aged 15 are

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<sup>20</sup> Note to Minister of Employment: *Further development of the Conservation Corp concept in New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Labour, 25 May 1988

<sup>21</sup> Report to the Minister of Youth Affairs, 5 October 2007, *MYD – 2008 contracting round for services for young people*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Development

<sup>22</sup> Report to the Minister of Youth Affairs, 2003, op cit

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

able to participate if they have been exempted from school via a Section 71 issued by the young person's school.<sup>24</sup>

While initially designed with a broad participant target group, over the past five or so years, both the NZCC and YSC have tended to focus on 'the hard end' of the youth spectrum; young people who have typically experienced a range of adverse childhood events, present with significantly challenging behaviours, and who face multiple psychosocial stressors. A portion of these young people also have a background of criminal offending. This focus was both an intentional policy shift towards investment in the most vulnerable and a reflection of strong economic conditions at the time which resulted in high employment amongst low-risk young people (and consequently minimal availability for participation in youth development programmes). The basic model for both NZCC and YSC involves an intensive, full-time 20 week course, of between eight and twelve young people per course.

Traditionally, the core components of the two programmes have been the same:

- work activities of value to the community – 50% (NZCC work activities are conservation/environment-based, while YSC activities are community-based)
- challenging recreation – 25%
- education – 25%
- work experience – 25%
- te Ao Maori – incorporated throughout the programme.<sup>25</sup>

In c.2006, these components were removed from the standard service contract. Contracts now require that providers deliver a prescribed set of inputs, have a minimum of 25 contact hours per week with students plus one hour one-on-one with the course instructor per fortnight, and achieve a prescribed set of outcomes.<sup>26</sup> The choice of activities included within programmes is now left to the discretion of individual providers, who are expected to select those that will best facilitate achievement of outcomes. Many programmes still largely follow a pre-2006 format.

The inputs for both programmes are as follows:

- prepare individual needs assessments
- develop, implement and monitor individual plans
- outline programme curriculum development and delivery to meet the needs of young people
- design project and activities in their community
- network and work in partnership with other providers of social services locally, regionally and nationally.<sup>27</sup>

The outcomes for both programmes are also the same. In the current service contracts, they are organised into the following four areas:

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<sup>24</sup> The Ministry of Education are currently reviewing school exemption policy which may affect the ability of 15 year olds to participate in youth development programmes as an alternative to school

<sup>25</sup> The intention was that the te Ao Maori component was embedded within the programme generally so did not represent a separate percentage of effort

<sup>26</sup> There are other compliance-related deliverables beyond those listed here, for example, around reporting

<sup>27</sup> See the Ministry of Youth Development's *Contract for Services for Young People* template

- *employment, training and education* – the young person transitions to education, training or employment on programme completion
- *health and wellbeing* – the young person demonstrates knowledge of healthier, safer living practices and sustains practices that contribute to their personal wellbeing and future
- *personal development* – the young person is able to self manage, has an increased sense of self identity, can make positive choices and is more skilled, equipped and personally supported to make transitions
- *social development* – the young person has increased relationship, communication and team-work skills, is connected more to their family, community and environment, and values contributing positively to people, their community and their environment.

## **The Review**

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this review was initially to provide the evidence base that MYD requires in order to effectively assess the continued relevancy and adequacy of NZCC and YSC for the current environment and to make informed future programme purchasing decisions. This review is not a critique or evaluation of either NZCC or YSC and the task of actually comparing this evidence against the current models of the two programmes sits largely, although not entirely, outside the scope of this review. Identification of the implications of evidence for MYD is within scope. The report has, over the course of its development, also acted as a review of current thinking regarding more general youth development programme planning, practice, policy and research.

### *Methods and Data Sources*

The review draws primarily on existing, published literature about young people, their needs, and how best to intervene with them. New Zealand-based literature is used where available, although most is international, and all is drawn from a range of disciplines. Staff from the Ministry of Social Development's Centre for Social Research and Evaluation and main library, along with those from within MYD, were enlisted to locate articles on areas identified as key to the review. Both to supplement this literature and to assist with its interpretation, the expertise of various youth development specialists has been drawn on, both within and external to MYD.

### *How the Evidence Base has Shaped the Conduct of the Review and Final Report*

In many disciplines or fields of social service, the provision of a knowledge base would equate simply to the conducting of a comprehensive literature review or a systematic review. In this case, however, it has meant something quite different.

The field of youth development, both in terms of its theoretical underpinnings and its evidence base, is an 'emerging' one. This means some of the ideas that inform its theory and practice have yet to be formally articulated, or have only been articulated in part (and sometimes not in a published form). This is particularly true when attempting to 'drop down' from the high level depiction of youth development, as articulated in

documents like New Zealand's Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA),<sup>28</sup> to establish what 'youth development' actually means at a practical level.

'Emerging' also means that the evidence base around intervening contains a lot of gaps, which is in no way a criticism of the value of the work, both theoretical and applied, that has and is being done.

Within the report, this approach is evident in the considerable time and space given to 'unpacking' core or fundamental youth development terms and concepts and re-articulating them, as well as drawing on the practical wisdom of youth development specialists.<sup>29</sup> The report spans a broad range of subject areas, trading off depth, in some cases, in order to provide the fuller picture necessary to make sense of the 'world' of youth development. The review does not purport to have 'defined youth development' on behalf of the sector.

### *Report Structure and Audience*

There are three broad audiences for this report, with quite different information needs. The first is senior policy decision makers who need information about key policy and operational policy issues; the second is those officials who will be responsible for progressing any future development of the NZCC and YSC programmes. The third group comprises members of the youth development provider sector in New Zealand who wish to have an informed basis on which to consider programme planning directions, such as extending 'range and reach'.

This latter group may need to 'delve into the detail' of different aspects of youth development and programme design in general, in order to decide how to identify the target participant group, how particular needs should be addressed, how to design the overall shape of the programme(s) to be purchased, how to support providers to deliver the programmes in the most effective way, and how to monitor and report back to government on their effects.

Rather than create separate reports, this single report addresses policy and operational policy issues of relevance to all audiences. However, a subsection of the MYD website ([www.myd.govt.nz](http://www.myd.govt.nz)) has been set aside for 'spin-off' reports from this review (Powerpoints, summaries etc). The first part of the report sets out what the literature tells us about different areas of relevance to youth development activity; the second part discusses the ramifications of that information for MYD and the New Zealand youth development sector.

This review is intended to provide a basic platform of information to help facilitate a common language and shared understanding of terms, concepts, ideas and knowledge about youth development and 'what works' that can be used, together with people's own knowledge, to further develop the activities that MYD purchases through a subset of the SFYP fund. This review is more usefully conceived of as a starting point or an input into further thinking rather than an end product.

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<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Youth Development, 2002, op cit

<sup>29</sup> The term 'practical wisdom' is used throughout the literature to refer to the body of knowledge derived from practical experience. For the sake of consistency, it is used in this way throughout this report

## **Youth Development as a Process of Adolescent Development**

Broadly speaking, 'youth development' refers to the developmental process associated with adolescence; the period one enters as a child and emerges as an adult, ideally able to avoid the choices and behaviours that limit future potential and more or less equipped with the skills, attitudes, competencies and values needed to successfully navigate adult life.<sup>30</sup> (See Appendix 1 for further discussion of adolescent development.)

What constitutes 'necessary skills, attitudes, competencies and values' is the focus of a great deal of attention in the literature and is conceptualised in a multitude of ways.<sup>31</sup> Typically, according to Roth, successful adolescent development is conceptualised in relation to skills and competence across the physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional and social arenas.<sup>32</sup>

One of the most commonly cited and straightforward categorisations depicted in the literature involves the '5-C's' of positive youth development, which deliberately seeks to broaden the conceptualisation of successful development beyond the skill and competence domains.<sup>33</sup>

- competence in cognitive, academic, social and vocational areas
- confidence encompassing self esteem, self concept, self efficacy, identity and belief in the future
- connections to family, peers and community
- character encompassing areas like positive values, integrity and moral commitment
- caring and compassion.<sup>34</sup>

A sixth 'C' of 'contribution', and a seventh 'C' of 'control' have more recently been added to this list.<sup>35</sup>

Other theorists talk in terms of 'necessary developmental outcomes'. For example, Connell et al list the developmental outcomes most likely to lead to adult success as follows:

- learning to be productive – to do well in school, develop positive outside interests, and acquire basic life skills

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<sup>30</sup> McLaren, 2002, op cit

<sup>31</sup> For the sake of brevity, the expression 'skills, attitudes, competencies and values' is subsequently referred to as 'skills etc'

<sup>32</sup> Roth, J (2004), Youth development programs, *The Prevention Researcher*, 11(2), p3-7

<sup>33</sup> Perkins, D. F (1997), cited in Patterson, J (2001), *The concept of youth development: A review of literature from the United States of America*. Adelaide: Ausyouth

<sup>34</sup> Roth, J. L and Brooks-Gunn, J (2003), Youth development programs: Risk, prevention and policy, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 32, pp170-182

<sup>35</sup> Lerner, R. M (2004), cited in Zarrett, N. and Lerner, R. M (2008), *Ways to promote positive the positive development of children and youth*, *Child Trends*, [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org), retrieved April 2009; Ginsburg K and Jablow M, A Parent's Guide To Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings, *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 2006, pp1-26: <http://www.psychiatricannalsonline.com/showPdf.asp?rID=22206> (p6)

- learning to connect in positive and supportive ways – to adults in their families and community, to their peers, and to something larger than themselves, be it religious or civic
- learning to navigate – to chart and follow a safe course. This task takes multiple forms:
  - navigating amongst changing conditions in their multiple worlds
  - navigating the developmental transitions from being taken care of to taking care of others, and from learning about the world to assuming responsibility for their role in it
  - navigating around the lures of unhealthy and dangerous behaviours.<sup>36</sup>

Another approach involves the identification of assets considered necessary for adolescent development and successful adulthood. Of the various asset models located in the literature, Eccles and Gootman's seems the most rigorously arrived at (see Figure 1).<sup>37</sup> It was derived from a blend of developmental theory, practical wisdom and empirical research, and incorporates many other models or conceptualisations of core skills, attitudes, competencies and values evident in the literature, such as the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets index<sup>38</sup> and the 5, 6 or 7 'C's' of youth development. For these reasons, it is described here in detail.

Eccles and Gootman identify 28 assets associated with adolescent wellbeing and successful transitions to 'positive' or 'pro-social' adulthood. (See Figure 1 overleaf and Appendix 2 for discussion of the methodology and application of Eccles and Gootman's model.) The 28 assets are organised into 1. personal assets, subsequently grouped into the three domains of physical, intellectual, and psychological and emotional development, and 2. social assets.

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<sup>36</sup> Connell, J. P., Gambone, M. A. and Smith, T. J (2000), Youth development in community settings: Challenges to our field and our approach, pp279-300, In Public/Private Ventures, op cit

<sup>37</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.search-institute.org/assets>, retrieved March 2009

**Figure 1. Personal and Social Assets for Positive Youth Development**

<p><b>Physical development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good health habits</li> <li>• Good health risk management skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Planfulness’ – planning for the future and future life events</li> <li>• Sense of personal autonomy/responsibility for self</li> <li>• Optimism coupled with realism</li> <li>• Coherent and positive personal and social identity</li> <li>• Prosocial and culturally sensitive values</li> <li>• Spirituality or a sense of a ‘larger’ purpose in life</li> <li>• Strong moral character</li> <li>• A commitment to good use of time</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intellectual development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of essential life skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of essential vocational skills</li> <li>• School success</li> <li>• Rational habits of mind (critical thinking &amp; reasoning skills)</li> <li>• Indepth knowledge of more than one culture</li> <li>• Good decision-making skills</li> <li>• Knowledge of skills needed to navigate through multiple cultural contexts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connectedness – perceived good relationships and trusts with parents, peers, and some other adults</li> <li>• Sense of social place/integration – being connected and valued by larger social networks</li> <li>• Attachment to prosocial/conventional institutions (eg school)</li> <li>• Ability to navigate in multiple cultural contexts</li> <li>• Commitment to civic engagement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Psychological and emotional development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good mental health including positive self-regard</li> <li>• Good emotional self-regulation skills</li> <li>• Good coping skills</li> <li>• Good conflict resolution skills</li> <li>• Mastery motivation and positive achievement motivation</li> <li>• Confidence in one’s personal efficacy</li> </ul>	

The basic idea underpinning the model is that individuals need to develop assets within these four domains. While they do not need the entire range of 28 assets to thrive, (different combinations of assets across the four domains reflect equally positive youth development), overall it is better to possess more assets than fewer and life is generally easier when an individual possesses assets in all four domains. Strong assets in one domain can offset weak assets in another.

Regardless of how they are conceptualised, young people acquire and develop these skills/competencies/assets etc through repeated exposure to ‘positive’ (pro-social) people and experiences which, in turn, provide them with the opportunity to gain and refine these skills etc.<sup>39</sup> There are four settings or environments in which young people naturally exist and where they can potentially access helpful people and have positive developmental experiences. These are:

- the family and whanau
- the community
- the school, university, training institution or workplace
- peers.<sup>40 41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>40</sup> Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, 2002, op cit

<sup>41</sup> Beatty, A. and Chalk, R (eds)] (2006), *A study of interactions: Emerging issues in the science of adolescence*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press

Each of these environments exerts a different amount of influence over individual young people, with family being the most powerful at all stages of adolescent development. Negative experiences in one (or more) of these environments can be counteracted by other stronger/more positive environments.<sup>42</sup>

More broadly, young people's development is also influenced by the wider economic, social and cultural contexts within which they grow up.<sup>43</sup> Young people at the start of the 21st century are the healthiest and longest-living of any generation in human history, and the least likely of any previous generation to die violently.<sup>44</sup> They will also be the first people to grow up in a world characterised by instantaneous global communication.<sup>45 46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, 2002, op cit

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Edgerton, R (1992) *Sick Societies. Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony* Washington DC: Free Press

<sup>45</sup> Beatty and Chalk, 2006, op cit

<sup>46</sup> Catalano, R, Berglund, M, Ryan, J, Lonczak, H, and Hawkins, J (2004), Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programmes, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol591, No1, pp98-124

<sup>47</sup> Rumbaut, R. G (2005), Turning Points in the Transition to Adulthood, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28, (6), pp1041-1086

## **Intervening to Facilitate Positive Youth Development**

What the evidence clearly shows is that young people have very different levels of access to the people, experiences and settings that can facilitate opportunities for positive development. In brief, it seems that adolescents in communities that are rich in developmental opportunities have higher rates of positive development, even amongst those youth deemed at-risk, compared with young people in communities that are poor in such supports and opportunities.<sup>48 49</sup>

The fundamental purpose of youth development programmes, regardless of who they target or how they organise their services, is to provide or facilitate developmental opportunities for young people. For young people living in developmentally opportunity-rich families and communities, youth development programmes are likely to supplement an existing array of beneficial opportunities. For young people who lack access to positive people and settings, however, youth development programmes could potentially represent a primary source of positive developmental opportunities and experiences.

A fundamental question for the youth development field generally is 'how do we best support young people in their adolescence and facilitate their successful transition to adulthood?'. For the purpose of this review, there is a much narrower question to be addressed: namely, 'what does a good youth development programme look like?'. Our ability to answer either of these questions with any degree of precision or certainty is, at this time, unfortunately somewhat limited.

The state of knowledge regarding youth development theory and practice is well described by Benson and Saito.

*If one commissioned 10 writers to compose reviews of what we know about youth development, 10 very different papers would emerge. Perhaps a few studies and a few names would be constant...Our point is that the conceptual terrain for youth development is murky.*

While considerable progress has been made since these comments were written in 2000, the issues they highlight have by no means been resolved. More recently, Roth noted that what constitutes a youth development programme still has to be defined; a situation she suggests makes it difficult either to establish what constitutes best practice or to answer questions about the utility of the approach. Without this clear picture, Roth suggests we run the risk of creating a new set of programmes that follow a youth development approach in name only.

Connell et al. suggest the conceptual issues facing the youth development area are two-fold. The first is that what constitutes the 'youth development field' is too narrowly defined. They suggest that youth development is currently conceived of as occurring within two settings: activities offered by community-based programmes and add-on or insertion programmes in schools or other institutional settings. This view unhelpfully excludes internal family interactions, intermittent interactions between young people, and with adults, and the time that young people spend involved with public institutions such

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<sup>48</sup> Benson, P. L., 1997, cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>49</sup> Blyth, D and Leffert, N, 1995, cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

as schools, juvenile justice, health services and so forth. In contrast, what constitutes a 'youth development approach', Connell et al. suggest, is excessively broad.

As an approach, "...we have trouble saying what [youth development] is not. The inclusionary impulse has produced a mind-boggling melange of principles, outcomes, assets, inputs, supports, opportunities, risks and competencies, much of which is only loosely tied to what actually happens in the daily lives of youths".<sup>50</sup>

The inability to draw on an agreed view of what youth development means, either as a field of endeavour or as a specific form of action, clearly poses some challenges for the conduct of this review. In practice, it has necessitated an attempt to weave together some kind of credible and cohesive picture from multiple ideas, beliefs, theories and evidence contained within the literature. For pragmatic reasons, emphasis has been placed on examining practical issues at the programme level rather than seeking to explore any of the larger, discipline-wide issues facing the youth development field.

### **A Strengths-Based Approach**

Views on what constitutes the 'best approach' to facilitating a successful transition to adulthood have evolved over time. Our conceptualisation of adolescent development has shifted from a life stage focus, as depicted by 20th century scholars such as Piaget<sup>51</sup> and Erikson,<sup>52</sup> to an ecological model where contextual factors and social settings are emphasised.<sup>53</sup> Alongside this shift from a life-stage to an ecological understanding of young people has been a move away from a deficit-based and problem-focused view of young people to a view emphasising young people's resiliency and potential and the influence of environment.<sup>54 55 56</sup>

Efforts to help young people, framed within a deficit paradigm, typically involved preventing or fixing problems. The types of programmes associated with this paradigm tended to focus on a single issue, such as drug or alcohol abuse, teen-pregnancy and so forth.<sup>57</sup> As our understanding of the social world advanced, the limitations of this view of young people and the associated approach became evident. Research into resiliency work, for example, demonstrated that most young people do well, sometimes in the face of incredible obstacles; a reality the deficit view of young people failed to capture or capitalise on. The emergence of a strengths-based approach to practice, where people were viewed as being "...at promise' [or 'at potential'] rather than 'at risk'...", was the result.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Connell et al, 2000, op cit

<sup>51</sup> Piaget, J (1965), *The moral judgement of the child*. New York: Free Press; Piaget, J (1952), *The origins of intelligence in children*. New York, NY: International Universities Press

<sup>52</sup> Erikson, E (1968), *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: Norton

<sup>53</sup> Bronfenbrenner, U. and Morris, P (1998), *The ecology of developmental process*. In W. Damon and R. Lerner (eds), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, New York: John Wiley; Bronfenbrenner, U (1994), *Ecological model of human development* In T. Husten and T. N. Postlewaite (eds), *International encyclopaedia of education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press

<sup>54</sup> Butts, J (2008), *Beyond the tunnel problem: Addressing cross-cutting issues that impact vulnerable youth. Briefing paper #3: A sensible model for juvenile justice*. Youth Transition Funders Group

<sup>55</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>56</sup> Beatty and Chalk, 2006, op cit

<sup>57</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>58</sup> Barwick, H (2004), *Young males: Strengths-based and male-focused approaches*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Development, p12

In the context of youth development, taking a strengths-based approach means efforts are directed towards identifying the strengths or protective factors that help most people to lead happy and productive lives, and supporting them.<sup>59</sup> Strengths help buffer against risk factors, which can lead to poor outcomes. A strengths-based approach helps to build resiliency in young people, which Barwick defines as a young person's ability to manage the balance between risks, stressful life events and protective factors.<sup>60 61</sup> As interventions, strengths-based programmes take a holistic view of young people and often use multiple strands of activities to promote broad-scale (holistic) positive growth and development.

The literature, as is done here, has tended to polarise the deficit/problem and positive/strengths-based approaches in a way that can sometimes be unhelpfully and unnecessarily restrictive, and that in all likelihood runs contrary to what many programmes actually do in practice.<sup>62 63</sup> Eccles and Gootman assert that a risk- or problem-focused approach is inadequate as a total response to the needs of young people ('problem-free is not sufficient') but that focusing solely on broad-scale positive development fails to provide young people with the help they need to steer clear of specific obstacles.

There is a middle ground, which it appears the YDSA was attempting to encourage through its articulation of what constitutes a good approach to youth development within a New Zealand context.<sup>64</sup> The strategy, which identifies the use of a strengths-based approach as a key principle of good youth development practice, advocates that policies and programmes need to build young people's capacity to resist risks factors *and* enhance their protective factors; i.e. take a dual prevention and promotion focus. Combined with a competence-based, holistic and environmental view of young people, this seems a fairly pragmatic way of defining a strengths-based approach.

## Goals and Outcomes

Providing young people with the opportunities and supports to foster broad, holistic development is the primary goal or purpose of youth development activity. At the individual programme level, there will be extensive variability in the specific goals and outcomes set, reflecting the lack of a unified youth development framework, but all should reflect some aspect of this overarching goal of broad developmental growth.

Broadly, both goals and outcomes will target some combination of the skills, attitudes, competencies and values discussed earlier in the report, whether they are expressed in those terms or in relation to assets, to the five (or six or seven) 'C's' of youth development, as general statements about broadening young people's horizons, raising their expectations and aspirations, connecting them to more positive settings and so forth, or in some other form. (See Figure 2 for a definition of goals and outcomes.)

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<sup>59</sup> Barwick, 2004, op cit

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Note the area of resiliency is an enormous one and there are numerous and continuously evolving understandings of how to view and define it, promote it, measure it and so forth. This report provides a simple explanation of resiliency for the sake of brevity

<sup>62</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>63</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>64</sup> Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, 2002, op cit

**Figure 2. Programme Goals and Outcomes**<sup>65</sup>

*Programme goals are essentially broad statements of expected outcomes, minus any reference to targets or timeframes. Alongside objectives, goals provide a general direction for the programme and a basic framework for the programme's activities or action.<sup>1</sup>*

*Outcomes refer to a measurable change in quality of life achieved by a client which may materialise in the short or longer term. Outcomes can be classified in a number of different ways, including on the basis of time since programme completion, as is described below.*

- *Immediate outcomes refer to the first benefits or changes a client experiences at the conclusion of a programme (e.g. changes in knowledge, attitudes or skills). They are not the end in themselves but represent necessary steps towards the desired end point.*
- *Intermediate outcomes involve changes in a person's quality of life that are measured at a particular point post-programme. These often involve changes in behaviour that result from the new knowledge, attitudes or skills.*
- *Longer term (or high level) outcomes represent the ultimate outcomes that a programme desires its participants to achieve. They represent meaningful changes in the lives of participants, often in relation to their condition or status.*

Programme goals need to be closely tied into the current economic and social circumstances of the programme's setting. As economic and social conditions change, what is needed from a programme may also change. This is particularly evident at the current time, where a contracting economy means that inflows into employment by young people are reducing at the same time as outflows (into unemployment) are increasing. We know that attachment and engagement in positive activities and settings is critical for keeping young people on a positive life trajectory. Disengagement can result in young people falling into 'sink holes' of inactivity or anti-social activity from which from it can be difficult to escape. Youth development programmes in general have an important role to play in the current economy by keeping young people involved in activities that will facilitate their return, or move into, employment as the economy improves and is better-placed to accept them.

During the conduct of this review, it became apparent that some confusion existed about the nature of programme outcomes. A clear understanding of this aspect of programme operations is essential if effective programmes are to be designed. Programmes create opportunities for young people to build their assets (or skills etc). Programmes do this by involving young people in activities within settings that have the characteristics that (we believe) most encourage the development of those assets. By 'characteristics', one can include things like providing opportunities for young people to be involved with pro-social adults and peers, to participate and exert influence, to contribute and feel valued and so forth. In this respect, the activities and their associated settings represent mechanisms through which programme outcomes are achieved.

At the same time, attachment to settings that have those characteristics is also what enables young people to continue to grow and lead positive lives beyond the duration of a programme. Helping young people to develop relatively enduring (i.e. post-programme) access to positive settings (and thus people and opportunities) by deliberately connecting them to positive settings during a programme is therefore

<sup>65</sup> Kettner, P. M., Moroney, R. M. And Martin, L. L (2008), *Designing and managing programs: An effectiveness-based approach* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed). Los Angeles: Sage Publications

potentially one of a youth development programme's greatest contributions. Once in place, 'positive relationships with adults', for example, can effectively become enduring mentoring mechanisms within young people's natural environments. In that respect, what represent mechanisms for the development of assets/skills etc during a programme are also important programme goals and outcomes in their own right.

In some instances, the development of positive relationships with the instructor and other course participants had been treated or recorded as programme outcomes in their own right. While these relationships are without doubt valuable, and in some cases may represent a considerable achievement, they are in essence valuable mechanisms rather than valuable outcomes (at the most, an argument could be made for them being low order or immediate outcomes that facilitate the attainment of higher order outcomes relating to post programme life.) It is when relationships are established that can keep young people connected to positive settings in their natural environments in everyday, post programme life that they can be considered programme outcomes.

### **Programme Activities**

Even a cursory glance at the literature reveals an enormous variability in the interventions deemed youth development programmes. The literature describes sports programmes, conservation and environmental programmes, arts, drama, culture and heritage programmes, outdoor adventure, work experience activities and so forth; all ostensibly falling within a 'youth development' framework.

The following section examines evidence relating to good practice in youth development, beyond simply the use of a strengths-based approach. The section covers the role of activities within a programme and the features and characteristics of activities and settings that best support positive youth development. It also considers the place of an underpinning therapeutic approach or practice model in youth development, and the evidence about additional programmatic elements that may influence programme effectiveness.

#### *Choice of Activities*

Activities are important because they are the way programmes attract participants.<sup>66</sup> Special effort needs to be made to attract young people because programmes naturally compete with other potential distractions and activities for youth.<sup>67</sup> According to Moore et al, the inclusion of a variety of activities within a single programme is endorsed by both research and practical wisdom that suggests this is the best way of meeting the diverse interests, as well as the learning needs and styles, of young people.<sup>68</sup>

Beyond attracting young people's interest, activities are also important because they are the vehicle through which young people gain access to the opportunities and settings that will foster the development of important skills, attitudes, competencies and values. There is a growing body of evidence indicating it is the nature and characteristics of the activities used when assisting young people that have the greatest effect on their

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<sup>66</sup> Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003, op cit

<sup>67</sup> Moore et al, 2006, op cit

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

outcomes, rather than the activity per se.<sup>69</sup> This evidence suggests that there may be no such thing as 'the best' activity or the 'most youth development-ish' activity.

Rather, what seems to matter most is that activities are chosen on the basis of their appeal to young people, their ability to provide the desired developmental experiences, and that they reflect the characteristics and features the literature suggests best facilitate successful youth development.

In the first instance, activities have, in and of themselves, particular characteristics that affect both their appeal for different young people and their suitability in terms of being able to create the kinds of opportunities that are believed to facilitate particular types of developmental growth – noting that the literature seems a long way from being able to empirically demonstrate the precise contribution of individual activities to outcomes or the ability of individual activities to facilitate certain types of outcomes relative to each other.

In the case of wilderness activities, for example, the literature suggests they meet young people's need for excitement, challenge and stimulation. They provide real-life experiences and, by removing young people from their normal setting for a period of time, an escape mechanism from family pressures and negative peer influences. They create an 'equalising effect' amongst group members because of the novel/unfamiliar nature of the setting and activities.<sup>70 71 72</sup> They also demand certain responses that are of value: "cooperation, clear thinking and planning, careful observation, resourcefulness, persistence and adaptability... [which] are not demanded by the environment, per se, but rather the manner in which the program forces students to interact with the environment".<sup>73</sup>

Service or voluntary activities, by contrast, provide opportunities for young people to experience what it is like to contribute in some way to their community. They require young people to use a range of skills, potentially in an environment that exposes them to a wider range of social and cultural networks.<sup>74</sup> Work experience activities provide an opportunity for young people to experience first-hand what employment actually involves. Work placements enable young people to try out different vocational options before committing to career-specific training or more permanent employment. They also serve to highlight the kinds of life skills that young people need for successful employment. On the other side of the equation, the participating employer organisation has the opportunity to learn about the young person's potential suitability as a worker, which may result in them being willing to subsequently act as a referee for the young person or hire them.<sup>75 76 77</sup> Conservation activities provide a number of opportunities

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<sup>69</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007), *Aiming high for young people: A ten year strategy for positive activities*. [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk), retrieved March 2009

<sup>70</sup> Garst, B., Scheider, I. and Baker, D (2001), Outdoor adventure program participation: Impacts on adolescent self-perception, *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 24(1), pp41-49

<sup>71</sup> Hattie, J., Marsh, H. W., Neill, J. T. (1997), Adventure education and Outwards Bound: Out-of-class experiences that make a lasting difference, *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), pp43-87

<sup>72</sup> Schoel, J., Prouty, D. and Radcliffe, P (1988), *Islands of healing: A guide to adventure based counselling* Project Adventures Inc

<sup>73</sup> Rhoades, 1972 cited in Hattie et al, 1997 op cit, p43

<sup>74</sup> Finlay, A. K., Flanagan, C. and Black, S (2007), *Service as a developmental opportunity: Building connections for vulnerable youths* [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org), retrieved March 2009

<sup>75</sup> Department of Work and Income (1998), *Job Intro, Job Link and Job Plus training (J3 programmes): Evaluation report*. Wellington: DWI

that seemingly represent a blend of those associated with outdoor/wilderness, service and work experience activities.

Art, music, drama and dance activities are considered to challenge and stretch young people, require them to work as a team, and encourage open-mindedness and creativity.<sup>78</sup> While some of these characteristics are similar to those associated with outdoor adventure/wilderness programmes, the nature of the vehicle may be of greater appeal to those young people who dislike outdoor or certain types of physical activity.

Beyond these core elements, there are also a number of characteristics discussed in the literature that relate more to the way in which activities are delivered, or the broader settings in which activities are delivered, rather than to the essential nature of the activity.

Effective programmes have high aspirations for, and expectations of, young people. They are well planned, with activities deliberately designed to progressively build on existing skills and competencies. They also have a 'deliberate learning environment', where learning opportunities are built into activities rather than assumed to simply arise as a result of participation (see Appendix 3), and they meaningfully involve young people in the design and conduct of activities. This serves a dual purpose of providing young people with opportunities to direct and control their activities and environment and helping to assure a programme's or activities' relevance.<sup>79 80</sup>

The quality of activities is also high in successful programmes, with activities delivered by a skilled and confident workforce.<sup>81</sup> This is critical because young people need to think highly of the services available to them if they are to take up the opportunities that those services can offer.<sup>82</sup>

The quality and content of activities, is in turn, dependent on the available financial, human and material resources.<sup>83</sup> There is a clear link between the level of resources allocated to a service and the quality of its work; although some services do seem to perform well despite minimal resources.<sup>84</sup> Ofsted found that "young people achieved high standards when workers had a good blend of qualifications and experience, the work was well planned and balanced effectively between recreational and educational aims".<sup>85</sup> The availability of well trained, high quality staff, who stay long enough to build

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<sup>76</sup> United Kingdom Select Committee (2001), *Third report: Recruiting Unemployed people* House of Commons, [www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk), retrieved May 2009

<sup>77</sup> Newton, B., Hurstfield, J., Miller, L., Page, R. and Akroyd, K (2005), *What employers look for when recruiting the unemployed and inactive: Skills, characteristics and qualifications. A report of research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.* DWP

<sup>78</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>79</sup> International Youth Foundation (1999), *Making youth programs work: Framework for effective programming*

<sup>80</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, training and Youth Affairs (2000), *National Youth Development Strategy.* Adelaide: Ausyouth

<sup>81</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Ofsted (2005) cited in HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>85</sup> Ofsted (2005) cited in HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit, p24

trusting relationships with young people is integral to programme success, as is sustained funding.<sup>86</sup>

Eccles and Gootman similarly emphasise that the key to effective programmes appears to lie not in the choice of activity per se, but beyond. In their case, they emphasise the importance of features or characteristics in relation to settings.

There are certain features of settings that young people spend time in, be they family, school or community, that affect how they develop – for better or worse. The more opportunities young people have to experience settings with features associated with positive development, the better off they will be.<sup>87</sup> These features, it seems, can be deliberately incorporated into the design of youth development programmes both through and irrespective of the particular activities chosen. They can be considered the ‘active ingredients’ in effective youth development programmes.<sup>88</sup> Programmes that incorporate these features, or as many as possible as it is unrealistic to expect all programmes will incorporate all features, can make up for the absence of these features in young people’s other settings.<sup>89</sup>

As part of a multidisciplinary committee comprising representatives of America’s National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences and National Academy of Engineering, Eccles and Gootman conducted a large scale review of evidence on the features associated with positive adolescent development across the different settings that young people spend time in. Drawing on the theory and research of a range of disciplines, they ultimately identified a list of features which they believe facilitate positive youth development and should be incorporated into youth development programmes. They emphasise that further refinement and testing is needed to establish the precise content and relative contributions of each feature.

Each of these features is discussed in Appendix 3. Summarised here, these features include:

- physical and psychological safety and security
- structure that is developmentally appropriate, with clear expectations for behaviour as well as increasing opportunities to make decisions, to participate in governance and rule-making, and to take on leadership roles as one matures and gains more expertise
- emotional and moral support
- opportunities for adolescents to experience supportive adult relationships
- opportunities to learn how to form close, durable human relationships with peers that support and reinforce healthy behaviours
- opportunities to feel a sense of belonging and being valued
- opportunities to develop positive social values and norms
- opportunities for skill building and mastery
- opportunities to develop confidence in one’s abilities to master one’s environment (a sense of personal efficacy)

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<sup>86</sup> Merton et al. (2004) cited in HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>87</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

- opportunities to make a contribution to one's community and to develop a sense of mattering, and
- strong links between families, schools, and broader community resources.<sup>90</sup>

### *Therapeutic Approach and Practice Model*

In understanding what makes a good youth development programme, it is important to consider matters relating to the style of interaction between practitioner and young person, to the specific learning and engagement techniques used to promote change, and the theoretical models that underpin those techniques. According to youth development practitioners spoken with during the review, the way in which practitioners engage, interact with and attempt to influence (or not) young people also more fundamentally determines what makes something a youth development programme as opposed to some other kind of youth-targeted programme, such as a recreational programme or an educational one. KPMG Peat Marwick's 1990 evaluation of NZCC found the emphasis was placed on the conduct/completion of tasks rather than on personal development, which may well represent inadequate attention to matters of therapeutic approach and practice.<sup>91</sup>

For the purpose of this review, the terms 'therapeutic approach' and 'practice model' have been used to encapsulate these ideas, although either term may not be wholly accurate or appropriate, noting that the use of the term 'therapy' by Priest and Glass to describe a distinct class of programme has the potential to create some confusion amongst readers.<sup>92</sup>

In most disciplines or fields, it is common for students to spend time understanding their practice model and the theoretical/conceptual models that underpin it. In areas like social work and nursing, for example, it would be one of the foundational components of students' training. During this review, no references were found to the term 'practice model' or a similar concept in the youth development literature. There was extensive consideration of practice models and therapeutic models within the wilderness therapy area. While there are some overlapping areas of interest, this area is quite distinct from youth development and (effective) practitioners have substantially more professional training and expertise.

Within the literature, articles tended to focus on individual elements that might form part of a therapeutic approach or practice model for youth development rather than address the topic of therapeutic approach directly. There was widespread agreement, for example, that the relationship between practitioner and young person was instrumental in facilitating change but the literature tended to focus on characteristics that comprised effective adult/young person relationships rather than the general area of therapeutic approach. Other literature addressed specific aspects of the overall area: Martin's writing on youth work, for example, presents material to support good youth work practice, inherent in which is a theoretical understanding of how to facilitate engagement, learning

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<sup>90</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>91</sup> KPMG Peat Marwick (1990), *New Zealand Conservation Corps Programme Evaluation*. Wellington: KPMG Peat Marwick

<sup>92</sup> Priest, S., and Gass, M (1997), *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics

and growth.<sup>93</sup> <sup>94</sup> There were discussions of single models of relevance to youth development practice, for example, Kolb's experiential learning model<sup>95</sup> and the scientist-practitioner model.<sup>96</sup>

The result of this is that it is difficult to articulate here what it is that characterises good practice in terms of therapeutic approach/practice model in youth development programmes, beyond those elements that have already been set out in the discussion of 'key features of settings'. These include, for example, what constitutes a good relationship between adult and young person, the need for emotional and moral support, type of structure and supervision needed and so forth. This seems to be a critical aspect of youth development practice and worthy of deliberate focus.

### *Other Programmatic Elements and Characteristics*

There are a number of additional programmatic elements that will affect the overall effectiveness of a youth development programme, beyond the activities discussed previously and the features of settings that should be reflected in individual programmes.

#### Programme Duration, Intensity and Course Size

Evidence on duration, intensity and course size for the review was derived from quasi experimental and non experimental research and practical wisdom. The review was unable to identify any evaluation work that specifically isolated the contribution of any of these three elements to programme outcomes.

There is enormous variability in the length of youth development and youth-focused programmes generally. Participants in America's Job Corp programme, an employment-focused programme that includes broad development goals, can choose how long they wish to stay. A 2008 study reported the average stay was eight months, with slightly under one quarter staying beyond a year.<sup>97</sup> The Californian Conservation Corps programme runs for approximately one year, although participants can choose both to exit earlier and to commit to further involvement beyond this year.<sup>98</sup> At the other end of the spectrum are programmes like outdoor adventure courses which tend to run from a few days to a few weeks.

The youth development literature quite strongly emphasises the value of longer programmes over shorter ones. This is most notable in the mentoring area but also true of other types of development programmes. According to Moore et al, practical wisdom identifies programme duration, along with intensity or programme 'dosage', as one of the most important aspects of programming.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Martin, L (2006), *Real work: A report from the national research project on the state of youth work in Aotearoa*. Christchurch: National Youth Workers Network

<sup>94</sup> Martin, L (2002), *The invisible table: Perspectives on youth and youthwork in New Zealand*. Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press

<sup>95</sup> Kolb, D. A (1984), *Experiential learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall

<sup>96</sup> Shapiro, D (2002), Renewing the scientist-practitioner model, *The Psychologist*, 15 (5), pp232-234

<sup>97</sup> Schochet, P. Z., Burghardt, J. and McConnell, S (2008), Does Job Corps work? Impact findings from the National Job Corps study, *American Economic Review*, 98 (5), p1864-1886

<sup>98</sup> See [www.ccc.ca.gov](http://www.ccc.ca.gov)

<sup>99</sup> Moore et al, 2006, op cit

In the case of mentoring, the adage 'longer is better' does seem to hold true, reflecting the time it takes to build the type of relationship between mentor and mentee that supports positive development. The World Bank's policy toolkit for supporting at risk youth suggests that the development of trust between mentor and mentee normally takes at least a year.<sup>100</sup> Ensuring sufficient time is allowed to develop the relationship makes sense given that the relationship essentially is the mechanism for change in a mentoring programme.<sup>101</sup>

For other programme types, however, the basis for 'longer is better' is less clear. A 1999 evaluation of NZCC and YSC reported that ten weeks was considered by some providers to be sufficient for some participants, while twenty weeks was considered necessary for others.<sup>102</sup> The final conclusion was that twenty weeks was "probably about right for most members".<sup>103</sup> The extent to which weight can be placed on this conclusion is limited given the nature of the evaluation design.

The impact evaluation of the American Youth Corps, which includes the California Conservation Corps on which NZCC and YSC are modelled, found no difference in participant outcomes when examined by their length of stay in the programme.<sup>104</sup> The seemingly most-cited study addressing duration within the youth development literature, Hattie et al's meta-analysis of the effects of adventure programmes on outcomes, found the effects on students' outcomes were similar regardless of duration.<sup>105 106</sup> Catalano conducted one of the more substantive reviews on effective youth development programmes and concluded that, amongst the 'themes common to success' was that most of the programmes ran for nine months or more.<sup>107</sup> This work is often cited by others as evidence that programmes should be long. More recently, key academics in the youth development field have justifiably highlighted the limitations surrounding this interpretation of evidence.<sup>108</sup> A more accurate interpretation of this work is that, of the studies included in the review, (a sample likely to be biased towards more substantial programmes), approximately 80% of those programmes deemed effective lasted for a period of nine months or more. Viewed in aggregate, the evidence seemingly leaves us with no definitive picture of the contribution of programme duration to programme outcomes.

The literature provides even less information on intensity/dosage and course size than it does on duration. Moore et al's review of programmes for 6-17 year olds included: experimental studies that supported higher programme intensity/dosage for some age groups (including the older teens) in some cases; non-experimental studies that found

<sup>100</sup> Cunningham, W., Cohan, L. M., Naudeau, S. and McGinnis, L (2008), *Supporting youth at risk: A policy toolkit for middle income countries*. The World Bank, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org), retrieved March 2009

<sup>101</sup> Jekielek, S. M., Moore, K. A., Hair, E. C. and Scarupa, H. J (2002), *Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development*, Child Trends Research Brief, [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org), retrieved April 2009

<sup>102</sup> Broome, A (1999), *The New Zealand Conservation Corps: A recipe for successful youth development*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs

<sup>103</sup> Broome, 1999, op cit, p36

<sup>104</sup> Jastrzab, J., Masker, J., Bloomquist, J. and Orr, L (1996), *Impacts of service: Final report on the evaluation of American Conservation and Youth Corps*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, [www.abtssociates.com](http://www.abtssociates.com), retrieved May 2009

<sup>105</sup> Hattie et al, 1997, op cit

<sup>106</sup> The extent to which the study's findings are applicable to NZCC and YSC is extremely limited due to differences in programme design. This study is included as it is one of the most commonly-cited studies in the youth development literature

<sup>107</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

higher dosage was better, especially for mentoring programmes; and again endorsement from providers.<sup>109</sup> In a very general way, this lends some support to the notion of greater rather than lower programme intensity.

Optimal course size seems to be influenced by a number of factors including programme type, participant age and needs, staff ability, and programme resources.<sup>110</sup> Given this variability, Moore et al suggest providers can most probably determine for themselves what group size would be optimal for their specific group.<sup>111</sup>

## Assessment

The youth development literature emphasises the importance of programmes being responsive to individual participants' needs and building on their strengths, yet provides very little specific comment on how individual needs or strengths might be determined. The lack of discussion of this aspect of programme activity within the youth development literature may well be, at least in part, an artefact of the ideology that underpins youth development and potentially the skill sets of those working in the field, such as youth workers.

The use of a strengths-based approach is a fundamental characteristic of youth development practice. This has sometimes been interpreted as an exclusive focus on strengths, rather than a dual focus on promoting strengths and responding to specific problems as has been the interpretation used in the current review.<sup>112</sup> When the focus is on building strengths, carrying out semi-formal or formal assessments in order to identify issues and potentially problems may well seem unnecessary, not to mention potentially the antithesis of good practice.

Further, youth development work is often carried out by youth workers with limited, ad hoc or quite narrowly focused professional training. Some may have never been taught how to carry out an assessment or exposed to specific tools, even assuming ideological support for their use.

There are large bodies of literature devoted to screening and assessment across different disciplines. Many of the approaches and tools set out in areas like education, psychology, neuropsychology, and youth justice do have a strong 'pathology' or deficit focus, seeking to identify and oftentimes quantify the prevalence/magnitude of certain problem behaviours or conditions. Considerable training and professional expertise is also required for meaningful and reliable answers to be produced from such assessment activities.

It is not essential, however, that either a deficit focus or complexity characterise an assessment process. Ultimately, assessment is simply a process of collecting information about someone and using that information to form a picture of their situation, oftentimes as a basis of providing some form of service.<sup>113</sup> Different methods may be used to capture this information, which may come from a range of sources, including

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<sup>109</sup> Moore et al, 2006, op cit

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

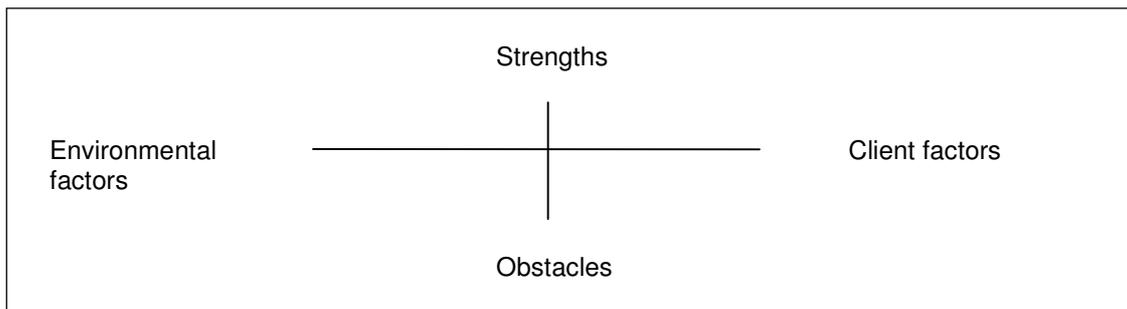
<sup>113</sup> Hodge, R. D (2001), *The juvenile offender: Theory, research and applications*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers

discussion with the individual and/or others who know the individual, direct observation, documentation and, if desired, the use of specific tools (customised or standardised). Even the last of these methods can be quite basic and involve only a small amount of instruction or training.

Further, it is possible to conduct assessment from a strengths perspective. The social work area particularly contains literature on how to conduct strengths-based assessments (and also strengths-based case management, which has some parallels with youth work practice).<sup>114</sup>

Cowger and Snively provide a basic framework for strengths-based assessment (see Figure 3 below).<sup>115</sup> Taking a strengths-based approach to assessment, they suggest, means that the areas encompassed within the two quadrants in Figure 3 relating to strengths (environment and client-focused) are emphasised but all four quadrants are ultimately included. The 'environmental factors' would include social and political areas, while factors intrinsic to the individual (physical, physiological, and psychological) would fall into the 'client' quadrants.

**Figure 3. A Framework for Strengths-Based Assessment**



The kinds of questions asked during a discussion between a youth worker and young person might be as basic as the following:

- who is important to you in your life
- what do you do during a normal day
- what makes your life worth living
- what is going well for you right now
- if things could be different, what would you wish for
- what has worked well for you in the past?<sup>116</sup>

While the answers to these questions won't address all information needs, particularly with respect to matters of client health and safety, they may be a useful starting point for

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, Saleebey, D (Ed), (2002), *The strengths perspective in social work practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon

<sup>115</sup> Cowger, C. D and Snively, C. A (2002), *Assessing client strengths: Individual, family and community empowerment*, pp106-123. In Saleebey, 2002, op cit

<sup>116</sup> Fast, B and Chapin, R (2002), *The strengths model with older adults: Critical practice components*, pp143-162. In Saleebey, 2002, op cit

further discussion. Subsequent discussion may, as useful, span a range of domains including housing, transport, finance, vocation/education, social, health and leisure.<sup>117</sup>

### Goal Setting and Personal Planning

The literature seems fairly consistent in its assertion that youth development activities should seek to raise young people's aspirations, in conjunction with the resources they have to draw on to fulfil those aspirations. Resources tend to be conceived of, however, in terms of personal attributes and access to external supports such as positive people and opportunities. The contribution of specific activities like planning were not discussed, at least in any articles located during this review, within the context of individual youth development programmes.

Virtually all the material located for the review was drawn from other disciplines, such as nursing (in the context of discharge planning), social work (exit from care) or the general vocational intervention literature. General principles or practices have been extracted from this literature and discussed here in terms of their relevance or applicability to the youth development area.

The process of goal setting can be used in programmes to help set direction for activity, during a programme as well as subsequent to it, and as a basis for viewing progress. Despite the apparent lack of attention devoted to this activity in the youth development literature, goal setting is, according to Roberts-Grey et al, part of the recommended best practice for what they term 'youth empowerment programmes'.<sup>118 119</sup> Roberts-Grey et al suggest actual methods for setting goals are often left to the discretion of the individual programme provider; the preferred approach depending on the type of service being provided and the type of person receiving the services.<sup>120</sup>

As an activity, goal setting is inextricably linked to a person's sense of self-efficacy; the belief that desired goals can be achieved through one's own actions.<sup>121</sup> The ability, or even the willingness, of a young person to set goals as part of a programme is therefore likely to be variable and change over time.

The goal setting process ideally feeds into the development of personal plans, which set out the intended direction, type, and practical details associated with, future activities. As with goals, the activities included within a plan may relate to the programme itself as well as to the time following. Consistent with notions of flexibility and service responsiveness, research in the employment assistance area has not surprisingly found that individually tailored action plans are more effective than standardised plans.<sup>122</sup>

The importance of preparing people for life post programme/intervention as early as possible is emphasised in the literature. A fundamental principle of discharge planning within a medical setting, seemingly one of the better-developed related bodies of theory,

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> Roberts-Grey, C., Steinfeld, S. and Bailey, W (1999), Goal setting and progress evaluation in youth empowerment programs. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 22(1), pp21-30

<sup>119</sup> Note the programmes included in their study are comparable with those programmes typically termed youth development within the literature

<sup>120</sup> Roberts-Grey et al, 1999, op cit

<sup>121</sup> Bandura, A (1989) cited in Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>122</sup> Eardley, T and Thompson, M (1997), cited in Higgins, 2003, op cit

is that it begins on hospital admission as opposed to waiting until near the end of treatment.<sup>123</sup> This doesn't mean all details of post-intervention life are resolved in detail in the early stages; it does mean that activities are carried out with an awareness that they are building towards something that extends beyond the immediate/short term, and that planning for different aspects of post-discharge life occurs as soon as is practically possible. This approach recognises that planning is a process rather than an event.<sup>124</sup>

This logic, if not completely transferable to the youth development area, would seem to have at least some relevance to it. Ensuring young people remain positively 'activated' or engaged post programme is integral to the transition process. While there will be constraints on what a young person is able to consider at different stages of a programme, it seems entirely plausible that preparing for the transition phase from the early stages of a programme is more likely to facilitate a successful transition than waiting until the young person is about to exit the programme before related issues are raised.

Part of preparation for post-programme life involves readying young people for the actual end of the programme. It is suggested that specific actions are required to ensure programme closure is a positive experience for all, including carrying out activities which acknowledge different people's efforts and contributions.<sup>125</sup> While given in the context of a mentoring programme, this advice seems applicable to youth development programmes more generally.

The greater part of the process involves identifying the activities that young people will be involved in post programme, making necessary arrangements before the programme ends (e.g. referrals, course enrolment), and putting in place the practical supports that may be needed to encourage or enable participation. Programmes that provide specific referrals to support services have been found to be effective at helping participants gain access to those services,<sup>126</sup> but follow-up may be needed to ensure that young people actually act on those referrals. In the context of employment programmes, keeping regular progress checks on plans has been identified as an important feature of successful case management.<sup>127</sup>

## **Achievements and Efficacy of Youth Development Programmes**

At its inception, youth development was a concept and movement united around two central axioms, as opposed to being a field or an approach.<sup>128</sup> These axioms were, according to Connell et al, that programme thinking is inadequate as a basis for policy thinking and that developmental thinking should organise youth policy in general and youth interventions and settings in particular.<sup>129</sup> By the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a substantial body of research that demonstrated that interventions assuming 'the problem' was a deficit in a young person had produced "weak, transient, or no

<sup>123</sup> Department of Human Services (2007), *Best practice Information package: Discharge planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients*. Victoria: State Government, [www.sciencedirect.com/science](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science), retrieved April 2009

<sup>124</sup> See ACT Health (2006), *Discharge planning policy*, [www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au), retrieved April 2009

<sup>125</sup> The Youth Mentoring Trust, New Zealand, [www.youthmentoring.org.nz/tools](http://www.youthmentoring.org.nz/tools), retrieved April 2009

<sup>126</sup> Hair, E., Ling, T. and Cochran, S. W (2003), *Youth development programs and educationally disadvantaged older youths: A synthesis*. *Child Trends*, [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org), retrieved March 2009

<sup>127</sup> Higgins, 2003, op cit

<sup>128</sup> Connell et al, 2000, op cit, p282

<sup>129</sup> Connell et al, 2000, op cit

results”.<sup>130</sup> Such interventions had failed to take account of the complexity of young people’s lives or the environment in which they continued to function.

Converging evidence from the adolescent development field, from resiliency studies and applied social research provided a credible platform for the movement, bringing “new substance and credibility to a set of ideas that were already intuitively appealing”.<sup>131</sup> At the centre of this thinking was the idea that young people were “assets in the making – their development dependent on a range of supports and opportunities coming from family, community and the other institutions that touch them”.<sup>132</sup>

The resultant youth development field and body of practice is one which has, according to Benson and Saito, “high face validity amongst practitioners working in such settings as schools, agencies and youth-serving organizations”.<sup>133</sup> Early successes include encouraging policy makers and programme designers to focus on young people’s strengths and their general development, and bringing “justifiable and needed attention to youth serving organisations that have long taken a developmental approach, even if they did not call it that”.<sup>134</sup>

Among many others, however, Benson and Saito observe that youth development practice has moved considerably ahead of the scientific foundations of the work.

*As we review the research literature, we find kernels of encouragement for establishing youth development as a viable approach. But we see little evidence of the kind of systematic enquiry necessary to guide, shape, refine and fuel the approach.*<sup>135</sup>

Benson and Saito draw a parallel between this situation and that faced previously by the prevention field. In about 1960, they suggest, prevention became an approach that promulgated programmes, professions and professionals. Accountability issues emerged and the field is now being underpinned by a unifying prevention science. Youth development is now, they suggest, at the crossroads faced by the prevention field decades earlier.<sup>136</sup>

In 2000, Public/Private Ventures (PPV) wrote that the state of knowledge about positive youth development depends on your perspective. “On the one hand, from the perspective of commonsense, it is clear that active attention to a youth’s developmental needs has a high probability of paying off in terms of increasing a youth’s successes in life and decreasing his or her serious problems”.<sup>137</sup> On the other hand, the body of evidence about effective interventions is quite limited. “There are many small studies, but few are large and methodologically stringent enough to persuade a sceptic.”<sup>138</sup> It is quite possible, PPV suggested, for someone to ‘support’ youth development but not be convinced that social programmes can do much to accomplish it.

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<sup>130</sup> Connell et al, 2000, op cit, p282

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Connell et al, 2000, op cit, p283

<sup>133</sup> Benson and Saito, 2000, op cit

<sup>134</sup> Connell et al, 2000, op cit, p284

<sup>135</sup> Benson and Saito, 2000, op cit, p134

<sup>136</sup> Benson and Saito, 2000, op cit

<sup>137</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit, p12

<sup>138</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit, p13

The World Bank was considerably blunter in its *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*:

*...programme officials, policy makers and the community in general have only limited information about how best to implement programmes..., about which programme features are the most effective, and even which programmes yield the greatest benefits. Therefore, in practice, most youth programmes are selected and designed on the basis of anecdotal evidence, interviews with potential participants, and the programme designer's personal predilection.*<sup>139</sup>

However limited the evidence base for intervening remains, it is nonetheless increasing. There is accumulating evidence that individual social programmes can in fact produce the skills/competencies/assets etc that are associated with positive development.<sup>140</sup>

Perhaps one of the strongest sources of support for youth development programmes comes from the reviews and meta-analyses that have been conducted across different programme types. The Social Development Research Group at the University of Washington carried out one of the most substantial early reviews of positive youth development programmes.<sup>141</sup> The reviewers located 77 youth development programmes that met their criteria, which included the availability of a rigorous evaluation that involved either a control group or a strong comparison group and automatic exclusion of any programme that involved treatment of a diagnosed disorder or behavioural problem (which made them a prevention programme rather than a youth development one). They ultimately drew on 69 programmes, and more closely on a subset of 25 programmes, that had been designated as 'effective' via evaluation.

The review found that the programmes had variously resulted in positive youth development outcomes including, but not restricted to, improved interpersonal skills, quality of peer and adult relationships, self control, problem solving, cognitive competencies, self efficacy and academic engagement and achievement; and prevented problem behaviours, in the areas of alcohol and drug use, aggressive and violent behaviour, truancy, high risk sexual behaviour and smoking.

The reviewers concluded that, while a range of strategies had produced these results, there were a number of themes common to success. These themes involved methods that strengthened various forms of competence, built self efficacy, shaped messages from families and communities about standards for positive behaviour, increased healthy bonding with adults, peers and younger children, expanded opportunities and recognition for engaging in positive behaviour and activities, provided structure and consistency in programme delivery, and intervened with young people for at least nine months. Eccles and Gootman have subsequently mapped their own work involving personal and social assets and features of effective youth development settings

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<sup>139</sup> Quoted in Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit, p122

<sup>140</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit

<sup>141</sup> Catalano, R., Berglund, M, Ryan, J, Lonczak, H, and Hawkins, J (1999), *Positive youth development in the United States: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programmes*. Seattle: University of Washington

(discussed earlier in this report) back to that of Catalano et al's, and found a high degree of alignment between core concepts.<sup>142</sup>

There were two general strategies evident in the most effective programmes: skill building and environmental/organisational change. Skills building included social and cognitive skills as well as life skills like decision making, self management, and coping skills. Reflecting the nature of studies chosen, environmental/organisational strategies identified included efforts to influence teacher practice in the classroom and the influencing of peer norms and perceptions.

Moving from meta-analyses such as Catalano et al's that look across programmes to particular types or classes of youth development activities, the evidence becomes considerably weaker. With the exception of mentoring, which has a relatively substantial and robust evidence base,<sup>143</sup> much of the evidence for efficacy relies on non-experimental studies at the strongest end through to participant or provider self reports at the other. There is, however, some rigorous evaluation work in the area of cadet-type programmes, of which NZCC and YSC are part.

#### *Cadet-style Programmes*

NZCC and YSC fall within a class of youth development activity termed 'cadet-style programmes'; the critical elements of which are, according to the Australian Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs:

- training aimed at developing specific skills
- opportunities to develop personal characteristics and talents
- an opportunity to provide some kind of community service.<sup>144</sup>

There are a considerable number of cadet-style programmes described in the literature. While no programmes were identified that precisely matched the MYD-funded NZCC and YSC programmes, Australia's Green Corps programme seemed to come closest. Green Corps, classified as a nation-wide youth development programme by the Australian government,<sup>145</sup> provides Australians aged 17-20 years with the opportunity to volunteer their time and effort to conserve, preserve and restore Australia's natural environment and cultural heritage. Individual projects involve groups of ten young people and last for twenty six weeks. The aims of Green Corps are to:

- provide high quality, genuine environmental outcomes
- provide youth development opportunities for young Australians, including improved employment and educational outcomes
- promote connections between young Australians and their communities.<sup>146</sup>

Participants receive an allowance, a uniform, and are provided with training which includes:

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<sup>142</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>143</sup> Public/Private Ventures, 2000, op cit

<sup>144</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000, op cit

<sup>145</sup> Ibid

<sup>146</sup> See [www.greencorps.gov.au](http://www.greencorps.gov.au), retrieved May 2009

- accredited training leading to a Certificate 1 level in a field relating to the project activities
- on-the-project training to provide practical skills
- first aid training
- occupational health and safety training
- career counselling.<sup>147</sup>

A fairly basic evaluation was conducted of Green Corps in 1999, approximately two years after the programme commenced.<sup>148</sup> The evaluation reported that programme participants had relatively strong education levels at programme commencement, with 59% having completed secondary education; 61% had been registered as unemployed prior to participation. About five percent were indigenous, which is slightly higher than the proportion of the population in this age group. Using self report and observational measures, the evaluation found participants gained skills and work experience, developed personal and social skills, increased self esteem and maturity, and increased environmental awareness.<sup>149</sup>

A key aspect of the Green Corps model, and one of the points where the programme appears to diverge from NZCC/YSC, involves the strong expectation that young people will obtain accredited training through programme participation. This training must be provided by a training officer recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

This emphasis on formal qualifications in Australian youth development programmes is also evident in the policy work carried out by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in 2002 to identify a way of recognising participation in youth development activities within the overarching national qualifications framework.<sup>150</sup> ANTA proposed a multi-faceted approach to recognition which included “formal recognition through established education and training systems and processes such as mapping skills developed to training packages and school curricula, as well as investigation into qualifications in generic and leadership skills”.<sup>151</sup> ANTA also recommended that further work be undertaken to develop a ‘Youth Participation Certificate’, the aim of which was to provide “a universal form of recognition based on participation rather than skill outcomes for all youth activities and to act as a base for more formal recognition options”.<sup>152</sup>

At the current time, the Australian Youth Participation Certificate has not been operationalised; the result of “implementation issues” encountered.<sup>153</sup> As part of the preparatory work, however, a tool kit titled 'Above and Beyond' was developed for the

<sup>147</sup> See [www.greencorps.gov.au](http://www.greencorps.gov.au), retrieved May 2009

<sup>148</sup> At that time, the programme seemed to have more of an ETE focus than a youth development one, as is currently the case, which may explain the lack of attention awarded to broader developmental outcomes in the evaluation

<sup>149</sup> Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (1999), *It's why you're swinging the mattock: An evaluation of the Green Corps programme*. Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

<sup>150</sup> Australian National Training Authority (2002), *Due credit: Examining the potential to recognise the skills achieved by young people participating in youth development programs*. Melbourne, Vic: ANTA

<sup>151</sup> Australian National Training Authority (2002), *Youth participation certificate: Draft discussion paper*. Prepared by ANTA for the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Australia, p2

<sup>152</sup> Ibid

<sup>153</sup> Personal communication with Anne Hugo, Information Manager, Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, University of Tasmania, Australia, 26 May 2009

youth development field, designed to help youth development groups “officially and formally accredit and recognize their work”.<sup>154</sup> Part of this toolkit included a booklet on how to develop “meaningful” youth participation certificates,<sup>155</sup> developed in response to youth feedback highlighting the need for improvements in the way youth development organisations approach to recognition and certification.<sup>156</sup>

The American-based cadet-style programmes, such as Americorps and the American Youth Corps, differ more substantially from NZCC/YSC. In general, they tend to be much longer in duration, include more formal and substantive vocational and education components, pay wages or some form of cash incentive, and result in formal qualifications, for example, major secondary school qualifications.

A recent eight-year impact study of Americorps found graduates were more connected to, empowered about, and active in their communities than the comparison group.<sup>157</sup> Graduates were also more likely to have gone on to work in the public sector, particularly those from racial and ethnic minority groups, and reported higher levels of life satisfaction. No difference was found in education levels obtained, although the study did note that about one quarter of both the graduate and comparison groups were still enrolled in higher education so this finding could not yet be considered definitive.

An experimental study of the American Youth Corps, which includes the California Conservation Corp on which NZCC and YSC are modelled, included a cost-benefit analysis of established Corps programmes and impact assessment on participant and community outcomes across a broader range of established and newer Corps programmes.<sup>158 159</sup> The cost-benefit analysis indicated a net monetary benefit to society of \$1.04 over and above costs, for each hour of service.

Participant impacts were examined at 15 months following random assignment to individual Corps programmes across the following nine outcome domains:

- civic, social and personal development
- current and planned community service
- current or planned involvement in other social service
- voting behaviour
- education and training achievements and plans
- employment and earnings
- involvement with risk behaviour
- educational aspirations and expectations
- work performance.

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<sup>154</sup> Hon Larry Anthony, MP, Parliamentary speech *Launch of the resource kit: Above and beyond – Recognising Youth development in Australia*, presented Parliament House, Canberra, 23 June 2004

<sup>155</sup> Department of Family and Community Services (2004), Guide 1: A guide to developing youth participation certificates, [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/57238/20060525-0000/thesource.gov.au/above\\_and\\_beyond/Guide\\_1.pdf](http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/57238/20060525-0000/thesource.gov.au/above_and_beyond/Guide_1.pdf)

<sup>156</sup> Personal communication with Anne Hugo, 26 May 2009, op cit

<sup>157</sup> Corporation for the National and Community Service (2008), *Still serving: Measuring the eight-year impact of Americorps on Alumni*. [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov), retrieved May 2009

<sup>158</sup> Jastrzab et al, 1996, op cit

<sup>159</sup> No author (n.d.), Youth Corps (American Conservation and Youth Service Corps), [www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/YouthCorps.htm](http://www.childtrends.org/Lifecourse/programs/YouthCorps.htm), retrieved May 2009

The most significant impacts related to employment and earnings, with the participant group more likely to have worked for pay and worked more hours than the control group. Much of this impact is attributable to working while in the Corps. Participants were also less likely to have been arrested, with participant arrest rates prior to the follow-up point nearly one third lower than the control group. Participants were also less likely to have obtained a technical certificate or diploma, suggesting that participation may have been a substitute for further education, at least in the short term. Across the other outcome measures, impacts were positive but not significant.

The overall impacts masked important differences across subgroups. No significant differences were found in impacts in relation to participant age or whether they had completed high school, nor in relation to the length of stay in the programme. The most significant impacts were on African-American males, who scored higher on measures of personal and social responsibility, civic behaviour, employment participation and earnings, educational qualifications obtained and were more likely to have increased their educational aspirations than the control group. Hispanic males also had more increases in total hours worked since programme enrolment and had more promotions at work. Negative impacts were evident for white males' employment and earnings' outcomes and perceived control of work outcomes.

Impacts on females were generally positive but more limited than for males. African-American females were more likely to have worked since programme enrolment and less likely to be pregnant out of marriage. Hispanic females were also more likely to have worked since enrolment, to have higher educational aspirations and to have received a raise at their current job. White females were more likely to have earned an associate's degree, had higher educational aspirations, and lower alcohol consumption levels.

Overall, participants were highly satisfied with their programme experience. Satisfaction was expressed even amongst participants who were involuntarily terminated from the programmes. Overall, only about a third reported having completed the programme. Another third left for reasons associated with negative experiences, with the remaining third leaving for employment or education reasons and personal problems.

Benefits to communities stemming from the service activities carried out by the Corps members included, during the 14 month period covered by the evaluation, over 1 million hours of service worth almost \$14 million across the eight programmes. Almost 80% of the sponsors of the service projects were highly satisfied/satisfied with the quality of the service provided and virtually all indicated they would be willing to work with the Corps programme again. Nearly three-quarters of the service beneficiaries perceived improvement in their quality of life resulting from programme services.

### *Mentoring*

Mentoring is a formal mechanism for providing young people with a positive relationship with a caring adult. The basic logic is that a structured and sustained relationship with a caring adult will be a protective factor for a young person, with the adult providing support, guidance and assistance that may otherwise be absent, in part or wholly, from their life.<sup>160 161</sup> Mentoring programmes vary in their goals, emphasis and structure. Some

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<sup>160</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

have very broad youth development goals while others are focused on narrower, more specific goals such as prevention or reduction of specific problem behaviours, or improvements in certain activities such as academic performance. Mentoring may be delivered as a stand-alone activity or as one component of a multi-strand programme and ranges from highly to very informally structured.<sup>162 163 164</sup> Reports of group mentoring programmes are also available in the literature, although there is some debate as to whether this does actually constitute mentoring or some other form of intervention.<sup>165</sup>

The seemingly most commonly cited of mentoring programmes is the US's Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programme. Evaluation of the school-based programme, using a random-assignment methodology, found that mentoring had positive effects on a range of areas in young people's lives including school attendance and performance, expectations for future academic activity, and prosocial behaviour.<sup>166</sup> A less commonly-cited aspect of the study is that findings apply for a period of up to 18 months after mentoring began, which means this study cannot be used as evidence that mentoring promotes sustained growth or change.<sup>167</sup>

Jekielek et al similarly found that mentoring programmes had a positive impact on young people's educational participation and attainment, health and safety, social and emotional wellbeing.<sup>168</sup> Qiao and McNaught's evaluation of Project K, a 14 month, multi-strand programme aimed at Year Ten students that includes a significant mentoring component, also found significant positive impacts on participants. These included improved ability to master academic activities, to form and maintain peer relationships and social assertiveness in the classroom, to make good career decisions, alongside short term improvements in students' ability to ask for adult help, information and support.<sup>169</sup> DuBois, Holloway and Valentine et al also found evidence that mentoring is effective, although the effect sizes were relatively small, and suggested effective programmes included on-going training for mentors, structured activities, frequent contact between mentors and mentees, and parental involvement.<sup>170</sup>

In their meta-analysis of 39 mentoring programmes for high risk youth, Tolan et al found positive, albeit again modest, effects for delinquency, aggression, drug use and academic performance. They also did not find any differences in outcome depending on whether the mentoring occurred on its own or whether it occurred either as part of a multi-component intervention or alongside other interventions.

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<sup>161</sup> Jekielek et al, 2002, op cit

<sup>162</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>163</sup> Liabo, K. and Lucas, P (2006), *One-to-one mentoring programmes and problem behaviour in adolescence. What works for children group: Evidence nugget*, [www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk), retrieved March 2009

<sup>164</sup> Jekielek et al, 2002, op cit

<sup>165</sup> Herra, C., Vang, Z. and Gale, L. Y (n.d.), *Group mentoring: A study of mentoring groups in three programs*. Public/Private Ventures, [www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org), retrieved May 2009

<sup>166</sup> Herrera, C., Kauh, T. J., Cooney, S. M., Grossman, J. B., and McMaken, J (2008), *High school students as mentors: Findings from the Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring impact study*. Public/Private Ventures. [www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org), retrieved May 2009

<sup>167</sup> Walker, G (2007), *Mentoring, policy and politics*. P/PV Brief, [www.ppv.org](http://www.ppv.org), retrieved April, 2009

<sup>168</sup> Jekielek et al, 2002, op cit

<sup>169</sup> Qiao, C and McNaught, H (2007), *Evaluation of project K*. Wellington: Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, Ministry of Social Development

<sup>170</sup> DuBois, D., Holloway, B., Valentine, J. and Cooper, H (2002) cited in Boaz, A. and Pawson, R (2005), *The perilous road from evidence to policy: Five journeys compared*. *Journal of Social Policy*, 34(2), pp175-194

Other studies have found that mentoring had either no effect on the outcome areas measured or, in cases where the mentoring relationship broke down, harmful effects on young people's self esteem and alcohol consumption.<sup>171</sup> Liabo and Lucas conclude that mentoring does not seem useful for young people at risk of permanent school exclusion, with poor school attendance, involved in criminal activities, with histories of aggressive or disruptive behaviour, or those already involved with welfare agencies.<sup>172</sup>

### *Service Programmes*

The literature also includes evidence to demonstrate the positive effects that volunteering programmes can have on developmental assets or outcomes. Volunteering or youth service involves "an organised period of substantial engagement, where young people are contributing to their local, national, or world community, in exchange for minimal or no monetary contribution to the participant".<sup>173</sup> This contrasts with most youth programmes and activities, where public services are provided to young people.<sup>174</sup>

The inequality of opportunities for participation in community service activities has been highlighted through research. Opportunities for "having a voice and participating in community affairs are lower for urban youth living in areas of concentrated poverty than for their peers living in middle class communities".<sup>175</sup> According to Hart and Atkins, these gaps in civic opportunities and competencies stem not only from the smaller amount of financial resources available but also from the lower ratio of adults in impoverished, 'child saturated' areas.<sup>176</sup>

Service-focused youth development programmes, one way of filling this gap, have been linked with reductions in problem behaviours, higher intrinsic motivation for work and lower individualistic focus on careers, greater reflection on and subsequent adjusting of future priorities, the formation of volunteering habits, and improved life skills, educational participation and performance and employment outcomes.<sup>177 178 179 180</sup> Service programmes also provide a range of benefits to the host organisations, where applicable, and to the communities in which the activities occur.<sup>181</sup>

### *Outdoor Adventure Programmes*

Outdoor adventure activity has also been linked with a range of positive developmental outcomes. At its most basic, outdoor adventure activity involves using the outdoors as the setting for activities that seek to effect some form of change/growth in participants. Outwards Bound and Spirit of New Zealand are two of the more well-known outdoor adventure programmes. Common features of adventure programmes include a wilderness or backcountry backdrop; small group size (typically fewer than 16); various

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<sup>171</sup> Liabo and Lucas, 2006, op cit

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Sherraden, M (2001) cited in Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit, p63.

<sup>174</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>175</sup> Hart, D. and Atkins, R (2002) cited in Finlay et al, 2007, op cit, p67

<sup>176</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>178</sup> Finlay et al, 2007, op cit

<sup>179</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>180</sup> Hair et al, 2003, op cit

<sup>181</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and youth Affairs, 2000, op cit

mentally and/or physically challenging tasks; frequent and intense interactions usually involving group problem solving and decision making skills; a non-intrusive, trained leader; and a duration of two to four weeks.<sup>182</sup>

Positive programme outcomes described in the literature include an enhanced sense of trust, personal and social responsibility and positive self perception, greater knowledge, skills and abilities, increased understanding of a positive peer culture and ability to develop positive peer relationships, and enhanced social skills.<sup>183 184 185</sup> Outdoor adventure can also help participants perceive their world differently and enhance their appreciation for the natural environment.<sup>186</sup> Building strong attachments between people and the natural environment can “give rise to spiritual experiences in which people feel a sense of connection with a larger reality that helps give meaning to their lives”.<sup>187</sup> It can also counter the human cost of alienation from nature, the ‘nature-deficit disorder’, such as diminished use of senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses.<sup>188</sup>

Adventure programmes are not inherently good, however. Kiewa, for example, observes that, while the learning experience provided by adventure activity will always be powerful, it may not always be positive. Kiewa suggests the necessary components of a positive adventure experience include: an experiential approach; a simple and meaningful reality; need for cooperation; intensity of feeling; opportunities to process experiences; success; choice; and a humane climate.<sup>189</sup>

Evaluations of outdoor adventure programmes demonstrate the variability in outcomes between different studies, programmes and individuals. Hattie et al’s meta analysis, for example, is a key contribution to this work.<sup>190</sup> As with other types of activities, there is still much to be learned about which elements of a programme are the most beneficial, as well as how to facilitate the transferral of gains made during a programme to participants’ home environments.

### *Arts and Culture Programmes*

The literature suggests participating in art, music, drama and dance programmes can build young people’s confidence, self esteem, self discipline, and social and teamwork skills. It can also help young people to be more open-minded, better able to make friends and to deal with difficult experiences, and be more creative in their thinking.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Hattie et al, 1997, op cit

<sup>183</sup> Russell, K. C., Hendee, J. C. and Phillips-Miller, D (2000), How wilderness therapy works: An examination of the wilderness therapy process to treat adolescents with behavioural problems and addictions, *USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P, 15(3)*, p207-217

<sup>184</sup> Garst et al, 2001, op cit

<sup>185</sup> Schoel et al, 1988, op cit

<sup>186</sup> Garst et al, 2001, op cit

<sup>187</sup> Schroeder, H (1996) cited in Garst et al, 2001, op cit, p48

<sup>188</sup> Louv, R. (2006). *Child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill

<sup>189</sup> Kiewa, J (1994), *Self-control: The key to adventure? Towards a model of the adventure experience*. The Haworth Press

<sup>190</sup> Hattie et al, 1997, op cit

<sup>191</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

Cultural programmes, such as those run through the UK's Heritage Lotteries Fund (HLF), can also foster positive developmental outcomes. In 2003, the HLF launched the Young Roots grant programme to engage young people in developmentally-focused heritage activities. An evaluation of 69 very different Young Roots projects, conducted relatively early on in the grants programme's lifespan, found that young people participating in the various projects had:

- gained new skills in communication, team working and leadership, as well as technical, creative, practical and heritage skills
- developed self-confidence through having to negotiate with adults, persuade others to be involved in their projects, team working, and assuming responsibility for aspects of the projects
- developed an understanding of heritage, which included an increased understanding of cultural identity, their community's history, and their place within contemporary society
- improved social inclusion, and awareness and tolerance of cultural differences amongst young people, and the trialling of new activities were other achievements attributed to the programme.<sup>192</sup>

At the same time, participating heritage organisations reported gaining expertise in working with and involving young people, which subsequently helped them to increase interest amongst young people more generally in heritage organisations, while communities gained resources they could continue to use, such as heritage trails, gardens, improvements to nature reserves, exhibitions and leaflets, and improved inter-generational understanding through cross-generational projects leading to greater community cohesion.<sup>193</sup>

### **Fit with ETE-type Programmes**

Where youth development programmes 'fit' relative to other programmes seeking to support young people is an important policy issue. Where they fit relative to ETE programmes is of particular interest for MSD, where there sometimes seems to be a lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the two broad classes of programmes as well as a perception of overlap or even potentially of duplication.

In considering the matter of 'fit', it is important to distinguish between different types of youth development programmes. Youth development programmes vary significantly in terms of their target participant group, their goals and intended outcomes, and the nature and the intensity of activities. Some programmes target quite high-achieving and/or well-supported young people, seeking to provide additional developmental or 'enrichment' opportunities. Some seek to provide developmental opportunities for young people who are 'doing reasonably well' but may benefit from some additional opportunities; Outward Bound courses can fall into this group. Volunteering programmes also provide useful developmental opportunities for young people, and are often taken up by those who would be deemed 'doing well'. Others provide low intensity or one-off developmental activities to young people generally, such as the MYD co-funded Stage Challenge.

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<sup>192</sup> Heritage Lotteries Fund (2005), Learning from Young Roots: Evaluation of the Young Roots Grant Programme. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk), retrieved April 2009

<sup>193</sup> Ibid

Intensive, structured youth development programmes, such as NZCC and YSC, at least as conceived in this review, are a different category of youth development programme. They are targeted at young people who lack basic/foundational qualities and competencies, and seek to establish a core platform of practices, competencies, values and so forth that the literature suggests is ultimately necessary not only for successful adult economic and social participation but also seemingly for successful participation in training, education and employment.

As proposed in this review, NZCC and YSC would also seek to connect young people with resources in their natural environments to support positive engagement and activity over the longer term. Viewed in this way, structured youth development programmes like NZCC and YSC sit lower on a 'staircasing' framework than ETE programmes and complement, rather than replicate, ETE activities.

An examination of evidence on the efficacy of youth employment assistance measures provides some support for the position outlined above. Amongst others, Martin and Grubb conclude that ETE-related programmes have had limited or modest effects on youth's labour market prospects.<sup>194</sup> To support this conclusion, they cite a substantive review where the reviewers concluded about the US-based studies "...we believe that neither the experimental or non-experimental literature provide much evidence that employment and training programmes improve US youths' labour market prospects".<sup>195</sup> Drawing on the European literature, these same authors conclude there is "...no consistent indication whether these interventions are more or less effective for youth, nor whether more disadvantaged youth benefit more or less from these programs".<sup>196</sup>

Poor attitudes towards work amongst disadvantaged youth have been identified as "...a major factor in explaining the dismal record of special youth measures".<sup>197</sup> Martin and Grubb argue, however, that it is difficult for ETE programmes to influence attitudes in ways that improve the employment and earnings' prospects of disadvantaged youth. They suggest the use of mentoring programmes to help overcome negative attitudes towards work rather than simply relying on traditional ETE programmes.<sup>198</sup>

While they focused specifically on mentoring programmes, the key thread of Martin and Grubb's argument is that additional intervention is required in order to support young people into employment, beyond that traditionally included within an ETE framework. Youth mentoring is fundamentally a youth development intervention and the youth development literature suggest there are a range of youth development activities that can achieve the kinds of attitudinal, value and behavioural shifts needed to support employment participation. While mentoring can have positive effects under certain conditions (and is ultimately a cheaper form of intervention), it is also more narrowly focused and provides far fewer of the developmental opportunities associated with a good structured youth development programme. For that group of young people who lack basic habits around rising/routine, for example, an intensive structured youth development programme seems more likely to teach or instil productive habits than a 'once-a-week' mentoring relationship.

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<sup>194</sup> Martin, J. P. and Grubb, D (2001), *What works and for whom: A review of OECD countries' experiences with active labour market policies. Working Paper 2001:14*. Paris: OECD.

<sup>195</sup> Heckman, J. J., Lalonde, R. J. and Smith, J. A (1999) cited in Martin and Grubb, 2001, op cit, p18

<sup>196</sup> Ibid

<sup>197</sup> Martin and Grubb, 2001, op cit, p20

<sup>198</sup> Martin and Grubb, 2001, op cit

Given the inability of ETE programmes to adequately respond to the needs a certain portion of young people present, well-designed and well-delivered structured youth development programmes – targeted at the right young people - represent a potentially valuable contribution to the overall effort to help young people transition into productive adulthood.

## **Performance Measurement, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Performance measurement, monitoring and evaluation are essentially three different approaches used to collectively assess the implementation, performance, results and impacts of programmes.<sup>199</sup> These activities enable us to meet performance accountability requirements and establish whether programmes are operating as intended or whether some adjustment is needed.<sup>200</sup> Each of these three activities has a particular focus, purpose, perspective and use, although there is overlap in some places.

### *Performance Measurement*

Performance measurement involves collecting data and information about aspects of a programme's performance to report to external stakeholders. It has a financial and managerial orientation, and is broadly aimed at promoting transparency to stakeholders.<sup>201</sup> Performance measurement is largely concerned with data and information about the amount of service provided to programme participants, service completion levels and outcome attainment, along with matters of cost effectiveness and cost efficiency.<sup>202</sup>

### *Monitoring*

Monitoring is derived from the Latin word 'monere', which means 'to warn'.<sup>203</sup> Monitoring focuses on programme operations during the delivery phase, providing data and information so those responsible for the programme(s) can track and adjust activity as needed. Because monitoring involves comparing what is actually happening with what was intended or expected, a clear articulation of expectation during the programme development phase is critical. Common monitoring questions relate to the type and number of participants, the type and amount of assistance being provided to participants, and results being achieved (outputs and outcomes).<sup>204</sup>

Monitoring for the purpose of programme management, as opposed to programme evaluation, would also include areas like risk management and incident reporting. This kind of activity needs to occur throughout the programme delivery phase.

### *Evaluation*

There are different types of evaluation, each with a particular aim or purpose, focusing on particular aspects of a programme, and conducted during a particular phase of a

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<sup>199</sup> Kettner et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>200</sup> Ibid

<sup>201</sup> Ibid

<sup>202</sup> Ibid

<sup>203</sup> Ibid

<sup>204</sup> Ibid

programme's lifespan.<sup>205</sup> The type of evaluation carried out ultimately needs to reflect the information needs of decision makers as well as pragmatic issues around feasibility.<sup>206</sup> Evaluations should help to answer the following questions:

- what kinds of clients
- experiencing what types of issues or problems
- receiving what type and volume of services
- get what results
- at what costs?<sup>207 208</sup>

An alternative set of questions is presented by Eccles and Gootman, who conceptualise the key questions as follows:

- is the theory of the programme that is being evaluated explicit and plausible
- how well has the programme theory been implemented in the sites studied
- in general, is the programme effective and, in particular, is it effective with specific sub-populations of young people
- whether it is or is not effective, why is this the case
- what is the value of the programme
- what recommendations about action should be made?<sup>209</sup>

A key focus for programme evaluations is the identification of programme outcomes and impacts. Programme impact is a very precise, and often misunderstood, concept involving the establishing of a cause-and-effect relationship where a programme, rather than any other factor, is found to be the reason for the programme's outcomes being achieved. Information about outcomes and impact is needed to help policy makers and planners make decisions about programme value or worth.<sup>210</sup>

It is common but poor practice to wait until late in the planning process, or until the programme is underway, before considering evaluation requirements. It is extremely difficult to evaluate a programme if the evaluation begins as the programme is ending.<sup>211</sup> Evaluation needs to be underpinned by good data and good monitoring, and in many cases data cannot be collected retrospectively. The late consideration of evaluation requirements, or the late involvement of evaluators, is often what ultimately causes evaluations to fail to deliver important information. This is a costly, frustrating and avoidable situation.

### *Management Information System*

To support performance measurement, monitoring and evaluation, organisations need a system of collecting and managing their data and information, generally termed a management information system. This broadly encompasses the specific tools that are

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<sup>205</sup> For further discussion, see for example, Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W. and Freeman, H. E (2004), *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (7<sup>th</sup> Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

<sup>206</sup> Ibid

<sup>207</sup> Ibid

<sup>208</sup> The consideration of cost, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, can sometimes sit outside the evaluation process within evaluations of government-funded programmes

<sup>209</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>210</sup> Ibid

<sup>211</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

used to capture and manage data and to generate reports, and the processes that sit around these activities. Regardless of the type of system and tools used, every organisation is confronted with three issues:

- what questions do we need the system to answer
- what data elements need to be included in the system in order to answer those questions
- what reports does the system need to generate?<sup>212</sup>

The extent to which these issues are thought through will largely determine the quality, relevance and general adequacy of subsequent performance management, monitoring and evaluation activities.

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid

## **Implications of the Evidence for the Ministry of Youth Development**

Post-report preparation note: *MYD is currently considering these recommendations as far as its work programme is concerned. It should not be assumed that MYD will necessarily be undertaking or meeting all of the report recommendations although this report, as a whole, is informing MYD Services and Policy work in 2009/10.*

### **Participation**

During the course of the review, it was suggested on more than one occasion that a strengths-based approach meant that all young people should be eligible to participate in all youth development programmes. In respect to MYD youth development programmes, this would mean it was unnecessary to have guidelines that further narrowed the scope of the target group beyond the current Cabinet-mandated 'young people aged between 12 and 24 years'.<sup>213</sup> The youth development literature offers an alternative view and suggests our understanding and application of the concept of 'strengths-based' work needs to be more nuanced.

A strengths-based approach certainly does emphasise the importance of seeing the potential in young people and supporting their positive development; without doubt this is of critical value to all young people and not just those deemed 'at risk'. At the same time, there is a substantial body of evidence that tells us that some young people are statistically more likely to be at risk of a negative life-course because of a lack of developmental opportunities brought about by a lack of attachment to pro-social settings and people. Such an outcome can represent serious harm and cost not only to the person involved but also to the state and to society generally.

A strengths-based approach does not mean we are blind to this information or this potential risk. We do not assume that everyone who is statistically at risk is actually at risk, and equally, we do not assume that everyone who is 'statistically blessed' is firmly set on a positive life trajectory. But the reality is that many young people can access developmental opportunities independent of a formal youth development programme or as part of a low level programme that forms only a small part of their normal daily life. There are programmes that MYD already funds that fall into this category, such as mentoring, Stage Challenge, Scouting New Zealand, Enterprise New Zealand and so forth. MYD's funding pool for structured programmes is relatively small: while this does not dictate who should participate in a programme, it does necessitate that MYD has very clear, tight, and enforced criteria around participant targeting in order to maximise the impact of that funding.

When thinking about matters of participation, the question that we need to ask is 'who is likely to make a poor transition to adulthood without a formal youth development intervention'. In the case of this review specifically, the question is 'who is likely to make a poor transition to adulthood without the intense support provided by a structured youth development programme?'. MYD needs to be able to answer that question, and develop clear guidelines that help narrow the target group beyond the very broad Cabinet-mandated guidelines. This will help ensure maximum value is extracted from the SFYP

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<sup>213</sup> Note that current service contracts specify the target group as youth aged between 15 and 24 years of age who are vulnerable and disengaged, with those aged 15 requiring a formal school exemption

fund. Providers' experience should be used to help shape those guidelines but at the day-to-day level, their judgement should come in when determining whether individual young people fall within scope of these guidelines.

To answer this question, we need to consider who is conceptually most in need of assistance and who is most likely to benefit from a structured youth development programme. We also need to consider a number of other factors, such as:

- who the government/minister considers to be the target group
- who is legally able to participate
- who is practically available to participate
- the availability of other, more suitable pathways for young people
- safety
- group norms.

All of these factors need to be considered within the broader context of MYD's service and funding strategy, which would set out MYD's intentions with respect to matters like:

- what MYD wants to achieve through its funding of services (i.e. trial and subsequently migrate successful programmes or elements thereof into the broader sector)
- the kinds of organisations MYD wants to develop through its funding (eg large organisations capable of delivering multiple programmes vs single operators who run a single programme)
- the areas where MYD wants to have services (e.g. does MYD want to provide services in areas where there currently are none or does it want to fund them in areas where there are a range of other services that can be drawn on either to provide additional support during a programme or post programme as 'the next step' for the young people)
- the kinds of activities MYD wants to be available to young people (eg does it want to fill gaps by funding, for example, arts- and drama-based programmes to ensure a range of activities exist for young people or does it want to be a specialist around a single or small number of programme types?).

As a first step towards developing guidelines, a mix of principles and more practical criteria are proposed that address which young people should be targeted for inclusion, which should be excluded, and which young people inclusion should be conditional for. These are set out in Appendix 4. In summary, it would seem the group most appropriately targeted for participation in programmes like NZCC and YSC are those young people who lack strong attachments to pro-social settings, who are disengaged or at risk of becoming disengaged from positive activities, and who need to develop foundational skills, attitudes, values and competencies in order to be able to successfully participate in educational or employment-related activities.

### **Referrals and Filtering**

If the intention is to shift the focus of these programmes towards 'low-end at-risk', then referral mechanisms need to route in that portion of this group whose needs will be met by this type of programme. At the same time, filtering mechanisms need to identify and

exclude those who fall outside these parameters and those whose needs are better met by some other form of intervention.

Police, Court and Family Group Conference referrals may no longer be appropriate referral sources, although as with most things, some discretion is always useful. More appropriate referral sources would include the young people themselves, families, schools and other agencies working with young people.

Developing a useful, formal filtering tool for providers to use at the initial intake stage is quite a complex task, although certainly not impossible. There are often matters of judgement that are needed when determining suitability; such as recognising when someone is 'on the cusp' between a negative and positive life trajectory. Filtering tools can lack the sensitivity to be useful in these circumstances, which may result in providers over-riding the tool's findings anyway. Certainly there is an element of discretion that needs to be used when choosing participants, especially when it comes to considering the composition of the participant group as a whole that a formal filtering tool is unlikely to replicate. Even assuming providers were supportive, (not a given), it may be that the development of a filtering tool is relatively low priority relative to other action required. MYD's greater contribution may well be the development of more precise 'target participant' guidelines for providers to follow.

### **Programme Goals and Outcomes**

Generic aims and outcomes for services and programmes funded through the SFYP fund were agreed by Cabinet. The key aim of MYD's programmes and services is to enable the implementation of the YDSA, promote effective cross-sectoral responses for young people and facilitate the recognition, development and implementation at a regional and local level. The key outcomes of SFYP services are: improved self esteem; personal development and learning opportunities; improved connection to family or community; improved health; reduced re-offending (where applicable); and/or entry into further education, training or employment following completion of projects.

There is a single set of aims covering both NZCC and YSC, articulated in the current service contracts as follows:

- deliver a youth development curriculum for young people in order to achieve positive outcomes
- deliver services that help young people acquire new skills, increase their confidence and motivation, support their active participation and remove barriers to education, employment and training
- deliver services which facilitate participation, inclusion and engagement, leading to achievement, awards or qualifications, long term economic and independent wellbeing
- deliver services which respond to current and emerging issues locally, regionally and nationally.

The outcomes, listed in the introduction to this report, are the same for both NZCC and YSC. These relate to the four broad areas of ETE participation, health and wellbeing, personal development and social development.

Overall, the stated aims and outcomes of both the SFYP fund and the NZCC and YSC programmes are consistent with the youth development literature. On a minor note, the SFYP fund outcome of 'personal development and learning opportunities' involves activity rather than outcome. The more substantive issue is that both the SFYP fund and the NZCC/YSC aims and outcome statements are very broad. With respect to the SFYP fund, this breadth is arguably appropriate. In respect to NZCC and YSC, it is possible this breadth is counter-productive.

On the 'plus side', this breadth does mean that all areas MYD may wish to effect change or growth in through NZCC and YSC are captured. The possibly limiting effect of this breadth is that it encourages programmes to 'do everything' with young people. The risk, when this happens, is that very little is achieved because efforts are too dispersed and lack the intensity and/or the focus needed to facilitate specific outcomes.

The literature provides strong evidence that a twenty week programme cannot undo all of the harm that some young people have already experienced, nor can it accomplish what multiple institutions with infinitely greater resources have failed to do in the decade or more prior.<sup>214</sup> Given this reality, it is vital that the programmes' aims/goals and associated outcomes give priority to those areas where action/change is most needed and is realistically achievable given the young people, the resources involved and our knowledge of the kinds of changes that programmes to-date generally have and have not been able to achieve.

This review contends that a youth development programme of this type, targeting this kind of young person, can most usefully contribute to young people's lives in the following way:

- by helping participants aspire to a life that includes positive and full economic and social participation
- by helping participants identify what their particular path to positive and full economic and social participation may look like, and the steps towards those goals
- by helping participants form enduring connections with positive people and settings that will help them to achieve positive and full economic and social participation beyond the duration of the programme
- increasing young people's motivation, confidence and self efficacy sufficiently in order for them to carry through on their next steps
- by helping to instil the knowledge and basic practices necessary for them to successfully carry out their next steps.

While the existing set of programme aims and outcomes does in essence capture the basic logic set out in the above points, they do not do so as explicitly. The risk is that programme providers, who will invariably make decisions about programme activities based on their perceptions of what is most important, may emphasise a particular combination of aims and outcomes that do not reflect the logic outlined above.

To illustrate this point through example: an individual provider or youth worker may reasonably respond to the breadth of aim and outcome statements by choosing to prioritise a portion of them; those that seems most consistent with their beliefs and knowledge of what makes a difference in the lives of young people. An individual youth

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<sup>214</sup> Higgins, 2003, op cit

worker may decide, for example, to place their greatest emphasis on carrying out activities that increase motivation, self efficacy and so forth, reflecting a personal belief that these are young people's primary barriers to participation. The literature, however, tells us that programme gains in this area are typically short lived; the extent to which the youth worker is aware of this is likely to be highly variable, and, at worst, quite limited, especially if their main source of knowledge comes from observing young people increase in their confidence and motivation during a programme. Unless the programme specifically includes substantial and meaningful goal exploration and personal planning activities, and deliberately equips young people with specific information and access to resources to follow this plan through, a worst-case scenario could involve young people 'feeling better' for a short period of time post programme and then returning to inactivity.

It would be useful for MYD to articulate a much clearer view of the basic logic that they perceive underpins NZCC/YSC programmes, whether it is similar to that discussed above or reflects a different perspective. This information needs to be communicated to providers, who need to give priority to the outcomes and activities that would appear to best support it. Further thought would be needed as to whether any possible re-articulation of logic/focus could be accomplished within the scope of existing contracts.

Another area for consideration involves the specific outcome area of post programme ETE activity. Current contract specifications require that 70% of young people should move into ETE post programme. This emphasis on ETE-type outcomes is a common practice in youth programmes internationally. At least in part, this reflects our understanding that continuous engagement and activation in useful and appropriate activities and settings is key to facilitating young people's transition into productive adult life.

For many young people, the next step from a youth development programme will be an ETE activity. There is a portion of young people, however, who may need other steps before they are ready for ETE (e.g. some kind of therapeutic intervention). Placing such a strong emphasis on post programme ETE participation has the potential to effectively penalise those providers who accept young people on to their courses, knowingly or otherwise, whose next step is not an ETE one. To look at this practically: on a course of ten people, if two need other intervention before ETE participation is realistic, that means a provider can only have one young person decide not to move into ETE activity post programme completion before they fail to meet their contractual obligations.

The extent to which a 70% ETE target is realistic depends in part on the profile of the young people participating in the programmes. In recent times, MYD structured youth development programmes have been targeting 'the hard end', who are more likely to have additional issues that need addressing post programme than the lower risk young people that are now being proposed as the target group. With respect to participant group at least, the overall ETE target seems more achievable now than previously.

Programme outcome attainment also depends in part on the emphasis given to personal planning within a programme. It is highly likely that young people who leave a course without having explored their career aspirations, options and next steps, will struggle in a way that those who have considered these matters may not.

The World Bank notes that the ability of programmes to assist young people into employment is also closely tied to the prevailing macroeconomic conditions.<sup>215</sup> At the current time, the labour market is contracting; which will make it more difficult to place young people generally into employment. In some New Zealand locations, it may be almost impossible to do so. The ETE targets encourage participation in training and education as well as employment, which to some extent buffers providers in respect to outcome attainment. At the time of completing this report, however, it was becoming apparent that training and education providers are struggling to meet demand for places and vocational options for some young people are becoming extremely limited.

What these factors highlight is the challenge of setting realistic targets that span multiple years and potentially different economic and political climates. Most of the current service contracts of NZCC and YSC are locked in for a three year period. Making adjustments to these targets is not straightforward, although it certainly is possible, assuming there was a more appropriate target. At the same, it may be useful to consider what a suitable response would be should it appear these targets have become unrealistic.

## **Programme Structure and Content**

### *Overall Programme Construction*

The literature indicates there is value in providing intensive, full time, structured, multi-strand youth development programmes aimed at broad-scale, often quite foundational, development of young people. Reports from a range of sources also support the impression that there is a need for these programmes.

There are three dimensions that affect coverage that can realistically be changed while holding funding constant. They are duration (currently 20 weeks), intensity (ie 'dosage', currently full- or near- fulltime) and volume (currently 8-12 young people per course). Financial-related dimensions have been excluded because increased funding seems unlikely in the current fiscal environment. It is also possible to adjust different combinations of these three dimensions in varying ways.

There is an inherent tension between attempting to increase coverage through some form of scope reduction and the tendency for programmes to sometimes try to be 'everything for everyone'.<sup>216</sup> In part this tendency reflects the fact that many of those working in this field are extremely and passionately committed to young people and possess a very strong desire to do whatever is needed to help these young people on their path. It is also a reasonable response to the reality of service levels in parts of the country where there really may be no other locally-based programmes or services to refer young people to.

As discussed previously, there seems to be very little empirical evidence to guide decisions about duration, intensity and group size for the programmes like NZCC and YSC targeting this broad age range. The most useful approach may well be to present the scenario of greater coverage requirements to providers and see what they suggest.

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<sup>215</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>216</sup> Note that 'scope reduction' could also involve a perceived 'dilution' of accomplishments stemming from increased course sizes, as well as the more obvious reductions in duration or intensity/dosage

Their advice can then help to shape a modified structured youth development programme, in conjunction with the insights this report provides about important components and features of effective youth development programmes.

When having this discussion, one of the issues that should be foremost in people's minds is the importance of creating stability/continuity of involvement by useful adults in young people's lives. As has been explored previously, a young person that has an ongoing relationship with a positive adult who can guide, encourage and support them is likely to do better than someone who doesn't have this. This basic belief provides part of the underlying rationale for youth development programmes generally and for the specific focus on helping young people to build positive connections in their natural settings.

Where positive connections are in place, the young person should no longer need the intensive assistance provided through a youth development programme or youth worker. Where such connections are not attained, however, there is considerable evidence to suggest that the ongoing involvement of a professional (in this scenario, most likely a youth worker) would be beneficial. A seemingly common tendency, however, is to use this scenario as a basis for justifying longer duration youth development programmes – the argument being: change happens where a young person trusts the youth worker; trust takes a long time to occur as does the resultant positive change; therefore the programme needs to be long enough to allow this change to happen.

What is in fact necessary is that the young person maintains access to a trusted and useful adult over time; it is not necessary that this is achieved through a fulltime, intensive (and expensive) structured youth development programme. One response may be to create the capacity for an ongoing mentoring strand of activity beyond the duration of the fulltime group component of the programme, for that sub-group of young people who need it. We know that some organisations and youth workers already devote considerable time and energy assisting young people who have left their programmes for this reason. Formalising this activity would be a way of ensuring it occurs in a more systematic, reliable and sustainable manner.

#### *MYD's Contribution to the Choice of Programme Activities*

The literature, at least at this point in time, suggests there is no single type of activity that can be considered particularly valuable or more 'youth development-ish' in nature than others; rather they are more or less relevant depending on interest and need. This supports the notion that providers decide which activities to include for any given programme.

For this approach to work well, it is essential that providers make informed choices about programme activities. This means that providers need to have a very clear understanding of the characteristics of different activities, or the kinds of opportunities they provide, and the links that exist between those opportunities and the desired developmental outcomes. Without this knowledge, activity choice may reflect what providers know or young people like, as opposed to what is most likely to produce the desired results. In this scenario, the successful attainment of programme outcomes is more a matter of chance than design.

The impression formed during the review is that this kind of understanding does not yet exist throughout the sector. MYD has a significant role to play in this educative process, both in terms of generating the information and in its communication.

Having acknowledged that providers need to be able to adapt their choices of activity for different groups of young people, MYD's decision to set no core components for the programmes may still be questioned. Previously, the service contract required that all programmes contain service activities, challenging recreation, education, work experience, and te Ao Maori. This approach ensured that providers carried out a useful range of activities while still leaving considerable flexibility around the specific activities and projects included within individual programmes. 'Challenging recreation', for example, could involve any number of different activities based around sport, outdoor activity, arts, drama, heritage and so forth.

For such a 'hands off' approach to work well, there would need to be a high level of capability across the sector, especially in terms of up-to-date 'best practice' knowledge. The extent to which this is currently the case may well be questioned. Providers need flexibility in order to achieve outcomes; the 'managing for outcomes' approach is premised on this notion. Even so, broad parameters that provide some direction for providers' effort may be very useful, even as a time-limited measure, helping to promote greater consistency in programme quality.

### *Choice of Activities*

If we know that activities are more or less relevant, or potentially interchangeable, depending on interest and need, then the evidence about the opportunities provided by individual activities and their apparent contributions to outcomes becomes even more important. This section considers the potential value and relevance of each of the traditional core components of NZCC and YSC in light of the literature.

No compelling reasons were identified in the literature for favouring conservation-based activities over other types of activity. Arguments are made for bringing young people in contact with nature and the outdoors in order to counter a possible 'nature-deficit disorder',<sup>217</sup> and without doubt 'the outdoors' provides an excellent setting for developmentally-focused activities. No evidence was identified to suggest, however, that this type of activity may have a greater impact on developmental outcomes than other types. Ultimately, the deciding factor may be the extent to which young people are attracted to the outdoor setting as opposed to other developmental mediums such as drama and arts.

MYD currently allocates the bulk of its funding to NZCC programmes. Recognising that activities are the way in which programmes attract participants, in all likelihood, this emphasis on conservation means a group of young people MYD would consider suitable/in need miss out on an MYD-funded structured youth development programme because they do not like those kinds of activities. The extent to which this is an issue depends both on MYD's desire to fund programmes of relevance to a broad group of young people through that portion of the SFYP fund and the availability of alternately-funded programmes involving other types of activities.

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<sup>217</sup> Louv, 2006, op cit

This argument also applies in respect to a 'challenging recreation' component. Young people who dislike physical activity and have participated in programmes that include this as a component have described the experience as demoralising.<sup>218</sup> In theory, 'challenging recreation' could involve a range of activities that focused on, for example, drama, dance or art, as well as the more obvious ones like outdoor adventure. According to MYD staff, however, this latter type of activity tends to dominate. It may be that this is what providers know is most relevant for young people in their area; it could equally be that this is what providers are organised and equipped to do.

The only literature located that particularly endorses outdoor adventure activities over some other types was the work of Hattie et al.<sup>219</sup> Their meta-analysis of adventure programmes suggested that, while the outcomes attained were more or less consistent with other education-focused programmes, the continued gains and longevity of those gains may be greater. The overall picture of efficacy depicted by the study was, however, quite mixed, and it does not suggest that this form of activity should be favoured above others. If it wished, MYD could encourage a greater range of 'challenging recreation' activities.

The evidence provides support for including a service component in the programmes. Done well, service activities provide a broad range of useful opportunities, including the opportunity for young people to positively and meaningfully interact with people outside the programme, which are in turn linked to a number of different important developmental outcomes. At the same time, local communities benefit from the completed project. Done poorly, such as when the nature of the project isolates young people from the community or the work involved is uninteresting or unlikely to develop useful skills, it is difficult to see benefit in it. There is substantial value in MYD carefully assessing the appropriateness of projects proposed by different providers as part of the overall monitoring process.

Education is a broad class of activity and one which provides within it considerable scope for adapting course content to reflect participant need. The literature provides strong support for the provision of information and teaching of skills across a broad range of life areas. The World Bank, for example, concludes life skills training positively impacts on the employability and educational outcomes of at risk youth as well as reduces specific anti-social behaviours.<sup>220</sup>

The value or appropriateness of teaching literacy and numeracy within youth development programmes of this type is less clear. It is quite probable that a sizeable portion of the young people who participate in a youth development programme have inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. Equipping young people with these skills is both important and necessary; however, it can easily be argued this is the role of educational specialists not youth workers. If programmes are to be shortened, for example, it makes more sense to focus on building confidence, motivation and so forth so the young person is better placed to move into a literacy and numeracy-focused course post programme.

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<sup>218</sup> Weaver, S (2001) cited in Barwick, 2004, op cit

<sup>219</sup> Hattie et al, 1997, op cit

<sup>220</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

Work experience is a popular component of youth programmes, assumed to increase employability and thus the move into employment, either within the organisation the work experience occurs in or an alternative site. The youth development literature does not clearly demonstrate how or to what extent work experience within youth development programmes affects participant outcomes. An MYD-conducted review of NZCC and YSC concluded there was a “clear correlation between work placements and ETE outcomes”,<sup>221</sup> the methodological basis for this conclusion, however, seems quite weak. Work experience programmes falling within the ETE category are much more carefully evaluated; even so, the findings are mixed.

It is entirely plausible that exposure to work settings within youth development programmes will help young people develop important competencies. As with other activities types though, the extent to which gains are realised will likely rely on the careful selection of suitable work sites, the provision of support throughout the placement, and deliberate activities to support reflection and learning post-placement.

The inclusion of a cultural component within a youth development programme is endorsed through the literature, in the sense that a clear sense of cultural identity and the capacity to operate in multiple cultural contexts are considered key assets needed for successful adulthood.<sup>222</sup> This does not mean ensuring a programme is relevant to the setting it is in or providing a ‘Maori component’ for Maori participants, although both are important. It means deliberate action to help individual young people explore and ultimately develop their own cultural identities as well as equipping them with the ability to successfully navigate multiple cultural settings. In New Zealand, this specifically includes an understanding of things Maori. While now quite dated, KPMG’s 1990 evaluation of NZCC found the programme had been instrumental in teaching participants about “Maori perspectives” encompassing topics like the Treaty, Maori tradition, “my whakapapa” and so forth.<sup>223</sup>

In terms of overall balance of effort, an argument could be made for a strong emphasis to be placed on building positive connections within young people’s natural environments (or helping them to access positive environments), as opposed to prioritising, for example, skills development. The design of the review prevents informed comment on the extent to which providers currently focus on connection-building as programme outcomes. The very limited impression gained is that the extent to which this occurs, and is done well, is probably quite variable.

### *Assessment, Goal Setting and Personal Planning*

#### Assessment

As part of the current registration process, providers are required to ensure participants complete a nine page MYD-produced document to be returned to MYD within two weeks of programme commencement. The first three pages cover relatively standard enrolment information. The fourth, fifth and sixth pages of the document ask a series of questions that might possibly, once completed, represent the needs assessment listed as a required input in the service contract.

<sup>221</sup> Ministry of Youth Development (1995), *Overview of the internal review of the New Zealand Conservation Corps and the Youth Service Corps*. Wellington, NZ: Ministry of Youth Development, p5

<sup>222</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>223</sup> KPMG Peat Marwick, 1990, op cit, p8

The remaining three pages of the nine page document involve the creation of a personal plan. Two of the pages young people are expected to complete involve a multi-step goal setting process relating primarily to the period covered by the programme but also, to a limited extent, to the post programme period. These goals can potentially span any aspect of a young person's life. The goal setting process is tied in to the youth development programme by a single question which asks how the programme can help to achieve the goal(s) set. The development and implementation of this personal plan, along with subsequent monitoring of the plan, is also listed as a compulsory input in the service contract.

There are a number of issues that could usefully be (re)considered with respect to the approach to assessment and personal planning that MYD currently encourages through its nine page 'enrolment' tool.

The approach to assessment encouraged by this tool, if indeed the tool does aim to support needs assessment, seems fairly questionable in terms of its appropriateness and its value. Part of the reason for carrying out assessment within a youth development programme is to learn more about the young person and their life in order to establish how best to work with them, as well as to identify any issues that may impact on the young person's ability to safely and meaningfully participate in the programme. A provider could help a young person complete this form and still know nothing about issues or conditions which could impact on course participation, such as any recent or significant mental health issues or unsafe living arrangements.

As is the case with the planning process discussed below, there is an issue about the willingness of young people to divulge personal information in early stages of a course. At the same time, it would seem prudent to at least attempt to obtain a minimum amount of information in the early stages rather than waiting until the young person hopefully volunteered it at a later stage. Tools like the internationally-recognised HEADSS measure<sup>224</sup> suggest useful areas to explore include the home, education/employment, activities, drugs and alcohol, sexuality, suicide risk and safety. According to HEADSS guidelines, each of these domains needs to be explored in relation to safety, connectedness and actual behaviour.<sup>225</sup>

The value or necessity of including a standardised assessment tool as part of the assessment process, within this particular context, is more difficult to establish. Ultimately, arguments can be made both for and against it. The systematic, as opposed to ad hoc, exploration of areas like psychosocial and physical health and wellbeing for individual programme participants may be a useful contribution for NZCC/YSC to make, especially in light of the emphasis placed on health and wellbeing in the current service contract.

Advocates of formalised assessment may argue that failing to incorporate a standardised assessment such as HEADSS within programmes like NZCC/YSC represents a wasted opportunity. Requiring providers to use a formal assessment is a

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<sup>224</sup> HEADSS is a screening tool for conducting a comprehensive psychosocial history and health risk assessment with young people. For further information, see, for example, clinical guidelines at [www.starship.org.nz](http://www.starship.org.nz)

<sup>225</sup> [www.starship.org.nz](http://www.starship.org.nz), retrieved April 2009

tangible action MYD can take to encourage providers/youth workers to systematically identify important areas of need in the lives of participants.

At the same time, the successful application of any assessment tool relies on the involved staff possessing enough knowledge not only to administer the tool but to interpret results. This requires knowledge of the broad area of adolescent development, health and wellbeing, as well as tool-specific information; both of which have training and resource implications for providers, and in turn, for programme funders.

Critics further point out that identifying need is very different to meeting it.<sup>226</sup> An assessment process is only valuable if the findings are acted on appropriately. To do this, staff need to know which services to direct young people to and how to locate them, which is in turn dependent on those services being available or accessible. This applies, however, regardless of the formality of assessment process or tools used.

### Goal Setting and Personal Planning

Personal planning, particularly with respect to life post course, is a critical element in a youth development programme as conceived of in this review. At the current time, there seems little that directly encourages providers to undertake a comprehensive planning process as part of the programme. While providers are expected to achieve a target of 70% ETE participation post programme, this can be achieved with the aid of a sympathetic labour market or good contacts with training organisations and in the total absence of any comprehensive or meaningful longer term planning. The personal planning template provided by MYD, if anything, serves to downplay planning's significance. While there may well be some providers who choose to incorporate comprehensive planning in their programmes, the current planning template may encourage a 'tick-the-box, complete it, return it' kind of mentality in others.

Ultimately, successful youth development means that young people are engaged in positive settings and activities over the long term, not just the short term, and programmes have a contribution to make beyond simply an initial post programme placement. Requiring providers to undertake comprehensive personal planning, where young people are encouraged to think about their longer term aspirations and how to achieve them, would seem a useful step for MYD to take.

In respect to the goal setting process set out in the current enrolment form, there are a number of specific issues that need to be considered. Firstly, the very detailed, multi-step method current used is likely to be unacceptably challenging for some young people. Secondly, young people may have little or no sense of their aspirations in the very early stages of the programme, when the form is to be completed. Thirdly, young people may not be willing to articulate their aspirations so early on, when the rapport and trust between programme staff and the group has yet to be established. Brief discussions with providers on this topic suggest all of these issues currently apply. Pressing young people to complete the current planning tool within the first two weeks seems quite likely to be counter-productive, serving to create or further reinforce a sense of incompetence or inadequacy and discomfort.

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<sup>226</sup> Gilligan, P. and Manby, M (2008), The common assessment framework: Does the reality match the rhetoric? *Child & Family Social Work*, 13 (2), pp177-187

If MYD agrees with the value placed on personal planning suggested here, it would be worthwhile considering how best to ensure programmes consistently undertake comprehensive and high quality personal planning activities. Some time spent with providers developing a modified approach that providers consider more suitable would seem a useful action for MYD staff to undertake. A more simplified goal setting method, occurring later in the programme, may be useful. As part of the data/information work stream, MYD should also consider what assessment and planning information it needs to receive: currently, MYD receives (at least in theory) planning and goal setting information for each programme participant. It is unclear what this information is intended to be used for and the usability of this information in its current form seems low.

### **Performance Measurement, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Work is currently underway to improve the broad activities of performance measurement and monitoring for the NZCC and YSC programmes. This includes the development of more relevant data capture and reporting tools. This work needs to be underpinned by a clear understanding of the information needs of different stakeholders. It also needs to be based on a clear understanding of youth development principles and what is important in youth development practice.

#### *Overall Information Framework*

MYD needs an overall framework to guide its information activities (performance management, monitoring, and evaluation) which directly focuses on the various elements the literature suggests are necessary for good youth development practice. This framework should be based on a clear description of programme theory, including the theory of change that underpins the structured youth development programmes. Providing clear descriptions of the rationale for the inclusion of different activities in the programmes, alongside statements about the opportunities the activities are expected to provide and their expected links with programme outcomes, will also usefully inform the framework.

#### **Inputs**

Working through the different components of a programme, beginning with programme inputs, MYD needs a fuller picture of programme participants. The kinds of areas that should be covered include participant demographic and characteristics information, as well as strengths and needs information. Developing a more suitable tool for use by all providers will be a useful action for MYD to undertake. Using internationally recognised measures or categorisations wherever possible should help with the overall comparability of information with other programmes.<sup>227</sup>

Some thought needs to be given to the amount or type of information MYD needs about programme inputs like materials, equipment and facilities. A key question to consider is how important or useful is it to build a picture of this aspect of programme provision, relative to other information needs.

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<sup>227</sup> See, for example, the compendium of research and assessment tools for youth development: [www.rmcdenver.com/cart](http://www.rmcdenver.com/cart); and the National Clearinghouse for Families and Youth, [www.ncfy.com/publications/satools/index.htm](http://www.ncfy.com/publications/satools/index.htm)

The possibility of more systematically capturing information about programme instructors/youth workers should also be considered. The skill of a youth worker is considered one of the most influential factors affecting participant outcome, yet MYD does not yet have a comprehensive picture of the people delivering its programmes. This information would also be useful when making decisions about the need for sector development, as well as in making service comparisons across providers.

## Activities

A much clearer picture of programme activities is needed to round out the overall picture of programme performance. It is difficult to make judgements about a programme's value, particularly in terms of its contributions to participant outcomes, with limited knowledge of what activities actually occurred or the quality of those activities.

Currently providers have complete autonomy in deciding programme activities (ie work experience vs recreation vs life skills training etc), which means there will be considerable variation between the different programmes even within NZCC programmes or YSC programmes. Regardless of whether or not MYD elects to provide greater direction on the types or broad classes of activities that will be used, there is value in trying to obtain more systematic information about what providers actually do during the courses. While some information is currently collected on activities, further attention to the form in which it is collected would help to improve its usability. It may be useful for Ministry of Youth Development to develop and require providers to report against a limited number of activity categories, such as 'personal planning', 'one-on-one time between young person and youth worker', 'work trial' etc.

It would be useful for Ministry of Youth Development to examine activity and financial records to establish the extent to which providers are contracting out responsibility for delivering different activities. Some activities, such as literacy and numeracy instruction, involve specialist skills that youth workers would not be expected to have. Contracting out this work to an expert is a sensible response to this situation. Other activities, such as the conduct of challenging recreational activities, fall within the sphere of expected skills for a youth worker in many of the conservation or outdoor-focused programmes. Contracting these activities to external individuals or organisations raises serious questions around the capability of these organisations to conduct aspects of their core business.

Information is also needed to enable MYD to drill down into the 'features of settings' that the literature identifies as being critical in effective youth development programmes. Pre-course discussions with staff, examination of course schedules (including intended projects), and site visits during the course will provide information about the features that providers intend and actually do incorporate into individual programmes (e.g. safety, appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, to experience mattering and so forth).

These methods could also be used to examine the aspect of programme activity termed 'therapeutic approach' in this report. Youth workers who are unable to describe, if not some underpinning theory then at least their practical approach to engagement and learning, are unlikely to be carrying out activities in a way that will facilitate the kind of development MYD is seeking to facilitate through the programmes.

The conduct of goal setting and personal planning, if MYD decides to place greater emphasis on this area, should also be examined through a monitoring process. In the first instance, there is a compliance aspect which needs to be addressed: these activities represent a specific deliverable within the current service contract and MYD needs to know they have been carried out. At the same time, the quality dimension also needs to be assessed. Again, this could include an examination of providers' general processes and tools, alongside a real-time or retrospective assessment of the quality of outputs through an examination of a sample of assessment findings and plans. If MYD elects to place greater emphasis on building participant's enduring connections in their own environments, then carrying out activities like social mapping will be useful within programmes. As for the other activities discussed here, there are both compliance and quality dimensions to this work.

### Outputs

For each course conducted by providers, MYD needs to know how many young people completed the course as well as how many exited early. Capturing the reasons young people exited early, and where possible what they did on exit, is an important part of this picture. Understanding the reasons why young people chose to remain on the courses is also important.

For each course, it is important to establish 'what' and 'how much' service participants actually received. Without this information, it will not be possible to determine, in the event an appropriately-designed evaluation is carried out, which components of a programme 'made the difference'. Counting this type of output will be easier once MYD has developed an approach for classifying and capturing programme activity information. It will also be complicated, however, where providers hold an integrated contract and can move young people between different programmes at will.

### Outcomes

The current basis for assessing change/achievement in participants seems insufficiently rigorous to meet the kinds of information needs stakeholders have indicated they have with respect to programme outcomes. Further work is required to clarify or refine the outcomes Ministry of Youth Development expects will result from participation. Once this is done, more relevant and precise outcome measures need to be developed. Having pre- and post-measures for assessing progress would be of considerable value, while standardised measures would help to make any evaluation work ultimately carried out a more valuable contribution to the overall body of evidence on youth development programmes.

### Impact

The only impact evaluation that has been conducted is de Boer and Soughtton's work looking at MSD's employment assistance programmes, within which they include NZCC.<sup>228</sup> The issue with this work is that it treated NZCC as a work confidence programme, which it is not. Unsurprisingly, the evaluation found that NZCC is a highly ineffective work confidence programme.

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<sup>228</sup> De Boer, M. and Soughtton, D (2008), *Sustainable Employment Annual Report 2008, Annex 1: Evidence by programme type*. Wellington: Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, MSD

The challenge MYD now faces is that this study has the most technically rigorous methodologies of those evaluations that have been conducted on NZCC/YSC. In the absence of an equally rigorous evaluation where NZCC/YSC is assessed as a youth development programme, these findings will continue to attract attention regardless of efforts made to explain why this evaluation provides a very incomplete picture of potential programme accomplishments.

If MYD is to move beyond this situation, a new impact evaluation is required. This type of evaluation is complex, time consuming and resource intensive. Accordingly, it should only be conducted once programmes are sufficiently developed, and stable, to make it worthwhile.

## **Conclusions**

The evidence reviewed demonstrates that effective youth development programmes can have a positive impact on youth development. There seems, however, to be a mismatch between the current evidence about programme accomplishments and the enthusiasm and passion that proponents of the youth development field express for it. Certainly there are amazing transformations that take place over the course of individual programmes and no doubt most youth development practitioners can truthfully cite examples of young people's lives moving on a more positive trajectory during and subsequent to intervention. Overall, however, the evidence reviewed suggests the impact of youth development programmes, when done well, tends to be positive but modest against the outcomes measured.

This picture of programme accomplishment seems largely consistent with the accomplishments of other disciplines or fields of practice that seek to effect change in the lives of young people. The literature suggests that ETE programmes have had limited, or modest, effects on employment levels and earnings of young people.<sup>229</sup> Areas like youth justice and offending have equally struggled to develop programmes where positive gains in areas like motivation, efficacy and pro-social behaviour are maintained post programme, or even generalised back into young people's settings where those programmes are residential.<sup>230</sup>

That notwithstanding, our knowledge of 'what works' in youth development is still very much in the early stages; a process not helped by the enormous variability in outcome frameworks across different programmes and the even greater variability in the measures used for testing them. For instance, the literature has, arguably, yet to adequately capture the positive effects that actions like 'increased connections with positive settings' have on a young person's life over time. A further impression is that there is considerable work still to be done before there is consistent application of what is known about effective practice across the youth development sector. What appears to represent a modest contribution today may in time deliver more substantial returns, especially as the quantity and quality of evaluation and synthesis work increases and that knowledge is more consistently translated into practice.

This review contends that 'modest value', if indeed that's what it truly is and not an artefact of our evaluation designs to-date, is not 'no value'. For young people 'on the cusp', a well-timed, well-designed and well-delivered youth development programme that firmly anchors them to a positive setting may well be what makes the difference between life spent on a downwards trajectory versus one on a positive trajectory. Being firmly anchored to positive settings and carrying out 'work-affirming' activities (eg maintaining a structured routine, developing a sense of belonging, mattering, and being able to contribute meaningfully to a community) may also be what facilitates the smooth entry or return to the labour market for some of the more vulnerable young people unable to secure employment in the current economic climate.

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<sup>229</sup> Martin and Grubb, 2001, op cit

<sup>230</sup> For a summary of evidence, see, for example, Zampese, L (2002), *When the bough breaks: A literature based intervention strategy for young offenders*. Christchurch: Department of Corrections

What this conclusion does highlight, however, is that greater realism may be needed about what youth development programmes can achieve, at least at this point in time. This seems reasonable when you consider that disadvantaged young people have often spent a decade or more in the school system and still not learned the literacy, numeracy and life skills that will help them obtain employment.<sup>231</sup> To expect a 20 week (or possibly shorter) programme to accomplish this is “somewhat astonishing”.<sup>232</sup>

The challenge for MYD is ensuring the programmes it funds reflect current knowledge of ‘what works’, and more broadly, ensuring sufficient standardisation occurs across the programmes to support accountability and efficiency, whilst still allowing providers enough flexibility to be able to respond to the divergent needs of individual localities and participants. There is clearly an inherent tension between flexibility and standardisation. On the one hand, a ‘one size fits all’ programme will never meet the needs of all young people and providers must be able to adapt their activities to reflect the particular young people that are participating in their programme at any one time. On the other, programmes need to consistently reflect what is known about effective youth development practice and consistently achieve what was intended with the public money that funds them, which implies a degree of standardisation alongside comprehensive, effective monitoring processes.

Regardless of the challenge involved, there is now enough known about best practice in youth development work to make the application of that knowledge in practice a reasonable expectation. This review would contend, in fact, that anything less than full application of that knowledge could open the sector and the Ministry to charges of negligence in respect to the value that is expected to be derived from public money. At the same time, it is recognised that a gap does exist between best practice and what is practiced currently by the youth development sector in New Zealand. This gap, which in some cases may be quite substantial, will take time and effort to close.

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<sup>231</sup> Higgins, 2003, op cit

<sup>232</sup> Grubb, D. (1999) in Higgins, 2003, op cit, p21

## **Recommendations**

Post-report preparation note: *MYD is currently considering these recommendations as far as its work programme is concerned. It should not be assumed that MYD will necessarily be undertaking or meeting all of the report recommendations although this report, as a whole, is informing MYD Services and Policy work in 2009/10.*

MYD has an important role to play in facilitating the application of best practice across the youth development sector. It appears the changes needed to support effective practice in the structured youth development programmes are twofold. Action is needed to ensure best practice principles for youth development are consistently applied by those receiving MYD funding, but more fundamentally, action also appears necessary to ensure the programmes designed and subsequently purchased by MYD are consistent with more generic programme design and delivery good practice principles.

In terms of the generic programme design and delivery issues, MYD needs, firstly, to clarify its own expectations regarding various aspects of programme design and delivery and, secondly, to align its own practices with those expectations. Specific actions MYD can undertake include:

- confirm the intended programme participant group and communicating this information to providers<sup>233</sup>
- more narrowly define the areas of young people's lives that MYD's structured programmes are expected to effect change in
- explicitly articulate the logic by which the programmes are expected to achieve intended outcomes and communicate this logic to providers to help guide their choices of activities
- ensure that programme deliverables, including outcomes at programme exit and at three months, reflect this scope and logic
- provide rationales for the programme deliverables outlined in service contracts to help providers understand why they are being asked to perform particular activities and to guide their choices of related activities
- improve the tools MYD requires providers to use for individual deliverables<sup>234</sup>
- build a monitoring framework, together with meaningful measures, that reflects the intended programme scope and deliverables, desired activities and practices, and intended outcomes.

In terms of the application of best practice youth development principles, MYD can:

- encourage providers to use a wider or different range of activities, taking account of appeal to young people, ability to provide or create needed experiences, and the limited information that is known about their ability to facilitate desired developmental outcomes<sup>235</sup>
- require providers to conduct activities that will build participants' connections with positive people that endure beyond the duration of the course
- require providers to conduct activities that will help participants identify and move towards their longer term goals, rather than simply their short term goals

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<sup>233</sup> Whether this reflects the profile outlined in the current report or some other sub-group

<sup>234</sup> For example, the goal setting and personal planning tools

<sup>235</sup> Activities do not need to be conservation- or outdoor-based to be developmentally useful

- require providers to demonstrate both conceptually and practically how their activities provide meaningful developmental opportunities<sup>236</sup>
- require providers to demonstrate both conceptually and practically how their service projects benefit the community
- require providers to demonstrably incorporate into their programmes features of activities/their settings associated with effective practice
- require providers to articulate and apply a model of engagement and learning practice that optimises the learning and growth that occurs from activities
- consider variations to the current standard programme model of 20 weeks, near-full time activity with eight to twelve young people<sup>237</sup>
- consider including an additional component in programmes to support the portion of young people who remain without positive adult support post programme.

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<sup>236</sup> Especially in terms of how they increase aspirations, build enduring connections, and better-place them to carry out activities beyond the duration of the programme

<sup>237</sup> Given there seems no evidential reason to endorse this particular structure over others

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## **Appendix 1. Adolescence and the Transition from Childhood to Adulthood**

Adolescence, regardless of the age parameters set or the milestones used as signposts, is the period one enters as a child and emerges as an adult.<sup>238</sup> It is the time when youth need to develop the skills, attitudes, competencies and values needed to successfully navigate adult life and avoid the choices and behaviours that will limit their future potential.<sup>239</sup>

An understanding of adolescent development, according to Beatty and Chalk (2006), "...begins with the recognition that different sets of changes occur along separate trajectories during the second decade of life – and that changes in one arena affect development in others".<sup>240</sup> Many of the changes associated with adolescence begin in the early years, sometimes clustered into a '10 to 14 years' age bracket. During this period, young people experience the most dramatic biological changes, are the most susceptible to peer influence and, for the first time, begin to have the cognitive capacity to engage in formal reasoning. This is also the period when young people typically experience a transition from junior to secondary school.<sup>241 242</sup>

As they grow older (often clustered into a '15 to 18' year group), family conflicts tend to diminish. Young people's susceptibility to peer influence decreases, while family influences remain strong. The biological systems stabilise and cognitive skills increase, and personal and social identity concerns become more important, particularly in relation to occupational, sexual and ethnic identities.<sup>243</sup>

The process of adolescent development has undergone considerable change over the past few decades. The length of adolescence has been drawn out into the mid-late twenties and the pathways into adulthood have become more numerous and less clear. According to the OECD, the transition phase from school into paid employment now averages 7.4 years; averaging five years in the UK through to an average of 11.3 years in Italy.<sup>244</sup> This has occurred within a broader context of dramatically changed landscapes of family and community life and vastly different expectations of and on young people.<sup>245</sup>

The increasingly drawn-out nature of adolescence, now seen to reach into the mid-twenties, has created a new phase of adolescent development sometimes termed 'emerging adulthood', involving the 18 to 25 year old population. Some adolescent specialists consider this lengthening of the transition period one of the most important sources of change in adolescence over the past 100 years.<sup>246</sup> For the most part, it seems the extension of adolescence into this older age group emphasises a continuation of the social aspects of development, such as personal, social and sexual role and identity concerns, transforming peer relationships into deeper friendships and intimate partnerships, and developmental activities related to economic independence.

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<sup>238</sup> McLaren, 2002, op cit

<sup>239</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>240</sup> Beatty and Chalk, 2006, op cit, p6

<sup>241</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>242</sup> Beatty and Chalk, 2006, op cit

<sup>243</sup> Ibid

<sup>244</sup> OECD (2000), *From initial education to working life. Making transitions work*. OECD: Paris

<sup>245</sup> Finlay et al, 2007, op cit

<sup>246</sup> Beatty and Chalk, 2006, op cit

More recent research has demonstrated, however, that some aspects of biological development, such as cognitive maturity, actually occur within this older age group rather than in younger adolescence as was previously believed.<sup>247</sup>

While most young people make a successful transition to adulthood, some young people struggle to do so. Viewed in terms of developmental tasks, Eccles and Gootman identify the following as the key risks facing young people during adolescence:

- renegotiation of the relationship with parents is so turbulent that a permanent rift occurs between youths and their families
- adolescents become involved in less prosocial peer groups and get involved in behaviours and circumstances that seriously endanger their ability to transition to mainstream adulthood
- adolescents fail to make social connections with the kinds of adults and social institutions that can help them transition to mainstream adulthood
- educational opportunities can be so limited that young people fail to acquire the intellectual and soft skills needed to move into the labour market
- minimal or poor experiences with civic engagement and social institutions result in adolescents failing to develop either the will or the skills necessary to participate fully as adult community members
- experiences of racism, prejudice and cultural intolerance alienate adolescents so they withdraw from or rebel against mainstream society and conventional social institutions.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Beatty and Chalk, 2006, op cit

<sup>248</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

## **Appendix 2. Personal and Social Assets for Positive Youth Development**

### *A Description of the Model*

Eccles and Gootman (2002) sought to identify specific assets that facilitate both current wellbeing amongst adolescents and a successful transition to adulthood.<sup>249</sup> To do this, they drew on three sources of information: developmental theory; practical wisdom; and empirical research. Within the first category of information, they used developmental theory from the fields of psychology, anthropology and sociology. The second category involved practitioners' knowledge from working in the youth development and/or the prevention fields. The third category, empirical research, involved three types of evidence:

*...evidence that particular characteristics are either positively related concurrently to other indicators of well-being or negatively related concurrently to indicators of problematic development; (2) evidence that particular characteristics predict positive indicators of adult well-being and of a "successful" transition to normative adult statuses; and (3) evidence that the experimental manipulation or training of particular characteristics produces changes on other indicators of either current well-being and adequate functioning or a successful transition into adulthood.<sup>250</sup>*

Eccles and Gootman argue this convergence of theory, practical wisdom and empirical research provides 'strong hints' regarding the kinds of assets young people need, as opposed to facts, which require a greater volume of experimental research than currently exists.<sup>251</sup>

### *The Value of the Asset List*

Eccles and Gootman's work on assets has considerable value, both to the youth development field generally and for the conduct of this review. The individual assets are essentially indicators of wellbeing amongst adolescents, and their association with successful adulthood transitions gives them some predictive value. In respect to programme design, the assets can be used as a guide when establishing the types of effects or changes a programme is seeking to facilitate in its participants. In that sense, when presented appropriately, the assets can also be used as programme outcomes, with the four broad asset domains providing a useful framework for organising those outcomes.

### *The Influence of Culture on Personal and Social Assets*

There is an extensive body of literature that explores the significant influence of culture on human development. Eccles and Gootman were explicit about the challenges they faced trying to develop a universal asset list given; for example, that different cultures value different characteristics in their young people and vary in terms of the contexts in which they expect young people to exercise those competencies.

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<sup>249</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>250</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit, pp68-69

<sup>251</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

After a prolonged debate about universality versus cultural specificity, the authors concluded it was possible to talk of universal assets at a very high level and that greater cultural specificity would be required as you dropped down into a more detailed level of analysis. For example, they argued there are some basic human needs (e.g. to feel competent) and that failure to have these needs met would have a negative effect on development, regardless of culture. At a more detailed level of analysis, such as when you were attempting to foster these assets within a community setting, local cultural contexts needed to be taken into account. In the case of competency, for example, this would involve consideration of what it means to be competent in that particular environment and the specific domains where a young person needs to demonstrate that competency.

### **Appendix 3. Features of Settings that Support Positive Youth Development**

Eccles and Gootman (2002) also make some important qualifications regarding their list of features that support positive youth development.<sup>252</sup> The first is that the list is based on existing literature, which has yet to include comprehensive study of different cultures, which means that the overall list may well omit features that are important to particular cultural groups. The second is that the boundaries between these features are not as distinct as the headings would suggest. They also emphasise that these features tend, in fact, to be features of a young person's interaction with (or experience of) the setting as opposed to truly being a feature of the setting itself. That is, there is a subjective aspect to interpretation of the different features that is unique to the individual. This is important because it suggests there are not always objective standards for the features described below: what matters is how an individual young person perceives a situation to be.

#### *Physical and Psychological Safety*

The safety of young people, both physical and physiological, is a prerequisite to all aspects of positive youth development. Beyond the direct effects of harm on physical wellbeing and development, actual violence or its threat interferes with the allocation of attention to intellectual, psychological, emotional and social development.<sup>253</sup> For young people to willingly participate in a community programme, let alone gain maximum benefit from it, the setting needs to be free from violence and unsafe health conditions, and incorporate practices that promote positive peer group interaction and reduce unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.<sup>254 255 256</sup>

#### *Clear and Consistent Structure and Appropriate Adult Supervision*

Applied research, supported by developmental theory, has clearly demonstrated that adolescents benefit from having clear rules, discipline and consistently enforced limits placed on their behaviour.<sup>257 258</sup> "Structure is a critical feature of all settings".<sup>259</sup>

Research has also shown a link between time spent in unstructured activities and involvement in problems behaviours. Mahoney, Stattin and Magnusson (2002) found that participation in community programmes lacking structure was predictive of greater involvement in problem behaviours in the present and twenty years later.<sup>260</sup> This finding was reinforced by the more recent work of Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth examining

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<sup>252</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>253</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>254</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>255</sup> Coatsworth, J. D. and Conroy, D. E (2008), Youth sports as a component of organized after school programs, pp57-74. In Perkins, D and Le Menestrel, S (eds), *New directions for youth development. Theory, research, practice* No 115 (Fall 2007): Special Issue: Sports-based youth development

<sup>256</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>257</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>258</sup> McLaren, 2002, op cit

<sup>259</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit, p92

<sup>260</sup> Mahoney, J., Stattin, H. and Magnusson, D (in press) cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

the relationship between youth leisure participation and adult outcomes in the UK.<sup>261</sup> The authors found that young people who participated in youth clubs (relatively unstructured youth-focused programmes) had worse adult outcomes for many of the measures of adult social exclusion compared with young people participating in the other forms of leisure examined. Interestingly, further examination of the cohort showed the youth club group had, at 16 years of age, personal and family characteristics associated with adult social exclusion that differentiated them from the rest of the cohort. This led the authors to conclude that these unstructured youth programmes "...may be precisely the contexts in which the most challenging and at-risk young people are choosing to engage".<sup>262</sup>

It is extremely important that a programme's structure is developmentally, ecologically and culturally appropriate. As young people mature in general, they need less external structure and control and greater opportunity to create their own structure and exercise self-control over their behaviour. Too much (or too little) adult-imposed control and young people are likely to experience poor outcomes.<sup>263</sup> Within the context of a youth development programme, the necessary amount of structure and adult-imposed control or supervision will vary not only depending on the age of participants, but also over the course of the programme. In general, the amount of control that adults need to exercise will lessen as the course progresses and the ability of young people to exercise judgement, self control and leadership (hopefully) increases. Expectations about structure and supervision also vary between cultures and need to be taken into account.

### *Supportive Relationships*

The nature and quality of relationship between young person and adult is one of the most often cited, and potentially powerful, variables influencing youth development, regardless of setting. Overall, where a positive relationship exists, young people feel more supported, are less depressed, more social, more resilient, and achieve more.<sup>264</sup>  
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There is an extensive array of research examining the critical features of positive relationships, encompassing qualities of emotional support (e.g. being caring, responsive, authoritative) and instrumental support (e.g. providing useful guidance).<sup>267</sup> Supportive relationships provide an environment "...of reinforcement, good modelling, and constructive feedback for physical, intellectual, psychological growth".<sup>268</sup>

Within the context of youth development programmes, the relationship between a young person and non-familial adult (e.g. a youth worker) is of utmost importance in achieving positive outcomes for young people, as most youth workers and related research will

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<sup>261</sup> Feinstein, L., Bynner, J. and Duckworth, K (2005), *Leisure contexts in adolescence and their effects on adult outcomes, Wider benefits of learning response report No. 15*. Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning

<sup>262</sup> Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, 2005, op cit, p17

<sup>263</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>264</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>265</sup> Ministry of Health (2002), *New Zealand youth health status report*. Wellington: MoH

<sup>266</sup> see also Hair, E. C., Jager, J. and Garrett, S. B (2002), *Helping teens develop healthy social skills and relationships: What the research shows about navigating adolescence*, *Child Trends*, [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org), retrieved March 2009

<sup>267</sup> See for example, McLaren, 2002, op cit; Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit; Hair et al, 2002, op cit

<sup>268</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit, p96

indicate. Eccles and Gootman found that supportive relationships were a major component of most of the effective youth development programmes they reviewed,<sup>269</sup> as did Catalano et al<sup>270</sup> and Roth et al.<sup>271</sup>

For young people who lack positive adult relationships in their normal life, youth development programmes may provide their only access to the kinds of developmental opportunities that positive adults can provide. In their research into service (volunteering) programmes, Finlay et al found that, of the 1096 at-risk young people surveyed, 41% reported having fewer than three adults they could go to for help and 9% said they had no helpful adults at all in their lives.<sup>272</sup>

### *Opportunities to Belong*

Having a sense of belonging and connectedness is a key element of positive youth development. Belonging is one of the cornerstones of the *Circles of Courage* model of youth development which has gained increasingly strong support in the youth arena.<sup>273</sup>

Community programmes can provide young people with a sense of belonging and connectedness within the programme itself, through the formation of a supportive group culture, and through course activities that link young people with the broader community. They can also provide a safe environment for young people to explore developmental issues relating to belonging and connectedness more broadly, such as cultural identity.<sup>274</sup> Deliberate exploration of one's personal cultural and ethnic identity, and the development of knowledge of other cultures, is an important aspect of equipping young people for adulthood – as is highlighted in Eccles and Gootman's asset list set out in chapter 2, which includes bicultural competence and the ability to navigate through multiple cultural settings as key assets.

### *Positive Social Norms*

All groups that have sustained interaction develop their own set of habits, norms and expectations that govern their behaviour. Adolescent-focused research has found that young people's perceptions of social norms have a long-lasting influence on their behaviour.<sup>275</sup> While often discussed in terms of its perceived harmful effects, the role of peer influence in setting social norms is typically more subtle and multidimensional and more beneficial than acknowledged. A number of different studies have found that peer influence towards positive behaviour is much more common than influence towards negative or harmful behaviour.<sup>276</sup>

In the context of community programmes, the influence of group norms is extremely important. Group activities provide the opportunities for young people to form bonds with

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<sup>269</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>270</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>271</sup> Roth, J., Brooks-Gunn, J., Murray, L. and Foster, W (1998), Promoting health adolescents: Synthesis of youth development program evaluations. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 8(4), 423-459

<sup>272</sup> Finlay et al, 2007, op cit

<sup>273</sup> See, for example, Van Brockern, S., Brendtro, L., Brokenleg, M (n.d.), *Reclaiming our youth*, [www.augie.edu/dept/nast/Projects/doc6.htm](http://www.augie.edu/dept/nast/Projects/doc6.htm), retrieved April 2009

<sup>274</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>275</sup> Ibid

<sup>276</sup> See, for example, Brown, B. B. (1990) cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

positive peer groups and adopt the group's pro-social behaviours.<sup>277</sup> The influence of group norms within a programme can also work in a negative way. Dishion et al found that adolescents grouped together for a programme with a large portion of peers exhibiting problem behaviours often show increases in problem behaviours as a result of programme participation.<sup>278</sup> This suggests it may be necessary, for the wellbeing of the group as a whole, to exclude some young people from programme participation.

### *Support for Efficacy and Mattering*

It is now understood that youth development is something that young people do for themselves (with a lot of help from others), rather than something that is 'done to them'.<sup>279</sup> For this reason, it is important that the settings young people are in provide them with opportunities to "...be efficacious and to make a difference in their social worlds..." - ie 'to matter'.<sup>280 281 282 283</sup>

Encompassed within 'efficacy and mattering' are a number of important ideas. These include:

- the importance of opportunities to make a real difference in one's own community - often talked about in literature in terms of participation and influence
- empowerment - Roth and Brooks-Gunn suggest providing an empowering atmosphere is a key element of what makes a programme a 'youth development programme' rather than merely a 'youth programme'<sup>284</sup>
- support for developmentally-appropriate amounts of autonomy
- the opportunity to experience meaningful challenge in order to build personal efficacy.<sup>285 286 287 288</sup>

Efficacy, it seems, results not simply from turning power over to young people but from ensuring they are challenged to extend themselves in novel, creative and demanding ways.<sup>289</sup> Experiencing efficacy, engagement and a sense of mattering is critical for growth: "it is through acting, taking on challenges, and making meaningful contributions that a person's sense of self and identity develops".<sup>290</sup>

Community programmes can, once again, provide vital opportunities to develop efficacy and a sense of mattering. Involving young people in the design and delivery of the programmes they participate in is a commonly identified means of providing participation

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<sup>277</sup> Eccles, J. S. et al (2003) cited in HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>278</sup> Dishon, T. J., McCord, J. and Poulin, F (1999) cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>279</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>280</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit, p103

<sup>281</sup> Van Brockern et al, no date, op cit

<sup>282</sup> Martin, 2002, op cit

<sup>283</sup> Allen and Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists Ltd (2003), *Effective drug education for young people: An overview of the literature review and analysis*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Development

<sup>284</sup> Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003, op cit

<sup>285</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>286</sup> Bandura, A (1994), *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman Publishers

<sup>287</sup> International Youth Foundation, 1999, op cit

<sup>288</sup> Ministry of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Health and Te Puni Kokiri (1998), *In our hands: New Zealand youth suicide prevention strategy*. Wellington

<sup>289</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>290</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit, p106

and influencing experiences (as well as for improving programme efficacy); service activities provide opportunities for making a difference in communities; while a range of activities are designed specifically to challenge and extend young people (e.g. outdoor/adventure).<sup>291 292 293</sup> In discussions with youth workers in the preparation of this report, the importance of young people obtaining qualifications through the programmes was raised, not so much because of the opportunities those qualifications might bring but because of the sense of achievement they fostered. As is the case with the other features discussed in this section, activities need to be developmentally- and culturally-appropriate, as well as within the bounds of the 'stretch capabilities' of the young people involved so that they don't disengage.<sup>294 295</sup>

### *Opportunities for Skill Building*

Good programmes help young people develop good habits and a wide range of competencies and life skills.<sup>296 297 298 299</sup> Research has linked the teaching of basic life skills with improved emotional wellbeing, better educational performance and reduced risk behaviours.<sup>300 301</sup>

It seems that programmes with positive outcomes tend to have a 'deliberate learning environment',<sup>302 303</sup> where learning opportunities are carefully selected and structured into a programme. Eccles and Gootman cite a number of studies that have demonstrated that participation in sports does not necessarily establish the skills and habits that would seem to lead naturally from physical activity, such as ongoing exercise or healthy lifestyle habits. "The basic point", they suggest, "is that participating in an activity does not mean that adolescents are acquiring the habits of and dispositions for the activity in the future. Programmes need to be explicitly designed to teach those habits as well as other critical life skills".<sup>304</sup>

### *Integration of Family, School and Community Efforts*

Ecological models suggest youth development is facilitated best where there is meaningful communication and consistency across different environments or settings. "This communication facilitates acquiring social capital, and it increases the likelihood of adequate structure in the setting. It also adds to the fund of developmental resources that adolescents can draw on".<sup>305</sup> Where it is lacking, there is a greater chance that

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<sup>291</sup> HM Treasury and Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007, op cit

<sup>292</sup> Perkins and Menestrel, 2007, op cit

<sup>293</sup> International Youth Foundation, 1999, op cit

<sup>294</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>295</sup> International Youth Foundation, 1999, op cit

<sup>296</sup> Cunningham et al, 2008, op cit

<sup>297</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

<sup>298</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>299</sup> International Youth Foundation, 1999, op cit

<sup>300</sup> LaFromboise, T. and Howard-Pitney, B (1993) cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>301</sup> Compas, B. E (1993) cited in Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>302</sup> Perkins, D. and Noam, G, pp75-84, In Perkins and Le Menestrel 2007, op cit

<sup>303</sup> Sport and Recreation New Zealand (2006), *It's all about children and young people: Implementing a child/young person centred philosophy in sport and recreation.* [www.sparc.org.nz](http://www.sparc.org.nz)

<sup>304</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit, p110

<sup>305</sup> Ibid

young people will be confused about adult expectations, developmental opportunities will be missed, and 'problem behaviour and values' will take root.<sup>306</sup>

Eccles and Gootman note there is little conceptual work or research into integration across community programmes but surmise, based on research in other settings, that community programmes will be more effective when they coordinate their activities with parents, schools, and communities. In their review of well-evaluated, successful youth development programmes, Catalano et al. found that combining the resources of the family, community and school was important to success for two-thirds of the programmes studied.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Eccles and Gootman, 2002, op cit

<sup>307</sup> Catalano et al, 2004, op cit

## **Appendix 4. Principles and Practical Criteria to Guide Participant Targeting**

Young people to be targeted for participation include:

- young people who are 'at risk'
- young people who need to develop foundational competencies, habits, values and so forth (such as motivation, confidence, self esteem, productive life habits and routines etc) in order to successfully participate in employment, training or further education
- young people who lack strong attachments to pro-social settings, who appear likely to form attachments to anti-social settings, or who have already formed attachments to 'low level' anti-social settings
- young people who, in the potential absence of employment opportunities (i.e. in the current economic climate), need intensive activation in pro-social settings in order to avoid general inactivity or forming attachments to anti-social settings.

Young people to be excluded include:

- those who already have the environmental supports they need to make a successful transition to adulthood
- those who are struggling but whose needs are predominantly around employment or employment-related training (in which case, ETE programmes would be more suitable)
- those who are struggling but whose needs are predominantly educational (eg literacy or ESOL-related) and there are not significant flow-on effects that would seriously hinder the young person's development
- those who are struggling but require a less intensive youth development response (the appointment of a mentor, for example, may be sufficient here)
- those with established and significant offending habits (including a history of violent behaviour)
- those people with serious drug and/or alcohol habits
- those whose behaviour is likely to pose a safety risk to other young people on the programme or to programme staff
- young people who have been referred by an agency wanting them placed in an activity but who have no desire or intention of participating in a meaningful way
- those whose behaviour is likely to negatively impact on the group norms to the extent the group is at risk of developing negative/anti-social norms
- those who for physical, mental health or psychiatric reasons are unlikely to cope with the demands of the course (noting that it is appropriate to exclude from participation in certain components of a programme rather than the entire programme)
- those whose physical, mental health or psychiatric support needs exceed that which can reasonably be met by programme staff (noting again that exclusion can be from individual programme components).

Young people whose inclusion is conditional:

- maturity/developmental stage – the ability of young people to gain maximum benefit from a programme and to contribute productively to the group may be influenced by their level of maturity, reflecting their age or the developmental stage. It may be that

some young people are not yet sufficiently mature to be able to cope with the demands of the course. The ability of programme staff to include particularly young or immature young people on a course may be influenced by the overall mix and composition of the group. Exclusion should occur when staff feel a young person is not yet ready for the course or where their inclusion would be detrimental to other participants

- young people with serious psychiatric or mental health issues - clinical advice provided to MSD in the context of another development programme for young people states that automatic exclusion should be considered for a young person where there have been high lethality suicide attempts in the previous year, and that a specialist psychological report should be required to over-ride this. The course this advice relates to already screens out those who, for physical, mental health or psychiatric reasons, are unlikely to cope with the demands of the course. The MYD programmes are considerably less mentally/emotionally challenging than the above course, however, the advice does highlight the need to consider the demands a course will place on a young person and conversely the demands a young people will place on the course. Where the course involves particularly mentally/emotionally challenging and/or 'away' components, young people with a history of serious psychiatric or mental health issues could be included on the advice and with the support and involvement of health care professionals and family.