

Report



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Date: 28 October 2022

Security Level: IN CONFIDENCE

To: Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Minister for Youth

Phase One Report Back on the Review of the Youth Plan

Purpose of the report

- 1 This report provides you with options for the next phase of the Review informed by key learnings from Phase One of the review of the *Youth Plan 2020-2022: Turning Voice into Action – Rebuilding and Recovering* (Youth Plan).

Executive summary

- 2 On 1 July 2020, Cabinet agreed to the Youth Plan which sets out a range of actions carried out across partner government agencies [SWC-20-MIN-0088 refers]. The Youth Plan's development was led by the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi and supported by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora Child and Youth Policy team.
- 3 The review of the Youth Plan commenced in mid-2022 to coincide with the first review of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS) being undertaken by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). These simultaneous review periods allow for the insights from engagement with young people to be collated and applied across government.
- 4 The review of the Youth Plan involves a wide range of evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of the Youth Plan for young people, in particular its priority cohorts, and government agencies, including those that completed actions under the Youth Plan.
- 5 The Youth Plan had two broad aims: to coordinate youth-focused work across government agencies, and to facilitate improved outcomes for all young people, with a particular focus on four priority groups.
- 6 Analysis of the Phase One inputs conclude that the Youth Plan was successful in coordinating cross-agency work towards improved outcomes for young people and raising the profile of young people in ongoing work programmes.

- 7 A longer timeframe is needed to clearly understand how the Youth Plan has resulted in improvements in outcomes for young people. While the recent Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey indicates that young people are doing well in many areas of their lives, there are challenges particularly around mental wellbeing.
- 8 We will need to build on the Youth Plan's achievements thus far over a longer period to fully realise its intentions. Examples of the shifts needed include embedding youth development best practice across government agencies to ensure a common understanding of outcomes and greater collaboration, increased investment and accountability.

Recommended actions

It is recommended that you:

- 1 **note** that Phase One of the Review of the Youth Plan began in mid-2022, involving a range of evaluation processes to build a picture of the effectiveness of the Youth Plan to date as a vehicle for achieving improved outcomes for young people
- 2 **note** the inputs to the Review of the Youth Plan attached to this report, including the process evaluation and youth engagement summary
- 3 **note** the findings in this report for Phase One of the Review of the Youth Plan
- 4 **forward** this report to the Office of the Prime Minister for circulation to Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Ministers.

Agree / **Disagree**

Chris Nimmo

28 October 2022

Chris Nimmo
Policy Manager, Child and Youth Policy

Date



Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan
Minister for Youth

30/10/22

Date

Background

- 9 The Youth Plan was developed in 2019 and early 2020 and included consultation with over 1,200 young people and 90 people from the youth sector and the development of specific collaborative actions by government agencies to deliver the Youth Plan.
- 10 The CYWS was launched in August 2019, with the Youth Plan as part of the programme of action under the 'involved and empowered' outcome. In this way, it aimed to complement the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS) along with other government strategies and action plans.
- 11 While the Youth Plan applies to all aged 12–24 years, its focus pivoted in early 2020 to identify outcomes and actions specific to an older cohort (17-24 years) who were disproportionately affected by COVID-19 impacts. Impacts were exacerbated for those navigating significant life transitions during COVID-19 recovery, such as starting a first job or leaving home.
- 12 The Youth Plan had two broad aims: to coordinate youth-focused work across government agencies, and to facilitate improved outcomes for all young people, with a particular focus on four priority groups (rangatahi Māori 17-24 years old, Pacific young people 17-24 years old, rainbow young people 17-24 years old and disabled young people 17-24 years old).
- 13 The Plan's actions were organised around four focus areas: Voice, Wellbeing, Leadership and Transformative Change (presented visually below)

ACTIONS			
VOICE	WELLBEING	LEADERSHIP	TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE
<p><i>Rangatahi voices and perspectives are listened to, valued, and embedded in decision-making at all levels, particularly in decisions about COVID-19 recovery.</i></p>	<p><i>The wellbeing of rangatahi, their whānau, and their communities is supported and strengthened.</i></p>	<p><i>Rangatahi are enabled to lead their own lives, have their identities seen, valued and respected and have increasing influence in their communities and over government policy.</i></p>	<p><i>Government agencies work collaboratively with each other, the youth sector, communities and rangatahi to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for rangatahi.</i></p>
<p>THIS MEANS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rangatahi participation is valued by all government agencies • government agencies understand and follow best practice when engaging with rangatahi • government agencies regularly share with each other what they have learnt during engagements, and collaborate where possible to reduce consultation fatigue • rangatahi voice is actively heard, captured and acted on as part of the COVID-19 recovery • the voices of the priority groups are amplified. 	<p>THIS MEANS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rangatahi are able to determine what wellbeing means to them • rangatahi, their whānau and their communities are supported to be well • rangatahi are supported to know when and how to access youth-friendly, appropriate information about looking after their own wellbeing • rangatahi have equitable access to psychosocial response services established as part of COVID-19 recovery • rangatahi are enabled to readily access culturally responsive services that accept and respect their gender and sexual identities when they want to connect with others. 	<p>THIS MEANS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rangatahi are supported to develop their identities and enhance their mana • rangatahi are accepted and respected for who they are and who they want to be • rangatahi leadership is recognised and valued • rangatahi in the priority groups have opportunities to lead and implement change on their own terms, particularly as part of COVID-19 recovery • rangatahi are supported into education, employment and training • rangatahi are given increasing opportunities in formal leadership and decision making roles, such as advisory and governance groups. 	<p>THIS MEANS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • government agencies are proactively collaborating and communicating to drive system change • systems are in place to support information sharing • youth sector organisations are provided increased funding by government to offset a decrease in funding from other sources • transparency and accountability in government decision making is increased.
<p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable youth voice in COVID-19 recovery (led by Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi) • Implement the Youth Voice Project (led by MYD). • Develop and share best practice guidance for engaging with children and young people (led by Office of the Children's Commissioner). 	<p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and respond to the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on rangatahi (led by Ministry of Social Development (MSD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora) • Create a safe digital environment for children and young people (led by Department of Internal Affairs). • Develop a social marketing campaign for rangatahi promoting healthy and safe relationships (led by MSD). • Collaborate with rangatahi to design and implement a wellbeing campaign (led by Te Hiranga Hauora/Health Promotion Agency). • Increase mental health, addiction and wellbeing supports for young people (led by Ministry of Health). 	<p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable community-led solutions (led by Ministry for Pacific Peoples). • Convene a regional rangatahi Māori leaders forum (led by Te Puni Kōkiri and MYD). • Expand the existing Employment Service to disabled young people in their final two years of school (led by MSD). • Continue He Poutama Taitamariki (led by MSD). 	<p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strategic leadership and evidence-informed advice on rangatahi (led by MYD). • Collaborate with disabled rangatahi to facilitate change across government (led by the Office for Disability Issues). • Design and implement the 'Hear Me See Me' Campaign (led by Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children). • Increase public sector capability and responsiveness to rainbow communities (led by MYD).

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14 Cabinet agreed the Youth Plan would be reviewed two years after its launch [SWC-20-Min-0088 refers] or initiated by July 2022. The Minister for Youth was invited to report back to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC) on findings following the review. There is no specific date for when the Minister for Youth must report back to SWC.

The review of the Youth Plan consists of two phases

15 MYD and MSD Child and Youth Policy initiated the review of the Youth Plan in March 2022, in order to contribute to and maximize the opportunities provided by the review of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS).

16 A phased approach to the review was agreed, as two phases outlined below:

- *Phase One: Review* comprised of internal and external evaluations of the Youth Plan, alongside key insights from engagement with young people and the youth sector. These inputs have built a picture of the effectiveness of the Youth Plan in achieving improved outcomes for young people.
- *Phase Two: Refresh* as initially outlined, involved a new suite of youth-focused actions to help achieve up-to-date priorities for young people, developed through engagement with young people, the youth sector and government partners.

17 Our Phase One findings suggest that a somewhat different approach to Phase Two may be appropriate. Options for this next phase could range from a refreshed suite of youth-focused actions (as originally proposed) to broader thinking and engagement regarding the role of the Youth Plan in raising the profile of youth issues across government.

18 The following sections present findings from Phase One, including the key strengths and limitations of the Youth Plan.

The Youth Plan successfully coordinated work across government agencies for young people...

19 One of the key aims of the Youth Plan was to foster coordination across government on youth-focused work. Phase One of the Review found that the Youth Plan was broadly successful in achieving this through its cross-agency focus.

20 The process evaluation and action lead self-assessments detailed the ways in which the Youth Plan fostered cross-agency coordination and more collaborative ways of working towards shared goals. A key strength of the Plan was the Cross-Agency Working Group (the Working Group), with membership from over 25 government agencies. The Working Group acted as a touchpoint which was particularly useful during COVID-19 as a space to share ideas and get feedback on approaches to actions, enabling more visibility of agencies' work programmes, and gaining introductions to youth sector agencies.

- 21 While the meaningful connections formed through the Working Group positively contributed to the Youth Plan's 16 actions, findings from the process evaluation suggest that agencies used the Working Group's enthusiasm and commitment to collaborate on other youth-focused work in addition to their agreed actions. While there were 10 lead agencies identified in the plan with an additional 5 agencies named as partner agencies across actions, the cross agency working group includes 25 different agencies who engage in information sharing and collaboration. These informal aspects of collaborative working, while beneficial in raising the profile of youth issues across government, were not covered by formal reporting in relation to the Youth Plan.
- 22 A key message from government stakeholders in the process evaluation was the need for clear guidance on collaborative actions. While members of the Working Group valued the enthusiasm and collaboration that came from cross-agency working, some agencies who co-led actions in the Plan found that more formal expectations around what collaboration involves would be beneficial in any further iterations of the Plan.
- 23 Findings from youth sector engagement and supported by the process evaluation and action leads emphasised the value of involving a wider range of actors from inside and outside government in actions development. Greater involvement of young people and the youth sector in setting priorities and actions was identified from the start of this review as an important opportunity for Phase Two.

...but the effects of the Youth Plan on outcomes for young people will require a longer timeframe

- 24 We have found that it is too early to identify the effects of the Youth Plan on outcomes for young people. A longer timeframe will be needed both to:
 - make the transformative shifts needed to improve outcomes both across the board and for the Plan's priority groups
 - see measurable progress on these outcomes.
- 25 A Measurement Framework (the Framework) was developed to gauge broader impacts of the Plan's actions and focus areas, and to provide a snapshot of how young people are doing across the Plan's four domains: Voice, Wellbeing, Leadership and Transformative Change.
- 26 The Framework's baseline report presents some insights into how young people engage with government, with 78% of enrolled young people (aged 18-24 years) voting in the 2020 New Zealand General Election, and a growing number of young people in leadership or management roles across the public service.
- 27 The development of the Framework was limited by the availability of data. As such, the Framework's report was not able to demonstrate its findings for the Plan's priority cohorts in many areas. At this stage, the Framework's baseline

report provides insights into how young people are faring across the Plan's four focus areas, which can be used to inform the key priorities and areas to improve on in Phase Two of the Review.

- 28 Findings from the action lead self-assessments demonstrated that a majority of the Plan's actions were focused on rangatahi Māori and Pacific young people, with less of a focus on disabled and rainbow young people.
- 29 Recent findings from the Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (YHWS) suggest that many young people are doing well across most areas of their life, but certain groups are experiencing greater challenges and there are growing challenges around mental wellbeing which are also found by the New Zealand Health Survey.
- 30 Young women are not prioritised within the Youth Plan. Notably, the YHWS found they were less positive than young men about many aspects of their lives. In particular they gave lower ratings for measures of overall wellbeing and hope for their future and were more likely to have thought about or attempted suicide.
- 31 Disabled and rainbow young people were even more likely than young women to experience distress and suicidal ideation. Additionally, they felt less able to express their identity than other groups of young people. A refreshed Youth Plan will need to consider how it delivers better outcomes for these groups and others.
- 32 Action leads reported some doubling-up of actions in the Youth Plan and the CYWS, and that half of the Plan's actions already existed prior to its development. These issues may have come about as a result of a lack of tools at the time to enable effective collaboration and partnership across agencies and the lack of additional resourcing for the collaborative action to respond to the impact of COVID-19.

Engagement with young people and the youth sector found strong support for an intersectional and Te Ao Māori lens

- 33 Although the Youth Plan was intended to have a Te Ao Māori lens, targeted engagement with young people and the youth sector suggested it retained a mono-cultural framing. More holistic framing and concepts of wellbeing such as Te Whare Tapa Wha and Hauora were put forward as a basis for bi-cultural framing of wellbeing. Mana motuhake, rangatiratanga, and models of collective leadership may better encapsulate how young people want to take a leadership role in their own lives and in their communities, fuelled by a strong sense of identity.
- 34 While young people were generally supportive of the Plan's four focus areas – Voice, Wellbeing, Leadership & Transformative Change – they raised the need to demonstrate the relationships between the focus areas. Given the opportunity to create visual designs of the focus areas, many positioned

wellbeing/hauora as a foundation from which voice and leadership follow, with transformative change as a final result.

- 35 Young people and the youth sector were supportive of the Plan's focus on four priority groups of young people, but noted that an intersectional view was missing. Recommendations from the youth sector and young people included expanding the groups to include a wider age-range (beyond 17-24), young people from ethnic communities, and young people in regional communities. Further work on a refresh of the Youth Plan could explicitly embed intersectional thinking and a different range of priority groups, but we note that looking at intersectional groups can make measuring outcomes challenging due to the lack of available data.

There is scope to improve the Plan with changes to its structure and focus areas, and a new suite of actions

- 36 Based on the findings of Phase One of the Review, officials identified a number of potential improvements to the Youth Plan's structure and coordination. These would involve:
- offering more formal avenues and pathways to engage with young people
 - establishing clear expectations and guidance about collaborative working including structures to support cross-agency buy-in and leadership
 - providing clear guidance around the size and scale of actions including setting short term and longer-term actions or targets
 - exploring the possibility of providing additional resourcing for youth-focused actions
 - developing a refreshed suite of measurable actions input from young people
 - greater accountability and transparency.
- 37 Crucial to strengthening the Youth Plan will be embedding what has worked well and can be built on. For example, youth voice informing the focus areas, building on cross-agency relationships.
- 38 While the Youth Plan aims to influence government to prioritise youth issues and embed youth voice in policy, it also needs to be useful and relevant for young people themselves. Clarifying the Youth Plan's language so that it is accessible and resonates with diverse groups of young people will ensure that all young people can see themselves in the Plan.
- 39 Measurability of actions is also key in developing a Plan that can deliver results for young people. There is an opportunity to integrate clear measures of success alongside actions which would complement the wider Measurement Framework.

There are opportunities for a more in-depth refresh of the Plan's purpose and role in achieving improved outcomes for young people

- 40 Throughout Phase One of the Review, findings and participants (in particular targeted youth engagement and youth sector) have pointed to a need for a more ambitious strategy to embed youth voice in government.
- 41 Progressing this work would require further engagement with young people and the youth sector to determine how they can be involved, and further discussion around where the Youth Plan sits in relation to other government strategies that deliver for young people.
- 42 You have indicated a number of areas where you would like to see strengthened focus through the refreshed Youth Plan. In particular, you have indicated that you would like to:
 - strengthen the focus on Youth Voice within the Youth Plan and across government
 - embed a strong bicultural and Te Ao Māori lens across the plan ensure the Youth Plan is not duplicating existing work
 - ensure the Youth Plan builds on the findings of the YHWS.
- 43 You have also indicated that you would like the Youth Plan to retain some emphasis on Covid recovery, although the way it does this could change somewhat.
- 44 We consider that a strengthened intervention logic, making clear how the elements of the plan fit together to achieve change, would be an important part of achieving this.
- 45 A refreshed Youth Plan could also involve some further thinking about the specific value-add that can be provided through youth voice and engagement in current government work programmes, as opposed to focusing on smaller actions for young people. The next Youth Plan could serve as a vehicle to keep government accountable in areas of work that may impact young people, while still being relevant and useful for young people themselves.

There are opportunities for a refreshed Youth Plan to support the effectiveness of the CYWS

- 46 The review of the CYWS resulted in a stronger focus on implementation of actions, as well as agreement to policy priorities that would drive focus on actions. The four policy priorities agreed in the CYWS review are:
 - reducing child poverty and mitigating the impacts of socio-economic disadvantage
 - supporting child and whānau wellbeing in the first 1000 days
 - addressing racism, discrimination, and stigma
 - enhancing child and youth mental wellbeing.

- 47 Officials note that mental health and wellbeing are top of mind for the youth cohort, coming through strongly in Phase One’s targeted engagement, in a thematic analysis of the Youth Parliament general debate, and in the findings of the YHWS. Issues regarding identity, racism, and discrimination featured prominently in Youth Parliament 2022, and were raised throughout targeted engagement with young people.
- 48 A refreshed Youth Plan could present opportunities to raise the profile of youth voice as part of work to achieve the four policy priorities, and to ensure that young people and government can work together to achieve transformative change. The CYWS review also presents opportunities to embed addressing racism, discrimination, and stigma that young people face through new actions in a refreshed Youth Plan.
- 49 In addition to the four policy priorities that emerged from the review, there were also 16 recommendations, several of which relate strongly to youth voice:
- Using the CYWS to join up various transformation efforts on the ground, such as identifying opportunities to tell positive stories about the CYWS and its implementation through youth voice and community champions
 - Refresh and amplify best practice guidelines for engaging with children and young people, to be shared across government agencies
 - Explore ways of increasing promotion of existing civics education resources, and encouraging their wider use within school system
 - Establish regular network and development opportunities for members of Youth Advisory/Leadership Groups.
- 50 There could be opportunities through a refreshed Youth Plan to give greater status and visibility to these recommendations.

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