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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

# Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action —Summary

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**TN:** The three logos at the top of the page are: Ministry of Youth Te Manatū Whakahiato Taioho, Administered by the Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Social Development Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora; Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government.

# Youth Plan: Voice, Leadership, Action

The Youth Plan drives change as part of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The vision of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is that Aotearoa New Zealand "is the best place in the world for children and young people." The Youth Plan drives actions under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy outcome area: "Children and young people are involved and empowered."

There are three documents that make up the Youth Plan:

1. a strategic framework,
2. a rolling suite of actions, and
3. a measurement framework

## Who is the Youth Plan For?

There are approximately 850,000 young people, aged 12-24 years, living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Youth Plan is for all young people aged 12-24 years, with a specific focus on seven cohorts:

- Rangatahi Māori
- Pacific young people
- Rainbow young people
- Disabled young people
- Young women

- Young people from ethnic communities (in particular, former refugees and recent migrants)
- Young people living in the regions

## **Aims of the Youth Plan**

The voices and perspectives of young people are listened to, valued, and embedded in decision-making at all levels.

The mana of young people is uplifted. Young people are enabled to lead their own lives, have their identities seen, valued and respected, and have a greater say in their communities and over government policy.

## **Focus Areas**

The Youth Plan has two focus areas: Voice and Leadership.

Voice and leadership are forms of whai wāhitanga. Young people should be seen as valued contributors and be given space to participate and assume agency.

## **Outcomes for Young People**

- Young people are supported to develop their identities and uplift their mana.
- The mauri of young people is fuelled so that young people are seen, recognised, and valued for who they are and who they want to be.

- The whai wāhitanga of young people is recognised and valued through opportunities for them to contribute their voices and leadership.
- Young people in the priority cohorts have opportunities to implement change on their own terms.
- Young people are supported into education, employment, or training with support from whānau (family), communities, and government.
- Young people are given increasing opportunities in formal leadership and decision-making roles, such as advisory and governance groups.

## **Key Enablers**

- Whai wāhitanga of young people is valued by all government agencies.
- Government agencies understand and follow Mana Taiohi when engaging with young people.
- Government agencies work innovatively and collaboratively with each other and community youth sector partners to support the voice and leadership of young people.
- Government agencies resource and support the youth sector and other community organisations who support young people through youth work and other youth services.

- Government agencies regularly share with each other what they have learnt during engagements and collaborate where possible to reduce consultation fatigue.
- Voices of young people are actively heard, captured, and acted on as part of government action.
- The voices of the priority groups are amplified within government.

## **Tools in our Kete**

To achieve the aims of the Youth Plan, actions will be designed and undertaken by government agencies, youth sector, and community sector partners. Four key tools should be used when designing and implementing actions. Links to further information and resources are available on the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD)—Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi website.

### **Tool 1: Mana Taiohi**

Mana Taiohi is a principle-based framework that informs the way people who work with young people work in Aotearoa New Zealand with a Te Ao Māori worldview. Mana Taiohi is based on the overarching principle of mana, and a further eight interconnected and holistic principles:

- Mauri
- Whakapapa

- Hononga
- Te Ao
- Manaakitanga
- Whai Wāhitanga
- Mātauranga
- Whanaungatanga

The first four principles of mauri, whakapapa, hononga, and te ao are mana that young people have. The second four principles of manaakitanga, whai wāhitanga, mātauranga, and whanaungatanga represent how youth development can help uplift mana.

Mana Taiohi principles are holistic, exist in relation to one another, and are stronger when connected. Without any one of them, the others are weaker.

The principle of Mana is defined as "the authority we inherit at birth, and we accrue over our lifetime. It determines the right of a young person to have agency in their lives and the decisions that affect them. Young people are supported to have a voice, work to their strengths, and step into leadership".

These principles acknowledge the mana that young people have, and how we can work to uplift that mana through voice and leadership. From this flows Whai Wāhitanga, participation. Whai Wāhitanga determines the right of a young person to have agency in their lives and the decisions that affect them.

Within the context of the Youth Plan, engagement with young people should create safe spaces that enable young people to express their voice, have it heard, and influence decisions. Whai Wāhitanga is undoubtedly about involving young people in decision-making in all aspects of their lives. This approach recognises the role that active participation can play as a vehicle for positive youth development and highlights the opportunity to achieve a broader range of positive outcomes that contribute to youth wellbeing.

## **Tool 2: Priority Cohorts**

Some groups of young people experience higher threats to wellbeing, based on factors such as their ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, disability, and geographic location. Many of these young people also struggle to access support services, for example, services that are culturally appropriate, accessible, accepting, and gender-affirming.

The Youth Plan will focus particularly on seven priority cohorts. These are:

- Rangatahi Māori
- Pacific young people
- Rainbow young people
- Disabled young people
- Young women

- Young people from ethnic communities (in particular, former refugees and recent migrants)
- Young people living in the regions.

The priority cohorts are not distinct categories, and many young people belong to multiple groups, with intersectional identities that result in unique experiences. When forming actions, this complexity must be considered.

It is important to remember, even within each cohort, individual experiences are diverse. Labels such as "ethnic" or "rainbow" are necessary generalisations that capture broad trends, but all people within these groups do not share one common experience. For example, ethnic young people include those born in Aotearoa New Zealand, those who migrated, and refugees undergoing forced migration, all following different paths and belonging to different population sub-groups.

Actions and measurements must embed diverse definitions of voice, and leadership. Particular attention should be given to the priority cohorts along with tailored responses to address their unique needs. Young people cannot succeed as a group while those facing disproportionate threats to wellbeing are left behind.

### **Tool 3: Age Range**

The Youth Plan is for all young people aged 12-24 years. This wider cohort can be divided into two groups based on



common development stages: young people aged 12-17 years, and young people aged 18-24 years.

These age ranges are a general guide for government agencies and others formulating actions for the Youth Plan. Broadly, the 12-17-year-old cohort are functioning in education environments, while the 18-24-year-old cohort are likely to be experiencing life transitions, including but not limited to: entering the workforce, further education, or moving out of home.

Experiences within each cohort are diverse. Young people are not meeting the same milestones or undergoing transitions according to fixed linear progression. Age, developmental stage, context, lived experience, and legal rights are all factors to be considered. For example, the rights and needs of a 12-year-old will not always align with those of a 17-year-old. Additionally, many young people leave school or enter employment at different ages. Those formulating individual actions should consider whether their objectives would better suit a narrowed or more targeted age range.

Engagement with appropriate age groups is important when developing actions to effectively address their needs. Young people have valuable insights and are experts on their own experiences. Government agencies and organisations should acknowledge that the voices and perspectives of young people at all ages are crucial.

## Tool 4: Engagement Continuum

The engagement continuum includes different levels of engagement. The first level is **inform**: young people are provided with balanced and objective information on issues or changes that affect them. The second level is **consult**: young people are provided with opportunities to give feedback and have input into decisions. The third level is **involve**: young people are involved in identifying and describing the issues they care about, and included in identifying options to address these issues. The fourth level is **collaborate**: young people's advice and inputs are actively sought and embedded in final decisions and actions. The fifth level is **empower**: young people are key decision-makers and key players in implementing action.

Agencies are encouraged to consider the level at which they wish to engage with young people. This includes considering what level of engagement may be most appropriate for their mahi (work), the level of resource they have available, and the outcomes they wish to achieve with, and for, young people.

More intensive levels of engagement, such as "empower" and "collaborate", will feature a higher level of youth voice and leadership, but likely with a smaller cohort of young people. Less intensive levels of engagement, such as "consult" or "inform", will feature less concentrated levels of youth voice and leadership but often achieve a wider reach of young people.

The level of engagement can also be different at different points in an action's life cycle. For example, collaboration may be most appropriate during a design and testing phase. During implementation and evaluation, consulting may be more appropriate.

At all levels, communication and transparency is essential to ensure the depth and scope of engagement is mutually understood.

## **End of Youth Plan—Voice, Leadership, Action— Summary**