



**Report of Survey Interviews and Focus Groups held  
with Young People for the Wairarapa Social Sector  
Trial (SST) Snapshots and Mapping**

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## Introduction

This report of findings from interviews and focus group discussions with young people in the Wairarapa forms part of a research project undertaken to produce a snapshot and mapping for the Wairarapa Social Sector Trial (SST). Each young person who was interviewed or took part in the focus groups had been identified by a service providing community organisation and stated that they had offended against the law, been truant from school, been involved in alcohol or drug abuse and/or participated in risky sexual behaviour. The report provides information about the following five SST outcome areas based on the views expressed by the young people directly involved:

1. Truancy
2. Offending
3. Alcohol and drug use
4. Risky sexual behaviour
5. Participation in education, training and employment

The decision to use two different methods of collecting information by individual survey and focus groups, was to provide a more comprehensive picture of the young people's views. The survey interviews provide specific responses to pre-set questions, whereas the focus group discussions allow a greater range of dialogue and depth around topics. The former ensure the young people's responses cover a broad range of topics, whereas the latter allow them to compare and share information as they explore fewer topics in greater depth.

The survey interviews were carried out between 11 June and 25 July 2015 by three interviewers. 25 Wairarapa young people were interviewed. They were aged from 13 to 18, with an overall median age of 16. Eighteen of the interviewees were males and seven were females. Seven of the interviewees were accompanied by one or more parents, caregivers or other family members. Because of the high rates of young Māori represented in the five SST outcome areas, Māori interviewers interviewed 13 Māori participants, around half the total, to ensure their views were well represented. The interviews were conducted using a structured 22 item questionnaire. Questions and responses were open-ended and responses were recorded in note form by the interviewers. Where possible, and appropriate, responses have been quantified; and where this is not possible, responses have been reported in narrative form.

Four focus groups were carried out between 25 June and 13 July 2015. As shown in Table 1, three groups had eight participants and one group had nine. Overall there were 33 participants, 20 males and 13 females, with an overall median age of 16, and ages ranging from 14 to 18. Two of the four focus groups consisted of Māori participants and were facilitated by Māori interviewers. These were around half those interviewed, 17 young Māori.

Table 1. Composition of focus groups

Focus group	Male	Female	Total	Median age
Focus group 1	5	3	8	16.5
Focus group 2	3	5	8	14.5
Focus group 3	5	3	8	16
Focus group 4	7	2	9	18
Total	20	13	33	16

The focus groups were conducted by a facilitator accompanied by a person who recorded the discussion in note form. The verbatim of the interviews were also digitally audio recorded. The discussion was guided by a structured question line designed to obtain the same types of information as the survey interviews.

The five SST outcome areas were discussed in the interviews and focus groups as areas of risk behaviour. Survey interviewees were asked to identify which of them, if any, they had engaged in.

## SST risk behaviour areas reported

### Interviews

The numbers of SST risk behaviour areas reported by survey interviewees ranged from none (in one case, to four, with a mean of 2.44 and a median of 3 each. Twelve of the 25 reported involvement in three activities. The average number for females was 2.6 and for males, 2.4. The median for each was 3. The numerical and percentage distributions of SST risk behaviour areas are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Numerical distributions of SST risk behaviour areas among the interviewees

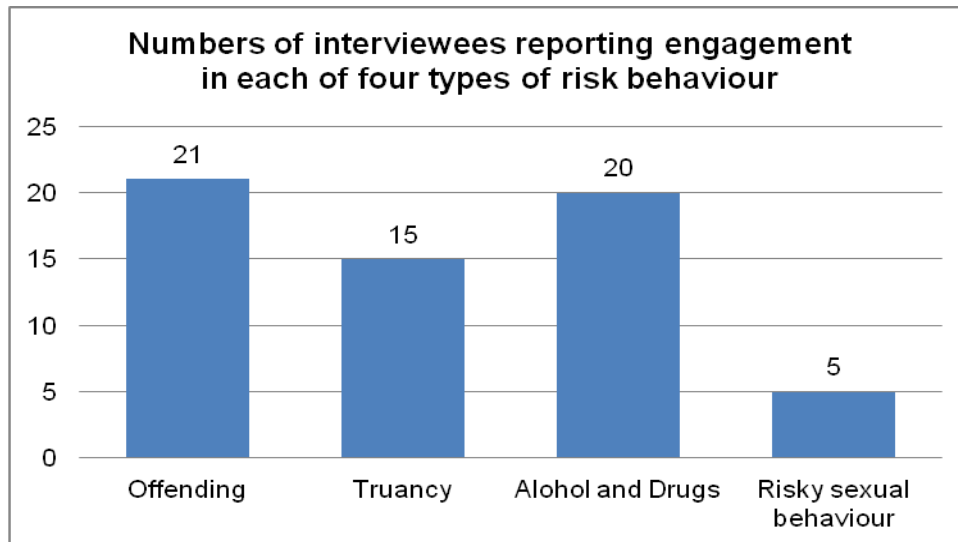
Gender	Offending	Truancy	A&D	Risky sexual behaviour	Totals
Male	15	13	13	3	44
Female	6	2	7	4	19
Total	21	15	20	7	63

Table 3. Percentage distributions of SST risk behaviour areas among the interviewees

Gender	Offending	Truancy	A&D	Risky sexual behaviour
Male	83	72	72	17
Female	86	29	100	57
Total	84	60	80	2

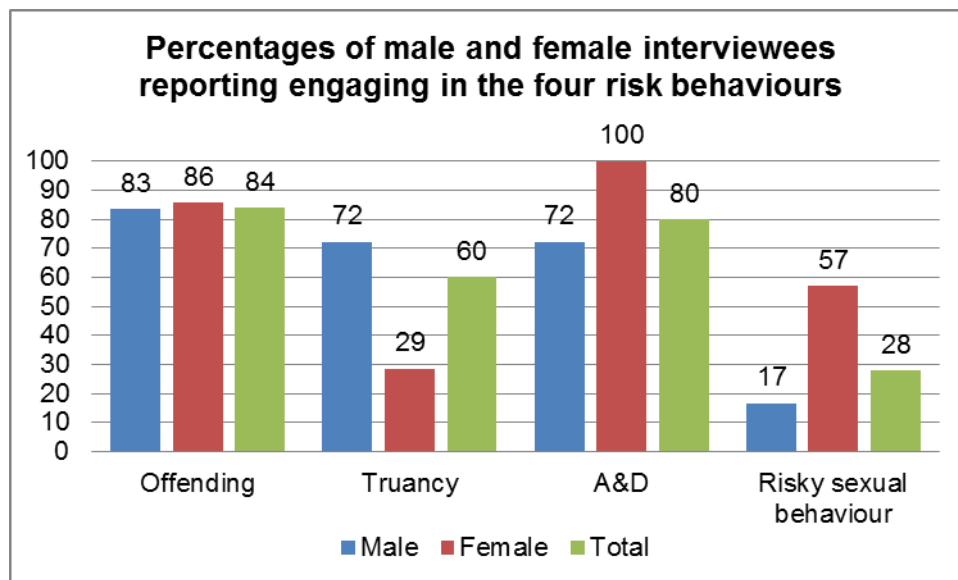
Offending and abuse of alcohol and drugs were the two most common reported risk behaviours, reported by 21 and 20, respectively, followed by truancy reported by 15 and risky sexual behaviour by only five, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Numbers of interviewees reporting engagement in each of four types of risk behaviour



The distributions of interviewees among the SST areas by gender are shown in Figure 2. Rates of offending were similar for males and females in the survey sample, males were more than twice as likely to be truants than females, and females were more likely than males to report involvement with Alcohol and drugs, and risky sexual behaviour.

Figure 2. Percentages of male and female interviewees reporting engaging in the four risk behaviours by gender



### Focus Groups

The numbers and percentages of SST risk behaviour areas reported by focus group participants are shown in Table 4 in order of their numbers. As was the case with the survey respondents, the category risky sexual behaviour had the least young people saying they had engaged in it compared to the other SST areas.

Table 4. Numbers and percentages of focus group

<b>SST focus area</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Alcohol and Drug use	31	94
Offending	29	88
Truancy	28	85
Risky sexual behaviour	16	49
Total focus group members	33	100

### **Survey interviewee's responses about their participation in risk behaviours**

Survey interviewees' responses to further questions about their participation in these behaviours are summarised and reported next.

#### **Offending**

##### ***Stealing, theft and burglary***

Sixteen interviewees reported having engaged in theft of one sort or another, and this was the most common type of offending reported. Examples covered burglary, shoplifting, theft, and unlawfully taking a motor vehicle. An interviewee who had been caught for stealing several times said:

*"I steal things all the time to get money or stuff that I need."*

Shoplifting venues identified were supermarkets, a shoe store and a bottle store.

##### ***Arson and wilful damage***

Several who had faced charges for burglary had also been charged with wilful damage, and resisting arrest. One of them had offended further while on bail, breaching his bail conditions. Another charged with shoplifting also committed arson, assault and wilful damage.

##### ***Alcohol and Drug related offences***

These were reported by three interviewees who listed: under-aged drinking in a public place and being picked up by police; having been arrested for being drunk and disorderly; and driving while under the influence of alcohol.

##### ***Assaults***

Committing assaults was reported by five interviewees. One reported being in trouble with the police for what he described as dumb things:

*"I've been in trouble with the cops for dumb things: arguing, harassment, threatening behaviour. Involved in something that I took the blame for -- wrong place, wrong time."*

Another received a warning for trying to attack a person in front of police. One who admitted assaulting one student once at one school also claimed other assaults out of school grounds. Another spoke of carrying out assaults or threats on a weekly basis when it was necessary to do so to deal with anyone who got in his way.



### **Driving Offence**

Only one interviewee reported driving related offences, which were speeding and driving while under the influence of alcohol.

### **Penalties received for offending**

Offenders reported having been referred to youth justice, attending family group conferences, having to carry out community work, and writing apology letters. One interviewee arrested for theft and burglaries ended up in a Youth Justice Residence in Palmerston North. One received a warning for stealing.

### **Truancy**

Fifteen interviewees reported having been truant while at secondary school. The reasons they gave for their truancy were associated with wanting to hang out with friends, avoid classes they did not like or subjects they were not confident in, and to avoid contact with particular students.

*"[I was] wagging school because of subjects that I am not confident in and because of particular students."*

Accounts of truancy were mostly in terms of selective and partial attendance ranging from one to three days a week, rather than complete non-attendance. One reported ditching school to hang out with friends and then leaving school for about a year, but being back in school now.

One interviewee, who had started being a truant two years before and had a 50 percent college attendance rate in 2014, was sent to an alternative education institution in March 2015 where his attendance improved significantly. Moving from a mainstream college to an alternative education was also noted by another interviewee who had truanted in 2014.

### **Alcohol and drug use**

13 males and 7 females reported and described their use of alcohol and drugs. Collectively, they reported using a range of substances covering: tobacco, synthetics, marijuana, prescription pills, beer, wine, spirits, bourbon and coke, and RTDs. The interviewees described their consumption in terms ranging from daily use to occasional use. One male referred to using cannabis, synthetics, and alcohol *"pretty much having all three on a daily basis"*. Another daily user reported he used to buy and sell for his mother, and also do drugs with his cousins.

Three female interviewees also linked their alcohol and drug use to their home or a parent. One who referred to herself as binge drinking regularly, smoking cigarettes, and smoking marijuana, said there was an alcohol problem in the house. She spoke of having been brought up with and constantly surrounded by alcohol and other drugs.

*"I was binge drinking regularly, smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana. There was an alcohol problem in the house. Brought up with it, was constantly surrounded by it and other drugs."*

Another female spoke of drinking at her father's place, mainly during the holidays, while her mother didn't want her to drink; didn't want her children to have a life like hers. Finally,

another who had overdosed on prescription medicine with the intention of committing suicide, referred to an alcohol influence within her home.

Interviewees who described their alcohol and drug use and the reasons for it did so in several different ways. Two associated it with boredom, one with being stressed and manipulated to use marijuana by friends, while two described themselves as social drinkers. Some used both alcohol and other drugs, while others spoke of using alcohol only – or mainly. In several cases they had stopped using other drugs and only drank alcohol:

*“I used to smoke synthetics all the time and drink. Now I only drink now and then.”*

### **Risky sexual behaviour**

This question was not responded to by most interviewees and only three males and four females reported having engaged in risky sexual behaviour. However, no interviewees reported NOT having engaged in it. This is a difficult area to draw responses from young people. Male and female views of what is risky very likely differ between the genders and the subject appeared to be more private to the interviewees than the other SST risk areas.

In all cases, risky sexual behaviour was discussed in terms of it being engaged in unprotected sex. In most cases, and for both males and females, it was spoken of as being engaged in while under the influence of alcohol. For one female, it followed her mother throwing away her condoms because she believed in another form of contraception.

### **Being offered or seeking help**

Interviewees were asked about whether or not they received any help for issues they faced, and whether they sought help themselves, and whether they had support offered to them. With the exception of one male, all interviewees had received help. Ten had initiated seeking support either themselves or through their parents. The other 15 had received support that was offered to them without having directly sought it themselves.

### **Sources of support that were approached by interviewees**

The 10 interviewees who had sought support identified 11 sources which are listed in Table 5. All are mentioned only once except GPs with two mentions.

Table 5. Organisations that were approached for support

<b>Sources of support approached by youth</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>No.</b>
GPs	2
CYF	1
Family Works (Presbyterian support)	1
Local youth programme through the church.	1
Police	1
School nurse.	1
Southern Wairarapa Safer communities.	1
Turret House (Family Works)	1
Whaiora	1
Youth pastors at Solway church.	1
Youth services Carterton	1

### Sources of support that approached interviewees

In contrast to the results shown in Table 5, Table 6 shows that interviewees had been subject to many more approaches from organisations than those they initiated themselves. The police and CYF were the two organisations most likely to offer support and this is probably to be expected in view of the participation in risk behaviours reported by the interviewees.

Table 6. Organisations that initiated offers of support

Sources of support offered to youth			
Source	No.	Source	No.
Police	17	Family	1
CYF	12	Family home plus	1
Rangitaane o Wairarapa	5	Giants softball team under 15s	1
School	4	GP	1
Te Hauora	3	Open home foundation	1
Truancy	3	Probation	1
Youth justice	3	School nurse.	1
Counsellor	2	SWIS worker from school	1
D&A counselling	2	Turret House (Presbyterian Support)	1
School guidance counsellor	2	Whaiora (Mana)	1
Teachers	2	Whānau ora	1
CAHMS (in Masterton)	1	Youth Services Carterton.	1
Church youth ministries	1	Youth street ministries	1

### Organisation's perceived helpfulness or non-helpfulness

#### Survey interviewees

Interviewees were asked to identify the organisations that they considered helped them with their problems, and those they considered not to have been helpful. Table 7 lists those organisations perceived as being most helpful with a ranking of more than 2. The Police and CYF have the most dealings with the young participants. It is interesting to note the positive ranking of the two Māori organisations.

Table 7. Organisations that were perceived to help with young people's problems (survey)

Organisation	No.
Police	6
Rangitaane o Wairarapa	5
CYF	4
Te Hauora	3

The organisations perceived as not being helpful with more than 2 responses are listed in Table 8. There are fewer of them than were identified as being helpful with the problems the young people had. The Police and CYF rank as highly for being unhelpful as they did for being helpful.

Clearly, the interviewees had different experiences in their dealings with various organisations, and the mixed views about the Police and CYF in particular are not surprising

in the light of their statutory responsibilities and the potentially punitive aspects of some of their work.

Table 8. Organisations that were perceived not to help with young people’s problems (survey)

<b>Organisations that didn't help</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	<b>No.</b>
CYF	8
Police	5

### Focus group participants

Focus group participants also identified organisations they considered had helped them with their problems and those referred to most often (more than twice) are listed in Table 9. Two of the focus groups were based in secondary schools and this may have been reflected in the numbers of mentions of school related organisations and services.

Table 9. Organisations that were perceived to help with young people’s problems (focus groups)

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>No.</b>
Makaura College	5
Doctor	3
Hauora	3
Whaiora	3

The assessments of the survey interviewees and focus group participants with scores of more than 2 are combined in Table 10 with the organisations and services arranged in order of the extent to which they were identified as having “helped” in the “combined” column to the right. Overall, the Police and CYF had high scores for helping young people with their problems and also not helping, probably because of their statutory role as noted above. Rangitaane o Wairarapa and Te Hauora Runanga o Wairarapa showed high scores for helping, probably indicating the preference of Maori young people for familiarity and culturally appropriate services.

Table 10. Combined results from the survey and focus groups about organisations that were perceived to help and not help young people with their problems

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Focus groups</b>		<b>Survey</b>		<b>Combined</b>	
	<b>Helped</b>	<b>Didn't help</b>	<b>Helped</b>	<b>Didn't help</b>	<b>Helped</b>	<b>Didn't help</b>
Police	2	1	6	5	8	6
Rangitaane o Wairarapa	2		5		7	
Te Hauora	3	1	3		6	1
CYF	2	1	4	8	6	9
College	5				5	
Whaiora	3		1		4	
Doctor	3				3	

## **Things the organisations did that helped young people with their problems**

Twenty one survey interviewees and each of the focus groups identified ways in which they had been helped by the organisations they dealt with. These related to dealing with alcohol and drug use, advocacy, behaviour, engagement in useful activities, practical assistance and support. Interviewees' accounts of the support they received are summarised below.

### **Alcohol and drug counseling (A&D)**

A&D counselling was credited with helping one interviewee complete a Family Group Conference (FGC) plan. For another, the seven A&D counselling sessions he was given exposed him to some educational DVDs that made him think that he don't want to be like the people in them, and even now he could remember them clearly. He said he was encouraged and praised throughout this process and had stopped smoking marijuana fully by the start of year 11.

Other programmes and activities that were identified as being helpful were: mentoring programmes, reparations activities, community hours, work experience, overnight camps, the Pukaha trapping programme, Kip McGrath tutoring, and the Tuakana/teina programme.

One of the focus groups emphasized the help they had received from their school with alcohol and drug counselling. The school had an open door which participants said made them accountable for the decisions they made. The school also organises other places for young people to access help, like Whaiora, when it is closed on weekends or for the holidays. They offer helpful pamphlets and even when they telephone their families to inform them of drug and alcohol use, it acts as a deterrent.

### **Advocacy**

Focus group participants referred to the advocacy of lawyers enabling them to be respected and treated fairly in court proceedings. CYF workers helped create an FGC plan that enabled a young person to be "uplifted" out of an unsafe environment and referred to skilled people to help him gain the support he needed.

The Police, CYF, Rangitaane o Wairarapa, and Southern Wairarapa safer communities were identified by an interviewee as putting him in touch with the right people, and advocating for him at his Family Group Conference and youth court appearance. As he said:

*"They put me in touch with the right people. Advocated for me in my FGC and in youth court. Helped me achieve credits of learning. Helped me complete my FGC plan obligations. Taught me new skills. Meet new 'good' people."*

### **Behaviour**

Three interviewees specifically acknowledged the influence of the Police in helping them improve their behaviours. One said that the Police were very clear with her and helped her understand the consequences of her actions.

*"Police helped change some of my bad behaviours and made me accountable for my actions."*

The warning she received from the Police scared her off offending again. Another female also said that the Police being so clear in explaining consequences, had helped reduce risk

of her reoffending. A male interviewee credited the Police with helping change some of his bad behaviours and be accountable for his actions. A curfew prevented him from hanging out with bad influencers.

Counselling was credited by another female with helping her. She said:

*“Counselling helped me deal with some of my anger issues.”*

Makoura College student support helped another finish her community hours satisfactorily.

Two of the focus groups consistently emphasized the importance of “being made accountable” particularly when they had been offending or truant. They said that having their families informed and being publicly named at a school assembly acted as a deterrent. They also referred to a particular principal who treats them as individual adults and gives them options about how to make better decisions.

### **Engagement**

In one of the focus groups, all participants referred to the importance of being treated fairly and given respect. They recognised that they needed help to move forward on with their real issues, like helping them pay their fines. They considered helpers should get to know them before assuming a negative outlook. They wanted encouragement for positive change rather than continually going back over their past.

SWIS (Social Workers in Schools) was credited with helping one female interviewee to see a better path for her future. She said her SWIS worker helped her with a lot of things.

*“SWIS has helped me see a better path for my future. My SWIS worker helped me with a lot of things. Listening to me, helped me with my anger, helped me with school issues. Help me realise things more clearly and help me know who I am and face my consequences.”*

A male interviewee said his SWIS worker helped him re-engage with school work and gave him a social place to go to during the week. This helped bring him back to see reality in life and kept him grounded. He loved outdoor physical activity.

A counsellor at Presbyterian support, youth pastors at Solway church, and the Anga Atu Club in Masterton were credited by another male interviewee with helping him to live with a better perspective. They taught him that it was alright to ask for help. He reiterated that the counselling really helped him.

*“Made me live with a better perspective. Taught me that it's alright to ask for help. Counselling really helped me.”*

Whaiora and the Turret House Cool M8s mentoring program gave another male a new perspective on life

*“They gave me a new perspective on life. They got me planting trees as a community initiative to give back to the community.”*

### **Practical support**

Some examples of practical support and assistance were mentioned, including a CYF worker putting a plan in place for a male interviewee to help him behave better and also putting a part time job in place for him. Youth services in Carterton helped another male get

on the youth benefit and on a course. One GP was mentioned by a female interviewee for listening, caring, and providing her the medication that she needed. Another female referring to support she had received from a number of services said they:

*“Gave me support. Just being someone that I can go and talk to if I need to. Gave me advice/strategies to prevent things from happening again.”*

The focus groups referred to broad sets of programmes and initiatives the young people considered helped them. These included: a stop smoking plan, a YMCA course on numeracy and literacy, access to contraception, a school’s use of pamphlets about healthy sexuality and open door policy to help as well, anger management courses, help with paying fines, whānau counselling, parenting courses, organisation that helped them get on to training and employment courses, health and safety awareness, life skills, GPs providing young people with their health test results and discussing them with them, cultural and pastoral care, alternative education, help setting targets, support through a miscarriage and support paying reparations.

## **Things that didn't help young people with their problems**

The four focus groups and 20 interviewees identified unhelpful things. Again we emphasise the Police and CYF are statutory organisations with legal authority to enforce certain actions and so they can be expected to be criticised more than non-Statutory bodies. The same organisations have also been named as helping young people in the foregoing pages. Nevertheless, there is value in understanding the positive and negative attributes of these organisations’ involvement with young people.

Some examples:

### **Police**

Some aspects of Police work with interviewees were perceived as not helping the young people with their problems. These included the police making assumptions about them, talking down to them, yelling at them, and being judgemental. A male interviewee considered that the police didn't really listen and used to hassle him if something had happened in town because of things he had done previously.

*“Police didn't really listen and they used to hassle me if something happened in town because of things I had done previously.”*

Another male felt that because of his family's history the police were targeting him and had him labelled as a thief.

A female interviewee who had been picked up by police, for some unspecified reason, said that they just asked for her details and took her home. She said that by them only doing that they did nothing to change anything and didn’t help her at all.

*“Police did nothing to change anything. Didn't help, they just ask for my details and took me home -- and that's all -- NO HELP.”*

The two focus groups with Māori participants had at least one member who referred to being threatened and/or physically assaulted by the police (one person in one group and a majority, though not all, in another group).

*“He beat me up.”<sup>1 2</sup>*

As with most of the interviewees, all four focus groups referred to some of the unhelpful aspects noted above.

### **CYF**

Six interviewees identified specific aspects of the work of CYF that they perceived to be unhelpful. One found them to be arrogant and judgmental, making assumptions about him and his family. A female interviewee commented about the CYF social worker always changing on her:

*“CYF social worker [was] always changing on me. Might see the social worker for 20 minutes, then nothing for weeks, sometimes months.”*

A male spoke of CYF sending lots of people to see him but none of them could get through to him or change things. A female interviewee regarded CYF as unduly child centred and failing to look at her problem within the family where it stemmed from. One male interviewee had this to say about CYF:

*“CYF lock you up in a room all day and want you to talk to them. Being told what I can't do, not what I can do.”*

Members within one of the focus groups stated that their experience of CYF workers was that they did not listen and made assumptions about them, rather than checking out what they needed.

### **Other services**

One participant referred to being placed in “cabbage classes” with much younger students. He said there were behavioural problems early on and he was not learning at his correct age. Some drug and alcohol counsellors and General Practitioners were accused of making assumptions about young people, talking down to them and judging them. In addition the high cost (\$40) of seeing a GP was mentioned as a barrier to their service. In one of the focus groups some members considered the truancy officers were unhelpful because they didn't follow up or make further contact after later school absences.

### **Organisations' attitudes to young people**

Interviewees were asked to evaluate the attitudes of the various organisations they had mentioned having had dealings with. A four item scale was used ranging from Very good to Bad. Please note these are subjective assessments from a group of young people who use their services. They offer a snapshot of client opinions based on their experience. Their evaluations with scores of 2 or more are summarised in Table 11.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note this is qualitative research where a statement of police assault is being noted in the context of a group discussion. It is a subjective statement of a young person and does not constitute proof of assault. Nevertheless, it is the description of the young person when invited to recall their experience with the police.

<sup>2</sup> The Police on reading a draft of this report initiated a meeting with the lead author highlighting their concerns about the comments referred to above. They issued an invitation to the young people concerned to meet with them so that the incidents could be further investigated.



Rangitaane o Wairarapa consistently and Te Hauora Runanga o Wairarapa consistently score highly most likely reflecting young Māori preference for culturally congruent services. The two large front-line statutory organisations that were often subject to criticism end up in the mixed 'neither good nor bad' category.

Table 11. Assessments of organisations' attitudes to young people

Organisation	n=	Max	Min	Median	Overall evaluation
Rangitaane o Wairarapa	5	2	1	1	Very good
Te Hauora	3	2	1	2	Good
Youth services Carterton	2	2	2	2	
School guidance counsellor	2	3	2	2.5	
CYF	12	5	1	3	Neither good nor bad
CAHMS	2	4	2	3	
Police	15	5	1	3	
School	2	4	2	3	
Teachers	2	4	2	3	
GP	3	4	3	3	
D&A	2	4	3	3.5	
Truancy	2	4	4	4	Bad

## The best things Organisations can do to help

Interviewees and focus group participants were asked to suggest things that support organisations could do to help them. Their responses which are set out below covered 10 areas recommending: Being consistent and patient, non-judgemental, and honest; listening to youth voices; providing support, opportunities, and education; working with the whole family; and providing support for withdrawal from alcohol and drugs.

### Consistency and patience

Consistency and communication between agencies was called for and speedier processing of issues and better communication and consistency were recommended for CYF. A male interviewee who had been head hunted for a scholarship at a top rugby school/college needed application forms to be signed and filled out by his biological parents, which was not possible in view of his circumstances. Different social workers dealing with this provided different information. His caregiver said he would get to know one social worker and form a bond, only to have the social worker changed and have to start again. The desirability of only having to deal with one person was raised by others, too.

The focus groups referred to helpers often not following them up, not continuing to show a genuine interest in their progress and seemingly not to care.

### Don't judge

Four interviewees and all four focus groups specifically called for organisations they dealt with to have a good attitude towards them, get to know them, and stop judging them. They asked them to listen and not judge people who make mistakes, to give people a chance before making assumptions. One male interviewee said they should be:

*"... non-judgemental, listening to what I have to say, helping me to plan ahead to achieve things. Be straight up and don't lie to me. If you say you're going to do something then do it!"*

One contrasted the judgemental attitudes towards young people with the supportive approach adopted by Hutt Valley women's refuge in its help to her mother and focus on fostering women's pride.

### **Be honest**

The need for organisations to be honest was raised by five interviewees who called for organisations to be straight up and not lie to them, and do what they say they are going to do. There was also a call for organisations to be honest with youth and tell them where they (youth) have gone wrong and the consequences if they continue. A male interviewee said organisations should:

*“Always be honest and tell us where we have gone wrong and the consequences if we continue. Help us right our wrongs like completing community work, reparations. And learn how to be a better person.”*

One focus group said they need people in the service organisations whom they can trust. *“They need to build a connection first”* and tell more about who they are and where they are from. They were also encouraged the professional helpers to relate by sharing their experiences.

### **Listen**

Six interviewees and all four focus groups specifically called for organisations to listen to them, one male interviewee said:

*“Listen to us without always interrupting. Not just assume that we are still getting into trouble, and blaming us for things that we didn't do.”*

They would like organisations to actually want to help them, really listen and care about them.

### **Support**

Nine interviewees and all four focus groups emphasised the value of organisations actively supporting them in practical ways:

*“Just be there to give them support/advice if they need it. Start from the start, involve families, see what the problem is and what they can do to fix the problem.”*

Organisations were encouraged to keep youth active, to be kind, honest, caring, and real; to spend lots of time with youth. Support was also called for to help youth right their wrongs in areas like completing community work and making reparations, and to learn how to be better people.

Provide mentoring that keep youth out of trouble and busy doing good things.

Support was recommended to help youth plan things so they've got something to do every day where they're not surrounded by people using drugs or other negative behaviours. They also wanted help to gain employment so they don't need to steal.

An interviewee who had been a truant said it would be good to have help with his truancy, such as being picked up from his class, taken out and asked about how his day has been,

and given things to keep him occupied. The availability of things to do was mentioned by others, such as having youth groups, and also help with planning ahead to achieve things.

### **Opportunities**

Two interviewees called for more opportunities to be offered for things to do to counter the boredom felt by many young people, boredom that led many of them into trouble:

*“They need to offer us more opportunities and things to do. Most of us young people are just bored and that's why we get ourselves into trouble. They could also include my family more in the plan. Listen to the young person rather than talking down to them.”*

Examples given were the Anga Atu Club, other organisations that could provide mentoring and options to keep youth out of trouble and busy doing good things. One of the focus groups referred to police taking them diving, and another organisation providing rugby boots to help get them involved in constructive leisure activities.

### **Education**

It was suggested that it helps to encourage an awareness among young people and show them what their lives will be like if they continue abusing drugs/alcohol. Visual education was suggested and hearing about real people and what drugs/alcohol have done to them. *“Show the youth that you genuinely care”*. In relation to this, one of the focus groups said education needs to be pitched to their level and hui should take place where young people feel comfortable, preferably with kai.

### **Family**

In recognition that many problems faced by young people had their origins in their families, several recommended organisations work with the young person and their family.

### **Drug and Alcohol support**

One interviewee called for support that would assist young people to be weaned off consumption and abuse of alcohol and drugs instead of just trying to make them stop straight away. One focus group recommended a free needle exchange service.

## **Family/Whānau involvement in the help offered to young people**

### **Focus groups**

Focus group participants were asked if they would like to have family/whānau involved when going to an organisation for help. Their views were mixed and they stated that it depended on the reasons why a family member wanted to participate. There were clear concerns about not wanting to be judged, not wanting parents to know what they were up to and not wanting to hurt or embarrass them. There were also concerns that family/whānau could make things worse instead of supporting them.

One focus group agreed that it was good to have family/whānau with them when going to an agency but only if they were supportive. They said some family members are not and can be very negative making the situation worse. There were some things the young people were embarrassed about and did not wish them to know.

In another focus group, all participants agreed that having family/whānau present when accessing services provided better support and helped them make better decisions, apart from accessing services for risky sexual behaviour, where the group was split. By contrast in a further focus group, all participants agreed that having family/whānau present when accessing services was not beneficial and caused unnecessary stress, apart from accessing services for risky sexual behaviour, where the majority of the group considered it would be helpful. There were definite concerns about their family/whānau knowing about their activities and creating problems for them.

### **Survey participants**

Nineteen of the 25 survey interviewees had whānau involved in the help they received, and 14 of those said that their involvement had been helpful. The primary reason given for it being helpful was that by being involved in the process, family/whānau members became aware of what the young person is facing and going through. As one male interviewee said:

*“So my parents knew everything I was doing, where I was, and they knew the people I was with. So my parents could help me stay on track.”*

It also meant that because they knew what steps the young person had to implement, they were in a better position to support them and reinforce the message the young person needed to absorb. In at least one case, a mother’s involvement was helpful to her as well because she wanted help with her parenting too. They were able to devise and create strategies together that benefited them both. For another, his family gave him support when he was dealing with the police, and it gave him someone to lean on.

Six interviewees whose family/whānau had not been involved responded to this, with four saying it would not have helped and two saying it would have. The two who did think it would have helped said that would be the case because their family would have offered more support and helped them make some better decisions.

Of the four who didn’t think it would have helped, one said this was because all her whānau

*“would have their own opinions and probably start arguing amongst themselves. They wouldn’t be supportive.”*

For another it was because he knew his mother wouldn't want to get involved. Another’s family didn't help because of their gang involvement; he said he needed a father to pull him up about his offending and his mother had no control over him. Other reasons were generally to do with the interviewees’ awareness that their family/whānau didn’t really care what happened to them and would not be supportive. For one, his father was in jail and his mother was not concerned, seeing no problem with offending, truancy, or drug and alcohol use. Another spoke of her nanny not keeping to her word when she said she would find her a part time job, but had never done so. For one male the reason was simply that having family/whānau involved would have put more pressure on him, made it harder to take, and be more stressful.

### **Conclusion:**

It seems that for family/whānau involvement to be helpful they must be aligned with and supportive of the aims of the help offered by organisations to young people who are at risk.

## The main causes of problems for young people

Survey Interviewees identified 21 problems which were mentioned 63 times. These are all listed in Table 12 which shows that the three most mentioned problems were boredom, peer pressure, and truancy. Boredom was mentioned 12 times in the interviews, peer pressure was mentioned 11 times, truancy was mentioned 5 times, and fourth equal with 4 mentions each were alcohol and drugs, negative home environment, and offending against the law (theft).

The focus group discussions identified seven problem areas that were linked to the problems they faced and the risk behaviours they engaged in. These are listed in Table 13 which shows that peer pressure and boredom are prominent as they were for the survey interviewees.

Table 12. Problems and number of mentions by survey interviewees

Problems and number of mentions			
Boredom	12	Family violence	2
Peer pressure	11	Parental example	2
Truancy	5	Anger	1
A&D	4	Dislike school	1
Home environment	4	Fighting	1
Offending	4	Gangs	1
Bullying	3	Lack of money	1
Arguing	2	Police	1
Bad environment	2	Poor decision making.	1
D&A	2	Poor role models.	1
Experimenting	2		

Table 13. Problems and number of mentions by focus group members

Problem and number of mentions	
Peer pressure	10
Offending to meet wants and needs	8
Boredom	6
Availability of alcohol and drugs	4
Family upbringing	4
Bullying and stress	3
Dislike of school and teachers	3
Influence of alcohol and drugs	3
Total	41

## **Key issues for young people**

The focus group participants identified what they considered the main factors underlying problems associated with each of the five SST target areas.

### **Alcohol and drug use**

There was agreement that alcohol and drug use by young people is exacerbated by pressure through intimidation from peers and family members, and expectations of gang affiliation. Media representations of lifestyles associated with drug and alcohol use were also raised as influencing young people to engage in the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol. Marijuana and alcohol is easy to access and that even within your own family/whānau someone is able to buy what you want. Marijuana use is more socially accepted and some families would rather you smoke at their house than smoke in public and get caught.

*“Young people try offending like stealing to make a name for themselves and be cool. My mates are truants because they find school boring.”*

The majority of the young people agreed that addiction is a big factor with their peers. Drinking, and smoking marijuana are the main causes. Synthetic drugs were mentioned as well due to them being accessible and easy to get. They said they were willing to give it a go. They would get bored and have sessions with their mates and then bunk school.

*“There’s nothing for youth to do in this town. Bored. Youth need money, so if they don’t have any they will steal something to sell instead.”*

Some of them said they hated the teachers because they didn’t feel supported by them. One of the boys said he would get depressed and not want to go to school and have to deal with the teachers. The majority of the group agreed strongly that alcohol causes offending and risky sexual behaviour and risky sexual behaviour and truancy leads to offending.

### **Offending**

Many of the participant’s fathers were either in jail or had been imprisoned at some stage for committing some sort of offence. Factors underlying offending by young people were having nothing to do to stay occupied, peer pressure to participate, pressure to have the newest technology, and the need to pay for drugs and/or alcohol.

### **Risky sexual behaviour**

The young people believed that unsafe sex was a big issue amongst their peers, and associated with disease and unplanned pregnancies as well. Factors underlying practising unsafe sex were having nothing else to do to stay occupied, and the influence of visual media, music, and peer pressure to participate in sexual intercourse. The influence of visual media and music acted through portrayals and representations of sexual activity in films and songs. The link between risky sexual behaviour and alcohol and drugs was summarised by one female interviewee who said:

*“If I continue abusing alcohol and drugs it could lead to risky sexual behaviour, self harm, being a poor role model myself. If I didn’t learn about the effects of sexual risky behaviour, I could have caught a disease or fallen pregnant.”*

### **Truancy**

Being truant and being stood down from school meant that CYF would get involved along with other agencies like the police and truancy officers. It raised the possibility of getting taken away from their families. Factors underlying truancy were; boredom -- having nothing to do to stay occupied, hating the teachers, struggling at school, needing to escape a difficult home life, peer pressure to participate and preferring to get stoned instead of going to school.

### **Participation in education, training or employment**

Seven of the survey interviewees were participating, 17 were not and one participated sometimes. The occasional participant was not in a mainstream college and the programme he attended was only for two hours in the morning each day.

### **Barriers to involvement in education, training or employment**

Nine interviewees said there were no barriers and six said there were. Barriers to involvement were associated with previous poor performance at school such as lacking the credits required to get into courses. Previous, and current, poor performance was often associated with involvement in alcohol and drugs, tough family life and gang exposure, fighting and stealing, and otherwise not fitting in at school for reasons such as being bullied. One male interviewee illustrated this well:

*“When I got kicked out of Kuranui I ran away from home for 3-4 months before going to alternative education in Carterton. Suspended from alternative education for drug use. Indulged heavily in drugs/alcohol while on the run.”*

Another barrier identified by a caregiver was red tape between agencies and poor communications which obscured entitlements to support for engaging in further education, training or employment.

### **Ways to overcome barriers to participation in education, training or employment**

The suggestions from the interviewees and focus group participants’ boiled down to providing school courses that interested the young people who were disengaged, making school work fun, and doing more practical school work. Offering courses that can lead to getting a job and having more courses available with more help to get the required credits if you don’t have them were also suggested. Two male interviewees recommended:

*“Courses that focus more on what I’m interested in. Courses for younger people not wanting to be in school.”*

and

*“Being able to access courses that I want to do now rather than having to wait. Especially because I don’t like school.”*

One interviewee said that it was *“important to learn not listen to teasing bullies and to tell the teacher about any bullying so they can talk to the parents of the bullies that hit you.”* More social workers were thought to be required because the worker: client ratio is too high. It

would also help if teachers did not judge students and in this regard, it was suggested teachers should not be able to know anything about your family to reduce their ability to pre-judge.

## **Motivations to overcome problems and difficulties and be involved in Education, Training and Employment**

Many of the interviewees' and focus group participants' motivations to overcome the problems and difficulties they faced and be involved in education, training and employment were closely linked to their relationships with their family/whānau and others close to them. These covered factors such as making their parents, koro and family proud; not wanting to disappoint people that try to help them; and being motivated to avoid their siblings ending up like them. A male interviewee said:

*“If I stay out of trouble and learn new things I can get a job and get paid. Making my mum and dad proud and everyone who has helped me too.”*

Other motivations included not wanting to go to jail, breaking the cycle of problems, and doing something good with the hope of getting a job. Having a good job was associated with being able to have nice things.

Other motivations embodied personal challenges such as one who wanted to show some people that he could do it and get a good job and help his family. The goal for another male was to join the army, for which he needed NCEA level 1. For another, being a part of the services academy at school had motivated him to become an officer in the navy. Enjoyment and support were also mentioned by one who wanted a course that he enjoyed that would give him qualifications to get a job, and to have people to support him to do it. Another spoke of the support she enjoyed from a SWIS worker and her whānau, especially her Nan, who motivated her. She said her Dad was in Jail but when she spoke to him he told her to stay in school, to stay out of trouble, and not do any gang stuff.

Not all were so motivated, with one interviewee making enough money dealing drugs and stolen goods to live. Helped by his father, his weekly income was better than minimum wage per week.

## **Advice for successful engagement with youth**

The advice offered by the survey interviewees and the focus group participants mirrors the things that they suggested earlier that support organisations could do to help them. The advice can be summarised as follows.

The young people/rangatahi said that if they don't accept the support from the agencies they won't get the help they need, so they have to just take chances and change their perception and attitude towards agencies. However they are strong believers that agencies need to know who they are and where they come from first. They need to be given a chance to prove themselves. They want agencies to be *“straight up with them”*, to realise their situation isn't the best and to not judge them.

*“Be non-judgemental, listen to us. Be honest and don't say something you don't mean. Be committed to helping us and don't give up.”*



Agencies need to stay involved for as long as needed and to follow through with things they promise. People that work with them should think about the questions they ask and try to understand their views.

*“Ask youth what they want to do. Be honest, caring, real. Spend lots of time with them and keep them active and busy.”*

The best advice for organisations is to be genuine, consistent and honest.

*“Get to know [the youth] well. Look after them. Be honest with them. Show them the way, lead by example. Kia ora.”*

## **Study limitations**

This report is based on analysis of the responses of individual young people who were interviewed, and the responses of young people who participated in focus groups. The resulting snapshot of the situations facing the young people who stand to benefit from youth focussed services and of the organisations charged with providing those services is taken entirely on the comments and observations they have made, based on their own experiences and perceptions. The young people who were interviewed or participated in focus groups had all been involved in risk activities, so their views cannot be taken as representative of all young people in the Wairarapa. However, there is no reason to suppose that their views and experiences are not broadly representative of those of their close peers.

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