

A Fresh Start for young offenders

August 2011



Context - New Zealand Youth Justice

- > Of the ten percent (approx 420,000) of the New Zealand population aged between 10 and 16 years of age, only a small proportion will be involved in the youth justice system.
- > The Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 is recognised as world-leading legislation and enjoys a strong international reputation.



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Youth offending

- > Youth offending takes place among a small group of teenagers in New Zealand.
- > However, there is a group of around 1000 serious and persistent offenders who are responsible for nearly half the crime committed by young people and who we need to work with more effectively.
- > Many of these young people will also have care and protection concerns with Child, Youth and Family.
- > These offenders cause significant harm to themselves, others and their communities. Their behaviour is harder to change.

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Youth justice reforms - an overview

The youth justice reforms, which took effect from 1 October 2010, include:

- > tougher new sentences for persistent and serious offenders, longer residential stays, and increased supervision requirements
- > new powers for the Youth Court to order mentoring, parenting, or drug and alcohol programmes
- > an ability to bring some 12 and 13 year olds in front of the Youth Court
- > a strengthening of the principle regarding the rights of victims to be engaged and informed
- > additional funding for services to target reducing youth offending.



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Identifying risks and needs

- > The change in legislation introduces a new youth justice principle, requiring measures for dealing with offending to address the underlying causes of offending.
- > A number of assessment tools have been developed to identify each young person's level of risk and needs, including:
 - > YORST (Youth Offending Risk Screening Tool)
 - > SACS (Substance And Choices Scale)
 - > TRAX
 - > Health and education assessments
 - > Specialist assessments



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Fresh Start Programmes: Mentoring

- > The programmes provide individualised and intensive support, positive guidance, encouragement, and challenge.
- > It aims to improve the young person's opportunities to:
 - > access education, training, employment
 - > engage in pro-social and meaningful activities
 - > improve their social and relationship skills
 - > accept responsibility and accountability for their offending
 - > minimise risk to the community from future offending and negative behaviour.



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Parenting programmes

- > For young people who are, or are soon to be, a parent and/or
- > Parents of high risk, serious and persistent young offenders
- > Parenting education programmes will include:
 - > positive communication strategies
 - > cognitive development of teenagers
 - > influencing positive peer associations, setting and monitoring boundaries, where to go for help.

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Alcohol and other drug (AoD) programmes

- > The Substance And Choices Scale (SACS) health screen helps identify alcohol and other drug use, and whether the young person needs a fuller assessment.
- > AoD programmes are aimed at young offenders who:
 - > have been identified as having a significant AoD issue
 - > are at risk of future offending triggered by substance abuse
 - > are at risk of having their substance abuse escalate.



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Supportive Bail and Intensive Supervision

- > Current evidence shows that community based interventions, even for serious offenders, is more likely to produce long-term sustainable change.
- > The Supported Bail programme is effective in providing a safe community-based alternative to holding a young person in custody while on bail.
- > Intensive Supervision orders, aimed a young people who do not comply with their court ordered plans.



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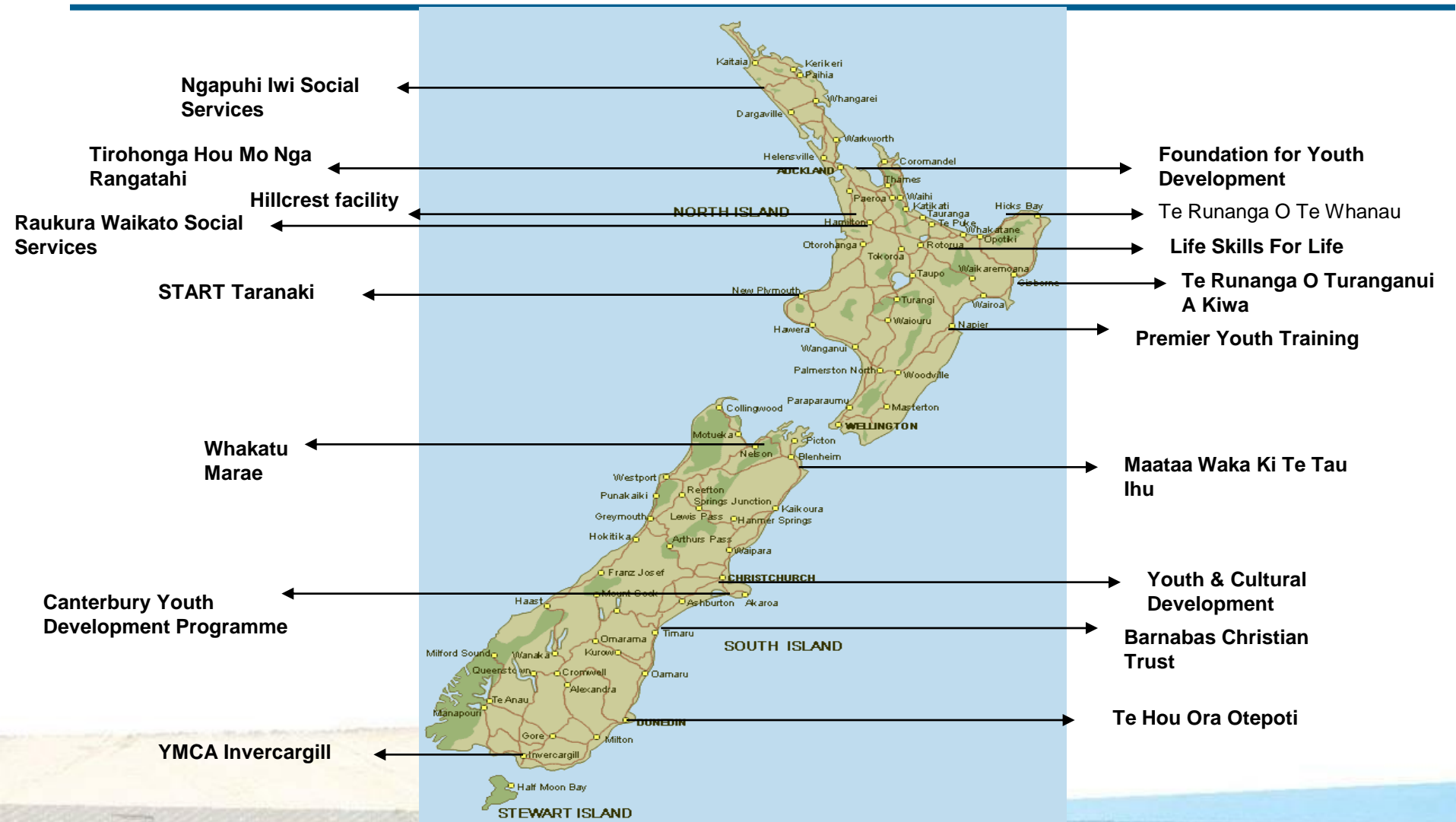
Supervision with Activity (SWA)

- > Longer supervision orders allow us to provide more intensive, sustained and individualised support for young people.
- > There is a greater focus on increasing the use of Supervision with Activity Orders and reducing Supervision with Residence.
- > We have increased national coverage for SWA providers, This will help ensure young offenders are kept connected to their families and communities.



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Supervision with Activity



Military-style Activity Camp (MAC)

- > Targets the most serious and repeat young offenders, on the cusp of transfer to the adult jurisdiction
- > Is a residential programme (including a wilderness camp), run in conjunction with the NZ Defence Force
- > Works to identify and address the underlying causes of offending, reinforce self discipline, personal responsibility and community values
- > Includes an individualised and detailed transition plan for each young person



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Our commitment to improving the effectiveness of Fresh Start:

Fresh Start is an opportunity to focus on best practice, and strengthen our work with young people who offend, their families, communities, and victims. We are committed to:

- > responding to community needs and expectations
- > strengthening family group conference decision making
- > actively managing the family group conference plans
- > creating a better future for each young person
- > 'teaming up' to achieve
- > ensuring victims are engaged and supported in the FGC process.



Respond to community needs and expectations

- > We will:
 - > ensure responses match the level of risk
 - > partner up with key agencies to deliver programmes and services
 - > engage with our communities
 - > encourage communities to deliver their own solutions
 - > work with iwi and Māori providers to develop solutions for Māori children and young people.



Strengthen family group conference

- > We will:
 - > assess young people to identify strengths, risks and needs
 - > give FGC participants full information prior to FGC
 - > ensure the FGC involve all the right people, including family members, victims and professional
 - > inform FGC and/or Court of risks and needs and intervention options available.



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Actively manage FGC plans

- > We will:
 - > give each task a completion date
 - > check things get done
 - > stay connected with the young person, to monitor any changes
 - > measure outcomes through reassessment.



Team up to achieve

- > We will:
 - have a joined up approach – youth justice, care and protection and residences
 - link up with Work and Income for training and employment opportunities for young people
 - work with health and education
 - work closely with iwi and Pacific providers



Create a better future for each young person

- > We will ensure:
 - > children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making
 - > underlying causes of offending are identified and addressed
 - > FGCs consider whether parenting, mentoring or AoD programmes are appropriate for the young person
 - > young person has safe living environment, and FGC considers if parents should attend parenting education
 - > plans focus on purposeful activity, education, training or employment.

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Victims engaged and supported

- > We will:
 - > ensure victims are invited to attend FGC
 - > give other options if they can't attend
 - > keep victims informed about the young person's progress
 - > ensure any reparation payments are kept on track
 - > seek victim's feedback, to assess our services.

