

Christchurch City Council

Youth Policy Study

Report of the Youth Strategy Working Party to the Christchurch City Council



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1. Executive Summary

In 1996 the Council decided to develop a Youth Strategy to further develop and direct the Council's existing commitment to young people. In 1997 a Youth Strategy Working Group was convened to oversee the development of the Youth Strategy. This group assisted Council staff in defining the scope and nature of the consultation process. The Working Party decided that the Council should consult with young people, community groups and government organisations.

The purpose of this consultation was to find out what the main issues are for Christchurch young people (aged 13-25 years), how these could be addressed and what the City Council's role should be in addressing them. The consultation was carried out from September 1997 to February 1998. The main recommendations from the consultation can be summarised as follows:

 That the City Council should work towards developing a city where:

- ◇ Young people and their contributions are valued
- ◇ The diversity of young people is recognised and celebrated
- ◇ Young people are included in decision making
- ◇ Young people have access to the information and resources required to meet their needs in the areas of:
 - ◇ Health, safety and wellbeing
 - ◇ Physical environment and design
 - ◇ Entertainment and recreation
 - ◇ Education and training
 - ◇ Employment
 - ◇ Family

 In working towards these outcomes the Christchurch City Council should have the following roles:

- ◇ To ensure that young people are taken into account in the Council's activities
- ◇ To advocate on behalf of, and with, young people

- ◇ To resource, provide and support services for young people in partnership with other agencies where appropriate
- ◇ To be a co-ordinator, with the community, of activities which provide for young people

The Working Party incorporated these recommended roles and activities into a draft *Christchurch Youth Policy and Strategy* (which became part of the larger *Draft Report of the Youth Strategy Working Party*). This draft was circulated to Community Boards and Study participants for comment and then an amended version was recommended to the Council for adoption (through the Community Services Standing Committee). The Council accepted the *Report of the Youth Strategy Working Party*. The Council amended the title of the one page draft *Christchurch Youth Policy and Strategy* to *Christchurch City Council Youth Policy* and agreed it should replace the 1992 Youth Policy (see page 27 for a full size copy of the Policy).

Christchurch City Council Youth Policy

The Christchurch City Council is committed to developing, supporting and promoting initiatives which positively contribute to the safety and wellbeing of young people, their families and communities.

Outcomes:

The Christchurch City Council will work towards developing a city where:

- ✘ Young people's views and contributions to their families and their communities are valued
- ✘ Young people are cherished and their diversity is recognised, acknowledged and celebrated
- ✘ The views of young people are sought and taken into account in the development of the Council's policies and activities
- ✘ Young people have access to the information and resources required to meet their needs in the areas of:

- ✘ Health, safety and wellbeing
- ✘ Physical environment and design
- ✘ Entertainment and recreation
- ✘ Education and training
- ✘ Employment
- ✘ Family

Scope:

All Christchurch people aged 13-25 years, recognising that there are varying needs within this age group.

Roles:

In working towards these outcomes the Christchurch City Council will have the following roles:

- ✘ To ensure that the views and needs of young people are taken into account in Council activities
- ✘ To advocate on behalf of, and with, young people
- ✘ To resource, provide and support services for young people in partnership with other agencies where appropriate
- ✘ To be a co-ordinator, with the community, of activities which provide for young people

Note: An action plan for this document will be developed annually for implementation.

2. Introduction and Background

The City Council has extensive involvement in community issues. This involvement is increasingly directed by the Community Development and Social Wellbeing Policy (adopted by the Council in 1997 - see Appendix I). This Policy articulates the Council's intentions regarding its roles in promoting social objectives.

In 1992 the Council adopted a Youth Policy which set out the Council's commitment to young people and determined the direction of work carried out by Council officers on youth issues (see Appendix II). Until the present time, the main roles of the Council have been co-ordinating and supporting community groups working with young people, and advocating to policy makers on youth issues. The Council is also involved in providing library and employment services. In 1996 the Council decided to further promote the interests of young people by employing a Youth Advocate (this followed the appointment of a Children's Advocate in 1995) and developing a Youth Strategy. The purpose of developing a Youth Strategy was to further develop and direct the Council's existing commitment to young people. The Council agreed that the development of the Youth Strategy would follow three phases; development, consultation and implementation. The Youth Advocate (appointed in February 1998) will have the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the Youth Strategy.

✠ Youth Strategy in a Wider Context

In establishing the specific roles the City Council should fulfil with regard to youth issues it is important to acknowledge the large number of initiatives already in place to promote the interests of young people. These range from the employment of a Youth Law Worker with the Christchurch Community Law Centre and a Co-ordinator of the Canterbury Youth Workers' Collective to the development of the new Health and Physical Well-being Curriculum soon to be implemented in schools. A significant amount of research into the experiences and needs of young people has also been carried out. Two recent examples of this are research by the Office of the Commissioner for Children

on awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ and research by Healthlink South on youth mental health².

In working towards the development of a Youth Strategy the City Council decided to work within this wide context of existing community and government activity to determine its own specific role. This is so existing initiatives are acknowledged and supported and also so a realistic idea of the Council's functions can be determined and put in place. Statistical information from the Census and other sources is also available to guide future developments (see Appendix III for a brief overview). This consideration of the Council's role in a wider community context guided the development of the Youth Strategy.

This document sets out the findings of the consultation process and summarises the roles that participants recommend that the Council plays in addressing the issues raised. It also describes the roles and activities the Council has agreed to undertake by adopting the Christchurch Council Youth Policy (1998).

¹ Aiomanu, K. & Campbell, J. (1997). *Is it rhetoric or reality? - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Christchurch Perspective*. 6A Incorporated Charitable Trust and the Commissioner for Children (Draft).

² Moore, R. (1997). *Youth mental health promotion including suicide prevention - a public health perspective*. Public Health Service. Healthlink South.

3. Development of the Youth Strategy Study

In 1997 a Working Party was formed of City Councillors, Christchurch Youth Councillors, Council officers and representatives from community agencies knowledgeable in youth issues. This group developed the structure of the consultation process which would be undertaken to form the Youth Strategy Study. The group decided that the Council should consult with:

- ◇ Young people (aged 13-25 years)³
- ◇ Community groups
- ◇ Government organisations

The purpose of this consultation was to find out what the main issues are for Christchurch young people, how these could be addressed and what the City Council's role should be in addressing them.

The Working Party also decided to seek information about the roles relating to young people which are currently being fulfilled by community and government organisations.

The Working Party met in small groups to determine the scope of the Youth Strategy Consultation. It decided that the consultation should cover six main areas which were defined as follows:

³ The 13-25 years age range was chosen to fit (at the lower end) with the Council's Strategy for Children and (at the upper end) with guidelines provided by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and other bodies.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing including basic needs being met.

Physical environment and design

The perception of the environment as well as the physical environment itself.

Entertainment

What you do outside work/education. Entertainment is seen as being fairly passive and recreation as active.

Education and training

'Institutions of social and academic learning', including a broad spectrum of school, peers, family and training opportunities.

Employment

Is generally for money, but also includes voluntary work or bartering. It relates to later career opportunities and gives signals about what is valued and what is not. Unemployment is a negative word - society makes judgements about skills, discipline and lack of a 'work ethic'.

Family

Encompasses many different family structures. Families are influenced by social pressures, culture, gangs and socio-economic factors.

The Working Party acknowledged that there would be significant overlap in the issues raised under each of these headings.

✠ 4. Consultation Process⁴

✠ Young People

A researcher was contracted to carry out focus group interviews with groups of young people aged 13-25 years. The purpose of this was to gain ideas from a range of young people rather than to try and obtain a representative sample of opinions. The researcher facilitated a discussion with each group about the main issues for young people and what they saw as the Council's role in addressing these (see Appendix IV).

Interviews were carried out between December 1997 and February 1998. They were typically one and a half hours in length and the interviewer used a dictaphone to record the discussion which was later transcribed. Participants in the focus groups were each given a double movie pass as a gesture of thanks for their contribution.

The following groups took part in the consultation process:

- ◇ Actionworks clients
- ◇ CCS (formerly Crippled Children's Society)
- ◇ Christchurch Youth Council
- ◇ GLADYS (Gay, Lesbian Advocacy Youth Services)
- ◇ Junior and senior secondary school students
- ◇ Pacific Island Youth Council
- ◇ Secondary school students with English as a Second Language
- ◇ Tertiary students (University of Canterbury)
- ◇ TOPs course students (YMCA)
- ◇ Youth Service Corps members (Youth and Cultural Development Society)

⁴ In this context the term 'consultation' refers to seeking community views rather than to fulfilling any statutory requirement. The Council adopted a *Seeking Community Views Policy* in December 1997.

✠ Community Groups

The following community groups were approached by the Community Adviser - Youth to take part in an informal interview. These groups all have a co-ordinating or overview function. The response rate was good although some groups chose not to participate (groups marked with * took part).

- ◇ Association of Canterbury Youth Groups*
- ◇ Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce*
- ◇ Canterbury Youth Workers Collective*
- ◇ Child and Family Support Network*
- ◇ Christchurch Safer Community Council*
- ◇ Community Employment Initiatives Group*
- ◇ Council of Christian Social Services
- ◇ Council of Social Services*
- ◇ Disabled Persons' Assembly*
- ◇ Ecumenical Youth Leaders' Group*
- ◇ Ethnic Council
- ◇ New Zealand Association of Adolescent Health and Development*
- ◇ New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
- ◇ Pacific Island Executive Council⁵
- ◇ Refugee and New Migrants Forum
- ◇ Secondary School Counsellors*
- ◇ Secondary Schools' Principals Association
- ◇ Te Runaka Ki Otautahi O Kai Tahu
- ◇ Te Runanga O Nga Maata Waka
- ◇ Welfare Rights Network Forum
- ◇ Youth at risk networking group
- ◇ Youth Mental Health Networking and Liaison Group*

⁵ The Pacific Island Executive Council preferred to delegate responsibility for responding to the Pacific Island Youth Council (see Young People under Consultation Process).

Interviews were carried out by the Community Adviser - Youth between September and November 1997 (See the interview schedule in Appendix V). The areas covered in the interview depended on the interest areas of the group participating and on the time available. Each group was given the opportunity to focus on areas of particular relevance to its activities. The Community Adviser - Youth explained the consultation process and the purpose of developing a Youth Strategy before the interview began. Interviews took between one and three hours and were recorded in note form by the interviewer (and in one case by a member of the group being interviewed). The roles of the participating community agencies in addressing the issues raised in the interview are summarised in Appendix VI.

Government Organisations

The following government organisations were sent a letter explaining the Youth Strategy process and a copy of the Youth Strategy Questionnaire to complete in September 1997 (groups marked with * took part) (see Appendix VII).

- ◇ Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand*
- ◇ Career Service
- ◇ Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service*
- ◇ Community Employment Group*
- ◇ Community Funding Agency
- ◇ Creative New Zealand
- ◇ Crown Public Health
- ◇ Department of Conservation
- ◇ Department of Corrections*
- ◇ Department of Internal Affairs*
- ◇ Education and Training Support Agency*
- ◇ Health and Disability Commissioner*
- ◇ Hillary Commission for Sport, Fitness and Leisure*
- ◇ Housing New Zealand
- ◇ Human Rights Commission*
- ◇ Income Support Service*

- ◇ Inland Revenue Department
- ◇ Ministry for the Environment*
- ◇ Ministry of Education*
- ◇ Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
- ◇ Ministry of Youth Affairs
- ◇ New Qualifications Authority
- ◇ New Zealand Employment Service
- ◇ Office of the Commissioner for Children*
- ◇ Police*
- ◇ Race Relations Office
- ◇ Southern Regional Health*
- ◇ Te Puni Kokiri
- ◇ Transit New Zealand

A reminder letter was sent to those organisations which had not replied in December 1997. Some of these organisations indicated that their work was not sufficiently relevant to youth issues in Christchurch to enable them to take part. The roles of the participating government organisations in addressing the issues covered in the questionnaire are summarised in Appendix VIII.

✦ 5. Overview of the Consultation

The following section is a brief summary of the consultation with community agencies, government organisations and young people. The full summary of responses is attached as Appendix IX. The roles of the participating community and government organisations are described in Appendix VI and Appendix VIII respectively.

An explanation of the meaning of each heading (as established by the Working Party) is given at the start of each section. It is acknowledged that many issues overlap two or more headings and the six sections should be read together to gain an overall picture of the consultation.

✦ Health, safety and wellbeing

The Working Party members defined this as physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. They included basic needs being met (including safety) as part of wellbeing.

✦ What are the health safety and wellbeing issues for young people?

✦ *Attitudes toward and understanding of young people*

✦ *Basic needs not met*

✦ *Crime*

✦ *Drug and alcohol issues*

✦ *Funding - not enough or misdirected*

✦ *Mental health*

✦ *Pressures on young people*

✦ *School/education issues*

✦ *Unsafe places and behaviours*

✦ *Unstable families*

☒ How could these issues be addressed?

☒ *Challenge some current policies*

☒ *Co-ordination*

☒ *Education and change in attitude*

☒ *Funding*

☒ *New services*

☒ What issues affect the access young people have to services related to health, safety and wellbeing?

☒ *Cost*

☒ *Issues about existing services*

☒ *Knowledge*

☒ *Physical access*

☒ How could access to health, safety and wellbeing services be improved?

☒ *Schools*

☒ *Transport*

☒ *Where young people are/ appropriateness*

☒ What role should the Christchurch City Council have in addressing the issues raised about health safety and wellbeing?

☒ *Encourage community providers*

☒ *Ensure Council events are appropriate for young people*

☒ *Facilitate, co-ordinate and provide an overview*

☒ *Provide leadership*

☒ *Research and advocate*

☒ *Resource/ provide*

✦ Physical environment and design

The Working Party members defined this as including the perception of the environment as well as the physical environment itself.

✦ What are the physical environment and design issues for young people?

✦ *Places for young people*

✦ *Conflict between different age groups*

✦ *Planning issues*

✦ *Safety*

✦ How could these issues be addressed?

✦ *Co-ordination*

✦ *New services*

✦ *Safety/ education*

✦ *Take young people into account in decision making*

✦ What issues affect the access young people have to aspects of the physical environment?

✦ *Mobility*

✦ *Self*

✦ How could access to aspects of the physical environment be improved?

✦ *Transport*

✦ What role should the Christchurch City Council have in addressing the issues raised about the physical environment?

✦ *Provide resources and advocate*

✦ *Take young people's views into account when planning*

✦ Entertainment and recreation

The Working Party members defined this as 'what you do outside work/education'. They see entertainment as being fairly passive and recreation as active.

✦ What are the entertainment and recreation issues for young people?

✦ *Appropriateness*

✦ *Gaps in services*

✦ *Lack of resources*

✦ How could these issues be addressed?

✦ *More opportunities*

✦ *Publicity*

✦ *Resources*

✦ What role should the Christchurch City Council have in addressing the issues raised about entertainment and recreation?

✦ *Facilitate youth input and access*

✦ *Liaise with commercial providers*

✦ *Provide information*

✦ *Provide services*

✦ Education and training

The Working Party members defined this topic as involving 'institutions of social and academic learning', including a broad spectrum of school, peers, family and training opportunities.

✦ What are the education and training issues for young people?

✦ *Attitudes of young people*

✦ *Attitudes towards young people*

✦ *Employment*

✦ *Home environment*

✦ *Income*

✦ *Relevant and sufficient education and training*

✦ *Truancy and suspension*

✦ How could these issues be addressed?

✦ *Links to employment*

✦ *More opportunities and resources*

✦ *Schools to change*

✦ What issues affect the access young people have to education and training opportunities?

✦ *Cost*

✦ *Decreasing choices*

✦ *Family*

✦ *Self*

✦ How could access to education and training services be improved?

Systems better geared to meeting needs

✦ What role should the Christchurch City Council have in addressing the issues raised about education and training?

✦ *Advocate*

✦ *Co-ordinate*

✦ *Involve young people*

✦ *Provide?*

✦ *Role model*

✦ Employment

The Working Party members defined employment as generally being for money, but also included voluntary work or bartering. It relates to later career opportunities and gives signals about what is valued and what is not. Unemployment was mentioned as being a negative word - society makes judgements about skills, discipline and lack of a 'work ethic'.

✦ What are the employment issues for young people?

✦ *Barriers to employment*

✦ *Economic development*

✦ *Expectations*

✦ *Income and the Employment Contracts Act*

✦ *Lack of work ethic*

✦ *Links with education*

✦ *Not enough jobs*

✦ *Training for employment*

✦ *Voluntary work - what is work?*

✦ How could these issues be addressed?

✦ *Address relationship between education and employment*

✦ *Increased opportunities*

✦ *Prevent exploitation*

☒ What issues affect the access young people have to employment opportunities?

✧ *Basic needs not met*

✧ *Changes to work*

✧ *Information*

✧ *Personal issues*

✧ *Physical access issues*

☒ How could access to employment opportunities be improved?

✧ *Education*

✧ *Employment promoted for people with disabilities*

✧ *More opportunities*

✧ *Support young people*

☒ What role should the Christchurch City Council have in addressing the issues raised about employment?

✧ *Advocate*

✧ *Facilitate*

✧ *Resource*

✧ *Role model*

✧ *Value young people*

✦ Family

The Working Party members defined this topic as encompassing many different family structures. They saw families being influenced by social pressures, culture, gangs and socio-economic factors.

✦ What are the family issues for young people?

✦ *Abuse*

✦ *Basic needs*

✦ *Pressures on families*

✦ How could these issues be addressed?

✦ *Community support*

✦ *Initiatives which support families being together*

✦ *More resources and services*

✦ *Parenting*

✦ *Schools*

✦ What role should the Christchurch City Council have in addressing the issues raised about family?

✦ *Advocate*

✦ *Encourage community and families*

✦ *Facilitate/co-ordinate*

✦ *Provide*

✦ *Support*

✠ 6. Recommendations for the Council from the Consultation

The information collected during the consultation process was presented to the Working Party in February 1998. A sub-group of the Working Party then developed a one page *Draft Youth Policy and Strategy* taking into account the main recommendations from the consultation material. These recommendations relate to the main outcomes participants hoped could be achieved for Christchurch young people and the roles the participants considered appropriate for the Council in achieving these outcomes.

✠ Outcomes

There are five main outcomes which describe the kind of city the participants in the consultation want to see for Christchurch young people. They had views not only about what the city should try to achieve, but also the activities which could enable them to be achieved.

✠ Young people's views and contributions to their families and their communities are valued

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Young people are encouraged and supported to seek help when they need it.
- ◇ Young people have access to adequate income
- ◇ Young people and youth activities are welcomed in the central city

✠ Young people are cherished and their diversity is recognised, acknowledged and celebrated

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Schools value all kinds of ability and interest
- ◇ Youth services are culturally appropriate
- ◇ Young people with disabilities are actively catered for by youth services

✠ The views of young people are sought and taken into account in the development of the Council's policies and activities

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Young people are involved in planning events
- ◇ Young people are consulted when new services are developed

✠ Young people have access to the information and resources required to meet their needs in the areas of:

- ✠ Health, safety and wellbeing
- ✠ Physical environment and design
- ✠ Entertainment and recreation
- ✠ Education and training
- ✠ Employment
- ✠ Family

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Schools develop better reference points for young people with problems
- ◇ There are adequate transport services for young people
- ◇ Young people are protected in employment situations

✠ Roles

There are four main roles which are commonly recommended to the Council in the consultation material. These roles are entirely in keeping with the Youth Policy adopted by the Council in 1992. They are (in general terms):

✠ To ensure that the views and needs of young people are taken into account in the Council's activities

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Consult with young people on planning issues which affect them (such as the use of public space)
- ◇ Involve young people in planning on youth related services (such as the skateboard park and entertainment opportunities)

✠ To advocate on behalf of, and with, young people

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Lobby central government on youth issues (such as the minimum wage and the provision of alternative schooling)
- ◇ Work with Christchurch youth service providers (including schools and employment services) to ensure they meet the needs of young people

✠ To resource, provide and support services for young people in partnership with other agencies where appropriate

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Ensure entertainment and recreation services are available and accessible to young people
- ◇ Fund and encourage initiatives which meet the needs of young people (such as youth work agencies, courses for parents and young people and youth events)

✠ To be a co-ordinator, with the community, of activities which provide for young people

Examples from the consultation:

- ◇ Facilitate forums to promote a co-ordinated approach to youth issues
- ◇ Provide links between the various sectors working with young people (such as social service agencies, schools and businesses)

✠ Final Policy

The *Draft Report of the Youth Strategy Working Party* was distributed for feedback from participants and Community Boards in April 1998. This feedback was taken into account in the final *Youth Policy and Strategy* recommended to the Council for adoption in June 1998. The Council accepted the *Report of the Youth Strategy Working Party* containing the one page *Christchurch Youth Policy and Strategy* and thanked the Working Party members for their contribution to this project. The Council amended the title of the one page *Christchurch Youth Policy and Strategy* document to *Christchurch City Council Youth Policy* and agreed it should replace the 1992 Youth Policy. This one page policy is now published in *Report of the Youth Strategy Working Party* (this document) entitled *Christchurch City Council Youth Policy Study* (see next page).

YOUTH POLICY

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL

The Christchurch City Council is committed to developing, supporting and promoting initiatives which positively contribute to the safety and wellbeing of young people, their families and communities.

OUTCOMES :

The Christchurch City Council will work towards developing a city where:

- Young people's views and contributions to their families and their communities are valued
- Young people are cherished and their diversity is recognised, acknowledged and celebrated
- The views of young people are sought and taken into account in the development of the Council's policies and activities
- Young people have access to the information and resources required to meet their needs in the areas of:
 - Health, safety and wellbeing
 - Physical environment and design
 - Entertainment and recreation
 - Education and training
 - Employment
 - Family

SCOPE :

All Christchurch people aged 13-25 years, recognising that there are varying needs within this age group.

ROLES :

In working towards these outcomes the Christchurch City Council will have the following roles:

- To ensure that the views and needs of young people are taken into account in Council activities
- To advocate on behalf of, and with, young people
- To resource, provide and support services for young people in partnership with other agencies where appropriate
- To be a coordinator, with the community, of activities which provide for young people

Note: An action plan for this document will be developed annually for implementation