

Message from the Minister

Since my last message to you back in May, there's been significant progress toward developing programmes which target New Zealand's most serious young offenders.

We've recently announced greater detail about a broadened approach to the Fresh Start for Young Offenders package of initiatives. We all know that early intervention is the best approach when dealing with youth offending. As well as continuing to target serious and persistent young offenders, Fresh Start will also target children and young people at the lower end of offending, or at risk of getting into trouble.

The new initiatives include structured activity programmes, Court-Supervised Camp Programmes aimed at diverting young people away from more serious offending, and a Fresh Start Innovation Fund that aims to provide a resource for communities to deliver their own promising solutions to local offending problems.

Along with the broadened approach to Fresh Start for Young Offenders, Prime Minister John Key also detailed a new range of holiday options for young people, called the 'Break-Away' package. These initiatives give young people more opportunities to stay on track, through structured holiday programmes, mentoring, and role modelling.

30,000 young people will be able to access additional places in school-holiday programmes across the country, giving kids some structure to their holidays, and motivation so they don't go off the rails and get into trouble.

I'm particularly excited about the Prime Minister's Programme, which will reward and foster achievement for around 100 disadvantaged kids through week-long holiday programmes involving structured cultural and sporting activities. Well known and respected New Zealanders from a variety of fields will offer leadership and mentoring. The aim is to put these youngsters in touch with inspiring and motivational leaders, and show them another view of the world.

Residential respite camps will also be offered to 500 children and young people who are cared for by foster parents, extended whānau and grandparents, who may need a break over the holiday period.

This newsletter outlines progress and development of the Fresh Start initiatives outlined in the May update, as well as more details about the newly announced youth justice initiatives.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support and enthusiasm for the Fresh Start approach, and the part that many of you have played in the development of the programmes.



Hon. Paula Bennett
Minister for Social Development and Employment

Update on Fresh Start initiatives

Mentoring

Mentoring plays a part in many of the Fresh Start for young offenders programmes being developed to target serious and persistent young offenders, and address the underlying causes to offending behaviour.

There are few mentoring programmes currently available that specifically meet the needs of this challenging group of young people. We set up a focus group to identify what mentoring for serious young offenders might look like. This was based on what we know works well for mentoring in general, building on our limited New Zealand experience of mentoring this target group.

The focus group was made up of representatives from partner agencies and NGOs, including Ann Dunphy, Efeso Collins and Bev Cassidy-MacKenzie, The Youth Mentoring Trust; Steve Boxer, Edge Life Skills Limited; Jo-Anne Wilkinson, Foundation of Youth Development; Dave Marshall, Big Brothers Big Sisters of New Zealand; Richard Aston, Big Buddy; David Robertson, Brothers in Arms Charitable Trust; Maania Niha, Awarua Social and Health Services; Jenny Riini, Raukura Waikato Social Services; and representatives from the Ministry of Social Development.

The group identified the key elements for a mentoring programme to be effective with serious young offenders. Programme specs are currently being developed, and will be trialled for several months before being rolled out nationwide by July 2010.

Parenting programmes

A similar focus group, involving parenting experts and NGOs, has been established to inform and support the development of parenting education programmes. The group have met twice to shape up the Fresh Start parenting programmes for parents of young offenders, and young offenders who are parents themselves.

The focus group includes: Prof. Matt Sanders and Dr Ian Lambie from the University of Auckland; Lee Daniels, Te Aho Tapu Trust Psychological Services; Rob Woodley, Genesis Trust; Mere Ruru, Te Ikaroa Rangatahi Social Services Inc; Bill Takerei, Otago Boards Forum; Losila Dot Greenfield, Y2Y Trust; Russell Martin, Open Home Fresh Perspectives; Jeff Saunders, Relationship Services Whakawhānau; and representatives from the Ministry of Social Development.

Extended orders

We're also working with providers and the New Zealand Defence Force, looking at the military-style activity camp and supervision with activity programmes under the proposed extended orders. The seven national supervision with activity providers came together recently to start designing service specs and identify how mentoring and parenting education will be incorporated into the extended orders. Elements of the programmes will be tested over the next few months.



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FRESH START

In September we will be concept-testing the military-style activity camp programme. It will begin with a seven night wilderness camp run jointly by the NZ Army and residence staff. On their return to the residence, the young people will continue to participate in a structured programme involving a further three weeks of input from the army, as well as intensive work by the residential staff. The residence based programme will introduce the young person to therapeutic interventions such as vocational or educational programmes, drug and alcohol counselling, and life skills development.

Selected NGOs will establish relationships with the young person while they are in the residence and also work with their family and offer interventions to family members. When the young person leaves the residence, the NGO will continue to offer mentoring support to help the young person as they settle back into the community.

Both the supervision with activity programmes and military-style activity camp programmes will have a strong emphasis on self-discipline, personal responsibility and community values.

New initiatives for young offenders

The recently announced expanded Fresh Start package introduced new programmes aimed at motivating change, and building strengths and positive relationships, to help young people coming through the youth justice system.

This gives us a much wider range of options to respond to the different needs of young people, from those dabbling in criminal behaviour, who need a bit of motivation and guidance to prevent them from taking those next steps, to those involved in really serious offending who need a much more intensive, sustained intervention.

The new initiatives include:

Court-Supervised Camp Programmes

200 programme places in Court supervised programmes as part of Court ordered family group conference plans. The programmes aim at motivating change in young offenders through adventure activities and community based youth development programmes. They will be phased in, with the first 50 places ready by April 2010.

Fresh Start Innovation Fund

This fund gives communities resources to deliver their own solutions to local youth offending problems, by targeting young people who are at risk of getting into a cycle of crime, particularly young Māori who are over-represented in the youth justice system. We want to encourage local innovation, by supporting organisations that have capacity to do more, or want to do things in a different or new way. About 230 programme places will be available, with funding accessed through the Ministry of Social Development. The first 50 places will be available from April 2010.



A large, stylized graphic of the words 'FRESH START' in a bold, hand-drawn, black font. The letters are slightly irregular and have a textured, brush-like appearance. The background behind the text is a light blue-grey wash.

Community Youth Development Programmes

Children and young people who are at risk of offending, or who are first time or minor offenders, will have access to community based activity programmes to help them learn new skills and develop constructive interests. Mentoring will be a crucial component of these programmes, and intensive case-management and parenting support will be offered to help reduce risk factors associated with offending.

These programmes will help around 1000 young people build strengths and positive relationships, and stay connected to their families, schools and communities. The programmes will be developed by building additional capacity and coverage from existing providers, including Police-led youth development programmes.

What happens next?

We have received a lot of enquiries from people wanting more information about how they can be involved, how they can apply for funding, and when and how we'll be selecting programme providers.

We're currently finalising details around programme specifications, criteria, funding and contracting processes, and identifying where there are gaps in service provision. We're planning a series of regional forums, to let providers know more about the initiatives and how they can be involved, and will have further details about these forums in our next newsletter, due out by the end of this month.

In the meantime, if you'd like to know more about what's required in the delivery of effective programmes for young offenders, the Youth Offending Services Effectiveness Checklist (YOSEC) available at www.courts.govt.nz is a useful starting point. YOSEC is based on a review of research into 'what works' to reduce offending by children and young people. It's used to help service providers assess the effectiveness of their programmes, and prepare plans for improvements where these are needed.

We will continue to keep you informed about progress and developments through these updates, and information about the Fresh Start and Break-Away initiatives is available on the MSD website www.msd.govt.nz. If you have any questions, please contact the project team on freshstart@cyf.govt.nz, or Bernadine MacKenzie, who is leading the Fresh Start for young offenders project.