



Profile report

Youth Guarantee Pathways and Profiles project

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The Collaborative for Research in Training in Youth Health
and Development

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Executive summary



Introduction

The Youth Guarantee Pathways and Profiles Project (YGPP) gathers the experiences and perspectives of young people in government-funded Youth Guarantee Fees Free training programmes, and their education providers. The project explores the value of Youth Guarantee for young people and whether it contributes to sustainable outcomes.

As the project develops it has become very apparent that Youth Guarantee is just one of the many experiences which influence young peoples' transitions and pathways. It had a significant positive impact on the lives of most participants during their engagement with the programme; however, its ongoing impact varies according to the wider context of each individual transition. This report identifies the general characteristics, contexts and experiences of Youth Guarantee learners at the participating education providers and highlights key themes which contribute to the successful transitions of these young people.

The first phase of the project involved the collection of data from 437 learners through surveys and interviews, and from 22 staff through focus groups. Data on learner outcomes was collected from their education providers. The second phase explores young people's pathways and longer-term outcomes after Youth Guarantee. We interviewed 63 young



people at the start of their Youth Guarantee programmes and will track these young people until the end of 2018, gathering their stories through one-on-one interviews.

Results

Youth Guarantee learner characteristics and experiences

Student participants were aged 15-19 years, with a good proportion of Māori and Pasifika learners, and slightly more females than males taking part. Most participants lived at home with one or both parents and reported that whānau and friends were their main sources of support. Participants also received support from other services such as Youth Service, counsellors and school careers advisors. There was a change in the types of support services accessed by participants from entry to exit, and exit survey participants reported accessing fewer services overall. Some participants reported issues with physical and mental health; interviews provided insight into the impact that these issues had on participants' transitions and experiences at school and in Youth Guarantee. Participants' self-esteem, measured through the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, increased overall from entry to exit.

The majority of participants did not complete secondary school and reported negative school experiences. Factors identified by participants as positively or negatively influencing their time at school, and their reasons for leaving school were related to issues with learning, relationships and behaviour. Friends and whānau were a positive influence on participants' time at school, while poor relationships, issues with learning, bullying, truancy and getting into trouble contributed to negative experiences at school and participants' decisions to leave school. About three-quarters of participants had some experience with employment, and these experiences had some influence on participants' decisions about the future. Having a source of income was important to a number of participants, and most reported receiving some form of income. Money from family and wages from employment were the most common sources of income for participants.

It appeared that most participants either had relatively short transitions between school and Youth Guarantee, or were not significantly disengaged during their transitions¹. From the interview participants we learned that a number undertook other education or were employed during their transitions. We also learned that those interview participants who experienced long-term Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) had less access to support overall and tended to report more issues related to drugs, alcohol and transience compared with participants who had not experienced long-term NEET. Participants were motivated to enrol in Youth Guarantee to gain qualifications and skills for employment or further study, most planned to work or continue their education after Youth Guarantee.

¹ Significant disengagement in this context refers to young people who are long-term NEET (a continuous spell not engaged in education, employment or training for six months or more). Young people often experience short spells of NEET so this is not an appropriate measure of disengagement. (Earle, 2016b; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, 2013)



These plans ranged from well-developed step-by-step plans to vague ideas about possible future pathways.

Experiences of the Youth Guarantee Programme

Overall, the feedback from participants about their experience of Youth Guarantee was extremely positive. Participants felt well-supported; they reported positive relationships with their tutors, other staff and students and enjoyed the learning style and environment at their Youth Guarantee providers. They reported positive effects from Youth Guarantee on their confidence, motivation and literacy and numeracy skills, and said that as well as Youth Guarantee staff, friends and whānau had a positive influence on their experience. Bullying, mental health issues, lack of attendance and the misuse of drugs and alcohol had negative effects on participants' experience of Youth Guarantee. A number of interview participants, however, reported that some of these behaviours and issues had improved over time due to their involvement with Youth Guarantee.

Quantitative analysis examined participants' achievement (defined in this study as achieving NCEA Level 2) on the Youth Guarantee programme and the factors related to this. This analysis indicated that attending a high decile school, having 14 credits or more on enrolment in Youth Guarantee, and having a plan for their next step, increased participants' likelihood of achieving NCEA Level 2 through their Youth Guarantee programme.

Pathways after the Youth Guarantee Programme

Interviews with participants six months and one year after their departure from their Youth Guarantee programme found them pursuing diverse pathways, and a number had changed direction since their exit interview. Most participants were engaged in some form of education, training or employment, a few had become parents and some were NEET. In conversations about future pathways participants' plans continued to range from well-developed plans to vague ideas, however, the majority of participants were keen to convey a sense of forward momentum, development and control.

Although, in the earlier interviews, many participants spoke of their intention to follow a linear pathway through education or employment upon exiting Youth Guarantee, very few actually did so. Participants experienced transition as an iterative process which was influenced by a variety of factors, including: their access to support and networks; their sense of direction, self-efficacy, self-development and control over their lives; their ideas about which pathways matched their interests, skills and current and future needs; and how well these pathways aligned with what they wanted to be and do in the future.

The effects of these factors on participants' experiences and pathways varied according to individual contexts and challenges. The main themes outlined below provide a framework for understanding the impact of these factors on participants' post-Youth Guarantee transitions.



Main themes

The main themes from the interviews with young people have evolved as more information is collected about their experiences and transitions. The five main themes of *Self-development*, *Control*, *Fit*, *Networks and Support* and *Direction and Stability* represent the common elements of participants' education, employment and transition experiences. The themes encapsulate the iterative process of transition and development experienced by the young people in this project. The theme of *Self-development* recognises participants' desire for growth and access to opportunity, *Control* is about being an active participant in transitions and *Fit* acknowledges participants' need for belonging and their search for alignment between self, current context and planned pathways. *Networks and Support* act as a stable base for participants' transitions and development while *Direction and Stability* provide a sense of purpose and a framework to guide these transitions.

These five themes differ from those discussed in the initial Profile Report. The themes explored in the first report were centred on participants' experiences of Youth Guarantee, and were concerned with what helped and what didn't help in terms of engagement and success. The five new themes take a broader view of participants' experiences, but retain important elements of the initial themes. *Control* has remained a consistent theme throughout the interviews, while the initial theme of *Learning and Achievement* has been broadened to *Self-development* to acknowledge the variety of contexts in which participants learn and succeed. The initial theme of *Connections* and its subthemes, specifically support, positive relationships and belonging, continue to contribute to participants' sense of *Fit*, and influence their access to *Networks and Support*.

Key learnings

This is an ongoing project and at this stage we feel that it is not appropriate to make recommendations about what works best for Youth Guarantee learners. Instead we present five key learnings which, we recommend, should be carefully considered by those involved in the planning and delivery of Youth Guarantee and similar foundation education or youth transitions programmes.

- Many of the factors discussed in this report are interconnected and the impact that they have on young people's lives, experiences and decisions is complex and varied due to diversity in individual characteristics, needs and contexts.
- Consistency of support is extremely important. Support provided through educational interventions should be responsive to the diverse needs of the young people in this cohort. This may involve significant pastoral care and in some cases on-going support is needed.



- Qualifications are important to the young people in this study but the pastoral care that they receive from their Youth Guarantee providers, and the ongoing support of their networks, is equally as important and is essential to their development.
- Participants' skills and capacity for self-development maximise the value of their qualifications. A qualification may open doors for young people but these doors are kept open by the skills and capacity for continued development gained from Youth Guarantee, other education and employment experiences, and access to consistent support.
- Participants experienced transitions in education and employment as an iterative process rather than a linear series of events. This process was closely linked to participants' identity development and influenced their decisions about education and employment pathways.



1. Introduction



The Youth Guarantee Pathways and Profiles Project (YGPP) gathers the perspectives of young people and education providers to explore the sustainable benefits of foundation education for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The project focuses on the experiences and perspectives of learners in government-funded Youth Guarantee Fees-Free (YGFF) training programmes, and seeks to explore in detail the value of YGFF for young people. It is centred on three key research questions:

- What is the profile of young people on the YGFF scheme?
- What are the longer-term effects of educational interventions for this group?
- How do youth participants and service providers perceive the role that education providers and the YGFF scheme play in addressing the educational and employment needs of participants?

YGFF is part of the wider government foundation learning initiative which aims to support young people to succeed in education. It provides school leavers who have few or no qualifications with an option to achieve NCEA Level 1 and 2 and National or New Zealand Certificates at Levels 1-3 on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. The main focus of YGFF is the achievement of NCEA Level 2 as this provides a pathway to further education or



employment². The programme contributes to the better public service target of 85% of 18 year olds having achieved NCEA Level 2 by the end of 2017³.

1.1 Background literature

This project is informed by research which views youth transitions in the context of identity formation, and understands transition as a process rather than an event (Munford & Sanders, 2015; Nairn, Higgins & Sligo, 2012; Vaughan et al, 2006). The project builds on research into young people's experiences of education and transitions in New Zealand including the Competent Children, Competent Learners series (NZCER, 1993-2007), Education and Employment Linkages research programme (Dalziel, Higgins, Vaughan & Phillips, 2007), the Pathways and Prospects project (Vaughan, Roberts & Gardiner, 2006) and Pathways to Resilience project (Sanders & Munford, 2015). It adds to existing research on YGFF and other government initiatives, which have focused on this group of learners, for example ACCESS, Training Opportunities and Youth Training (Educational Attainment Working Group, 2012; Benseman & Tobias, 2003; Earle, 2014, 2015, 2016a; Gordon, Sedgwick, Grey & Marsden, 2014; Mahoney, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2002).

Previous research has shown that young people's transitions from secondary school are diverse and non-linear, and transitions can be particularly challenging for young people with low skills and education (Bibbee, 2013; Higgins, 2012; Vaughan et al., 2006). This transition is seen as a pivotal point in young people's lives as choices and experiences during this time will contribute to the formation of their identities and influence their longer-term pathways (Tertiary Education Commission, 2011; Vaughan, et al., 2006).

The group of young people who access YGFF is perceived to be at risk of becoming NEET (Not engaged in Education, Employment or Training) as many have become disengaged from mainstream education. The impacts of being NEET and disengaged from education, and the relationship between engagement and learning have been explored extensively (Earle, 2016b; Pacheco & Dye, 2013; Wylie, Hipkins & Hodgen, 2008; Zepke & Leach, 2010). There is a wealth of empirical evidence of the wide-ranging benefits of education and the impact that low levels of education can have on youth transitions and long-term outcomes (Loader & Dalgety, 2008; Bibbee, 2013). International research has demonstrated the influence of education on other areas of life, for example, higher levels of education have a positive influence on health outcomes (de Coulon, Meschi, & Yates, 2010) and lower levels of education have been linked to economic hardship and involvement in crime (Heckman, Stixrud & Urzua, 2006). In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education has shown that employment and earnings increase with higher levels of education and qualifications (Earle, 2010; Park, Mahoney, Smart & Smyth, 2014). However, increasing qualification attainment is only part of the solution. Young people

² See <http://www.tec.govt.nz/funding/funding-and-performance/funding/fund-finder/youth-guarantee/> or <http://youthguarantee.net.nz/fees-free/> for more information.

³ <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/bps-boosting-skills-employment>



must also develop soft skills, which facilitate learning and access to employment (Department of Labour, 2012; Zepke & Leach, 2010).

1.2 The current project

The purpose of this project is to find out more about the YGFF learner cohort, their journeys after Youth Guarantee and their longer-term destinations. This will provide information on the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee intervention and allow young people to share their perspectives on the variety of pathways and transitions they experience. It is important to include young people's voices in this area as most data relating to YGFF are quantitative and rely on government performance measures to assess effectiveness. The Education Performance Indicators of course and qualification completion, retention and progression cannot capture the experiences and perspectives of Youth Guarantee learners or the longer-term impact of the programme.

As indicated by the background literature, little is known about the pathways of young people who depart YGFF programmes. Some effort is being made to track these learners through government data sets (Earle, 2016a); however, in order to fully evaluate the role and impact of Youth Guarantee in young people's lives, it is necessary to understand what has shaped their pathways and decisions. This project addresses this gap and it is intended that the data collected will inform improvements in educational provision and outcomes for this group.

This is the first report of the Youth Guarantee Pathways and Profiles Project. The report presents data collected from young people who attended YGFF⁴ programmes at three education providers during 2015. In particular, this report focuses on our first aim to find out more about the young people accessing YGFF by creating a profile, or perhaps a series of profiles, representing the different groups of young people who accessed this programme.

Understanding young people's pathways, and the way they construct their future identities through their experiences and decisions, will provide a more effective basis for a profile of the Youth Guarantee learners in this project. This will give valuable information on the role of YGFF in young people's transitions, which could further our understanding of how to effectively support young people. As we are currently tracking participants for interviews one year after their exit from Youth Guarantee, we do not yet have enough information to create a profile based on their pathways. Therefore, this report provides background information on the young people who participated in this project and introduces key findings and themes which will be developed as more data becomes available.

When reading this report, please take care that you do not over-interpret the data. The data presented in this report are mainly descriptive and at best relational. No cause and effect should be interpreted. The quotes from interview participants included in this report provide

⁴ Throughout this report, we refer to Youth Guarantee or YG. In the context of this report this should be taken as referring to the Youth Guarantee Fees-Free (YGFF) programme and NOT to the wider Youth Guarantee initiative which includes vocational pathways, trades academies and secondary tertiary partnerships.



examples of the diversity in the transition experiences of the young people who are participating in this project. We have included the age, gender and ethnicity of quoted participants along with the quotes to highlight the diversity of the sample. When reading this report please be aware that this demographic information does not infer that certain findings are related only to the participants who share the characteristics of those quoted, unless explicitly stated. The quotes have been selected to convey the complexity of participants' experiences, while also ensuring that participant anonymity is protected. If you have any questions or need further clarification about these data or the interpretations that can be made from them, please contact the research team.

After this introduction, the methods of data collection and analysis are outlined. This is followed by a discussion of the main findings from the student surveys, interviews and Youth Guarantee provider data.



2. Method



2.1 Project context

Participants were recruited from three multi-site providers delivering YGFF programmes. Two Private Training Establishments (PTEs), Community Colleges New Zealand and YMCA, and one Institute of Technology (ITP), Unitec Institute of Technology, took part. These providers have delivery sites in a range of urban and semi-rural locations throughout New Zealand, with 12 sites in the South Island and eight North Island sites. There were differences in the YGFF programmes offered at these providers. Both Community College and YMCA have 44-week open entry programmes, while Unitec offers a semester long programme with intakes for Semester 1 and 2. Community College deliver NCEA Levels 1 and 2 and NZ or National Certificates via vocational programmes, YMCA creates personalised programmes for each individual student based on their needs, and Unitec offered a Level 2 Certificate in Foundation Studies in 2015. At Community College and YMCA most provision ends at Level 2 and learners must move on to other tertiary providers to access higher level qualifications. Unitec students can progress to higher level study within the institution.

2.2 Data collection

Data were collected from a range of sources, with qualitative and quantitative information collected and analysed concurrently. Quantitative information was gathered through two student surveys in 2015 and from student entry and exit data held by providers. Qualitative



data were collected through one-to-one interviews with a percentage of the student survey cohort and from staff focus groups held during 2015 and 2016.

2.2.1 Surveys

All learners who enrolled in YGFF at the participating providers from January to August 2015 were invited to complete an entry survey. Learners from this cohort were later invited to complete an exit survey; these were completed between April 2015 and March 2016. Participants completed the surveys through Survey Monkey in a private space. Providers administered the survey through an online link and the data were received directly by the research team.

The entry survey consisted of 30-38 fixed response questions and one open-ended question and took participants between 15-20 minutes to complete. The exit survey contained 24-26 fixed response questions and two open-ended questions and took between 10-15 minutes to complete. Surveys gathered demographic data, information on learners' school experiences, prior activity, reasons for enrolling in their Youth Guarantee provider, their expectations and experiences of their Youth Guarantee programme and their future plans. The surveys measured participants' self-esteem at entry and exit through the Rosenberg Scale. Although most questions were fixed response, the majority gave participants the option of leaving a comment if they felt the available response options were not relevant to them.

It was intended that all participants who completed the entry survey would complete an exit survey, and vice versa. However, due to student turnover and the transience of some learners this was not manageable. Three hundred and fifty-two learners completed the entry survey and 251 completed the exit survey, with 160 completing both surveys. During quantitative analysis, the data were examined for differences between those with exit data and those without. It was found that a higher proportion of Pākehā and a lower proportion of Māori had exit data available.

2.2.2 Data from providers

Data gathered by the participating YGFF providers for enrolment and reporting purposes were collected to supplement the survey data. These data included, participants' programme entry and exit dates, qualifications on entry, last secondary school attended, prior activity, qualifications achieved on the programme, programme completion information⁵ and progressions from the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Tool.

2.2.3 Interviews

One-to-one semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are being conducted with 20% of the entry survey cohort, these interviews will continue with the same participants until 2018. Two interviews were carried out in 2015; 63 participants took part in the first round of interviews (entry interviews), which were conducted during May 2015. There were 53 participants in the second interviews (exit interviews), which took place between August 2015

⁵ Information on whether participants successfully completed their YGFF programme and participants' reasons for leaving their programme was only available for Community College and Unitec participants.



and January 2016. These interviews asked participants about their previous experiences with education, pathways to YGFF, reasons for enrolling, experiences on their Youth Guarantee programme and their future plans. Each interview was approximately 10 to 20 minutes in length. Sixty of the first-round interviews were face-to-face, and three were conducted via telephone. Face-to-face interviews were held at the education providers in a private space or in a location selected by the participants. From round two onwards, interviews have been either face-to-face or telephone interviews depending on the needs and availability of participants.

Four more rounds of interviews follow the entry and exit interviews, however, data from these will not be included in this report. A third interview was carried out approximately six months after participants left their 2015 Youth Guarantee programme; so far 42 participants have taken part. We are currently conducting the fourth round of interviews, approximately one year after participants' exit from Youth Guarantee, and a further two interviews are planned for the end of 2017 and the end of 2018. These interviews follow up on participants' current activities and transitions and ask about future plans, supports and barriers and the impact of Youth Guarantee.

2.2.4 Staff focus groups

Three focus groups were held with staff from Community College and YMCA during 2015, and Unitec staff took part in a conference call in 2016. In these focus groups, staff discussed their perspectives of YGFF and its value for young people, and how they meet their learners' education and employment needs within the YGFF framework.

2.3 Recruitment and consent

The recruitment process for surveys and interviews, information sheets and the consent process were piloted in 2014 with Youth Guarantee learners from the participating providers who were not re-enrolling in 2015.

The recruitment criteria for survey and interview participants were:

- Aged between 16 -19 years (i.e. eligible for YGFF programmes)
- Enrolled on Level 1 and 2 YGFF programmes
- Attending one of the three Youth Guarantee providers participating in the project.

Survey participants were invited by their education providers to take part and were given an information sheet to read before deciding whether to participate. Participation was voluntary and had no impact on learners' enrolment or achievement at their education providers. Learners who agreed to take part were required to indicate that they had read an online information sheet and gave their consent to participate before they were given access to the survey questions through Survey Monkey. As part of this process, learners gave consent for their enrolment and exit information to be shared with the researchers.



Interview participants were recruited from the entry survey. Learners were given information about the interviews before completing the entry survey and at the end of this survey were able to click through to a separate survey to indicate their interest in participating in interviews. This survey collected learners' contact details and their gender, age and ethnicity. We intended to use this information to ensure diversity of the interview sample; however, the 91 participants who indicated their interest in participating in interviews were representative of the diversity of the survey cohort. We approached the majority of these participants to invite them to participate but were unable to make contact with some, and a few declined to participate after being provided with further information about the interviews. The interviewers contacted participants directly to invite them to participate and ensured that they had access to an information sheet before deciding whether or not to take part. At the first interview, written consent was sought from participants. At each subsequent interview, verbal consent was sought before beginning each interview.

Staff participation in focus groups was voluntary. Staff were nominated by their site manager to take part and were selected based on their role within their organisation, level of experience and availability. Staff were provided with an information sheet about the focus groups and gave verbal and/or written consent to participate.

2.4 Tracking of student participants

All survey participants were identified by their National Student Number (NSN). This enabled entry and exit survey data to be matched, and survey data to be linked to data provided by the Youth Guarantee providers. In keeping with privacy regulations, the researchers did not know who was participating in the surveys. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the education providers to recruit learners for the surveys and give those learners who had completed an entry survey the option of completing an exit survey.

Interview participants were contacted directly by the researchers. At the first interview, participants were asked to provide their contact details and those of two people who the researchers could contact if they were unable to get in touch with the participant for future interviews. Many participants opted to put down their education provider as one of their contacts. Participants have been tracked via the contact details provided and these details have been updated as necessary when participants are re-contacted for interviews. We began with a sample of 63 interview participants and expected some attrition; we hope to retain a sample of approximately 20 participants by the end of 2018.

2.5 Analysis

2.5.1 Quantitative analysis

Entry and exit survey data, and the entry and exit information collected by the participating Youth Guarantee providers were analysed quantitatively. To protect participants' anonymity, any identifying information was removed prior to analysis. Data from providers were added to the survey data prior to analysis, and were matched to survey responses using the



participants' NSNs. The NSNs, which were used to verify responses and match the survey and Youth Guarantee provider data, were then changed to non-identifying research numbers.

Quantitative analysis of surveys and data from providers was carried out by Dr Mark Turner of the Collaborative Trust for Research and Training in Youth Health and Development. Data were entered and analysed using SPSS (software package), and descriptive statistics such as mean, median and percentage were calculated. The data were analysed for differences by ethnicity, gender, age, qualification level and school decile. Differences between groups were calculated using the chi-square test for categorical measures and where appropriate, the t-test or ANOVA (analysis of variance) for continuous measures. Where differences are not reported, this is either because the response number was too low to calculate these effects, or no significant effects were found. As NCEA Level 2 achievement is a central aim of YGFF, a logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of a number of demographic, pre-Youth Guarantee factors and issues during the Youth Guarantee programme on the likelihood of attaining NCEA Level 2 through YGFF programmes. Methods of logistic regression are used to predict the probability of gaining NCEA Level 2 based on a one unit change in an independent variable when all other independent variables are kept constant. The appropriateness of the resulting model was tested by confirming the normality of the standardised residuals with normal probability plots.

Where results are reported as statistically significant, for example "significantly more females than males had NCEA Level 1 or higher when they enrolled on their Youth Guarantee programme", this means that the finding has a 5% (.05) chance of not being true (not really being different). In other words, there is a 95% probability that this difference exists and did not occur by chance.

When something is reported as significant, this means that there really is a difference; significance does not refer to how big that difference is.

2.5.2 Qualitative analysis

The interviews with student participants, focus groups with staff and open-ended survey questions were analysed using thematic analysis. Researchers used this method to identify common themes in the educational experiences and transitions of the young people who participated in the project. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method of analysis which requires in-depth examination of the data to allow common themes to emerge (Boyatzis, 1998). Analysis of interviews also followed the two-directional strategy outlined by Thompson and Holland (2003) who recommend the use of cross-sectional analysis to identify themes and discourses within phases of data collection, and longitudinal analysis to investigate themes and discourses over time.



3. Results



3.1 Who are our learners?

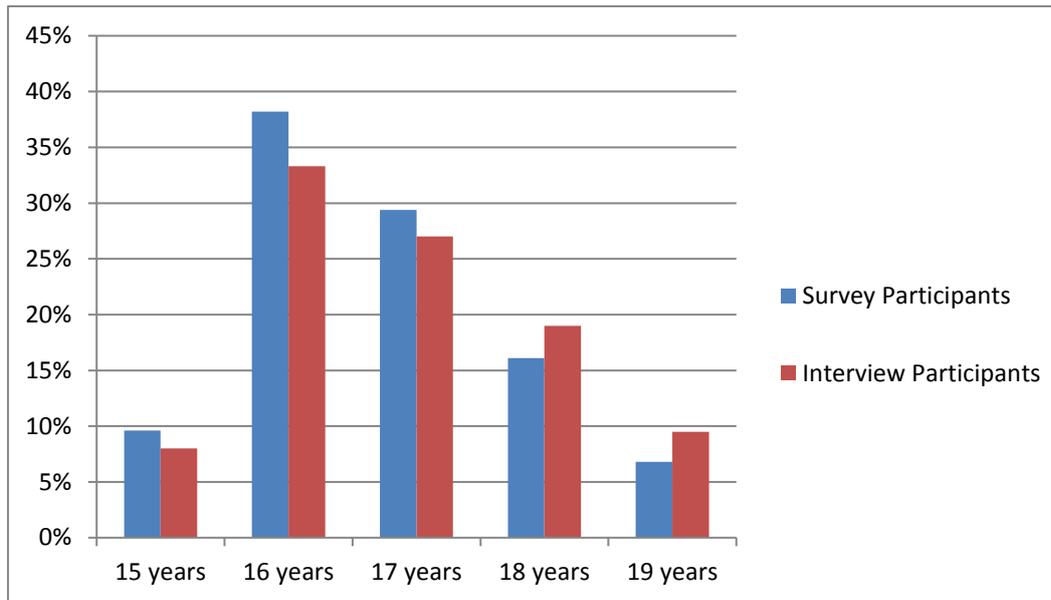
This section reports the basic demographic details of the YGFF learners who participated in the project.

3.1.1 Age

Most survey participants were 16 or 17 years old when they began their YGFF programme. The ages of these participants at the start of their programme ranged from 15.3 to 19.9 years. We do not have information on the age of interview participants when they began their Youth Guarantee programme as these data were not collected; however, the ages of participants at the time of their interview ranged from 15 to 19 years and the majority of participants were 16 or 17 years old at their first interview.



Figure 1: Age of project participants⁶



3.1.2 Gender

There were more female than male participants in both the surveys and interviews. Forty-eight percent of survey participants were male and 52% were female. We included an ‘Other’ category for participants who do not identify as male or female and those who did not share their gender. Some participants specified their gender identity, however this information is not reported due to the low number of respondents in this category. There was a similar gender split among the interview participants, with slightly more females (49.2%) than males (47.6%) taking part in interviews.

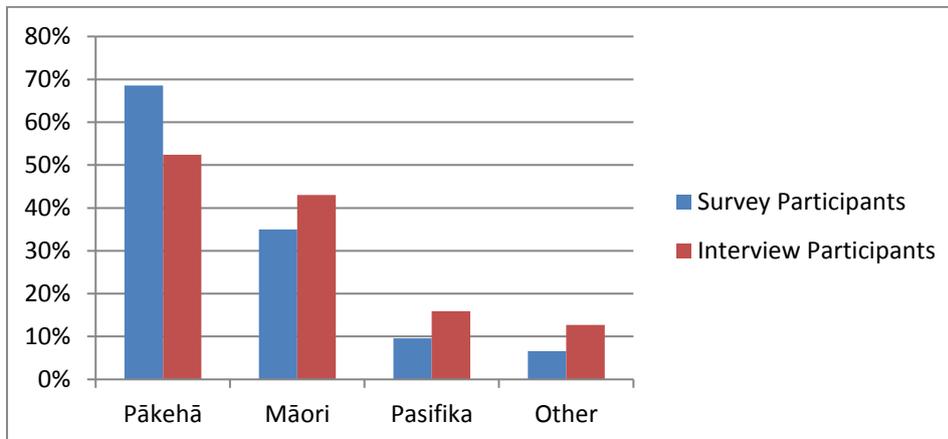
3.1.3 Ethnicity

Participants could choose multiple ethnicities in response to this question, with 21% of survey participants and 24% of interview participants reporting more than one ethnicity. The majority of survey and interview participants reported their ethnicity as New Zealand European; however, a smaller percentage of interview participants reported a Pākehā ethnicity and a higher percentage reported that they were Māori or Pasifika. The ethnicities in the ‘Other’ category included people of North American, Asian, South American, African and European descent.

⁶ Note: Survey participants’ age is taken as their age at the start of their YGFF programme, while for interview participants; their age is recorded as age at first interview. This may account for survey participants appearing to be younger than interview participants.



Figure 2: Ethnicity of project participants⁷



3.1.4 Current living arrangements

The majority of entry and exit participants (67.8%) were living with one or both parents. A closer look at this data showed that across entry and exit participants:

- 23.9% lived with both parents
- 37.1% lived with their mother
- 6.8% lived with their father.

Other living arrangements included living with a partner or de facto, boarding and living with flatmates. The 'Other' category in the table below generally consisted of grandparents, other relatives, family friends and step-parents. There were a few participants who were 'couch surfers' or were homeless.

Table 1: Living arrangements of project participants⁸

| Living situation | Entry participants | Exit participants |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Boarding | 10.5% | 10.4% |
| Flatmates | 6.2% | 12.4% |
| Partner or de facto | 8.5% | 10.8% |
| Other | 17.4% | 14.3% |

Interview participants were not asked directly about their living situations, however, information about living arrangements and the impact that these had on participants' educational experiences and decisions emerged over the course of the interviews. Many participants lived in stable family environments and had the support of parents, siblings

⁷ These participants are counted in more than one ethnic group, so the totals in Fig. 2 do not add to 100.

⁸ Note that this table compares all participants with entry data and all participants with exit data rather than just the participants with data at both time points.



and/or other family members. Some were flatting or living with friends and a few were, or had experienced, homelessness.

The living situations of participants influenced their education experiences and their future education and employment choices. Family responsibilities had an impact for some participants. Caring for younger family members or children, and concern over parents' health were two common factors. A number of interview participants⁹ felt a sense of responsibility to contribute to their families, which influenced their decision to go into work rather than continue education.

“Didn’t really work out, oh, because of my daughter. Yeah. Coz she’s never been like, she’s never left me, like left my side before so it’s all new to her being in kindy, so she got really sick, yeah, so I just couldn’t, yeah.” Jess (Demographic information not shared)

“Work, for the experience and to help my mum, to help my mum with money and stuff. She knows she needs the help, she even asked me for the help.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Interview participants reported that their living situations influenced their decisions about where to work and study, for example, the location of their Youth Guarantee provider was a factor in their decision to enrol there. In terms of employment, some interview participants felt that their employment opportunities were limited by where they lived and their access to transport; this was an issue in both cities and rural areas.

“Um, I was just looking for work. I hadn’t found any, and that’s why I’ve moved out of [City].” Kaia (Female, Māori, 19 years)

“Like everything is near, and like I live just in like [street name], and it’s convenient.” Amit (Male, Other Ethnicity, 19 years)

“I don’t really want to move all the way from home (to study), but I’ll have to anyway. Even my Mum doesn’t (want me to), and my Grandma, but oh well. I have to go so have to get along, yeah.” Nathan (Male, Māori, 17 years)

Some participants experienced disruption to their education as a result of transience, unstable or unsatisfactory living situations, or things going on within their family.

“I didn’t get to finish my NCEA credits in the last two years, coz, in and out of the country and family issues and stuff.” Jen (Female, Other Ethnicity, 17 years)

⁹ All names are pseudonyms.



“My Dad, didn’t really, like I don’t really know him too well. And then I moved with him and then yeah, he was just borderline dick, so yeah it didn’t really work out living with him and going to school and that while he’s around.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

3.1.5 Health

Entry survey participants were asked about health and mental health; there were a lower number of responses to these questions as participants were able to skip them if they did not wish to share this information with us. Three hundred and thirty-two (94.3%) participants responded to questions about physical health and 344 (97.7%) to questions about mental health.

Participants were asked about long-term health conditions and disabilities, 69.3% of respondents to this question reported that they did not have a long-term health condition or disability.

Of those that did, the most common problems associated with a long-term health condition or disability were:¹⁰

- Learning, concentrating or remembering: 12%
- Communicating, mixing with others or socialising: 7%.

A further 10% reported that they had a long-term health condition but did not have difficulty with the areas listed in the survey¹¹.

Several interview participants reported long-term health conditions or learning difficulties. These participants all reported that this affected their experience at school. Those with health conditions described how, although school staff offered support, in practice the support was not appropriate. These participants felt that their conditions were not well understood and eventually ended up leaving school and finding an alternative which they felt was better able to meet their needs.

“The Deputy Principal was like, “yeah, no it’s alright” and my Dean was like “oh yeah, it’s ok, you can sleep in the sick bay rardy rardy rah” but when it came down to it, they were like “oh no the sick bay’s just for sick people, you’ve gotta go”. Or I could go into the, the room for the disabled kids, sort of thing, but that would make me feel like, an idiot, like I was stupid, because I was going in there. ...I dunno, they just weren’t supportive like, I was trying to learn and you know I wanted to get my, my um, my NCEA, but because I wasn’t there the teachers had just given up because they

¹⁰ Percentages are calculated as a percentage of the whole survey cohort, not just those who reported a health condition.

¹¹ These areas were: Learning, concentrating or remembering; communicating, mixing with others or socialising; using hands to hold, grasp or use objects; walking, lifting or bending; hearing, even when using a hearing aid; seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses.



couldn't be bothered putting the time into me." Rachel (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

Interview participants with learning difficulties reported that these were often undiagnosed and this contributed to their struggles at school.

"I absolutely hated every day, uh since I was about six, I've absolutely hated school. Just never been my thing sitting in the class for six hours and only having a few hours for a break to get away from it, it's just too much, I just couldn't handle it. I just get real fidgety, real annoyed and then I start pissing off the teachers and just get kicked out, and then I'll just go home."
Alex (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

"A few years ago, I found out I'm dyslexic, so that's why it was like hard for me to actually do Correspondence coz I needed that help. Like Mum would help the best she could but she has to work too. It was really tough because they wouldn't actually give me the help that I needed, like once a week they were supposed to give me like a full day of reader-writer, they weren't even doing that." Ashley (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

3.1.6 Mental Health

Thirty seven percent of entry survey participants who responded to questions about mental health reported that they had received or had needed help with their mental health.

Of these respondents, 52% reported that they had a diagnosed mental health condition; the main conditions reported were depression and anxiety, or both of these.

Mental health issues were also reported by the interview participants, this ranged from anxiety to severe depression. Some participants reported receiving help with their mental health while others attempted to manage it on their own. The participants who experienced anxiety reported that this affected their time at school. For some, their anxiety was reduced while they were attending their Youth Guarantee programme, however for others, anxiety contributed to their disengagement from their Youth Guarantee programme.

"I loved school. And then um, stuff happened at home which made me depressed and start wagging school and getting into alcohol and drugs, I just dropped out completely." Kaia (Female, Māori, 19 years)

"Also, because I did have anxiety for a bit there, so like, big crowds, big school, you don't really wanna go there? So, I just never went and then I stopped going to school, because there was no point going to school."
Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)



3.1.7 Self-Esteem

The survey measured participants' self-esteem through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. Scores can range from 10 indicating low self-esteem to 40 indicating high self-esteem.

Of the entry survey participants who completed all items on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (88.9%), the average score was 27.6. Of the exit survey participants who completed all items on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (94.4%), the average score was 30.1.

A point of interest in the present study is the extent to which participants' global self-worth has changed between the beginning and end of their Youth Guarantee programme. The 137 participants with scores at both times had increased Rosenberg Self-Esteem scores at the end of the Youth Guarantee programme (average score: 31.0) compared to the beginning of their programme (average score: 27.9). The size of this difference in average scores was found to be strong ($r=0.55$).

We examined the self-esteem scores in relation to other measures in the entry and exit data and found that in the entry survey, participants who reported bullying as a reason for leaving school had a significantly lower mean Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale score compared to the participants who did not report bullying as a reason for leaving.

Similarly, those participants who reported *I did not get along with other students* as a reason for leaving school early had significantly lower scores on self-esteem than those who did not mention this as a reason for leaving school early¹².

No significant differences were found in the exit data for self-esteem by ethnicity, age, gender, qualification level on entry, or school decile.

3.1.8 Support

The interview participants reported that whānau was their most important source of support in all aspects of their transitions. Friends were also a source of support; they played a role in interview participants' positive experiences at school and in their Youth Guarantee programmes, and influenced participants' transitions to their Youth Guarantee providers. The ways in which whānau and friends provided support are discussed throughout the report, where relevant. Survey participants also indicated that family and friends were important in their lives, with entry and exit survey participants reporting that both of these had a positive influence on their time at school and at their Youth Guarantee provider.

Both the entry and exit surveys asked participants about the support services they used. Entry survey participants were asked to report the support services they had accessed over the last

¹² The 68 learners who reported *I did not get along with other students* had a mean Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale score of 24.7 compared to 28.4 for the 245 learners who did not report this. $t(311) = -4.97$; $p < 0.001$



two years, while exit survey participants were asked about the services accessed over the period of their Youth Guarantee programme.

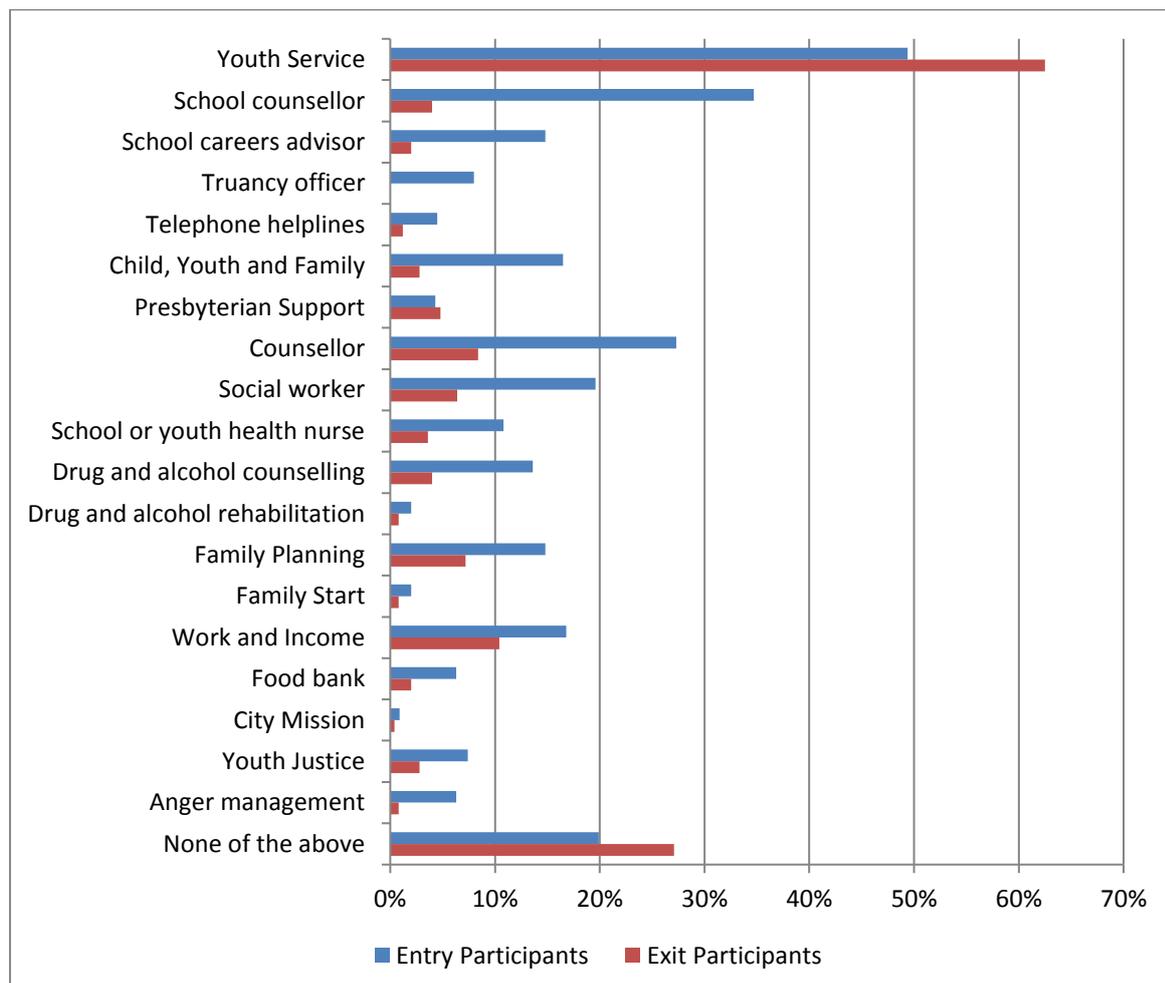
Most participants reported using support services, with only 19.9% of entry survey participants and 27.1% of exit survey participants reporting that they had not had contact with any services.

Youth Service was the most commonly accessed service at both time points with 49% of entry survey and 62.5% of exit survey participants reporting contact with this service.

Figure 3 shows that exit survey respondents reported less use of support services. This may be due to the different time periods reported on (past two years vs. duration of Youth Guarantee programme). There are also major differences in the types of services accessed, with school-related services much more apparent in the two years prior to entry to the programme, for example school counsellors.

In the entry survey, 42% of participants reported using three or more support services over the last two years, while just 13.2% of exit survey participants reported using three or more services over the period of their Youth Guarantee programme.

Figure 3: Support Services accessed by entry and exit survey participants





Through the interviews, we were able to get a better sense of the role of support services in these participants' lives. For the majority of interview participants, support services were additional to the support provided by whānau and friends. In some cases, the role of support services diminished as the participants settled into their Youth Guarantee programme, while in other cases, the use of services increased as the participants were given access to appropriate services through their Youth Guarantee providers. These differences appeared to be driven by participants' needs and the connections which Youth Guarantee providers had to local services.

Youth Service was the most frequently mentioned support service among interview participants, and provided a wide range of support from assistance with accessing education to job search and support with personal needs. For some interview participants, their interaction with some support services (for example Youth Justice, Child, Youth and Family, school-based services, e.g. school counsellor) ended due to their age and eligibility, rather than a reduction in their need for support.

3.2 Education and employment experiences

The majority of entry survey and interview participants did not complete secondary school. Their experiences with education before Youth Guarantee were mixed, but most reported negative experiences and/or disengagement from education. About three-quarters of entry survey participants had some experience with employment prior to entering Youth Guarantee. This section discusses the school and school leaving experiences of participants, their engagement and experiences with education after leaving school, their experiences with employment and the role of income in participants' lives.

3.2.1 Leaving school

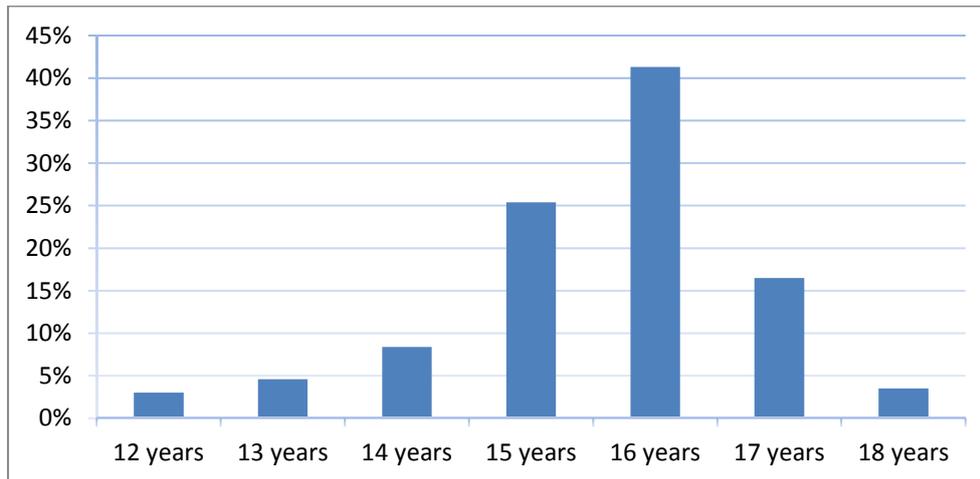
3.2.1.1 Age and Year Level

Sixteen years was the most common school leaving age among the participants who completed the entry survey, most participants left school between the ages of 15 and 17 years. The age that participants left school corresponds with the information they provided about the year level that they were in when they left. Almost 45% of participants left school in Year 11, and 30% left school in Year 12. It is interesting that 22.2% of participants said that they left school in Year 9 and 10, it is possible that some of these participants went on to Alternative Education, as discussed below.

Not all participants provided information on their school leaving age and year level. The information in Figure 4 is based on data from the 346 (98%) survey participants.



Figure 4: Entry survey participants' age when they left school



3.2.2 Reasons for leaving school

Entry survey participants who left school before the end of Year 13¹³ (329) were asked why they left school. Multiple responses were allowed.

Over half (56.5%) of respondents reported leaving school because *it wasn't for me* and 48% said *I didn't like school*.

Other reasons given indicate that learners were disengaging from school:

- 33.1%: *I wasn't getting enough help with learning*
- 30.7%: *I was not attending*
- 29.5%: *I did not get along with the teachers*
- 29.5%: *I wasn't learning anything.*

Like the survey respondents, interview participants gave a variety of reasons for leaving school. Learning, truancy and poor relationships were also mentioned in the interviews. Some participants reported a lack of support and achievement, and felt that they weren't learning anything useful at school.

“My teachers were at me all the time that I was below everyone else in the class, so I was like, “well I'll just leave”. So, and plus people were saying

¹³ Home schooled learners (4) are not included in this measure as all left mainstream education during primary school



that my credits were so low that I won't pass, so it's downing me as well..."
Nathan (Male, Māori, 17 years)

"...basically I wasn't getting the education I needed back at [Secondary School] and, teachers were never helping me, and I realised that what I was being taught at [Secondary School] was nothing that was gonna help me in the future." Hayley (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)

Many interview participants reported that non-attendance contributed to their decision to leave school. For most interview participants, non-attendance reflected their disengagement from school rather than being a reason for leaving in itself.

"It just wasn't for me. I didn't like it at all. I was barely going to my classes, not really wanting to be at school..." Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Poor relationships with staff and students were a common reason for leaving. Some participants reported that they got along with some people at school but this was not enough for them to feel as though they belonged at school.

"Um, school was just never a place for me. I didn't like the teachers. I had lots of teachers who were racist, they just, yeah, it was really racist. And coz I started off really naughty, I was really naughty. But then I got better, and I tried to, I tried to change, but teachers were like "oh you're still the same" and like no one would bother to even help me. So, I wanted like a new start, so I left." Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

"Yeah, I got stood down, and then, it was a terrible school. I just didn't get along with any of the teachers, students, and then just left." Tyler (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

For some interview participants, the structure of school, with large classes and changes of classroom and teacher for each subject, was too much for them.

"But then we had to move classes in College, now you have to go maths and all that. And then that was it. That pissed me off." Grace (Female, Pasifika/ Other Ethnicity, 15 years)

"Um, how they would change teachers. It makes students very um, confused. Because like, one teacher would tell you how to do something, and then another teacher the next day will tell you how to do it, and it's really confusing." Megan (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)

Other participants located the problem within themselves, rather than the school environment, saying that they were "not made for school".



“Like, school’s not for some people and it just wasn’t for me, I wasn’t concentrating, I wasn’t really learning anything and I was like, getting into trouble.” Jasmine (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Getting into trouble had an impact on participants’ decisions to leave school, 26.1% of entry survey participants reported this as a reason for leaving, and a number of interview participants spoke about how getting into trouble at school contributed to them leaving early.

“Um, coz school wasn’t right for me, and I’d end up doing stupid things in school. And just, getting suspended, so I just left.” Amber (Female, Māori/Pākehā, 16 years)

“Um, just playing up aye, at school. Wasn’t listening. Was going to class late. And um yeah, showing up to school stoned as, drunk. And yeah, then my Mum had enough of it aye, so she pulled me out of school. And she sent me to [City]. So yeah.” Brayden (Male, Māori, 18 years)

3.2.2.1 Relationships between school leaving and other factors

Some connections were observed in the interview data between participants’ reason for leaving school, their level of support and whether they had a plan after leaving school. The majority of participants who reported being excluded, asked to leave school, or getting into trouble at school, did not have any plans for their next step when they left school. These participants were also less likely to report high levels of family support, and received more support from other agencies.

The challenges faced by interview participants who reported being excluded, asked to leave school, or getting into trouble at school appeared to be different from those faced by those who left school for other reasons. About half of the participants in the first group reported that transience, alcohol, drugs and involvement in crime affected their time at school. Participants who left school for other reasons tended to report that challenges such as health, mental health and learning difficulties affected their time at school.

Analysis of entry survey data found some significant relationships between the reasons for leaving school and ethnicity and gender.

- Māori were significantly more likely to report leaving early for issues related to trouble at school.

Table 1: Reasons for leaving school Māori / non-Māori

| Reason for leaving | Māori | Non-Māori |
|----------------------|-------|-----------|
| Being asked to leave | 16.3% | 8.7% |
| Excluded | 22.0% | 7.8% |
| Not attending school | 36.6% | 27.2% |
| Getting into trouble | 34.1% | 21.4% |



- On the other hand, non-Māori were significantly more likely to report leaving early for issues related to being bullied:
 - 16.3% of Māori reported leaving school early because of bullying compared to 25.2% of non-Māori.
- Males were significantly more likely to report leaving early for issues related to trouble at school.

Table 2: Reasons for leaving school male / female

| Reason for leaving | Male | Female |
|----------------------|-------|--------|
| Being asked to leave | 15.2% | 7.9% |
| Excluded | 19.2% | 7.9% |
| Getting into trouble | 33.8% | 18.8% |

- Females were significantly more likely to report leaving early for issues related to those shown in Table 4.

Table 3: Reasons for leaving school female / male

| Reason for leaving | Female | Male |
|--|--------|-------|
| Bullying | 27.9% | 15.2% |
| Physical health | 6.1% | 0.7% |
| Mental health | 16.4% | 6.0% |
| To study somewhere else | 24.8% | 15.9% |
| To care for children or family members | 3.6% | 0% |

- Learners from higher decile schools were significantly more likely to report they left school because they weren't learning anything.
- Learners from lower decile schools were significantly less likely to report they left school because they were not attending.

Table 4: Reasons for leaving school, deciles

| Reason for leaving school | Decile 8-10 | Decile 6-7 | Decile 1-5 |
|--|-------------|------------|------------|
| Because they weren't learning anything | 38.7% | 27.4% | 21.4% |
| Because they weren't attending | 37.3% | 37.2% | 18.3% |

3.2.3 Alternative Education / Trades Academy

Just over a fifth of participants (22.7%) reported that they went to a Trades Academy or left school for Alternative Education. From the information provided, it appears that most of these were in Alternative Education and only a few attended a Trades Academy before leaving school. The average school leaving age of these participants was 14.7 years, suggesting that



this may have been a pathway for participants who left school before the age of 16 years. The school leaving age of these participants is included in Figure 4.

A number of interview participants reported attending Alternative Education. These participants appeared to leave school at a younger age, and had varied pathways and experiences. Some were sent to Alternative Education directly by their school, while others left school and re-engaged with education later on with the support or advice of whānau or friends.

“I left school, like 14, eventually, around 15, just around 15, I went to my Nanna, and it was like, “you are going somewhere”. We tried all the mainstreams and yeah, but we found none of them would accept me, and then yeah about 15 I went to [Alternative Education].” Tyler (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“The Principal pulled me out, and put me into the [Alternative Education], which is run from the College.” Paige (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

Most participants reported that Alternative Education was more engaging than school due to the smaller classes and varied learning activities.

“Oh, I felt, oh it was easier for me. Coz they’ll help, like help you out. And there’s like not much students and that. And there’s about like four or three teachers in one classroom. Yeah. It was a bit easier.” Troy (Male, Māori, 19 years)

“He gave us reasons to come to course. Even though we had fitness in the morning he gave us reasons to come ... we’ll go different places like Tuesdays we’ll have to walk around [the beach] for fitness. Then Fridays were our day out. That’s like Fridays. So, we could either go Paint Balling, go karting, movies or to town for a walk around. And that just made us, like work our arses off. Coz if you didn’t get much work done, or if you only came in two days a week we weren’t allowed to go on Friday.” Awhina (Female, Māori, 17 years)

Some received support from their Alternative Education provider to transition to other education once they turned 16 years. Others did not feel well supported, or became disengaged from alternative education.

“And then, they got me into [YG provider]. I didn’t even know you could come to [YG provider] and do level twos. I didn’t know that, but yeah that course got me in here.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Because that course was cool. The best tutor there was [name of tutor]. But it’s when he left in 2013 the school went down. And all of us started



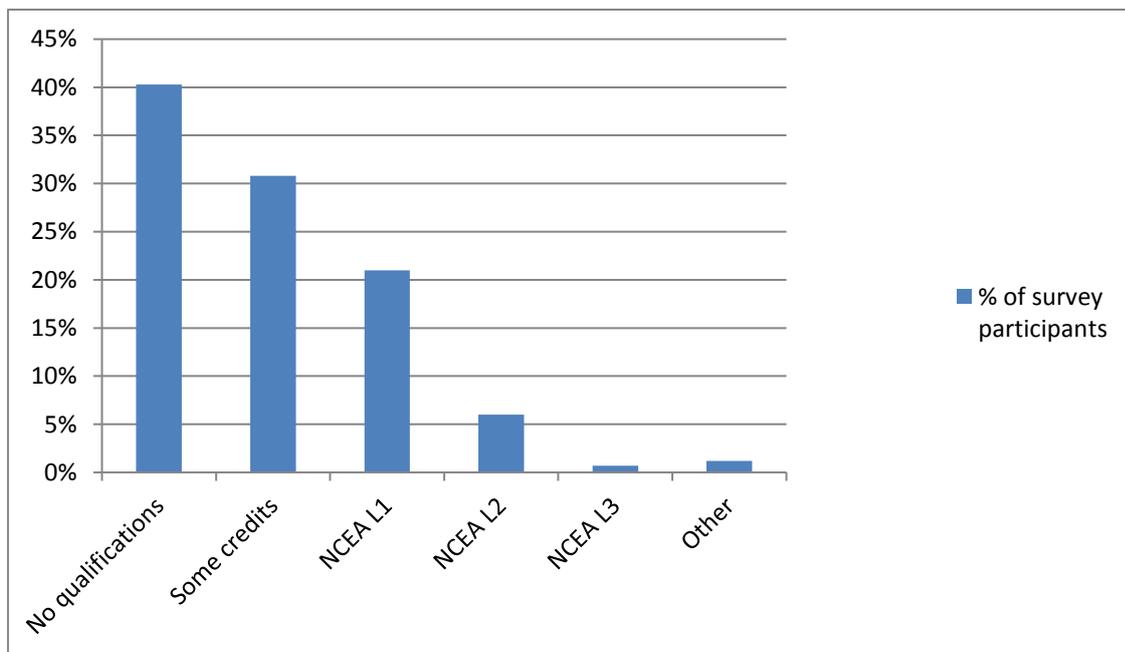
playing up, we didn't wanna listen, coz the tutor had left us to go work in [city]. And we all started getting ourselves kicked out." Awhina (Female, Māori, 17 years)

3.2.4 Qualifications

Just over 70% of survey participants did not have a formal secondary school qualification when they enrolled at their Youth Guarantee provider, 40.3% had no qualifications and 30.8% had some credits¹⁴. About one-fifth of all participants had NCEA Level 1 (21%) and a few had NCEA Level 2 (6%). The Tertiary Education Commission's (TEC) limit on the number of learners with NCEA Level 1 or 2 that providers can accept onto Youth Guarantee courses may play a part in this¹⁵.

The information presented in Figure 5 is based on data from the 98% of entry and exit survey participants who had achievement information available.

Figure 5: Survey participants' qualifications on enrolment at YG Provider



3.2.4.1 Relationships between qualifications and other factors

In the entry survey data, we noted that significantly more females and non-Māori had at least an NCEA Level 1 qualification when they enrolled in their course.

- Significantly fewer Māori (20.8%) had NCEA Level 1 or higher compared with 36.4% of non-Māori

¹⁴ 14 or more credits at any level.

¹⁵ For 2015, YGFF providers were required to ensure that learners who already held a qualification at levels 1 or 2 on the NZQF comprised no more than 20% of new enrolments in Level 1 and 2 Youth Guarantee programmes. See [Condition YG016](http://www.tec.govt.nz/Resource-Centre/Rules-and-Conditions/YG/YG016-TEO-to-limit-number-of-students-who-already-hold-a-qualification-at-level-1-and-2-on-the-NZQF/). Source: <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Resource-Centre/Rules-and-Conditions/YG/YG016-TEO-to-limit-number-of-students-who-already-hold-a-qualification-at-level-1-and-2-on-the-NZQF/> NOTE: progression to another qualification within a YGFF is not counted as a new enrolment so is not subject to this rule.



- Significantly more females (39.2%) had NCEA Level 1 or higher compared with 22.9% of males.

Analysis of entry survey data showed some significant differences between participants with no qualifications, those with some credits, and those with at least NCEA Level 1 in relation to their reasons for leaving school. Entry survey participants with no qualifications were significantly more likely to report leaving school for the reasons shown in Table 6.

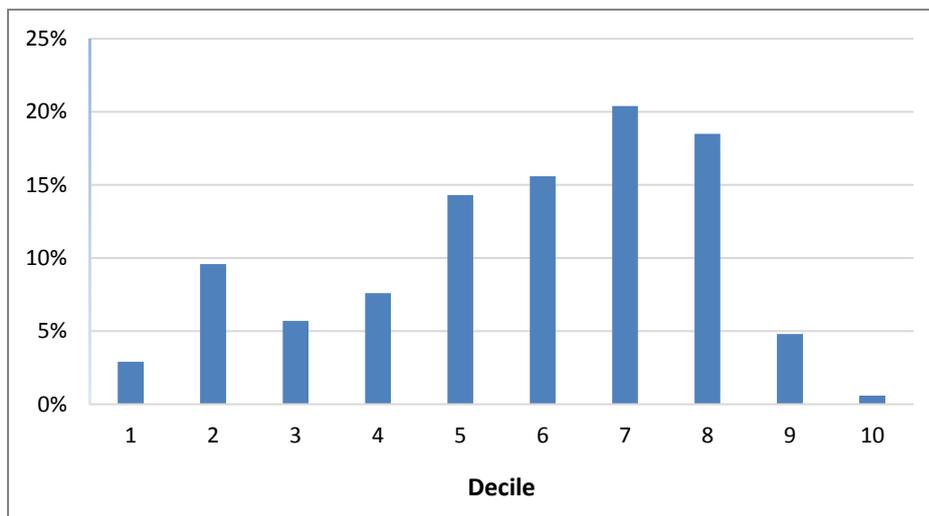
Table 6: Qualifications and reasons for leaving school

| Reason for leaving | No qualifications | Some credits | NCEA L1 or higher |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| I wasn't learning anything | 32.8% | 28.8% | 20.0% |
| I was not gaining credits | 29.0% | 29.8% | 12.4% |
| The school asked me to leave | 16.8% | 7.7% | 6.7% |
| I was excluded | 19.1% | 12.5% | 4.8% |
| I was not attending | 34.4% | 32.7% | 19% |
| I was getting into trouble at school | 31.3% | 26.9% | 13.3% |

3.2.5 School deciles

Information on the last secondary school attended by survey participants was gathered from the participating Youth Guarantee providers. From Figure 6 it can be seen that for over half the participants (54.5%), the last secondary school they attended was a decile 6-8 school.

Figure 6: Decile of participants' previous secondary school



3.2.6 Experiences at school

Entry survey participants were asked to rate how a range of factors positively or negatively affected their school life.



The factor that had the most positive effect was friends at school (57.6%), followed by friends out of school (49.1%) and family (50.3%). The factor that was rated most negatively was truancy (44.9%), followed by bullying (40.8%) and mental illness (35.8%)

For the entry survey participants, there were some significant effects on school experiences according to gender, ethnicity, qualification level and school decile¹⁶.

- Females were significantly more likely than males to report that self-esteem and confidence had a negative effect on their life at school.
- Māori were significantly more likely to say that friends had a negative effect on their life at school compared with non-Māori.
- Participants who did not have any secondary school qualifications were significantly more likely to report negative effects on their life at school from:
 - Risky behaviour
 - Motivation
 - Literacy or numeracy skills.
- Participants from high decile schools were significantly more likely to report negative effects on their life at school from:
 - Motivation
 - Stand-down or suspension
 - Drug and alcohol use.

3.2.7 Interview participants' school experiences

While we have not quantified the differences in school experiences of interview participants, some of the factors identified in the entry survey were also experienced by interview participants as having a positive or negative effect on their school experiences.

3.2.7.1 Positive influences

Overall, friends and whānau were described by interview participants as having a positive influence on school experiences. Friends made school enjoyable for participants, several interview participants commented that their friends were the only reason they continued to attend school, although friends could also contribute to getting into trouble.

“I used to be like, quite silly with my mates, and we’d just talk through the periods, and we’d just have fun basically.” Holly (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

“I had my own group of friends but then everyone else was so like, judgemental, and all that kind of stuff and I wasn’t into that.” Renee (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

¹⁶ To identify these differences, participants’ responses were calculated using the mean score, rather than the percentages noted above.



Many interview participants talked about receiving support from their family to leave school and find other options for education. Whānau was the main source of support for most participants and played an important role in their experiences and transitions.

“Nanna and my brothers, they always wanted me to be like the smart one, the on to it one. And they just noticed that I’m not the on to it one so, but in the end, when I actually told them how I don’t like school and stuff, they understood and then they’ve been supporting me since. Well my Nan has anyway.” Aroha (Female, Māori, 17 years)

“I asked her (mum) if I could leave and get a job and she said no. And then I like asked her if I could leave and go to a course, and she said if I really wanted to leave, then like, show her proof that I have a place to go to. So, I had to like get all the information from the course, and sat down with her properly and I said to her why I wanted to leave and why it would be good for me, and then yeah and then she finally said ok.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

3.2.7.2 Negative experiences

Interview participants reported far more negative than positive experiences and influences on their time at school. This is a reflection of their largely negative school experiences.

A number of interview participants reported that they were bullied at school and their experiences provide insight into the impact that this had on both their school experiences and their decision to leave school. For some interview participants, like Daniel, the bullying they experienced was severe and constant, while others reported occasional bullying related to conflict within peer groups.

“I got into a lot of trouble with bullies and actually, retaliated against bullies. If I saw something going on I’d kind of draw their attention by throwing stuff at them and then getting them away from those that were bullying so, that actually landed me in detention a few times, it was after an incident where I was being slammed on a heavy wooden door, repeatedly and, which nearly actually killed me so they (parents) pulled me out (of school).” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)

“Everyone loved me, and then, like, the popular ones stopped getting popular and kinda, turned on me.” Ella (Female, Māori/Pākehā, 15 years)

In all instances, the interview participants felt that their school had not adequately addressed their bullying, and this was seen by participants as a reason for their disengagement. This is explained by Ethan who was eventually excluded from school for his behaviour.

“I used to get bullied a lot in school and I asked the teachers if they could help and they couldn’t. Like they wouldn’t do anything so I was just like



“stuff it. You’re not going to do anything for me, so why be here?” And then I started causing trouble in school.” Ethan (Male, Māori, 16 years)

Interview participants also talked about the negative impact of mental health and truancy on their school experiences, these were often linked, as Gemma describes below.

“Because of like, you know all the Mental Illnesses and stuff, they’re quite tiring. So, I’d always just sleep ALL the time, I couldn’t get up in the morning kind of thing, and um ... I’d sleep in, till about ten thirty, oh no, earlier than that, I’d go to Form Time and Second period. Coz we had First Period, then Form time which was fifteen minutes, and then Second Period which was an hour. And then I’d leave at Morning Tea. So, I’d always be late, and I’d always leave early.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

For other interview participants, truancy was linked to the influence of their peer groups and use of drugs and alcohol.

“Yeah, yeah. But I dropped out coz, coz um, you know how the syns came out? Last year, the Synthetics? Yeah, got too, did a bit, got a bit dopey and started wagging school, and then I got dropped out, and ended up on the streets coz I got kicked outta my own house, and yeah.” Elijah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)

“I just thought it was cool, dunno at the time. Oh yeah, sweet as, come on Bro! Let’s go do this, do that, go to school late, go get stoned, go get drunk, I dunno.” Brayden (Male, Māori, 18 years)

Another group of interview participants just didn’t like school and chose not to attend the classes that didn’t interest them.

“Uh well, some classes I did turn up, to class, like Maths and English I don’t turn up coz I don’t like those. But um, Food and Nutrition, P.E. and all that stuff I turn up to, so that was the only main subjects...” Paige (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

Some interview participants described how moving had disrupted their schooling. For some, this was moving between parents, or moving with their whole family, while others were sent to live with family members after a family breakdown or when their behaviour became too much for their parents to manage.

“I just stopped going because I moved to [City 1] for a bit there, and like moving to a new school ... you don’t really wanna go and my attendance was really poor there as well, and then I moved back to [City 2] and then starting a new school again it was like everyone you know before you left aren’t your friends anymore.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)



Poor behaviour in and out of school had a negative effect on the experiences of some participants and often contributed to their decision to leave school.

“Um, fighting, smoking on school property, drinking and that. And drug abuse. Yeah. I didn’t really enjoy school when I was sober. So, like yeah, might as well get drunk.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

Interview participants’ school experiences are discussed further in section 3.5 in relation to the main themes from the interviews.

3.2.8 Employment

3.2.8.1 *Employment and work experience*

Three-quarters of entry survey participants reported that they had some experience with employment; this included having had a paid or unpaid job, doing volunteer work or work experience. About a quarter (25.6%) of entry survey participants had never had a job or done work experience. Of the entry survey participants who had been in employment before:

- 32.4% had one job
- 23.3% had two jobs
- 18.8% had three or more jobs

At the time of completing the exit survey, just over a third of participants (35.9%) indicated that they currently had a job (paid or unpaid) compared with 24.6% of participants in the entry survey. Almost all of those in a job at exit (86.7%) were in paid employment.

Of the 126 participants who had employment information at both entry and exit, 23.9% of those who didn’t have a job when they began their Youth Guarantee programme had one at exit, while 15.8% who reported that they had a job at entry no longer had a job when they finished their Youth Guarantee programme.

3.2.8.2 *Interview participants and employment*

From the interview participants, we learned that for those who had a job, or had worked before, most had found work through whānau and friend connections. Some participants had found work on their own, although those who were searching for employment without existing connections found this more difficult.

“My bro’s hooked me up on those jobs. Oh, the farming job, that was like um, a family business. Yeah. But I was getting paid for it and stuff.” Troy (Male, Māori, 19 years)

“Oh, no, because um, we were fixing, I was fixing my, my Mum’s car, outside, and the mechanic shop was just across the road. And he said if I wanted to go and get paid under the table. And I was like “yeah sure”. If he wants help.” Josiah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)



“I just walked in one day and asked if there was anything and I got told there was nothing and then yeah I went to the shop again one day just to get me something and then they asked if I’d ever [task] before and then they just basically put me through it.” Hayden (Male, Māori/Pākehā, 18 years)

The interview participants reported that their experiences with employment had informed their decisions about the future by motivating them to learn more or informing their thoughts about which careers would suit their interests and meet their needs; however, money was an important factor for many. For many of these participants, gaining their NCEA Level 2 through Youth Guarantee was the first step in their path towards their desired career.

“When we moved to [town], Mum and [Stepdad] started working on a Dairy Farm and when I got grounded, um I’d have to go stay with the bosses of the Dairy Farm and work on the Dairy Farm all day. And I actually really enjoyed it and then that’s where it popped up from.” Ella (Female, Māori/Pākehā, 15 years)

“Yeah that’s why I wanna get a job there, like, I’m um, I guess you could call it friends or acquaintances with [Manager], and also the lady down there, I’ve done lots of volunteer work with her and they’re all friendly, and yeah.” Taylor (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Negative or mixed experiences with employment also informed young people’s decisions to enter Youth Guarantee and their plans for the future. Some had been interested in a particular industry or career but after working in their chosen sector, decided that it wasn’t what they wanted to do. These participants wanted qualifications to allow them to take a different path from the one they had planned.

“I was doing ‘mechanicing’. But um, nah I don’t like it, Coz I know heaps of other jobs they get paid heaps more, and they don’t even do as much work as what we do, we work hard out. Yeah, but that’s what I wanted to do then. Coz my older brother did that. And then I started doing that but I reckon it was too hard of a job. I reckon this (building) will be easier. And more fun. Coz its outdoors. When you’re inside the mechanic shop you just inside the shed all day. Um and then you only get to go out when you driving the cars, test driving them.” Hemi (Male, Māori, 17 years)

“I noticed that, as I was there for even that small amount of time, it was moving away from actually building computers and just to, just more software side of things, which isn’t where my interests lie. I prefer the hands-on building of them, Custom PCs, but, not really anymore.” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)



For other participants, experience in low skill employment drove them to return to education because they believed that qualifications would provide a pathway to ‘better’ jobs.

“(I want to work in) Media because I think it’s a quite good opportunity for me to get experience like, going to offices and at the same time you earn a lot of money, whereas work in a factory like, every day same routines, same people, and it’s just not really good for me. And Media it’s quite professional, coz you get treated good.” James (Male, Other Ethnicity, 16 years)

“I just feel like I can do better. Oh, that sounds like I’m like trying to put them down, but I’m really not, coz I even have some friends that work in the [factory] and it’s good money, but I don’t wanna do it.” Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

3.2.9 Income

In the surveys, participants noted all the sources of income they received at the start and end of their programme. At both time points, just over 80% of participants reported some source of income. The largest source of income was money from parents or family members, although it can be seen in the table below that the percentage of participants reporting this income source decreased from entry to exit, while the percentage of participants who received income from wages increased.

Table 7: Sources of income for entry and exit survey participants¹⁷

| Sources of income | Entry participants | Exit participants |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| Money from parents or family members | 40.9% | 34.3% |
| Travel allowance ¹⁸ | 28.6% | 24.7% |
| Wages or other bonuses paid by an employer | 23.4% | 28.7% |
| Student Allowance | 10.9% | 12.4% |
| Youth Payment | 15.4% | 17.1% |
| Young Parent Payment | 1.7% | 2% |

Further sources of income are not reported here as they were reported by fewer than 5% of participants.

The weekly income received by survey participants differed from entry to exit. At the start of their programme, 63.3% of entry survey participants reported receiving \$100 or less per week, compared with 50.4% exit survey participants. Overall, it seems that exit survey participants were receiving more income, with 30.4% receiving between \$100 and \$200 per

¹⁷ Note that this table compares all participants with entry data and all participants with exit data rather than just the participants with data at both time points.

¹⁸ Learners enrolled on Youth Guarantee Fees Free programmes are eligible to receive payments to cover the costs of their transport to and from their Youth Guarantee provider; these are administered by the providers.



week, and 19% receiving between \$201 and \$500 compared with 16% and 10.3% of entry survey participants.

3.2.9.1 Interview participants and income

Money was a significant factor in the decisions and pathways of interview participants. This was often combined with the desire to own a car, move out of home or find a suitable place to live.

“Like I just want a job. And just work and work and get my own car and all that, and my licence haven’t even got it yet ... just money, and everything. And my own like, like stuff that I need.” Amber (Female, Māori/ Pākehā, 16 years)

“I’m flatting with my Aunty, it’s just me and my Aunty. But yeah, sometimes I can’t be stuffed living there, and I want to find my own house.” Rebecca (Female, Pasifika, 19 years)

Overall, money was important to interview participants because it allowed them to increase or maintain their independence. A number reported that they needed money to meet their immediate needs; this consideration played a large role in their decisions and plans for the future.

“Well I have a car now, and I’ve got some things to pay for and everything.” Hayley (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Coz the place where I’m staying, I don’t even have my own room bro, I like stay outside in the carport, and that’s like ratshit as. And she like keeps my benefit and all, my whole two hundred bucks, it’s like Bro I have to go [illegal activity]. So, I can like, buy me nice clothes and stuff to wear.” Tyrone (Male, Pasifika/Pākehā, 16 years)

“Yeah. Trying to buy things that I need to, before study, like because I see a lot of students, um coz I’m actually flatting and I see these students from [University], they have their cars and laptops and kind of need all those stuff really, before studying, like [ITP] and that.” James (Male, Other Ethnicity, 16 years)

The desire to earn money influenced interview participants’ plans for the future. Some participants planned to enter the workforce after completing their Youth Guarantee programme; some were already looking for work while attending Youth Guarantee and planned to stop studying if they could find a job. A number of these participants had entered Youth Guarantee to gain qualifications for employment after a period of unsuccessful job search since leaving school.



“Coz like, I wanna just work and earn money. But then I wanna get an education too...” Jasmine (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Um working, if I find a job that I like, or just any job that pays well, I’ll probably stop studying.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Um, for half a year I tried finding a full-time job, but that didn’t work out, my plan was to get a full-time job this year, try figure out what I wanted, and then, yeah I didn’t find a full-time job for a half year, so I decided to enrol at [YG provider]. Yeah.” Nicole (Female, Māori, 18 years)

Other participants reported that money was a consideration in their choice of career path, and planned to continue studying to put themselves in a better position for the future.

“I really wanna, you know, become good at Computing and, yeah wanna get a good job so I can make some money.” Jake (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Coz I chose, I chose kinda building because I was talking to a few people that twenty-five dollars was hammer handing and 55 dollars was if you had your apprentice in it. And so, I was like, far that’s good money aye.” Tyrone (Male, Pasifika/Pākehā, 16 years)

Some interview participants reported that their decisions to enter Youth Guarantee were influenced by money. A number said that they would like to continue in education but were concerned about the cost of studying and how they would pay for it.

“First I was going to go to [City], to [ITP], but my Dad didn’t wanna pay for like my accommodation.” Ryan (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Yeah. Well I need to get money first. I don’t have a job at the moment so I can’t really pay for the training.” Nathan (Male, Māori, 17 years)

Many planned to work after Youth Guarantee to earn money to pay for further study, or find a part-time job to support themselves while they continued their education. Participants reported that they were worried about balancing work and study commitments, but felt that this was their only option.

“Yeah, coz courses these days aren’t that cheap. And like, I don’t live with my parents so I don’t get support from my parents, it’s just me trying to find a job to pay for everything.” Melissa (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Other participants thought that they probably wouldn't continue studying, despite wanting to, due to cost. These participants did not consider a student loan as an option as they didn't want to get into debt. Participants who had applied or attempted to apply for a student loan in the past found the process challenging and this influenced their decisions about further education.



“So, it all depends really like money is a big factor, ... I just I don’t wanna have loans, especially when it’s over ten grand and more, like that’s crazy.” Hayden (Male, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

“Um, that’ll just be the same trouble all over again with Studylink.” Kaia (Female, Māori, 19 years)

3.3 Pathways in and out of Youth Guarantee



3.3.1 Activity after leaving school

From the entry survey and data from Youth Guarantee providers we have some knowledge of participants’ post-school activities and pathways into YGFF. Of the 352 entry survey participants:

- 155 reported that they did some form of work or study after leaving school.
- 110 did nothing between leaving school and enrolling at their Youth Guarantee provider.
- 80 participants left school for Alternative Education.

Just under half (46.3%) of the participants who left school for Alternative Education reported doing further education, training or work once they left Alternative Education. This means



that, overall, 55% of all participants did some form of work or study after leaving secondary education.

Information on survey participants' activity prior to enrolling in Youth Guarantee was collected from the participating Youth Guarantee providers. This data was collected from learners on enrolment at their provider and recorded their activity at October 1st 2014. Slightly more than 70% of participants reported their prior activity as a secondary school student. Ten percent of participants were studying at a PTE, ITP or Wānanga, 5.2% were working and 13.1% were unemployed or receiving a benefit. This suggests that most survey participants had a fairly direct transition from school to Youth Guarantee.

The transition experiences of interview participants offer a more detailed view of the transition from school to Youth Guarantee. The pathways of the interview participants were diverse and the length of transitions from school to Youth Guarantee varied significantly. Some enrolled directly from school while some spent over two years moving between education, employment and periods of NEET. The number of transitions was also varied; some participants had attended between three and four other education institutions, and others had had multiple jobs.

3.3.1.1 Education after leaving school

Of the 63 entry interview participants, 39.7% reported some other education between school and Youth Guarantee. About half of these did Alternative Education, 52% went to an ITP, PTE or Wānanga and a few did correspondence. Some participants engaged in several types of education during their transition, for example, moving from school to Alternative Education then onto an ITP before entering Youth Guarantee. Some participants reported direct pathways between school and other education, while others spent between a few months to over a year out of education; a few were supported by their schools to transition into Alternative Education, correspondence or tertiary study. Others found out about education options through friends, whānau and the Internet.

“And they kind of suggested to me to find other courses or whatever, they had like a Careers Person, and so um I wanted to go Electrical Engineering, and I ended up at [ITP].” Logan (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Yep, I went to the School Counsellor, she helped me, she tried to help me stay in school, but coz I wasn't, she got me in like, Correspondence so I could keep doing my school work, I done correspondence. And I done another course in [City] but I didn't last long there, coz it was Christmas. And other than that, I don't do anything.” Kaia (Female, Māori, 19 years)

“Yeah. Coz my Dad went to [PTE]. And he thought I could join him.” Elijah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)



3.3.1.2 Other activities

Sixty percent of interview participants did no other education between school and Youth Guarantee. Many of these had a direct transition from school to their Youth Guarantee provider. Of those participants who did not transition directly some were working for some or all of the time.

“I started working at McDonalds, and then that was horrible, just because I didn’t like working there, you know, they are a chain restaurant and they’ve got their ways and like, they’ve got so many people working there and leaving all the time, because it’s such a big restaurant and need so many staff.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“I done farming for quite a while, about, um about a year I think. Or just bout a year and a half? But I’ve been to like six different farms, working. And I done scaffolding for like a month. And painting, I done that for five months.” Troy (Male, Māori, 19 years)

Others were looking for work or waiting for their programme to start and some were at home not doing anything or hanging out on the streets getting into trouble.

“I was planning to take a gap year and work, but finding a job was like, really hard, like, I had like no luck so far...” Brooke (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 18 years)

“I just kinda stayed at home and played X Box for about yeah, a year.” Jake (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“I was doing nothing aye, to be honest, for like two and half years, three years almost. Just like, hanging out on the streets, kicking with mates...” Tyrone (Male, Pasifika/Pākehā, 16 years)

“I had to wait coz I think they were on holidays when I went and enrolled with them. And so, I think I was just at home for a month or two, and then yeah and then I started with them. Yeah.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Most of the participants who were in employment after leaving school either already had a job before they left school, or found a job through existing networks, primarily family connections. Some participants who were looking for work but did not have these connections were unable to find a job.

3.3.2 Types of transition

The interview participants could be loosely grouped into three types of transition; short, extended and disengaged. Those who experienced short transitions spent minimal time disconnected from education or employment and experienced few disruptions to their planned pathways. Some participants in this group had transitioned to Youth Guarantee



directly from school while others had had multiple transitions, for example from school to Alternative Education to a Youth Guarantee programme, or to employment. Twenty-six participants experienced this type of transition.

“I didn’t want to go back for Year 13 and I was like no, it’s not my thing and then I just searched all over the, all of the Universities, and found that I could do, like level 3 and 2 here and so I signed up and then got accepted.”
Renee (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Well I quit my High School last year, and after High School I went to work in a factory for three months, and after that I kinda looked for a course I wanna take, and so I landed here and I talked to [YG recruiter] and my Mum. And after that, this year just, I just came here.” James (Male, Other Ethnicity, 16 years)

The 21 interview participants in the extended transition group had a period of disconnection from education and employment, however, they were not significantly disengaged and spent the majority of the time out of education and employment planning or preparing for their next step. This group spent some time working, looking for employment or a suitable education option, or moving around between family members. Some participants in this group experienced unexpected challenges or changes in their lives, for example becoming pregnant, involvement with Youth Justice and changes in family circumstances.

“I left [Secondary school], they put me into Alternative Education, and I went there for about a year and then after that I went to Polytech. I ended up going to [name of youth residence], which is a Youth Residence, and I got outta there and then came straight here afterwards um, coz it’s part of my plan.” Ethan (Male, Māori, 16 years)

“Uh, trying to get the benefit, trying to find like, a job or something like that, and like, a solid place to live... I didn’t have a school to go to, so I decided to come to [YG Provider], coz I found out about the course through my mates.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Um, well, I stopped going to school, like half way through my Year 12s, because I never went anyway ... I literally did nothing for like, about a month, then thought I better get a job, so I started working at McDonalds ... I just left that job and didn’t know what I was gonna do for a while. I really wanted to do Correspondence but didn’t have the motivation to do that, which I figured out pretty quickly, so I came here.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

The final group of 16 interview participants experienced disengagement during their transition from school to Youth Guarantee. Participants in this group spent a year or more



out of education or employment and were mostly hanging out on the streets or at home doing nothing. The transience experienced by participants in this group was more disruptive than it was for participants in the short and extended transition groups. They tended to report less access to support and were more likely than participants in the other groups to report that drugs, alcohol, crime and transience affected their transitions.

“I didn’t really like college. So, I started hanging down the centre, and then all my mates convinced me to go hang out at [YG provider]. The old one, over there. Then I used to hang out there, and then, [YG Manager] asked if I wanted to start, but I was too young. But then I got accepted from the Ministry of Education. And yeah, here I am.” Grace (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity 15 years)

“I went to a [Alternative Education] for a year, got my Level 1s there, and then I went to [PTE] just up the road from [Alternative Education]. And then, I got kicked out of that, so I just moved away from that area. ...I was kicked out on the street and had to live on the street for a good, about four or five months... And so, the people that live in [town] came and picked me up on that day, oh a couple of days after I told them about it, they came and picked me up, got me into this course.” Paige (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

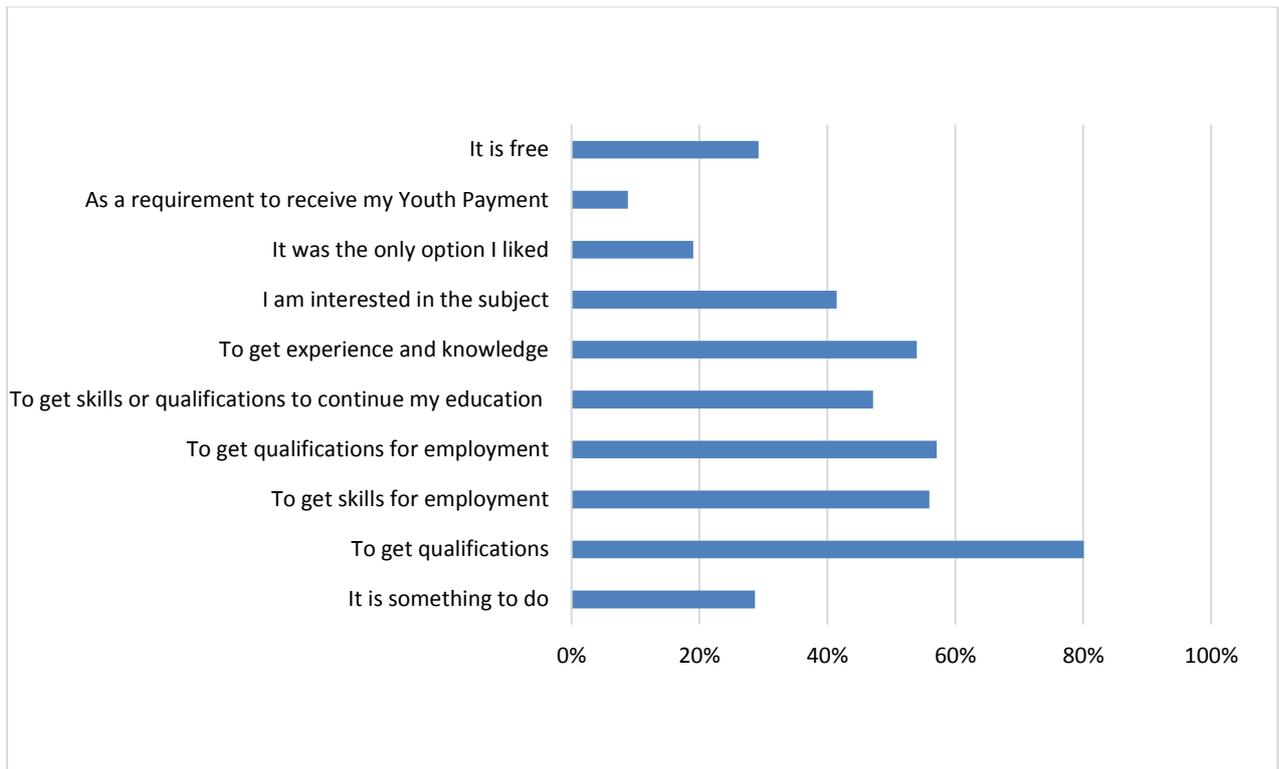
“Nothing at all. I just played video games and just mucked around at home. Like looked for a job once. And that was just going down to WINZ and just looking at jobs and I was like “nah”.” Tom (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

3.3.3 Reasons for enrolling and aims for Youth Guarantee

Ninety eight percent of entry survey participants said that they wanted to be attending their Youth Guarantee provider. Only two interview participants had not enrolled in their Youth Guarantee provider by choice, however, once they began their programme they decided that they wanted to continue.

Entry survey participants were asked why they enrolled in their Youth Guarantee programme and were able to select multiple responses. The most common reason for enrolling was to get qualifications (80.1%), while only 8.8% said that they enrolled as a requirement to receive their Youth Payment. The reasons given by interview participants for enrolling in Youth Guarantee were similar to those of entry survey participants displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Entry survey participants’ reasons for enrolling in YG



3.3.3.1 Relationships between enrolling in Youth Guarantee and other factors

In the entry survey data, some significant differences in reasons for enrolling were found by ethnicity, school decile and qualification level.

- Māori were significantly more likely than non-Māori to report that they had enrolled (See table 8).

Table 8: Reasons for enrolling Māori/ non-Māori

| Reason for enrolling | Māori | Non-Māori |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| It is something to do | 36.5% | 24.3% |
| It was the only option I liked | 24.6% | 15.9% |
| It is free | 38.9% | 23.9% |

- Those from a low decile school were significantly more likely to report that they had enrolled as a requirement to receive their Youth Payment.
- Participants who had qualifications at NCEA Level 1 or higher were significantly less likely to report that they had enrolled in the programme because it was free.

3.3.3.2 Interview participants' reasons for enrolling in Youth Guarantee

Many interview participants commented that qualifications were important to them because of the opportunities that these would bring. Few were able to articulate what these opportunities were; however, there was a sense that more education and employment options would become available once they had gained qualifications.



“Ah, just so I have qualifications, and then through that I can probably get, oh I came here so that I have more opportunities, as well...” Hemi (Male, Māori, 17 years)

“Because I knew they (YG Provider) had open doors for me, for different opportunities I can gain. That was why.” Casey (Female, Māori, 18 years)

“I came here coz I guess I, I wanted to get somewhere in life, like I didn’t, how do I put it, I didn’t want to live the life like my Mum did, so I wanted to get, I wanted to get something on my plate, and help me get somewhere in life that will help me for a better future.” Taylor (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

For the interview participants, the fact that Youth Guarantee was free was an added bonus rather than the main reason for enrolling. The interview participants who spoke about this felt that because their education was free they had more flexibility to explore different pathways and decide what they wanted to do.

“Coz um, it’s just an option, like, it was a free option for me to see if I actually wanted to do Cookery.” Ashley (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

Some interview participants reported that they had been motivated to enrol in Youth Guarantee as it was a chance to gain qualifications in an environment which was more suited to their needs. According to some interview participants, unsatisfactory experiences at school and in post-school education had motivated them to search for alternatives and led them to enrol in Youth Guarantee.

“I just thought it was different to school coz it’s not such like a school environment, environment, it’s more like an adult environment, it’s a bit more, less as, I guess controlled as school ... it’s more lenient.” Luke (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“I found out about [YG] from one of my Teachers at [Secondary School] ... I told him that I wasn’t actually enjoying myself at [Secondary School] and I wasn’t really showing up so, um he thought of an alternative that would be like school but a lot more entertaining.” Samson (Male, Pasifika, 16 years)

3.3.3.3 Support to enrol in Youth Guarantee

Interview participants reported receiving support to enrol in Youth Guarantee from a number of sources. Whānau and friends were the largest source of support in participants’ decisions to enrol in Youth Guarantee and provided the most information about the programme. Whānau supported participants through providing encouragement and helping them decide on their course of study. Some whānau and friends were involved in the recruitment and



enrolment process and accompanied participants to their initial enrolment interview at their Youth Guarantee provider.

“Mum took me into school and we just sat down and talked about all the different options. Yeah, and they said to me that if I wanted to get a job, that they would help me look for one, or I could go back to school or come here, or go to the [other YG provider] or something like that.” Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“I found out through, like, one of our cousins, she helped me out. And she got me into the course, coz she knew a couple, oh, coz a couple of her mates worked, as teachers.” Hemi (Male, Māori, 17 years)

“Oh, my mate, he was signing up to it and then he just told me to come along so I just came along with him, and signed myself up. Yeah.” Kyle (Male, Pākehā/ Māori, 15 years)

The education experiences of participants’ whānau and friends influenced their decision to enrol in Youth Guarantee. Some commented that they had friends or family members who were currently attending their Youth Guarantee provider, or had done so in the past and had experienced success. These participants were motivated to enrol because they felt that they would fit in at their Youth Guarantee provider, and would have a better chance of gaining NCEA than they would at school.

“I actually was in class when my friend texted me, and I just walked out of class and came here and enrolled. And I started the next week. And it was pretty cool, and I knew everyone in my class because they went to a previous school before that, with all them, and it wasn’t scary and it was fun.” Jayden (Male, Pākehā/ Māori, 16 years)

“Um, my brother used to come here. He came here for about a year, when he was sixteen, seventeen, and yeah that’s how I found out. And he said it was really good course.” Amber (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

The support that participants received from their schools and other education providers to enrol in Youth Guarantee was mixed. Some participants reported that they were supported by their schools or Alternative Education providers to find a suitable course once they turned sixteen years old, and a few reported receiving support from social services such as Youth Service or Youth Justice.

“My school offered me to leave because um, I never really paid attention at school, we’d just, yeah so they got me into that um, Beauty Course because they knew I wanted to do Beauty ... and then, it didn’t work out too well for me, it just wasn’t really for me. And then, my Youth Coach um, helped me come here, because I wanna be a Beauty Therapist and I need



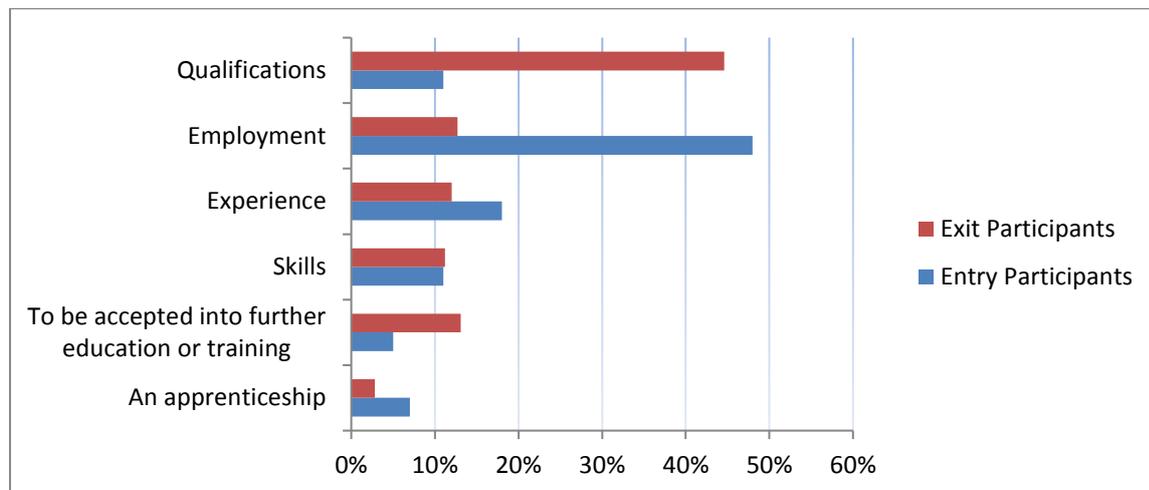
my Level 1 and 2 to do the Beauty Course.” Holly (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

As well as education experiences, interview participants were motivated to enrol in Youth Guarantee by other post-school experiences. Some participants reported that they were sick of doing nothing and wanted to do something with their lives. Others who were unable to find a job after leaving school reported that this experience had motivated them to obtain qualifications which they hoped would make it easier to find work.

3.3.4 What participants want from their Youth Guarantee programme

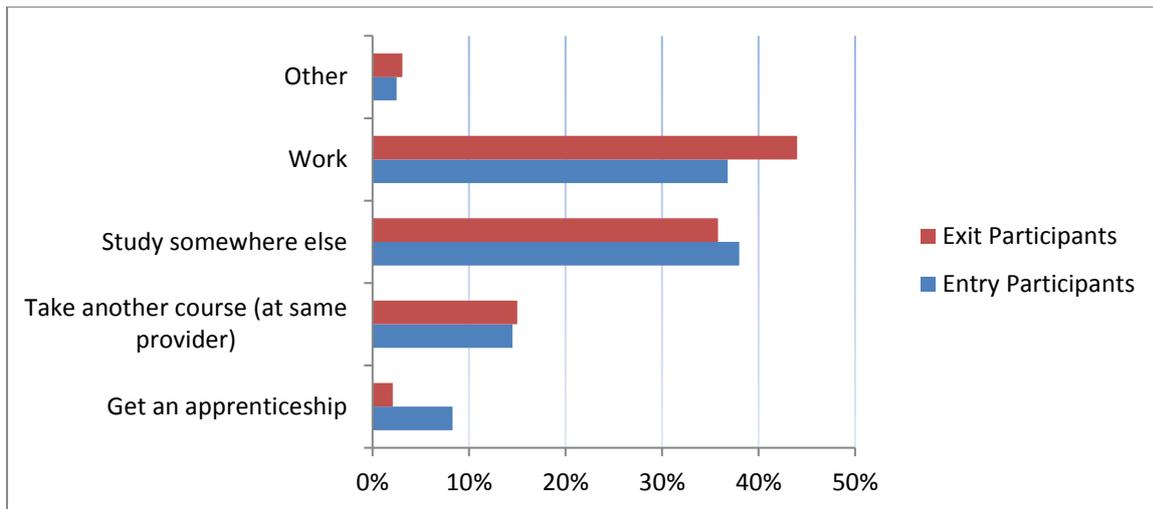
Entry and exit survey participants were asked to choose the most important thing they wanted from their programme. There was a notable difference in responses of entry and exit survey participants. Almost half of entry survey participants (47.6%) said that employment was the most important thing that they wanted from their programme, however only 12.7% of exit survey participants rated this as most important. The opposite occurred with the importance of qualifications. Just 11% of entry survey participants said that qualifications were the most important thing that they wanted from their Youth Guarantee programme, compared with 44.6% of exit survey participants. More detail can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8: The MOST important thing participants want from their YG programme



It is interesting to consider these changes in relation to survey participants’ post-Youth Guarantee plans. In both surveys, most participants either planned to work or continue studying, however the percentage of participants who planned to work increased from 36.8% in the entry survey to 44% in the exit survey. It is important to note that not all of the entry survey respondents completed the exit survey, and vice versa.

Figure 9: Survey participants’ plans after finishing YG



3.3.5 Interview participants' aims for Youth Guarantee

Most interview participants were thinking about their futures when they enrolled in Youth Guarantee. All of the interview participants aimed to gain something from their Youth Guarantee programme. Most were hoping to gain NCEA Level 2, some wanted it for a job or further study and others just wanted to achieve a qualification. While the aims of participants were similar, most were centred on future employment or education; there were differences in how developed their plans were. Some of them were following a pathway and knew that they would need NCEA Level 2 to achieve their next step while others were considering several options, or were unsure what they wanted to do but thought that qualifications would help. Interview participants could be loosely divided into three groups according to their plans on arrival at their Youth Guarantee provider.

3.3.5.1 Following a path

Some participants enrolled in Youth Guarantee as a step towards their planned career path. These participants knew what they wanted to study and what they would need in order to achieve this. Gaining NCEA Level 2 would provide access to higher level programmes which would give them the necessary qualifications to enter their desired industry or career.

“Um, planning to go in as a Chef, get my cheffing degree through the Army, so I’ve got a, something to fall back on. Um after I get my cheffing degree through the Army I plan to reenlist as a Rifleman. And hope to work my way up to a minimum rank of Sergeant.” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)

“Like gain Level 2, get qualifications in Level 3, Travel and Tourism and then just go so on and so on? Like go to Level 4 and then go into Diploma.” Aroha (Female, Māori, 17 years)

3.3.5.2 Having direction



The majority of participants had some ideas about the direction of their future when they enrolled in their Youth Guarantee provider. Some of these participants reported that they had some ideas about the future and had been thinking about them for a while; however, they did not have clear knowledge of how to fulfil their aims. Others had several ideas about what they wanted to do and changed their mind a few times, but had a sense of purpose in terms of future direction; they knew that they were going somewhere, and that they would need qualifications to get there.

“I really wanted to be a Counsellor at one point, and then a Social Worker kind of thing, so I looked at all the courses I could do at [ITP], and I’d planned to go to one, and then I thought I’d be able to get like, finish my Level 2s, and then I thought I’d get my Level 3s doing Correspondence, and I was like “well that’s not really an option” coz I can’t do that, can’t motivate myself enough. So, I was like “I’ll just get my Level 2s” and then I was like “Do I even want to do Social Work”?” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants in this group reported that they had only recently begun to think about the future. The majority of these participants said that they had been living in the moment when they were at school and just wanted to have fun. These participants felt that they had since grown up and were now thinking about their futures.



A small number of participants said that they didn't think about the future until recently because they couldn't envision a path out of their current situation. These participants didn't see the point in making plans or thinking about the future because they didn't have much hope for their future. Instability in their lives and mental health played a role in this, there was a sense that these participants felt that they didn't have control over their lives.

"At [Secondary School], I was, I don't know, I was in a pretty dark spot there, I didn't really see a future for myself so I didn't really have anything planned." Taylor (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

3.3.5.3 *No plans*

A few participants did not have any ideas about the future when they enrolled in Youth Guarantee. For these participants, enrolling in Youth Guarantee and gaining qualifications was their future plan.

"Yeah, and just something to do. Hanging out with my mates at the same time. Getting my Levels and that, yeah, some education." Isaac (Male, Māori/Pākehā/Pasifika, 16 years)

3.3.6 *Developing aims and plans*

The first two interviews provided insight into how participants' ideas about the future developed over time. Most interview participants were influenced by whānau and/or friends, but other experiences also played a role.

"My granddad and me talk about planes on days on end and all that kind of stuff. Like I'm a plane fanatic, I go to the Warbirds, I go to anything with planes, like fly ins, anything. And I get books out, read about planes and completely annihilate my head with information..." Nathan (Male, Māori, 17 years)

"I got two mates that are on the building course aye, and they said that its life changing. Coz they, they were like me, yeah, from course to course, drugs to drug, and yeah, now they got their life on track and I wanna be the same." Brayden (Male, Māori, 18 years)

"I was gonna do nannying, and then I was in hospital last year, twice, quite sick and then um, all of the like nurses and everything would talk to me about it and they were like "we didn't even do science or anything" and you know I was like "oh it looks like so much fun" so I decided I wanted to do nursing." Renee (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Those interview participants who already had detailed plans looked for ways to extend themselves further to increase their chances of success.



“Level 4 sounds good to me coz it like preps you up for the real study ... practising doing assignments, the big assignments, um writing what the lecturer is saying, like the important stuff, coz I know you don’t really get that much help when you actually study.” Nicole (Female, Māori, 18 years)

For interview participants, whose ideas had changed over time, or who had recently begun to think about their future, these ideas developed as the future became more visible. Some participants attributed this change to growing up or a change in their life which had required them to think deeper about their path.

“I thought about becoming a drug dealer. Was gonna become one of those because it’s easy money. But then, started growing up and then just noticed that, that stuff will get you locked up.” Brayden (Male, Māori, 18 years)

“Mum passed away and shit, and I was just like, I had like no more money, and no one I could run to that could help me, so I had to like help myself aye, to get to get to where I wanted to be.” Tyrone (Male, Pasifika/Pākehā, 16 years)

As their future ideas developed, interview participants began to think about the implications of their choices for their lives now and in the future. For example, how much study they would need to do, whether they were suited to a certain line of work, if it was something they could see themselves doing long-term.

“I guess I couldn’t see myself studying for the next like, four years or whatever, and that’s what I’d have to do if I stayed with that career choice, yeah.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“I dunno when I really think about it, it doesn’t really seem something that I’d enjoy long term. And I reckon I’d get bored with it pretty quick.” Alex (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“I’ve noticed that Hairdressing and Beautician would be full of bitchiness and I don’t know if I want to go through that again.” Melissa (Female, Māori, 16 years)

For some participants, thinking seriously about their future meant that they changed their plans towards something that they thought was more realistic or achievable for them. Others refined their plans to ensure they would be able achieve their goals, adding steps to their plans to acquire the necessary skills and qualifications.

“Yeah, like I kinda had a change of plan and stuff. But like, hopefully I can do the course and then not head into like, Marine Biology straight away. I’d just be like, probably going to [city] and staying with my Mum for a bit,



after the course. Just so I can save up like, a bit of money and be able to like, carry on with Marine Biology and stuff.” Niko (Male, Māori/Pākehā, 16 years)

Most interview participants had multi-stage plans, for some these were well-developed while for others the next step in their plan was designed to give them time to contemplate future options.

“I’m going full time at [employment], coz I already work there now. And I’m part time, but full time till February and then I’m going to [City] to go to [ITP], I’ve been accepted, the first course that I’m doing is thirty-six weeks, and then the Level 4 course that I’ll be doing is eighteen weeks.” Jayden (Male, Māori/Pākehā, 16 years)

“Get a job in the Hospitality Industry and then figure out what I wanna do while I’m doing that, because you know, still young, don’t really wanna study something and get all this student loan, when I figure out I don’t actually wanna do it.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants who were not yet certain on their future direction had several ideas and back up plans. The focus here was on being prepared. These participants were not entirely sure what the future would hold but they wanted to make sure that they left their options open.

3.3.7 Activity after Youth Guarantee

About half of the interview participants had finished their Youth Guarantee programme by the second interview. The main activities were further study, employment or searching for a job or education option. The majority of those who continued education were following a path to their desired qualification or career. Some were studying to get qualifications for the future but were not yet certain about what that future was.

Most participants who were working after leaving Youth Guarantee found employment through existing connections like whānau, friends, their Youth Guarantee provider or past employers. Some participants had planned to work but had been unsuccessful in finding a job. Some continued to job search and others had revised their plans, either returning to education or moving somewhere where there were more job options.

Some who were working saw this as temporary while they waited for their next course to start, or considered their future options. A few were working part-time and studying, and some were working full-time and had opportunities for progression within their current workplace or industry.

The post-Youth Guarantee activities of interview participants will be explored in detail in our next report, which examines the longer-term pathways of participants after they leave Youth Guarantee.



3.4 Experiences of Youth Guarantee

This section discusses survey and interview participants' experiences on their Youth Guarantee programme. It examines factors reported by participants as positively or negatively affecting their experience, looks at participants' perspectives of the impact of Youth Guarantee and whether they think that extra support is needed.

3.4.1 Survey participants' experiences

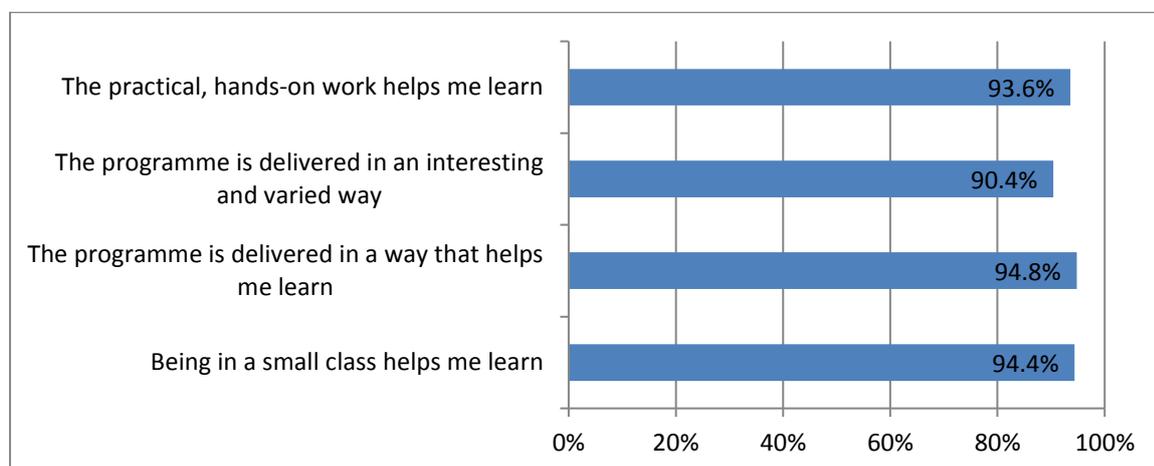
Overall, exit survey respondents were very positive about their experience at their Youth Guarantee provider. The majority of participants felt that they were achieving (93.2%), learning more than at school (90%), and could work at their own pace (88.8%).

Very few participants felt that the work was too easy (13%) or too hard (7.2%) and 83.9% felt that it was easy for them to learn at their Youth Guarantee provider.

Exit survey participants were extremely positive about the learning environment at their Youth Guarantee providers. They reported that the teaching and learning style and structures of their Youth Guarantee providers helped them learn, as shown in Figure 10.

Other aspects of the environment which worked well for participants were related to the theme of Choice/Control discussed in Section 3.5. Exit survey participants reported that their learning environment was relaxed (88%), they had more freedom than they did at school (94.4%), were treated like adults (85.8%) and given responsibility to make decisions (91.1%).

Figure 10: Percent of exit survey participants who agreed or strongly agreed with these statements



Comments from exit survey participants indicated that success in education was important to them and from their perspective, the learning environment and approach to teaching and learning at their Youth Guarantee provider helped them succeed.

- I loved that all of the staff cared about me and encouraged me to do super well, I would never have passed NCEA Level 2 at school, the way the tutors taught me was calm.



- I enjoyed learning in [Tutor's] class. Was a great environment to be learning in and felt the freedom made learning a lot easier.
- I loved the course it was so good for me and other students to learn because being in a small class is more better to learn because you get more 1 on 1 time with my tutor and yeah it's just good at [YG provider].
- I loved learning and I really enjoyed all the practical things we did, I have learnt so much from being here.
- Tutors were so friendly and all of them knew your name, if you were having trouble with your work the tutor would find different ways to help you understand, the tutor was very open to how you wanted to learn and what worked best for you.

From these comments, we can see that relationships and support contributed to the positive experiences of exit survey participants. Participants' responses regarding support from their tutor (Figure 11) and relationships with staff and students (Figure 12) are shown below.

Figure 11: Exit survey participants reporting these factors 'most of the time' or 'always' regarding their tutor

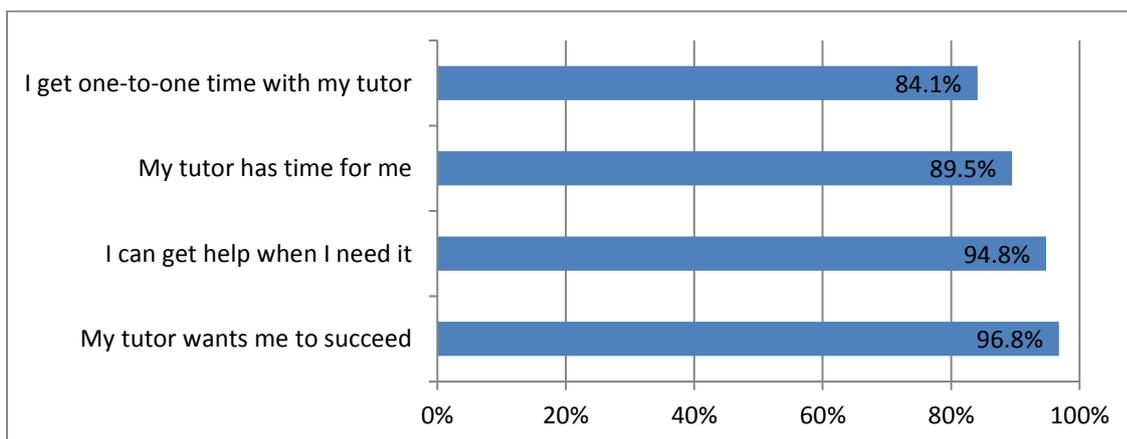
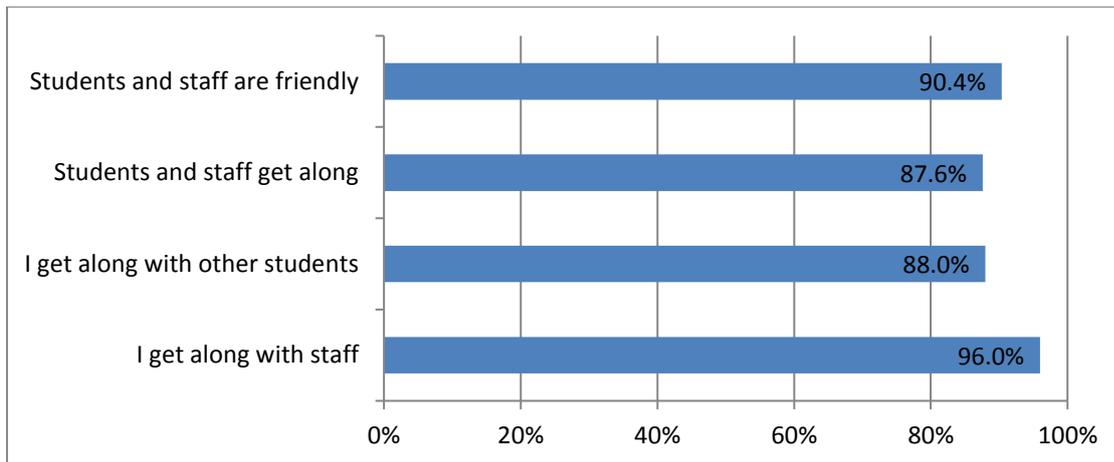


Figure 12: Exit survey participants reporting these factors 'most of the time' or 'always' in their learning environment



The interviews with Youth Guarantee learners provided more information on participants' perspectives of the impact that the learning environment, relationships and support at their Youth Guarantee provider had for them, and the role these played in learning and achievement. The feedback from exit survey responses discussed above aligns with the main themes identified in the interview data, in particular; support, relationships, structures, choice and control and achievement. These are discussed in depth in Section 3.5.

3.4.2 Expectations

The majority of exit survey participants said that their Youth Guarantee programme met (40.6%) or exceeded (49.4%) their expectations. Only 1.2% said that their programme did not meet their expectations and 8.8% said that it was different than expected. The participants who gave reasons for why the programme was different than expected made positive or neutral comments:

- I thought it wouldn't have an impact in my life but it has in a good way.
- I just thought it was going to be like school.

Overwhelmingly, the exit survey participants reported liking their Youth Guarantee programme, with 99.2% of the 241 respondents indicating that they had enjoyed their programme.

Most exit survey participants reported that they achieved what they expected (48.2%) or more than expected (46.6%) on their Youth Guarantee programme, just 5.2% said that they achieved less than expected.

3.4.3 What else contributed to participants' experiences of Youth Guarantee?

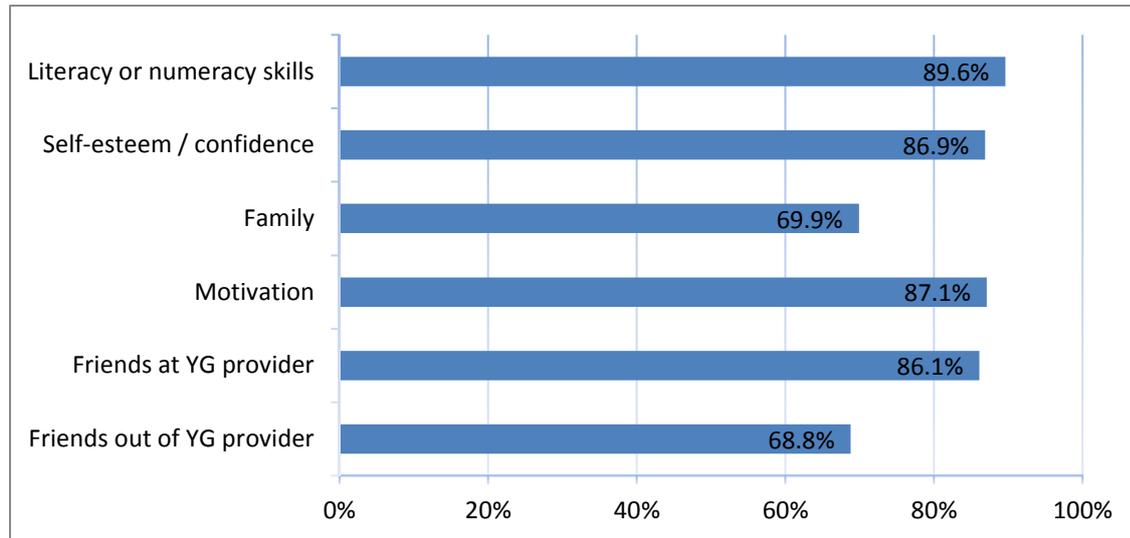
Participants were asked about the impact of a variety of factors on their time at their Youth Guarantee providers (Figures 13 and 14). Factors that were identified as either positive or negative by survey participants were also mentioned in the interviews. The comments from the interviews can shed some light on the how these factors may have contributed positively or negatively to participants' experiences.



3.4.3.1 Positive impacts for survey participants

Exit survey participants reported positive effects on their literacy and numeracy skills (89.6%), motivation (87.1%) and self-esteem or confidence (86.9%). Other factors which had a positive impact according to participants were friends, at and outside of their Youth Guarantee provider, 86.1% and 68.8% respectively, and family (69.9%).

Figure 13: Factors which had a positive impact on exit survey participants' YG experience



3.4.3.2 Positive impacts for interview participants

While we cannot comment on the relative strength of these factors for interview participants, these were identified by participants as positive aspects of their Youth Guarantee programme. Interview participants said that they were motivated to attend their programme, and more motivated for the future.

“I’m more motivated. Like I’ll get up every day, and like it’s just kind of gave me like a head start in what I want to do.” Jasmine (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Just the motivation with everybody else. Like, they not so much push you but they help, like help you to succeed. And my tutors made me realise, you know, that I can do stuff that I thought I couldn’t do.” Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“They like, gave me the confidence to (go to ITP), because I didn’t really think you know, oh I might mess it up or something but nah they gave me the confidence to go do it. I was like “I’ve done this, I can do that” so that’s how I saw it.” Tom (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

A number of interview participants said that their confidence had increased and their literacy and numeracy skills had improved as a result of their Youth Guarantee programme.



“Just mainly I’ve built a lot of confidence here, and it’s like, transferred into my everyday life.” Ashley (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

“I’ve got more confident, I was like a wee shy fella. Now I’m, I dunno, I’m like a different human being or something like that. So, yeah, I’m better, I’m a better person as well.” Nathan (Male, Māori, 17 years)

“Maths was my poor subject when I first started in January, I didn’t have anything good with maths, and then like, I did my literacy, uh reading, writing and math test at course the other day, and my maths skills have improved. And that’s only from the [YG provider].” Melissa (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Yeah, like um my reading and my spelling got a lot better, like I’m still nowhere near the A student or nothing, but it did improve.” Hayden (Male, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

Interview participants also reported that friends had a positive impact on their experience in Youth Guarantee. Some had friends at their provider when they enrolled while others commented that making friends and meeting people was a positive impact of their programme.

“Yeah. Made a lot of friends since I been here, so, I’ve made new friends since some new students have been starting, so it’s been awesome.” Paige (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

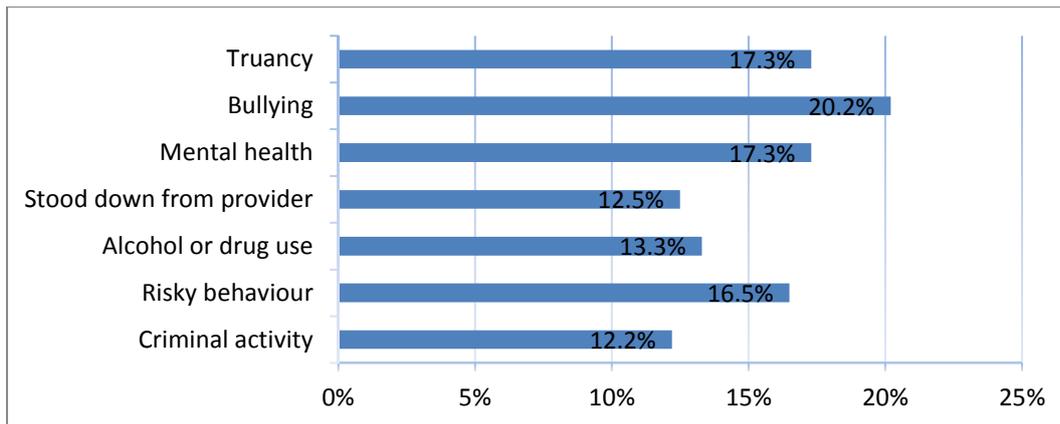
“So many different people and so many different like, not backgrounds but like backgrounds, it’s just talking to so many different people I guess it kind of opens you up a bit.” Logan (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

3.4.3.3 Negative impacts for survey participants

Some exit survey participants reported negative impacts on their experience at their Youth Guarantee provider (Figure 14). Overall, 39% of participants reported that one or more factors had a negative effect on their studying, while a quarter (24.7%) reported two or more factors.

Further analysis of the exit survey data found that Māori were significantly more likely than non-Māori to report two or more negative factors affecting their time at their Youth Guarantee provider.

Figure 14: Factors which had a negative impact on exit survey participants’ YG experience



Bullying was the most reported negative factor, with 20.2% of exit survey participants indicating that bullying had negative effects on their time at their Youth Guarantee provider. As noted in Section 3.2.4, bullying was an issue for some participants at school, with 40.7% of entry survey participants reporting some negative effects from bullying on their life at secondary school. In the entry survey, 21.1% of participants said that they thought bullying may have a negative impact on their life at their Youth Guarantee provider. In the exit survey, 11.3% of participants reported that there was bullying ‘most of the time’ or ‘always’ in their learning environment.

Of the 42 comments from exit survey participants about aspects of their programme that they didn’t enjoy, 52.4% of these were related to other learners. Not all referred to bullying, some mentioned drama and the negative impact of other students on learning. These comments indicated that although, overall, peers had a positive impact for participants in Youth Guarantee, this was not always the case.

- I didn't really like being in an all-girls class just because quite often there was bits of drama and it just made it harder to focus and get work done.

3.4.3.4 Negative impacts for interview participants

Only a few interview participants reported experiencing bullying at their Youth Guarantee providers so it is difficult to get a clear sense of the overall impact of bullying. Some interview participants spoke about ‘drama’ and ‘bitchiness’, however this was not necessarily related to bullying. These experiences were in stark contrast with those of the majority of interview participants.

“Probably when it came to the whole bitchiness side of things, like, there was one group of friends over one side and there was another on the other side and they clashed. ...and there was the bitchiness and the rumours and all that.” Melissa (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Some interview participants reported that mental health affected their time at their provider. Many reported that they had received help, or felt that they could manage their mental health better, since enrolling in Youth Guarantee. However, some participants disengaged from their Youth Guarantee programme as a result of their mental health.



“I’m still overcoming it. Sometimes it affects my learning and my thinking but by the end of the day I make sure it doesn’t stop me from where I am by just getting on with my work, or just going out for a smoke when I feel like I’m in a dark space, or I just go to someone that I can trust and talk to them.” Casey (Female, Māori, 18 years)

“Um, I hardly went to [YG provider] ... I was either sick or I just couldn’t, I didn’t want to go to [YG provider] because I felt anxious.” Ben (Male, Pākehā/Other Ethnicity, 16 years)

“Just coz I went through so much growing up, like I didn’t have the best childhood and then talking to [counsellor] made me realise I did need help that way. Yeah. When she referred me to a counsellor, it was the best decision ever.” Melissa (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Non-attendance was an issue for some interview participants. Most participants felt that poor attendance was related to their own motivation and were less likely to attribute it to disengagement or poor relationships, which they reported as the main causes of non-attendance at school.

“Um well, I did enjoy it, but I just, I didn’t have good attendance, and I couldn’t, like I can keep up with the work, but I wasn’t there all the time, so I was behind. I just, I’ve always had a thing with attendance, I don’t, I dunno, I just rather do other things or don’t show up, or yeah.” Ella (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 15 years)

A few interview participants were stood down or asked to leave their Youth Guarantee provider. Some of these participants reported that they did not get along with other students and/or staff.

“Um, it was alright, I wouldn’t say great but some of the tutors were nasty. That’s partially why I got kicked out. I don’t know, coz they were trying to change the way I talk, because they didn’t like me. That’s my opinion.” Ethan (Male, Māori, 16 years)

Drug and alcohol use had varying impacts for interview participants. A number reported that it had a negative impact for them but they no longer used drugs and/or alcohol. According to participants, this was due to the influence of their Youth Guarantee programme, and also because they were more grown up. It is possible that drugs and alcohol had a negative impact for those participants who mentioned these in their first interview and were unable to be tracked for the second interview.

“I don’t even smoke anymore. But at all. Coz I like, have fun here. You know when you like have an addiction, and you find an occupation, you just forget about it? Yeah. It’s like that... It’s just not right, you know? You just



don't get stoned and then do work." Grace (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 15 years)

"I didn't wanna show my drug side here aye, so I decided not to come to course. And now that I'm all fixed up and better I'm back here." Brayden (Male, Māori, 18 years)

"Oh, when I first started, it just made me drink a lot. Coz everyone here was pisseheads ... the same people but they've just got their lives on track now." Aroha (Female, Māori, 17 years)

A number of interview participants who spoke about drug and alcohol use were also engaged in risky behaviour or criminal activity. In fact, there were no participants engaged in these activities who were not misusing drugs or alcohol, although most of these participants said they wanted to or were trying to change.

"Yeah, I used to do Counselling for it, that's from the Court as well. But yeah, it's a big problem, expensive problem, really expensive problem. But nah, I reckon that would probably be the only thing that would stop me from achieving my goals, would be the drugs." Alex (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

"Yeah, coz I'm back in the Court system ... it's just disorderly behaviour. Not even. It was a different person. And I happened to be by that person, and I was like "oh no!" My other one got wiped. I'm only on this one charge. So, you'll get me into trouble man. I was angry as." Awhina (Female, Māori, 17 years)

Other challenges mentioned by interview participants were transport and family responsibilities. Some participants found it difficult to get to their Youth Guarantee programme and this could affect their attendance.

"I get up at six o'clock in the morning, wait for the bus at seven, and then, get here eight, do course, finish course at three and then wait for the bus 'til 5. I don't get home till about six." Ethan (Male, Māori, 16 years)

"Um, the only problem was me being on time, cos I have to travel far, sometimes trains get delayed, and it's a long way to get to [YG provider]." Nicole (Female, Māori, 18 years)

"Kind of like the transport money I was getting, I reckon wasn't enough, but yeah." Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

Some participants had children or family responsibilities which could affect their ability to attend or focus on their learning.



“My Mother’s really, really sick, and um, so that would be the only thing that would stop me. I’d have to sort out my brother and sister coz I’m the oldest of three and everything.” Rachel (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

“I think a lot of pressure and trying to deal with Course at the same time as trying to deal with a baby now, coz I wanted to do um, [study], but I’ve had to put that on hold, so yeah.” Courtney (Female, Māori, 19 years)

“Like, coz I have to drop my niece and nephew to school before I come here, so they’re like he’s like four, so it’s kind of a hassle taking him to school and like dropping him and stuff, so yeah, time management is my greatest issue I think.” Amit (Male, Other Ethnicity, 19 years)

3.4.4 Impact of Youth Guarantee for interview participants

While the factors explored above indicate that, overall, exit survey participants had a positive experience at their Youth Guarantee providers, it is difficult to gauge the impact that these factors and YGFF have on participants’ lives through quantitative measures. Here we discuss interview participants’ perspectives of the impact of Youth Guarantee before turning to exit survey participants’ perspectives on their preparedness for their next step.

The information below highlights the main ways in which interview participants felt their Youth Guarantee programme had had an impact for them. Interview participants’ perspectives of the impact of Youth Guarantee can be grouped into three broad categories; skills, change and preparation for the future.

3.4.4.1 Skills

Participants reported that they gained a variety of skills from their Youth Guarantee programme. Some talked about gaining skills that would help them in life, regardless of the path they chose to take.

“Um, practical knowledge, just about life, how to get a house and things like that, how to get on a lease, how to buy a car and things like that... And just even, even like how to cook meals and stuff like that.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Yeah, um, just being, having positive body language towards everyone, like I figured out what’s positive and what’s negative, and what people will find more opening. So, that was good, and just the way I talk to them and just not being afraid to mess up, sort of thing.” Ella (Female, Māori/Pākehā, 15 years)

Many participants said that their communication skills had improved as a result of their Youth Guarantee programme and reported increased confidence through developing skills in this area. For some participants, having these skills increased their engagement in their



communities. A number planned to enter service industries and valued the customer service skills that they gained; they reported feeling more confident about entering the workforce.

“It’s good because when I first started I was a bit shy about talking to customers but now I can just talk to anyone and it just looks like that I’ve known that person for a long time so I’m just not scared to talk to anyone now.” Jayden (Male, Māori, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Yeah, like when I meet new people now I like always ask how they are and like, how their days been and all that sort of stuff, like just random people, like strangers at the supermarket. Yeah, just anyone I see now, like if I go into the petrol station to pay for something I’ll stand there and have a conversation with them for five minutes, don’t know them from a bar of soap.” Alex (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants spoke about feeling more prepared for further study and said they had developed study skills and techniques as a result of their Youth Guarantee programme. Time management and organisation were seen as particularly important by participants who planned to enter higher level study.

“How to organise my time management and yeah, so you’re not like, falling behind, you have an idea of what you learned the whole day... just like, as soon as I get an assignment or something, just work on it, and like pretty much just don’t leave it till the last minute, even knowing you have like two weeks ahead to do it, just do it straight away.” Laila (Female, Other Ethnicity, 17 years)

“It’s just basically through everything [tutor]’s taught me, and everything that I’ve learned. Because you have to be organised, you have to get prepared, you have to do everything that you can beforehand, to get the end result better.” Ashley (Female, Pākehā, 18 years)

Participants reported that they were more confident in their ability to learn due to their experience on Youth Guarantee and were more likely to consider further study since experiencing success in education.

“I’ve sorta learnt a different learning style and things like that. And I can adapt to different like, teachings, and stuff like that now, better, since I’ve been here. Coz every tutor’s sort of got their own style of teaching and they’re not all the same.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Yeah. I used to think that I didn’t need education. I hated it, but now getting an education has actually made me think that you do actually need it, because it’s changed the way that I think about things, knowing



that I can do it now, instead of thinking before that I can't." Mikayla
(Female, Māori, 16 years)

Gaining skills for employment was particularly important for participants, especially those who had struggled to find employment in the past. Participants reported that they were more confident applying and interviewing for jobs.

"I feel like I've had the practice and a push from our tutors... When we done our fake job interviews, our tutor assessed us on our body language and then after we had done the interview she would tell us what we had done wrong and how we could improve it. And when I went for my real job interview, last week, I found myself doing what I was doing wrong, in the fake interviews, yeah. So, I had to like, just remember what she told me not to do, and then I just relaxed and wasn't so nervous. Yeah." Kaia
(Female, Māori, 19 years)

"I've definitely learnt a lot of skills, about the work industry, like I didn't even know how to write a CV, yeah but, and my own resume and I wrote that all by myself, like two weeks ago. Emailed them out, got a few, got a few emails back. I applied online. Sent my CV to all of them ... before I wouldn't do that, I would like get a friend to do it, yeah but I wrote my own on this one." Jess (Demographic information not shared)

Some participants planned to work in a specific career or industry and had gained skills from their Youth Guarantee programmes that would help them towards their goal, either through preparing them for further study or an apprenticeship.

"Maths, um like, just the basic stuff. For coz carpentry involves a lot of maths, and like we had to know how much centimetres are there, oh, how much millimetres are there in a centimetre and stuff." Hemi (Male, Māori, 17 years)

"Um, like with hair colouring and stuff, I didn't know a lot about that. I'd coloured people's hair but found out new ways that help to get it done better, with a better outcome, um proper ways of like, blow drying hair, I learnt a lot about the skin and the head and stuff, and your hair." Brittany
(Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Others had a career in mind, and felt the skills they had gained from Youth Guarantee were flexible and would help them in their planned career and in employment in general.

"I've gained customer service, so I know that's definitely going to help me in the workplace and become a flight attendant, yeah. I think now I might have a better chance of getting different jobs that are more to my liking now, since I've gained those skills." Hayley (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)



3.4.4.2 Change



Many participants mentioned that their Youth Guarantee programme had changed them and influenced a change in pathway. A number of participants credited their Youth Guarantee programme for helping them change the direction that their life was headed and providing them with alternative options.

“I would have not got my Level 1s. I would have not passed. I would have been probably locked up, because I was just turning to robberies. Like, it’s shown me like, who’s friends and who’s not, coz there’s only, some people that are only around you for money, or like what you got, and it made me realise, like being here. Coz me and [tutor] had a long talk about everything.” Josiah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)

“Just my behaviour has changed, and just the way I was has changed, because I had gone from getting into heaps of fights with people and just not getting anywhere and then I came here and that all stopped. Yeah. I had a lot less pressure on me here, and I was just I had something to focus on.” Mikayla (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“I thought I was going to be a bum for the rest of my life! But nah, now that I went there, you know, I kind of got my ideas opened, and set me up



towards this (study at ITP) so I'm thankful for it." Tom (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants felt they had become different people as a result of their Youth Guarantee programme. They attributed this to the support they received, their positive relationships with staff and students, and the experience of achieving in education.

"When I say changed, it's turned me into, I'd say a better person. Like I was just, I wasn't nice, like I'd always have drama, I was always like, stubborn, and then when I started going to [YG Provider] I changed coz I realised that I, um, that I had a lot of people that care and that I just don't need drama." Amber (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

"Yeah I've changed big time. I used to be an alcoholic, drank every day, but now no, I wouldn't. Like (before) I wouldn't even think about going to course. I couldn't be stuffed with it. I just thought it was all dumb. But then all the little kids, my nephews and them, they were wagging school, and I was like "oh, they're going to end up like me", and I was like "oh far out." And then yeah, just had to find something to do with my life. And then this course, I think it was just all the help I was getting. To like, make me wanna come back." Awhina (Female, Māori, 17 years)

Participants also talked about a change in the way they saw themselves and the possibilities that were available to them.

"Before I saw myself as someone that wasn't going to get through life easily, one of those people that are relying on friends, and not having a stable life and that. And so now I see myself with a stable life and a good chance of achieving my goals and dreams." Hayley (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)

"When I grew up I was sort of independent on my own, like I liked being independent, in myself, and yeah now, from being at the course, it's changed my perspective that I don't have to be independent to myself, like, there's people there that you know, that do wanna be there for me, and I don't have to be independent and do everything myself." Alex (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

"I've absolutely changed. I used to think that um, I was a failure, I was stupid, I couldn't achieve anything, that I wasn't bright, you know, that I wasn't worth anything. And now you know, I just feel like I do know I'm worth something, I can go out and achieve things if I want to. If I put the time and effort in, you know, I can do it. And that's been a real self-esteem boost." Rachel (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)



Confidence played a large role in the changes noted above. Many participants said that their self-confidence and confidence in their ability to succeed in the future had increased due to their experiences at their Youth Guarantee providers.

“Yeah, I’ve um, didn’t really have that much self-confidence when I started here, and that’s seriously improved since then, so yeah. I mean I would never have tried doing speaking in front of people, like I do now. Organising things for other people is not something I’d do, I’d always leave it for someone else, yet the course has taught me how to do that, and to be confident when doing it, so yeah, it’s pretty cool. I feel like I’m more able to give more of myself to whatever I choose to do, (YG) helped me bring out my best skills and allow me to use them better, so yeah.” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)

“And yeah just believing in myself and knowing that I CAN do things if I really try to. I just, I’m now way more confident with talking to people, and just everything like that, so it does feel like I could have so many other opportunities other than agriculture.” Ella (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 15 years)

A number of interview participants said that meeting new people and developing new friendships was a positive impact of their Youth Guarantee programme. Some participants talked about meeting friends who were a better influence on them, or who they had more positive relationships with. For some participants, meeting new people was part of the change in who they were and how they saw themselves.

“Probably that more diverse with people coz like, when I was at school I’d just hang out with sports groups and kind of shrugged off other people I guess. But now like I open my eyes I guess, and see other people.” Ryan (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Like at course, I had friends. I met better people, and, they just changed the way I like, they just changed me.” Amber (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

3.4.4.3 Preparation for the future

Participants said that their experience at their Youth Guarantee provider and the skills they had gained had prepared them for the future. Many said their experience had increased their motivation and provided them with new ways to think about their future.

“It has given me more motivation to like do something instead of just sitting at home... Like, before that I was just a school dropout, who didn’t have any qualifications and yeah, nothing really going for her, but now I’ve got my qualifications and actually want to look for a job, and you



know ready for the big wide world ... plans can be bigger now. Bigger and better.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Um, I think I’m more, like mature enough, like I’m like thinking about my future, like just doing something good for myself. And like trying to succeed in life. ...I think [YG provider] has like, helped me along the way, like just like helped me to grow up a bit.” Amit (Male, Other Ethnicity, 19 years)

As mentioned earlier, participants were motivated by their successes at their Youth Guarantee provider and this encouraged them in their path to the future.

“Just looking back at earlier in the year and things like that, and seeing how I was earlier in the year, and just realising that I’ve changed, just helps me sort of improve I guess.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants reported that learning at their Youth Guarantee provider had helped them find direction for their future, develop their future plans and consider a wider range of future possibilities.

“Mmm, I like, I dunno, just being at [YG provider], I’m realising that it’s not as hard as you think it is. Like school you think it’s really hard and lots of assignments and exams and then, [YG provider’s] like really relaxing and yeah, I just, it’s made me more enthused about wanting to study as it’s not as hard.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Um, it’s given me, like options. More options like, for what I want to do. So, like I could either go and work or like I could go try and be like an assistant in a salon, or try like go round all the salons, so it’s given me like, another option to help me find something to do, like carry on with.” Jasmine (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Well they helped me kind of sort out where I wanted to go with my, kind of job options, because I guess it was really talking with [tutor 1] and [tutor 2] that made me decide to go for the army. Um, yeah, I guess if I hadn’t really been here I would still kind of be jumping from job to job or looking for some way to complete the NCEAs to help me with the jobs.” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)

Overall, interview participants felt well-prepared for their next step after leaving their Youth Guarantee provider, even those without solid plans or pathways felt confident in their ability to achieve whatever they wanted and forge a path for themselves using their new skills and knowledge.



3.4.5 Survey participants: preparation for the future

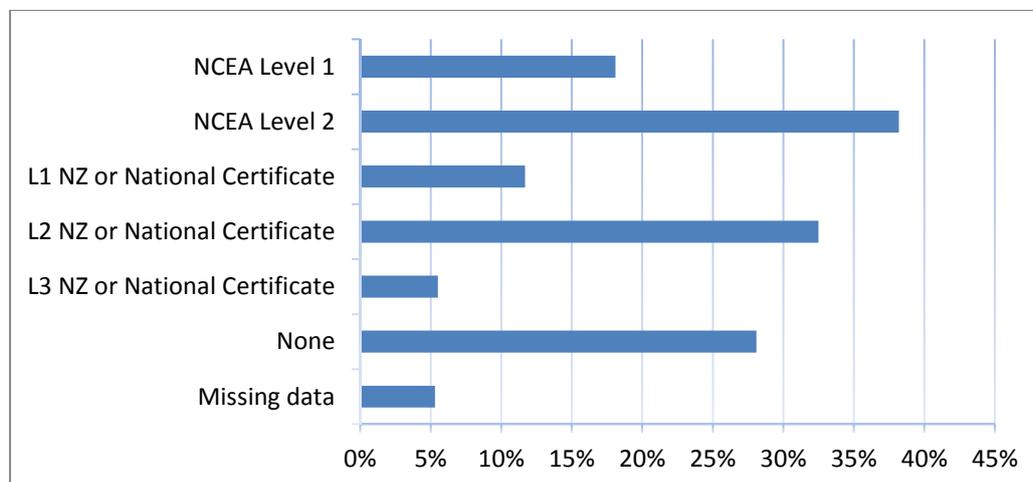
The data from the interviews discussed above aligns with what we heard from exit survey participants about whether their Youth Guarantee programme had prepared them for their next step. Most exit survey participants (92.8%) said that their programme had helped prepare them for what to do next and 87.6% reported that they felt well-informed to make their next step after finishing their Youth Guarantee programme. Ninety-six percent said that they had gained skills and knowledge that would help them with their next step.

3.4.6 Outcomes

3.4.6.1 Qualification achievement

Based on the qualifications data from the participating Youth Guarantee providers, the qualification attainment of the entry and exit survey participants is displayed in Figure 15.

Figure 15: The highest qualification held by survey participants on exit from Youth Guarantee



Before the start of their Youth Guarantee programme, 166 participants had no formal school qualifications. By the end of their Youth Guarantee programme:

- 33.7% of these participants still had no qualifications
- 34.9% had a NZ or National Certificate or NCEA Level 1
- 31.3% had attained NCEA Level 2 or higher.

3.4.6.2 Literacy and Numeracy

The Literacy and Numeracy Youth Assessment Tool is an adaption of the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Assessment Tool, which has been tailored for learners between 15 and 25 years. It is an online adaptive tool that provides robust and reliable information on the reading, writing and numeracy skills of young people. This tool was developed by the Tertiary Education Commission.

Entry and exit literacy data were available for 289 participants. There was a significant increase in the average score on the reading assessment (literacy) from a mean of 560 at entry



to the programme to 576 at exit¹⁹. The size of this difference in mean scores was found to be medium ($r=.26$).

According to their Literacy Gain Score²⁰, 112 participants had a decrease in literacy scores while 175 participants had an increase, including 39 with a statistically significant increase.

Figure 16: Participants' literacy step at entry to, and exit from, their YG programme

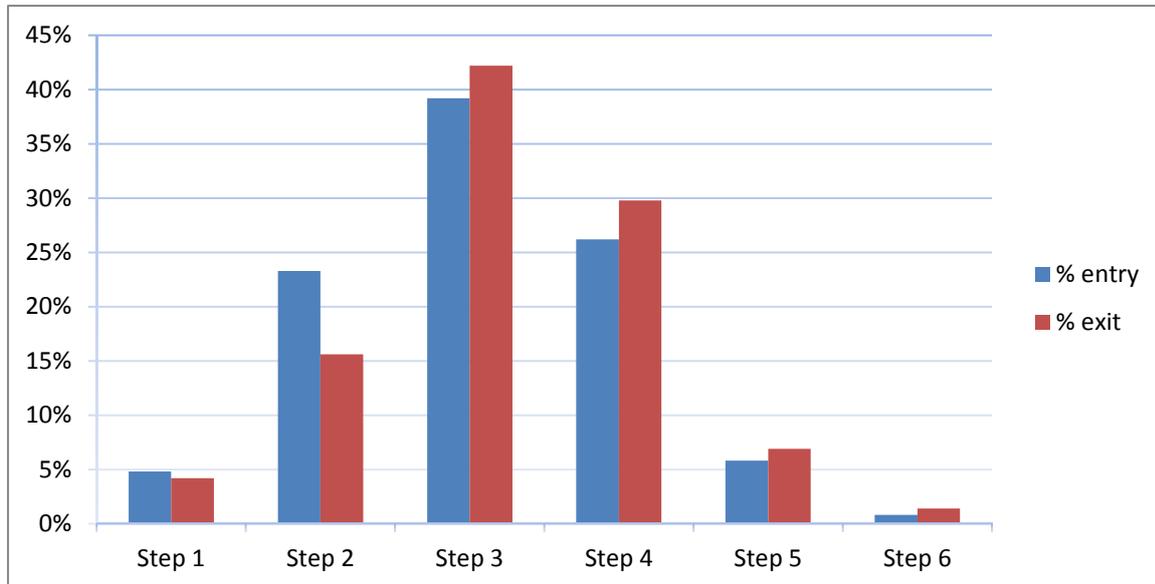


Figure 16 shows that learners were on similar literacy steps at entry to, and exit from, their programme.

Entry and exit numeracy data was available for 293 participants. There was a significant increase in the average score on the numeracy assessment from a mean of 543 at entry to the programme to 570 at exit²¹. The size of this difference in mean scores was found to be medium ($r=.40$).

Eighty participants had a decrease in numeracy scores, while 213 had an increase, including 51 with a statistically significant increase according to their Numeracy Gain Score.

Figure 17: Participants' numeracy step at entry to, and exit from, their YG programme

¹⁹ $t=-4.59$ ($df=288$); $p<.001$.

²⁰ The Gain Report allows organisations to see which learners have made a statistically significant learning gain between two assessments. The Gain Report is very useful when looking at the impact of a programme of learning. It provides an overall picture of how much change the Assessment Tool is able to register between assessments. When a large number of learners are able to show a statistically significant change, it is fair to conclude that the evidence points to meaningful progress for learners in the programme. <http://www.literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/Resources/355055>

²¹ $t=-7.43$ ($df=292$); $p<.001$

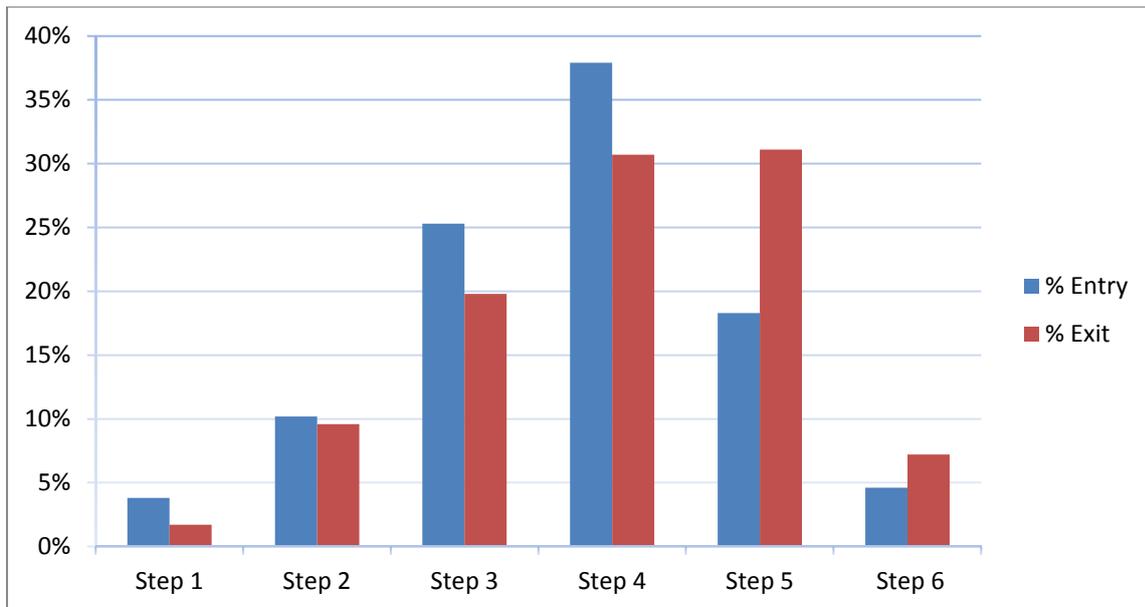


Figure 17 shows that there was an increase in the number of learners on step 5 for numeracy (from 18.3% at entry to 31.1% at exit).

3.4.7 Prediction of a good outcome

The Youth Guarantee Scheme provides foundation education choices to support young people to achieve NCEA Level 2 and progress to further education or participation in the workforce. Therefore, a strict evaluation of a good outcome in YGFF would be the number of young people who achieve NCEA Level 2. We examined the quantitative data collected through the surveys and from Youth Guarantee providers to identify factors which were associated with a good outcome.

At exit from their Youth Guarantee programme:

- 123 participants had no qualifications
- 124 participants had a NZ/National Certificate or NCEA Level 1²²
- 167 participants had NCEA Level 2 or above
- 23 participants had missing data.

Table 9 shows the associations between a series of factors and gaining NCEA Level 2 at exit from Youth Guarantee. This data is based on information from 379 participants; a number of participants were excluded from this analysis.

We had some qualification information for 437 participants, however 42 of these were removed from further analysis of the predictors of NCEA Level 2 outcome, as they either already had NCEA Level 2 on entry to their Youth Guarantee programme, or they might have.

Of the participants who were excluded, 26 had NCEA Level 2, three had NCEA Level 3 and one had University Entrance at the start of their Youth Guarantee programme. Four learners had

²² Or a Unitec Certificate in Foundation Studies Level 2



other (unknown) qualifications. Finally, eight learners had missing data. This left 395 learners who definitely didn't have NCEA Level 2 at the start of their programme.

Of the 395 learners who definitely didn't have NCEA Level 2 at the start of their programme, 16 had missing qualifications data at exit. These participants were also removed from further analysis.

This left 159 learners that attained NCEA Level 2 by exit from their programme (that didn't have it already) and 220 that didn't attain NCEA Level 2 by exit from their programme.

3.4.7.1 A note on interpreting this data

The final column in this table indicates the statistical significance of the difference between groups. The p-value is used to determine whether the difference in NCEA Level 2 achievement between groups is significant. With p-values, lower numbers (≤ 0.05) indicate a greater chance that a difference exists. Values below 0.05 are considered statistically significant as they indicate that there is at least a 95% probability that this difference exists and did not occur by chance. When something is reported as significant, this means that there really is a difference; significance does not refer to how big that difference is.

3.4.7.2 What predicts gaining NCEA Level 2 for our project participants?

While a number of significant associations are reported in Table 9, when all factors are considered together, some no longer have a significant effect on gaining NCEA Level 2, and some do have an impact. Methods of logistic regression are used to predict the probability of gaining NCEA Level 2 based on a one unit change in an independent variable when all other independent variables are kept constant. The appropriateness of the resulting model was tested by confirming the normality of the standardised residuals with normal probability plots.

A logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of a number of demographic, pre-Youth Guarantee factors and issues during the programme on the likelihood of attaining NCEA Level 2. The logistic regression model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(3) = 22.77$, $p < .001$. The model correctly classified 63.9% of cases.

Table 9: Factors associated with gaining NCEA Level 2



| | Attained NCEA Level 2 at exit | | Significantly different |
|--|-------------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| | Yes | No | p |
| Demographic factors (n=368) | | | |
| % female | 55.2 | 46.3 | .05 |
| % Māori | 34.0 | 37.3 | NS* |
| % New Zealand European | 76.7 | 65.5 | .012 |
| Mean age | 17.3 | 17.1 | NS |
| Previous schooling related factors | | | |
| % no qualifications prior to starting (n=379) | 32.7 | 51.8 | .001 |
| % low decile school (n=346) | 29.5 | 46.0 | .017 |
| % living with both parents at start (n=300) | 23.4 | 19.8 | NS |
| % bullied reason for leaving school (n=300) | 28.1 | 17.4 | .02 |
| % kicked out of school (n=300) | 9.4 | 16.9 | .043 |
| % left school because getting into trouble (n=300) | 22.7 | 28.5 | NS |
| % left school because wasn't learning anything (n=300) | 32.8 | 26.7 | NS |
| % left school because didn't understand the work (n=300) | 24.2 | 15.7 | .045 |
| % know what they will do after YG programme (n=297) | 75.4 | 63.7 | .021 |
| Psychosocial factors before Youth Guarantee | | | |
| Mean Rosenberg Self-esteem scale score (n=266) | 27.3 | 27.6 | NS |
| % needed help with mental health before YG (n=295) | 46.0 | 32.5 | .013 |
| % not living with parents before YG (n=300) | 26.6 | 35.5 | NS |
| % living in current house less than a year (n=295) | 40 | 41.2 | NS |
| Psychosocial factors during Youth Guarantee | | | |
| Mean Rosenberg Self-esteem scale score (n=213) | 30.8 | 29.4 | NS |
| % not living with parent(s) during YG (n=226) | 70.0 | 65.5 | NS |
| % living in current house less than a year (n=211) | 47.5 | 40.0 | NS |
| Mean low self-esteem/confidence (n=226) | 1.46 | 1.79 | .010 |
| Mean low motivation (n=224) | 1.49 | 1.77 | .013 |
| Mean bullying impact (n=223) | 3.00 | 3.10 | NS |
| Mean mental health impact (n=224) | 2.49 | 2.66 | NS |
| Mean alcohol or drug use impact (n=224) | 2.83 | 3.01 | NS |

*NS = Not significant

The results of the model fitting for NCEA Level 2 and previous schooling-related factors are shown in Table 10. This shows for all significant factors the logistic regression coefficients (B), standard errors (SE), and the significance of the coefficients (p), for the regression model. The logistic regression coefficients (B) for this model show the expected changes in the log odds in favour of having NCEA Level 2 for a one-unit shift in the independent measures. $\text{Exp}(B)$ is the odds ratio predicted by the model.

Table 10: Logistic regression models of factors from prior to YG associated with NCEA Level 2



| Factor | B | SE | p | Exp(B) |
|---|------|------|------|--------|
| 14 or more credits prior to starting at YG provider | .755 | .266 | .005 | 2.13 |
| High decile school | .675 | .266 | .011 | 1.96 |
| Know what you will do after YG Programme | .719 | .291 | .013 | 2.05 |

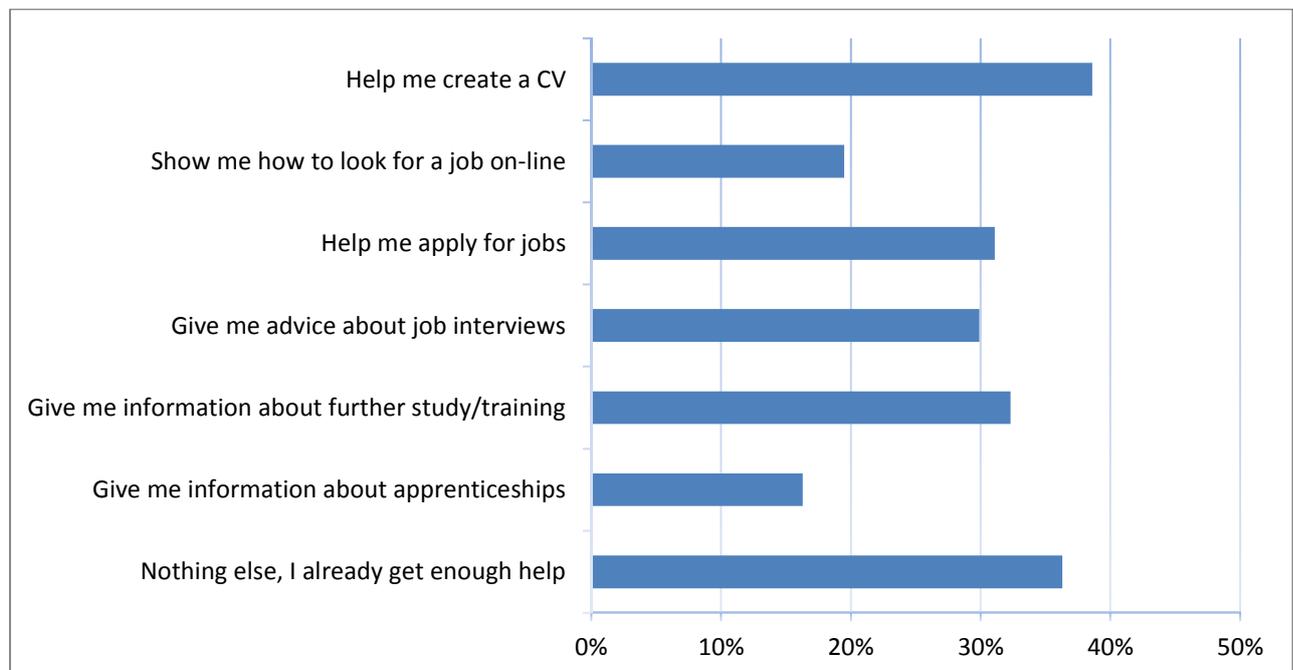
The results suggest that those with 14 or more credits at any level prior to entering their Youth Guarantee provider had odds of gaining NCEA Level 2 that were 2.13 times higher than those who did not, while those who came from a high decile school had odds of achieving NCEA Level 2 that were 1.96 times higher than those from a low decile school. Finally, those who stated that they had a plan as to what they would do after their Youth Guarantee programme had odds of achieving NCEA Level 2 that were 2.05 times higher than those who did not know what they were going to do.

In summary, having qualifications when entering Youth Guarantee, coming from a high decile school, and having a plan each approximately doubled the likelihood that participants would achieve NCEA Level 2 during their Youth Guarantee programme.

3.4.8 Suggestions for improvement

Although the majority of exit survey participants felt ready for their next step, some participants indicated that they would like more help in some areas. Feedback from exit survey participants about what else their Youth Guarantee provider could have done to prepare them for their next step is shown in Figure 18. This was a multi-choice question; multiple responses were allowed and participants had the option of leaving a comment.

Figure 18: What else could your YG provider do to prepare you for what to do next?



Exit survey participants were asked if there was anything else they needed from their Youth Guarantee provider. Some participants wanted more help with CVs, job search or information about further study. Just over 35% said they already had enough help (36.3%). The majority



of interview participants were happy with the support from their Youth Guarantee provider and felt prepared for their next step. Interview participants were asked an open question about this, while exit survey participants were given a list of options which may account for the difference in results.

Interview participants were asked if they had any suggestions for improving their Youth Guarantee provider or programme, or the YGFF scheme. The majority said that they would not change their programme, and made few suggestions. There were no obvious patterns in the suggestions for improvement.

3.5 Themes from interviews with Youth Guarantee students



This section explores the main themes arising from the first two interviews with YGFF learners. These interviews were analysed qualitatively to assess which factors were significant for participants in relation to their transitions and experiences with Youth Guarantee; and to determine participants' perspectives of how and why they make decisions about their future. These themes provide a starting point for examining how education programmes can provide effective support and meet young people's education, employment and personal needs. Understanding how young people interpret their experiences and choices is an important element of this.



The key themes discussed in this section are Connections, Choice/Control and Learning and Achievement. These themes are interconnected and their role in participants' experiences and pathways varies according to the contexts of individual participants. The theme Connections explores the influence of support, relationships and belonging in participants' pathways and their education and employment experiences. Participants' strategies for gaining and maintaining control over their choices are examined in the theme Choice/Control. This theme explores the roles of choice and control in experiences with education and in transitions between education and employment. The final main theme, Learning and Achievement, analyses participants' perspectives on what helps them learn and achieve, and the impact that achievement has had on their lives.

3.5.1 Connections

3.5.1.1 *Support, relationships and belonging*

The theme of Connections refers to support and relationships, which were a major theme in the entry and exit interviews. Support and relationships are closely connected and reinforce each other; support plays a role in developing and maintaining positive relationships, and positive relationships pave the way for support to be provided.

The presence or absence of support and positive relationships influenced participants' experiences at school, at their Youth Guarantee providers and during their transitions; and influenced their ideas and decisions about the future. When participants spoke about support for learning, this was often connected to a holistic interpretation of support which considered the whole person. Their descriptions of positive relationships were also built on this interpretation. Participants talked about support and positive relationships with teachers, whānau, friends and support workers. Participants who had positive relationships with teachers at their schools or education providers said that their teachers understood their learning and their personal needs.

The provision of support and creation of positive relationships contributed to a sense of belonging for most participants at Youth Guarantee providers. When participants were not well-supported or did not experience positive relationships, they tended to become disengaged. Furthermore, support and positive relationships facilitated learning and achievement, which contributed to participants' engagement and motivation in learning.

3.5.1.2 *Feeling Valued*

Feeling valued was the main component of positive relationships and the provision of effective support. Participants said that they felt valued when they were treated with respect, supported to learn and make decisions, and when their needs were recognised and met. Feeling valued by their Youth Guarantee providers had a positive impact on participants' experiences and their relationships with staff.

“Well, basically when I first went there, everyone was just like, happy to see me, and like, everyone was just like, talking to me, like right away, and I was like, unexpected right there, eh... [Tutor] introduced me to



everybody, and then made sure that like, I was knowing exactly what I was doing in my work.” Jake (Male, Pākehā, 17)

“Like, they not so much push you but they help, like help you to succeed. And my tutors made me realise, you know, that I can do stuff that I thought I couldn’t do... I don’t know what you’d call it, like kind of like cheered me on, kind of thing.” Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17)

“They like actually um treat you like a grown up and stuff and they help you, and they take the time to help you, whenever you need it.” Brooke (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 18)

3.5.1.3 Being Present

Interview participants said that Youth Guarantee staff were engaged in their learning and cared about them as people, which made them feel valued. Youth Guarantee staff had time for young people, listened to them, took time to support them and did not give up, especially when they were struggling with learning or another issue. In other words, staff were a consistent supportive presence in participants’ learning and in their lives.

“If you need help they just come like, not right to you if they’re dealing with something else, but, they know that you need help so they go like, to you like afterwards. And if I don’t get it, he’ll keep explaining it ‘til I understand. Where at school if you say “I still don’t understand” they just say “well that’s your fault”.” Jake (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“It’s way different. More like, the tutors are more open minded. Instead of just chucking you work, they actually, like they help you one on one. Like they’re real, like they help you understand easier, I reckon. And they have more time too.” Jasmine (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“Because the tutors actually, you know, they talk, they talk to you. You know, they’ll call you one by one up to the table, to tell you, “this is how you can do it. These are the ways you can do it”.” Megan (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)

As well as being present in participants’ learning, tutors provided support for other issues and showed participants that they cared about them through being welcoming and creating a sense of belonging. The positive relationships that participants had with their tutors facilitated access to support in other areas of participants’ lives.

“The Tutors, they’re awesome, help us out as much as they can, sometimes even out of course if we’re having troubles at home, they help us out.” Kaia (Female, Māori, 19 years)



“When we walk in the doors, they’ll be like, “oh good morning, how’s your day going?” and if they see a little bit of sadness, or anger, they’re always like “what’s wrong, do you need to see someone to talk to, or do you need to talk to me, or...” something like that ... if you’re having a bad day they’ll all just know and they all just you know, just talk to you about it.” Megan (Female, Pākehā, 16 years)

“It’s good here coz like, they’ll keep in touch with you and that, like they’ll message you on Facebook and that and see what you up to. If you don’t come in or anything like that. I’m like you know, it feels like I, like people want me here.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

The support received from Youth Guarantee providers was in stark contrast to participants’ descriptions of their school experiences. Most participants reported that they did not have a sense of connection with staff at school as they were not as involved in their learning. Many participants said they thought that their teachers at school didn’t care about them or believe in them. These participants did not experience positive relationships at school and did not feel well-supported. The teaching style described by participants likely contributed to this as it provided fewer opportunities for teachers and young people to interact, for example, learning from the board.

Whānau, friends and support workers also provided interview participants with support through being present. For participants who did not have a lot of family support, positive relationships with friends, support workers and Youth Guarantee providers were essential in providing support, encouragement and advice about the future.

“All the [peers] smoke drugs and stuff, but they were trying to like encourage me (not to) and I was like “oh yeah, I got some people willing to help me. Now I can help myself kind of”. Coz some of them were like giving me the drive, to not do that.” Tyrone (Male, Pākehā/Pasifika, 16 years)

“I’ve had a lot of support from the ladies in the Youth Service coz I was having a lot of family problems last year and to some extent still have this year. Just being able to go and talk to them has been really helpful, so, yeah.” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)

“Um, well I wasn’t actually going to finish, I was just going to leave and get a job, since I’ve moved out of home I don’t really have an income to support me but, um, the manager and my tutor convinced me that it won’t take me long to finish my work and that they wanted to see me succeed, so I decided to stay.” Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)



Participants said that having positive relationships and sources of support in their lives encouraged them to think more, or more positively, about the future. Many participants reported that since being at their Youth Guarantee provider they had a clearer idea about their future compared to when they were at school. The combined support from whānau, staff at their Youth Guarantee providers and others contributed to this as it helped young people think about 'the future' as real and attainable. Participants said that they felt supported in their decisions, either because they were deciding together with others or they felt that they had people who were there for them and would support their decisions.

“Um, it’s gonna go to plan. When I finally make a plan coz um, [tutor] and them are like real supportive so, they’ll give me help and stuff, and help me do it, you know.” Tiana (Female, Māori, 16 years)

3.5.1.4 Understanding needs

Understanding and meeting participants’ learning and other needs was central to the effective provision of support. Staff at Youth Guarantee providers demonstrated to participants that their needs were understood by being involved in their learning. This meant not just understanding how a young person learns and using an appropriate teaching style, but also what young people need to be able to learn, for example having frequent breaks and being in a good mood.

“And then if you do get grumpy or something, the Tutors will send you away for a break for like five minutes and then tell you to come back. Not just send you away for a whole period and then not deal with it at all.” Courtney (Female, Māori, 19 years)

“Yeah, like if I was like stuck I could just ask my tutor and she would just like ease it out for me. Like explain it the way I know, coz like the big words in our book, I don’t understand it. I just go to my Tutor and she’ll say it the way I understand it, and then I’m like “oh, is that all?”” Grace (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 15 years)

Participants conveyed the sense that they were in control of their learning at their Youth Guarantee providers and staff were there to guide and facilitate.

Coz my teacher said “if you just communicate, and you know, move on from it, people understand you more”. (At school) you don’t learn it, you just get stood up, you just have to write a speech and stand up right there, then and just say it. That’s peer pressure. [Tutor] is like, like she won’t tell us to do it, she’ll say “if you wanna do it then do it, but if you don’t wanna do it, then just tell me when you’re ready”.” Grace (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 15 years)

“They give you a, um, a time to like pick out what you wanna do, when you wanna do it, and it doesn’t mean because the students are doing this side



of things you have to do it, you can do this part or do the other side in your own time, it's not rushed or nothing. And that's what I think helps, there's no pressure." Hayden (Male, Pākehā/ Māori, 18 years)

This differed from participants' school experiences where participants reported that learning was dictated by teachers and did not necessarily meet their needs. These teaching styles were not engaging and participants felt that they did not have the opportunity to ask questions and engage with learning in a way that suited them.

Understanding participants' other needs was an important part of positive relationships and support. Participants' reported that this made it easier for them to learn at their Youth Guarantee providers and they appreciated it when staff took the time to understand them.

"Like if anything was going on in my life, I can tell my Tutor, and he'll, he knows, that I, you know, sometimes won't be here and, like that's what happened at the start of the year, I told him like, my situation at home and he's like "ok that's alright" and he understood." Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

"If they know us better, they know how to talk to us and things like that... Like they know your moods and things like that, if they see you around, and stuff like that. They just know you a whole lot better so it's easier for them to teach us, and it's easier for us to learn." Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

As discussed previously, there were also other people in young people's lives who understood and met their needs. Participants valued the opinions of those who they felt understood their needs and were more likely to seek help or accept support from these people when making decisions about their transitions and future.

3.5.1.5 Respect

Mutual respect characterised the experiences of many participants at their Youth Guarantee providers and facilitated the development of positive relationships with staff. Participants said they felt respected by Youth Guarantee staff because staff valued them and gave them the space to make decisions, while continuing to provide support as necessary. Some also identified with their tutors through shared experiences, which participants said increased feelings of mutual respect. This contrasted with school experiences where participants felt they were treated like "kids" and not given independence.

"Well you get, like they don't treat you like kids. Like at school, I always got treated like I was stupid. And then I came here and Level 1 kind of just helps you achieve your goals. And, they don't like, put you down or anything. They help you realise that you CAN do it. Yeah." Brittany (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)



“Instead of trying to come down to your level and try and talk to you like you’re a little kid and try and drill into your head, they tell you what you’re doing wrong, and they give you options to fix it, or chances to fix it.” Jordan (Demographic information not shared)

“They actually like listen to you, and they actually take your opinions or your, whatever you’re saying.” Brooke (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 18 years)

“I think he’s just more understanding eh, me and him are not the best spellers anyway, like he reckons when he was like a younger man he was basically where I was sitting in the chair, so I don’t know that could be a big part of it, but I don’t know he just seems to be easy to talk to, I feel like everyone feels the same way towards him.” Hayden (Male, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

3.5.1.6 Judgement

At school, some participants felt that they were judged by teachers which led to poor relationships and negative outcomes. Participants said that teachers’ perceptions of them led to them being treated unfairly or not given the help and support that was offered to others. This sense of being judged prevented the development of positive relationships and access to support, and made participants feel as though they did not belong at school. Participants felt that there was no judgement at their Youth Guarantee providers, they could be themselves and were supported, not judged, for their choices.

“Like, they just have like an open mind, like teachers at schools are like so closed up and like, people here like make you feel welcome and make you feel like, just more comfortable, being here I think.” Jasmine (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“It’s open aye. Like, everyone’s treated the same. You’re allowed to smoke, so there’s no picking or choosing. And it’s just, good vibe I guess.” Rawiri (Male, Māori, 17 years)

3.5.1.7 Structures

The physical structure of schools and Youth Guarantee providers contributed to participants’ sense of connection and/or disconnection to their learning environment. Youth Guarantee providers were described by participants as homely and like a family²³. This was attributed to the smaller classes and scale of their Youth Guarantee providers compared with school.

²³ Unitec is a larger institution, so feelings of homeliness may not apply here. For Unitec participants, being part of a larger institution did not necessarily reduce their sense of connection. They felt that they were part of an adult learning environment where everyone was focused on learning and achieving, and reported that they were well supported by their tutors.



Participants felt that being part of a smaller institution enabled them to form stronger connections with others and gave them more time with their tutor for learning and support.

“It’s a real second family ... just the environment, and like, the whole vibe throughout the [YG Provider]. Coz they get along, all the tutors and that sorta get along with young people real well. It’s better than like, schools where it’s just some old person like, that doesn’t really care, it’s just another class... At other places, it would just be like, knowing someone, it wouldn’t be like having family like we do here. It’s real good. Yeah, it’s just our little community.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

“There were not many people in the classes, so you get a lot of um, you get noticed by your tutor if you need help, and it’s just way better than school because there’s so much like everyone knows each other. Everyone is there for each other and everyone supports each other.” Ella (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 15 years)

“I guess it’s just kind of a casual approach, there’s no real barriers between the classes. And I mean, in colleges, you kind of stick to your class or your year group, whereas here there is nothing like that, it’s just, they encourage you all to mix and be friends.” Daniel (Male, Pākehā, 19 years)

In contrast, schools were seen as too big, with too many people. Participants reported that the size of their school, and changing classrooms and teachers between subjects made it hard for them to form meaningful connections, feel supported, and develop a sense of belonging.

Another aspect of structure that differed between schools and Youth Guarantee providers was the approach taken towards setting and enforcing rules. Participants said that at school they were forced to conform to rules that they didn’t agree with and this caused some conflict. At their Youth Guarantee providers, they were able to make their own decisions; very few participants reported issues with smoking, attendance or behaviour at their providers

“With Course like you don’t have to wag. Like, you know, you can just tell them that you’re not coming in, and then they’ll be like “it’s sweet as” but then when you come in, they’ll just give you more work to do, like catch up and stuff.” Aroha (Female, Māori, 17 years)

“Well it’s awesome coz I can like go out and have a smoke instead of hiding in a bush or something or leaving.” Ella (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 15 years)

3.5.1.8 Fitting In

Relationships with peers were important to participants in all education settings. Many participants reported negative peer relationships at school, while at Youth Guarantee providers, relationships with peers were more positive. Fitting in was the main element of positive relationships with peers. Participants reported that this made them feel supported



and that they belonged. Participants reported that it was easier to fit in at their Youth Guarantee providers because everyone got along. Some friendships were formed at the Youth Guarantee providers, while some participants already had friends at their provider when they signed up. For participants, getting along meant understanding and supporting each other.

“Like all these guys got kicked out, so they feel the same way. So, we all like, we all good with each other now. Coz when we first came we all asked each other “oh why did you come here?” “oh, this and that”.” Hemi (Male, Māori, 17 years)

“Um, the closeness that you get with like, your tutor and your classmates, so you’re all doing it together, it’s not like you know, you feel awkward doing something in front of your classmates, because you spend every day with them, and there’s a little amount of them, so it’s just like a group of friends really.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Here it’s like, one whole big family and everyone knows you, and everyone just get along, during weekends you go and hang out with them. And it’s nice.” James (Male, Other Ethnicity, 16 years)

Participants valued the chance to get to know different people, they felt this made them more accepting and understanding of others and contributed to the positive environment at their Youth Guarantee providers. At the PTEs involved in this study, this was facilitated by the smaller classes and size of the institution. At the ITP, classes and the institution itself were larger. However, learners retained the sense of getting along with peers from different groups as they felt there was a shared understanding and desire to study in a non-school environment.

“Just having so many different people and so many different like, not backgrounds but like backgrounds, it’s just talking to so many different people, I guess it kind of opens you up a bit.” Logan (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Like you know teenagers are mostly individual and they just keep to their own group, like their own group of friends but there everyone would like, start off nervous and then someone would open up and then everyone else would open up, yeah.” Jess (Demographic information not shared)

“Relating a bit more to other, different people, like, everyone here’s like a lot different, I thought that I could always relate to really different people but I’ve never met some of the people that are you know, people like people here at course.” Jen (Female, Other Ethnicity, 17 years)



3.5.2 Choice / Control

Having choices, and control over choices, were strong themes in the interviews with young people for this study. Participants' decisions were influenced by their desire to have control over themselves and over decisions which involved or affected them. Part of this was ensuring that they made the right choices, or kept their options open through creating opportunities. Overall, positive experiences in education or employment were associated with control over choices and negative experiences were characterised by a lack of control and choice.

3.5.2.1 *Taking and Ensuring Control*

The desire to take and ensure control is present in many of the decisions made by participants. They used control over decisions to demonstrate independence and self-responsibility, and to reject situations which undermined their control. Participants demonstrated an awareness of their needs when attempting to take control over their lives or ensure control over their futures. Examples of this include the decision to leave school, enrol in education post-school, enter or leave employment or change behaviours. Some participants were supported in decisions to take control, while others described this as something which they did on their own.

“I started here last year, but we were only meant to come up and pick up this girl I was meant to have a fight with but then I ended up signing up to this course and we didn't end up having a fight because I didn't wanna get kicked out.” Awhina (Female, Māori, 17 years)

“My bosses, um, they didn't see me as a worker, they seen me as a boy and they treated me like shit, so I just got out of there as quick as I could. I'd rather work for a boss that will recognise me for who I am and what I can do, not just, not pick on me, coz they all picked on me coz I was the youngest one.” Alex (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

3.5.2.2 *Valued Currency*

For many participants, the ability to gain or maintain independence and have control over their lives and choices in the future was very important. They approached this through making sure that they had access to 'valued currency' that would help them maintain independence and control, and through preparation. For participants, the main forms of valued currency were qualifications and information about employment and education options. Whānau was the main source of information for most participants, followed by friends and their Youth Guarantee providers.

Gaining qualifications was important to participants as these were thought to provide access to employment, better pay and working conditions, and help with further education towards a desired career. Participants appeared to have bought into the idea that NCEA Level 2 is the



“passport to success”²⁴ and believed it would provide access to more secure future options and greater opportunities. They thought that the skills and qualifications that they gained from their Youth Guarantee programmes would improve their chances of gaining employment.

“Yep, definitely, coz they’ve got me like, Certificates, I got National Certificate in Employment from them, to put on my CV, once I’ve got Level 2 it’ll sort of yeah it’ll just make things a whole lot smoother.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

“Well it gives you more like, qualifications to get a job. So, it gives you a bit of hope.” Tegan (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

“Because you needed some qualifications to do some courses, so you know, [YG provider] just gave me that starting point, and now everything’s just going smoother, yeah.” Tom (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants were working towards qualifications with an aim in mind. Some thought that gaining NCEA Level 2 would improve their job prospects, while others saw it as a route to higher education:

“Because I heard, that um, most jobs nowadays you need your Level 2. As well as your Level 1. So, I just thought I’ll just get my Level 2 and try to find a job.” Rawiri (Male, Māori, 17 years)

“Like gain Level 2, get qualifications in Level 3, Travel and Tourism and then just go so on and so on. Like go to Level 4 and then go into Diploma. But even if you’re like in a Level 3 course or Level 4 course, for Travel and Tourism you still get offered jobs.” Aroha (Female, Māori, 17 years)

Some participants were focused on qualifications to gain employment in a specific industry where they hoped to earn money and gain independence. Job quality, future opportunities and the ability to work in an area that interested them were also important to participants.

“Um, it just wasn’t a big enough career, like doing something. I’d rather do something that I love, that I REALLY love that will get me somewhere instead of doing something that I just love but it will get me nowhere.” Mikayla (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“I am a huge fan of the mind, like ... I’ve just got a passion and a pure interest, for mental illnesses and everything like that, so I wanna study about it, see if I can help the world.” Taylor (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

²⁴ This phrase has been used frequently by the Ministry of Education, for references to NCEA Level 2 see <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/upwards-ncea-trend-continues> and <https://www.maoritelevision.com/news/education/record-number-maori-students-achieving-ncea-level-2>



Other participants were working towards qualifications as they believed that having at least NCEA Level 2 would be useful for their futures, however they were not working towards a specific pathway. For these participants, achieving NCEA was a significant achievement and they did not feel the need to consider further study or longer term future options at this stage.

“I just wasn’t too bothered, about doing anything this year. Even though that’s bad, but I kinda felt good about just completing my course ... just relax for a bit, I was trying to get a job as well.” Amber (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

“That’s what I’m actually studying for with my qualifications. ...I am going to do it, but it’ll help me in the future maybe. I dunno. Could think about it. I’m still young!” Grace (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 15 years)

Access to information about employment and study options was of significant value to participants. Most were following or planned to follow education or career pathways which were clear and/or familiar. Many participants relied on trusted routes or sources of information when forming future plans. For example, following a friend into polytechnic, working with a family member, or following an education pathway set out by an education institution.

“I think it’s just because I’m familiar with it, yeah. I know there’s like courses at [YG provider] that you can take.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“I’m going to work with my brother. I’ll be working in his company. He just told me if I wanna go over and work with him. Yeah, he said I gotta get my um truck licence.” Josiah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)

“I’ve still gonna look into that a little bit more but a mate of mine goes to [ITP] and she says that there’s a degree. But I’m real, like my Dad works in Construction so yeah, he was like “you’d be good at that” and so did Mum so I was like “ok”.” Jen (Female, Other Ethnicity, 17 years)

Whānau was the most commonly accessed, and usually the most trusted, source of information; many participants reported seeking advice from their whānau before making choices. Information from those who previously attended an education provider helped participants assess the suitability of a programme and decide whether it was the right environment for them. They were motivated by the successes of friends and family members and wanted to access the same benefits.

“Yeah, so I’ve got a few things circled. But um I’m still not too sure, I’m going to sit down with my Mum actually, and have a talk with her, and I think we’ll probably make the decision together.” Rachel (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)



“I always wanted to be like a [career], but then, oh you know, I thought “that’d be too hard” and all that, but then my mate did it last year, like he was in Course with me last year, he went on to do it and it just sounds real cool. So, I thought yeah, “I might do it as well”, and now here I am, like really wanting to do it.” Tom (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

“Like a lot of my mates that do [Martial Arts], basically they’ve got jobs at gyms, bouncing, teaching people and it’s not because they went to school or nothing, and like none of these dudes had nothing, like no Level 1, no nothing... So, I was thinking, that’s probably just the easier way to be honest.” Hayden (Male, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

Participants’ Youth Guarantee providers and their tutors were another trusted source. In cases where participants’ families didn’t have much knowledge of education or employment pathways, providers were vital to future decisions. Participants saw their Youth Guarantee providers as knowledgeable and held them in high regard due to the positive and supportive relationship they had with staff, and because these staff had helped them succeed.

“I’m gonna go do my Level 2 Trade Skills, and [tutor] said I can also come here and do, like do work as well. On the days I’m off. Coz it’s only Monday to Wednesday, that I’m on. Yeah. She said she’ll help me. And she said she’ll try find me a part time job too.” Josiah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)

“[Tutor] um, like made me research what I wanted to do after this, coz she wants me leave and have something to like do after it.” Jade (Female, Pākehā/Māori/Pasifika, 16 years)

3.5.2.3 Preparation

The need to be prepared for the future influenced participants’ decisions to enter Youth Guarantee and their plans or ideas for the future. Whether or not they had a clear vision of their future, preparing for the future through Youth Guarantee gave participants a sense of direction and control over their lives.

Many participants had multi-stage plans for their future, which included a combination of study and work or several steps through education. Some had a fully formed pathway while others had their next step planned and some idea of their future direction. Participants used these plans to maintain control over their lives; having multiple stages gave them flexibility to change route and adjust timelines. Youth Guarantee contributed to these plans by providing participants with base qualifications and skills to continue into higher education or find a job.

“I think I’ll just start off with the Barista course first, so I’ll probably, if I don’t get to [ITP] next year I’ll probably do it the year after, or in the middle of the year.” Aroha (Female, Māori, 17 years)



“That’s a bit of a big step for me so I wanna start with something that I, that I know, so maybe, I’ll maybe, I’ll learn some stuff from food, and learn skills off it, and find a course with numeracy and literacy as well.” Elijah (Male, Pasifika, 18 years)

“I’m trying to like (make) small goals at a time, like not too far in the future, because you don’t know what’s really gonna happen in the future... I’ll probably just look for a job in a café, till a while, till I decide what else, what my next step is really. That’s just my first, two steps I’m looking at in my future, and then I’ll think of more steps once I get to those.” Gemma (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

Some participants had also thought through back-up plans, or alternative options, in case they changed direction or were unable to pursue their current goal.

“Um, after that, if I don’t get into the [Workplace], I’ll be reapplying back at [YG Provider] for uh, Level 2.” Samson (Male, Pasifika, 16 years)

“Well if I couldn’t do that, then I’d probably just carry on with my Sports. Coz I’ve already done two years of that and, it will just be the trouble of drumming it back into my head, coz I haven’t done it since last year. But yeah, that was my second option.” Courtney (Female, Māori, 19 years)

“I’ve looked at the requirements but it’s not hard for me. But I do know a Police Officer that said you know, have a bit of life experience and always have a back-up for the Police, like if the Police don’t let you in or it doesn’t work out, at least if you’ve got another qualification you can fall back onto that.” Luke (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)

Ensuring that they had some security in their futures was important to participants, and influenced their decisions about whether to enter employment or continue their education after Youth Guarantee.

“You know, one day things could just change and I might just not have the chance, or life might just turn a different corner and I’ll have to go somewhere else, so yeah, so I can work and that coz, yeah I’d rather work and pay my rent and eat then study.” Dylan (Male, Pākehā, 16 years)

3.5.2.4 Opportunities and control over choices: It’s down to me

After experiencing success in Youth Guarantee, participants felt that they had access to a much broader range of options than they had previously thought possible. Many participants’ experienced mixed emotions as they left Youth Guarantee. They felt as though they could do anything, and there was a sense of excitement and anticipation about what the future held. They also said that they were now responsible for themselves; Youth Guarantee had given them the tools to succeed and it was now up to them to make ‘the right decision’ and access



one of the many opportunities available. Jayden's explanation of his feeling about the future summarises this experience.

"Yeah I was really happy to leave, like I'm so excited, I achieved everything that I wanted to. When I left there, I felt like I'd gained a lot of life experience, like just knowledge and stuff, and how they've kind of sent me out to like, life. I mean when you get older and jobs and stuff and it's really serious. I don't know, I just reckon what they've taught us, has like, opened my eyes a wee bit about the working life." Jayden (Male, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

"I just have a lot of things I really wanna do for like, my career, but I just have to take it slow, like there's so much options and stuff, I just have to choose wisely and carefully... Like if I was going to go and study that course I wanted to study, it has to be a wise, like a wise thing to do, like do I really wanna do that? And what will I achieve out of it? And I just have to think, like outside the box, yeah life is tricky." Jayden (Male, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

Participants' view that they were in control of their destinies led some to interpret their successes or failures in individual terms. This view seemed to change over time; the majority of participants interpreted their experience at school as a failure of the system rather than of themselves, although some participants interpreted their lack of achievement as a personal failing. However, after experiencing success in Youth Guarantee, all participants now felt that the future was in their hands. The idea that they had ultimate responsibility for their future was overwhelming for some participants. They were caught between their desire to be responsible and independent, and the pressure of making a decision that they might later regret.

"I started thinking about um what would happen if I did this, or what would happen if I did that wrong, and so like hang on, nah, too soon to be thinking like that, so I'm just going to just take things as it comes." Samson (Male, Pasifika, 16 years)

"I'm just gonna see where my options and stuff take me. So, that's (a) big step." Courtney (Female, Māori, 19 years)

"[YG provider] pretty much set the path, it's like, it's sort of up to you afterwards, what's going to happen... Just like I can't mess around anymore and it's like I gotta be focused to actually like do anything, everything's serious, it's not like school where you can just muck around." Tom (Male, Pākehā, 17 years)



3.5.2.5 Control over Education

Young people in this study demonstrated their independence through managing their own learning and education choices. Participants wanted control over what they studied, where they studied, and how they studied. In making decisions about learning and education choices, young people demonstrated awareness of their learning needs and a desire to actively participate in their learning.

“I like being able to interact to be able to learn, I can’t just sit there and listen to the teacher all the time. Like she should be like, pull out like a heart, and then like, separate like the aorta, and all of that, like what side the left ventricle pumps, the right ventricle, and that she should do all that stuff and let us like interact, like, cutting out pieces and stuff, to make me actually like learn, not just sitting there and she’s just explaining it.” Tyrone (Male, Pākehā/ Pasifika, 16 years)

Participants wanted to study subjects that were relevant to them and could help them in the future; they felt that this was not provided at school, so chose to attend a Youth Guarantee provider instead. Studying at a Youth Guarantee provider gave participants more control over their learning style and achievement.

“Because in school there was the subjects that you didn’t need but you still had to take, and that’s the thing that was hard for me... But here at [YG provider], I know every class that I’m in, it’s like, I’m doing it for a reason.” Crystal (Female, Māori, 16 years)

“I think it’s really awesome here because it gives you more freedom and more control over your own work and what you’re doing.” Taylor (Female, Pākehā, 17 years)

“They use these booklets that give you the information that you need, but you can do it at your own pace, instead of having to listen to a teacher all the time.” Jess (Demographic information not shared)

Freedom to exercise personal choice in learning was a key element to participants’ positive experiences at their Youth Guarantee providers. Participants described how staff at Youth Guarantee providers facilitated control over learning and education choices through recognising the capacity of young people to manage their own learning while providing appropriate encouragement and support.

“They (school) command you to work. When [tutor] will just give me a visit “oh, if you need help just come back”. Instead of “do this, you have to do that, if you don’t do that then you’re gonna fail”.” Grace (Female, Pasifika/Other Ethnicity, 15 years)



3.5.3 Learning and achievement

The theme of Learning and Achievement is present in the themes of Connections and Choice/Control. Learning and experiencing success in education were very important to participants. Feeling that they were learning and achieving motivated them, instilled a sense of pride and self-efficacy and contributed to their developing identities as successful learners and successful young people.

“I used to think school was absolutely everything, if you couldn’t succeed at school, you couldn’t succeed in life. And then going to [YG provider] I realised you know, there’s lots of other ways you can, but I’m trying to teach my sister that now, you know, coz she’s Year 9 and she thinks you know, “oh my god, school’s everything” but no, there’s so many other things.” Rachel (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 18 years)

“I love it. I’ve just been happy. Like, when I was at school I used to always come home in a, not a nice attitude with my siblings and all that, and I was just unhappy. And with Course, like I’m flying through the credits just like that. When I was at school I didn’t care about anything. But when I came here, everything, I just changed. Like my whole, like my thoughts and that just changed and dealing with situations better than I usually did.” Amber (Female, Pākehā/Māori, 16 years)

The main components of this theme are those which have already been identified in relation to the themes of Connections and Choice/Control, and do not need repeating here. However, it is important to acknowledge that learning and achievement has a central role in participants’ experiences of Youth Guarantee, and impacts on their future decisions and pathways. According to participants, learning and achievement were facilitated by a sense of connection to their peers, staff and learning environment, by the support they received for both learning and other needs, and by positive relationships in and outside of their learning environments. Participants were positive about learning when they felt in control of their education and their choices. They said that achieving in education made them feel as though they had choices available to them and that they were in control of their future pathways. In the ongoing interviews we will see whether this sense of control and achievement continues in participants’ lives after they depart Youth Guarantee.

4. Discussion



This report has presented findings from two surveys and interviews with young people who attended YGFF programmes at Community College, Unitec and YMCA during 2015. One research question posed by the Youth Guarantee Pathways and Profiles project was “what is the profile of young people on the YGFF scheme?” This report has attempted to answer this question in relation to the cohort of learners who participated in the project.

4.1 Main findings

A diverse group of young people participated in this project in terms of age, ethnicity, location and transitions experiences. Some aspects of their educational experiences and pathways from school to YGFF were similar; most had negative experiences at school and more positive experiences at their Youth Guarantee provider. Almost all young people who participated were early school leavers, the majority had no or low qualifications when they enrolled in YGFF and most experienced disengagement from school, with a number reporting truancy, stand downs and exclusion from school. These characteristics place them in the group of young people who are considered ‘at risk’ of poor outcomes such as becoming long-term NEET (MBIE, 2013) and being less likely to enter further study or find employment (Earle, 2016b). The young people who participated in this project did not see themselves as ‘at-risk’ and those who had previously described themselves as such were creating new identities as successful learners. All were keen to avoid becoming NEET and believed that gaining qualifications would protect against this. Most planned to enter employment or continue education and had developed strategies, including back-up plans and skill development, to ensure they achieved their aims. Although they followed multiple pathways there was a



common narrative of young people constructing pathways for themselves as they shaped their post-school identities.

From the surveys and interviews, it is clear that support and relationships played an important role in young people's experiences and pathways. Whānau was a significant source of support; most participants lived with family and received some financial support from family members. Whānau and friends influenced participants' pathways from school, acting as role models and sources of motivation, and providing knowledge, advice, support and access to opportunities. Some participants combined this with information from other sources, for example schools, education providers and social workers, to make decisions about desirable and suitable future pathways. The visions and plans participants had for their futures were influenced by their support networks. These opened up particular pathways and shaped participants' ideas about what was possible for them. Participants also identified motivation, confidence and individual agency as important aspects of their current and future successes. These were developed through the achievement of educational and personal goals in Youth Guarantee programmes and in some cases helped participants address or overcome challenges in their lives.

According to participants, the support they received from their Youth Guarantee providers was fundamental to their positive experiences and their success in learning and overcoming challenges. Participants described warm and welcoming environments at their Youth Guarantee providers where they felt valued, respected and understood. The sense of belonging that participants felt at their providers was enhanced by their positive relationships with staff. Participants reported that staff supported them in their learning, their lives and their decisions. The unfaltering support of staff created a safe space where participants could take control of their learning and explore possible futures and identities. Many participants reported increased confidence and self-esteem as a result of their Youth Guarantee programmes. They acquired new vocational skills and developed communication, interpersonal, self-management and literacy and numeracy skills.

A number of interview participants spoke about undergoing a change as a result of learning and achieving through Youth Guarantee. Some had experienced, or continued to face challenges with health, mental health, family situations, transience, drugs, alcohol and risky behaviour. The impact of these challenges and participants' capacity and motivation to face challenges were dependant on participants' access to support. Participants were more likely to overcome challenges when they had easy access to ongoing support. Participants reported that receiving ongoing support from their Youth Guarantee providers to manage or overcome challenges increased their self-efficacy and changed their self-perception. After Youth Guarantee, they began to see themselves as successful learners who were in control of their own destinies and had the potential to access a wider range of opportunities than they had previously thought possible. This brought both excitement and apprehension as participants took steps to gain the independence they desired and sought to make the 'right choice' which would ensure future success and security.



The three themes of Connections, Choice/Control and Learning and Achievement are visible in all aspects of participants' educational experiences and transitions. The connections between these themes are an indication of the complexity of the education and transitions experiences of this group. As this report has demonstrated, the diverse experiences, supports and challenges in participants' lives, interacted in a variety of ways to produce different choices, pathways and outcomes. The key learnings and themes that have emerged from this project so far highlight the aspects which we believe are the most influential, although these may change or develop once more data are collected and analysed. The key learnings and themes align with findings from past research into young people's transitions and their experiences and engagement with education.

4.2 Connections with current literature

Participants reported that it was easier for them to learn in Youth Guarantee programmes because they got along well with their tutors and felt that their needs were understood. The positive impact of support and positive relationships on student engagement is well established in research; student agency and self-efficacy in learning have also been shown to play a role (Zepke & Leach, 2010). The combination of support and control in the learning environment described by Youth Guarantee participants shares some common aspects with the holistic view of student engagement proposed by Zepke (2015). Participants reported that they were motivated to take control of their learning through the way in which their tutors supported them and by the experience of learning and achieving educationally. They noted that their experiences in Youth Guarantee had impacted on other parts of their lives, in particular, their engagement with their community and their confidence in their ability to manage unfamiliar situations. Participants mentioned that their tutors, Youth Guarantee providers, friends and whānau all contributed to their engagement in education through the provision of support and encouragement.

Another strong connection between the participants' experiences and existing research is the impact that the "enduring presence" (Munford & Sanders, 2015, p.1571) of significant adults can have on young people's lives. For participants, one of the most important aspects of their positive relationships with Youth Guarantee tutors was that their tutors were there for them in both learning and personal matters. They experienced the "safe, secure and warm relationships" (Munford & Sanders, 2015, p.1577) which Munford and Sanders contend are the basis for the development of positive identities. Participants' said they felt less pressure at their Youth Guarantee providers because they were in control of their learning and decisions, and knew that help was available if they needed it. This sense of security gave participants space to develop, consider alternative pathways and create new identities for themselves as successful learners with access to opportunities.

Throughout their transitions, participants relied on trusted sources when making plans, and mainly accessed information through whānau and friends. Family, in particular, have a significant impact on young people's decisions about the future (Reay, 1998). Family background and values shape aspirations, and family resources, for example, economic



capacity and knowledge of higher education and careers, influence young people's decisions regarding suitable and achievable options (Engberg & Allen, 2011). Educational institutions are also thought to play a role in young people's decisions. Research suggests that schools can raise or constrict the aspirations of students through school culture and the availability of resources which help young people plan their post-school pathways (McDonough, 1998). As the Youth Guarantee providers involved in this project have replaced the role of school in participants' lives, they contribute to the formation of participants' aspirations. In the interviews for this project, we observed the influence of both family and Youth Guarantee providers in shaping participants' plans and visions for the future. Participants reported that as a result of Youth Guarantee they could now envision a wider range of opportunities for themselves and were confident in their ability to access these due to the skills and qualifications they had acquired. The majority of participants reported receiving support from their families for their futures and in their decisions. In some cases, family members helped participants access education or employment, in others, family provided encouragement and support but were unable to play an active role as they had limited knowledge of how to access education or employment. In these instances, or where there was an absence of family support, participants sought support from their Youth Guarantee providers or other support services.

At all stages of their transitions, participants faced challenges and made decisions that would affect their pathways. Their capacity to manage these effectively was mediated by a variety of factors including self-confidence, knowledge of pathways, immediate financial needs, peer group and access to support. Despite the complexities in each individual's experience, support appeared to play a vital role in transitions. Participants who reported high levels of family support were more likely to have a plan when they left school, and overall had shorter spells of NEET. Meanwhile, participants who reported less access to support were more likely to report longer periods of NEET, were less likely to have plans for their future when they left school and reported more issues related to drugs and alcohol. Participants demonstrated varying degrees of reflexivity in their decisions about the future and how to deal with challenges that could disrupt their plans. In some cases, participants appeared to engage reflexively with risks, anticipating challenges and developing strategies to overcome these. For example, they attempted to ensure financial independence by gaining skills to help them obtain immediate employment while also acquiring qualifications that will enable access to higher level study (Laughland-Booÿ, Mayall & Skrbiš, 2015). However, there was a sense that this reflexivity was constrained to some extent. For some participants their lack of material resources caused them to focus on meeting their immediate needs and prevented them from developing long-term aspirations for the future (Threadgold & Nilan, 2009). Their lack of knowledge about careers and education opportunities, and the absence of networks through which to access this information were a further constraint. For others, the value that society places on self-responsibility had shaped their belief that they had ultimate control over their destinies. This prompted some to avoid risk through following a path which was familiar, or



which seemed achievable, or through delaying decision-making until they felt better prepared to confront their futures.

4.3 Limitations

The findings in this report relate to the YGFF learners who took part in the Youth Guarantee Pathways and Profiles project. The ability to generalise these findings is limited by the population who participated in the project. Not all young people who enrolled in YGFF at the participating Youth Guarantee providers in 2015 took part in the project. Furthermore, not all participants took part in both surveys; and a lower proportion of Māori and a higher proportion of Pākehā participants took part in the exit survey. Some survey and interview participants departed suddenly and were unable to be tracked, while others declined to complete one of the surveys, or to continue taking part in interviews. While such attrition is expected, there is a risk that the voices of young people who faced challenges which prevented them from completing their Youth Guarantee programmes are not fully represented in this report. The effects that these limitations have on the generalisability of the findings are protected by the design of the project which allows the triangulation of data from surveys, interviews, staff focus groups and Youth Guarantee providers. A further strength is the longitudinal interviews which provide information from the same participants across several time points. At this stage of the project we have retained the majority of interview participants and have a diverse sample in terms of demographic characteristics and education and transition experiences.

4.4 Final comments

Overall, YGFF was found to have a positive impact on the lives of the young people who participated in surveys and interviews for this project. The support, environment and positive relationships with staff and peers at their Youth Guarantee providers were a large part of this; participants were further motivated by having control and seeing themselves succeed. Their perspectives and stories included in this report add an extra dimension to the Educational Performance Indicator data used to monitor the effectiveness of the YGFF scheme. Participants viewed the achievement of NCEA Level 2 as a positive outcome for themselves; however, this was not the most important outcome of the Youth Guarantee programme. The personal growth and development, and changes in lifestyle and self-perception experienced by participants were a significant part of their experience. These changes shaped their decisions about the future and as we continue to interview participants we will see whether and how these changes are sustained and what impact they have on participants' pathways and decisions.

The intention of the project and this report was to gather Youth Guarantee learners' perspectives to provide the participating YGFF providers and the sector with information on their learners, which can be used to improve provision, ensure that learner needs are met and that positive outcomes are sustained beyond YGFF. The focus has been to produce information which is accessible and meaningful to those who are directly involved in the provision of YGFF programmes. Following this, the creation of learner profiles would enhance



understanding of the needs and perspectives of Youth Guarantee learners and allow teaching, learner skill development and the provision of support to be more effectively tailored to young people according to their needs, contexts and aspirations. In some ways, this has been achieved; this report has presented young people's perspectives on what works and what doesn't work for them in education and what is needed for the effective provision of support. In other ways, it has been difficult to present a coherent profile of YGFF learners due to the complexities of their experiences. The process of collecting and analysing data for this report has reinforced the notions that young people's transitions from school are non-linear and complex, and that flexibility is needed in the provision of effective education to this group.



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