



Proactive Release

Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – Submission Template

This document is intended for individuals or groups who wish to make a formal submission on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Please complete this template and email it to: childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz

A guide to making a submission is available on the DPMC website <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

Submissions will close on **Wednesday 5 December**.

Please provide details for a contact person in case we have some follow up questions.

Contact Name:	9(2) (a)
Email Address:	
Phone Number:	
Organisation Name:	Youthline
Organisation description: (tell us about your organisation – i.e. who do you represent? How many members do you have? Are you a local or national organisation?)	Youthline are a national collective of youth organisations across NZ. We are dedicated to creating communities where young people thrive and are supporting to achieve their potential.
Executive Summary: (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	<p><i>We are heartened to read such a holistic, client and family-centred based framing of this strategy. We applaud the highly aspirational nature of the vision and outcome statements. We are encouraged to see this strategy sits across government agencies to create an overarching outcomes framework.</i></p> <p><i>We have provided recommendations and feedback regarding more integration of a youth development approach, funding equity and outcomes reporting.</i></p> <p><i>We have also summarised and linked to more information for key focus areas where we have conducted research or can provide thoughts and opinions based on service provision.</i></p> <p><i>We are happy to be reached for more information regarding further development of this strategy and aligned policy.</i></p>

Submission Content

Framing and Vision

We are heartened to read such a holistic, client and family-centred based framing of this strategy.

We applaud the highly aspirational nature of the vision and outcome statements.

We are encouraged to see this strategy sits across government agencies to create an overarching outcomes framework.

We believe the strategy should include all children and young people, young people being aged 12-24.

Throughout the proposed focus areas young people and youth read as a late addition to the overall strategy. The language and focus areas are predominantly child-focussed.

Youth Development Approach

We are pleased to see language throughout the proposed strategy that aligns to positive youth development practices, however we encourage the strategy to go beyond valuing youth voice, and to ensure that young people are full participants in decisions that affect them.

Participation, as defined by youth participation expert Hart (1992) is “the the process of sharing decisions which affect ones’ life and the life of the community in which one lives. It is the means by which a democracy is built and... against which democracies should be measured. Participation is a fundamental right of citizenship.”

Space for genuine youth leadership across the wellbeing domains identified needs to be explicit.

We believe there is opportunity to reflect more of the language and guiding principles of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa throughout this Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The existing YDSA was developed through broad sector engagement and in consultation with young people. Though it is being reviewed, it’s themes and principles remain relevant to young people and youth development organisations like ours.

Focus Area Information and Feedback

We have identified they key potential focus areas that we work in, and offered some information, research and feedback where appropriate. We are happy to be contacted to provide further consultation as the strategy develops.

“All children and young people are loved, nurtured and safe”

Children and young people have positive interactions with peers and others outside the home

- *Bullying in schools and recreational environments is addressed*
- *Children’s and young people’s safety online is supported*

According to young people in New Zealand, bullying is the third biggest issue facing young people in this country, after stress and being accepted. This was even higher for young women (Colmar Brunton, 2016).

Bullying and cyberbullying are consistent themes clients present with when contacting our Helpline. In our experience, this is also a significant stressor for parents/guardians and supporters of young people who are being bullied, who often express frustration, fear and a lack of guidance on how best to support their children/young people in their care.

Youthline’s approach to bullying is guided by the six principles of the YDSA:

1. Youth development is shaped by the ‘big picture’

Youthline understands that building resilient young people requires a focus not just on individuals but in creating safe and supportive environments around them. This is particularly poignant when addressing issues of surrounding bullying, a process resulting from wider community issues, such as discrimination.

2. Youth development is about young people being connected

Youthline aims to provide a foundation for young people to branch out and establish a network of connections to draw strength from. This can be as simple as linking the young person with a sports team or social group where they can develop relationships with peers and adults. Creating relationships which can support students against bullying is one of the most effective strategies for reducing its occurrence and effect.

3. Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach

A strengths-based approach focuses on minimising the effect of risk factors while promoting strengths and resilience. Youthline incorporates a strengths-based philosophy into their approach to bullying by helping the young person to identify risk and resiliency factors around their situation and acting accordingly.

4. Youth development happens through quality relationships

Bullying at its core is a relationship problem. Often the best protection against the negative outcomes of bullying is to build positive and trusting relationships with victims. This is relevant both to the relationships between the client and the people around them as well as the relationship between the client and Youthline. Evidence has shown that efficacy of treatment is dependent on the strength of the client-therapist relationship. When

appropriate, Youthline will endeavour to include the young person's family when addressing issues of bullying in order to facilitate greater understanding and support. Inclusion of the young person's main support figures will facilitate greater change not only within the young person, but within the greater environment in which the bullying is taking place.

More resources regarding this point can be found here Youthline's [Bullying Best Practice Paper](#).

“All children and young people have what they need”

Children and young people experience improved equity of outcomes, with services helping address the impacts of poverty, low socioeconomic status and disadvantage

- *Services and institutions are accessible, welcoming and respectful to all*
- *Parents, children and young people have the ability to influence the way they get support so it works best for them*
- *Core services and systems like health, education, justice and social support are designed and delivered in ways that meet diverse needs and that minimise the costs and stresses of engaging with them*

Though young people in New Zealand consider embarrassment to be the biggest barrier to accessing help, 1 in 2 say cost is a barrier (Colmar Brunton, 2016).

When asked “what would stop you seeking help or advice from a support organisation” young people said:

“Not having the means to access the resources available to help.”

“Distance or availability of access to support organisations.”

This national survey was conducted with the general youth population, however themes relating to poverty and cost as a barrier emerged nonetheless. Anecdotally, for university aged students, in particular, economic stressors and constraints feature highly, we therefore believe the inclusion of all young people up to the age of 24 is important for this Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

There is good information relating to this outcome area included in the recently released He Ara Oranga – Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction.

Specifically, broader access to talking therapies and relevant therapies including family therapy.

At Youthline we provide access to face-to-face therapy on a sliding scale based on income, and regularly provide transport so that young people can access services or have the ability to participate in training and programmes to support their development.

Over phone, text, email and web chat we provide a free, person-centred counselling service which is available across the country regardless of location and means.

An appropriate level of investment, across agencies, will be required to realise this outcome.

“Children and young people belong, contribute and are valued”

The cultures of children, young people and their families and whanau are recognised, enhanced and supported

The family plays arguably the most important role in a young person’s development, helping to form their identity, attitudes and values, as well as their behaviour patterns (McLaren, 2002). Families should provide young people with the nurturing relationships, guidance and support needed for their development into positive and resilient youth, and healthy families are essential in a young person’s physical and mental development (Waldegrave & Waldergrave, 2009). Family dynamics, and how individuals within the family react to situations and to the actions of other family members, shape how relationships are built and developed within that family. In New Zealand, the term ‘family’ encompasses a multitude of concepts, beliefs and understandings, including notions of identity, belonging, heritage, family processes, interactions, multigenerational identity and distinct cultural practices.

New Zealand is based on a bicultural discourse that is expressed through a partnership between the Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti and established with the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. In recent decades, New Zealand has become home to multiple nationalities and cultures, including Pacific Island, Asian, Middle Eastern, European and African peoples, each having their own unique set of values and belief systems.

The notion of ‘family’ in Aotearoa New Zealand is unique to the cultural context in which individual family units are located. This cultural diversity highlights the importance for practitioners to consider family therapies within the context of cultural preferences. Family values, structure, gender roles and discipline practices may differ widely between families of different cultures, and practitioners need to contextualize their understanding of the family so they can provide a culturally sensitive approach (Waldergrave, 2009).

More resources regarding this point can be found here: [Youthline’s approach to Family Work](#)

Children and young people have improved opportunities for civic engagement and environmental awareness

The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa recognises that participation is an important factor in healthy youth development. It is therefore a priority for communities to facilitate meaningful youth participation. This involves enabling young people to make a real difference by creating opportunities for decision-making that encourage young people to feel connected and play a valued and authoritative role in this process (Oliver, Collins, Burns and Nicholas, 2006). Meaningful participation can be promoted in many areas of a young person's life, including social, political and educational contexts. It can also be nurtured within the family, establishing the young person as a valued and respected member of the family/whanau. All of these environments afford important opportunities for young people to develop new skills and explore their opinions. At Youthline, young people are encouraged to get involved in a wide variety of activities, events and developmental programmes. Engaging through participation creates quality relationships and fosters connections. The strengths-based approach Youthline adopts enables the young person to enhance protective factors in their lives and build resilience, while understanding and managing risks.

Fundamentals of Participation

- *Ensure that young people are valued by acknowledging their importance to our communities and affirm their contribution through reciprocal exchange (not necessarily money - although it could be appropriate at times).*
- *Respect young people and their views – they will sense tokenism or exploitation. Give them the time they need and deserve.*
- *Understand that the views and experiences of a small group of young people do not usually represent those of all young people.*
- *Provide relevant training for the task and clearly identify development opportunities and pathways. Often young people need to be mentored and their skills developed in order to participate fully.*
- *Accommodating practical aspects such as transport needs and providing food at meetings is essential for young people to participate.*
- *Take care with scheduling. Young people may have trouble negotiating time off with their workplace or school. Sometimes communicating directly with work, school and parents/guardians will increase participation.*
- *Having several youth members will increase their individual participation and enrich their experience and contributions.*
- *Being young is not enough; choose the young people for their skills not their youth.*
- *Give them tasks that are achievable and meaningful.*

More resources regarding this point can be found here: [Youthline's approach to Youth Health](#)

Children and young people are happy and healthy

“Children’s and young people’s mental wellbeing is supported”

We are very passionate about this focus area, and support it’s inclusion in the final version of this strategy. We are happy to provide further information and input in this section as you develop the aligned policies to this strategy.

We have a range of best practice information that includes approaches to resilience, bullying, self-harm, substance abuse, suicide, postvention and sexual harm.

- *We worked closely with the team at Massey University on the Pathways to Resilience project which culminated in a set of resources for those working with young people, [tools and research available here](#)*
- *[Youthline’s best practice guide to substance abuse](#)*

Suicide and Postvention

Suicide is a major health and social issue in New Zealand, acting as an indicator of both the level of mental health and the social wellbeing of the population.

Suicidal ideation can be triggered by a wide array of biological, psychological and social factors.

Precipitating factors include:

- *exposure to trauma - e.g., family violence, child abuse, bullying*
- *family factors - e.g., parental separation, mental illness*
- *socioeconomic factors - e.g., income, education, housing, mobility*
- *cultural factors - e.g., extent of integration, autonomy, language and/or identity*
- *individual factors - e.g., personality or genes (Beautrais, 2003)*

Most serious suicide attempts occur when people are depressed, are using alcohol or drugs, have a range of past and present difficulties, and a current trigger or problem that seems overwhelming.

More resources regarding this topic can be found at: [Youthline’s approach to suicide](#)

For every person who dies by suicide, it is (conservatively) estimated that 6 others are seriously impacted. It is essential that these people are well supported.

Grief arising from bereavement by suicide is comparable to the grief response experienced by other traumatic, sudden and/or unexpected deaths.

Research however, indicates that measurable differences exist between suicide bereaved and those bereaved by other modes of death. Differences include:

- Significantly greater frequency of feelings of responsibility;
- Higher levels of overall grief;
- Slower recovery in the first 2 years following the suicide;
- Prolonged feelings of grief.

Further common characteristics of a person bereaved by suicide include:

- Having unanswered questions that are likely to underlie and exacerbate the above feelings of grief;
- Strong need to find meaning in the death;
- Great feelings of guilt, blame, rejection and abandonment;
- Feelings of stigmatisation and social isolation;
- Interrupted

More resources regarding this topic can be found at: [Youthline's approach to postvention](#)

“Young people can be very alone with the ongoing impact of trauma. The pathway to get support can be confusing and difficult. This is a recurring theme that comes through many of our interactions with clients on the Helpline.” – 9(2)(a)

9(2)(a)

Funding Equity

We were very pleased to see the overall focus on social determinants of health and wellbeing. Previously health-based approaches have dominated, and prevention and early-intervention services have been undervalued. We have been providing early intervention and crisis intervention services in accessible and alternative mediums with little to no government funding for years. We hope the reframe of the strategy towards a wellbeing approach results in a more equitable distribution of funding.

We are the most well recognised youth support organisation, by young people, in the country. However, direct costs for our national 24/7 Helpline service are only 11% government funded (\$89K), with the gap being made up through fundraising.

Outcomes Reporting

As an organisation that works with various agencies and DHBs, we are interested in what the shift to broad outcomes may mean in terms of reporting. Current reporting requirements often involve duplication across various agencies. With an aligned strategy that sets outcomes across the board, what might this mean in terms of reporting efficiencies for service providers and NGOs.

Please note that your submission will become official information. This means that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may be required to release all or part of the information contained in your submission in response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may withhold all or parts of your submission if it is necessary to protect your privacy or if it has been supplied subject to an obligation of confidence.

Please tell us if you don't want all or specific parts of your submission released, and the reasons why. Your views will be taken into account in deciding whether to withhold or release any information requested under the Official Information Act and in deciding if, and how, to refer to your submission in any possible subsequent paper prepared by the Department.