

PATCHWORK

Auckland Youth Support Network Working for young people

Issue 1 • October 2007

Hello and welcome to the first issue of *PatchWork*. This is the place to read all about the latest work going on around the issue of youth gangs. The Auckland Youth Support Network is the group of people in charge of work being done in Manukau and Otahuhu. They are leading the way in this area.

The Auckland Youth Support Network involves the following:

- Ministry of Social Development
- New Zealand Police
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Youth Development
- Counties Manukau District Health Board
- Housing New Zealand
- Auckland City Council
- Manukau City Council.

The Auckland Youth Support Network meets every month



Plan of Action

In September 2006 the \$10 million Counties Manukau and Otahuhu Plan of Action was launched. It includes 26 Action points ranging from the establishment of new reception centres, to youth workers in the community, managed by the community, and police youth action teams. Working together, a wide range of different agencies have made strong progress in achieving what the Plan set out to do.

We are pleased to report that the 26 action points have now been completed. We hear from key agencies and community leaders that levels of gang activity remain lower in the area now than previously. The Action Plan is the beginning of an Auckland-wide and, eventually, a national effort to improve youth outcomes and respond to youth gang activity.

You can look at the whole plan by going to: Improving Outcomes for Young People in Counties Manukau.

<http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/cross-sectoral-work/youth-gangs-action.html>

National Youth Gangs Manager

Earlier this year the first National Manager for Youth Gangs, Carl Crafar, was appointed

His role is to take an overview and to make sure the Plan of Action for Counties Manukau and Otahuhu is implemented. He is also assessing what measures need to be taken in other areas. Much work is being done, not only with regard to the action plan but also through other government and



community initiatives to make sure young people are helped and gang related problems are tackled. In the coming weeks Carl will be continuing to look beyond Counties Manukau and Otahuhu at other areas in the city and in the country which have youth gang issues. He has visited Hamilton and Northland, and will be visiting the Bay of Plenty to get an idea of the

problems in these areas, and advise on how experiences in Counties Manukau and Otahuhu could work for them.

A bed for the night

A new Specialist Care Reception Centre has opened in Hillsborough to provide emergency short-term accommodation for young people in trouble. Lighthouse is open 24 hours a day and seven days a week and provides round-the-clock staffing and a dedicated social worker in an environment like a family home.

One of the main roles of the centre is to accommodate young people who have been arrested and would otherwise have to spend more than 24 hours in police cells. If someone is picked up out-of-hours and maybe at the weekend they could face a few days in the cells, a situation which will not help them, or the police. The emergency beds in Lighthouse mean that a safe and secure environment in the community can be offered.

While they are at the centre the young people are off the street, receiving help and are safe. The centre has individual bedrooms, communal rooms, a basketball area, a weights room, games and a computer to keep the boys occupied. The young people staying there are also expected to help with the chores and they can earn rewards for good behaviour. The average stay at the centre is three days and since its opening, Lighthouse in Hillsborough has accommodated 70 young people. A dedicated reception centre for girls opened in September in Pakuranga with 17 residents thus far.

The Hillsborough centre was visited by the Prime Minister in July.



Other activities

There are lots of other initiatives happening to help young people. A total of 22 youth workers have been contracted through community organisations such as Otara 274 and Genesis Youth Trust. They provide activities for young people and mentoring support. One hundred and sixty-five young people and their families are also benefiting from a full wraparound service through an integrated case management approach. More than 500 parents have attended positive parenting programmes, again delivered by community organisations. More information will be provided about these initiatives and others in future newsletters.

To find out who is doing what about youth gangs go to <http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/children-and-young-people/youth-gangs/providers-list.html>

Questions and answers

Q. What is a youth gang?

A. This is the central question and one for which there is no easy answer because there is no agreed definition of youth gangs. Youth gangs are often defined by their criminality but the two are not synonymous.

Q. So when does a gathering of young people turn into a gang?

A. A gang is a group of individuals who share a common identity and, in current usage, engage in illegal activities. If their behaviour intimidates or becomes anti-social and they move as a pack then it can be said to be a gang. To read much more about this question and put gangs in context in their history in New Zealand society have a look at the research.

From Wannabes to Youth Offenders: Youth Gangs in Counties Manukau - Research Report
<http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/social-research/children-young-people/youth-gangs.html>

Get in contact

This newsletter will be produced every second month. We want to hear from you too. Do you have a story you think we should look at? Do you have any questions you want answered. Get in touch and email us at patchwork@msd.govt.nz.