

Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot: One year follow-up study

**Wendy Searle
&
Philip Spier**



First published in February 2006 by the
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 180
Wellington
New Zealand

© Crown Copyright

ISBN 0-478-29019-5

Foreword

The Youth Court is a vital part of the structure created by the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 to respond to offending by young people aged 14 to 16. The Youth Court is intended to operate in a more personal, individualised way than the adult courts - in keeping with young people's levels of maturity. The Court also recognises the importance of effective intervention so that young people do not progress to adult crime – with all the attendant costs to themselves, their family/whanau, the wider community and the state which that entails.

The Christchurch Youth Drug Court (YDC) Pilot, which has been operating since March 2002, has provided an enhanced Youth Court process to address the alcohol and drug dependency issues of young people appearing in court. We know that alcohol and/or other drug abuse are often significant factors in youth offending. The aim of the YDC has been to facilitate better service delivery to these young people in an effort to reduce their offending.

The current report is the second stage of the YDC Pilot evaluation. An earlier report, *Process Evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot (2004)* by Dr Sue Carswell, examined the operation of the YDC over its first 18 months. That report identified the strengths of the YDC as the judicial continuity (the fact that the same judge dealt with the young person each time he or she appeared in court), the strong multidisciplinary team approach and interagency co-ordination.

The current report is a follow-up assessment of the 30 young people who participated in the YDC Pilot during its first 12 months of operation. It looks at levels of reoffending by these young people in the year after leaving the YDC, and also includes the results of interviews with some of the young people and their family/whanau about the effect that participation in the YDC has had on their lives. While the small sample size means that conclusions must be drawn with caution this report will be of considerable assistance in assessing the efficacy of this approach.

Sandi Beatie
Acting Secretary for Justice

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the young people and their family/whanau who took part in the interviews for this part of the evaluation. Without their willingness to share their experiences and insights about the Youth Drug Court this report would not have been possible.

Thank you to Karen Keelan for undertaking the interviews with young people and their family/whanau and reviewing the final report. We are indebted to her experience and expertise in facilitating this part of the evaluation.

This report would not have been possible without the considerable assistance and cooperation of the various individuals and agencies involved in the Youth Drug Court. In particular, thanks are due to Judge John Walker, Judge Jane McMeeken, the Youth Drug Court team, Phil Miles (Christchurch Criminal Courts Manager), Rebecca Pyle and Kelly Bristow (Youth Drug Court Clerks) and members of the Christchurch Police who assisted with aspects of the project.

We would like to say a special thank you to Dr Sue Carswell, the author of the Youth Drug Court process evaluation report. Sue was responsible for facilitating the overall processes for the evaluation, readily providing advice on the follow-up assessment and reviewing this report.

Thanks also to the members of the Evaluation Advisory Group, who were representatives from various government agencies. They provided guidance to the evaluation and reviewed drafts of the process evaluation and follow-up reports.

We also wish to thank Kaye McLaren, Sue Triggs, John Meek, and Darren Skidmore for their very helpful peer review comments on a draft of the report. Thanks also to Alison Chetwin from the Research, Evaluation and Modelling Team of the Ministry of Justice for her advice along the way and for reviewing the draft report.

We would also like to thank Vivienne Morrell for proof-reading and Judith Spier for formatting the report and transcribing interviews.

Finally, we would like to thank the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research for their review of the final report.

Wendy Searle & Philip Spier
Research, Evaluation and Modelling Unit
Ministry of Justice

Contents

Foreword	3
Acknowledgements	5
Tables	9
Figures	10
Executive summary	11
1 Introduction	19
1.1 Introduction	19
1.2 The drug court model	19
1.3 Establishment of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot	21
1.4 Overview of the YDC process	21
1.5 Exiting from the YDC	23
1.6 The YDC evaluation	23
1.7 New South Wales Youth Drug Court Evaluation	24
1.8 Limitations of the current evaluation	25
1.9 Outline of the report	27
2 Methodology	29
2.1 Follow-up assessment objectives	29
2.2 Reoffending analysis	30
2.3 Interviews	32
2.3.1 Recruitment of participants	32
2.3.2 Content of interviews	33
2.3.3 Ethical and cultural considerations	33
2.3.4 Interview analysis	34
2.4 Youth advocate costs	34
3 Reoffending analysis	37
3.1 YDC pilot sample	37
3.1.1 Prior offending	37
3.1.2 Offending accumulated during the YDC pilot	39
3.1.3 Post-exit reoffending	41
3.1.4 Changes in the rate and seriousness of offending after exit from the YDC	42
3.1.5 Reoffending rates according to whether the young person successfully completed the YDC requirements	44
3.2 Reoffending comparisons	46
3.2.1 Characteristics of the sample groups	46
3.2.2 Reoffending rate comparisons	48
3.2.3 Time to first reoffence	48
3.2.4 Changes in the rate and seriousness of offending	49
3.2.5 Subsequent imprisonment rate comparisons	50
3.2.6 Other reoffending comparisons	50
3.3 Summary	52

4	Interviews with young people and family/whānau members	55
4.1	Introduction	55
4.2	Assessment of the Youth Drug Court	56
4.2.1	Positive aspects	56
4.2.2	Negative aspects	58
4.2.3	What could the YDC have done better?	59
4.2.4	Did young people complete treatment?	60
4.2.5	Recommend Youth Drug Court?	60
4.2.6	Does the Youth Drug Court make a difference?	61
4.2.7	Overall comments about the Youth Drug Court	61
4.3	Life changes as a result of the YDC	62
4.3.1	Drug and alcohol use	62
4.3.2	Offending	65
4.3.3	Other life changes	67
4.4	Other findings	68
4.4.1	Education and treatment programmes	68
4.4.2	Future plans	69
4.4.3	Other things in life help?	69
4.5	Summary	70
4.5.1	Assessment of the youth drug court	70
4.5.2	Response to the Youth Drug Court process	70
4.5.3	Other	70
5	Youth advocate costs	71
5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Findings	71
5.3	Summary	73
6	Discussion and conclusion	75
6.1	Introduction	75
6.2	Limitations of the evaluation	76
6.3	Assessment of the Youth Drug Court	77
6.4	Patterns of offending among youth drug court participants	77
6.5	Alcohol and/or other drug dependency	78
6.6	Offending related needs and protective factors	80
6.6.1	Multiple risks	80
6.6.2	Increasing protective factors	80
6.6.3	Targeting specific needs	81
6.7	Good practice in the Youth Drug Court	82
	References	85
	Appendix 1 Informed Consent Sheets	87
	Appendix 2 Interview Schedules	93
	Appendix 3 Safety Protocols	97
	Appendix 4 Additional tables	101
	Appendix 5 Seriousness scale and offence types	103

Tables

Table E1	Number of offences before, during, and after exiting the Youth Drug Court for the pilot participants	13
Table E2	Number and percentage of the various groups who reoffended	14
Table 3.1	Total number of prior offences for YDC sample	37
Table 3.2	Annual rate of prior offending for YDC sample	38
Table 3.3	Number and percentage of YDC sample with prior offences of specific types	38
Table 3.4	Seriousness level of major prior offence for YDC sample	39
Table 3.5	Total number of offences accumulated during attendance at the YDC	39
Table 3.6	Number and percentage of YDC sample with accumulated offences of specific types	40
Table 3.7	Seriousness level of major offence accumulated during attendance at the YDC	40
Table 3.8	Total number of reoffences after exiting the YDC	41
Table 3.9	Number and percentage of YDC sample with offences of specific types after exiting the YDC	41
Table 3.10	Seriousness level of the major offence after exiting the YDC	42
Table 3.11	Total number of participants imprisoned after exiting the YDC	42
Table 3.12	Annual rate of offending before and after exiting the YDC	43
Table 3.13	Changes in the rate of offending after exiting the YDC	43
Table 3.14	Average seriousness of offences before and after exiting the YDC	43
Table 3.15	Changes in the average seriousness of offending after exiting the YDC	44
Table 3.16	Number of offences before, during, and after exiting the YDC, according to completion status	45
Table 3.17	Characteristics of the various sample groups	47
Table 3.18	Number and percentage of the various groups who reoffended	48
Table 3.19	Annual rate of offending before and after exit	49
Table 3.20	Average seriousness of offences before and after exit	50
Table 3.21	Number of subsequent prison sentences for the various groups	50
Table 3.22	Number and percentage of offences of specific types within 12 months for the various groups	51
Table 3.23	Seriousness of major offence within 12 months for the various groups	51
Table 4.1	Demographic information for the young people involved in the follow-up assessment	55
Table 4.2	Nature and severity of alcohol and cannabis use of the YDC sample group when they exited the pilot	62
Table A4.1	Number of reoffences within 6 months for the various groups	101
Table A4.2	Number of reoffences within 12 months for the various groups	101
Table A4.3	Number of prison sentences imposed within 12 months for the various groups	102

Figures

Figure 3.1	Percentage of young people who had not yet reoffended up to one year, by group	49
Figure 5.1	Youth advocate daily costs – proportion of young people	72
Figure 5.2	Average total cost for YDC participants compared to young offenders going through the Youth Court in 2001 to 2003	73

Executive summary

Introduction

The Christchurch Youth Drug Court (YDC) was established by the Ministerial Taskforce on Youth Offending and started operating on 14 March 2002. The pilot has been an innovative programme aimed at reducing offending which is linked with alcohol and/or other drug dependency amongst young people. The YDC aimed to do this by facilitating early identification of young offenders with alcohol and/or other drug use problems; reducing time delays in service delivery to young people; facilitating effective interagency coordination; and monitoring the young people to facilitate the treatment process. The pilot targets young recidivist offenders appearing in the Youth Court who have been identified as having a moderate to severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency that is linked to their offending.

The evaluation of the Christchurch YDC was divided into two phases. The first phase, a process evaluation, has been completed and the findings are available in the report by Carswell (2004) *'Process Evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot'*. This first report provides information on the operation of the pilot in the first eighteen months. The process evaluation found support for the YDC model as implemented in Christchurch. Respondents considered that the pilot had, on the whole, made improvements to the process issues it set out to address. The strengths of the YDC were considered to be: the consistency of the Judge, the strong multidisciplinary team approach, and interagency coordination. However, a number of concerns were expressed or suggestions made for improvement. These included: the need to more effectively address resourcing issues, including service gaps; concern for victim rights in the YDC process; and ensuring accountability of young people for their offending.

The second phase of the evaluation, the subject of this report, is a follow-up assessment of the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation. It examines patterns of offending by these young people in the twelve months after they left the YDC. It combines this reoffending analysis with a small number of interviews with young people and their family/whanau to gain insight into these young people's lives after leaving the YDC. It also assesses their perceptions of the impact the YDC may have had in facilitating any changes in their lives.

Limitations of the evaluation

Caution needs to be applied in interpreting the findings of the reoffending comparisons presented in the report. The small numbers of young people eligible for the YDC pilot make any comparisons statistically unreliable – that is, it would be difficult to statistically detect any effect on reoffending due to participation in the programme. Also, the administrative data available on the young people who could potentially be included in a comparison sample did

not include information on whether the young person had moderate-severe alcohol and/or drug dependencies that were associated with offending.

However, two proxy comparison groups were selected. The first of these was a National Youth Court sample which included all cases with a proved or convicted outcome in the Youth Court in the 2002/2003 fiscal year. As there were a number of important differences between the characteristics of the YDC pilot sample and the National Youth Court sample, a subset of the National Youth Court sample was formed that better matched the YDC pilot on some attributes, in particular gender, number of prior proved offences in the Youth Court and seriousness of major prior offence. All these are key factors in predicting risk of reoffending. The comparison groups have been provided in order to put the reoffending analysis of the YDC pilot in context. Without this, it would not have been possible to identify if outcomes would have been any different had the participants gone through standard Youth Court processes.

It is also important to note that only six of the thirty young people who went through the YDC in the first year of operation and five family/whanau members were interviewed for the qualitative section of this report. The small numbers mean that the views reported here are not necessarily representative of all the young people who went through the YDC.

Reoffending analysis

This section presents information on the prior, accumulated and post-exit offending of the thirty participants in the YDC pilot sample. It also presents comparative information on reoffending rates for the YDC pilot sample, a national Youth Court group, and a sub-sample of the national Youth Court group that was 'partially matched'.

Youth Drug Court Pilot Sample

- Before entering the YDC, the 30 pilot participants had a mean of 15 (median of 11) prior 'proved' offences (see Table E1). Almost all of the YDC participants had committed a property offence before they started attending the drug court, over half had a prior violent offence, and less than a quarter had a prior drug offence. All but one (97%) of the YDC sample had committed a prior offence of at least moderate seriousness before entering the drug court.
- The 30 participants attended the drug court pilot processes for an average of 10 months. Most (80%) of the young people accumulated further offences that were committed while attending the drug court, with one-fifth (6) of the sample accumulating at least ten offences.
- Sixty percent (18) of the YDC sample had committed another offence within six months of exiting the YDC, and within one year 70% (21) had reoffended. The mean number of offences for each participant within 12 months of exiting the YDC was 6.2, with the median being 2.0.

- Half the sample had committed a property offence within six months of exiting the YDC, with the proportion increasing to 60% within 12 months. Only one offence of high seriousness was committed by the pilot sample within 12 months of exiting the YDC.
- Participants who successfully completed the requirements of the YDC had lower reoffending rates after exiting the drug court than participants who did not complete requirements – although the differences were not statistically significant. While this could indicate a positive effect from YDC-related interventions, it is also likely that at least some of the difference is due to differences in characteristics of ‘completers’ versus ‘non-completers’.

Table E1 Number of offences before, during, and after exiting the Youth Drug Court for the pilot participants

Period and number of offences	Number	Percentage
<u>Prior to YDC</u> ¹		
1–4	6	20%
5–9	8	27%
10–19	7	23%
20+	9	30%
Total	30	100%
<u>During YDC</u>		
0	6	20%
1 or more	24	80%
Total	30	100%
<u>6 months after exit</u>		
0	12	40%
1 or more	18	60%
Total	30	100%
<u>12 months after exit</u>		
0	9	30%
1 or more	21	70%
Total	30	100%

Note:

1. Includes offences for which the young person entered the YDC, as well as all prior ‘proved’ offences.

Comparisons with other groups

Two groups of young people were found as proxy comparisons to the YDC pilot sample from data involving young people who had proved cases in 2002/2003. The limitations of the comparisons were outlined above.

- Within both follow-up periods (6 months and 12 months) the YDC pilot sample were as likely to reoffend as both the national Youth Court sample and the ‘partially-matched’ Youth Court sample (see Table E2). The small differences found in reoffending rates were not statistically significant. For example, within 12 months of exiting the YDC, 70%

of the YDC pilot sample had another ‘proved’ offence recorded against them – compared with reoffending rates of 68% for the partially-matched Youth Court sample and 65% for the national Youth Court sample.

Table E2 Number and percentage of the various groups who reoffended

Follow-up period and number of reoffences	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample		National Youth Court sample	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
6 months						
0	12	40%	62	52%	447	54%
1 or more	18	60%	58	48%	385	46%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%
12 months						
0	9	30%	39	33%	293	35%
1 or more	21	70%	81	68%	539	65%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%

Note: See Section 2.2 for details on the sample groups, and Table 3.18 for further details on the figures in the table.

- The YDC pilot sample appeared slightly less likely to commit a violent offence, and slightly more likely to commit a property, drug or traffic offence within both follow-up periods than both the Youth Court samples. However, none of these differences were statistically significant.
- Both the rate of offending and the seriousness of offending by the pilot participants reduced significantly after exiting the drug court, compared to levels before entering the YDC. The same was also found for both Youth Court samples. The decrease in the offence rate was in fact larger for the partially-matched Youth Court sample than the YDC pilot sample.
- Four (13%) of the young people who went through the YDC pilot were imprisoned within 12 months of exiting the YDC. This was a significantly higher proportion than that for the national Youth Court sample (5%). However, the difference was not statistically significant in relation to the partially-matched Youth Court sample (for which 9% were imprisoned within 12 months).

Interviews with young people and their family/whānau members

Six young people and five family/whānau members were interviewed as part of the follow-up assessment. The aim of these interviews was to gain an insight into these young people’s lives one to two years on from their participation in the YDC.

Assessment of the Youth Drug Court

All the young people and most of the family/whānau interviewed were able to recall positive aspects of participating in the YDC. Most commonly mentioned was the relationship formed

between the young person and Judge Walker, who was the presiding Judge at the time these young people attended the YDC. However, the support of other members of the YDC was also mentioned as being a particular positive aspect of the YDC. A couple of young people commented positively on the way the YDC sought to involve the whole family in the process and not just the young person.

A number of suggested improvements to the YDC were made including the need for residential programmes for alcohol and/or other drug treatment in Christchurch and the need to provide support for the young people after they leave the YDC. All of the young people interviewed said they would recommend the YDC to other young people because they had experienced the difference it had made for them.

Life changes as a result of the YDC

Interviews twelve months or longer after leaving the YDC showed that some young people had managed to sustain the changes in their alcohol and/or other drug use made during the period they were on the YDC. A couple of young people, however, had started using alcohol and/or other drugs again in the period since leaving the YDC. They attributed this to stressful life circumstances, but were both wanting, with the support of their partners/families, to make changes to their alcohol and/or other drug intake.

All of the young people interviewed, with the exception of one, had proved offences since leaving the YDC. Two of the young people had only offended once in eighteen months, two had offended moderately and one had offended extensively. Most of these young people acknowledged in the interview that they had continued to offend after leaving the YDC, but also indicated that they were offending much less often.

The YDC was credited by both young people and their family/whanau as having a significant part to play in the reduction of their alcohol and/or other drug abuse and in offending. However, other factors were also important including maturation and significant relationships.

Other findings

Only one of the young people appeared to have undergone any form of treatment or counselling since leaving the YDC. Most of the young people had, however, been involved in either courses or in some form of employment. Most of the young people had plans for their future. These included travel, study, owning their own homes, having a family and employment.

Offending-related needs and protective factors

It is clear from the evaluation that young people eligible for entry to the Youth Drug Court are at the serious end of youth offenders. While alcohol and/or other drug treatment is a major focus of the YDC, other needs of young people were also considered important. Therefore, a wide range of programmes and services were used to address alcohol and other drug issues, offending behaviour, education and vocational needs, and to provide mentoring and support.

There is evidence that the Youth Drug Court does increase protective factors in the young people who were interviewed. The YDC does not involve just the young person but the family/whanau as well and it was evident that both the young person and their family/whanau benefited from this experience. The YDC also successfully engaged young people in the process. Young people were motivated both by the feeling that the YDC was their last chance, and by the positive influence of the Judge.

Youth advocate costs

It is estimated that on average youth advocate cost for the YDC was about four times that of the cost for youth advocates in the standard Youth Court. However, it would be expected that youth advocate costs for the YDC would be significantly higher than those for the general Youth Court. Young people on the YDC remain on it for a longer period of time than if they were attending the Youth Court for a similar offence. In addition, YDC participants make more frequent court appearances – starting off with fortnightly appearances, graduating to monthly appearances once they are showing signs of improvement. Total costs for the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation were \$138,215. The costs for each young person varied significantly from \$616 to \$10,784.

Good practice in the Youth Drug Court

The Youth Drug Court's current structure and processes appear particularly effective in engaging young people and their families, increasing motivation to change, providing timely and in-depth assessment and facilitating access to treatment. It also has strengths in developing a positive and effective relationship between the judiciary and young people and their family/whanau. Other positive aspects of the YDC include the interagency coordination, the support provided to young people and their families and the high level of supervision and accountability that young people experience.

All these are strengths which can be built on and considered for wider adoption within the general Youth Court, and it is suggested that a more rigorous assessment of the problems which are causally related to offending could be considered in the Youth Court. This would include screening for medium to high risk of reoffending and a range of problems causally related to offending, a full assessment of all needs, and referral to services which address the moderate to severe needs/problems identified.

The following list contains a number of features identified as good practice:

- The same Judge dealing with the young person each time he/she appears in the Youth Court to develop a “contractual” relationship between the judge and young person.
- High quality assessment to inform decisions about intervention.
- More frequent court appearances to monitor progress and deal with any issues arising.

- Closer monitoring of the young person to ensure compliance with any court orders (normally these would be in the form of bail conditions) by a multidisciplinary team including representatives of several government agencies.
- Referral to services which address as many as possible of the moderate to severe needs/problems identified in the assessment and Family Group Conference.
- Choose treatment services that are tailored to the young person and family's needs and preferences, as much as possible, to further reduce barriers to treatment and increase engagement. This includes providing young people with the opportunity to attend programmes and counselling services that incorporate and integrate cultural paradigms/frameworks.
- Choose services that teach new skills in active ways, particularly relapse prevention skills (for example, identifying cues to drug/alcohol use or offending, learning new ways to respond to them) and thinking skills such as predicting consequences of behaviour and problem solving.
- Aim to involve the young person in a range of positive, socially normal activities which will replace alcohol and drug activity, such as education, work, sport, culture, recreation, to expose them to new values and acquaintances. Ensure that hours of involvement in treatment and positive activities are high.
- Choose services that involve families, partners and friends in treatment so they can learn the skills and encourage the young person to keep using them. Train and support families in effective supervision, discipline and communication.
- Ensure that adequate supports, including treatment programmes and counselling, are put in place for young people exiting the YDC. This support should taper off as the young person gradually learns to cope on their own, but provision for young person to access services, if needed, should remain open. This would also include transfer to adult services if their age precluded access to children and young person's services.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Christchurch Youth Drug Court pilot (YDC) was established by the Ministerial Taskforce on Youth Offending and started operating on 14 March 2002. It is based on an initiative developed by Youth Court Judge John Walker who identified a need for addressing the linkage between alcohol and other drug use and offending, and facilitating a better service delivery to this group. A paper '*A proposal for early court intervention for drug dependent young offenders appearing in the Youth Court*' (Judge Walker, 28/11/2000) advocated the use of an adapted form of the drug court model in New Zealand.

The pilot's overall objectives were to:

- Improve the young people's health and social functioning and to decrease their alcohol and/or other drug use;
- Reduce crime associated with alcohol and/or other drug use; and
- Reduce criminal activity.

The evaluation of the pilot was divided into two phases. The first phase was a process evaluation which examined the operations of the YDC for the first eighteen months (14 March 2002 to August 2003). That report was published in November 2004 (Carswell, 2004). The second phase of the evaluation, the subject of this report, follows up the same sample of thirty young people twelve months after they have left the YDC, including an examination of offending patterns post-exit.

1.2 The drug court model

The first drug court was implemented in Miami, Florida in 1989 and quickly became a national USA model. There are now over 1,000 courts in the USA encompassing mainly adult drug courts but also an increasing number of youth drug courts and family drug courts. The first juvenile drug court was established in Key West, Florida in 1993 and a May 2004 report found that there were now 268 such drug courts operating in 44 states in the USA. The drug court model is applied in a number of forms and can also be found in countries such as Australia, Ireland and Canada.

The underlying philosophy of the drug court is therapeutic jurisprudence, which has been described as:

...a perspective that regards the law as a social force that produces behaviours and consequences. Sometimes these consequences fall within the realm of what we call therapeutic; other times antitherapeutic consequences are produced. Therapeutic jurisprudence wants us to be aware of this and wants us to see whether the law can be made or applied in a more therapeutic way so long as other values, such as justice and due process, can be fully respected. (David Wexler n.d.a.)

When therapeutic jurisprudence is applied to the drug court model it is 'the use of the Court and the sanctions available to it in conjunction with treatment programmes to effect a reduction in reoffending... It is a new role for a Judge attempting to change behaviour and acting in a preventative way by intervention'. (Judge John Walker 2000).

The first Australian drug court was established in New South Wales in 1999. They now exist in five of the seven Australian jurisdictions. Australian drug courts are largely based on the models developed in the US in that they feature an integrated community-based treatment programme that is monitored through regular court appearances. The treatment programme requires drug abstinence through frequent and random drug testing, and increases participant accountability through a series of rewards and sanctions. Unlike US drug courts which generally target first-time offenders, the Australian programmes are primarily aimed at offenders with a long history of property offending and are used as a final option before incarceration.

The Christchurch Youth Drug Court pilot was based on diversionary models of drug courts and adapted to the New Zealand context. While the Christchurch Youth Drug Court has some different features to an ordinary Youth Court, the pilot essentially operates as a Youth Court under the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (CYP&FA 1989). The Family Group Conference (FGC) is integral to the YDC and young people are expected to achieve their goals set out in the FGC recommendations. Young people are promised that if they successfully complete their alcohol and other drug treatment plan and other FGC goals they will not be given a custodial sentence. The YDC is voluntary for young people identified as suitable candidates and they can elect to go back to the Youth Court at any time.

The YDC Judge plays an important role in overseeing the monitoring of young people. Key features of the YDC model are the consistency of seeing the same Judge on a regular basis and the use of the Judge's authority to positively recognise progress and to sanction non-compliance. The therapeutic jurisprudence approach recognises that the way the Judge treats young people can be an important influence because of the Judge's symbolism and authority.

The key mechanism for the coordination of services in the YDC is a multidisciplinary team. The holistic approach to addressing young people's offending behaviour has been widely recognised in the literature as beneficial and a unique feature of the YDC team is the close integration of health and education services with justice services. The YDC team is made up of the following practitioners:

- Judge;
- YDC Social Worker (Department of Child, Youth and Family Services);

- YJ Coordinator (Department of Child, Youth and Family Services);
- Police Prosecutor;
- Youth Advocates (lawyers) representing YDC participants;
- Youth Speciality Services coordinator of the alcohol and other drug stream and mental health (Ministry of Health);
- Group Special Education Team Leader (Ministry of Education);
- YDC Court Clerk (Ministry of Justice).

1.3 Establishment of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot

The Christchurch Youth Drug Court pilot was established through a series of interagency meetings conducted both at the national and regional level. Christchurch Youth Court was chosen as a suitable site for the pilot for the following reasons:

1. The perceived intensity of the drug problems amongst the Youth Court population.
2. The relatively high numbers of young persons going through the Youth Court.
3. The services available for alcohol and other drug treatment.
4. Youth Speciality Services (YSS) in Christchurch performs dual diagnosis of alcohol and other drug and forensic mental health with young people.
5. The geographical layout of Christchurch meant that one Youth Court serviced a large metropolitan area whereas other areas such as Wellington were more geographically dispersed with disparate services.

The Ministry of Justice conducted a formative evaluation to assist in the development of the pilot, particularly the selection criteria for participants. This included a scoping exercise during November 2001 where a 'snapshot' of young offenders appearing in Christchurch Youth Court was taken to inform agencies about the needs of young people and how many were likely to be eligible for the pilot. The focus was on: the extent of alcohol and other drug dependency among young people, offending histories, and educational background.

1.4 Overview of the YDC process

The pilot targets young offenders appearing at Youth Court who have been identified as having moderate to severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency that is linked to their offending behaviour. Their alcohol and drug dependency can be linked to their offending behaviour when offending for the purposes of obtaining alcohol and/or other drugs; offending under the influence of these substances; and committing drug related offences. They may be identified by various means such as: the Police, their Youth Advocate, Child Youth and Family (CYF), or through a Family Group Conference held previously. If they agree, they are then referred to a screening by a YSS clinician to determine their eligibility for YDC. A YSS clinician is based at Christchurch Youth Court on court list days (every Tuesday) to conduct screenings onsite. To be eligible for the YDC, young people should meet the following criteria:

- Be aged 14–16 years at the time of the offence;
- Have a moderate–severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency linked to offending behaviour;
- Be a recidivist offender, defined as appearing in the Youth Court two or more times in the previous twelve months;
- Sexual offending is excluded;
- Some violent offending may be excluded, and is assessed on a case by case basis;
- The offence[s] before the Youth Court have been proved or admitted.

Following the screening, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services Court Officer will advise the Judge of the results of the screening. If the criteria are met, then the Judge will decide whether to remand that young person to the YDC. If the presiding Youth Court Judge decides to transfer the young person to the YDC then the remand will be to a date which will provide sufficient time for a full assessment by Youth Speciality Services, and the development of a detailed plan of treatment through the FGC process.

The process from initial identification to the first Youth Drug Court appearance should take approximately three to four weeks. The young offender and his/her Youth Advocate then attend a hearing of the Youth Drug Court to hear the outcome of the assessment report and the recommendations of the FGC. If the young person is found suitable and agrees to participate in the YDC process, the Judge will accept the young person into the YDC.

One of the strengths of the YDC is the team approach and members from each agency are required to be regularly in contact with each other and work closely together to address the needs of the young people. The YDC sits fortnightly and the team meets before the court sits to review cases. This is designed to facilitate information sharing and coordination between agencies represented on the YDC team.

To monitor the young person's progress they start on fortnightly remands, graduating to monthly remands if they are complying with their plan. Bail conditions are used extensively to try and reduce continued offending and to get young people to attend their programmes, courses and counselling. A particular feature of the YDC is the consistency of having the same Judge presiding over cases and monitoring the young person's progress. The Judge in consultation with the YDC team changes the young person's plan in response to progress and circumstances.

If the plan breaks down and the young person breaches their bail conditions they are answerable to the YDC Judge, who decides whether they should be sanctioned and remain on the YDC, or be returned to the standard Youth Court process. In the final sentencing, the Judge takes into account the young person's progress on their alcohol and other drug treatment programme and other requirements of their plan, such as obligations to victims, training and educational goals. If they successfully complete the YDC they will receive a non-custodial sentence.

1.5 Exiting from the YDC

The young people who are regarded as successful participants of the YDC are discharged by the YDC when the YDC Judge and team decide they have completed, or nearly completed all the requirements and there is consensus that there is no need for further YDC overview. For the purposes of the evaluation, these young people are said to have received a 'completion discharge'. The following guidelines are considered when deciding if young people are to be discharged:

- Completion or near completion of Family Group Conference (FGC) outcomes.
- The YDC aims for harm minimisation rather than abstinence and therefore looks for a decrease in alcohol and/or other drug use.
- Stability in their current situation, for example, attending courses, school, or employment, having a supportive home environment, involved in sports or cultural activities, and not associating with other youth offenders.
- No recent offending and therefore no outstanding matters before the YDC.
- Matters in the YDC are able to be finally determined.
- Consensus among the YDC team members that there is no further need for YDC overview.

A young person can be remanded back to the Youth Court or other Courts for the following reasons:

- Further offending committed that precludes the YDC, such as the type of offence; accumulation of offences, age of offender¹;
- The young person wants to exit the YDC;
- The young person is not complying with their treatment programme and the Judge and the YDC team think that no useful purpose will be served by the young person continuing in the YDC.

For the purposes of this evaluation this is called a 'non-completion discharge'.

1.6 The YDC evaluation

The evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court was divided into two phases. The first phase, a process evaluation, has been completed and the findings are available in the report by Carswell (2004) *'Process Evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot.'* The report provides information on the operation of the pilot in the first eighteen months. The process evaluation examined how effective the pilot had been in achieving the process issues it set out to address. These process issues include: efficient identification of young people with alcohol and other drug issues, timeliness of service delivery, interagency coordination to improve

¹ If a young person is aged 17 or over when they commit an offence they come under the adult jurisdiction of the District or High Court.

service delivery and the monitoring of young people. The process evaluation also reports on justice processes, including: victims' rights, young people and their families/whanau perceptions of the YDC, and issues around programmes and services. The process evaluation report also includes aggregate information on all the thirty young people who entered the YDC during the first year of the pilot, 14 March 2002 to 13 March 2003.

The process evaluation found support for the YDC model as implemented in Christchurch. Respondents considered that the pilot had, on the whole, made improvements to the process issues it set out to address. The strengths of the YDC were considered to be: the consistency of the Judge, the strong multi-disciplinary team approach, and interagency coordination. However, a number of concerns were expressed or suggestions made for improvement. These included: the need to more effectively address resourcing issues, including service gaps; concern for victims' rights in the YDC process; and ensuring accountability of young people for their offending.

This second phase of the evaluation is a follow-up assessment of the same sample of thirty young people after they exited the Youth Drug Court. The follow-up assessment includes a reoffending analysis for the thirty young people, and some limited analysis on an additional twenty-one who entered the YDC in the second year of operation. Interviews with six young people and five family/whanau members were also conducted.

The report combines data on reoffending with the perspectives of young people and their family/whanau on major changes in the young people's lives since leaving the YDC, and the extent to which participation in the YDC processes contributed to changes.

1.7 New South Wales Youth Drug Court Evaluation

Evaluations of drug courts in general have been hampered by a number of problems outlined by Belenko (2001) (cited in Eardley, 2004). These include: difficulties with the selection of appropriate comparison groups, issues with accessing juvenile data, and small sample sizes. These problems limit the statistical power of outcome studies. Rodriguez and Webb (2004) reiterate these concerns, noting that evaluations of drug courts to date have generally been constrained by small samples, inadequate comparison groups and limited outcome measures.

The New South Wales (NSW) Youth Drug Court pilot began on 31 July 2000 and is Australia's only Youth Drug Court. The NSW YDC pilot programme aimed at reducing offending amongst those entrenched in the criminal justice system. The pilot is targeted at young people aged 14–18 years charged with a criminal offence (excluding sexual offences, traffic offences and serious indictable offences) for which a caution or youth justice conference is considered.

The evaluation of the NSW pilot hoped to overcome some of the problems identified in previous evaluations but in practice found that the evaluation was affected by many of the same difficulties. A randomised control experimental design in the NSW evaluation was rejected for reasons of small sample sizes and ethical reasons. A matched comparison group of young people in another court area was also rejected as an option. Aside from problems of controlling for differences in locality, access to services and court practices, this proved

impractical because creating a genuinely matched group would have meant putting the comparison sample through the same level of intensive assessment that takes place in the YDC which was beyond the resources available for the evaluation.

Outcome data on offending was therefore limited to during and post programme offending for both programme participants and non-participant referrals. However, data on offending also proved to be significantly limited with many inconsistencies. The authors therefore concluded that quantitative results from the study need to be treated with caution but do provide a useful picture of programme impacts.

The results of the evaluation showed that in its first two years, the NSW pilot YDC received 164 referrals of young people facing possible custodial sentences for serious offences, of whom 75 (46%) were judged eligible. Of these, 29 (39%) went on to complete the programme to the court's satisfaction or to 'graduate'. Data problems made it difficult to be precise about levels of offending by participants. Best estimates suggest that around 60% of participants appeared in court on fresh charges whilst they were on the programme.

Around 35% of participants were not recorded as having offended, and 65% did reoffend, after they left or completed the programme. However, post-programme offending data were incomplete and only available for a short period after the end of the pilot. Graduates were less likely to reoffend than those who did not complete the programme. Given the difficult backgrounds and histories of participants, there was a high and sustained level of satisfaction with the programme overall, as well as with the Court staff and casework staff.

1.8 Limitations of the current evaluation

The evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court faced many of the same limitations confronting the evaluation of the New South Wales Youth Drug Court. In particular, it was not possible to use a purely experimental design with participants randomly allocated to either a 'control' group or a 'treatment' group. Firstly, only thirty young people entered the Youth Drug Court in the first twelve months of operation. Small numbers make any comparison statistically unreliable, such that it would be difficult to statistically detect any effect on reoffending due to participation in the programme.

Secondly, random allocation raises an ethical dilemma. The pilot intends to provide better service delivery to a group of young people identified as having moderate-severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency. To randomly allocate young people to a 'control' group (that is, they would just go through the standard Youth Court process rather than the YDC) could be seen as not giving them the same opportunities for recovery as available to the YDC participants at that particular time in Christchurch. This is further complicated by the upper age limit of the Youth Court and Youth Drug Court (16 years at the time of the offence), which would mean that those eligible offenders reaching the upper age limits may not get another chance to participate in the YDC.

As it was not possible to have a 'control' group, a 'matched comparison' sample would have been the next best alternative in order to compare the effectiveness of the Youth Drug Court with the Youth Court. However, a matched comparison sample, where the two groups are

matched as closely as possible on all the relevant variables was not feasible for several reasons:

- There was no means of identifying in the available Youth Court data young people who had a moderate–severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency that was linked to their offending – a key criterion in the selection of young people for participation in the YDC. Young people who have a moderate to severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency, particularly where this is linked to offending, may differ in significant ways from other young offenders and we have been unable to control for this.
- Prior offending has been found to be one of the key variables in predicting future offending. However, one of the major obstacles to youth reoffending analysis is the lack of reliable data on youth offending (Robertson, 2004). Relatively little offending by young people is dealt with by way of the Youth Court. It is estimated that only 20% of apprehended young offenders go to the Youth Court (Maxwell, Robertson & Anderson, 2002). Specific details of young offenders can be recorded in the Youth Justice module of the Police’s National Intelligence Application (in operation since early 2001). However, a number of concerns have been highlighted about the quality of Police information on youth offending (Spier & Segessenmann, 2004). At the time of the 2004 report, this included the fact that that not all offending was being entered into NIA; there were no standards for data entry so the quality varied significantly across regions; and many young people had multiple identities which were not always linked. Many of these issues arose because NIA did not become the recognised operational system of the NZ Police until June 2005.

Robertson (2004) suggests that one approach is to make an ‘educated guess’ as to the expected rate of offending for the programme cohort. For example, if the programme is targeted at serious and persistent offenders, then it would be reasonable to estimate that approximately 80% would reoffend within a year. The actual reoffending rate of programme completers can then be compared with this ‘target’ figure. However, this approach was not favoured for this evaluation.

There are other limitations associated with this reoffending analysis (and other similar studies) which should also be noted. These include:

- Using administrative data to count, e.g. offences which come to the attention of Police, or offences which are dealt with in court, may not be reliable proxies for actual levels of reoffending by programme participants. It is known that only a small proportion of many types of offences committed are reported to, or detected by, Police (see, for example, Morris and Reilly, 2003);
- The reoffending statistics presented for participants include all offences committed within specified time periods post-exit from the YDC and which were finalised by 3 May 2005. Some serious offences where the defendant pleads not guilty can take considerable time to be resolved by the courts. There may be a few instances where offences committed by YDC participants within specified follow-up periods were not yet finalised by 3 May 2005.

Caution must also be exercised when drawing conclusions from the interview information presented in this report. Only six of the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation and five family/whanau members (representing four of the young people who were interviewed and one who was not) were interviewed for this report. The small numbers mean that the views reported here are not necessarily representative of all the young people who went through the YDC.

1.9 Outline of the report

Chapter 2 describes the methodology used for this study and chapter 3 provides the findings from the reoffending analysis. Chapter 4 relates young people and their family/whanau perspectives on life since leaving the youth drug court and what had helped them make changes to their lives. Chapter 5 presents the results of the youth advocate analysis and chapter 6 is a discussion of the findings.

2 Methodology

The YDC follow-up assessment combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine patterns of offending among young people in the twelve months after they have exited the YDC, and to identify what effect the YDC has had on participants' lives. The reoffending analysis was undertaken for the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation (14 March 2002 to 13 March 2003). Where possible, information was also included for the twenty-one young people who entered the YDC in the second year of operation (14 March 2003 to 13 March 2004). However, the use of this additional YDC sample was limited by the fact that many of the young people had exited the YDC relatively recently, so didn't have sufficiently long follow-up periods in which to examine reoffending. In-depth interviews were undertaken with six young people and five family/whanau members. In addition, information on youth advocates' costs were collected for the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation.

The Ministry of Justice convened an evaluation advisory group (EAG) consisting of representatives of key stakeholder agencies. The EAG was set up to inform the development of the evaluation and related issues that arose during the fieldwork and to review drafts of the reports. The group included Ministry of Justice staff and personnel from the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, New Zealand Police, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education.

2.1 Follow-up assessment objectives

The objectives of the follow-up assessment were:

1. To examine patterns in offending behaviour among Youth Drug Court participants.
2. To identify any factors to which the participants and sample group of family/whanau/caregivers attribute any improvements or deterioration in offending behaviour.
3. To ascertain to what extent there has been any improvement in the health and wellbeing of the participants, and whether there has been any decrease in their alcohol and/or other drug use on completion or exit from the pilot, and up to twelve months afterwards.
4. To identify any factors to which the participants and sample group of family/whanau/caregivers attribute any improvements or deterioration in wellbeing and alcohol or other drug use.

2.2 Reoffending analysis

The offending histories of the thirty participants in the first year of the YDC pilot were extracted from the Justice Data Warehouse on 3 May 2005. This data, sourced from the operational computer system in courts – the Case Management System – includes information on both traffic and non-traffic offences that resulted in:

- a conviction in the District or High Court;
- a discharge without conviction (after the person is found guilty or pleads guilty) in the District or High Court;
- a ‘proved’ or ‘admonished’ outcome in the Youth Court;
- a discharge under s282 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989. In the vast majority of such cases, the young person would have admitted the offence, been sent to an FGC, and would have had to have complied with the recommendations made at the conference, before having the offence discharged by the Court;
- a withdrawn outcome with an associated plea of ‘admitted’ in the Youth Court. In this case, the young person is also likely to have successfully attended an FGC and subsequently had the charge withdrawn.

Data was not readily available for the thirty participants on offences that resulted in ‘non-court’ outcomes, i.e. cautions or warnings, Police Youth Aid Section diversion, or intention-to-charge FGC’s, so could not be included in this report. This is likely to mean that the number of prior offences shown for young people will be an undercount of the actual number of offences that came to the attention of the Police. It is likely to have much less of an impact on post-exit offences, as once the young person has attended the YDC, the Police may be more likely to lay future charges in court.

As the YDC pilot sample was so small, we investigated whether any of the young people who attended the YDC in the second year could be included in the analysis to boost the sample size. A total of twenty-one young people attended the second year of operation of the YDC pilot. However, many of these young people had exited the drug court relatively recently, so a twelve month follow-up period was often not available. Therefore, information on these young people was only included in the survival analysis presented in section 3.2.3.

Because of the limitations discussed in Section 1.8, an attempt was made to find some proxy comparison groups using data involving young people who had proved cases in 2002/2003. However, **caution** needs to be taken with these comparisons as it was not possible to match individuals in these groups to the YDC pilot sample on factors such as whether they had alcohol and/or drug dependencies that were linked to their offending.

The two proxy comparison groups available were:

1. *National Youth Court sample*

Includes all cases with a ‘proved’ or ‘admonished’ outcome in the Youth Court or a convicted outcome in the 2002/2003 fiscal year for: all 14 to 16 year olds, and all people

aged 17 when the case was laid in court and whose first appearance was in the Youth Court (presumably because they were aged under 17 when they offended). Excluded were: minor traffic and ‘miscellaneous’ offences which are not usually dealt with in the Youth Court, and people charged with sexual or serious violent offences, as these people would not be eligible for selection for the YDC. There were 832 people in this sample. The follow-up period for this group (and the partially-matched Youth Court sample described below) was measured from the date the case in the Youth Court was finalised.

2. *‘Partially-matched’ Youth Court sample*

As there were a number of important differences between the characteristics of the YDC pilot sample and the National Youth Court sample (see Section 3.2.1), a subset of the National Youth Court sample was formed that better matched the YDC pilot group on some attributes.

Four sets of matches to each of the thirty individuals in the YDC pilot sample were randomly selected from the national Youth Court sample. Each probability-based random sample was selected with the data stratified on: gender, number of prior offences², and seriousness of the major prior offence. The four samples were joined into one dataset called the ‘partially-matched Youth Court sample’.

Offending histories for the sample groups above were also extracted from the Justice Data Warehouse in May 2005. Offending was classified into time periods as:

- ‘Prior’ offending – for the YDC pilot sample this was taken to be all ‘proven’ offences that were committed prior to the date of entry into the YDC³. For the Youth Court samples, this was taken to be all ‘proven’ offences committed prior to the date of finalisation of charges in the Youth Court (for the 2002/2003 case).
- ‘Accumulated’ offending – for the YDC pilot sample this was taken to be all ‘proven’ offences that were committed between the young person entering and exiting the YDC.
- ‘Post-exit’ offending – for the YDC pilot sample this was taken to be all ‘proven’ offences that were committed after the date of exit from the YDC. For the Youth Court samples, this was taken to be all ‘proven’ offences committed after the date of finalisation of charges in the Youth Court. Any time spent in prison was excluded from the follow-up period, so that only time ‘at large’ was counted for the six and twelve month follow-up periods.

Analysis of the data was carried out using the SAS package⁴.

Paired differences in the average annual rates of offending and the average seriousness of offending for the YDC pilot sample after exit compared to before entering the YDC were

² It was not possible to assess levels of offending that were dealt with by means other than formal prosecution in court, e.g. cautions, warnings, Police Youth Aid Section diversion, or intention-to-charge FGC’s. Therefore, it was not possible to ‘match’ samples based on total levels of prior offending (an important predictor of future levels of offending).

³ The date the offence was committed (rather than the court finalisation date) was used to classify offences into each time period.

⁴ SAS is an integrated system of analysis software produced by SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC, USA.

tested using the Wilcoxon signed rank test. This non-parametric alternative to the paired samples t-test was chosen as the underlying offending rate and seriousness distributions do not follow a normal distribution. Differences in the level of reoffending according to whether the young person successfully completed the YDC were analysed using a Fisher's exact test. This test can be used to conduct a chi-square test where one or more of the cells have an expected frequency of five or less.

Differences in the number and seriousness of offences, and the number of prison sentences post-exit were compared for the YDC pilot sample and the national Youth Court sample by a Wilcoxon rank-sum test. This test was also used to compare differences for the YDC pilot sample and the partially-matched Youth Court sample.

Statistical tests of differences in the proportion of the YDC pilot sample and the national Youth Court sample who committed an offence (overall or of particular types) within particular time periods were conducted. For sufficiently large samples, the difference between the proportions can be taken to be approximately normally distributed, and hence a test statistic Z can be calculated to test the likelihood of the difference in proportions being due to chance. Statistical tests of differences in the proportion of the YDC pilot sample and the partially-matched Youth Court sample who committed an offence within particular time periods were conducted using an extension of McNemar's test for multiple matched controls (as specified in Pike and Morrow 1970). This test was used as a matched sample violates the assumption of independence to the other sample to which it was matched.

Survival analysis (PROC LIFETEST in SAS) was used to test differences between groups in the length of time to the first reoffence.

2.3 Interviews

2.3.1 Recruitment of participants

The thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation were invited to participate in an interview when exiting the YDC. Twelve of the thirty young people consented to participate in an interview. In addition, eleven family/whanau who represented eight young people also consented to an interview. Analysis of this information was included in the process evaluation report. At the end of this first interview, these young people were asked if they would consent to a follow-up interview in about twelve months time. All twelve consented and they were asked to indicate the best way of contacting them in twelve months.

Attempts to contact all twelve young people who consented to a follow-up interview were made between October 2004 and January 2005. However, only six were able to be contacted or agreed to a follow-up interview. Several of the young people no longer had active contact numbers or addresses and no other way of being contacted. One young person agreed to an interview but kept failing to show up for appointments and in another case the parents of the young person said that he was doing well and they did not want him interviewed. This level of attrition is common in research with young people. In their study on achieving effective outcomes in youth justice, Maxwell et al (2004) managed to locate about half of a sample of

young people who had previously had a family group conference. They indicated that because of age and lifestyle these young people are very transient.

In addition to the six young people, five whanau were interviewed representing four of the young people who participated in an interview and an additional young person who did not participate in interviews.

2.3.2 Content of interviews

The interviews were semi-structured and were based on the research objectives and the schedules used in the first round of interviews with young people (see Appendix 2). Young people and family/whanau members were asked for their perspectives on the YDC twelve months on. They were also asked about whether their drug and/or other alcohol use and offending had changed in the last twelve months and how in general the young person's life had been since leaving the YDC. In particular they were asked for their perspective on any impact the YDC might have had on these areas of their lives.

2.3.3 Ethical and cultural considerations

The research proposal was reviewed by the Justice Sector Review Group. The project was conducted in accordance with ethical principles set out in the Association of Social Science Research Code of Ethics (1996), and strategies were developed to ensure that these ethical principles were put into practice. Examples outlined below include: ensuring that young people and family/whanau were fully informed before they were asked to participate, and developing safety protocols.

Cultural safety

An interviewer of Maori ethnicity with an understanding of kaupapa Māori methodologies was contracted to undertake interviews. The contract interviewer was also well experienced in the area of youth justice. She underwent training about the project and was supervised by a Ministry of Justice researcher.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from each young person and family/whanau member before interviews were conducted. They were asked whether they agreed to being interviewed. Interviewees were informed that their participation in an interview was voluntary, they could refuse to answer any of the questions, they could stop the interview at any time, and they had a right to withdraw their consent right up until the time the information was incorporated into the research analysis. They were also told what the information would be used for, and that nobody would be able to recognise their answers in the report.

The interviews were taped with the consent of interviewees and the tapes and transcripts kept securely at the Ministry of Justice. Interviewees were asked if they agreed to being anonymously quoted and were also asked if they would like to receive a summary of the report.

Young people were also informed that researchers would ask them whether they would agree to nominate someone close to them to be approached to participate in an interview. However, they were also informed that they did not have to nominate anyone if they didn't want to.

Safety issues

Although each young person and family/whanau member was told that their information would be confidential to the research team, they were also informed about the process that would be followed if the interviewer was told something which made them think that somebody was at risk of serious harm.

The safety protocols developed for this project focussed on ensuring the safety of young people, family/whanau members, other members of the public and the interviewer (see Appendix 3). The protocols described procedures which the interviewer should follow if it became clear during an interview that someone's safety was seriously at risk.

The interviewer was provided with a list of local community and support organisations such as Women's Refuge, Budget Advisory Services, Citizens Advice Bureau, and alcohol and other drug services. These details were available for the interviewer to pass on to a young person or family/whanau member if the interview had raised issues they wanted to discuss further.

2.3.4 Interview analysis

Interviews were taped to assist with the accuracy of data collection and to allow verbatim recording. The software package for the analysis of qualitative data, NVIVO, was used to analyse the responses to the interviews. Interview data was coded into different topic areas and themes emerged from the data.

2.4 Youth advocate costs

Chapter 8 of the *Process Evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot* reports on resourcing for the YDC pilot. This report expressed concerns as to the youth advocate costs for the YDC. Therefore, to answer this question, information on youth advocate costs for the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation was collected and included in the current report.

A youth advocate is a lawyer appointed by the Court to help a child or young person charged with a criminal offence who is appearing in the Youth Court. The costs of youth advocates are funded by the Ministry of Justice. Youth advocate costs were collected for the period that the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation were in the YDC.

The names of the thirty youth drug court participants were matched to a corresponding youth advocate from a manual register held by Christchurch District Court. Each young person had one particular youth advocate who was assigned to their case. However, youth advocates would stand in for each other when, for any reason, they were unable to appear in court on a

particular day for their assigned young person. Invoices were filed by youth advocate and not by young person. Therefore for any young person it was necessary to find invoices for each youth advocate who had appeared on their behalf.

Caution must be used when interpreting the findings from the analysis of youth advocate costs. In particular:

- Youth advocates varied considerably in the amount and type of information included in their invoices. Some youth advocates included very detailed accounts of appearances and dates. Others only broke down the information at a very general level. Therefore, the costs reported include appearances at hearings other than the Youth Drug Court during the period that the young person was on the YDC. This includes Family Group Conferences and Status Hearings.
- Youth advocate costs were collected for the actual period that the young person was on the YDC, defined by the entry and exit dates. However, in some cases youth advocates included in their invoices costs for periods before or beyond these entry and exit dates which were not possible to separate out from YDC costs.
- A few youth advocates included costs for more than one youth drug court participant (this normally happened when they had stood in for a youth advocate on one day and represented more than one young person). Where this was the case the costs were divided evenly amongst the number of young people represented.
- There were a number of invoices which could not be located. This was particularly the case where the youth advocate had stood in on behalf of another youth advocate. In three cases invoices were missing for a period of a few months. Where this was the case, figures have been extrapolated from the invoices submitted.

3 Reoffending analysis

This chapter presents information on the prior, accumulated⁵, and post-exit offending of the thirty participants in the Youth Drug Court (YDC) pilot sample. The chapter then goes on to present comparative information on reoffending rates for the YDC pilot sample, a national Youth Court group, and a sub-sample of the national Youth Court group that was ‘partially matched’ with the YDC pilot sample (section 3.2.1 explains this further).

3.1 YDC pilot sample

3.1.1 Prior offending⁶

Thirty young people entered the YDC during the first year of the pilot. Table 3.1 shows that these young people had a mean of 15 (median⁷ of 11) prior offences before entering the drug court. Over half (53%) of the YDC sample had at least 10 prior offences.

Table 3.1 Total number of prior offences for YDC sample

Number of prior offences	Number	Percentage
1–4	6	20%
5–9	8	27%
10–19	7	23%
20+	9	30%
Total	30	100%
Mean	15.4	
Median	11.0	

Note: Table includes the offences that led to the young person attending the YDC, as well as all prior offences.

Table 3.2 shows the annual rate⁸ of prior offending for the sample participants. Only three young people had rates of prior offending of less than one offence per year. Nearly one-third of the participants had rates of prior offending of 1 to 4 offences per year, while around a quarter had rates of 5 to 9 offences per year, and a similar proportion had rates of 10 to 19

⁵ ‘Proved’ offences (as described in Section 2.2) that were committed between the young person entering and exiting the YDC.

⁶ In this section of the report an ‘offence’ is referring to an offence which was dealt with by the Courts and which involved either an admission of guilt by the young person, or a finding of guilt by the Court. See section 2.2 for further details.

⁷ The median is an alternative measurement to the mean of the ‘average’ value, and is the middle value when observations are ordered from smallest to largest. The median is less susceptible than the mean to very small or very large ‘outlier’ values – particularly when small samples are involved.

⁸ Calculated as the total number of prior offences, divided by the number of years between the young person’s 14th birthday and the date the young person started attending the YDC.

offences per year. Three people had rates of offending of at least 20 offences per year prior to entering the YDC. The mean rate of prior offending for the YDC sample was 8 offences per year, with the median rate being 6 offences per year.

Table 3.2 Annual rate of prior offending for YDC sample

Rate of prior offending	Number	Percentage
<1.0	3	10%
1.0 – 4.9	9	30%
5.0 – 9.9	7	23%
10.0 – 19.9	8	27%
20.0+	3	10%
Total	30	100%
Mean		8.4
Median		6.0

Note: Some figures in this and subsequent tables differ slightly from those presented in Carswell (2004) as a slightly different methodology was adopted.

Almost all (27 or 90%) of the YDC participants had committed a property offence before they started attending the drug court (see Table 3.3)⁹. Over half (53%) the sample had a prior violent offence before attending the drug court. Less than a quarter (23%) of the sample had a prior drug offence.

Table 3.3 Number and percentage of YDC sample with prior offences of specific types (n=30)¹

Type of offence ²	Number	Percentage
Violent	16	53%
Other against persons	2	7%
Property	27	90%
Drug	7	23%
Against justice	10	33%
Good order	13	43%
Traffic	8	27%
Miscellaneous	2	7%

Notes:

- 1 Table does not total to 30 or 100% as individuals are counted in all offence categories for which they committed an offence.
- 2 See Appendix 5 for a description of the types of offences included within each offence category.

Table 3.4 shows that all but one (97%) of the YDC sample had previously committed an offence of at least moderate seriousness. The majority had previously committed an offence of 'moderate to high' seriousness – including 13 (43%) whose most serious previous offence was burglary. Four people (13%) had previously committed an offence of 'high' seriousness (either aggravated robbery or grievous assault).

⁹ The majority of the sample had prior burglary (60%) or prior theft (73%) offences.

Table 3.4 Seriousness level of major prior offence for YDC sample¹

Seriousness level	Number	Percentage
Minor	1	3%
Minor to moderate	0	0%
Moderate	6	20%
Moderate to high	19	63%
High	4	13%
Total	30	100%

Notes:

- 1 In this and subsequent tables, the major offence was selected using the Ministry of Justice seriousness of offence scale. See Appendix 5 for details on this scale and the seriousness categories shown in the table.

None of the thirty YDC participants had been imprisoned prior to attending the drug court.

3.1.2 Offending accumulated during the YDC pilot

The thirty participants attended the drug court pilot processes for ten months, on average, with the length of time ranging from just over one month to eighteen months. Thirteen of the participants attended for between six and twelve months, and nine attended for more than twelve months and up to eighteen months.

Table 3.5 Total number of offences accumulated during attendance at the YDC

Number of accumulated offences	Number	Percentage
0	6	20%
1 or more	24	80%
1-4	10	33%
5-9	8	27%
10-19	2	7%
20+	4	13%
Total	30	100%
Mean	6.7	
Median	3.0	

Most (80%) of the young people accumulated further offences that were committed while attending the drug court, with one-fifth (6) of the sample accumulating at least ten offences (see Table 3.5). The mean number of accumulated charges was 7, with the median being 3. The charge for almost all of the 'accumulated' offences for the sample had initially been laid in Court while the young person was still attending the YDC, but in the majority of cases the charges were not finalised until after they exited the drug court.

Most of the participants (70%) who accumulated an offence during the YDC committed a property offence, while over a third (37%) accumulated a traffic offence¹⁰, and just over a

¹⁰ For example, driving with excess alcohol; careless, reckless or dangerous driving; or driving while forbidden.

quarter accumulated an offence against justice (usually escaping from custody¹¹). Four participants (13%) accumulated a violent offence during the pilot.

Table 3.6 Number and percentage of YDC sample with accumulated offences of specific types (n=30)

Type of offence	Number	Percentage
Violent	4	13%
Property	21	70%
Drug	4	13%
Against justice	8	27%
Good order	4	13%
Traffic	11	37%

Note: Table does not total to 30 or 100% as individuals are counted in all offence categories for which they committed an offence.

There was a reasonable spread in the seriousness of offences committed while attending the YDC. Forty percent (12) either did not offend or committed an offence of less than 'moderate' seriousness, 20% (6) committed an offence of 'moderate' seriousness, and 40% (12) committed an offence of greater than 'moderate' seriousness. The major accumulated offence was an offence of high seriousness (aggravated robbery, robbery, or grievous assault) for four participants (13%).

Table 3.7 Seriousness level of major offence accumulated during attendance at the YDC

Seriousness level	Number	Percentage
No offence	6	20%
Minor	2	7%
Minor to moderate	4	13%
Moderate	6	20%
Moderate to high	8	27%
High	4	13%
Total	30	100%

Two (7%) of the YDC participants were imprisoned for offences committed while attending the drug court. In one case, the prison sentence was imposed about a month after exiting the drug court, and in the other case, the prison sentence was imposed about 10 months after exiting the drug court. While these prison sentences were imposed after exiting the YDC, they related to offences committed while attending the YDC, so are counted in the figures included in this subsection, rather than in the figures on post-exit offending presented below.

¹¹ For young people, 'escaping from custody' can include absconding from a CYF residence (including family homes) when the young person is remanded into the custody of the Chief Executive of CYF.

3.1.3 Post-exit reoffending

Table 3.8 shows that 60% (18) of the sample had committed another offence¹² within six months of exiting the YDC, and within one year 70% (21) had reoffended. The mean number of offences for each participant within 12 months of exiting the YDC was 6.2, with the median being 2.0.

Table 3.8 Total number of reoffences after exiting the YDC

Number of offences	6 months after YDC exit		12 months after YDC exit ¹	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	12	40%	9	30%
1 or more	18	60%	21	70%
1-4	12	40%	8	27%
5-9	3	10%	5	17%
10-19	3	10%	6	20%
20+	0	0%	2	7%
Total	30	100%	30	100%
Mean	3.0		6.2	
Median	1.0		2.0	

Note:

1. On this and subsequent tables, it should be noted that the 12 month reoffending figures include all offences committed in the first six months, as well as those committed in the next six months.

Table 3.9 Number and percentage of YDC sample with offences of specific types after exiting the YDC (n=30)

Type of offence	6 months after YDC exit		12 months after YDC exit	
	Number	Percentage of total sample	Number	Percentage of total sample
Violent	2	7%	4	13%
Other against persons	0	0%	2	7%
Property	15	50%	18	60%
Drug	2	7%	4	13%
Against justice	3	10%	8	27%
Good order	2	7%	3	10%
Traffic	7	23%	10	33%
Miscellaneous	1	3%	1	3%

Note: Table does not total to 30 or 100% as individuals are counted in all offence categories for which they committed an offence.

Table 3.9 shows that half the sample had committed a property offence within six months of exiting the YDC, with the proportion increasing to 60% within 12 months. A third of the participants had committed a traffic offence within 12 months. Two (7%) of the young people had committed a violent offence within six months of exiting the pilot, and another two also committed such an offence in the following six months.

¹² The term 'committed another offence' is being used here to refer to an offence that was dealt with in Court and for which there was an admission of guilt by the defendant, or a finding of guilt by the court.

Only one offence of high seriousness was committed by the pilot sample within 12 months of exiting the YDC (see Table 3.10). Sixty percent of the participants had committed an offence of at least 'moderate' seriousness within 12 months.

Table 3.10 Seriousness level of the major offence after exiting the YDC

Seriousness level	6 months after YDC exit		12 months after YDC exit	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
No offence	12	40%	9	30%
Minor	1	3%	1	3%
Minor to moderate	3	10%	2	7%
Moderate	8	27%	8	27%
Moderate to high	6	20%	9	30%
High	0	0%	1	3%
Total	30	100%	30	100%

None of the thirty YDC participants were imprisoned within six months of exiting the drug court¹³, but four (13%) were imprisoned in the following six months.

Table 3.11 Total number of participants imprisoned after exiting the YDC

Number of prison sentences	6 months after YDC exit		12 months after YDC exit	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0	30	100%	26	87%
1	0	0%	4	13%
Total	30	100%	30	100%

3.1.4 Changes in the rate and seriousness of offending after exit from the YDC

Table 3.12 shows that the rate of offending by the participants after exiting the drug court was lower, on average, than the rate before entering the drug court in both follow-up periods. The difference was statistically significant within six months, but just failed to reach significance after 12 months.

¹³ Excludes one person who was imprisoned just after exiting the YDC for an offence committed while attending the YDC. For this person, the six month reoffending follow-up figures were calculated from the periods either side of the prison sentence that totalled six months.

Table 3.12 Annual rate of offending before and after exiting the YDC

Period	Number	Mean annual rate	Wilcoxon signed rank test statistic ²	p-value ³
Before YDC	30	8.4	-	-
6 months after exit ¹	30	6.0	-112.5	0.012
12 months after exit	30	6.2	-82.0	0.092

Notes:

1. The 'annual' rate of offending during the six month follow-up period was calculated by multiplying the number of offences in the period by two.
2. Value of the Wilcoxon signed rank test statistic calculated from the paired difference in mean annual rate after exit compared to before attending the YDC.
3. The p-value is the significance probability. A value close to zero (e.g. 0.05 or less) represents a statistically significant result, which means there is a very small likelihood of the difference being due to chance.

Table 3.13 shows that after exiting the drug court, the vast majority of participants had lower offending rates than before they entered the YDC (including some people who did not reoffend at all). Within 12 months of exiting the YDC, 73% of participants had lower rates of offending than previously, with the proportion dropping to 65% after 18 months.

Table 3.13 Changes in the rate of offending after exiting the YDC

Period and change in annual rate of offending	Number of YDC participants	Percentage of YDC participants
6 months after exit (n=30)		
Lower rate than before	24	80%
Higher rate than before	5	17%
Same rate as before	1	3%
12 months after exit (n=30)		
Lower rate than before	22	73%
Higher rate than before	8	27%

Table 3.14 shows that the average seriousness of the offences committed by the participants after exiting the drug court (in both periods) was considerably less than the average seriousness of the offences before entering the drug court. In both cases, the differences were statistically significant.

Table 3.14 Average seriousness of offences before and after exiting the YDC

Period	Number	Average seriousness	Wilcoxon signed rank test statistic	p-value
Before YDC	30	80.9	-	-
6 months after exit	30	21.6	-155.5	0.001
12 months after exit	30	34.7	-124.5	0.008

Note: The average seriousness score for a person who did not reoffend within a particular time period was taken to be zero.

Table 3.15 shows that after exiting the drug court, the vast majority of participants committed less serious offences, on average, than before they entered the YDC. Within 12 months of exiting the YDC, 77% of participants had lower average offence seriousness ratings than previously, with the proportion being 74% after 18 months.

Table 3.15 Changes in the average seriousness of offending after exiting the YDC

Period and change in average seriousness of offending	Number of YDC participants	Percentage of YDC participants
6 months after exit (n=30)		
Less serious than before	25	83%
More serious than before	5	17%
12 months after exit (n=30)		
Less serious than before	23	77%
More serious than before	7	23%

Note: People who did not reoffend are included in the 'Less serious than before' category.

3.1.5 Reoffending rates according to whether the young person successfully completed the YDC requirements

Of the 30 young people who went through the YDC pilot in the first year, 17 (57%) successfully exited the YDC, and 13 (43%) did not complete the requirements of the YDC. (See section 1.5 for details on the requirements for successfully completing the YDC.)

Only 4 (36%) of the 11 females in the YDC pilot sample successfully completed the YDC requirements, compared with 13 (68%) of the 19 males. Seven (47%) of the 15 Māori participants successfully completed the YDC requirements, compared with 8 (62%) of the 13 NZ European participants. Very small numbers made differences difficult to interpret.

Table 3.16 shows that participants who successfully completed the requirements of the YDC had lower reoffending rates after exiting the drug court than participants who did not complete requirements – although the differences were not statistically significant.

While this could indicate a positive effect from YDC-related interventions, it is also possible that at least some of the difference is due to differences in characteristics of 'completers' versus 'non-completers'. 'Completers' tended to have slightly fewer previous offences, on average, than 'non-completers' prior to entering the YDC. Given that previous offending is usually a good predictor of future offending, successful completers would be expected to have had slightly lower reoffending rates after exiting the YDC.

Table 3.16 Number of offences before, during, and after exiting the YDC, according to completion status

Period and number of offences	Successfully completed requirements of YDC (n=17)		Did not complete requirements of YDC (n=13)		Total (n=30)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<u>Prior to YDC</u> ¹						
1-4	3	18%	3	23%	6	20%
5-9	6	35%	2	15%	8	27%
10-19	4	24%	3	23%	7	23%
20+	4	24%	5	38%	9	30%
<u>During YDC</u>						
0	3	18%	3	23%	6	20%
1 or more	14	82%	10	77%	24	80%
1-4	8	47%	2	15%	10	33%
5-9	4	24%	4	31%	8	27%
10-19	1	6%	1	8%	2	7%
20+	1	6%	3	23%	4	13%
<u>6 months after exit</u>						
0	8	47%	4	31%	12	40%
1 or more	9	53%	9	69%	18	60%
1-4	7	41%	5	38%	12	40%
5-9	1	6%	2	15%	3	10%
10-19	1	6%	2	15%	3	10%
20+	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<u>12 months after exit</u>						
0	6	35%	3	23%	9	30%
1 or more	11	65%	10	77%	21	70%
1-4	5	29%	3	23%	8	27%
5-9	4	24%	1	8%	5	17%
10-19	1	6%	5	38%	6	20%
20+	1	6%	1	8%	2	7%

Notes

1. Includes offences for which the young person entered the YDC, as well as all prior 'proved' offences.
2. Differences in whether the young people reoffended according to completion status were tested using Fisher's exact test. Neither of the differences was statistically significant: 6 months $p = 0.465$; 12 months $p = 0.691$.

3.2 Reoffending comparisons

This section presents comparative information on reoffending rates for the YDC pilot sample, a national Youth Court group, and a sub-sample of the national Youth Court group that was 'partially-matched' with the YDC pilot sample. These comparison samples were described earlier in Section 2.2.

It must be noted again that **caution** needs to be taken with the comparisons presented because of:

- the small numbers of young people eligible for the YDC pilot make any comparisons statistically unreliable, i.e. it would be difficult to statistically detect any effect on reoffending due to participation in the programme; and
- the administrative data available on young people who appeared in the Youth Court did not allow matching on whether the young person had moderate–severe alcohol and/or other drug dependencies that were associated with the offending;
- other limitations of the analysis, as detailed earlier in section 1.8.

3.2.1 Characteristics of the sample groups

Over a third (37% or 11) of the 30 young people who attended the first year of the YDC pilot were female (see Table 3.17). This is a much greater proportion of females than the national Youth Court sample (13%).¹⁴ This is why gender was used as one of the attributes for matching on when forming the 'partially-matched Youth Court sample'.

The ages of the YDC pilot sample when they entered the drug court were similar to the ages of the national Youth Court sample when they had their cases initially laid in Court. Ages tended to differ more at the time of 'exit' – possibly due to the various drug court processes lasting longer than standard Youth Court processes.

The ethnicities of the YDC pilot participants were reasonably similar to those of the national Youth Court sample.

Almost identical proportions of the YDC pilot sample and the national Youth Court sample had a property offence as the major prior offence (63% and 62% respectively). Members of the YDC pilot sample were slightly more likely to have a violent or drug offence, and slightly less likely to have a traffic offence as the major prior offence than the national Youth Court sample.

The YDC pilot sample tended to have a more serious major prior offence and also have a greater number of prior offences than the national Youth Court sample. This is why these attributes were used for matching when forming the 'partially-matched Youth Court sample'.

¹⁴ It can be noted that of the 21 young people who went through the second year of the YDC pilot, 14% (3) were female and 86% (18) were male. These proportions are almost identical to those of the National Youth Court sample. This implies that the proportion of female offenders attending the first year of the YDC pilot was unusually high.

Table 3.17 Characteristics of the various sample groups

	YDC pilot sample (n=30)		Partially-matched Youth Court sample (n=120)		National Youth Court sample (n=832)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Gender						
Female	11	37%	44	37%	112	13%
Male	19	63%	76	63%	720	87%
Age at entry¹						
14	4	13%	17	14%	102	12%
15	11	37%	33	28%	262	31%
16	12	40%	55	46%	352	42%
17+	3	10%	15	13%	116	14%
Age at exit²						
14	0	0%	13	11%	68	8%
15	4	13%	24	20%	211	25%
16	13	43%	68	57%	436	52%
17+	13	43%	15	13%	117	14%
Ethnicity³						
NZ European	13	43%	44	38%	274	35%
Māori	15	50%	65	56%	437	56%
Pacific peoples	2	7%	5	4%	59	8%
Other	0	0%	2	2%	8	1%
Unknown	0	-	4	-	54	-
Major prior offence						
Violent	8	27%	30	25%	157	19%
Other against persons	0	0%	1	1%	7	1%
Property	19	63%	75	63%	518	62%
Drug	2	7%	1	1%	9	1%
Against justice	0	0%	4	3%	25	3%
Good order	0	0%	2	2%	14	2%
Traffic	1	3%	6	5%	96	12%
Miscellaneous	0	0%	1	1%	6	1%
Seriousness of major prior offence						
Minor	1	3%	4	3%	71	9%
Minor to moderate	0	0%	4	3%	79	9%
Moderate	6	20%	23	19%	178	21%
Moderate to high	19	63%	76	63%	441	53%
High	4	13%	13	11%	63	8%
No. of prior offences⁴						
1-4	6	20%	24	20%	319	38%
5-9	8	27%	32	27%	229	28%
10-19	7	23%	28	23%	186	22%
20+	9	30%	36	30%	98	12%

Notes:

1. Age when the young person entered the YDC, or the age when the case was first laid (Youth Court samples).
2. Age when the young person exited the YDC, or the age when the case was finalised (Youth Court samples).
3. People with unknown ethnicities were excluded from the calculation of the percentages for this attribute.
4. Includes offences for which the young person entered the YDC or appeared in the Youth Court, as well as all prior 'proved' offences.

3.2.2 Reoffending rate comparisons

Table 3.18 shows that within six months of exiting the YDC, 60% of the pilot sample had another ‘proved’ offence recorded against them – a higher figure than that seen for both the national Youth Court sample (46%), and the partially-matched Youth Court sample (48%)¹⁵. Within 12 months of exiting the YDC, 70% of the YDC pilot sample had another ‘proved’ offence recorded against them – a very similar figure to that seen for the partially-matched Youth Court sample (68%)¹⁶ and the national Youth Court sample (65%). None of these differences were statistically significant.

Table 3.18 Number and percentage of the various groups who reoffended

Follow-up period ¹ and number of reoffences	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample ²		National Youth Court sample ³	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
6 months						
0	12	40%	62	52%	447	54%
1 or more	18	60%	58	48%	385	46%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%
12 months						
0	9	30%	39	33%	293	35%
1 or more	21	70%	81	68%	539	65%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%

Notes:

1. The 6 and 12 month follow-up periods were measured from the YDC exit date for the YDC pilot sample, and from the case finalisation date in 2002/2003 for the Youth Court samples. The 12 month reoffending figures include all offences committed in the first six months, as well as those committed in the next six months.
2. An extension of McNemar’s test for multiple controls was conducted on the differences in reoffending rates between the YDC pilot sample and the four partially-matched sample groups. The 6 month reoffending differences found $X^2=1.891$, $p=0.169$. The 12 month reoffending differences found $X^2=1.891$, $p=0.169$.
3. Z test of the difference in proportion who reoffended for the National Youth Court sample versus the YDC pilot sample found: within 6 months $Z=1.480$, $p=0.139$; within 12 months $Z=0.588$, $p=0.556$.

Appendix 4 provides further detail on the level of reoffending for the various groups within 6 and 12 months (see Tables A4.1 and A4.2 respectively).

3.2.3 Time to first reoffence

As well as looking at differences in the proportion of the three groups that reoffended, it is also possible to examine whether there were differences between groups in the length of time to the first reoffence. Survival analysis is a statistical technique that allows such an examination, and also allows the inclusion of ‘censored’ data for people who did not reoffend by a particular date, or who did not have a complete follow-up period (of one year, for

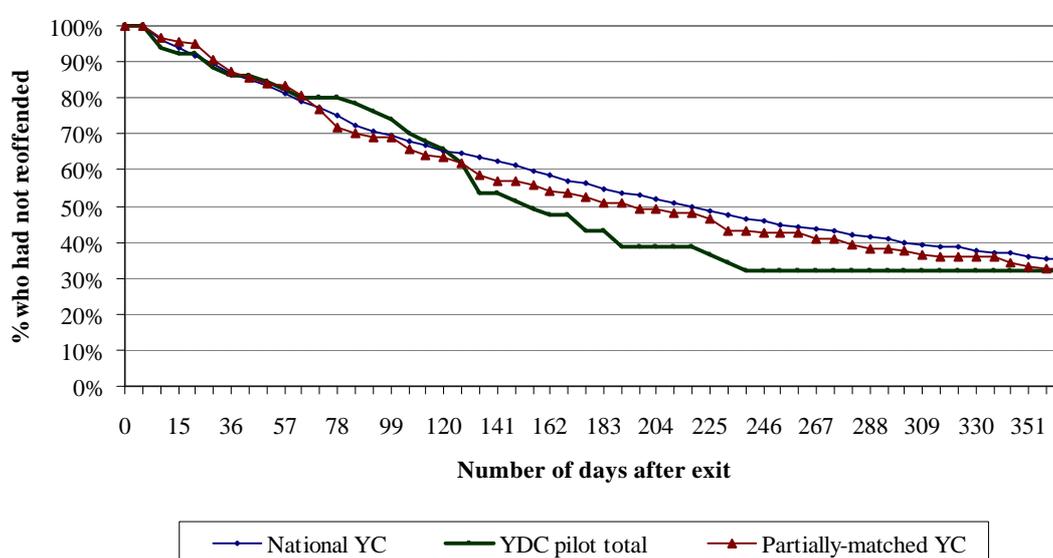
¹⁵ Within this figure of 48%, the proportion of people who reoffended varied from 43% to 53% for the four samples of 30 that made up the partially-matched Youth Court sample.

¹⁶ Within this figure of 68%, the proportion of people who reoffended varied only slightly between 67% and 70% for the four samples of 30 that made up the partially-matched Youth Court sample.

example). For this reason, it was possible to include information on the extra young people who went through the YDC pilot in the second year, in combination with data on the young people who went through the YDC pilot sample in the first year (see section 2.2).

Figure 3.1 shows the reoffending survival curves for the three groups. Over the first four months after exiting the YDC, the pilot participants appeared to reoffend at a similar or slower rate than the two Youth Court samples (subsequent to the case finalisation date in 2002/2003). However, after this, the pilot participants reoffended more quickly than the other two groups, although the differences were not statistically significant.

Figure 3.1 Percentage of young people who had not yet reoffended up to one year, by group



* The 'YDC pilot total' includes the 30 young people who went the YDC pilot in the first year, as well as the 21 young people who went through the pilot in the second year.

3.2.4 Changes in the rate and seriousness of offending

As noted earlier, both the rate of offending and the seriousness of offending by the pilot participants reduced after exiting the drug court, compared to levels before entering the YDC. Tables 3.19 and 3.20 show that the same was also found for both Youth Court samples. The decrease in the offence rate was in fact larger for the partially-matched Youth Court sample than the YDC pilot sample.

Table 3.19 Annual rate of offending before and after exit

Period	YDC pilot sample	Partially-matched Youth Court sample	National Youth Court sample
Before entry	8.4	13.4	6.8
6 months after exit	6.0	4.6	4.3
12 months after exit	6.2	4.9	4.4

Table 3.20 Average seriousness of offences before and after exit

Period	YDC pilot sample	Partially-matched Youth Court sample	National Youth Court sample
Before entry	80.9	79.4	77.7
6 months after exit	21.6	21.7	30.1
12 months after exit	34.7	33.5	36.6

3.2.5 Subsequent imprisonment rate comparisons

The likelihood of receiving a prison sentence within six months was very small for all three samples, with no significant differences being found (see Table 3.21).

Table 3.21 Number of subsequent prison sentences for the various groups

Follow-up period and number of prison sentences	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample ¹		National Youth Court sample ²	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
6 months³						
0	30	100%	118	98%	820	99%
1	0	0%	2	2%	12	1%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%
12 months						
0	26	87%	109	91%	790	95%
1 or more	4	13%	11	9%	42	5%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%

Notes:

1. An extension of McNemar's test for multiple controls was conducted on the differences in subsequent imprisonment rates between the YDC pilot sample and the four partially-matched sample groups. The 6 month differences found $X^2=0.031$, $p=0.860$. The 12 month differences found $X^2=1.339$, $p=0.247$.
2. Z test of the difference in proportions who were imprisoned for the National Youth Court sample versus the YDC pilot sample found: within 6 months $Z=0.662$, $p=0.508$; within 12 months $Z=1.984$, $p=0.047$.
3. No-one in any of the samples received more than one prison sentence within six months.

Four (13%) of the young people who went through the YDC pilot in the first year received a prison sentence within 12 months of exiting the drug court. This was a significantly higher proportion than that for the national Youth Court sample (5%), but the difference was not statistically significant in relation to the partially-matched Youth Court sample (9%).

Appendix 4 provides further detail on the number of subsequent prison sentences for the various groups within 12 months (see Table A4.3).

3.2.6 Other reoffending comparisons

This subsection presents some additional comparison information on the types and seriousness of the reoffending for the various samples. Only twelve month figures have been shown as none of the six month differences were significant.

Table 3.22 shows that the YDC pilot sample appeared slightly less likely to commit a violent offence or an offence against good order within twelve months than both the Youth Court samples. Conversely, the YDC pilot sample appeared slightly more likely to commit a property, drug, or traffic offence within twelve months than the Youth Court samples. However, none of these differences were statistically significant.

Table 3.22 Number and percentage of offences of specific types within 12 months for the various groups

Type of offence ¹	YDC pilot sample (n=30)		Partially-matched Youth Court sample ² (n=120)		National Youth Court sample ³ (n=832)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Violent	4	13%	28	23%	149	18%
Other against persons	2	7%	16	13%	52	6%
Property	18	60%	63	53%	395	47%
Drug	4	13%	10	8%	77	9%
Against justice	8	27%	28	23%	150	18%
Good order	3	10%	28	23%	183	22%
Traffic	10	33%	27	23%	216	26%
Miscellaneous	1	3%	7	6%	42	5%

Notes:

- 1 Individuals are counted in all offence categories for which they committed an offence, so numbers within the table do not add up to the total (n value) shown, and percentages do not add up to 100%.
- 2 An extension of McNemar's test for multiple controls was conducted on the differences in reoffending rates for each offence type between the YDC pilot sample and the four partially-matched sample groups. None of the differences came very close to statistical significance.
- 3 None of the differences in proportions between the YDC pilot sample and the National Youth Court sample came very close to statistical significance (Z test).

Table 3.23 shows that the average seriousness of the offences committed by the YDC pilot sample in the twelve months after exiting was similar to that for both the Youth Court samples, with no statistically significant differences being found. Only 2% to 3% of all three samples of young people had committed an offence of 'high' seriousness within one year.

Table 3.23 Seriousness of major offence within 12 months for the various groups

Seriousness of major offence	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample ¹		National Youth Court sample ²	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
No offence	9	30%	39	33%	293	35%
Minor	1	3%	7	6%	65	8%
Minor to moderate	2	7%	14	12%	88	11%
Moderate	8	27%	20	17%	148	18%
Moderate to high	9	30%	38	32%	209	25%
High	1	3%	2	2%	29	3%
Total	30	100%	120	100%	832	100%
Average seriousness	34.7		33.5		36.6	

Notes:

- 1 Wilcoxon rank-sum test against YDC pilot sample of the average seriousness of reoffences found p=0.714.
- 2 Wilcoxon rank-sum test against YDC pilot sample of the average seriousness of reoffences found p=0.366.

3.3 Summary

Youth Drug Court (YDC) pilot sample

- Before entering the YDC, the 30 pilot participants had a mean of 15 (median of 11) prior 'proved' offences. Almost all of the YDC participants had committed a property offence before they started attending the drug court, over half had a prior violent offence, and less than a quarter had a prior drug offence. All but one (97%) of the YDC sample had committed a prior offence of at least moderate seriousness before entering the drug court.
- The 30 participants attended the drug court pilot processes for an average of 10 months. Most (80%) of the young people accumulated further offences that were committed while attending the drug court, with one-fifth (6) of the sample accumulating at least ten offences.
- Sixty percent (18) of the YDC sample had committed another offence within six months of exiting the YDC, and within one year 70% (21) had reoffended. The mean number of offences for each participant within 12 months of exiting the YDC was 6.2, with the median being 2.0.
- Half the sample had committed a property offence within six months of exiting the YDC, with the proportion increasing to 60% within 12 months. A third of the participants had committed a traffic offence within 12 months. Two (7%) of the young people had committed a violent offence within six months of exiting the pilot, and another two also committed such an offence in the following six months.
- Only one offence of high seriousness was committed by the pilot sample within 12 months of exiting the YDC. Sixty percent of the participants had committed an offence of at least 'moderate' seriousness within 12 months.
- Both the rate of offending and the seriousness of offending by the pilot participants was lower after exiting the drug court in both follow-up periods, compared to levels before entering the YDC. All the decreases were statistically significant, except the 12 month post-exit offending rate which just failed to reach significance.
- Participants who successfully completed the requirements of the YDC had lower reoffending rates after exiting the drug court than participants who did not complete requirements – although the differences were not statistically significant. While this could indicate a positive effect from YDC-related interventions, it is also likely that at least some of the difference is due to differences in characteristics of 'completers' versus 'non-completers'. 'Completers' tended to have slightly fewer previous offences, on average, than 'non-completers' prior to entering the YDC. Given that previous offending is usually a good predictor of future offending, successful completers would be expected to have had slightly lower reoffending rates after exiting the YDC.

Comparisons with other groups

- As it was not possible to undertake a randomised control experimental design for the YDC pilot, no 'control group' was available for comparison to the reoffending rates of the pilot participants to. An attempt was made to find some proxy comparison groups using data involving young people who had proved cases in 2002/2003. However, **caution** needs to be taken with these comparisons because of the small number of participants in the YDC pilot sample, and because it was not possible to match individuals in these groups to the YDC pilot sample on the critical factor of whether they had alcohol and/or drug dependencies that were linked to their offending.
- Within both follow-up periods (6 months and 12 months) the YDC pilot sample were as likely to reoffend as both the national Youth Court sample and the 'partially-matched' Youth Court sample¹⁷. The small differences found in reoffending rates were not statistically significant. For example, within 12 months of exiting the YDC, 70% of the YDC pilot sample had another 'proved' offence recorded against them – compared with reoffending rates of 68% for the partially-matched Youth Court sample and 65% for the national Youth Court sample.
- The YDC pilot sample was slightly less likely to commit a violent offence, and slightly more likely to commit a property offence or a traffic offence within both follow-up periods than both the Youth Court samples. However, none of these differences were statistically significant.
- As noted earlier, both the rate of offending and the seriousness of offending by the pilot participants reduced significantly after exiting the drug court, compared to levels before entering the YDC. The same was also found for both Youth Court samples. The decrease in the offence rate was in fact larger for the partially-matched Youth Court sample than the YDC pilot sample.
- Four (13%) of the young people who went through the YDC pilot were imprisoned within 12 months of exiting the YDC. This was a significantly higher proportion than that for the national Youth Court sample (5%). However, the difference was not statistically significant in relation to the partially-matched Youth Court sample (for which 9% were imprisoned within 12 months).

¹⁷ Matched to the YDC pilot sample on gender, number of prior offences, and seriousness level of major prior offence.

4 Interviews with young people and family/whānau members

4.1 Introduction

Six young people and five family/whānau members were interviewed (representing four of the interviewed young people and one who did not participate in an interview). Therefore, information about seven young people is represented in the analysis presented in this chapter. It is important to note again, that the information presented in this section is based on small numbers of young people and is therefore not necessarily representative of all those who went through the YDC in the first year of operation.

Table 4.1 presents demographic information about the young people interviewed. Four of the young people were male and three female; two identified as Maori; and four had successfully completed the requirements of the Youth Drug Court before exiting. Three did not complete the requirements of the Youth Drug Court. Over a third of the thirty young people who attended the first year of the YDC pilot were female. Maori females made up a quarter of young people on the YDC. It is noteworthy that no Maori males participated in interviews, yet Maori males accounted for about a quarter of those who entered the YDC in its first year of operation.

Table 4.1 Demographic information for the young people involved in the follow-up assessment

	Number interviewed in follow-up assessment
Gender	
Male	4
Female	3
Ethnicity	
Maori	2
Non-Maori	5
Completed YDC?	
Yes	4
No	3

All of the young people interviewed had been on the YDC for a period of at least six months. At the time of the follow-up interview, the young people had been out of the YDC for a period ranging from fifteen months to just over two years. The assessment conducted on exit from the YDC showed that two young people were in full remission of their alcohol and/or other drug use at exit of the YDC, two showed no change in their diagnosis, and three had

mixed results. Court records showed that all but one young person had committed further offences since exiting the YDC, but these ranged from offences of minor seriousness to one young person who had committed an offence of high seriousness. Further information about the young people's drug and alcohol use and offending is contained in section 4.3 on discussion of responses to the Youth Drug Court.

4.2 Assessment of the Youth Drug Court

Young people and their family/whanau members were asked for their assessment of the Youth Drug Court now that at least twelve months had passed since leaving the YDC. They were asked to comment on some of the best and worst things about the YDC, whether they thought the YDC had helped them, whether they had completed the treatment programmes while on the YDC, and whether they would recommend the YDC to other young offenders.

4.2.1 Positive aspects

Young people and family/whanau were asked, in looking back, what they considered to be some of the best things about the Youth Drug Court. All the young people and most of their family/whanau members were able to recall positive aspects of participating in the YDC.

A couple of young people mentioned that one of the best things about the Youth Drug Court was that it involved the family in the process:

'It is good. They should keep it going for people that want to stop their habit. Definitely. It is good because it involves their family too. It is not just involving them.' (young person)

'Because they involve your family as well, and that is good for support. Instead of just talking to you, they talk to everyone.' (young person)

All of the young people and most of the whanau interviewed mentioned that one of the best things about the Youth Drug Court was the support of the various people involved in the process. Especially mentioned was Judge Walker, who was the Judge presiding at the time these young people attended the Youth Drug Court.

Comments from young people included that he was easy to talk to, would give them an opportunity to tell their side of the story, and that he became involved in their situation:

'He was really good. He let you speak your side of the story as well. He let you have your time to speak.'

'He wasn't like a normal Judge that would just throw the book at you and send you away. He was the kind of person that would actually listen to what you had to say and look at what was best for you, not what was best for everyone else.'

A couple of the young people mentioned that while Judge Walker was very nice they also thought he was a bit lenient:

'I found it awesome because I knew he was cruisey.'

'I thought he was really nice. I must admit that he was a bit lenient.'

Four out of the five family/whanau interviewed also commented positively on the relationship they and the young person had with the Judge. Certainly, this relationship was perceived as being a crucial factor in changes seen in the young person:

'Yes I truly believed that [they]¹⁸ changed a lot through the Youth Drug Court. [They] did. The reason [they] changed was because Judge Walker spoke to those kids like they were human beings....He is one of the best Judges I have ever seen. He will go a long way the way he talks to children. I was really rapt in him' (family/whanau)

A couple of family/whanau members mentioned that the Judge would include them in the decision-making process by asking for their opinion:

'Always did ask me how I felt about this. "Well what do you think Mrs [X] about [X]." Whether it be [their] charges or whether it be what the outcomes were going to be. He always acknowledged me every time I was in court with [X].' (family/whanau)

'He used to always say to me too "and how have things been going for you?". Which was good. I could tell him how things were going from my point of view too, not just [theirs].' (family/whanau)

Young people also mentioned a number of other key support people as being the best thing about the Youth Drug Court:

'My lawyer. She was the best. I loved her.'

'Yes. He [Youth speciality services] stuck right beside me for about two years. Really, really helped me get through it.'

A couple of whanau members stated that the large number of professionals involved and the team approach to the Youth Drug Court was especially positive:

'I guess the amount of support and the people that were involved. We had kind of battled for years to get help and then all of a sudden there was all these people that we could resource. There was Youth Speciality, nurses, social workers, lawyers, youth workers, and the Judge was great.' (family/whanau)

The programmes offered by the YDC¹⁹, particularly around drug and alcohol issues, were considered by several young people and family/whanau to be the best thing about the YDC. When asked what stood out as having made an impact on their young person, one family/whanau stated:

'Anger management, all of the anger. A&D, more so the alcohol because that was one of [their] problems was alcohol. [Their] counselling sessions were really good.' (family/whanau)

¹⁸ 'Their', 'they' and 'them' etc. have been used to 'hide' the gender of the young person.

¹⁹ The YDC does not have its own programmes but refers on to other services.

One young person said:

'They put me through programmes that could help as well.' (young person)

A couple of family/whanau mentioned that the fortnightly and monthly reporting was a positive aspect of the YDC, both in terms of its regular and compulsory nature.

4.2.2 Negative aspects

Young people and their family/whanau were asked what they thought were the worst things about the YDC. Young people could think of few negative things about the YDC but a few did mention that they found YDC somewhat restrictive:

'Yes it was helpful in some ways. In others it wasn't because they were getting too involved with my social life. More than I actually wanted them to. Every night I was starting to get a phone call and it was starting to get a bit too much.' (young person)

'It was pretty hard because I was on curfew for that whole eight months. I was trying hard trying to change what I used to do and what I couldn't do. I couldn't do all the stuff I wanted to. That was probably the hardest.' (young person)

One commented negatively on the treatment programme they attended and felt it could have been delivered better to young people:

'I had to do this drug and alcohol rehab thing once a week. I thought that was really stupid. It was really pointless and it had no effect on my drug and alcohol intake. I thought it was really stupid.' (young person)

One young person mentioned that the YDC had given him too many chances *'...they were a bit easy on me.'*

Only one family/whanau member commented when asked what they thought were the worst things about the YDC. This person felt that their young person hadn't benefited much from being on the YDC and that help for drug and alcohol problems should have been offered much earlier.

'I couldn't see that [they were] benefiting from the programme much at all. I found that whichever direction [they] went in, it was going over the same stuff all the time....As a parent I think if I could have earlier on got some help and said "[X] has a problem with drugs and alcohol, [they are] 13 years old, I want to have [them] committed somewhere, or whatever to get this problem dealt with", would have been great...I just feel that parents have that right taken away from bringing their kids up to the best of their ability in being able to get them into these programmes.' (family/whanau member)

However, this same family/whanau member commented very positively on the Judge.

'But the Judge that [X] was talking about was very good. He could see [X] had family support. I think that made a difference.' (family/whanau member)

4.2.3 What could the YDC have done better?

Two young people and most of the family/whānau interviewed identified a number of areas in which improvements could be made to the YDC. One young person mentioned that they thought weekly reporting would be more useful than fortnightly. They felt that two weeks was a long time to be waiting if something urgent needed to be discussed. This same young person suggested that a gradual discharge from the YDC would be more helpful for young people trying to adjust back into 'regular' life.

'Once I got discharged it was alright for the first probably couple of weeks, but then it just felt like shit. I was being set free. What happens again if I end up in more trouble than what I was? Who do I go to sort of thing?...A slow discharge, rather than one big full discharge.' (young person)

Another young person said that it would have been much better had there been a residential programme in Christchurch at the time they had gone through the YDC²⁰.

Family/whānau mentioned a number of areas for possible improvement:

- Extend the eligibility criteria for the YDC

'I have got a young person at the moment that I caregive who is going through a similar situation as what ... did. She didn't meet the criteria of the Youth Drug Court...the chances are she is going to reoffend. She will reoffend. Whereas a programme like through the Youth Drug Court would be the best thing that could probably happen for this girl.'

- Young people should spend longer in the YDC
- Life experience for those who work with young people

'Have they been there and done that? Or are these just people from books and behaviour and things like that...Because I feel what is necessary is those that have been down with drugs and down that road, they fully understand what these kids are going through. They are, as far as I am concerned, the best people to help them...'

- Consequences of not meeting requirements of YDC need to be tougher

'But there were no consequences if [they] didn't quite toe the line, you know, until [they] went the next time back to court...So to see a system where there is a consequence, not some third, the fourth, the fifth time. This is how it is.'

- Lack of residential programmes available in Christchurch

²⁰ At the time these young people were going through the YDC, there were no residential alcohol and/or other drug treatment programmes in Christchurch and young people were referred to North Island facilities. However, subsequently the Christchurch-based Odyssey House Trust has opened a South Island residential alcohol and other drug treatment for youth.

'I mean everything happening with the Youth Drug Court was great. It was just kind of other constraints, of what is available out there and things...Not having the facilities available for the kids to go to. There was no inpatient treatment available.'

4.2.4 Did young people complete treatment?

Three of the young people represented in this analysis (two of whom were interviewed) did not successfully complete the requirements of the Youth Drug Court. The young people interviewed also did not complete their treatment programmes. Both indicated that they found the course helpful and they enjoyed it even though they didn't complete it or it didn't stop them 'doing' alcohol and other drugs.

'I found it helpful but it didn't stop me. Once I got out I still did drugs and stuff.'

All other young people interviewed had managed to complete the treatment programme (they had also been successfully discharged from the YDC). However, they had varying comments on the programmes they had attended:

'It was good except the fact that I couldn't handle being in the residential side of it in [place] because I basically had no-one up there that I knew and no-one coming to see me, bugger all contact with anyone really.'

'When I was on the Drug Court and I was doing anger management counselling, it just showed me all these points of what I need to do to calm myself down. And just to be cool about it.'

4.2.5 Recommend Youth Drug Court?

All six young people interviewed indicated that they would definitely recommend the Youth Drug Court to other young people because they had experienced the difference that it had made for them. A couple of young people mentioned, however, that they would only recommend it if the young person had a positive attitude towards it.

'Only to people who want to do it. If they don't want to do it then it is not worth wasting anybody's time. When I first did it, I wasn't really interested. I thought no, stuff this. I am just going to keep doing what I am doing. But then after a little while I thought this is my chance to get myself out of this shit.'

A couple of young people mentioned they would recommend the YDC because of the support it provides:

'Well, the support. Because it is good to see how much you got support. It changes a lot of things. You see you have got the support. It made me think a lot different than I would.'

'Really supportive people who want to see you get out of your habits.'

One family/whanau member indicated that they would only recommend the YDC if it was changed to ensure that the consequences for offending were tougher:

'If it was to change in some way. I am not saying it is all a waste of time, but there are certain areas for sure...[They] got threatened a few times. But there were no consequences for [them].'
(family/whanau member)

However, another whanau member interviewed said that the YDC was not an easy option but they would recommend it particularly for the support it provided to the family:

'Definitely. It was hard on [X]. It was really tough because there was a lot of follow-up and people hassling [them] all the time...[They] had to do stuff. [They] hated it. But definitely for family members I would recommend it, because it was a great support for us. In the end...[they] said yes it was really good. But at the time, yes there were a few times [they] definitely wanted to get out of it.'

4.2.6 Does the Youth Drug Court make a difference?

Young people were asked whether they thought that the Youth Drug Court had helped them. All responded by saying that the YDC had helped them, at least to some extent. When asked to elaborate on their responses, they indicated that YDC had given them the opportunity to examine what they were doing and look at other options. Several credited the Youth Drug Court with helping them to make significant changes in their lives.

'It got me thinking about a lot of different things. It made me think about the support too. The more support I had, because I didn't even think about that. But when my family started getting into it, and helping, it made me think a lot.'

'If it wasn't for the Drug Court I would have still been going downhill. The Drug Court gave me that opportunity to stay out of trouble. I was on a lot of conditions. That helped me stay out of trouble and just stop what I was doing regularly like drinking and all that.'

One young person, while also saying that the YDC had helped them also said that it was not helpful because:

'I think I got too many chances. They should probably have cracked down on me a bit harder.'

4.2.7 Overall comments about the Youth Drug Court

'It was pretty different. If it wasn't for the Drug Court I would have still been going downhill. The Drug Court gave me the opportunity to stay out of trouble. They helped me to stay out of trouble and just stop what I was doing regularly like drinking and all that.' (young person)

'Definitely I would support the Drug Court. If I had to walk down the street to support it I would because it works. I don't care what anybody else says. That is my own opinion as a mum, as a parent who has had a child that has gone through the Youth Drug Court.' (family/whanau)

4.3 Life changes as a result of the YDC

This section examines ways in which the young person's life had changed since exiting the Youth Drug Court. Young people and their family/whanau were asked whether the young person's drug and alcohol intake and offending had changed in the last year, and how in general their life had been since they had left the YDC. They were asked to consider what impact the YDC may have had in any changes they had experienced in their lives.

4.3.1 Drug and alcohol use

Table 4.2 shows the nature and severity of the alcohol and cannabis use, at exit of the YDC pilot, for the seven young people participating in the follow-up assessment. The criteria for alcohol and other drug *abuse* and *dependence* follow the Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorders, version four (DSMIV). The differentiation between *mild-moderate* and *moderate-severe* is addiction discontrol. That is, *moderate dependence* with discontrol that meets 4 to 5 of the DSMIV criteria. Polydrug dependency, that is, using more than one drug, was common, with many young people appearing in more than one of the categories for both alcohol and cannabis.

Table 4.2 Nature and severity of alcohol and cannabis use of the YDC sample group when they exited the pilot

Nature and severity of substance dependence problem	Full remission	No change
Alcohol dependence mild – moderate	2	
Alcohol dependence moderate	1	1
Alcohol dependence moderate – severe		1
Cannabis abuse		1
Cannabis dependence moderate	1	4

1 A young person could appear more than once in the table.

Two of the young people were in full remission of all substances at exit of the YDC. In one case, the young person had been diagnosed with moderate alcohol dependence on entry to the YDC. In the second case, the young person was diagnosed with moderate cannabis dependence. Two young people had no change in their cannabis or alcohol dependence or cannabis abuse; and three young people had mixed results at exiting the YDC. One had full remission for their 'other' drug dependence but there was no change in their cannabis or alcohol dependence. Another young person had full remission in their alcohol dependence but no change in their cannabis dependence. The third young person was in full remission for their alcohol dependency but had no change in their cannabis dependency.

Young people and their family/whanau were asked whether their drug and alcohol intake had changed in the last year since leaving the YDC and what they attributed this change to.

One young person had still been abusing both alcohol and cannabis at exiting the Youth Drug Court. In their first interview after exiting the YDC this young person indicated that they were still receiving treatment for their drug and alcohol abuse and that they were

committed to giving up on drugs and only drinking alcohol socially. They mentioned that their partner was playing a significant part in their desire to give up abusing drugs and alcohol. Nearly two years on, this young person said that they were now no longer abusing drugs or alcohol. When asked what had contributed to this change they responded:

'It is the Youth Drug Court, it is me getting older, it is my partner... Because if I didn't go to Youth Drug Court I wouldn't have gone to the rehab and they wouldn't have showed me what to do and how to give up and how easy it is to give up.'

A second young person had been diagnosed as cannabis dependent on entry to the Youth Drug Court. They had not completed the YDC, and the diagnosis at exit showed no change in their cannabis dependency. Alcohol had not been an issue for them while on the Youth Drug Court but had become so since exiting. They attributed their increase in drinking to cope with some very difficult family circumstances. However, they said that their use of cannabis, while still a problem, had decreased significantly in the two years since exiting the YDC. A member of this young person's family/whānau stated that while the young person was still using drugs and alcohol, their use of them had decreased.

'It definitely all settled down. I mean [they] didn't completely stop everything, but it did settle down. I mean more manageable for [them]. [They] probably still had blowouts every now and again.'
(family/whānau member)

This second young person had attended a treatment programme but had not managed to complete it. The young person family/whānau member indicated that a residential programme would have been much better:

'[They] did not complete it, which was a shame. I mean it is a great programme but something probably in-patient would have been much better, but there was nothing available.' (family/whānau member)

A third young person was diagnosed as having moderate cannabis dependence. This was in full remission at exit of the YDC. In their first interview after exiting the YDC, the young person confirmed the diagnosis that they were no longer using cannabis. Fifteen months on they were still cannabis free and were drinking only on social occasions. This young person attributed the changes, not so much to the YDC, but rather to an accidental overdose of pills. This had shocked them and was the main reason why they were no longer using drugs.

A fourth young person evidenced full remission in their alcohol dependence at exit of the YDC, but there was no change in their cannabis dependence. In their first interview after exiting the YDC they said:

'I drink every now and again, have a beer after work or something, don't go out and get pissed any more, don't use. I smoke the occasional bit of pot but that's – any other drugs I'll just put down now.'

They attributed their change in alcohol and/or other drug use to a combination of the YDC, treatment programmes, maturity, will-power and support. In their follow-up interview, they admitted to using drugs once more after exiting the YDC, but that it had been over a year

now that they were 'clean'. This young person attributed much of the changes in their use of drugs to the YDC and in particular Judge Walker:

'Pretty much the way Judge Walker put the rationale thinking side of it. He explained the easier ways. I highly doubt that he has been in that situation but he is in touch with people that have been. The way he put it sounded like it was coming from someone that had been into that for a long time and got off it. The way he said how to keep away from it.'

The young person said that in particular understanding the health consequences of their drug abuse had made them stop and think about what they were doing.

However, while this person had been in full remission for alcohol dependence at exit of the Youth Drug Court they had started drinking again in the period since leaving the YDC. They acknowledged that alcohol was still a significant problem for them and they were attempting to give up for the sake of their partner. At the time of the interview they had not consumed alcohol for two or three weeks. Their partner supported this saying that when they first met nine months previously, the young person was drinking a substantial amount but had not drunk alcohol for the last few weeks. The young person's partner was concerned at the stress that alcohol was putting on their relationship and the young person's reckless behaviour when they had been drinking, and was very supportive of their attempt to give up.

Another young person had exhibited full remission in their alcohol dependence at exit of the YDC but no change in their cannabis dependence. Fifteen months on, their use of alcohol was still under control. However, they admitted to smoking cannabis since exiting the Youth Drug Court but said this has stopped recently. When asked whether the YDC had any impact on their use of alcohol and drugs they responded:

'I feel like it did. That was really what made me think "hang on, I need to sort my shit out. What am I doing?"'

However, this person's family/whanau member who was interviewed indicated that they thought the Youth Drug Court had little to do with any changes in the young person's alcohol and other drug use. Instead changes were simply due to maturity and other life changes.

A further young person had been diagnosed as having moderate alcohol dependence on entry to the Youth Drug Court. At exit they were in full remission. In their first interview after exiting the YDC, this young person said they had made some significant changes in their life in the period of being on the YDC, including relationships in their family and credited the YDC with helping them do so. Twenty months on, the young person said that their alcohol dependence was still in remission and they would only drink every three or four weeks. Their involvement in sport and study had played a big part in their reduction in alcohol use. This change in the young person's alcohol dependence was corroborated by their family/whanau who said that the YDC had played a significant part in assisting the young person to make changes to their life. When asked in what way they responded:

'Understanding it, I think a lot better now. Through the sessions of [their] counselling with A & D. Just having a better understanding. But then I also think [their] age has got a lot to do with it too.'

[They are] a lot older. I don't know if [they are] a lot wiser. No actually I think [they are] a lot wiser. The Drug Court actually plays a big part of [X] change-over, I suppose, or make-over.'

A seventh young person exhibited no change in their diagnosis of moderate alcohol dependence and cannabis abuse at exit of the YDC and did not complete the YDC. Two years on, a member of their family/whānau indicated that the young person's use of alcohol and drugs had significantly reduced after leaving the YDC.

'After the drug court sometimes [they] would go two or three weeks without drinking...[They] still smoked a bit, but not as much...'

This family/whānau member considered the YDC to be significant in helping the young person make these changes to their life and in particular mentioned the way the young people were treated and reasoned with in the YDC.

'I think what was helpful was that [they weren't] getting yelled at and told "you better cut out drinking or else you will be in trouble". [They were] asked "can you try and cut down on your drinking? Can you try and do that and see if you can?"' (family/whānau member)

4.3.2 Offending

All but one of the young people interviewed had been convicted of further offences since leaving the Youth Drug Court. The amount and seriousness of offending however varied significantly. Two young people had only one conviction in eighteen months after exiting the YDC and in one case the offending was of a minor nature. One young person had three convictions with the major offence being a property offence of moderate seriousness. A couple of young people had a moderate number of convictions with the major offence being a property offence of moderate to high seriousness. One young person had offended extensively since leaving the YDC but this was of moderate seriousness. Their major offence was a traffic offence.

Most of the young people interviewed during the first round of interviews attributed their offending, at least in part, to their alcohol and/or other drug use:

'When I ran out I would go out and do some burglaries or rob cars and that to buy some more drugs.'

'I don't go out and reoffend because I am not under the influence.'

Young people and their family/whānau were asked whether their offending had changed in the last year since leaving the YDC and what they attributed this change to.

One young person had a significant number of proven offences in the Youth Court before entering the YDC. They had continued to offend extensively both during the YDC and after leaving the YDC and had numerous charges. In an interview about two years after leaving the YDC this young person indicated that they offended mainly when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Their family/whānau member indicated that while the young person continued to offend after the YDC there was nevertheless a 'massive' drop in the amount of offending. When asked whether the YDC had contributed to this reduction in offending:

'Definitely. It was a turning point. You can trace all positives that have happened back to when [they] went through that. That was the turning point for [X].' (family/whanau member)

A second young person had a moderate number of proved offences in the Youth Court before being accepted for the YDC. They accumulated one more offence of minor-moderate seriousness while on the YDC but had not been convicted of any further offences since leaving the Youth Drug Court. In an interview fifteen months after leaving the YDC they stated that *'it has been a good year.'*

Another young person had a significant number of proven offences in the Youth Court before entering the YDC. While on the YDC they accumulated six more charges and were charged with an offence a few months after leaving the YDC. In an interview nineteen months after leaving the YDC, the young person said that they had continued to offend for about three months after leaving the Youth Drug Court but that they had not offended in the last twelve months. They credited this reduction in their offending to the Youth Drug Court, but also to their partner. About the Youth Drug Court they said:

'It showed me what I shouldn't really be doing.'

They added:

'I have grown up. I don't want to go to prison anymore. It scared me the first time and I wasn't in there for long, but didn't like it.'

A fourth young person had a moderate number of proven charges prior to entering the YDC and while on the YDC were charged with a traffic offence. Twelve months after leaving the YDC they had three charges with the major one being of moderate seriousness. However, at eighteen months after leaving the YDC they had accumulated no further charges. This young person said that all of their offending had occurred while in the company of friends and some while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.

'But not all my offending was because I was drunk. Some of it was...I would say it all happened when I was with friends.'

This young person did not think their current offending was a serious problem and in fact indicated that they no longer offended and hadn't for quite a while. When asked whether the YDC had helped them reduce their offending, the young person was uncertain and indicated that the YDC itself didn't provide many consequences for offending:

'I didn't really get many consequences. I had to do community service, shit like that, but nothing too, you know. They didn't send me to jail or anything. I must admit I got away with a lot. In some ways it is like well really I shouldn't have, but in other ways it is like cool...'

This young person's family/whanau, when asked whether the YDC had had any impact on their offending said:

'The only impact I think it had... was that [they were] very determined to get out of it.'

Another young person had one proved serious offence before entering the YDC. While on the YDC they had committed no offences and had committed only one minor offence in eighteen months since exiting the YDC. In an interview twenty months after leaving the YDC they said that the YDC had connected them with people who helped them make significant changes to their life. When asked what had helped them make positive changes to their offending they said:

'I just mainly look at life in a different way now, these days. Just everything to me is just a real positive now...Back then I was, oh no I can't be bothered with anything.'

The young person's whanau/family said that the offence they had been convicted of since leaving the YDC was a minor one which had occurred when in the company of a large number of their friends.

A sixth young person had committed a significant number of offences before entering the YDC and continued to offend while on the YDC and after exiting. This young person's whanau/family talked about the connection between the young person's offending and their use of drugs and alcohol but also indicated that a lot of offending was due to issues with anger, which had not been resolved while on the YDC. They indicated that it would have been helpful if the YDC had continued to work with the young person for a longer period of time.

A final young person interviewed had a very extensive history of proved offences in the Youth Court. They continued to offend while on the YDC but at a much lower rate. Eighteen months after exiting the YDC they had a moderate number of charges. In the interview nineteen months after leaving the YDC the young person acknowledged that they had still been offending and this was related to their alcohol and other drug use, but also to the friends they would hang round with. However, it had been several months since their last conviction and the young person indicated that their offending had stopped. Their partner corroborated this saying that it had been a while since their last offence and that the young person was trying to change:

'...[they are] getting along pretty well actually. From what I know of [their] past and what I have seen, it is trying to get [them] on the right track and then trying to keep [them] there.'

4.3.3 Other life changes

In addition to changes in alcohol and/or other drug dependency and offending we were also interested in the general health and well-being of the young people in the period since they had left the Youth Drug Court.

A couple of young people indicated that they had developed a significant relationship since leaving the YDC and that this had made a big difference in their lives:

'When I first met [them] [they] didn't even have to say anything to get me off [X], which I was still hooked on when I met [them]. [They] hooked me off that and straightened me up. I wouldn't be like this now if it wasn't for [them].'

'It is not so much the specifics about the using, it is just since I have been with [them] I just haven't thought of it. It hasn't been an issue.'

A couple of young people indicated that they had managed to obtain employment since leaving the YDC. Most of the young people were in reasonably good health and one was doing very well at sport. One young person, however, said that their health was not very good mainly due to using drugs over a long period of time.

Several of the young people were still living at home or had moved back to living at home since leaving the YDC.

One of the positive impacts that the YDC was perceived as having was improved relationships with family/whanau. One family/whanau member who was interviewed said this about the Youth Drug Court and their young person:

'I think it was a turning point for [them]. Things still aren't perfect but they are much better than they were. The thing is if it hadn't been for the youth drug court, things would be a lot worse than they are now. It did kind of facilitate getting the family back together and people talking and helping. [X] made peace with a lot of people. We can all see that [they have] tried really hard over the last few years.' (family/whanau)

4.4 Other findings

4.4.1 Education and treatment programmes

Young people and their whanau were asked whether the young person had been involved in any further education or training, or whether they had been receiving any treatment in the period since leaving the YDC.

Two young people were, or had been, doing polytechnic courses in the period since leaving the YDC. Three young people had been working since leaving the YDC, although two had since left their places of employment. In one case this was due to pregnancy. One young person was on the sickness benefit, although they indicated that they had had three or four jobs since leaving the YDC. They said that their use of alcohol and other drugs had had a significant impact on their ability to hold down a job:

'Spending the whole night on the piss and then not going to work the next day. I have done that quite a few times.'

Only one of the young people appeared to have undergone any form of counselling or treatment in the year since leaving the Youth Drug Court. One, however, at the time of the interview, mainly at the instigation of their partner was seeking to get some help with their alcohol abuse.

4.4.2 Future plans

Many of the young people had plans for what they would like to do in the future. This included travel, study, owning their own homes, having a family and employment.

'I want to travel and work. That would be awesome. Work overseas. I want to be a really good chef and one day open my own restaurant. That is my plan.'

'Me and [Y] are going to go to Auckland next year. Then from there we are going to go to Aussie, then to India, and travel round.'

'I just want them (their child) to grow up and just be happy and stay the hell out of trouble. I don't want them to make the same stupid mistakes I did.'

A couple of the young people, however, were uncertain about what the future might hold:

'I can't actually sit here and say that I do have a plan, because I don't really. I don't know. I don't know what the future holds.'

One young person said *'I haven't actually thought that far yet.'*

Most of the family/whānau members interviewed talked about their hopes for their young people. One mother was very proud of what their young person had accomplished both through sport and education. When asked of her hopes for her young person, this family/whānau member said that it was *'to move mountains'*. She added *'As me as [their] mother I want to support [them] as much as I can in achieving that.'*

Some were very realistic about the struggle ahead for their young people:

'It is difficult. [They] gets these plans and then [they do] something dumb and it all gets interrupted...' (family/whānau)

4.4.3 Other things in life help?

Young people and their family/whānau were asked whether there were other things in their lives that had helped them during the period they were on the YDC. Most of the family/whānau members and several of the young people mentioned the support of family and friends as being a crucial factor in the young people's lives during the period they were on the YDC. A couple of young people also mentioned maturity and growing older as being a factor. One young person and their family/whānau mentioned that connections with people, made through programmes while on the YDC, had played a significant part in changes in their life. One of these people, who was highly respected in their community, had become a mentor to this young person.

4.5 Summary

4.5.1 Assessment of the youth drug court

- All the young people and most of the family/whanau interviewed were able to recall positive aspects of participating in the Youth Drug Court. Most commonly mentioned was the relationship formed between the young person and Judge Walker, who was the presiding Judge at the time these young people attended the Youth Drug Court.
- A number of suggested improvements to the YDC were made, including the need for residential programmes for alcohol and drug treatment in Christchurch, and the need for support for the young people after they leave the YDC.
- All the young people interviewed said they would recommend the YDC to other young people because they had experienced the difference it had made for them.

4.5.2 Response to the Youth Drug Court process

- Two of the young people interviewed for the follow-up assessment were in full remission of all substances at exit of the YDC, two young people exhibited no change in their diagnosis at exit and three young people had mixed results at exiting the YDC. In an interview at least twelve months after they had exited the YDC, some of the young people indicated that they were either still in remission of their alcohol and/or other drug abuse or that they had given up abusing drugs and alcohol in the period since leaving the YDC. However, a couple of young people had started abusing again.
- All of the young people, with the exception of one, had offended since leaving the YDC. Two of the young people had offended only once in eighteen months, two had offended moderately and one had offended extensively.
- The youth drug court was credited by both young people and their family/whanau as having a significant part to play in the reduction of their alcohol and/or other drug abuse and in offending. However, other factors were also important including maturation and significant relationships.

4.5.3 Other

- Only one of the young people appeared to have undergone any form of treatment or counselling since leaving the YDC. Most of the young people had, however, been involved in either courses or in some form of employment.
- Most of the young people had plans for their future. These included travel, study, owning their own homes, having a family and employment.

5 Youth advocate costs

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 8 of the *Process Evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court* reports on resourcing for the YDC pilot. This chapter describes how some of the resources have been utilised in the first eighteen months of the pilot, and resourcing issues raised by government agencies and the Odyssey House Day Programme. It is suggested that readers wanting a full understanding of these issues read this chapter.

The process evaluation report expressed concerns as to the youth advocate costs for the YDC (pg 122). A youth advocate is a lawyer appointed by the Court to help a child or young person charged with a criminal offence who is appearing in the Youth Court. The costs of youth advocates are funded by the Ministry of Justice. Their costs would most likely be higher for YDC participants than other clients because of the increased time spent accompanying clients to the fortnightly remands and attending case reviews.

This chapter presents information on youth advocate costs for the thirty young people who entered the Youth Drug Court in the first year of operation.

It was beyond the scope of this evaluation to undertake a full cost–benefit analysis of the Youth Drug Court. All government agencies involved with the YDC had some difficulty in distinguishing between core business and additional costs incurred by operating the YDC. This was mainly due to the fact that the young people would have been processed through most of the agencies anyway. It is also difficult to predict what offending may have occurred during the equivalent time the young people were on the YDC that would have required resources.

5.2 Findings

Total youth advocate costs for the thirty young people who entered the Youth Drug Court in the first year of operation were \$138,215. The period of time included in the analysis was taken from the young person's entry date into the YDC to their exit date. They may have had court appearances before and after this time period but these weren't included in the costs²¹.

The costs for each young person varied significantly from \$616 to \$10,784 and the average was \$4,607. The length of time each young person was on the YDC ranged from 45 days to 544 days. Given that this would have a significant impact on cost, the average daily cost for

²¹ However, in a few cases youth advocates did not separate out their costs for the period outside the YDC, so in these cases the extra costs have been included.

each young person was, therefore, calculated²². This ranged from \$9 per day through to \$34 per day, with the average being \$16 per day for each YDC participant. Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of daily youth advocate costs per young person. The daily youth advocate costs for two young people (7%) was less than \$10. For 12 young people (40%) the costs per day were between \$10 and \$14 and for another 12 they were between \$15 and \$20. In only four cases (13%) the daily cost of the youth advocate was over \$20.

Figure 5.1 Youth advocate daily costs – proportion of young people

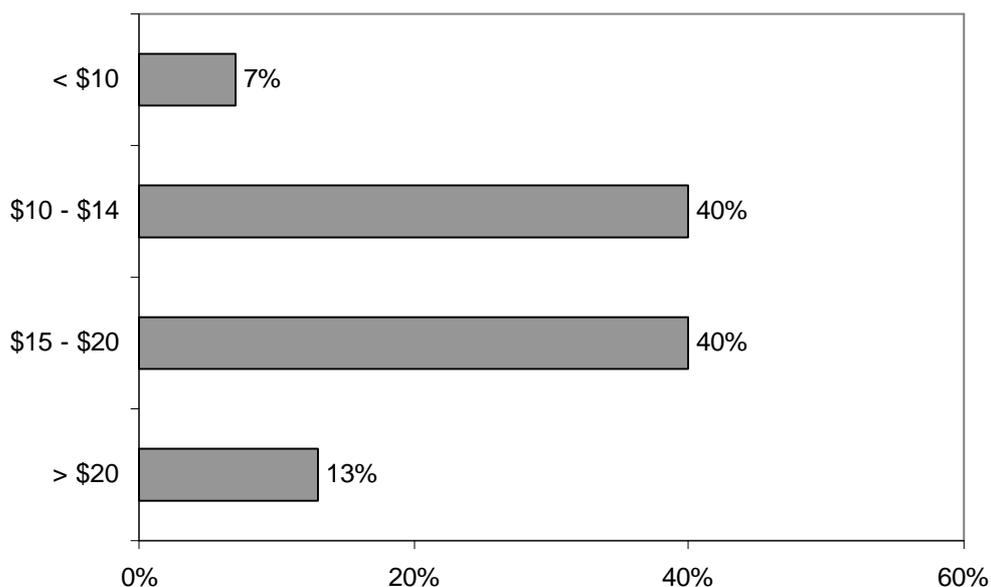
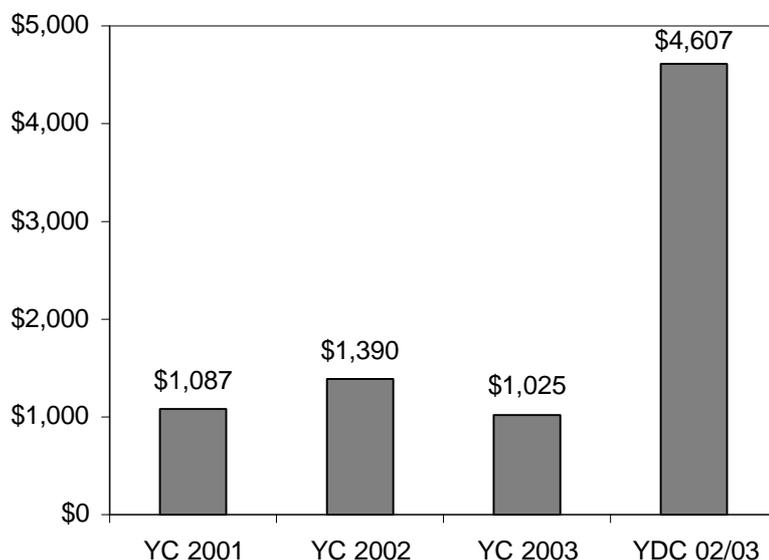


Figure 5.2 compares the average cost for a Youth Drug Court participant with the average cost for a young person proceeding through the standard Youth Court. Figure 5.2 includes youth advocate costs for 2001 through to 2003. Not surprisingly, the average youth advocate cost for the YDC was about four times that of the cost for youth advocates in the standard Youth Court. However, it would be expected that youth advocate costs for the YDC would be significantly higher than those for the general Youth Court. Young people on the YDC remain on it for a longer period of time than if they were attending the Youth Court for a similar offence. In addition, YDC participants make more frequent court appearances – starting off with fortnightly appearances, graduating to monthly appearances once they are showing signs of improvement.

²² The daily cost was calculated by dividing total cost by the number of days between start and exit of the YDC. It is not the cost per actual day worked.

Figure 5.2 Average total cost for YDC participants compared to young offenders going through the Youth Court in 2001 to 2003



5.3 Summary

- Total costs for the thirty young people who entered the Youth Drug Court in the first year of operation were \$138,215. The costs for each young person varied significantly from \$616 to \$10,784 and the average was \$4,607. The length of time each young person was on the YDC ranged from 45 days to 544 days. Given that this would have a significant impact on cost, the average daily cost for each young person was therefore calculated. This ranged from \$10 per day through to \$34 per day, with the average being \$16 per day for each YDC participant.
- The average youth advocate cost for the YDC was about four times that of the cost for youth advocates in the standard Youth Court. However, it would be expected that youth advocate costs for the YDC would be significantly higher than those for the general Youth Court. Young people on the YDC remain on it for a longer period of time than if they were attending the Youth Court for a similar offence. In addition, YDC participants make more frequent court appearances – starting off with fortnightly appearances, graduating to monthly appearances once they are showing signs of improvement.

6 Discussion and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The Christchurch Youth Drug Court (YDC) Pilot has been an innovative programme aimed at reducing offending which is linked with alcohol and/or other drug dependency amongst young people. The YDC aimed to do this by facilitating early identification of young offenders with alcohol and other drug use problems linked to offending; reducing time delays in service delivery to the young people; facilitating effective interagency coordination; referral to a range of programmes; and monitoring the young people to facilitate the treatment process.

The Youth Drug Court started operating on 14 March 2002. A process evaluation, examining the operation of the YDC in its first eighteen months, was published in December 2004. The process evaluation found support for the YDC model as implemented in Christchurch. Respondents considered that the pilot had, on the whole, made improvements on the process issues it set out to address. The strengths of the YDC were considered to be the:

- consistency of the Judge;
- strong multidisciplinary team approach;
- good interagency coordination;
- more efficient identification of young people with alcohol and other drug problems through the onsite Youth Speciality Services clinicians;
- immediacy of response to treatment needs and other issues; and
- intense monitoring of the young person and their Family Group Conference plan.

However, a number of concerns were expressed, or suggestions made, for improvement. These included:

- the need to more effectively address resourcing issues, including service gaps;
- concerns for victims' rights in the YDC process; and
- ensuring accountability of young people for their offending.

Thirty young people entered the Youth Drug Court in the first year of operation (14 March 2002 to 13 March 2003). Information on their offending before and while on the YDC was included in the process evaluation report and is reported here too. This current report also examines offending for these thirty young people in the twelve months after they exited the Youth Drug Court. It combines this reoffending analysis with a small number of interviews with young people and their family/whanau to gain an insight into these young people's lives one to two years after leaving the YDC. It also assesses their perceptions of the impact the YDC may have had in facilitating any changes in their lives.

It must be noted that of the thirty young people who went through the YDC pilot in the first year, only 17 (57%) successfully exited the YDC and 13 (43%) did not complete the requirements of the YDC. There were a variety of reasons as to why young people did not successfully complete the requirements of the YDC, including that they reoffended or did not complete their alcohol and drug treatment programmes. This must also be taken into account when considering the findings of this report.

The aims of this follow-up assessment were: to examine patterns of offending among YDC participants and to ascertain whether there had been any improvement in the wellbeing of participants, including a decrease in alcohol and drug use and what these changes were attributed to.

6.2 Limitations of the evaluation

It is necessary to reiterate at the outset of this chapter the limitations of the evaluation already mentioned in other parts of this report. These limitations apply particularly to the reoffending analysis and the choice of comparison groups, but also to the other analyses presented in the report.

Ideally it would have been preferable to have a randomised control study where participants had been randomly allocated to either a 'control' or 'treatment' sample. This was not feasible for reasons outlined in Section 1.8. Two proxy comparison groups were therefore selected. The first of these was a National Youth Court sample which included all cases with a proved or convicted outcome in the Youth Court in the 2002/2003 fiscal year. As there were a number of important differences between the characteristics of the YDC pilot sample and the National Youth Court sample, a subset of the National Youth Court sample was formed that better matched the YDC pilot on some attributes, in particular gender, number of prior proved offences in the Youth Court and seriousness of major prior offence. All of these are key factors in predicting risk of reoffending.

The comparison groups were provided in order to put the reoffending analysis of the YDC pilot sample in context. Without this, it would not be possible to identify if outcomes would have been any different had the participants gone through the standard Youth Court processes. However, caution must still be exercised when drawing conclusions from these findings. Firstly, only thirty young people entered the Youth Drug Court in the first twelve months of operation. Therefore, small numbers make any comparison statistically unreliable, i.e. it would be difficult to statistically detect any effect on reoffending due to participation in the programme.

Secondly, the comparison sample used in this report was only a partially-matched sample, as it was not possible to match individuals in this group to the YDC pilot sample on the key factor for selection to the YDC, which was whether they had moderate to severe alcohol and/or drug dependencies that were linked to their offending. Young people who have a moderate to severe alcohol and/or other drug dependency, particularly where this is linked to offending, may differ in significant ways from other young offenders and we have been unable to control for this. However, it is probable that the comparison samples did include

some young people with moderate to severe alcohol and/or drug dependency. Because this is not recorded in the official data collection it was not possible to identify this factor.

In addition, expectations about what the Youth Drug Court can achieve, and the questions that the evaluation can be expected to answer need to be realistic. The young people who are eligible for the Youth Drug Court are at the severe end of youth offending, so it will take time to achieve results with this target group, and achieving large reductions in reoffending are not realistic. In addition, it is difficult to attribute change solely to the YDC processes, as there are multiple factors that can influence change in young people's behaviour, including the quality and appropriateness of other services they engage with. The Youth Drug Court's effectiveness must be viewed in the context of the wider provision of services to these young people and the effectiveness of those services.

It is also important to note that only six of the thirty young people who entered the YDC in the first year of operation and five family/whanau members were interviewed for the qualitative section of this report. The small numbers mean that the views reported here are not necessarily representative of all the young people who went through the YDC.

6.3 Assessment of the Youth Drug Court

Young people and their family/whanau interviewed for both the process evaluation and this report were asked to comment on the best and worst things about the YDC. Both young people and family/whanau members commented overwhelmingly positively about their experiences in the YDC, in particular mentioning the support of the YDC team and the relationships developed with the Judge. A couple of young people and family members also commented positively on the way the YDC sought to involve the whole family in the process and not just the young person.

However, young people and their family/whanau also identified a number of areas where improvements could be made to the YDC. Suggestions included the need to have:

- a gradual discharge from the YDC to assist young people to 'adjust' back to life;
- tougher consequences for not meeting the requirements of the YDC; and
- more suitable alcohol and/or other drug treatment and residential facilities in Christchurch.

6.4 Patterns of offending among youth drug court participants

A majority (70%) of the YDC pilot sample reoffended within 12 months of exiting the drug court. The majority (60%) of the participants committed a property offence after exiting the YDC, with a minority committing a violent offence (13% within 12 months). Only one offence of high seriousness was committed by the pilot sample within 12 months of exiting the YDC. Four (13%) of the young people were imprisoned within 12 months of exiting the drug court.

Both the rate of offending and the seriousness of offending by the pilot participants was lower after exiting the drug court in both follow-up periods (6 months and 12 months), compared to levels before entering the YDC. All the decreases were statistically significant, except the 12 month post-exit offending rate which just failed to reach significance.

Comparisons to a national Youth Court sample and a 'partially-matched' Youth Court sample revealed no statistically significant differences in the rate or seriousness of reoffending after exit. While noting the limitations discussed in section 6.2, the evaluation has not found that the Youth Drug Court pilot had an impact on the rate or seriousness of reoffending over and above what may have occurred if the young people had just gone through standard Youth Court processes.

Young people and their family/whanau spoke openly about the young person's offending before and after the Youth Drug Court. They attributed much of the offending, at least in part, to their alcohol and/or other drug use. But also, it was clear that much of it was committed while in the company of their peers. Most of the young people interviewed at least one year on from leaving the Youth Drug Court acknowledged that they had continued to offend after leaving the YDC, but also indicated that they were offending much less often. This was corroborated by the family/whanau interviewed with one family/whanau member indicating a 'massive' drop in the amount of offending.

The Youth Drug Court was certainly credited by most of the young people and their family/whanau interviewed as having a significant part to play in any reduction in their offending. However, other factors were also important including maturation and life changes (for example, gaining employment and developing significant relationships). Interviews suggested that the YDC and treatment had helped young people to think about what they were doing and the likely consequences, to feel more motivated to make positive changes, and to learn some skills that assisted them to make these changes.

6.5 Alcohol and/or other drug dependency

All thirty youth drug court participants were diagnosed as having either a moderate or moderate-severe alcohol and/or cannabis dependence. Polydrug dependency, that is, using more than one drug, was common, with twenty-two young people appearing in more than one of the categories for both alcohol and cannabis. Nearly all young people (29) were diagnosed with a conduct disorder. Assessments of the young people on exiting the Youth Drug Court showed that about three-quarters of the young people had either stopped or reduced their alcohol and/or other drug intake. One year on, we did not conduct a diagnosis of alcohol and/or other drug use, but we asked six young people whether their alcohol and drug intake had changed in the period since leaving the YDC. Where possible their family/whanau were also asked the same question to corroborate their responses.

Interviews showed that some young people had certainly managed to sustain the changes in their alcohol and other drug dependency made during the period they were on the YDC. They attributed changes to a combination of treatment programmes, the YDC Judge, positive mentoring relationships developed through the YDC, life changes, will-power and

maturation. Relationships with partners were also seen as one reason why young people made or sustained changes in their alcohol and/or other drug use.

A couple of young people, while having reduced alcohol and/or other drug dependency while on the YDC, had started using again. They attributed this to stressful life circumstances, but both were wanting, with the support of their partners and family/whanau, to make changes to their alcohol and/or other drug intake. Only one of the young people interviewed one year on from exiting the YDC had undergone any form of ongoing or additional treatment programme or counselling in that period.

Given that one of the main objectives of the YDC is to reduce crime associated with alcohol and/or drug dependency, the effectiveness of the drug and alcohol services will be crucial to any changes in dependency and offending. McLaren (2000) points out that one factor that does not appear to have been investigated in evaluations of drug courts is the nature of the drug and alcohol treatment provided. Not all drug treatments are equally effective and the impact of the YDC would presumably be affected by the quality of treatment. The evaluation of the Youth Drug Court did not include an evaluation of the individual programmes that young people attended. Such a task was outside the scope and resources of the evaluation.

However, key informants and young people and their families/whanau did comment in the process evaluation on issues relating to programmes and services²³. In particular, at the time these young people were going through the YDC, there were no residential alcohol and other drug treatment programmes available in Christchurch, although young people were referred to residential services in the North Island. This was highlighted in the process evaluation as a major service gap in Christchurch, as was the lack of services for young Maori. This latter gap has important implications given that half of the young people who went through the YDC in the first year, and the sample for the reoffending analysis, were Maori. However, since the process evaluation was undertaken, the Christchurch-based Odyssey House Trust has been selected to provide a new South Island residential alcohol and other drug treatment service for young men. Any expansion of the Youth Drug Court needs to take into account the availability of key services and, in particular, residential alcohol and other drug treatment programmes and the cost of meeting gaps in such services where needed. Young people, particularly Maori, need a choice of treatment programmes and counselling services that incorporate and integrate cultural paradigms/frameworks.

While readers must keep in mind that it was not possible to match individuals in the comparison sample to the YDC pilot sample on whether they had alcohol and/or other drug dependencies that were linked with their offending, the question arises as to why a reduction in alcohol and/or other drug dependencies at the time of exiting the YDC was not related to a more significant decrease in offending by the young people going through the YDC compared with those going through the Youth Court. New Zealand and international research generally agrees that drug and alcohol abuse, while a risk factor, is not a primary risk factor for offending by young people, although some international research suggests that it is more of a risk factor for serious and violent offending for the under 12 age group than for the 12 to 14 age group (Lipsey and Derzon, 1998). Two international meta-analyses found that treating substance abuse in both young men and women was not associated with reductions

²³ For a fuller analysis of the services and programmes used by the YDC sample readers are advised to refer to Chapter 5 in Carswell S (2004).

in reoffending (Dowden and Andrews, 1999a, 1999b). This strongly suggests that other risk factors will also need to be addressed in order to have a more significant impact on reoffending. This issue is further discussed in the next section on risk and protective factors.

However, these comments should not be taken to indicate that treatment for alcohol and/or other drug dependency is not an effective intervention for young people. Interviews with young people and their families/whanau were indicative that a decrease in alcohol and/or other drug use was related to an improvement in life outcomes for some young people. Substance abuse interferes with prosocial activities such as work, education and positive relationships. It increases the risk of offending to fund drugs and alcohol, offending while under the influence or specific drug offences. In addition, it encourages associations with young people involved in criminal and drug-taking activities, which is a major risk factor. These associations increase the likelihood of criminal activity as illustrated by the findings that some young people offended when in the company of their peers. Thus effective alcohol and/or other drug treatment is still a key part of dealing with this group of serious young offenders.

6.6 Offending related needs and protective factors

6.6.1 Multiple needs

What is clear from the evaluation is that the young people eligible for entry to the Youth Drug Court are at the serious end of youth offenders. McLaren (2000) states that the main distinguishing characteristics of young offenders are the number of problems they experience. Alcohol and other drug dependency, while a treatment need, is only one of numerous offending related needs, especially among those who start offending before age fourteen. Other needs included: having few social ties, mixing with antisocial peers and having family problems. Research has shown that targeting problems causally associated with offending has been found to be effective in reducing offending, and that targeting two or more of these needs is more effective than targeting only one (Dowden & Andrews, 2003). Top priority should be given to those needs that are severe.

While alcohol and other drug treatment is a major focus of the YDC, other needs of the young people were also considered important. Therefore, a wide range of programmes and services were used to address alcohol and other drug issues, offending behaviour, education and vocational needs, and providing mentoring and support. The process evaluation showed that in addition to drug and alcohol treatment programmes, the services accessed by YDC participants included: anger management courses, education and training courses, and employment services. It is suggested that any programmes young people are referred to should aim to target multiple needs with one of these needs being antisocial peer associations, as this has been found to be the major offending-related need for adolescents.

6.6.2 Increasing protective factors

There is evidence from both the process evaluation and this current report that the Youth Drug Court does increase protective factors in the young people who were interviewed. The YDC does not just involve the young person but the family as well and it was evident that

both the young people and their family/whanau benefited from this experience. For some young people it was evidence of the fact that their family cared for them and wanted to see them make changes in their lives. Family/whanau felt included in the decision-making process and appreciated being spoken to and included by the Judge.

The Youth Drug Court also successfully engaged young people in the process. These are young people who, as mentioned earlier, have significant offending records and multiple problems, and are reasonably hard to engage in treatment. Referring them straight to programmes as part of Court activities, and increasing motivation in young people to make positive changes both reduce barriers to young people becoming involved in treatment. Young people were motivated both by the feeling that the YDC was their last chance and by the positive influence of the Judge. Reducing barriers to treatment is a criminogenic need – that is, something that is associated with reductions in reoffending when it is addressed. It is significant that the YDC has made an impact in this area.

Perhaps one of the key messages to come out of the process evaluation and follow-up assessment is the importance of the role of the Judge as a key authority figure in the lives of the young people. Young people and their family/whanau commented very positively on the relationship they developed with the Judge during the time they were on the YDC, and this was clearly a key factor in their perception of the YDC. The young people in both the process evaluation and follow-up assessment commented on the fact that often for the first time in their lives they felt listened to and understood. Young people were motivated to have something positive to report to the Judge in their fortnightly meetings. Family members talked about how the Judge had respected them and shown an interest in what was happening to them. However, a few young people and their family/whanau thought that the Judge was too lenient and more sanctions should have been given to young people who did not meet their commitments.

It is evident that what authority figures like Judges say has an effect on the young people and can be used in a therapeutic and rehabilitative way. However, certain conditions must be met in order to facilitate this relationship with the Judge – this includes consistency of the presiding Judge over a period of time. ‘Therapeutic jurisprudence’ enters new territory for Judges in New Zealand - as Judge John Walker states *‘it is a new role for a Judge attempting to change behaviour and acting in a preventative way by intervention’* (Judge John Walker, 2000). It offers promise, in combination with sanctions and treatment programmes, to influence behaviour. Further research is needed to explore ways in which therapeutic jurisprudence can be used, the optimal conditions necessary for its success, and the long term outcomes of this approach. In addition, the paradigm shift created by this role will need to be fully explored and debated before it is widely accepted.

6.6.3 Targeting specific needs

Associating with antisocial peers is a well established offending-related need in both New Zealand and international research, particularly for the over twelve age group (Fergusson et al. 2002). Conversely, higher levels of prosocial ties (for example, family, partners, employment and education) have been found to be a protective factor, particularly for young people low in self control (which may well encompass young people with moderate to severe alcohol and/or other drug abuse) (Wright et al., 2001). Studies on interventions designed to reduce

contact with antisocial peers or increase contact with prosocial peers are few, and research findings are mixed. The YDC aimed to both decrease contact with antisocial peers through bail conditions and increase contact with prosocial peers through the Judge and YDC team encouraging involvement in education, training, work, recreation and cultural pursuits.

Targeting family factors has been found to result in reduced offending by young people (Dowden & Andrews, 2003). In particular, increasing parental skills for supervising young people (knowing where they are and who they are with, setting rules and sanctions), and increasing family affection are key targets. Given the evidence of family engagement in the YDC, it is suggested that services are provided for the families aimed at improving both parental skills and family affection.

The findings from both the process evaluation and this follow-up assessment suggest that further attention needs to be given to ensuring that adequate supports are in place for young people exiting the Youth Drug Court. It appeared that few young people received any form of follow-up treatment or counselling after exiting the YDC. In fact, one young person commented on how difficult they had found suddenly having no supports in place when they left the YDC. This may include making certain that ongoing treatment needs are being addressed, that adequate supports are put in place in the young person's environment, and ensuring that there is a transitional phase when withdrawing support.

6.7 Good practice in the Youth Drug Court

The Youth Drug Court's current structure and processes appear particularly effective in engaging young people and their families, increasing motivation to change, providing timely and in-depth assessment and facilitating access to treatment. It also has strengths in developing a positive and effective relationship between the judiciary and young people and their family/whanau. Other positive aspects of the YDC include the interagency coordination, the support provided to young people and their families and the high level of supervision and accountability that young people experience.

All these are strengths which can be built on and considered for wider adoption within the general Youth Court, and it is suggested that a more rigorous assessment of the problems which are causally related to offending could be considered in the Youth Court. This would include screening for medium to high risk of reoffending and a range of problems causally related to offending, a full assessment of all needs, and referral to services which address the moderate to severe needs/problems identified.

The following list contains a number of features identified as good practice:

- The same Judge dealing with the young person each time he/she appears in the Youth Court to develop a "contractual" relationship between the Judge and young person.
- High quality assessment to inform decisions about intervention.
- More frequent Court appearances to monitor progress and deal with any issues arising.

- Closer monitoring of the young person to ensure compliance with FGC plans and any Court orders (normally these would be in the form of bail conditions) by a multidisciplinary team including representatives of several government agencies.
- Referral to services which address as many as possible of the moderate to severe needs/problems identified in the assessment and Family Group Conference.
- Choosing treatment services that are tailored to the young person and their family's needs and preferences, as much as possible, to further reduce barriers to treatment and increase engagement. This includes providing young people with the opportunity to attend programmes and counselling services that incorporate and integrate cultural paradigms/frameworks.
- Choosing services that teach new skills in active ways, particularly relapse prevention skills (for example, identifying cues to drug/alcohol use or offending, learning new ways to respond to them) and thinking skills such as predicting consequences of behaviour and problem solving.
- Aiming to involve the young person in a range of positive, socially normal activities which will replace alcohol and drug activity, such as education, work, sport, culture, recreation, to expose them to new values and acquaintances. Ensure that hours of involvement in treatment and positive activities are high.
- Choice of services that involve families, partners and friends in treatment so they can learn the skills and encourage the young person to keep using them. Train and support families in effective supervision, discipline and communication.
- Ensuring that adequate supports, including treatment programmes and counselling, are put in place for young people exiting the YDC. This support should taper off as the young person gradually learns to cope on their own, but provision for the young person to access services, if needed, should remain open. This would also include transfer to adult services if their age precluded access to children and young person's services.

References

- Carswell, S. (2004). *Process Evaluation of the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot*. Wellington, Ministry of Justice.
- Dowden, C. & Andrews, D.A. (1999a). What works in young offender treatment: A Meta-analysis, *Forum on Corrections Research*, 11, 21-24.
- Dowden, C. & Andrews, D.A. (1999b). What works for female offenders: A meta-analytic review, *Crime and Delinquency*, 45(4): 438-452.
- Dowden, C. & Andrews, D.A. (2003). Does family intervention work for delinquents? Results of a meta-analysis, *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, July 2003, 327-342.
- Eardley, T., McNab, J., Fisher, K. & Kozlina, S., with Eccles, J. & Flick, M. (2004). *Evaluation of the New South Wales Youth Drug Court Pilot Program*. Social Policy Research Centre Report 8/04, Sydney.
- Fergusson D.M., Swain-Campbell N.R. & Horwood L.J. (2002). Deviant Peer Affiliations, Crime and Substance Use: A Fixed Effects Regression Analysis, *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 30(4): 419-430.
- Lipsey, M.W. & Derzon, J.H. (1998). Predictors of violent or serious delinquency in adolescent and early adulthood: A synthesis of longitudinal research. In R Loeber & DP Farrington (Eds.) *Serious and Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions*, pp. 86-105, California: SAGE.
- Maxwell, G., Kingi, V., Robertson, J., Morris, A, Cunningham, C. with contribution from Barb Lash (2004). *Achieving Effective Outcomes in Youth Justice. Final report*. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development.
- Maxwell, G., Robertson J. & Anderson, T (2002). *Police Youth Diversion: Final report*. Crime and Justice Research Centre, Victoria University, Wellington.
- McLaren. K. (2000). *Tough is Not Enough – getting smart about youth crime: A review of research on what works to reduce offending by young people*. Wellington: Ministry of Youth Affairs.
- Morris, A. & Reilly, J. (2003). *New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001*. Wellington, Ministry of Justice.
- Pike, M. & Morrow, R. (1970). Statistical analysis of patient-control studies in epidemiology: factor under investigation an all-or-none variable. *British Journal Prev. Soc. Med.* 24: 42-44.

- Robertson, J. (2004) *Evaluating Offending Outcomes for Young Offender Programmes*. Paper presented at the Social Policy, Research & Evaluation Conference, November 2004, Wellington.
- Rodriguez, N. & Webb, V.J. (2004). Multiple measures of Juvenile Drug Court effectiveness: Results of a quasi-experimental design. *Crime and Delinquency*, Vol 5 (2), 292-314.
- Spier, P. & Lash, B. (2004). *Conviction and Sentencing of Offenders in New Zealand: 1994 to 2003*. Wellington, Ministry of Justice.
- Spier, P. & Segessenmann, T. (2004). *Youth Justice Minimum Dataset*. Wellington, Ministry of Justice.
- Walker, J. (28/11/2000) *A proposal for Early Court Intervention for Drug Dependent Young Offenders appearing in the Youth Court*, unpublished paper.
- Wexler, D.B. (nda) *Therapeutic Jurisprudence: An Overview*, adapted from a lecture given by David Wexler at the Thomas Cooley Law School <http://www.law.arizona.edu/depts/upr-intj-o.html>.
- Wright B.R.E., Caspi A., Moffitt T.E. & Silva P.A. (2001). The Effects of Social Ties on Crime Vary by Criminal Propensity: A Life-Course Model of Interdependence, *Criminology*, 39(2): 321-352.

Appendix 1 Informed Consent Sheets

Information Sheet for participants in the Youth Drug Court

About a year ago you participated in an interview about what you thought about being in the Youth Drug Court. At that time you said you were happy to be contacted again in about 12 months to do a follow-up interview for research that the Ministry of Justice is doing on the Youth Drug Court.

Who will interview you?

Karen Keelan, an interviewer working for the Ministry of Justice will interview you.

What will the interview involve?

We would like to talk to you about how you are going now that it has been 12 months since you left the Youth Drug Court. No one will know if you chose to be interviewed or not. The interview will take about half an hour. The questions will be about what you think of the Youth Drug Court now and some of the things that have been happening in your life. The interview will be private but you can bring along a support person if you would like to.

The interviewer will ask if you mind the interview being taped so that what you have to say is recorded accurately. The tape will only be heard by your interviewer. You can say no if you don't like being taped. The interviewer will ask you if you agree to be quoted. Your name will not be used with the quote or anywhere in the research reports.

We would also like to get an idea of what the people closest to you thought about the Youth Drug Court processes and whether they thought this was a better system or not. We will ask you whether you would like to nominate someone close to you for us to interview. However, you do not have to nominate anyone if you don't want to.

What will be done with the information?

The information you give will be **confidential** and not given to anyone else to read except the Ministry of Justice researcher, Wendy Searle. But you need to know that if you tell us anything that makes us think you or someone else is at risk of serious physical harm, we'll need to talk to you about this and may need to tell someone else.

All the information you give will be mixed together with information given by other young people and presented as a summary in a research report. Your name will **not** be used in any reports so you will remain **anonymous**. You will be asked if you would like a summary of the results.

Your choice

You can choose whether you want to be interviewed. You can also choose not to answer a question. You have the right to withdraw the information you gave in your interview up until the time it becomes part of the research.

Your contribution towards this research will be very important and much appreciated. We are doing the research to help the government decide whether Youth Drug Courts are a good way of doing things or not. If you need to get in touch with the Ministry of Justice researcher, Wendy Searle, her contact details are:

Wendy Searle
Research and Evaluation Unit
Ministry of Justice
Ph. 04 494 9865

It's helpful when we're writing a report if we can include some of the actual words that people say. When we do this we make sure that nobody can be identified. Are you happy for us to use some of your actual words in our final report?

Yes **No**

So that we don't have to take lots of notes during the interview, I'd like to tape it. If you don't want me to tape the interview, that's fine. Is it alright for the interview to be taped?

Yes **No**

Family/whanau/caregiver interviews

We would like to get an idea of what the people closest to you thought about the Youth Drug Court compared to the normal Youth Court processes. Whether they thought this was a better system or not.

Would you like to nominate someone close to you for us to interview?

Yes **No**

Nominated person and their contact details:

Would you like a summary of the report findings?

Yes **No**

Contact details

I agree to take part in an interview for the Youth Drug Court evaluation

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Print name _____

Youth Drug Court Pilot Evaluation Information Sheet

The Ministry of Justice is doing some research on the Christchurch Youth Drug Court Pilot. You are invited to take part in an interview as a family/whanau member or caregiver to a young person who has participated in the Youth Drug Court.

Why is this research being done?

The Youth Drug Court is a trial programme designed to address the drug and alcohol problems of some of the young people who commit crime. The Youth Drug Court aims to help the young person get the treatment they need so that they will decrease their alcohol and drug use. Because some of a young person's offending is due to their alcohol or other drug use, a decrease in their drug and alcohol intake should reduce their criminal offending.

The research is being done to help government decide whether Youth Drug Courts are a good way of doing things or not. In the first phase of the research young people and their family/whanau were interviewed when they left the drug court. The second phase of the research involves following-up the young people about a year after they have left the Youth Drug Court to see what has been happening in their lives since they left the programme. As someone close to one of the young people involved you can provide valuable information about what effect you think the Youth Drug Court has had for him or her.

What will the interview involve?

The interview will take about half an hour. The interview will be private but you can bring along a support person if you would like to.

The interviewer will ask if you mind the interview being taped so that what you have to say is recorded accurately. You can say no if you don't like being taped. The interviewer will ask you if you agree to be quoted. Your name will not be used with the quote or anywhere in the research reports.

Who will interview you?

Karen Keelan, an interviewer working on behalf of the Ministry of Justice will interview you.

What will be done with the information?

The information you give will be **confidential** and not given to anyone else to read except the Ministry of Justice researcher, Wendy Searle. But you need to know that if you tell us anything that makes us think you or someone else is at risk of serious physical harm, we'll need to talk to you about this and may need to tell someone else.

All the information you give will be mixed together with information given by other family/whanau and presented as a summary in a research report. Your name will **not** be used in any reports so you will remain **anonymous**. You will be asked if you would like a summary of the results.

Your choice

You can choose whether you want to be interviewed. You can also choose not to answer a question. You have the right to withdraw the information you gave in your interview up until the time it becomes part of the research.

Your contribution towards this research will be very important and much appreciated. If you need to get in touch with the Ministry of Justice researcher, Wendy Searle, her contact details are:

Wendy Searle
Research and Evaluation Unit
Ministry of Justice
Ph. 04 494 9865

It's helpful when we're writing a report if we can include some of the actual words that people say. When we do this we make sure that nobody can be identified. Are you happy for us to use some of your actual words in our final report?

Yes **No**

So that we don't have to take lots of notes during the interview, I'd like to tape it. If you don't want me to tape the interview, that's fine. Is it alright for the interview to be taped?

Yes **No**

Would you like a summary of the report findings?

Yes **No**

Contact details

I agree to take part in an interview for the Youth Drug Court evaluation

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Print name _____

Appendix 2 Interview Schedules

Youth Drug Court Pilot Evaluation

Interview questions for young person (Follow up assessment)

Introduction

- Read through informed consent form and make sure they understand the main points. Particularly need to explain the point re disclosure of information which leads you to believe that they or someone else is in danger.
- Tell them the interview is going to be some follow-up questions on what they thought about being on the Youth Drug Court, now that it is about a year since they left the programme. Emphasise we want to find out what they honestly think about it **now** and what they have to say will be important for our research.
- Ask them if they agree for the interview to be taped. [Note before interview check you have relatively fresh batteries and a spare pair just in case! Check recorder working.]

Questions

Assessment of the Youth Drug Court

It's been about a year since you left the Youth Drug Court. Looking back, what were some of the best things about being on the Youth Drug Court?

What were some of the worst things about being on the Youth Drug Court?

Overall do you think the Drug Court helped you or didn't help you? *[Probe to find out reasons why]*

Have there been other things in your life that you think might have helped you during this time? *[Probe were there things in your life that didn't help]*

Did you complete the treatment programmes you were attending while on the Youth Drug Court? *[How did they help/not help?]*

Would you recommend the YDC to your friends or other young people? *(why or why not?)*

Response to YDC process

Has your drug and alcohol intake changed in the last year? *[Probe to find out what sort of changes (reduction, increase, different substances) and why they think that is, probe for any impact the YDC had.]*

How about offending? Has that changed in the last year? Are you still offending? *[Find out how offending may have changed in terms of links with alcohol and drugs, ie offending to obtain; offending under the influence; A & D related charges.]*

(If offending changed improved or deteriorated) Why do you think your offending has got (better or worse – probe for any impact YDC has had and risk and protective factors)?

How has your life been since you left the Youth Drug Court? *[Probe for where living/who with, health, what are you doing with you time? What has changed in your life in the last 12 months?]*

Other

Have you been receiving any treatment or help in the last year or so? *[Probe to find out what this is, ie courses, counselling, or help from various agencies etc].*

Have you been involved in any education or work in the last 12 months? *(eg in school, undergoing further training, or looking for work etc)*

Future plans

Have you got any plans about what you'd like to do in the future? *(eg find paid work, or stay in paid work, further training, going back to school, changing living situation etc).*

Thank the participant for their valuable contribution to the research.

Ask the young person whether they agree with us contacting family/whanau/caregiver for an interview. Explain that is so we can find out what they also thought about the drug court. If they agree then ask for contact details.

Note: Remember to write name and date on tape.

Youth Drug Court Pilot Evaluation

Interview questions for family/whanau/caregiver (Follow up assessment)

Introduction

- Read through informed consent form and make sure they understand the main points.
- Tell them the interview is going to be some follow-up questions on what they thought about [young person] being on the Youth Drug Court, now that it has been about a year since [young person] left the programme. Emphasise that we want to find out what they think about the Youth Court **now** and that their views will be important for our research.
- Ask them if they agree for the interview to be taped. [Note before the interview check you have relatively fresh batteries and a spare pair just in case! Check recorder's working.]

Questions

Assessment of the YDC process

It's been about a year since [young person] left the YDC programme. Looking back, what do you think were some of the best things about the programme?

What were some of the worst things?

What do you think the YDC could have done better?

Have there been other things in (young person's) life that might have helped during this time?
[Probe where there things in their life that didn't help?]

Would you recommend the YDC programme to other young people?

Response to YDC process

Do you think [young person's] drug and alcohol intake has changed in the last year?
[Probe to find out what sort of change – reduction, increase, different substance – reasons why, and probe for any impact the YDC had]

How about any changes to their offending? Has that changed in the last 12 months? *[Find out how offending may have changed in terms of links with alcohol and drugs ie offending to obtain; offending under the influence; A & D related charges Do they think offending has stayed the same, reduced or increased in terms of number of offences and severity. Probe for reasons and any impact YDC has had.]*

How has [young person] life been since they left the Youth Drug Court? *[Probe for where living/who with, health, what are doing with their time? What has changed in their life in the last 12 months?]*

Other

Has [young person] been receiving any treatment or other help **in the last year**? *[Probe to find out what this is ie courses, counselling or help from various agencies. Has the help been useful? How? Still receiving help? Not been useful? Why?].*

Has [young person] been involved in any education or work in the last year? *[Eg in school, undergoing further training or looking for work etc]*

Future plans

Does [young person] have any plans for the future? *[eg doing any further training, looking for paid work, changing living situation etc etc].*

Thank the respondent for their valuable contribution to the research.

Note: Remember to write name and date on tape.

Appendix 3 Safety Protocols

Youth Court Evaluation – *Safety Protocol*

Project team leader – Wendy Searle (04 4949-865)

This safety protocol provides guidelines that should be followed if it becomes clear during an interview that someone's safety is at risk.

These guidelines relate to the safety of:

- the person being interviewed
- another adult member of the public
- a child
- the interviewer

Where there is risk of serious harm, the principle of confidentiality is suspended.

1. Concerns about safety of the person you are interviewing

Immediate threat of physical harm

If during an interview:

- you witness someone being seriously physically harmed
- it becomes apparent that someone's safety is seriously at risk (by serious risk we mean it becomes apparent that the person you are interviewing, yourself or someone else on the premises is in immediate physical danger).

In the first instance you must keep yourself safe. In this situation you should leave the room and then contact the police immediately. Then notify your project team leader at the earliest opportunity.

If the person being interviewed has indicated that they intend to harm themselves (ie suicide) and there does not appear to be any physical danger to yourself or others, stay with the participant and ask them if they would like you to assist in making contact with a support/advocacy group. If they agree make sure they are speaking to the counsellor before you leave. If they don't agree you must phone a counsellor (eg Lifeline) for further advice at the earliest opportunity.

In either case, you must also report the incident to your project team leader at the earliest opportunity.

Potential for/fearful of serious harm (not at immediate physical threat)

If the person you are interviewing:

- tells you they are fearful of physical harm, or feel unsafe
- has disclosed recent abuse during interview
- does not disclose recent abuse during the interview but appears to be upset or distressed.

Offer the participant the support/advocacy/help group list if necessary, offer to call on of the groups on their behalf. Inform the participant that their options include reporting to the Police, and/or moving to a place of safety such as with family, friends or with Women's refuge.

At the earliest opportunity after completing the interview, discuss your concerns with your project team leader.

2. Concerns about safety of another adult member of the public or a child

Immediate threat of physical harm

If during an interview:

- you witness someone being seriously physically harmed
- it becomes apparent that someone's safety is seriously at risk (by serious risk we mean it becomes apparent that someone on the premises is in immediate physical danger)
- an adult indicates they intend serious harm to another adult or child.

In the first instance you must keep yourself safe. In this situation you should immediately leave the room and then contact the police immediately. Then notify your team leader at the earliest opportunity.

Disclosing serious crime

If a participant indicates that they have committed a serious crime (such as a sexual abuse or rape) and they have not been convicted of this offence:

- The interviewer has an obligation to report the crime.
- The interviewer should tell the participant that the information will be passed on to the police.
- If the participant does not want to take any action the interviewer should talk to the project team leader, and the team will then decide the appropriate steps to take in the situation.

3 Concerns about the safety of the interviewer

Safety measures prior to interviews

Try to arrange interviews with respondents at a place where you will both feel comfortable and if possible avoid going to their homes. Before you go to an interview let the project team leader know when and where you will be going and then ring after the interview to let them know you are alright.

If possible drive to an interview in someone's home in a car you can leave in.

Immediate threat of physical harm

If during an interview you think that your safety is at risk you should leave the room immediately and then contact the police, and then notify your project team leader at the earliest opportunity.

Your personal safety is of paramount importance. Ensure you are safe before taking any action that may be required. Don't get personally involved in any of the above situations any more than absolutely necessary. The Police, CYFS, Women's Refuge along with agencies provided on your list have trained staff who will deal with the situation. Never give out your personal contact details.

Interviewer support and wellbeing

You will be interviewing a wide range of people who may present you with issues you are uncomfortable with or need to talk to someone about. If you need to debrief on issues raised during interviews:

- talk to your team leader and/or other interviewers on the team
- talk to a counsellor. The Employee Assistance Programme provides confidential professional counselling and can be contacted 24 hours – 0800 327 669.

4. Summary

Although the risks described above are unlikely they cannot be discounted. It is not possible to cover all types of potentially harmful situations that might occur when interviewing on this project. If you are unsure as to what, if any, action you should take please contact your project team leader immediately. Remember that:

- your safety is of paramount importance
- you are an interviewer. Your role is to provide information of support agencies and you should not provide support yourself
- you have the support of your project team leader and the other interviewers for debriefing.
- you also have Employee Assistance if you require support for your wellbeing.

Appendix 4 Additional tables

Table A4.1 Number of reoffences within 6 months for the various groups

Number of offences	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample		National Youth Court sample	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	12	40%	447	54%	62	52%
1 or more	18	60%	385	46%	58	48%
1-4	12	40%	255	31%	37	31%
5-9	3	10%	82	10%	16	13%
10-19	3	10%	44	5%	4	3%
20+	0	0%	4	0%	1	1%
Total	30	100%	832	100%	120	100%
Mean	3.0		2.3		2.1	
Median	1.0		0.0		0.0	

Table A4.2 Number of reoffences within 12 months for the various groups

Number of offences	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample		National Youth Court sample	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	9	30%	293	35%	39	33%
1 or more	21	70%	539	65%	81	68%
1-4	8	27%	270	32%	36	30%
5-9	5	17%	150	18%	26	22%
10-19	6	20%	83	10%	13	11%
20+	2	7%	36	4%	6	5%
Total	30	100%	832	100%	120	100%
Mean	6.2		4.9		4.4	
Median	2.0		3.0		2.0	

Table A4.3 Number of prison sentences imposed within 12 months for the various groups

Number of prison sentences	YDC pilot sample		Partially-matched Youth Court sample		National Youth Court sample	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	26	87%	790	95%	109	91%
1 or more	4	13%	42	5%	11	9%
1	4	13%	40	5%	10	8%
2	0	0%	1	0%	1	1%
3	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%
Total	30	100%	832	100%	120	100%

Appendix 5 Seriousness scale and offence types

Seriousness of offence scale

A seriousness of offence scale was originally developed by the Policy and Research Division of the Department of Justice in 1991, and has been updated about every five years since then. The most recent update of the scale occurred in February 2005 by the Ministry of Justice. The updated scale gives imprisonable offences a score according to how serious judges have deemed each offence in terms of the use of custodial sentences over a specific time period.

The updated scale is based on court sentencing data for the period 2000 to 2004. The seriousness score assigned to each offence is the **average number of days of imprisonment imposed on every offender convicted of that offence between 2000 and 2004, where the average is taken over both imprisoned and non-imprisoned offenders**. Suppose, for example, that between 2000 and 2004 there were 100 cases of offenders convicted of a particular offence. Of these cases, 50 resulted in a custodial sentence, and the average length of the custodial sentences imposed on these offenders was 30 days. The seriousness score for this offence is $(30 \times 50/100)$, or 15.

Offences that became obsolete prior to 2000 were given the same score as any new similar offences, or a score was calculated based on sentencing data before 2000. Imprisonable offences for which there were convictions but no custodial sentences over the period 2000 to 2004, were given a seriousness rating slightly lower than the least of the offences already assigned a seriousness score (i.e. a score of 0.2). Non-imprisonable offences were assigned a seriousness score of zero.

Although seriousness scores are based on judges' determination of seriousness in terms of the use of custodial sentences, there is an upper constraint on scores – i.e. the maximum penalties prescribed in legislation. For example, the highest feasible seriousness score for an offence with a three month maximum penalty (assuming everyone convicted was imprisoned for the maximum term) is 90 [3x30 days], whereas for an offence with a maximum penalty of ten years, the highest feasible score is 3650 [10x365 days].

Seriousness scores in this report are grouped into five categories as follows:

- **Minor:** offences with seriousness scores of 1 or less. For young people, such offences are typically: careless driving, driving while forbidden, other non-imprisonable traffic offences, wilful damage, disorderly behaviour, driving with excess alcohol (1st or 2nd offence only), or liquor-related offences.

- **Minor to moderate:** offences with seriousness scores of >1 to 10. For young people, such offences are typically: theft, minor assault, some serious assaults, receiving stolen goods, failure to answer bail, trespassing, driving while disqualified, or reckless/dangerous driving.
- **Moderate:** offences with seriousness scores of >10 to 100. For young people, such offences are typically: motor vehicle conversion, getting into/interfering with motor vehicles, theft, fraud, some grievous assaults, escaping lawful custody, or possessing offensive weapons.
- **Moderate to high:** offences with seriousness scores of >100 to 500. For young people, such offences are mostly burglary, but also include: robbery, some serious or grievous assaults, and arson.
- **High:** offences with seriousness scores of >500. For young people, such offences are typically: aggravated robbery, some grievous assaults, robbery, sexual violation, indecent assault, homicide, kidnapping or abduction and aggravated burglary.

Offence groupings

- **Violent offences:** involve either a direct act of violence against a person or the threat of such an act. Includes offences such as: homicides, kidnapping/abduction, sexual violation, indecent assault, robbery, assaults and threats to kill or do grievous bodily harm.
- **Other offences against the person:** are mainly offences of obstructing or resisting police officers or other officials, and sexual or intimidation offences which are not included in the violent offences category.
- **Property offences:** include dishonesty offences, property damage offences, and other property abuses. For example, burglary, theft, fraud, arson, motor vehicle conversion, receiving stolen goods, and wilful damage.
- **Drug offences:** involve possession or dealing in any illegal drugs, possession of drug paraphernalia, or other drug offences. The vast majority of drug offences involve cannabis.
- **Offences against justice:** are mostly the result of a breach of a sentence awarded for an earlier offence (e.g. breach of community work), failure to answer bail (i.e. failure by a person on bail to appear in court at a specified time and place), breach of protection orders, or are offences relating to court procedure.
- **Offences against good order:** include disorderly behaviour, offensive language, carrying offensive weapons, trespassing, and unlawful assembly.
- **Traffic offences:** includes a range of non-imprisonable and imprisonable traffic offences e.g. driving while forbidden; failing to stop; careless, dangerous or reckless driving; driving while disqualified; and driving with excess alcohol. This category does not include infringement offences for speeding or parking offences etc.

- **Miscellaneous offences:** contains offences defined in an assortment of Acts and regulations including the: Arms Act 1983, Dog Control Act 1996, Fisheries Act 1983, Income Tax Act 1994, Tax Administration Act 1994, Goods and Services Tax Act 1985, Postal Services Act 1998, and Sale of Liquor Act 1989.