

Right in the mix:
Roles of Victorian councils
in the delivery of services to
vulnerable young people

Report of the MAV/DEECD Partnership project

July 2013

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Introduction

This report is the result of a project which emerged from the partnership between the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV). That partnership recognised that the local government sector in Victoria is a strong contributor to programs, projects and resources aimed at Victoria's young people and agreed to facilitate research to highlight good practice in local government and in particular, that which related to vulnerable young people.

Summary of findings

- All councils visited believe they could play a key role in the delivery of universal prevention and early intervention programs for young people in Victoria. Indeed, 43 of 45 Councils provide what they would describe as 'Generalist' Youth Services, offering early intervention and prevention services.
- Pre-existing platforms of service delivery (for example: early year's, *ChildFIRST*) could be reconfigured or broadened to include universal preventative programs for children and young people.
- Councils are pivotal to service and community planning; connecting services and developing partnerships within municipalities and regions. Councils understand their communities, turning data into knowledge and action.
- The majority of councils visited are delivering preventative and resilience building programs in schools with positive outcomes. However, because programs are based on informal relationships rather than any formal agreements with schools, personnel changes at the school can affect program continuity. Further, limited capacity, particularly in the small rural shires, means that programs currently cannot reach all schools within a municipality. Of the 45 councils studied, 32 do some work within local schools.
- Few councils believe they should be delivering 'tertiary services' and where this does happen, reasons for delivering these services are either historical; or as a result of an emerging unmet need and are thus time limited. Of the 45 councils studied, 11 were delivering what might be described as 'tertiary services'.
- Several councils contribute internal funding to youth services of more than a million dollars and 41 of 45 councils provide funding for youth services over and above that provided by state and federal governments.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 38 are involved in programs delivered in schools or in partnership with schools.
- Properly funded, these formal partnerships between councils and schools could build the capacity of schools to improve student wellbeing and engagement.
- Youth strategies, plans and/or charters guide the work of 34 of the 45 councils included in the study.
- Youth services work with an age range of 12- 25 in 33 of the 45 councils included in the study.

- Youth services work with an age range of 10 - 25 in 12 of the 45 councils included in the study.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 21 of these have between 1 and 5 EFT dedicated to working with young people.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 11 of these have between 6 and 10 EFT dedicated to working with young people.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 13 of these have more than 10 EFT dedicated to working with young people.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 11 of these facilitate a program specifically to address the needs of GLBTIQ young people.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 16 of these operate in what may be described as the ‘middle years’—that period in a young person’s life between 8 and 12 years.
- Of the 45 councils included in the study, 7 of these offer a young mother’s and/or parent’s program.

Project aim

- To understand what role the local government sector considers it should play in supporting vulnerable Victorian young people.
- To understand the current level and nature of programs, programs and other activity in supporting vulnerable Victorian young people.
- To highlight areas of good practice and innovation.
- To highlight both enablers of, and barriers to, supporting vulnerable Victorian young people.

Consultation

A desk top audit of council websites identified current youth strategies, programs and projects across each Victorian council. An interview schedule was (attached as appendix one) to guide the research. Face to face interviews were conducted with representatives of forty-four councils from across Victoria, including a mix of metropolitan, interface, rural and regional municipalities. One interview was undertaken by telephone and all interviews were either recorded for future transcription and subsequent analysis, or substantial notes taken.

The subject councils were either selected on the basis of the desk top audit; or 'self-selected' in response to notices placed in MAV bulletins. Some council officers made contact after learning of the project and its intent through other means. Interviewers sought the participation of councils' Director/General Manager of community services or equivalent and their reports with responsibility for youth programs. These positions included managers, program coordinators and youth development officers.

Local government officers were extremely co-operative and generous with their time and willingness to participate in the study.

Those councils where interviews have been completed are listed below:

- Ararat Rural City Council
- Ballarat City Council
- Bayside City Council
- Brimbank City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Campaspe Shire Council
- Cardinia Shire Council
- Casey City Council
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- Corangamite Shire Council
- Darebin City Council
- Frankston City Council
- Gannawarra Shire Council
- Golden Plains Shire Council
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Greater Geelong City Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Hepburn Shire Council
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Kingston City Council
- Knox City Council
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Mansfield Shire Council
- Maribyrnong City Council
- Maroondah City Council
- Melton City Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Moira Shire Council
- Monash City Council
- Moorabool Shire Council
- Mount Alexander Shire Council
- Nillumbik Shire Council

- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Port Philip City Council
- Pyrenees Shire Council
- Stonnington City Council
- Swan Hill Rural City Council
- Wangaratta Rural City Council
- Warrnambool City Council
- Whitehorse City Council
- Whittlesea City Council
- Wodonga City Council
- Wyndham City Council
- Yarra City Council
- Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Limitations of this report

Due to the purposive nature of the sampling strategy, the findings cannot be claimed as a representative ‘snapshot’ of all Victorian Councils. However, given that more than half of all councils have been involved in this project, it could be expected that the findings will give a reasonably reliable view of Victorian councils’ approaches to working with their young people.

Secondly, and while the project team collected a vast amount of information from 45 councils from across Victoria, this report presents case studies of just seven. The seven case studies presented is reflective of the broad range of involvement, commitment and approaches to the provision of services to young people.

The service delivery continuum

The service continuum can be seen in two ways in the context of this report. Firstly, it may be viewed as one which transcends the life cycle from early years and children's services; through to youth services, services for families and their children, and for older people. In other words: the provision of a particular service across the life stages. Many councils work to strengthen links between early years, family and youth services to achieve enhanced outcomes. The service continuum may also be viewed as one which describes interventions for a particular group(s) relative to the timing of that intervention and/or the potential harm or disadvantage that may occur without such intervention.

The early years

Early years programs and support are for children aged newborn to eight years old (MAV, n. d. b). Local government has played a major role in initiating and developing the children's service system, including securing Federal and State Government funding for programs such as maternal and child health, preschool and child care. Along the way, Victorian local government has become the largest single provider of early years' services in Australia (MAV 2005).

Local government in Victoria is recognised by the state as:

... a key partner with the Victorian government in planning and supporting early childhood services, particularly Maternal and Child Health, and councils often provide active support for linking vulnerable children with universal services (Victorian Government, 2012).

With the support of the MAV and underpinned by the joint MAV/DEECD early years' planning framework, all councils in Victoria have developed individual early years' plans. These plans outline Council's role in the provision of services, infrastructure, planning, advocacy and community development for children and families (MAV n. d. b).

Maternal and Child health services

The Maternal and Child Health Service is a primary health service, free for all Victorian families with children aged birth to school age. The Service supports families in the areas of parenting, health and development; promotes family health, wellbeing and safety; gives referrals and helps link families with local communities (DEECD, 2012).

Maternal and child health services are provided by councils or organisations contracted by councils and are located in each local government area. These services are included in the municipal early years' plans prepared by all councils. According to the MAV, approximately 98 per cent of families access these services (n. d.).

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the MAV and DEECD guides the partnership between state and local government for the planning, funding and provision of maternal and child health services (MAV, n. d.).

Youth Services

Local government across Victoria delivers a broad range of services and programs aimed at supporting the personal and social development of young people and their social inclusion. For most councils interviewed, these services and programs range from primary prevention activities aimed at connecting all young people with their communities; through to early—and sometimes —secondary intervention programs.

Some councils do regularly provide services which may be described as tertiary interventions, while others will sometimes deliver in the secondary or tertiary 'space' for a defined period; to respond to emerging issues which would otherwise not be addressed. A small number are committed to delivery of secondary and tertiary services for historical reasons. Almost without exception, councils described their youth service as 'Generalist' youth services.

The 'Generalist youth worker'

While a precise definition of a 'generalist' youth worker is rather elusive; a useful guide is that these services are available to the general youth population rather than young people with specific needs or pathologies. The following themes are common to role/position descriptions for generalist youth workers in local government and community agencies (examples include Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, 2012; Greater Dandenong City Council, 2012; Jesuit Social Services Mt Druitt, 2012; Tribal Youth 2012):

- the use of a youth participation and community development framework
- facilitating and supporting youth leadership
- needs assessment and referral to appropriate services
- individual support to young people
- the planning, development and implementation of programs and activities for groups of young people
- advocating for young people and youth services to ensure appropriate service options for young people
- liaison with other service providers—including education and employment, as well as specialist and general youth services—to promote sharing of resources and opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of services to young people
- liaison and consultation with Government and non-government agencies in relation to the needs of young people

Who's Carrying the Can, the 2006 report into youth service gaps in Victoria commissioned by the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS) and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), suggested that: " 'generalist' youth support services are youth specific, universally available and flexible in approach". That report made reference to two levels of generalist youth support which may be delivered by youth workers: primary/early intervention and secondary intervention.

Primary/early intervention services

Otherwise described as prevention and early intervention, these strategies aim to influence children's, parents' or families' behaviours in order to reduce the risk or ameliorate the effect of less than optimal social and physical environments. An important goal of prevention and early intervention is to change the balance between risk and protective factors so that the effect of protective factors outweighs the effect of risk factors, thus building resilience (Hawkins et al. 2002 cited in Watson et.al. 2005).

Several councils officers interviewed suggested that councils are particularly adept at developing and delivering primary prevention programs that build resilience and protective factors within young people. Such programs have been described as including: providing

skill development and case management; holiday programs; life skills programs; drop in centres; homework programs; recreation and leisure events and arts programs; activities that enhance young people’s protective factors, and; programs that development youth participation, civic engagement and leadership skills (VCOSS & YACVic, 2006:5).

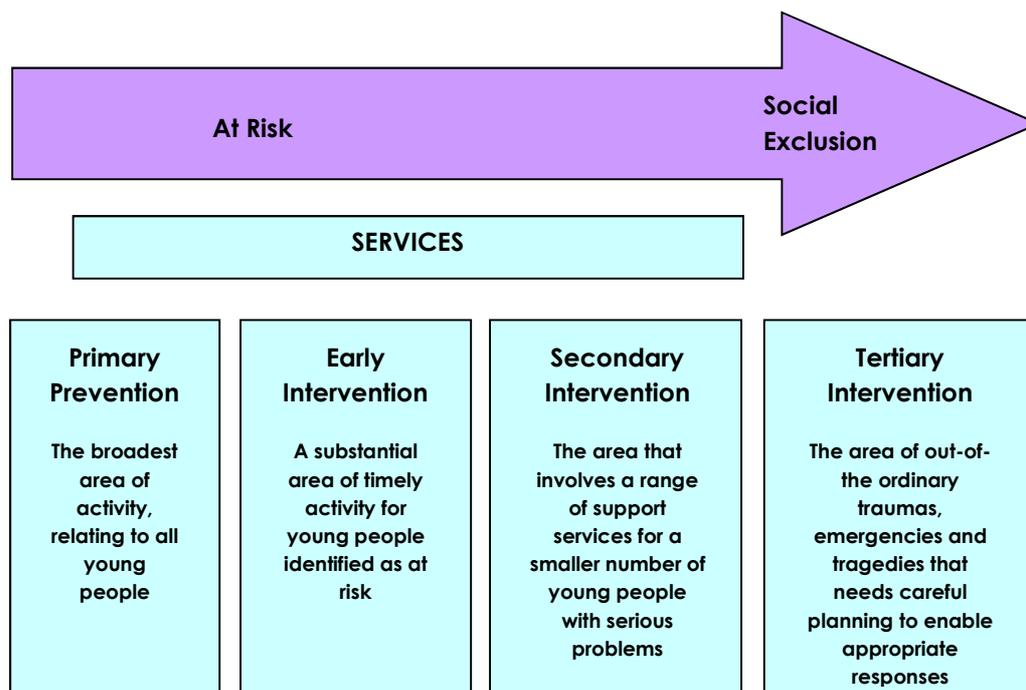
Secondary intervention

Secondary intervention services are described as those targeted to young people at more at risk of family breakdown, early school leaving, bullying, and non-acute mental health concerns and addressed through family mediation, counselling, advocacy and case work. These interventions would usually be of limited duration (up to six months) and intensive or specialised support would be sought for the young person if required (VCOSS & YACVic 2006:5).

Frameworks for service delivery

The diagram reproduced below (Fig.1) represents a framework for understanding the service continuum which was adopted by the Interface Councils in their 2007 report *Staying Connected: solutions for addressing service gaps for young people living at the Interface*.

Figure 1: Framework for understanding services



Department of Premier and Cabinet (2005) Better Outcomes for Disengaged Young People, presentation for Local Government, as reproduced in *Staying Connected: solutions for addressing service gaps for young people living at the Interface*: a report commissioned by the Interface Councils in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Representatives from Interface Councils were keen to remind interviewers of the findings of that report, confirming that the recommendations contained within the report about the need for a service system with a focus on prevention and early intervention were still salient.

They further argued that for work with young people to be effective, there needs to be strategic and seamless links between each level of intervention, sharing the view that "...'at risk' is a temporary state for the majority of young people" (Anlezark, 2009). Similarly, most councils expressed agreement with the focus and direction of the *Vulnerable Youth Framework* with one council officer suggesting at interview:

I think that the Vulnerable Youth Framework is a very useful document and it is particularly helpful because it starts looking at all young people and that we move in and out of different states of vulnerability...and it's acknowledging that there are different layers of vulnerability and so you see different levels of intervention.

Some felt that the Vulnerable Youth framework was a useful conceptual framework whilst others were concerned that it may have implied that all young people were subject to vulnerability. Most agreed however, that the majority of their work was focused on keeping people from becoming vulnerable or 'at risk'.

The *Social Determinants of Health Framework*¹ was another framework often referred to by councils during interview. Councils explained that addressing the social and environmental factors that lead to inequalities and disadvantage was the key to reducing future need and the best practical approach given limited budgets.

¹ An explanation of the framework can be found at the Victorian Government's Department of Health website at: http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/what_is/determinants.htm

A Role for Local Government

In partnership with the Department of Victorian Communities (DPCD) and RMIT University, the MAV recognised the key place that local government holds in the youth service system by the publication of *A Guide to the Development of a Local Government Youth Charter* (DPCD, 2004) and its companion document entitled *Engaging Young People: Local Government in Action* (DPCD, 2004). The former document highlighted the importance of young peoples' participation in decision making and service delivery functions across the spectrum of councils' roles. Further, it outlined a number of fundamental principles for decision making and youth participation that should be adopted by Councils across Victoria and suggested that councils impact on the lives of young people through a variety of local government roles, such as providing information, advocacy to other agencies, planning, and the delivery of some services (DPCD, 2004:4).

Prevention

During the data collection phase of this project, many councils interviewed strongly believed they have a role in the provision of preventative programs which would contribute to improved health and wellbeing of young people in their municipalities. Some rural councils however, find difficulty in the direct provision of any services for young people due to limited budgets. Others lament that if health and wellbeing issues have not been addressed before a young person reaches adolescence, it is already too late. A number of councils highlighted a particular gap in the provision of support to young people in the transition from primary to secondary school (between 8 and 12 years) and while some seek to invest their resources in this area, others could not prioritise such work within existing resources despite recognising the need. Numerous councils do invest in programs at the transition from junior secondary to middle or senior secondary (years 8 and/or 9), recognising that done well, intervention in these years may be the difference between a young person disengaging from school and continuing.

Secondary and tertiary services

Only a few councils believed they should be involved in the delivery of secondary and more particularly tertiary services. Some cite the existence of adequate tertiary service providers, while others suggest that particularly small councils

...don't have the skills or experience to support staff operating in that space" and

...we would see from [our] position that there are organisations that are structured to support vulnerable groups of people and young people are part of that and they [the organisations] understand how to work with vulnerable people and they would be better to be supported to grow to deliver the service than for council to actually be a competitor against them...
(Council officer at interview),

That is not to say that tertiary services are always seen as adequate or accessible. Several council representatives expressed a view that while on paper services appeared to be provided to their area, the funded services were not to be seen in reality. This was particularly the case where services were funded to a region. Where such services did exist, access to them by young people was inhibited by a lack of transport. They added that because funding models were based on metropolitan/urban conditions, service levels were reduced because of the higher costs of providing services. As a result, services rarely visited or provided a service into shires and towns outside of the primary centre. Frustration was expressed that this not only meant that services were not provided and young people were

missing out, but advocacy to other levels of government for extra resources was met with responses indicating resources were adequate. More than one council argued that accountabilities for funded agencies needed to include more than simply throughputs.

Planning role

Councils take their community planning role seriously and are required to prepare Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans (MPHWPs) as specified in the Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008). These plans outline action to prevent or minimize public health dangers, as well as to enable people living in the municipality to achieve maximum health and wellbeing.

Most of the councils visited through this project had either developed youth plans or strategies to guide their actions, or had included specific goals and actions for young people within their community wellbeing plans. In some cases, councils have developed long range plans including Casey—part way through the second of two five year strategies (City of Casey, 2011) — and Whittlesea—approximately one third through a plan which extends to 2030 (City of Whittlesea, 2007). According to the City of Whittlesea, councils also fill other important roles:

Council is also ideally placed to provide leadership in strengthening partnerships with other local and regional agencies that have a focus on youth, strategically planning and advocating for services, encouraging youth participation and improving the outcomes for young people (2007).

Coordination role

Providing a coordinating role within the local service system including facilitating service provider networks and connecting services with each other was a common role performed by councils according to interviews. This accords with results from the 2011 survey conducted across all Victorian councils which found that all but 3 of the 79 councils played a role in coordinating youth service provision (DEECD & MAV 2011:69). A common theme expressed was that councils were impartial 'players' in the service system as they were not competing with other agencies for competing funds. Rather, they often assisted the local youth services network in identifying available funding sources, preparing documents and submissions and advocating on their behalf.

Data and data collection

The paucity of data and difficulties in obtaining information about young people who had disengaged and / or were homeless was a common frustration of a number of councils. It is those young people who have disengaged from school yet are not accessing any services that are 'falling through the cracks'. Councils understand privacy legislation and its intent but lament the inability of the system to resolve this issue which allows the most vulnerable to remain hidden. They believe that access to good data will result in improved outcomes for these young people.

Value adding

Interviews revealed that councils bring a range of skills and 'value adding' to local partnerships including understanding community needs through research and data collection. They bring key strategic and business planning skills as well as strong understanding and practice of both governance and asset management. They also have well developed links into the community including business and welfare organisations and thus

are able to 'connect' agencies within the community. New partnerships are able to build on existing structures simply and effectively.

Programs delivered in schools

A great majority of councils deliver one or more programs within schools in their municipality. These programs are usually targeted at year 8 or year 9 cohorts and aimed at building resilience and protective factors of students by addressing issues such as body image, self-image and bullying. Councils report that these programs are providing positive outcomes and schools are more than willing partners. That said, the partnerships are rarely formalised and rely on relationships between individual council workers and school staff; usually deputy principals or student wellbeing staff.

A note on alternate education settings

Several negative views were expressed by council staff in relation to the delivery of some education in alternate settings within their municipalities. The concern expressed was that while learning in alternate settings is fine, if the program is not integrated with mainstream school, young people may be further alienated rather than reengaged. In particular, one council officer commented on one program which offered little more than four hours per week for the participants and stated "...young people still need to be prepared to live in the real world and four hours per week doesn't cut it".

State funded programs

Most councils participating in the study acknowledged funding received to run *FReeZa* events, *Engage* youth participation programs and the *L2P* program. Some councils described using such funding as leverage to develop community partnerships to 'spread the dollar' further, while most suggested that they also provided in kind or other support to such funding, providing added value to the programs including a large supportive infrastructure. In relation to the *L2P* program however, and despite recognising its important aims, a small number of councils were critical of and had initially refused to run that program. They had formed the view that the funds should be given directly to community providers rather than creating a 'middleman' in council. Says one council officer:

Don't use local government as an arm of state government because it is not ... It is a waste of our time and it just doubles the handling.

School focused youth service (SFYS)

Councils generally valued the work of the School Focused Youth Services (SFYS) and the link that the program provided between council and schools. In some cases, the SFYS was the connection that enabled relationships between schools to develop and flourish. Concerns were raised, however, at a perceived lack of accountability of some non-government agencies who were contracted to provide the services. In addition, views were expressed that reflected a lack of direction and evaluation of the program on the part of DEECD.

Several council officers expressed a view that SFYS would be better placed being located within local government rather than contracted to non-government agencies. In addition to accountability concerns, some officers stated that the program would be run more efficiently, have less overheads and would therefore be able to provide 'more bang for the buck' if located with councils; as long as the program was funded reasonably and continued to come

with brokerage funding. In this regard, councils' large infrastructure and organisational capacity were seen as strengths. Locating all SFYS within councils was not a universal view however, with a small number of rural councils—for example those with no direct services to young people other than *FReeZa* — concerned that they council was not 'geared up' to do the type of work that the SFYS provided and/or support such a worker 'in the field'.

Case studies:

Rural City of Ararat

Location

The Rural City of Ararat is located in south-west Victoria, approximately 200 kilometres west of Melbourne, on the Western Highway. Occupying 4,210 km², towns within the City include Ararat, Buangor, Elmhurst, Lake Bolac, Moyston, Pomonal, Streatham, Tatyoon, Warrack and Willaura.

Population

The Census population of Ararat Rural City in 2011 was 11,1832. This represented a contraction of approximately 1.2% over the previous ten years. About 7170 people reside within the Ararat Township. Table 1 details the numbers of children and young people living in the municipality in the various service age groups.

Table 1

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Regional VIC %
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	662	5.9	6.3
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	885	7.9	8.8
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	845	7.6	8.4
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	707	6.3	8.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011

As the data shows, children and young people to age 24 make up more than one quarter of the population of the Rural City of Ararat (27.7%). This is lower than the proportion across regional Victoria of almost one third (31.6%).

Industry and Employment

More Ararat Rural City residents work in agriculture, forestry and fishing than any other industry. The next largest industries employing Ararat Rural City residents are health care and social assistance; manufacturing; public administration and safety; and, retail trade.

The unemployment rate for the Rural City of Ararat was 5.5 % for the December 2012 quarter, compared to 5.7 % for regional Victoria. This represents no change in the unemployment rate in Ararat since the corresponding period in 2011; against an increase of 1.5% in the unemployment rate for regional Victoria.

Education

Schools

Several government and catholic primary schools are located within the municipality, as are the government secondary schools Ararat Community College and Lake Bolac Community College P12. The Catholic high school Marian College is located within the City, while the Australian College of Wine and a campus of the University of Ballarat offer tertiary education opportunities.

² <http://profile.id.com.au/ararat/population>

Educational Achievement

In 2009, 74.0 per cent of young people aged 19 years in Ararat had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was lower than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent)³.

Relative Disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), the Rural City of Ararat was 11th of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Issues for local young people

Major issues for Ararat young people as identified in consultation with them relation to the use of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs; bullying and peer pressure; family issues; and, the way the adult population views young people. Other identified at interview as impacting on young people within Ararat include a lack of employment opportunities (shared equally with parents leading to generational unemployment); and homelessness. According to the recreation officer, there are many examples of 'couch surfing'⁴ among young people. A further issue identified relates to access to post compulsory education within reasonable travelling distance, with many young people forced to leave Ararat to pursue educational opportunities. This is a common issue for rural areas in particular, with relatively few of the young people who leave for education returning to be part of the social and economic fabric of the area.

Services provided for young people

Ararat Rural City does not provide any direct services to young people, other than infrastructure based programs such as provided by recreational facilities. Rather than employing youth workers, it has a sole recreation officer with a community development focus. While the council does not receive any state government youth services funding, it seeks to attract resources to the local area— including by writing and supporting submissions on behalf of other organisations. The recreation officer works closely with local agencies including schools, Grampians Centre for Community Health, Central Grampians Local Learning and Employment Network (CGLLEN), LenZone, Central Connect, Victoria Police and the YMCA. The awarding of *FREEZA* and *Engage* funding to a local non-government organisation is an example of such support and demonstrates a philosophy of council of supporting the organisation best placed to receive funding, rather than be a competitor for available funding.

The council also supports a partnership with the local community health services 'men's shed, which works toward reengaging disengaged young people with school and community. In one program entitled "Hammer Grammar" students do a modified school program while also working with the shed and learning to use tools for basic repair and refurbishment tasks. Through its community grants program, Council funded a bicycle repair program within the men's shed where the members of the shed teach the young people how to restore bicycles. Once repaired, the young people get to keep a bicycle and others are donated within the community. Not only do participants gain skills while contributing to their community, they reconnect with school and learning.

³ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/aratsum.pdf>

⁴ Describes the practice where a young person out of home will stay with a succession of friends and acquaintances

Issues for the local service system

A frustration was expressed at interview in relation to structural barriers to improving the circumstances of young people within the City. In 2011, CGLLEN set up 'Community Action Networks' aimed at fostering collaboration between community stakeholders and education providers. These networks superseded 'Community Reference Teams' which had been convened by CGLLEN in Stawell and Ararat since late 2007; and which met to facilitate inter-agency information sharing, oversee specific referral issues and work collaboratively to obtain the best outcomes for those young people at risk of leaving school early. Including 'coal face' stakeholders such as schools, NGOs and other youth and families services, the network sought to set up an effective local referral system but found 'blockages' as a consequence of privacy legislation. Said the Recreation Officer, "If you see something, you want to be able to act, but it is not as easy as that".

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

In order to "... better engage, respect and support young people" (Ararat Rural City Council, 2008), Ararat Rural City launched its first Youth Action Plan in 2008. Developed after significant consultation with young people, service providers and the wider community; the Rural City of Ararat *Youth Action Plan 2008-2012* provides a framework for the inclusion of young people in council's decisions and guides the manner in which the council works to impact positively on the local youth population. Council's strong interest in the educational outcomes of its young people are evident in plan, including a commitment to work with partners in the region to ensure that all young people within the City achieve year 12 or equivalent.

Bayside City Council

Location

The City of Bayside is located some 8 km from Melbourne's CBD, and is bordered in the west by the coastline of Port Phillip Bay, while the Nepean Highway and the Frankston railway line form most of the eastern boundary. The city coastline stretches for 17 kilometres from Brighton in the north to Beaumaris in the south. Primarily a residential area, Bayside includes several popular beaches and a number of golf courses. The main suburbs in the municipality are Brighton, Hampton, Beaumaris, Sandringham and Cheltenham.

Population

The Census population of the City of Bayside in 2011 was 91,815. This represents a population increase of approximately 7% over the previous ten years. Table 2 details the numbers of children and young people living in the municipality in the various service age groups.

Table 2

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Greater Melbourne %
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	5,552	6.0	6.5
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	8,941	9.7	8.4
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	7,077	7.7	7.3
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	7,052	7.7	10.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011

As the data show, the City of Bayside has similar proportions of pre-schoolers and secondary schoolers to Greater Melbourne, but substantially smaller numbers of young people aged between 18 and 24 years.

Industry and Employment

The unemployment rate for the City of Bayside was 3.5 % for the December 2012 quarter compared to 5.4 % for Greater Melbourne. These figures represents an increase in the unemployment rate in Bayside of 0.7% since the corresponding period in 2011, against an increase of 0.4% in the unemployment rate for Greater Melbourne.

More City of Bayside residents work in professional, scientific and technical services than any other industry. Other major employment sectors include health care and social assistance; retail trade; education and training; manufacturing; financial and insurance services and construction.

Education

Schools

Secondary schools within the Bayside Municipal area are the government schools Brighton Secondary College and Sandringham College; independent schools Brighton Grammar, Firbank Grammar (early learning through to VCE), Haileybury College – Castlefield Campus and St Leonard’s College, and; Catholic schools Star of the Sea and Xavier College – Kostka Hall. Twelve primary schools are located within the City

Educational Achievement

In 2009, 95.2 per cent of young people aged 19 years in Bayside had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was greater than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent).

Relative Disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Bayside City was 78th of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Services provided for young people

The Council also seeks to acknowledge young people aged 10-25 who live, study, work or have significant ties to the City of Bayside and contribute to their community. The *Bayside Youth Appreciation Awards* recognise young people who have made a positive difference to their community by helping others, volunteering, demonstrating loyalty to a particular recreational activity, and/or demonstrating teamwork.

Issues for local young people

According to the *Bayside Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-13*, the key issues for young people and their families as identified by young people, parents, community members and service providers within the municipality are:

- alcohol use including binge drinking and underage drinking
- substance use, safe partying and self-medicating and concurrent mental health issues
- bullying and cyberbullying
- loneliness, isolation from peers and excessive use of communication technology.
- anti- social behaviour including violence and gangs
- young people not attending school and the lack of support for students with additional needs
- family issues including conflict, adolescent violence towards parents
- mental health issues including depression, anxiety, body image and self-esteem
- importance of good family relationships
- young people wanting more youth events such as festivals, youth groups and entertainment, and increased numbers of sporting facilities including skate parks, basketball courts and pools.

Barriers to effective service provision

The Bayside Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-13 has identified that the youth sector is complex and can be very difficult to navigate with numerous agencies providing specialist support services.

Whilst the municipality is generally regarded as being relatively advantaged, there are pockets of disadvantage in areas of Office of Housing accommodation. Attracting funds to

address social issues is difficult when their need is compared to the most disadvantaged communities.

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

Council's *Youth Strategy and Action Plan 2010-13* guides the provision of services to young people and their families in Bayside. Based on broad consultation, the strategy has identified the range of issues facing young people in Bayside and identified actions for improvement.

The *Bayside Youth Charter* was developed by the local youth sector in 2009 and seeks to improve outcomes for young people through improving the way in which youth organisations work with young people.

Brimbank City Council

Location

Population

The Census population of the City of Brimbank in 2011 was 182,732. This represents an 11.7% increase over the previous ten years. Table 3 details the numbers of children and young people living in the municipality in the various service age groups.

Table 3

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Greater Melbourne%
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	11,969	6.6	6.5
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	15,929	8.7	8.4
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	14,392	7.9	7.3
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	19,556	10.7	10.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011

As the data show, the City of Brimbank has similar proportions of children and young people in each of the service age groups to those for Greater Melbourne.

Industry and Employment

More City of Brimbank residents work in manufacturing than any other industry. Other industries employing significant numbers of Brimbank residents are retail trade; transport, postal and warehousing; health care and social assistance; construction; accommodation and food services; and professional, scientific and technical services. The unemployment rate for the City of Brimbank was 9.2% for the December 2012 quarter compared to 5.4 % for Greater Melbourne. These figures represents an increase in the unemployment rate in Brimbank of almost 1.5% since the corresponding period in 2011, against an increase of 0.4% in the unemployment rate for Greater Melbourne. It should be noted that there is great disparity in unemployment levels in within the municipality: Sunshine has a rate of 11.8% compared to only 6.6% in Keilor.

Education

Schools

Brimbank is home to 28 government and 15 Catholic primary schools. Sirius College and Overnewton College are both independant p-12 schools, and; St Albans Secondary College, Victoria University Secondary College, and a number of campuses of Sunshine College.

Educational Achievement

In 2009, 84.5 per cent of young people aged 19 years in Brimbank had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was greater than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent).

Relative Disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Brimbank City was 9th of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most

disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Services provided for young people

Background

For a long period until January 2011, Brimbank Youth Services were contracted out to the YMCA. During that period, these services had a heavy recreational focus. Consultation for the development of Brimbank's Youth Strategy suggested that Council's response needed to move beyond recreation towards a focus on vulnerable young people. Council subsequently brought youth services back 'in house' and has since been methodically developing its youth response; including a focus on 'place based' planning and service delivery.

Target group/s

According to Council officers interviewed, all of Council's youth programs and services deal with young people who are vulnerable in some way. Their programs are targeted at prevention and early intervention; and given tertiary and specialist providers are already operating within the municipality, Council deliberately stays out of the 'tertiary and specialist end' of the service continuum. Officers interviewed spoke of young people as belonging to one of three groups: those who are doing well but could be at risk at some time through their teenage years and who may 'move up and down' but 'get through'; those young people who are technically at school but are beginning to disengage; and those young people who are not at school at all.

Brimbank Council youth services may be described as 'generalist', focussing on universal support to young people across the municipality including those identified as vulnerable. Council's youth team identify and engage young people who aren't linked to specialist services yet but may be 'at the cusp'. These include culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities; newly arrived African communities; and other diverse groups of young people from across the municipality who are not accessing programs, not at school, education or training and not with specialist services. Where young people are identified as not in school, education or training, youth services staff try to engage these young people; linking them with specialist services where appropriate and ensuring young people 'don't fall through the cracks'. Where young people are already linked with other services, council's youth team liaises with those services to ensure that efforts are coordinated rather than duplicated.

Services provided

A key focus of Council's youth services is youth support and counselling. Others programs include:

- Youth 'Drop in' in Sunshine West
- *Pridentity in Action* : A whole school approach to reducing homophobia in partnership with Keilor Downs and St Albans Secondary colleges
- Teenage School Holiday Program
- Alternative school holiday activities
- Music program
- Art and craft programs including *Urban Art* program for young people interested in aerosol art
- Cooking program

- L2P Learner driving program
- Study Support

Partnerships

The co-location of a number of specialist services at the Visy hub in Sunshine is a positive for the youth sector and young people in and around Sunshine. According to Council staff,

Before we came over to the hub, the services were a bit 'siloed'. We are a generalist team while all the others are specialists, so we are the conduit...As an example...(and) probably our role through the youth strategy, we were given the 'go ahead' pretty much by the sector that council should be a bit of a leader and facilitator in supporting them (interview with Council staff).

Council's youth team also has positive and productive relationships with local police who are seen as vital partners. The Police and Community Youth and Citizens' (PCYC) 'Street Surfer' Bus is a source of strong relationships between Police who are involved with the bus (including driving) and council youth staff. The Street Surfer Bus is an outreach bus providing services to young people within the municipality and encourages young people to connect with the range of services at the Visy Cares Hub. A number of police also serve on council committees, helping to build a strong rapport between staff from both organisations.

Barriers to effective service provision

Council is still in the early stages of developing its youth services provision and is seeking to have a presence across the municipality through a place based approach. Council staff acknowledge that the lack of a funding mechanism to support its activities restricts its capacity to respond to vulnerable young people. Further, they state that the broader youth service system within Brimbank is largely focussed on St Albans and Sunshine and currently does not provide well for new and emerging communities and localities.

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

The Brimbank Youth Policy and Action Plan 2010-2014 guides the provision of youth services in Brimbank.

Corangamite Shire

Location

Corangamite Shire is located in south-western Victoria covering an area of 4,425 square kilometres. Its largest towns, in order of size, are Camperdown, Terang, Cobden, Timboon, Port Campbell and Skipton.

Population

The Census population of Corangamite Shire in 2011 was 16,370. This represents a slight contraction of 1.5% over the previous ten years. Table four below details the numbers of children and young people living in the municipality in the various service age groups.

Table four

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Regional Vic%
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	1,096	6.7	6.3
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	1,526	9.4	8.8
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	1,545	9.3	8.4
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	1,061	6.5	8.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011

As the data show, Corangamite Shire has a slightly higher proportion of children and young people up to age 17 and slightly less young people aged 18-24 when compared to regional Victoria.

Industry and employment

The unemployment rate for Corangamite Shire was 3.3 % for the December 2012 quarter compared to 5.7 % for regional Victoria. These figures represents a decrease in the unemployment rate in Corangamite Shire of 0.1% since the corresponding period in 2011, against an increase of 1.5% in the unemployment rate for regional Victoria.

The region is supported by the agricultural, retail, health, manufacturing and tourism industries, with skills shortages experienced in the following areas:

- Engineering / Metal trades
- Electrical / electronic trades
- Food trades
- Engineers
- Automotive trades
- Construction trades
- Child care occupations
- Health specialists
- Social workers
- Lawyers
- Accountants

Education

Schools

Corangamite Shire is serviced by seven primary schools. Mercy Regional College, a catholic secondary college; Cobden Secondary College; Derrinallum P12 and Timboon P-12 provide

for secondary students. Glenormiston Campus of South West TAFE provides local post-secondary education.

Educational Achievement

In 2009, 76.6 per cent of young people aged 19 years in Corangamite had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was lower than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent).

Relative disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), the Shire of Corangamite was 34th of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

BRICKS

Given its limited resources, Corangamite Shire does not have the capacity for large teams of youth and/or community workers and when a youth suicide in the area occurred in the Shire, youth workers identified a lack of support for young people as a significant issue. The Council sought to develop an innovative response that would build resilience and protective factors in all young people in the Shire. The result was the BRICKS program, Building Resilience in Corangamite Kids. Currently run by a Youth Development Officer with training in health promotion and working with young people, the program is designed as a youth leadership project using Peer Skills training. It is designed to be a self-sustaining, self-help model that assists young people and the broader community to help themselves and each other, and to realise their capacity for dealing with adversity.

BRICKs aims to decrease the rate of mental health issues, particularly depressive symptoms, that lead to suicidal ideation and attempts among young people in the Corangamite Shire, through the implementation of the Peer Skills Program.

The project objectives include:

- Increase help seeking behaviour of young people
- Increase young people's connectedness to, and active participation with, the school community
- Increase awareness and utilisation of problem solving techniques by young people
- Increase collaborative approach by local education and health partners

Partnership Approach

The BRICKs Program is evolving steadily to ensure the most effective and efficient use of scarce resources. The program would not be possible without the strong partnerships that see an investment of time and resources. This year (2012) saw a shift in delivery to enable 170 young people to be involved which is a fivefold increase from 2011. Four secondary schools are currently involved in the program and this involvement has recently been formalised through the development of a Memorandum of Agreement between each school and the Corangamite Shire Council.

The sustainability of the program hinges on the ongoing investment of time and resources by program partners and the development of a mental health promotion culture.

The model

Every year 9 student from participating schools is involved in the delivery of Peer Skills over 2 full days. The program is facilitated with a ratio of 2 facilitators for every 10 students.

Facilitators are trained in the delivery of the Peer Skills program.

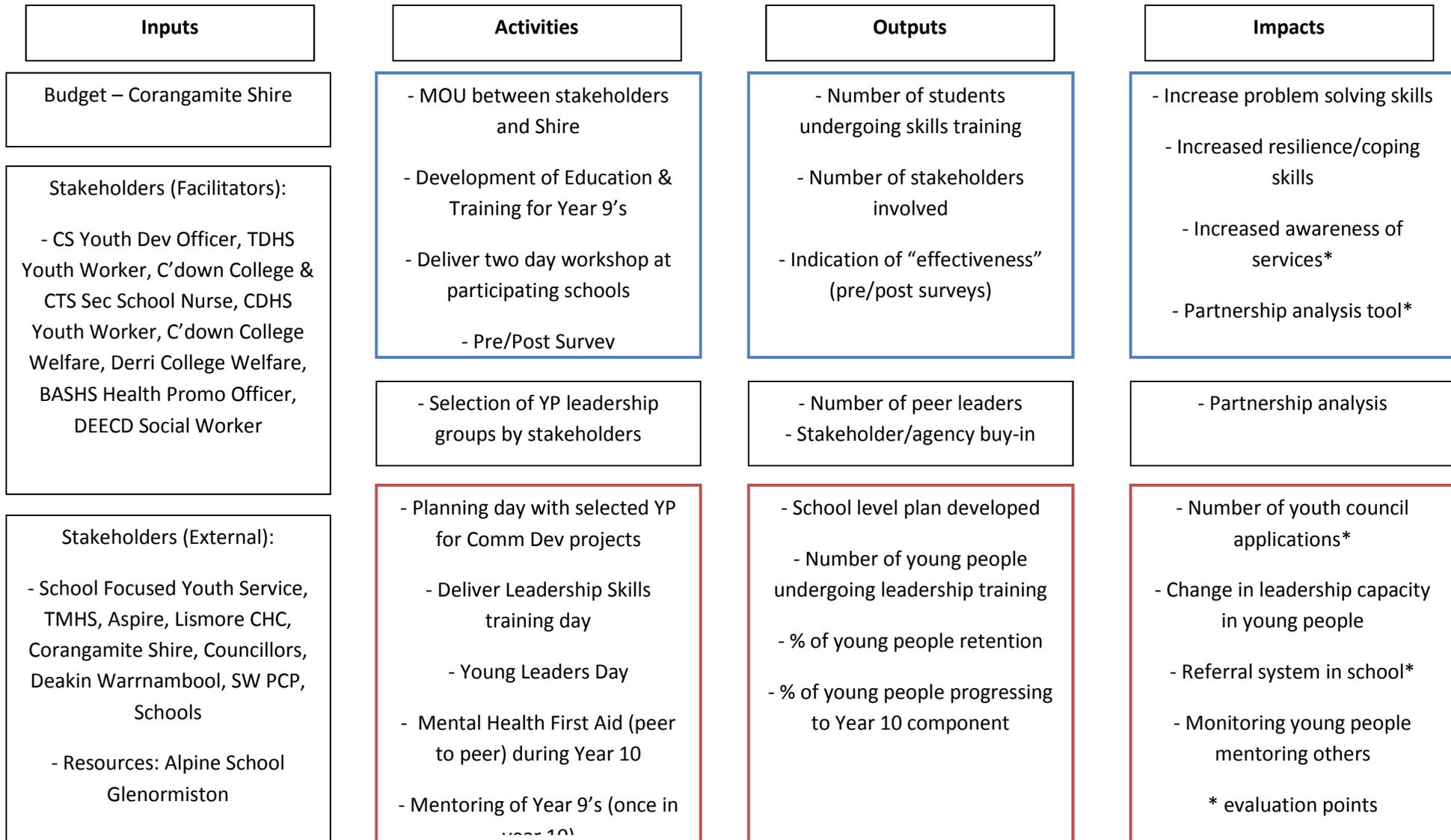
At the conclusion of the whole of year level Peer Skills delivery, a small group of year 9 students are self and peer selected to be a part of the BRICKS Leaders Program. The BRICKS Leaders implement projects throughout the remainder of the year. Projects include promoting “Stress Down Day” and “R U Ok? Day”, as well as assisting with, transition from primary to secondary school, days.

The training includes a series of fun and interactive activities based on the following areas:

- Introduction to Peer Skills
- Active listening
- Values
- Problem Solving
- Taking Care of Yourself
- Support Networks

A program logic model for the BRICKS program is attached.

BRICKS Program Logic Model



Assumptions/Theoretical Underpinnings

- Ongoing support from Stakeholders. – Funding ongoing. – Young People interested. – Sufficient resources. – Staff turnover
- Social Cognitive. – Diffusion of innovation

City of Greater Dandenong

Location

The City of Greater Dandenong is located in Melbourne's southeast and contains the suburbs of Bangholme, Dandenong, Dandenong North, Dandenong South, Dunearn, Keysborough, Lyndhurst, Noble Park, Noble Park North, Sandown Village, Springvale and Springvale South. Greater Dandenong City Council's central activities district is Melbourne's second largest retail and commercial centre, including over 7,000 businesses, large shopping complexes at Dandenong and Keysborough, and the Dandenong Market.

Population

The estimated resident population of the City of Greater Dandenong in 2011 was 142,591. This represents an increase of 11% over the previous ten years. Table five details the numbers of children and young people in the various service age groups.

Table 5

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Greater Melbourne%
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	8,917	6.0	6.5
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	10,920	8.0	8.4
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	9,882	7.3	7.3
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	13,913	10.3	10.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011

As the data show, the proportions of children and young people in the various service age groups are comparative to those of greater Melbourne.

Diversity

Greater Dandenong is one of the most culturally diverse localities in Australia. Some of the community's key attributes include:

- over half its residents were born overseas
- residents come from more than 150 countries
- two-thirds of residents speak languages other than English at home which is twice the number when compared to Greater Melbourne.

Industry and unemployment

The unemployment rate for the City of Greater Dandenong was 9.1% for the December 2012 quarter compared to 5.4 % for Greater Melbourne. These figures represents an decrease in the unemployment rate in Greater Dandenong of 0.9% since the corresponding period in 2011, against an increase of 0.4% in the unemployment rate for Greater Melbourne.

The City of Greater Dandenong is recognised as Victoria's manufacturing heartland and home to 9,000 businesses. Manufacturing is the major employer however; retail trade, construction, health care and government services provide employment for significant numbers.

Education

Schools

Greater Dandenong is serviced by 23 primary schools, nine secondary schools and a TAFE campus. Secondary schools are Carwatha College, Caulfield Park Community School (Oakwood campus), several campuses of Dandenong High School, Doveton College, Hallam Senior Secondary College, Keysborough Secondary College, Lyndale Secondary College and Noble Park Secondary College.

Educational Achievement

In 2009, 78.3 per cent of young people aged 19 years in Greater Dandenong had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was lower than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent).

Relative disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), the City of Greater Dandenong was 1st of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Council's approach

Greater Dandenong City Council has 18 staff working in the youth area and of these, only 3.2 EFT are funded by government grants. The remaining positions are funded directly by council. All 18 of these staff work with, or for, vulnerable youth. The Council has been investing heavily in the youth area for many years and in 2012-13 will spend 1.3 million dollars on youth programs and services.

Council has a very clear view of its roles in relation to young people. These are defined in the *City of Greater Dandenong Youth Strategy 2012-2017*, as:

- Planner – work with service providers, community stakeholders and young people to support an integrated service system and identify service gaps and opportunities based on sound research
- Provider – Deliver services and programs to young people that focus on promoting positive participation in community and civic life and provide prevention and early intervention services to enhance young people's health and wellbeing
- Facilitator – Collaborate with tiers of government, service providers in the youth and family sector in mobilizing action-based responses to identified service issues and gaps.
- Advocate – Provide advocacy to levels of government and within the service sector on local needs and priority areas of concern that affect young people

Issues for young people

According to internal research, the top five issues for young people within the municipality are mental health; family and adolescent violence; bullying; drugs and alcohol; and issues with education. Council has used this data to inform their programs and service delivery. Although well-serviced with providers within the municipality offering support services to young people, there are still gaps in the service provision. Wherever possible, Council will focus on these gaps and use the following questions as a guide to determining how they may deal with this gap:

- What's the gap?
- Can someone else do it?
- Can someone do it with us?
- Can we take it on?

Services provided

Greater Dandenong City council provides a range of services and programs including:

- Counselling and support services, including free confidential individual and family counselling, 10 individual sessions and six family sessions provided at Youth Stop.
- Provision of youth and family counsellors in a local secondary school.
- A range of health and well-being group programs for secondary schools, including: young women's, body image, mental health, healthy relationships, anger management, bullying.
- An engagement and participation program for male violent offenders who have disengaged from school.
- Recreational programs at trouble hot spots, targeting youth affected by substance misuse and not at school. Working in partnership with community agencies including Drug and Alcohol specific agencies and the Centre for Multicultural Youth. By engaging with young people through sport and building trusting relationships, these staff members are then able to direct young people to the services that they need, with a much higher chance of success and participation.
- Youth leadership including a young leaders program that conduct research and develop youth projects in the community and advise council on youth issues.
- Youth Events committees providing a range of youth led events.
- Working with police to stop retribution – targeting community leaders and using a 'restorative justice' model where mediation occurs between the bully and the victim.
- Gain Respect Increase Personal Power (GRIPP): a voluntary, diversionary program for young males aged 13-17 years who have come to the attention of the courts or police for using aggressive or violent behaviour. The program works with these young people and their families to develop skills to build non-violent relationships and addresses offending behaviour. Participants receive twelve individual sessions and up to six family sessions, working on their aggressive behaviour, anger management and 'triggers' for aggression.
- Providing a quick flip guide for schools and services that provides contact details for all relevant agencies, grouped by topic or area of speciality. Council found that the welfare teams in their schools were predominantly working in isolation and not referring students on to service providers where necessary. This innovation assists welfare staff to navigate the service system, helping to keep young people engaged in school.
- Council funds a centre where a number of youth services are co-located as a way of enhancing 'seamless pathways' for youth and their families.

- The provision of a professional development and training program for youth professionals, in partnership with the Department of Human Services. They run a number of seminars per year and while they typically have 65 workers at each event, there is also a waiting list.
- Expanding the normal Maternal and Child Health (MCH) program to support young women from diverse cultures including refugees and young women on spousal visas who have a child and for whom their culture prevents them from leaving the house until some weeks after the baby is born. This has the impact of leaving the young mother isolated and vulnerable. Council has funded extra visits for this cohort from the MCH nurse and Youth Services staff member to engage young mums including home visits. This is a vital link and support for these vulnerable young women and is able to link them to a youth specific young mum's program and other services they may need for themselves or their children.
- Coordination of numerous networks and groups, including a Youth Network with 120 youth workers and the CALD Inclusion Advisory Group that has representation from eight government departments.

While this list provides a snapshot of the range of activities funded and provided by Council, it does not encapsulate all of Council's programs, activities and impact on young people. However, it does give a feel for Council's approach and shows each role that Council undertakes in action: as planner, provider, facilitator and advocate.

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

The *City of Greater Dandenong Youth Strategy 2012-2017* and the *City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services Needs Analysis Report 2012-2013* guide the work of Council's youth team.

Monash City Council

Location

The City of Monash is located some 13km east—at its closest border—from the central business district of Melbourne. Occupying an area of 81.5 square kilometres its suburbs include Glen Waverley, Mount Waverley, Wheelers Hill, Clayton and Oakleigh. Some 16.1% of residents in Monash were aged 15-24 years at the 2011 census, compared with Greater Melbourne with 13.8%.

Population

The Census population of the City of Monash in 2011 was 169,275. This represents an increase of 8.2% over the previous ten years. Table 6 details the numbers of children and young people living in the municipality in the various service age groups.

Table 5

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Greater Melbourne%
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	8,670	5.1	6.5
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	12,164	7.2	8.4
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	11,469	6.8	7.3
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	21,270	12.6	10.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011

As the data show, there are fewer children and young people in all age groups to age 17 living in Monash when compared than the figures for greater Melbourne, while significantly more young people aged 18-24 live within the City.

Industry and Employment

The unemployment rate for the City of Monash was 4.9% for the December 2012 quarter compared to 5.4 % for Greater Melbourne. These figures represents a decrease in the unemployment rate in Monash of 0.3% since the corresponding period in 2011, against an increase of 0.4% in the unemployment rate for Greater Melbourne.

Major industries in Monash include manufacturing; health care and social assistance; retail; construction; education and training; professional, scientific and technical services.

Education

Schools

The City of Monash is serviced by 39 government and independent primary schools. Secondary schools in the area are Ashwood College, Brentwood Secondary College, Glen Waverley Secondary College, Highvale Secondary College, Mt Waverley Secondary College, South Oakleigh Secondary College, Wellington Secondary College and Wheelers Hill Secondary College. Non-government secondary colleges include Avila College, Caulfield Grammar School, Huntingtower P-12 School, Mazenod College, Oakleigh Grammar, Sacred Heart Girls College, and Wesley College. The John Monash

Science School (years 10-12 only), is a specialist government school providing for students specialising in science, mathematics and associated technologies.

Educational achievement

In 2009, 94.7% of young people aged 19 years in Monash had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was higher than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent).

Relative disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), the Monash LGA was 69th of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Council's Youth Team

The City of Monash employs a relatively large team of 13.2 EFT in its Youth and families team across three sites. This equates to the second largest youth team of the councils in the eastern region, next to Yarra Ranges Shire. The team works across the continuum of services for young people from preventative programs through to counselling and one to one support. All of Council's youth programs are designed with a strong evaluation framework with outcome measures including pre and post questionnaires as well as process or output measures

According to council staff at interview, the service system is minimal within the municipality:

...it might seem a bit strange, generally speaking, (but) there isn't much of a service system. We are 'smack bang' right in the middle of the inner east; you would think there would be services 'galore' here and there are plenty of services that cover Monash but there are very few that are based here. So for example, we have no emergency drug and alcohol service, we have no mental health service. We have no housing service. None of them are based here. It is one of the reasons that Monash council's youth services component is as large as it is.

Housing services were given as one example of the difficulties faced by young people from Monash needing a service:

If you have a young person who is homeless, they have to go to Hawthorn to access the housing service. The housing service is in Wantirna, but the housing front door⁵ is in Hawthorn.

In addition, housing services don't always work with young people under 18 and the nearest youth refuges are in Moorabbin and Dandenong. Whilst there is a youth refuge in Ringwood, it is impossible for a young person to get there.

We did a study a few years ago with the University of Melbourne's Youth Research Centre which found that if you are a young person and you are acutely vulnerable, in order to get service you have to leave Monash...doesn't matter what the issue is.

Access to the mental health system was another area where young people from Monash had difficulties, particularly if they lived in Hughesdale:

⁵ Front door model: single entry point model of accessing the housing system in Victoria includes a coordinated referral and assessment system

For a start, the catchments don't match local government boundaries...so we have three mental health catchments in Monash: Eastern, Southern and a little bit of the Alfred. That would be fine if the different jurisdictions agreed with where the boundaries were, but they don't, so you have gaps within the system. The Department of Health have a...website (to find) your service provider... Eastern have said that 'if there is a dispute, we'll take that up with the Department. Now that's brilliant, except, Southern don't agree with that and we had a young person in Hughesdale, acutely suicidal, couldn't get a service and they went to Eastern who said 'It's not us' and if you look at the website, it says Southern and they (also) say it's not us and that they never agreed to the website. This is a massive issue.

Council staff stated they spent a lot of time working with young people to help them navigate the system and given they found it difficult as professionals, they wondered how hard it was for young people, "There are lots of 'gatekeepers' who close the doors on us all the time".

In relation to those regional services funded to provide outreach to Monash, council staff stated "it just doesn't happen". Again they gave the example of a young person seeking a housing service:

... one of the housing services has an outreach which happens every second Thursday in the afternoon and yes, a young person can get into that if they are prepared to wait nine months. So it's no good if you are a young person and homeless...

Advocating for increased service provision is a major component of the work of council staff across the lifespan, not just for young people, including for example, 'Child first'. Most of the regional services which are funded to cover Monash are located in either Boroondara or Whitehorse:

...but the extent that they actually do...It is a real challenge which we are starting to get some traction on but we have a very, very, long way to go...we do have psychiatric inpatient services at Clayton, but even if you live next door, you have to triage through Dandenong because that unit covers Mornington Peninsula!".

Council staff questioned the rationale for the placement of 'Headspace' services, particularly in relation to the recent announcement of a service in Kew:

...there is one based in Knox servicing the outer east and the new one announced in Kew, but we don't know where what the model is (or) who is running it. It will be 3 km from the Abbotsford service: if they wanted one in Boroondara, they could have put it in Ashburton, which is a really high needs area and would have been good for us. It is supposed to be based on need and accessibility. But it is neither needed in Kew nor is it accessible. So they all are inaccessible to Monash. That said, Headspace isn't the panacea...

Even getting to see a General Practitioner (GP) is difficult for young people in Monash, particularly if they wish to bulk bill or require a mental health assessment. Mental health assessments completed by GPs are the 3rd lowest of any municipality in Victoria and there is only one bulk billing GP in Monash. While the Medicare local is aware of the issues, the fundamental issue is a lack of health providers of all types, in the municipality.

The biggest issue, apart from boundaries, is getting assessments:

...and while we don't like labelling young people, at least once they are assessed they can get a service. Homelessness and housing is another issue, particularly for young people and young families. The young person has to leave the city to get a service...That is why our

service response needs to be so flexible. A number of our staff spend considerable time in driving young people to Box Hill etc. dropping them off and making sure they get there. If young people are happy to navigate the public transport system, that is fine, but in some places, there is not a service on weekends. There are extreme issues with north- south public transport.

Aside from dealing with young people in crisis, Monash describes its youth service as a generalist service and a linker, advocator and coordinator; but spending far more time as advocate because of being stuck between the inner and outer east and southern regions.

With 63 schools in Monash, schools form a major part of the youth services our 'engagement platform'. The council works with every one of those schools to some extent. According to council staff, the local SFYS (auspiced by Council) performs a vital role:

(It is an) incredibly important part of the service delivery system...it is the glue that keeps things together. It is one of the only programs that are properly funded. Its primary focus is about connecting schools with community agencies and that role is making sure that schools are resourced with information and where those services or programs do not exist, they manage a small pool of brokerage (funds) to try and plug these gaps. SFYS gives 'bang for your buck'.

The council performs outreach work on a weekly basis in five secondary schools that have been identified as among the most vulnerable, including government and non-government schools. Council also designs and delivers programs in schools in response to issues identified by the schools, such as bullying and social connectedness, sometimes in partnership with other agencies. A Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of the council's Youth and Family Services is the delivery of 40 such programs each year.

Relationships with principals, assistant principals and welfare coordinators for example are the key to the delivery of these programs in schools and schools are extremely responsive. Being located close to the DEECD regional office and building relationships with regional office staff has also been useful in this regard.

Transitions from primary to secondary school are a key focus of the Youth team:

We know from research that year six is the moment where young people are most engaged at school so when they leave, that's where they need to be supported and captured and we aim to make sure that that continues as much as possible when they get into the secondary school. The vast majority make that transition well, but we need to support that transition so that they remain engaged.

Council has also been involved in the provision of alternate education settings for young people. In particular, it has supported the development of a community VCAL with a private provider which deals with very vulnerable young people, at cost to the parents. The council provides a facility in which it operates.

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

The *Monash Youth Plan 2013-2016* guides the work of Council's youth services.

Rural City of Wodonga

Location

Located on the Victorian side of the Murray River, Wodonga City is Australia's 18th largest regional city when combined with Albury NSW. With an area of 430 square kilometres, the municipality services the wider north east region of Victoria.

Population

The Census population of the Rural City of Wodonga in 2011 was 35,519. This represents an increase over the previous ten years of 14.8%. Table 7 details the numbers of children and young people in the service various age groups.

Table 7

Service age group (years)	Number	%	Regional Vic%
Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4)	2,698	7.6	6.3
Primary schoolers (5 to 11)	3,498	9.8	8.8
Secondary schoolers (12 to 17)	3,086	8.7	8.4
Tertiary education & independence (18 to 24)	3,846	10.8	8.1

Source: Adapted from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011.

As the data show, the Rural City of Wodonga has proportionally more children in each of the service age groups than figures for regional Victoria.

Industry and Employment

Industries employing significant numbers of people in the Rural City of Wodonga include manufacturing; public administration and safety; health care and social assistance; accommodation and food; and, retail trade.

The unemployment rate for the Rural City of Wodonga was 7.0% for the December 2012 quarter compared to 5.7 % for regional Victoria. These figures represents a decrease in the unemployment rate in Yarra Ranges Shire of approximately 0.2% since the corresponding period in 2011, against an increase of 0.4% in the unemployment rate for Greater Melbourne.

Education

Schools

Government secondary schools in Wodonga include Wodonga Senior Secondary College and Wodonga Middle Years College; while Catholic and independent schools include Catholic College Wodonga, Frayne College P-8, Mt Carmel Christian School, Trinity Anglican College and Victory Lutheran College.

Educational Achievement

In 2009, 71.9 per cent of young people aged 19 years in the Rural City of Wodonga had attained Year 12 or its equivalent. This was lower than the proportion across Victoria (79.8 per cent).

Relative disadvantage

According to the 2011 ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Wodonga is 26th of the 79 Victorian councils in order of disadvantage, with 1 being the most disadvantaged and 79 being the least disadvantaged.

Council services for young people

Wodonga City Council apportions \$340,000 per annum to the youth services budget, employing 2.8 EFT Youth Services staff. With this relatively small youth team, Council is very strategic about its role in the 'youth space' and what it can realistically achieve.

In addition to this funding, and like all councils, Wodonga City Council impacts on the lives of its young people through the provision of a range of activities, facilities and services; including open spaces, sporting facilities, festivals and events, urban planning and infrastructure development. The encouragement of democratic participation and active citizenship and advocating for young people are also roles which the Council actively embraces.

According to council officers, Wodonga is very well serviced with support agencies. While some gaps in service provision do exist, Council resists becoming involved in direct provision services to vulnerable youth. Rather, Council works to build and strengthen its relationships with these service providers and seeks to link in with other organisations where they can.

Centralised data collection project

Council staff have identified that accurate data about the needs of young people is essential for proper planning and service provision. To this end, they have determined that the best contribution they can make in the youth space is the identification of needs and the development of a demographic profile of its youth. They believe that this work will provide a valuable contribution to young people and the community and provide the basis for advocacy around future planning and securing funding.

In partnership with the North East Local Learning and Employment Network (NELLEN), Council has become the central repository for the collection of data. Together, they have worked with relevant community agencies, approaching forty-four of these to become involved. To date, ten major organisations have agreed to participate, including the neighbouring councils of Indigo Shire, Towong Shire and Alpine Shire. All government secondary schools across the four participating municipalities are counted as one agency, as their information will be provided by the DEECD.

Each agency is to provide seed funding of between \$500 and \$1,000, to supplement funds provided by Wodonga City Council and NELLEN. Outputs from the funding will

include a tool for collecting the data, service mapping, data collation and analysis and the creation of a demographic profile.

Development of the data collection tool should be completed by the end of 2012 and the first year's data collected and mapped in 2013.

All participating youth service organisations will be asked to share the data currently collected and provide input into the environmental scan and demographic profile. Agencies will be able to use the information individually and/or collectively for future planning, programming, advocacy and funding. Agencies currently not participating in the project will be required to pay for this data in subsequent years, if they want access.

The agencies involved have made an ongoing commitment to work together to collect and share their data, for the benefit of the whole community.

Council Youth Plans/Strategies

The Rural City of Wodonga's *Youth Strategy 2010-2014* guides the work of Council's youth services team.

Conclusions and opportunities

Local government makes a significant contribution to youth services in Victoria; with councils involved in some or all of the following: as a funder of programs, as a partner in governance and evaluation, as a service planner and co-ordinator and as a deliverer of programs and services to young people and their families. Local government is well placed to play an enhanced role in assisting the Victorian government to meet its reform agenda in relation to vulnerable and at risk young people.

From the project team's conversations with more than half of all Victorian councils, a number of messages have been consistently received. These include wide spread concerns about young people 'falling through the cracks', the willingness of most councils to be part of a solution, difficulty in accessing useful data about who these young people are; and resource constraints—particularly in rural and regional areas—which present significant barriers for councils in seeking to address the issue.

Many identified the service gap in addressing those children and young people aged between 8 and 12 years and most councils indicated they were well placed to be key partners in a universal system to prevent vulnerability and disengagement.

Earlier research on local government provision, conducted in partnership between MAV and DEECD, described the issue succinctly:

One of the considerations for Victorian and local governments is whether all councils need to have a similar level of involvement in ensuring provision of a broad range of services and support for children and young people. The high variability in councils' current levels of involvement highlights the challenges involved in ensuring a more systemic and consistent level of local support for children and young people (DEECD & MAV 2011:78).

The findings of this report clearly indicate that a number of opportunities exist for enhanced local government involvement in supporting young people:

- Councils are central to community planning. All councils are required to prepare Municipal Public Health Plans (MPHWPs). These plans outline action to prevent or minimise public health dangers, as well as to enable people living in the municipality to achieve maximum health and wellbeing. MPHWP could provide the framework for a state-wide consistent approach to the coordination and delivery of services to young people. Youth strategies, plans and/or charters already guide the work of 34 of the 45 councils included in this study.
- Improved access by councils to quality data held by government departments (such as DEECD and DHS) would improve the local government sector response to at risk/disengaged young people.
- Pre-existing platforms of service delivery (for example: early year's, *ChildFIRST*) could be reconfigured or broadened to include universal preventative programs for children and young people.
- Support to young people at the key transition points—from primary to secondary school and from junior to middle/senior secondary school— would benefit from such

reconfiguration. More than one third of councils included in this study have begun work to focus on this period.

- Councils are often central to existing networks and partnerships which currently deliver a wide range of programs to young people. This is particularly the case in rural and regional municipalities. Such partnerships could be enhanced to provide a consistent approach to supporting young people.
- Formal agreements between schools and councils would benefit existing partnerships which target improved outcomes for at risk/disengaged young people. Almost 85% of councils included in this study are involved in programs delivered in schools or in partnership with schools.
- With the addition of targeted funding—and councils' expert knowledge of local resources and needs—these partnerships could build the capacity of schools to improve student wellbeing.

To conclude, this and previous research suggests that Local Government can bring significant leverage and value-add as a major partner in the vulnerable youth reform agenda. The Local Government Act (1985) provides for Councils to have responsibilities for the well-being of all their citizens, including children and young people. More particularly, the Act describes a number of objectives of local government which include "...to promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipal district: and, "... to improve the overall quality of life of people in the local community". Councils take this role seriously: either providing funding for and/or delivering programs; partnering with other government and community organisations in governance and evaluation; or service planning and advocacy. The importance of Victorian councils in the 'youth space' was described by Nabben (2004):

Councils have a unique and critical role to play. Young people, more than many other population groups, are grounded in place, or the "local". A range of council activities have a primary impact on young people, including urban planning, economic development, public space, parks and gardens, human services, libraries, by-laws, and infrastructure. Councils have a unique capacity to work from a "place-based" perspective, holistically monitoring issues, identifying gaps and responding from a broad professional base.

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Appendix One: Interview schedule

Over page



Youth Partnership Project Data Collection

The Youth Partnership Secretariat at DEECD has sought an arrangement with MAV to undertake project work to focus on good practice in local government, particularly related to vulnerable young people.

We are seeking to interview a large sample of councils about their work, including frameworks or programs with young people at risk of disengagement from school or family support.

Key Questions

The following questions will form the basis of our interview:

1. Are there programs within your municipality/region which respond in some way to vulnerable youth? We are looking at programs that assist young people to engage or re-engage with learning, community and / or family.
2. How are 'vulnerable' youth defined by your organisation, if at all defined?
3. What is the nature of the program/s? i.e. what do they do?
4. What are the stated aims?
5. How are the programs managed i.e. governance structure? Who is the auspice?
6. Who are the program partners?
7. Who funds the program?
8. Who or what drives the program? If the worker/s were to leave tomorrow, would the program be sustained?
9. What is the evidence base underpinning the project?
10. What data is collected/used to inform the project?
11. How successful is the program/s? How do you know? How do you measure success? What does the evaluation framework look like?
12. What makes them successful? Is it the intervention/s or the people that implement the program, or something else?
13. What are the blockers to success?
14. What could assist the program to better respond to vulnerable youth?
15. Who else might we speak with for further information?
16. Imagine we were building a 'brand new' service system to work with vulnerable young people. Where would you see your council's role, if at all, in that system?
17. Given there are many local organisations and schools that collect information / data about young people, is there a role for council in data collection or coordinating data collection, and/or needs identification, and/or monitoring? If not council, who is best placed to do these things?
18. Do you see a role for your council in co-ordinating services delivered by other providers? Or should council be a direct service provider to vulnerable young people?

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