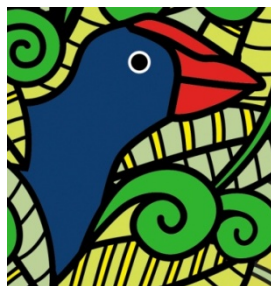


# A summer study of young people who were enrolled in youth guarantee fees-free courses in 2014

Final report  
March 2015

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Thank you again to the 12 TEOs who helped us enrol young people into the project. We are indebted to you and hope our study provides useful findings for you. And to the students who volunteered to participate, we are very grateful to you.

Liz Gordon and Natalia Marsden  
Pūkeko Research Ltd  
March 2015.

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## Glossary of terms

EFTS	Equivalent Full-Time Student
ITP	Institute of Technology or Polytechnic
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement. This can be awarded at Levels 1, 2 or 3
NEET	Referring to young (usually aged 16-24), not in education, employment or training
NZQF	New Zealand Qualifications Framework
PTE	Private Training Establishment
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TEO	Tertiary Education Organisation (include ITPs, PTEs and Wananga).
YG	Youth Guarantee Scheme
YGFF	Youth Guarantee Fees-Free Scheme (a subset of youth guarantee)
YS	Youth Service

## Executive Summary

This study of 73 students arises from findings in Earle's (2014) YGFF monitoring report. It considers whether the three-month summer break period following a YGFF programme, is a time when barriers prevent students' progress to higher levels. The young people in this study are from five regions, are 40 percent Māori, and 60 percent female. More than half of these students left school with qualifications below Level 1, NCEA. Students enrol in YGFF courses throughout the year, with many TEOs offering rolling entry. Nearly 50 completed some qualifications in 2014.

In the first interview for this study, only 22 students expected to return to study in 2015, although many did not answer this question. Those returning were completing courses, taking a course at a higher level or changing TEOs. A number were in employment, including two apprenticeships, while others were looking for work. Many were stuck in post-course unemployment, although 15 had holiday work in low-level jobs. Many had a range of aspirations for the future, some in line with their current study (e.g. hairdressing), while others wanted to move in a different direction. The students expressed an average confidence level of four on a scale of five.

Subsequent interviews traced changes and continuity over the summer. Twenty-eight students were returning to their same provider, although seven wanted to change their study topic. Twelve students had decided to move to new providers, to do higher level courses or different vocational areas. Many had changed their proposed careers, for a number of reasons. Seventeen students had gained sustainable employment (although often part-time), including a small number in higher level positions. A further person had gained an apprenticeship. Five were unemployed, including one of those seeking an apprenticeship. Parenthood, caregiving, inability to choose, uncertainty, moving to Australia or having no plans – none of these were reasons why participants were not in training or the labour market. These young people mostly had confidence levels below those of the majority, although overall confidence levels held up over the summer.

TEOs and others can do more to facilitate good outcomes. While there is excellent pastoral care, more can be done in the recruitment, pathways and labour market outcomes. It cannot be expected that TEOs can play all these roles. Some vocational areas are able to strongly frame progression, while others are not, and this makes a difference to student outcomes. Local communities can add value to youth guarantee by offering support, services and routes to employment, but these options are not always well-utilised, or supportive.

Five policy areas were highlighted for future work: early school leaving issues, continuity and consistency in course progression, progression through multiple NZQF qualifications, those dropping out of courses and, the role of youth coaches.

There are a wide range of barriers affecting progress in the YGFF programme that arise from the characteristics of the students. These include decision-making processes, problems in course progression, gaps in support and a lack of good employment options. Despite this, most of the students in this study are making good progress in 2015.

## 1.0 Introduction

This study aims to understand how youth guarantee students make, keep or alter decisions about their learning pathways through the summer break between one year and the next. It follows on from the core finding of a 2014 study of the youth guarantee research project, that young people were intending to progress through learning pathways into further study and good work (Gordon et al 2014). This finding conflicted with Earle's (2014) study which found that youth guarantee students (graduating in 2013) were more likely to achieve NCEA Level 2 than a comparison group, but no more likely to progress to higher levels.

The current study was carried out over the summer of 2014-15. It tracked 73 students from the end of their study year in 2014, up until 1 March 2015. The research questions were:

1. What do young people who were involved on youth guarantee fees-free courses at Level 2 in 2014 intend to do in 2015, as measured at the end of the course?
2. What strengths, barriers, enablers and opportunities occur over the subsequent three months to affect pathways in 2015?
3. What choices do the young people make 1 March 2015, what factors have influenced these choices, and what are the implications for their further pathways?
4. What more can the youth guarantee fees-free process do to encourage and support young people to successfully move to further study or good employment?
5. Considering the pattern of pathways as a whole, what operational policies, regional factors and support systems could affect or improve the outcomes for the young people?

A significant amount of qualitative data has been collected from the participants, and will be available for further analysis.

## 2.0 Methodology

Twenty eight TEOs which had participated in a prior research study of the Youth Guarantee Fees-Free scheme in 2014 (Gordon et al, 2014) were invited to submit the names of students who agreed to be contacted for the summer study.

Most TEOs were happy to participate, but a number of barriers prevented this for some. The main difficulty was that the contract for this project was not signed until 5 December 2014, and by that time a number of the organisations were winding up for the year. Several organisations declined to participate, largely due to the timing.

In total, 12 TEOs, including three ITPs and nine PTEs submitted names. Criteria for selecting students were that they:

- (a) had studied at the TEO during 2014 in a YGFF programme
- (b) agreed to engage in two or more interviews with the research team over the summer, and may agree to a focus group discussion.

This was in no way a random sample, and as a qualitative study, makes no claim to be representative. However, it will be demonstrated that the students in this study represent the full range in terms of key indicators: school-leaver qualifications, age when leaving school, ethnicity, and other disadvantage. Although the findings cannot be extrapolated to the whole YGFF population, they are indicative of key pathways.

Some of the students had also participated in the prior study. An information sheet and consent form were prepared as part of the research management and ethical processes, and delivered to all participants. It was agreed to pay each participant a koha of a \$50 voucher at the end of the project, as recognition of their participation in the study.

In total, 84 names were submitted by 12 TEOs in five regions, as listed in Table 1:

Region	No. students
Auckland	33
Gisborne	15
Northland	5
Dunedin	12
Canterbury	19

**Table 1. Number student participants by region.**

A total of 73 of these students were eventually surveyed once, twice or three times over the summer. Of the rest, five young people were uncontactable at the number provided, two had moved and could not be contacted, one declined, one was sick in hospital and two had gained employment and did not want to take part.

The first contact was a brief (10 minute) survey that included demographic data and questions about current situation, plans and future aspirations (Appendix 1). The first and subsequent follow-ups reminded the participants of their earlier answers and asked whether anything had changed (Appendix 2).

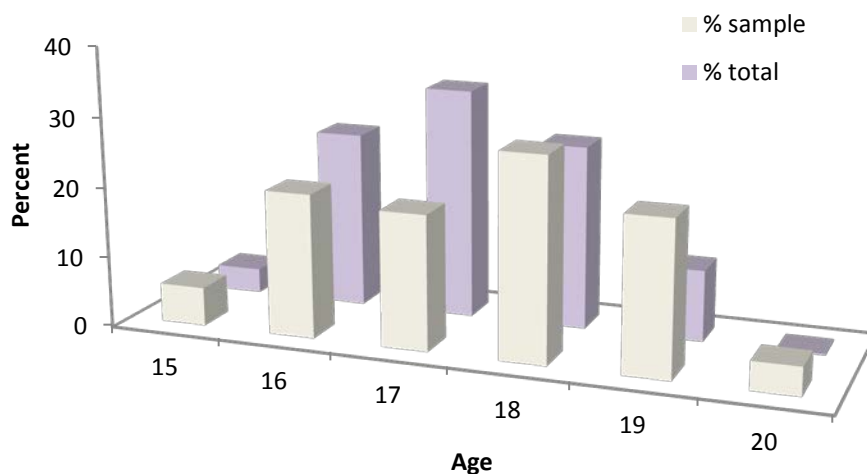
TEOs were heavily involved in these processes, by assisting us to pin down the young people for interview. During late February the research team also visited five of the TEOs – Christchurch (1), South Auckland (2) and Gisborne (2) – where individual interviews and focus groups were held with students, and a discussion on progression was held with staff.

### 3.0 About the young people and their courses

The first part of this section outlines demographic information on the participants. A small amount of information on the demographic characteristics of young people on Youth Guarantee Fees-Free (YGFF) courses was provided in the Ministry of Education’s Monitoring Report (Earle, 2014), as follows:

There were more males than females participating in Youth Guarantee programmes. Māori also had higher participation rates, making up a third of participants in fees-free places and secondary-tertiary programmes (p.2).

The age of participants was compared to the overall age distribution of YGFF students in 2014. The age distribution of the participants in the summer study is slightly older than those in the overall scheme, because they have been engaged in youth guarantee for between a few months and three years. Nevertheless, three quarters of the sample were 18 years of age or less, as Figure 1 illustrates.





*\*15 year olds may enrol if they have been formally exempted from school*

**Figure 1. Age of participants**

The sample contained more young women than men. According to Earle (2014), the scheme overall includes more males than females. Our observation on the ground was that there is significant gender bifurcation in the YGFF courses. Young men tend towards the traditionally male trades, while young women opt for hairdressing, hospitality and administration courses. The gender distribution of this study therefore reflects the courses offered by participant providers.












Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Male		40.3%	29
Female		59.7%	43
Other, please specify...		0.0%	0
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>72</b>

**Figure 2. Gender of participants**

Participants were asked to state their ethnicity. Multiple responses were allowed, although all but 12 gave a single response. Those mentioning two ethnicities were mainly Māori and Pasifika or Māori and Pākehā/New Zealand European. The Pākehā/New Zealand European respondents totalled 35 of the 73, or 48 percent. They were more likely to come from the South Island, including Christchurch and Dunedin.

Over 40 percent of respondents identified as Māori, which appears higher than Earle’s (2014) estimate of one-third. This may be because three of the areas that this study focused on had a high Māori representation: Gisborne, Auckland and Northland. For example, all 12 participants from Gisborne TEOs were Māori. Nine respondents identified as Pasifika – from Samoa, Tonga and a range of other countries.

Eleven students came from outside New Zealand or the Pacific, and included Asia, Europe, the USA, Australia and other (unspecified).

Response	Chart	Percentage	Count
Pākehā/New Zealand European		47.9%	35
Māori		41.1%	30
Samoa		2.7%	2
Tongan		2.7%	2
Other Pasifika		6.8%	5
Asian		4.1%	3
Australian		1.4%	1
European or the USA		6.8%	5
Other		2.7%	2
		<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>73</b>

**Figure 3. Stated ethnicity of participants**

Some groups are under-represented in YGFF courses. For example, only three students identified as Asian. Two of these were relatively high achievers, with NCEA Levels 2 and 3 respectively completed at school. One young woman was a talented musician whose dream of a performance career was “shattered” (in her words) by a car crash which severely

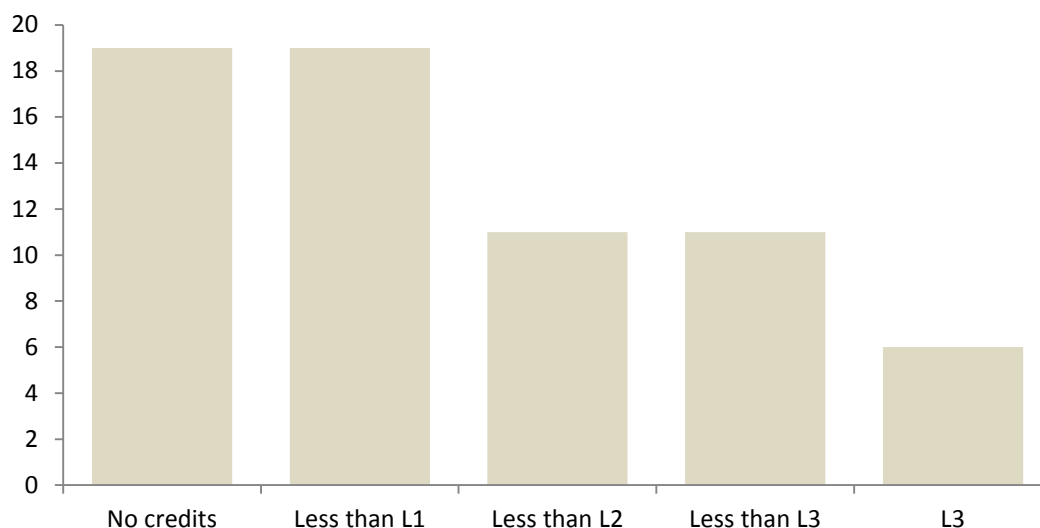
damaged her arm. She has used the YGFF as a mechanism to explore alternative futures, while battling severe depression.

The second Asian student had completed NCEA Level 3 and was studying Level 3 Business Administration in 2014 as a 'gap year' activity. He does not know whether to study finance, law or something else, and stated in the initial survey that he was "confused" about his future. In the second survey he noted that his confidence level had fallen further: "Gone down. I don't know, I'm quite unsure what's the degree for me, what it is I really want to do... when I get more of an idea, it'll probably go up again. I'm just so confused!"

The third Asian student identified as Asian/Māori, dropped out of school at a young age, did well in a YGFF course, worked for two years as a travel agent and has recently had a baby. She is looking for a career change in the future.

### 3.1 School achievement

The young people were asked how many credits they had received on the NZQF prior to entering the youth guarantee programme. The responses ranged from none at all (19) to six students who had already completed Level 3 NCEA at school. The results are shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4. No of school (NCEA) credits reported by participants (n=73)**

It is evident that the school performance of the participants in this study is much lower than the NCEA Level 2 benchmark. Only 20 percent of students met or exceeded that benchmark.

As this was a qualitative research study, the participants inevitably told 'stories' to explain the pathways they had followed. As with the previous study, many of them spoke of the circumstances of their early disengagement from school. Reasons included rebellious behaviour, 'bunking off', being bullied, school not interested in them, excluded from school, 'dropped out', parent unable to pay for NCEA credits, and so on. One person expressed regret at having left early, and one young woman, a new parent, was currently arranging to return to high school, to the teen parenting unit, as the TEO she attended did not have the facilities to support her. Some students left school specifically to join an YGFF programme:

*Didn't like school, wanted to leave anyway. I had a friend on the course who loved it and really sold it – really good course, seemed pretty alright, heard good things, better than sitting at home and doing nothing...*

One person recounted the key difference experienced between being at school and learning in a TEO:

*My friend told me how chill[ed] it was and I'd just got kicked out of high school because I wasn't attending, but the main reason was it that it wasn't fun to me and there were so many things to stress about - so many classes in a day, so many people in a class, have to be on time. I've done so well this year and I never thought I'd come this far. I started the course and realised how nice and lovely the tutors were and it was just like being in a family, every day you get a massive hug and they'd be so supportive.*

Some of the students travel long distances, literally and figuratively, to get to YGFF courses. One young woman we interviewed in Gisborne explained how she had made it to Gisborne and the course:

*I came in midterm 2013 with nothing, had dropped out of school in Australia (where Mum lives) and moved to Blenheim to live with Dad. Just stayed at home getting stoned all day. And then Dad got rid of me and I didn't go back, got sent to Aunty in Hawkes Bay but that was bad too. Nan offered me a bus ticket to Gisborne and I didn't want to go but Dad said I should try it out for a week and I've just stayed. They're really strict, they sat me down and gave me a big talk and all these restrictions, no phone, no Facebook, no going out. I had death threats coming at me, I think it was gang related. I was hanging out with Mongrel Mob, I think I'd be dead now if I was still in Hawkes Bay.*

Students enter the YGFF programme with the full range of school outcomes, from no qualifications at all to full school leaver credentials. Half of the students in this study had not completed Level 1 NCEA at the point of entering the YGFF programme, and 80 percent had not completed Level 2.

### **3.2 Enrolment and progress in the programme**

The following chart shows the month and year most of the 73 first-survey participants first enrolled in their current TEO. Eight students from one TEO were excluded from this analysis (for reasons outlined below), and a small number were not able to say when they were enrolled. One first enrolled at their current TEO in 2012, went away for a while and then returned. Some have completed two full years, or 18 months, of study.

The pattern for 2014 demonstrates clearly the 'rolling entry' process, discussed in the earlier report, in operation. Most TEOs in this study (8/12) allow students to enrol at any point in the year. This provides an additional service for students, but makes classroom life complex.

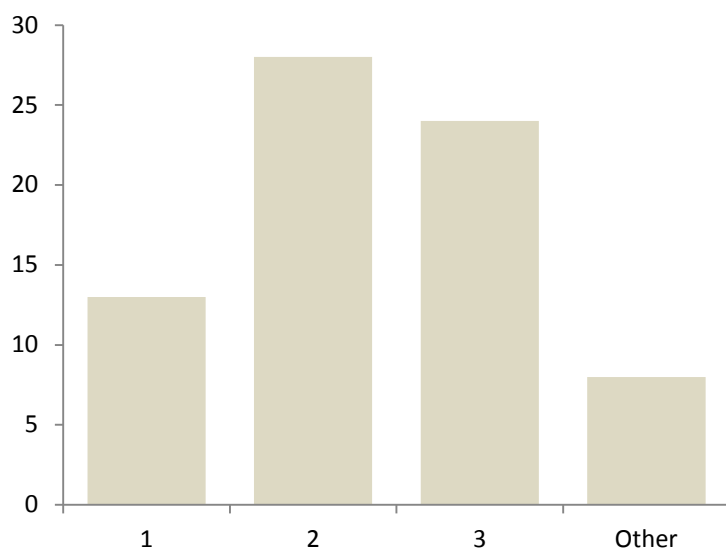
Months	2013				2014			
JFMA	2	2			8	13	4	1
MJJA	2		1		3	2	5	3
SOND					5	4	2	1*

\* This student was fifteen and had been at the TEO, non-enrolled, for several weeks at the end of 2014, waiting for his exemption from school to come through.

**Figure 5. Date of enrolment in the TEO by month and year.**

Students undertook a wide range of programmes on the youth guarantee. Some were mainly studying for their NCEA, but most were taking general vocational pathway courses, employment skills programmes or specific topics. Some of these programmes offer NCEA equivalency. Areas of study included automotive, business administration, hairdressing, engineering (of various kinds), hospitality, computing, early childhood, music, sports and wellbeing, panel beating, and radio.

Students were studying at a number of levels, and many were studying at more than one level at a time. Figure 5 outlines the highest level studied by the 73 participants in 2014.



**Figure 6. Enrolments by highest course level, 2014 (n=73)**

The tag 'other' consists of eight students included in the project who had completed YGFF in 2012 and 2013. One TEO was unable to offer us any current students as they had gone home for the holidays, but engaged us with some students who had been involved in a follow-up study in 2014. These students had left the TEO some time ago. As the summer study is about understanding pathways and barriers, we included these eight as a separate group.

The group of eight students is too small and too selective to provide any replicable data, but their YGFF record and subsequent study or work record is outlined in Table 2. Three of these students were Māori, two Pasifika and one Asian and, as the table shows, they left school with few qualifications.

Entered YGFF with	Completed YGFF with	Is now...
No qualifications	Business Admin L3	BSc Business student
No qualifications	Hairdressing L3	Working as a barber
No qualifications	Levels 1-3	B. Nursing student
No qualifications	Levels 3 and 4	B. Ed (teacher)
Had NCEA 2	Level 3	B. Business student
No qualifications	Level 2	Had baby (was working FT)
No qualifications	Level 2	Plans further study
Gateway course	Level 3	Has apprenticeship

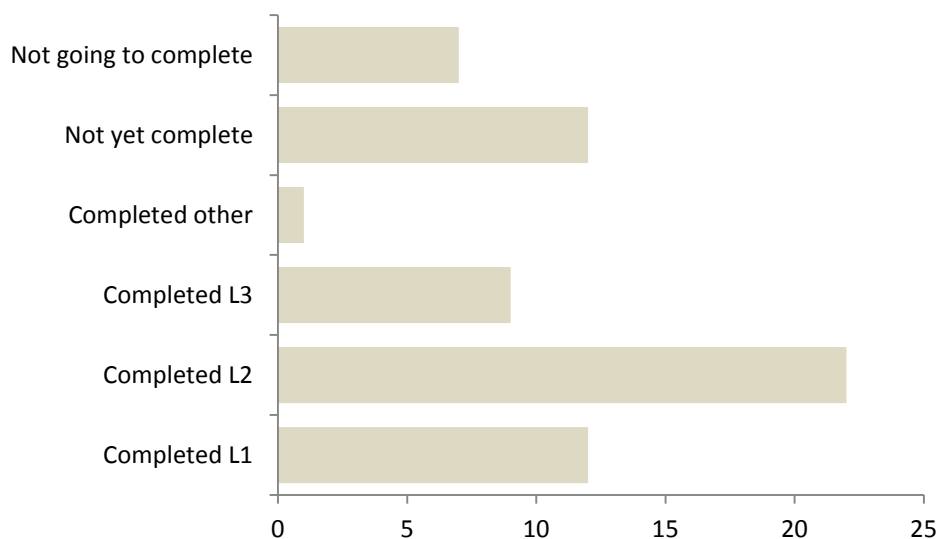
**Table 2. YGFF completion and progression, eight students from 2011-2013**

Nearly all of this group would meet the Ministry’s criteria (Earle, 2014) for progression to higher levels. The eight students all acknowledged the importance of their YGFF courses in moving them towards higher learning and better jobs. Comments included “would be working in McDonalds without it”, “imagine a school drop-out getting to university”, “I am thinking of post-graduate study” and many others. One young woman, who “didn’t even have Level 1” when she left school, is nannying, tutoring at Camp America and about to start her teaching degree:

*Absolutely I hated school, didn't do very well... having support from [tutors] and we were all there because we wanted to be and changed our lives, common denominator. I was absolutely stoked that I got to go into the programme and wouldn't be where I am today without it.*

The evidence from these eight students is that the YGFF programme can offer pathways to higher learning, even for the most disadvantaged students. The factors that lead to these successes, and the pathways taken, need further research.

Because of the rolling entry system, not all of the students enrolled in 2014 completed their course of study within the year. At least 12 students still had qualifications to complete from their current programme. Seven students noted that they were not intending to complete their programme, for a variety of reasons. For example, a student completed Level 2 and her TEO “helped me get into teacher training college”, and she was not required to complete her Level 3.



**Figure 7. Status of completion of qualifications in 2014 (n=63).**

Another way of examining progression is to measure the qualification distance travelled by participants from their entry to the YGFF programme until the end of 2014. The 'years of progression' measure equals the highest level completed in 2014 minus the highest level completed at secondary school.

We have calculated this by assigning a zero to qualifications less than Level 1, a 1 to Level 1 and so on. Using this method, 17 students made no progress in qualifications during 2014. The largest group, 27 students, made one year's progress, completing a qualification one year beyond their entry level. As well, 23 students progressed two years and five students progressed three years. A small number of students had entered YGFF in 2012 and 2013, accounting for most of the multi-level progression.

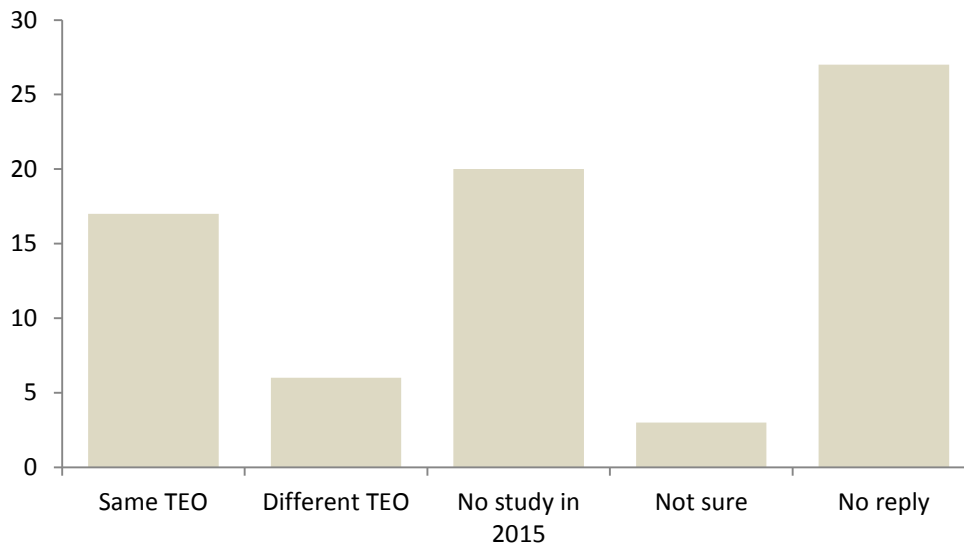
The number of students with a zero score reflects that many students were working on but had not completed one or more levels at the time of the study. At the end of 2014 most of these students intended to return in 2015 to complete their programme.

Some participants reported they received multiple qualifications, but no-one trumped this young person: "...graduated last week, NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3, health and safety Levels 4 and 5 and business admin and computing Levels 1 and 2. They don't normally do NCEA Level 3 so I don't know how I got it! All within two years."

This section has outlined the baseline data for this study, as reported by the participants in their first interview.

## 4.0 Aspirations at the end of 2014

A key element of the study was whether plans changed over the summer. It was therefore important to pin the participants down early on their aspirations for 2015. The responses are outlined in Figure 8. Around a third did not feel able to outline their 2015 plans at the first interview, and, of the rest, around half intended to continue their study in 2015 and about half did not.



**Figure 8. Student assessments of their likely study in 2015 (n = 73)**

Those returning to their current TEO wanted to complete their current courses or start new ones. Some were progressing to non-YGFF courses at other TEOs. Examples of these aspirations are:

*I'll be continuing with Level two, probably finish around September or October.*

*Yes, hopefully will do another qualification at the same place, Level 2. This is a separate qualification for painting and building.*

*Going to [TEO] to do business administration, Level 3.*

*Now that I've finished I've enrolled at [another TEO], Level 4 business administration, carrying it on, starting Feb 16<sup>th</sup>.*

Most of those not intending to study in 2015 are keen to get employment. Two already had gained apprenticeships and four more were actively looking for them. Two were keen to join the Army or Air Force. Some had holiday jobs or job prospects, with the possibility of longer-term work:

*I have a job coming up soon at freezing works through friends. It's quite a bit of money. Looking for a panel beating apprenticeship in the long term.*

In terms of future plans, 18 participants stated they will continue studying in 2015 towards their current YGFF qualification. A further eight thought they would study towards a different qualification, and four of the cohort who left in 2012-13 will also continue their studies in 2015. Twelve definitely want to go into work, plus the additional six who cite an apprenticeship as their target. Eleven have no plans and others declined to share them.

Three cited a desire for further study but had concerns about student debt. A number of students found planning for the future hard:

*Looking at a vet nursing course, not too sure what it is, haven't looked.*

*Might go to [TEO] not sure what to do, have a sister who does a cooking class which looks good.*

*Yeah, computing course at [TEO].*

*I am hoping to get a job.*

*Yeah I just don't know what I want to do, I'm so stuck, it's so hard because you just get pushed out there to do what you want but if you don't know what to do you're just stuck. I don't want to go to university, but at school they expected you to do that.*

Apart from the young man who has got the job at the freezing works, it is noticeable that those wishing to get jobs or apprenticeships are not finding it easy to get into permanent work. One young person commented that since her course finished in August, she has just acted as a volunteer at her former TEO:

*I finished in August, at the end of the second term but kept going back there to help with the teachers and on reception, didn't have anything to do, better than doing nothing!*

#### **4.1 The labour market**

These students have connections to two labour markets: the part-time summer labour market, which involves mainly retail sales, low-level hospitality work and, in some regions, 'picking' (i.e. fruit and vegetables), and the longer term labour market.

Over the summer, 15 of the participants have worked in short term employment: in the Warehouse, Mitre 10, supermarkets and other retail outlets, helping a parent in hair salon, in a café, in a kennels, at the butcher's and other mainly low paid, part time or temporary work. Many of these positions are part-time – as little as a day per week. Some do volunteer work with sports teams and other organisations. Two have new babies, one lost her job and one is looking for work. Apart from these, the others are doing nothing, chilling out, spending time in church or doing 'stuff' over the summer.

Participants were asked about how they went about getting a job. The general response was that job-hunting was very difficult. People found jobs primarily through friends and family and word of mouth.

*It's pretty hard to get a job out there eh, I was lucky because I live with my brother who works there, he said if I keep turning up they'll give me a job.*

*I'm looking for a part time one but it's majorly hard, been looking on Seek and TradeMe, just putting my CV up and stuff like that, especially hard as I'm 16 with no experience. How can I get experience if no one gives me a chance?*

Some people walked into places at just the right time, or have relatives able to give jobs "Uncle is the contractor". "Auntie is a supervisor", "my sister used to work there":

*I was just browsing TradeMe one day and thought I'd love that job and that I'd go for it and I got it first pop! Surprised myself really.*

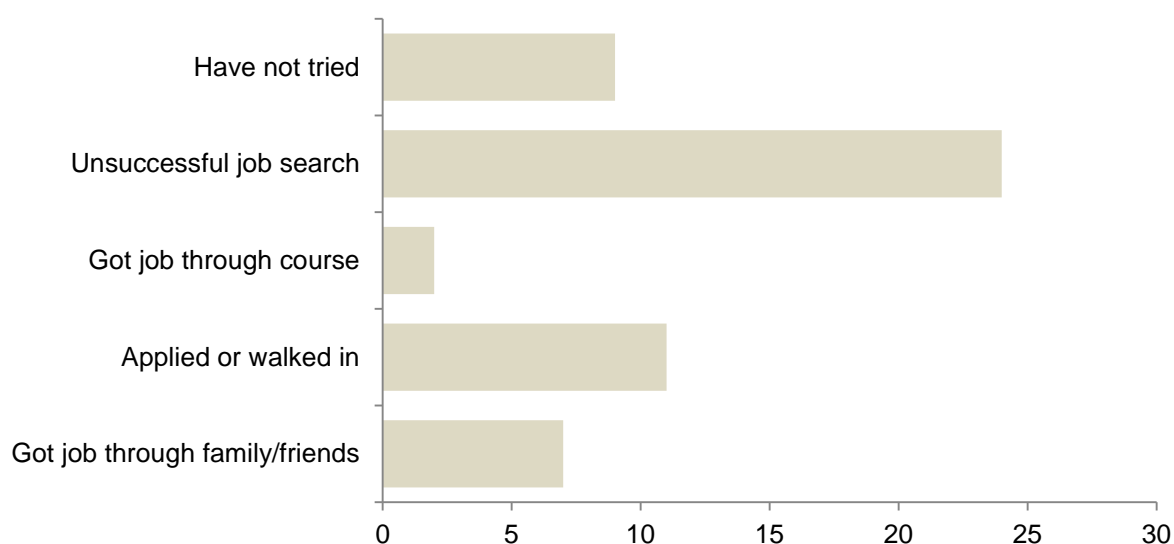


The largest category is unsuccessful job search. While there are temporary and casual jobs available in most areas over the summer, finding a more sustained position, and one with a reasonable wage is somewhat harder. Some participants are resigned to a long wait:

*It's quite hard looking for one as businesses are quite quiet, not a lot going in [city]. It's just more a matter of time though, rather than whether I'll get a job or not, never know when one will come up. Might be a few weeks, might be a year.*

Of the 2014 finishers, few had gained full-time permanent jobs, although a number were looking for them during the first survey. One young man was about to commence work at a local freezing works, working all night. One young woman has gained a good position as a student officer in an ITP (where she was previously a student). Four or five have holiday-only positions.

The full summary of sources of employment is outlined in Figure 9. This chart refers to all forms of job search, whether permanent or a holiday job (although mainly the former). Only 53 people responded to this question.



**Figure 9. Sources of employment, or job search status (n=53)**

A key to 'progression' is undertaking courses that lead to skilled work. Participants were asked to consider their future employment. Some had very fixed plans, while others had none at all. A popular choice among the young women was hairdressing:

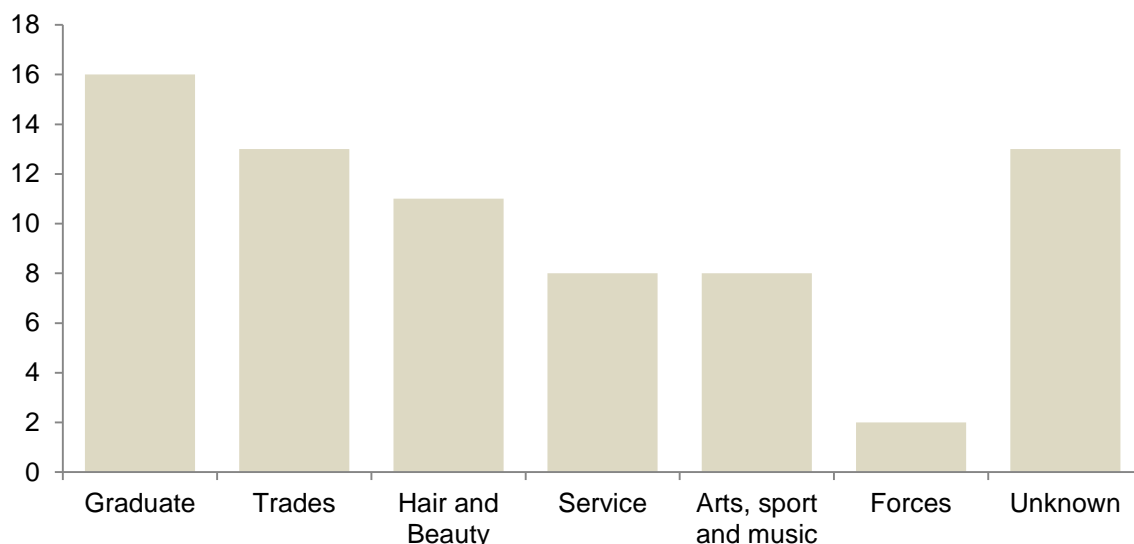
*Hairdresser, is good to have two qualifications (hairdressing and makeup), want to have everything under my name so when I go to other places they can see how skilled I am. Want to travel as well – maybe go work in London with working visa, not sure which country but definitely work at the same time so I'm not blowing my money!*

Another had ambitious plans – perhaps to be the next Peter Jackson?

*I'm so into movies and TV is my main hobby, absolutely love it. I want to study directing and producing. I'm currently writing up two scripts for short movies I want to do. We plan to have own business, a production company, we want to act in them as well, play ourselves- stories our based on our lives. Start our own YouTube channel, nervous about that though, going to be embarrassing, can put our short films on YouTube, to get practice to see if people like it.*

For the young men, a future in automotive, engineering or building trades was also a popular choice. It is interesting that, while the hairdressers can bypass apprenticeships by gaining qualifications, for the male trades an apprenticeship was still a requirement.

However, the most popular aspiration was for a professional career, as a teacher, a nurse, a business manager, a vet or vet nurse or similar graduate profession. A summary of career aspirations is presented in Figure 10.



**Figure 10. Career aspirations (n=71)**

Participants had a range of views on whether the youth guarantee courses had changed their plans for the future. Most (58/71) stated that their plans had changed. The three things most mentioned were the ability to study without debt, the gaining of more confidence and the opening out of options for the future. The courses helped people improve their self-esteem and motivation. For some, they are transformative:

*Yeah it has the course has helped me change, helped me out. Being here I can really see a better life ahead of me. I'm really confident. I tell a lot of people not on course that I was in their place, I've talked them back into education, told them they shouldn't have babies, life is better than that. I don't think I'd have got this far without the tutors telling me I can do it, I can climb these steps. I'm a totally different person. My friends see the changes with me and ask how I did all this. Some just don't like listening, don't like the work. I keep saying keep positive, don't think negative, life is better. It's free, take all the opportunities while it's free. I tell them we watch our parents struggle, sitting around, I didn't want that, it's because they have no qualifications.*

*Yep it has, in really positive way. It's made a difference to my life, my future. Two years ago I just thought of alcohol. I looked after my niece on week days, and went out and got drunk on the weekends, smoked a lot of dope too. Most my friends from then just wander around, I've tried to persuade them to come here. A lot have now found courses or just moved to Australia. Definitely treated with respect here, at school they kind of did, some teachers were nice, some not so much.*

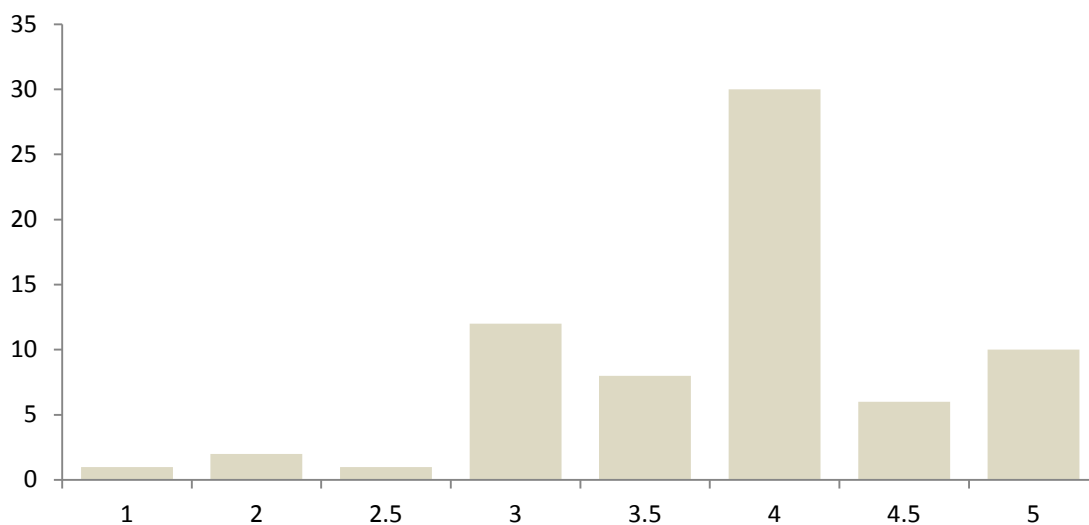
Apart from the hairdressers, few thought that their courses would lead them directly into their work choices, and some have several years of study planned, often including significant changes in course topic or vocational area.

Thirteen students had not changed their plans since before enrolling on the courses, although the course may take them one step further into training but not necessarily into work:

*Not really. I still want to be a panel beater. But the opportunities have not come up for me.*

Two-thirds of students reported that they had received explicit careers advice, and in some cases work experience as well. Some trades courses also actively look for apprenticeships for their students.

Finally, students were asked to rate their confidence in the future on a scale of 1-5, in terms of work and career. The results are outlined in Figure 11.



**Figure 11. Ratings on a scale of 1 to 5, confidence in the future, 5 is high score (n=71)**

Overall at the end of 2014, the young people demonstrated high levels of confidence in the future, a modal score of four and a mean of 3.9. There is nothing to compare these scores with, but the qualitative comments indicate that the YGFF courses have improved the outlook of the young people. Below are three comments from young people, two explaining a high score and one explaining a low score:

*I feel really confident, I see that I've set up my goals and I see my future being brighter than it was before.*

*I feel confident in my knowledge of the industry I want to go into, don't know how difficult it will be to get the job I want; confident I can do the job, but not that I can get it in the first place.*

The final quote comes from a person who, as a result of an accident, will never be able to pursue her life's dream (according to her own account). She is battling depression and, while she enjoys her course, does not know what the future will bring. In that context, her score of 2.5, and associated comment can be understood:

*Although I wish it could be higher, I know that anything can be changed in an instant.*

This concludes the section on the aspirations of the young people revealed in interviews at the end of 2014, and into January 2015. The second survey process begins to reveal changes that have, or have not, occurred over the holiday period, and these are discussed in the next section.

## 5.0 Over the summer – strengths, barriers, enablers and opportunities

The first survey provided baseline data about each of the participants. The second and subsequent surveys, focus groups and other contacts provided the opportunity to examine whether and how things changed over the summer. The earlier study demonstrated that students enjoyed their YGFF courses, and that their self-concept and self-esteem grew through the programmes. Was all of this good work undone over the long break? Were students vulnerable to external influences such as alcohol and drug abuse, family breakdown or other cause? Did they just give up, or move away, or get a job? The aim is to understand Earle's (2014) finding that YGFF students are no more likely to progress to higher levels of learning, or good work, than non-course participants.

### 5.1 Changes over the summer

This section provides a broad qualitative account of changes over the summer. Five categories are explained, with examples: no change, changed study plans, searching in the labour market, family issues and returning to NEET status. The numbers given are indicative: at times there are significant overlaps between the categories.

For 28 students, nothing much changed over the summer in terms of their study plans. Seven of these were hairdressers, who tended to have clear paths mapped out. Most of the others in this category were continuing with incomplete courses or moving on to higher levels in the same area. One student reported that her literacy and numeracy scores had fallen back over the summer, and that she was going to have to redo some work.

Although students in this category were continuing on a course of study, apart from the hairdressers there is little evidence that participants were settled into clear vocational pathways. Most of the courses being completed were NCEA and generic certificates such as Employment Skills, with students either continuing the previous year's study or starting at a higher level.

Of those still studying, seven wanted to change their study topic once their current course was complete. The new topics include nursing, social work, building, tourism and business administration.

Most of the rest were keen to complete their qualifications, while a small number wanted to get into employment. A number had unmet aspirations. One young person was keen to develop and open a rock climbing centre, but expects, with tutor support, to end up in a more ordinary job. For another, the Youth Coach was searching for an apprenticeship for him in a trades area, or he expected to end up in another job.

Twelve students decided to continue studying in 2015 but are headed for new providers, either at the beginning of the year or when their current course is complete.

One participant, a young Māori woman aged 17 who left school without qualifications, has followed a difficult route through training. In 2013 as a 16 year old, she took courses at two TEOs that did not work for her. In 2014, she started on NCEA Level 1 on the YGFF scheme. She said she had not known it was possible to study NCEA at TEOs. She finished Level 1 and will complete Level 2 in a few months. In the first survey, she stated she wanted to go to another TEO in 2015 and study cooking. At the same time, her career aspiration was palaeontology or archaeology. By the second survey, she was still going to the same TEO, but wanted to study science or fitness. By this stage she had 'thought about' her future and

decided she might go into the Navy. In short, this young woman had ideas about what she would like to study and her career aspirations, but there was little relationship between the various goals. Perhaps it is too much to expect that a young school drop-out should have a career progression plan firmly in mind.

Several students who completed NCEA Levels 2 or 3, or equivalent, last year are moving into other study pathways in 2015. One is doing a short house-painting course organised by Work and Income, one is doing a pre-Police course, one a security course (L2) (with the intention of becoming a Māori Warden) and two intend to study business at ITPs, at Levels 4 and 5 respectively.

One young woman now aged 19, is starting a teacher education degree course in 2015, which her PTE helped her get into. She: “passed Levels 1, 2 and 3 NCEA at school but Mum didn't pay for it so don't have the certificates”. She has been through two TEOs studying, first, performing arts (L4, not YG) and then a pre-teaching course at Level 3 (YGFF). She fell in love with teaching, and has been accepted into a university primary teaching programme. Arguably she was qualified for entry for this programme two years ago, but her lack of paid-for qualifications caused a delay, which subsequently led to a significant change in her career aspirations.

One young man completed a Level 2 hospitality course in 2014, and was returning to complete Level 3. Over the summer, he discovered body sculpting at the gym, and he has begun to train towards competing in the area. As a result, he has turned away from hospitality and he has begun a Level 3 sport and fitness course. He wants to be a personal trainer.

Others are moving to different courses at new TEOs. One young woman wants to be a chef but also a hairdresser. In the meantime she will be doing a chef course, but names her long term goal as hairdressing.

Another who left school at 15 is working towards her Level 2 NCEA and in the first survey noted her intention to work and save up before further study. She wants to go to university and study to be a veterinarian. By the second survey she had taken on part time work while completing her last few credits. Her aspirations remain unchanged and she is confident about the future, despite the gap between her current achievement and her aspirations. She noted:

*You never know what the future holds, don't know what it's going to bring you, anything can change, anything can change in an instant so you've got to be a bit wary. I hope I've got some good plans, I'd like my future to be very cruisy and delightful!*

Seventeen young people are now in employment or looking for work. The young man who took on a night shift at the freezing works is now looking for something a little easier. While the job is well-paid, the hours are poor (10 hour night shifts) and the work is “too much”. Others have a range of low-level jobs, including packing, casual and supermarket work.

There is unemployment among this group. Two young men have apprenticeships, but four others are still searching for one. All four have completed their Level 2 qualifications. As well, four others are looking for permanent work. They are resigned in some cases to a long wait. All except one have completed qualifications to Levels 2 or 3. Some are contemplating further study, not because they need the qualifications, but as a fill-in until they can get work.

Two young women have had their lives interrupted by unplanned family duties. One had her study interrupted by having a baby and, as noted elsewhere, she is now returning to school to continue her studies in a teen parent unit.

The second unexpectedly took on the care of her younger sister and she, her partner and the sister have moved out into a rural area. She may look for work later. The young woman whose injuries in a car accident have put paid to her music career remains unsure about what she will do in 2015.

Two young people are not engaged in employment, training or other activity. They are having difficulty deciding how to move forward. One young woman in a training programme had a court appearance coming up the week after we met her at a TEO visit. She did not expect the outcome to affect her study.

## **5.2 Babies, study and the future**

Two babies were born over the summer to participants. The first, in December, was born to the Asian/Māori participant discussed above, who had been out of YGFF since the end of 2012 and had worked as a travel agent in 2013 and 2014. In the first interview she told us she had resigned from this position and would eventually be looking for something a little more active, not working in an office. In the follow-up interview she stated she was enjoying being a mother, that her son was sleeping through the night, and that she wanted to be a 'stay at home mum' for a few years. She eventually wants to go back to studying:

*I want to do midwifery, it would be really fun and it's something I'm really passionate about.*

Her plans had not changed since the earlier interview and her confidence levels in the future remain at 3.5.

The second new mother had her child in early January. We interviewed her at almost the same time, and she was busy and did not want to talk in detail. A young Māori woman, she had left school with no qualifications and had been studying business administration for the past nine months, gaining a Level 2 qualification. She noted that she 'might' consider doing more study, and she reiterated this in the second interview in February.

In late February we visited the TEO where this young woman had been a student, and, as it turned out, she was visiting the TEO during our visit. She was interviewed for a third time and had decided to return to study in 2015:

*Yeah in a few months. They're talking about doing a Level three computing course here or I'll do Level 3 at [the local high school with a teen parent unit], which I think I'll do because they'll look after my baby which is good.*

## **5.3 An eventful summer**

In addition to their study and work choices, the participants in this study had an eventful summer. One young woman was ejected from her family home, and another was removed from the course provider. One got into university (but was well-qualified), while others hold dreams of getting there, like the aspiring vet currently struggling through Level 2 NCEA. One young woman gained an acting role in a film over the summer, and after that will be working towards being a Māori Warden. One spent much of the summer in hospital after an operation. There were new family responsibilities and part time jobs.



## Participant A: a case study

Participant A was interviewed in early January 2015. She had only enrolled in her TEO four weeks before the end of 2014. She was 18 years of age and had left school at age 15, with no qualifications. She had enrolled for a combined Levels 1 and 2 NCEA course. In the interview, she revealed several years of addiction to synthetic cannabis, during which time she had 'sold everything she could' from her Mum's home to feed her habit and, eventually, started selling the drugs herself. With the help of a local church, she has given up the drugs and was looking forward to completing her course. When the course restarted two weeks later, this young woman did not turn up. Phone calls and texts from the TEO and the research team in February failed to elicit any response. Given the precarious nature of her recovery, the silence seemed ominous. By early March there was still no sign of her, but an online search revealed a Facebook page in her name, showing she had enrolled at another local TEO, studying Makeup Design, a Level 4 fee-paying course. In her interview, she had noted her desire to be a "makeup artist and beautician", and it appears she was following her dream<sup>1</sup>.

None of the participants mentioned any financial risks to us. None mentioned any drug and alcohol problems. Several of the participants told us that they actively sought to encourage those from their previous lives to get into YGFF courses. In the earlier study, few participants left YGFF without aspirations for either employment or further study. The finding is the same here. Even the three students who do not know what to do will probably end up at university (2) and in some form of music-related employment, such as an events manager.

Those in the most difficult position are out of work and, in about half of the cases, looking for apprenticeships. Some are reluctantly back at training because they were unable to find jobs of the kind they wanted, usually because of the lack of positions within the regional labour market. There is a risk in this that training courses come to act as a replacement for unemployment, especially when the young people run out of YGFF or other fees-free courses. There are advantages in being on a course, as opposed to being unemployed, in terms of new skills learned and support from the TEOs. But the risk is in burning up any student allowance eligibility, and running up student debt, thus cutting off later opportunities.

The question arising from Earle (2014) is whether there are any new barriers that arise over the summer that prevent young people from progressing. Such barriers that were identified were minor, and our qualitative research continues to show significant progression towards Level 4 or good work.

Perhaps what can be said is that progress can be slow, and sideways, and that aspiration at times outweighs likely short-term outcomes. Quite a number of the participants significantly changed their goals and their courses over summer. For example, a chance encounter at a gym caused a person to switch from hospitality to sports, and to take up competitive body-sculpting. While most of the opportunities the young people report come from the TEOs, not all do.

It may be that the measures applied by Earle were simply too close in, and that a period of time, say two years, needs to pass in order to assess progression. Certainly the study of eight 2012 and 2013 graduates discussed above demonstrates almost a clean sweep of progression targets, not to mention some impressive outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> There are some important things to be learned from this case study, the most important one being that a lack of contact does not mean a bad outcome. For a number of weeks we feared this young person had 'dropped out', and instead she has essentially pursued her stated desires!



## 6.0 Choices for 2015

At the end of the summer break, the situation of the young people, as far as can be ascertained, is as follows:

In YGFF programmes	33
In other training or education courses	10
Working/apprenticeship	12
Looking for work	5
Looking after a baby	2
Undecided/other	10

### 6.1 Studying in 2015

A number of students (13) are engaged in programmes that have progression built-in, and intend to stay two or more years at the TEO. The best vocational example of this is hairdressing, where participants can bypass any need for an apprenticeship through 2.5-3 years of study. While hairdressing cannot be completed through YGFF courses, a substantial amount of study towards the qualification can take place in non-fee courses. This has opened up the study of hairdressing to many young people who would otherwise not have had access to it.

One young woman (like most of them, she left school with no qualifications), noted:

*Yes definitely, I don't need to stress out about getting a student loan it's so easy and comfy, simple and don't have to worry – and I'm working too so getting enough money. It's really easy...*

The focus group held at a hairdressing TEO reinforced the strength of the progression in that field, although also pointed to the fact that the course gets harder:

*Since I've been back after Christmas it's got a lot more serious at the course, it's helped me to learn more about hairdressing. Good thing though!*

In the non-trades area, a number of students are progressing between NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 (or equivalent) over up to two years. For this small group, gaining qualifications at Level 2 and above is a priority.

The second category, 14 students, consists of those who need to finish existing courses. With rolling entry, many students in YGFF are studying across academic years. Many of these students want to complete their current study then move into further study or employment with study (usually a move from Levels 2 to 3, but not always).

Aspirations to move between subjects were outlined by five students:

Computing L3	Nursing L7
Sports L2	Building L3
NCEA, Māori and hospitality	Tourism L3
Sports L2	Business Administration L3
NCEA L1/ computing	Trades Apprenticeship (L4 study)

Ten students are studying elsewhere in 2015. Four will be at university (three who left before 2014, and one who is just entering a primary teaching programme) and six at other TEOs, studying pre-teaching, pre-policing, business administration Level 4 (2), hospitality and one

not specified. All of these courses are Levels 3, 4 or higher. Some are free courses; some of the participants continue to be debt-averse.

## 6.2 Employment in 2015

Twelve are working. Their jobs are: casual and temporary work (3), barber, nanny, freezing worker (2), apprentice (2), retail/hospitality (2), finance officer (1) and non-apprentice trades (1). Only four intend to stay in their positions. Three are working while waiting for an apprenticeship, four are intending or likely to take on further study and one is looking for another position.

### Participant B: a case study

Participant B is a pākehā male based in a South Island city. He left school at 16, half way through the year. He did not complete NCEA Level 2 and commenced at a trades-based TEO doing Level 1 automotive engineering. He stayed there for 2.5 years and finished Level 1 but did not finish Level 2. Over the summer he was offered a job in a freezing works, and was excited about this. However, with 3:00am starts and long shifts, he quickly became disillusioned with the job and at the end of summer was still employed there, but looking for alternatives.

At the end of summer four participants were unemployed and actively looking for employment, plus one unemployed and looking for an apprenticeship. All of these intend to study later (one as an apprentice, four in various courses).

## 6.3 Other

As noted previously, two participants had babies over the summer. One (aged 20), who completed her YGFF scheme in 2012, has been working for two years and intends to take up to two years off to be with her baby, before re-entering the labour market. She was working as a travel agent but wants a new start in the future, and will probably retrain as a midwife. The other (aged 18) completed Level 2 NCEA at the end of last year, and had her baby in January. She now intends to pick up her study at the local high school that has a teen parenting unit.

Finally, there are 10 2014 participants in the YGFF scheme who do not fit into other categories – six males and four females. Several are in and out of courses without much direction (3), one has an injury that has prevented him continuing study, one has gone to Australia, one is a full-time caregiver for her younger sister, two expect they will start looking for work at some point, and two have no plans at present.

Eight of the 10 had confidence levels below the modal level of 4/5. One of these estimated their confidence level at 1/5 on first interview, and was unable to be contacted for a second interview despite several messages. From the information available, we have put together a brief picture.

### Participant C: A case study

He is a pākehā who left school with 'about 40 credits' in Year 11, and commenced study at an ITP in 2014 after "I had been on and off the streets for a year and I needed something to get me back into place". He was studying Level 2 vocational studies and visual arts on the YGFF. He noted that the course was different from that advertised:

*I think coz, I was quite bummed out, system had changed the day before we started our actual course, nothing going on, bummed out about that, but it was a good course, good people on the course, good tutors who taught you what you needed.*

He is “not sure” whether he has passed the vocational studies part as he “barely turned up to it”. He has no idea what he is going to do now. He would like to continue with study in the visual arts in 2016, but does not know whether he needs to do more study before moving to higher levels. He will “cross that bridge when I come to it”. He currently has work experience at a café; they give him jobs when he turns up, but not regular: “they said when they have a proper job going free they'll give it to me”. His aspirations are to work in “something to do with music”. He scored confidence at 1/5 because “you never know what the future holds”. Participant C is an interesting mixture of an articulate young man, and a person with little evident aspiration for the immediate future.

#### **6.4 Good choices?**

By the end of the summer, the majority of the participants in this study were re-engaged in training, education or employment. About 20 percent (17/71) were unemployed or not in the labour market for a variety of reasons. With around half of the participants likely to complete their current YGFF courses during the year, there are still some decision points to be made in 2015. As well, the unemployed and the non-choice participants have few discernible pathways at present.

The case of the four young people waiting for apprenticeships needs highlighting, and will be discussed in the policy section. These young people have completed either one or two year's pre-apprenticeship trades training, but without an apprenticeship to go to, there appears to be no pathways for them. Some trades areas (e.g. painting) do not require a trades certificate, but many do.

Some of the participants are taking a rather roundabout route to their preferred vocational future, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Given that 38 participants entered YGFF with less than Level 1 NCEA, and 49 with less than Level 2, it is to be expected that many will try out various vocational areas. The extension of free tertiary courses up to Level 3 essentially mandates a broader search pattern for young people at the lower levels of the framework.

#### **Participant D: a case study**

At the first interview, this young women (age 17, Māori), was completing her Level 2 business course and contemplating a move to her local ITP to study Level 3. She was searching for part-time work, without success. Her confidence level was high (5/5): “gotta have the faith”. By the follow-up interview, she had experienced amazing changes in her plans. In her words:

*Yes, there's been a lot of changes. I've finished my course and I'm going down to Queenstown to work on 15th, I've been cast in a feature film, it's a big jump. Seven weeks, drama film, I applied for it online, four auditions and I ended up with the part. It's pretty exciting.*

In addition to the film, she had also changed her study plans for 2015. Instead of Level 3 business, she intended to enrol on a security course that would put her on a pathway to becoming a Māori Warden.

Overall, confidence levels went up slightly over the summer, but there was no significant difference. On balance, it can be said that participants held their existing levels of life confidence over the summer.

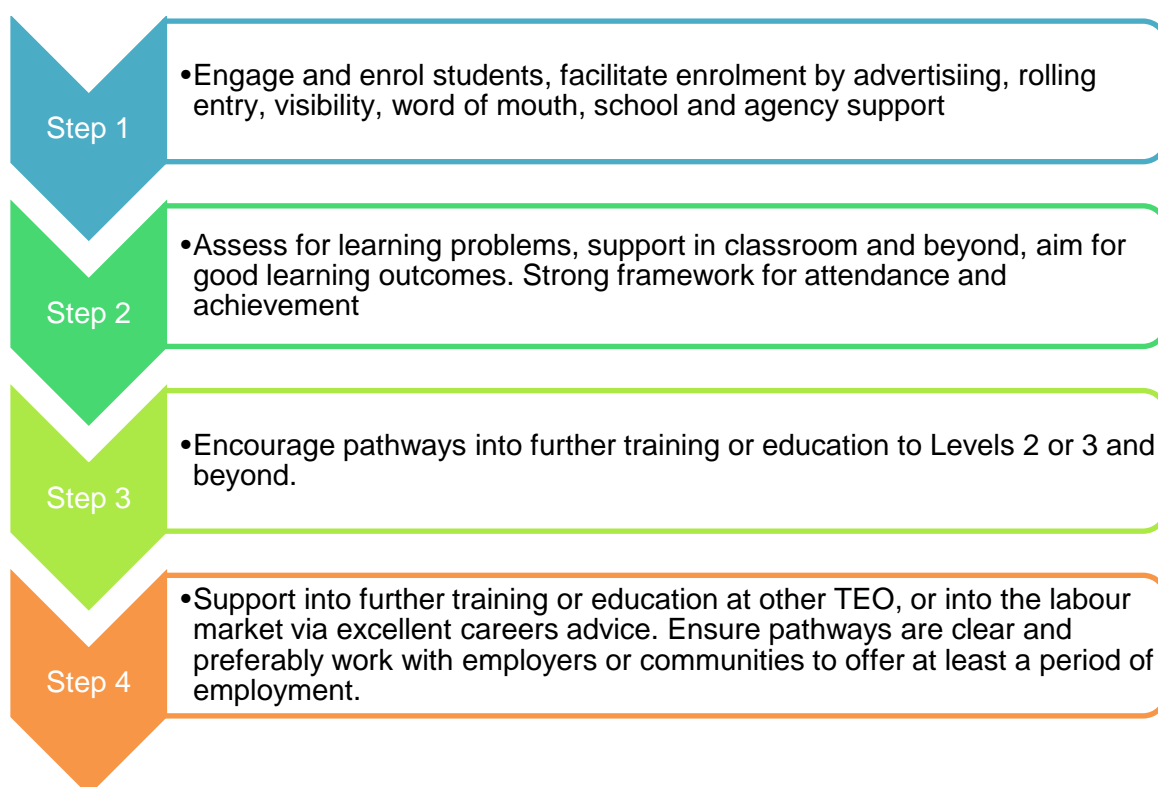
The next section examines whether there is more that TEOs can do to support students to make good choices and forge strong pathways.

## 7.0 What more can the youth guarantee scheme do?

The focus of this study has been on the situation and choice of young people, and especially course and employment options, over the summer period 2014-15. In this section, the TEOs are examined. From what we have heard from the young people, and what we saw during site visits and interviews with providers, what more can be done to facilitate good outcomes for young people?

### 7.1 The role of the provider

The work of the YGFF providers can be categorised in the following schema.



In general, we found in the earlier study that YGFF programmes did Step 2 excellently, but were struggling with Step 1 (often because the tutors had to do the engagement) and Step 4. One participant in the summer study noted their tutor was going to help them get work, and another cited help from a youth coach. Generally the amount of support for Step 4 is patchy and needs to be consistent. See also policy issues below.

Step 3 is very strong in the hairdressing TEO cited above, but is variable in other TEOs. While there is little doubt that the tutors support the aspirations of learners, it is not clear how they build good pathways so these aspirations can be achieved. The 'vocational pathways' model at the policy level is promising, but both current and past studies have shown that these young people engage in somewhat disjointed and chaotic pathways – more like Spaghetti Junction than the Champs Elysees! Five examples were given above of participants wanting to move into very different areas. A mechanism needs to be available to support this process.

## 7.2 The caring and support role and qualification pathways

First, it is worth reiterating from the earlier study that TEOs offer a hugely supportive environment for YGFF students, whether the front line is staffed by tutors, youth workers or senior staff. The tradition of TEOs supporting disadvantaged learners goes back a long way. Examples can be found in Benseman's (2006) study, and much further back in Korndorffer's (1985) research. This pastoral function is basically immeasurable but apparent in many interviews. The staff support, engage, teach, listen, counsel and encourage the youth, and have been doing so in youth guarantee and former youth training courses for 30 years. The impact of this pastoral role over time must be significant.

TEC course completion rates for 2013 were that only 60 percent of EFTS in 2013 completed a course (any part of an overall qualification). According to our interviews with TEOs over the summer, they believe the retention and completion rates will have improved in 2014. The prior research (Gordon et al, 2014) found that those who remained in a programme were likely to complete it, and the summer study bears that out – nearly all of the participants had completed, or were intending to complete, their YGFF programme. One person had not completed, and one person expressed anxiety that the study was 'hard', but apart from that success was expected.

With the shift to the youth guarantee scheme from 2012, there has been a shift towards the gaining of full qualifications, so that YGFF students can gain equivalency with those getting their NCEA at school. The policy basis of this is that those who complete NCEA Level 2 have better outcomes than those who do not, and that therefore this is a potentially effective benchmark. However, this goal was slightly called into question by Earle's (2014) monitoring report, which found that success in NCEA did not lead to progression to higher levels.

There is little doubt that the NCEA Level 2 goal initially proved difficult for TEOs, but many reported over the summer that they had improved their outcomes in 2014. Such claims will be confirmed or otherwise by the Ministry of Education when it releases the 2014 data on retention and completion rates.

## 7.3 Strong pathways

Hairdressing is a vocational area that can offer strong pathways for learners. One PTE dedicated to hairdressing and related courses was part of the earlier study and the summer study. That TEO has very low withdrawal and high completion rates, according to TEC performance criteria. In February a focus group was convened at a South Auckland site to meet with the young people in the study and examine the barriers they faced. Five young women, all Māori or Pasifika, met with us. Most were school drop-outs, although two had NCEA level 2 or above. We were struck by how committed and happy the young people were, and their high level of certainty that the course they were doing would lead to qualifications and a good job. We learned that in just 2.5 years they could go from no qualifications to a trades certificate (through the 'grads' course), with the first year covered by the YGFF programme. There were also options in other areas, and three of the focus group members wanted to complete a make-up course as well as hairdressing.

The nature of the industry assists this TEO in providing strong pathways. As noted above, in most trades a course-only qualification is not enough – an apprenticeship is often a necessary route to trades qualifications. So while many YGFF trade pathways break down because of the disjuncture between the number of people seeking apprenticeships and the number of places, this gap does not exist in hairdressing. Those who do go the apprentice route in hairdressing choose it because there is a position on offer and it means that the employer will pay for their qualifications.

Some of the young women we interviewed at the hairdressing school come from at-risk families and, before enrolling in hairdressing, did not face good outcomes. Now, they all expressed certainty that they will receive their qualifications and be able to work in their chosen area.

According to media reports, the number of hairdressing places funded by SAC at Levels 3+ will be cut by 14 percent in 2015, on the basis that there is an over-supply of hairdressers<sup>2</sup>. This will impact on the students in this study who need to progress from YG courses to Level 4 SAC courses in order to complete their pathway to hairdressing. Our data indicates this may be a false economy. At the focus group, the hairdressing students talked freely about the communities they come from, and the propensity of their peers to choose to become teen parents rather than engage in education, training or the labour market. The economics must indicate that a well-trained trade professional is going to be less of a long-term burden on the state than a young mother.

*Yep it has, in really positive way. It's made a difference to my life, my future. Two years ago I just thought of alcohol. I looked after my niece on week days, and went out and got drunk on the weekends, smoked a lot of dope too. Most my friends from then just wander around, I've tried to persuade them to come here. A lot have now found courses or just moved to Australia. Definitely treated with respect here, at school they kind of did, some teachers were nice, some not so much.*

However, the strong pathway offered by this TEO will not suit everyone. The question is how TEOs can provide smooth pathways while allowing for and supporting a broad range of (often changing) interests and the development of talent in their students.

#### **7.4 The role of the community**

Some of the TEOs, in particular iwi and Christian-based ones, rely heavily on their communities for support of various kinds – tangata (people with skills), kai (food), transport, services and even community events, are made possible by such support.

As well, some students are enrolled with a Youth Service youth coach who is able to assist in breaking down barriers to further study and employment. Although until a full qualitative evaluation is complete, it will not be known how successful the YS is; current success data for the scheme is heavily enmeshed with the success of YG.

Few participants or TEOs mentioned broader support from the community, except by families. Instead, we heard that many areas had few community and employment options, and local businesses were often not keen to assist young people in their pathways to employment.

The Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs, which in past years has led the charge to support youth employment, appears to be almost moribund<sup>3</sup>. Yet it is not possible to overcome youth employment or NEET status without significant job creation in communities. A strong community committed to supporting young people into jobs needs to work with TEOs to ensure the pathways do not lead to a dead end.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/265795/tertiary-subjects-get-the-chop>

<sup>3</sup> There is nothing on the website of the organisation later than January 2014. In later email communication, it was noted that the organisation will be undertaking and reporting on regional activities in 2015.



TEOs may enhance the effectiveness of vocational pathways by working within their regions and with other organisations to enhance community development and job creation. Pūkeko Research is working with several organisations to research this further.

## **7.5 More than just numbers**

While the quantitative monitoring report demonstrates limited impact of the YGFF scheme, both qualitative studies conducted by Pūkeko Research have demonstrated significant qualitative impact on individuals and their families of the scheme. We conclude that using key indicators to test outcomes, and especially that elusive and time-sensitive indicator 'progression', may not provide an effective snapshot of the programme. While our two qualitative studies have been limited in scope, their findings have been very consistent. Given the large investment in this area, we believe it is important that the Ministry of Education and the TEC fund a large multi-dimensional process and summative evaluation of the programme.

It is our view that TEOs would strongly welcome an in-depth evaluation, as there is significant frustration that they are able to fully demonstrate neither the good work they are doing nor the barriers they encounter through current reporting. The evaluation would need to cover the four areas noted above: engagement, the programmes, further pathways, and support into the labour market. It would need to proceed over 18 months to get the full picture of how the programme works, given the practice of rolling entry throughout the sector. With the inception of Youth Guarantee, and the refocus of Youth Training after 30 years, an evaluation is overdue.

One area for further examination is the high drop-out rate (which was 40 percent in 2013 but may have reduced in 2014). Our two qualitative studies have a built-in bias because they are concerned only with those who have remained in their programmes. In such vulnerable populations, the effects of dropping out of YGFF courses may be significant. The further population question, relating to those who the programme does not engage at all, probably cannot be answered in an evaluation, although relates to probably the majority of NEETs.



## 8.0 Policies and systems to improve outcomes

The final question covered by the research relates to how policies and systems may improve the scheme. Some of these matters are covered in the previous chapter which deals with changes at the organisation or regional levels, and some require further work. The points are indicative only; they are not formal recommendations for action. They represent areas where further policy work should proceed, with a focus on the TEC, Ministry of Education and MSD.

### 8.1 Why do many students learn at TEOs when they failed in school?

Following on from the first study (Gordon et al 2014), the number of young people leaving school for reasons other than academic completion and moving on the YGFF is significant. In this study, an analysis of qualitative comments found 34 'reasons' for early leaving, including truancy, bullying, disliking school, disliking teachers, a 'terrible' school, failing or non-achievement (especially literacy and numeracy problems), dropping out and similar reasons (Appendix 3). Two longer explanations follow:

*No, high school wasn't the place I really wanted to go, first impression was bad, impression that teachers really didn't want to help me, and that impression stuck with me all the time even when I'd decided I wanted to try get my NCEA. [ITP] did so well for me, was so different, freedom!*

*High school wasn't working out for me, I'm a smart kid but school isn't for everyone and being I didn't like a lot of people at my school, too many people I don't like and some of the teaching methods didn't work for me. I was really good at history but I failed because I couldn't write it in an essay. Dyspraxia.*

The fact that these same students can make significant and often speedy academic and personal progress in small PTEs, in classes run by non-teachers, raises significant questions about the senior school. There needs to be research on early leavers.

### 8.2 Continuity and consistency

The hairdressing example raised in this report demonstrates that a pathways model can be effective. It is also clear that this model is not for everyone. There are clear points at which the pathway leads nowhere, or where young people stray from the path and into potential difficulty. TEOs need to provide strong information and advice on pathways for all YGFF students. This should include whether students may 'skip' levels, other local courses available, jobs available in the region and similar advice.

### 8.3 Climbing the framework

One concern is the possibility of young people getting locked into the NZQF progressions, working through Levels 3, 4, 5 and up. One participant in this study stated she had worked out she had five years of fee-paying courses to be completed before she could meet her goal of veterinary nursing. This seems excessive, as she had already studied for 18 months on the YGFF scheme. Are students getting the best advice on climbing the framework? Is it right that a person has to study for seven years to get a Level 5 qualification? Once again, options for providing good advice need to be investigated.

## **8.4 Drop-outs and decliners**

At present, there is no requirement for TEOs to track students who leave courses before completion, which may be up to 40 percent of students in total. Some do their best to track, but students disappear (see the case study of participant A), move or do not keep in touch. As well, around two-in three-NEETS aged 15 to 19 years do not enrol on YGFF courses (Gordon et al, 2014).

While young people can choose whether to do YGFF courses, or not, the role of the state should be to ensure that they know that options are available to them, and facilitate their entry. This may require the provision of a range of external services, such as alcohol and drug treatment services, mental health support and other services. There is certainly an argument for 'joined-up' services in disadvantaged areas.

## **8.5 Youth coaches**

Instead of being seen as an alternative to YGFF courses, YS youth coaches may need to work more closely with students in the courses, especially at decision points. Some of those who have youth coaches assigned find their services useful at these points. It may be that the provision of youth coach services to all YGFF students, including a strong career focus and good information on options for further learning, could provide better support for progression.

## **8.6 Work**

There are too few jobs for the number of youth needing them. The lack of employment is a clear barrier to some of the youth in this study. For example, the young men seeking trades apprenticeships have no pathway to their chosen future until these positions become available.

Gordon et al (2014) discussed some of the European youth guarantee initiatives that provided temporary employment options, or apprentice starters, for NEETs. In the absence of such options, training courses or temporary work become a 'filler option', because pathways have been closed off. With NEET rates at a high level, subsidised employment opportunities might sit alongside training programmes for 18 year olds and above. The cost of this may be little more than the provision of a benefit, and there are significant opportunity costs as well.

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## Appendix 1. YG Summer Study

Name

Current Age

- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21

Gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

What is your ethnicity?

- Pākeha/ New Zealand European
- Māori
- Samoan
- Tongan
- Other Pasifika
- Asian
- Australian
- European or the USA
- Other

Name of TEO

What month did you start at the TEO?

Name and level of course(s) did last year

How many credits did you complete?  
If not why?

How many credits did you have before you came to ...  
(what quals did you leave school with)

Did you finish any qualifications (e.g. NCEA, certificates etc). If so what were they called?

Was that your first YG course?

Why did you enrol in YG course in the first place?

Will you go back to ... next year?

If yes doing what course at what level? When are you going to enrol?

Do you plan to do more studying in the future?  
What/when. (after next year)

What are your plans for this summer?

Do you have a job?

How did/do you find looking for a job?  
Easy or difficult

What job do you want to do in the future?

Has being on the YG course changed your future plans?

What is careers advice/tuition like at your TEO?

How confident do you feel about the future?  
1 being not confident at all and 5 being totally confident re work and study

How do you want to be contacted in the future?  
JAN/FEB/MARCH

## Appendix 2. YG Summer Study First follow up

Name

Has anything happened over the past month that has changed you future plans at all?

What are you up to now?

- Back at their TEO
- At a new TEO
- In a job (no studying plans)
- Still on holiday from TEO
- Looking for a job
- Going to university
- Looking for study
- Nothing
- Other, please specify... \_\_\_\_\_

What studying will you be doing (if any) in 2015 and beyond?

Has this changed from last interview?

Do you have a job?

Has this changed from last interview?

What job do you want to do in the future?

Has this changed from the last interview?

You gave a ..... in the last interview. How confident do you feel about the future? With 1 being not confident at all and 5 being totally confident that you'll get the job you want/be able to study

Has this changed from the last interview?

## Appendix 3. Reasons stated for leaving school early

Case no.	Reason given
101	School didn't work for me
102	Didn't like school
103	Truancy
105	Dropped out of school
106	Didn't enjoy school, had problems with reading and writing
108	Didn't like it, left as soon as I could
111	School wasn't working for me
113	School I was at was a really terrible school, worst school I could have chosen
114	Didn't enjoy school
115	Kicked out of High School, I wasn't attending, it was not fun, it was stressful
116	On and off the streets for a year after dropping out of school
121	I achieve more here than I could at High School
122	I was failing in almost every class
123	I left school at 15
128	Dropped out of school
129	Stuff that happened – I had a couple of deaths
130	I didn't really enjoy school much
133	Dropped out (after completing Level 1)
136	Not really a thing for school, teachers didn't help me
138	Not happy at school – left at 15
139	I had a bad time at school – bullying
140	Was a rebel at school, didn't get on with teachers
141	I didn't like school, was in Year 11 when I left
142	At my school you had to be either smart or sporty. I got left behind
143	School didn't help me
144	Not focused. I didn't like school
145	Got bullied pretty much from both students and teachers
151	<i>See first quote p. 31</i>
152	I dropped out of school kind of regret it now
152	I got kicked out of High School at 15
164	I had a lot of drama at school
167	Truancy...
172	<i>See second quote p. 31</i>