

## COLLABORATING FOR YOUTH SUCCESS: AT A GLANCE

The report, *Collaborating for Youth Success*, is the result of a scoping exercise initiated by the South Dunedin Social Sector Trial (BASE) Advisory Group to look at the systemic barriers that prevent an effective response to at risk young people and their families/ whānau. The scoping exercise took place between March and June 2016 and involved focus groups with young people, interviews with other key stakeholders as well as a review of evidence.

The scoping exercise focused on the question:

*How can local and central government and the social sector strengthen their collaborative approach to working with each other in order to improve outcomes for at risk youth and their families/ whānau in Dunedin?*

The report acknowledges the huge amount of positive work that is taking place with young people and their whānau across the city. It also identifies a number of challenges that need to be addressed and highlights there is no silver bullet to solving the community's most complex social problems concerning youth.

The report sets out a local, call-to-action for community-led, transformative leadership so that Dunedin is effectively positioned to respond to the changes taking place within and across the government and social sectors. In order to do this, the community must come together and lead in the midst of uncertainty. The report provides more detail about the imperatives for change as well as the challenges being faced.

Community-led development is not a model or a service: it is a local approach to solving a community's greatest problems that embraces 5 core principles:

- Shared local visions drive action and change
- Utilisation of existing strengths and assets
- Many people, groups and sectors working together
- Building diverse and collaborative local leadership
- Adaptive planning and action informed by outcomes.

The report defines the essence of collaboration:

**Collaboration** is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organisations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone. The organisations believe they are interdependent. Partners agree that each organisation has a unique role to play to address the issue. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; and sharing of resources and rewards. Partners focus on the way in which the current system can be improved by changing individual organization's policies and procedures.

Dunedin has a great opportunity to design a system that reflects the lessons learnt from the Social Sector Trial and other local initiatives. The systems changes that need to occur to improve outcomes for young people are massive. However there is a strong sense of

optimism and a sense of obligation to young people and their whānau to improve the entire system, not just focus on individual organisations.

In order to start making the necessary shifts in thinking and organisational structures, the government and social sectors need to:

- Put youth and their whānau at the centre of planning and service delivery, and recognise young people and their whānau as experts in determining what is best for them
- Develop a local, long-term vision and plan to improve the lives of young people
- Undertake a process (Theory of Change or similar) to clarify outcomes and develop co-ordinated strategies to achieve those outcomes
- Agree to move beyond co-operation and co-ordination into real collaboration, recognising that collaboration requires an effective governance structure focused on action and accountability
- Identify and develop bold, courageous leaders who can inspire others to achieve the desired outcomes, and develop specific tactics to move from operations and processes to strategies and measurable outcomes.

The BASE Advisory Group urges others to join in developing a mechanism to enable the community to identify and commit to specific actions that lead to collaborative leadership to identify and agree the shifts required to improve the system's response to young people, suggest enhanced ways of working to get on the right path, and embolden local leaders to take ownership for the changes that need to occur.

The report's specific recommendations are to:

- I. Understand what it means to collaborate (versus co-operate or co-ordinate)
- II. Meaningfully engage with the community and develop a partnership with Iwi to identify the problems and solve and build the public imperative for change
- III. Identify, recruit and invest in the right leaders
- IV. Agree on and analyse the problems we are trying to solve
- V. Develop a shared, long-term vision and process to achieve that vision (eg a Theory of Change process)
- VI. Develop and invest in a collaborative framework to guide the work
- VII. Create a governance structure rooted in accountability and action, and embrace the role of culture
- VIII. Work with funders as partners in strategic efforts.

The aim is to create as healthy a community as possible by changing the underlying elements – such as culture, incentives and settings – that give rise to the symptoms that lead to social problems. Acting on a shared vision for the future is the foundation on which a healthier community is built. Crucial to this is identifying the leaders able to lead the change required.

The Executive Summary and the full report contain more detail about what the above recommendations will entail, together with references to tools and resources that can be used to take this work forward. To view them, please go to:

[www.dunedin.govt.nz/collaborating-for-youth-success](http://www.dunedin.govt.nz/collaborating-for-youth-success)