

Local government Forum on Gangs 19th November 2008

Facilitated Session – What role can local government take?

It is easy to identify what is not working. While we don't want to ignore problems that need to be fixed, it is also important to look at what **does** work. We want to build on what works rather than what doesn't. The group started by looking at what is working, considered how things would look if local actions were effective, and finally looked at what needs to happen for things to be working really well. A summary of the feedback is set out below:

1. What's working locally that could contribute to resolving gang related issues?

The group started by identifying **what is working** locally. A number of things were identified across the group. Not all will be true in all areas, but there were many commonalities, so the list below gives us some good ideas about what is working:

- Close collaboration and relationships between key people and agencies at the local level (such as Police, Maori Wardens, Iwi, Health, Education, Council, local providers, etc)
- Good youth programs, trusts, centres
- Strong youth workers, and youth sector
- Strength based programs
- Mentoring programs
- Broader safer community strategies and programs
- Youth Transition Services and employment initiatives
- Zero tolerance of offending by known gang members and strong enforcement
- Focusing on high risk families and working with families,
- Early intervention and prevention programmes
- Banning colours in some areas
- Strong community groups and bottom up community development
- Increasing willingness for partnerships, collaboration and communication
- Increasing community engagement
- Working with schools
- Strong relationships with Iwi
- Governance groups involving senior people in agencies who can make decisions and hold budgets
- Marae based programs
- Working with Pacific Island churches
- Recreation and sports programs

2. What would it look like when local responses [OR local government actions] are working at their absolute best? What would be happening? What would we see, hear, feel?

The group then considered what it would be like if things were working at their best:

- Young people realising their potential
- Young people engaged positively in education, employment, sport, community etc
- Safer streets, safer and healthier communities
- Proactive, realistic, and sustainable responses to issues where they arise
- Sense of community empowerment
- People involved in their communities
- Respect, pride and acceptance of self and others

3. What needs to happen for local government/responses to make an effective contribution? What practical actions do we need to take?

Finally, the group considered what needs to happen for local responses to be really effective. These focused on leadership, collaboration and sustainable resourcing.

The group identified that local government can:

- take a stronger role in leadership and empowering communities to be leaders
- advocate to central government for:
 - o long term interagency commitment to issues and programs
 - o realistic and sustainable funding
 - o an assessment of the cost of doing nothing/ or failing to resolve the issues (e.g. A UK report calculated the economic costs of Youth Exclusion to the nation)
- prioritise programmes and activities for youth and family in council budgets
- provide affordable leisure activities in communities
- facilitate conversations and collaboration with central government, agencies, lwi, and community groups (to clarify roles and contributions)
- establish governance groups for projects if (appropriate)
- look at skills needed in councils in future
- take some risks

We can all look at what is working and build on our successes.