

# **Youth engagement in the justice system across time – risk, resources and service experiences**

**Jackie Sanders  
Robyn Munford  
Linda Liebenberg**

**December 2013**

This is a preliminary working report from the New Zealand Youth Transitions Research Programme funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all the young people who have participated in this study and taken the time to share their experiences with us. They have been generous in their time and in the effort they have put into answering complex questionnaires and to participating in interviews over many years. Many of the youth who participated in this research also nominated an adult who knew a lot about them (PMK) who we could interview. We would like to thank all the PMK who generously gave their time to this study.

The following individuals and organisations have provided intensive support to us at various points in the study. Professor Michael Ungar and Dr Linda Liebenberg at the Resilience Research Centre based at Dalhousie University in Halifax Canada provided the methodologies and research materials and supported us in applying their ground-breaking Canadian study in New Zealand. They have provided enormous amounts of ongoing support to the project. Kāpiti Youth Support (KYS) and particularly Raechel the Manager and Briar the social worker, Presbyterian Support Upper South Island, and in particular Sue Quinn, the Highbury Whānau Centre and particularly Michelle Swain and Anjali Butler, Pete Butler and his team at START, Youth Transitions in Palmerston North. Special thanks to Barbara, Vicki and the team at Otago Youth Wellness Trust who provided assistance and support to the Dunedin research team for the duration of the study. The Ministry of Social Development, and particularly Child Youth and Family Services, The Families Commission, as well as the Department of Corrections also provided ongoing support at various stages in the research which would like to acknowledge. We also acknowledge the contribution of The Donald Beasley Institute; Youthline Auckland and Otago University. Finally, we would like to thank and acknowledge the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment for funding this research.

## Summary

This report presents a preliminary analysis of the relationship between involvement in the justice system and a range of other indicators for a group of vulnerable youth participating in the New Zealand Youth Transitions Study; a longitudinal study of vulnerable youth. It reports on data collected at three time periods between 2009 and 2013. In this report, youth are compared on various aspects of their lives including resilience resources, individual and community risks, interpersonal relationships as well as on their involvement in and experience of various services designed to assist them.

For analysis purposes the sample was divided into groups based on their reported levels of involvement in the justice system at different points in time. High justice involvement was defined as having been to Youth, District or High Court, or having been sentenced to a youth justice facility or prison, while no involvement was defined as either reporting no involvement in the justice system at all or reporting involvement through lower-level processes such as justice family group conferences, community sentences or diversion. Just over half of the youth in this study reported high involvement in the justice system at Time 1 and/or Time 3. Half of the youth with high involvement at Time 1 retained this level of involvement at Time 3. During the course of the study another 15% of youth became highly involved in the justice system. More male than female youth reported high levels of involvement in the justice system across time. Youth with high levels of involvement also tended to be older than those with no involvement. Māori and Pacific youth were over-represented in the group of youth with high levels of involvement in the justice system throughout the study period.

Across time youth with high levels of justice system involvement consistently reported significantly higher levels of individual externalising risks (such as engagement in aggressive behaviour, theft, damage to property and substance use) and at the end of the study they also reported significantly higher levels of neighbourhood risks. Youth with higher levels of engagement in the justice system also tended to report higher levels of involvement in the child welfare system at different periods in their lives. There was also some indication that early engagement in the justice system was related to lower levels of later engagement in educational programmes. However, those youth who had high levels of involvement in the justice system at the end of the study reported higher involvement in educational programmes at their first interview, possibly reflecting the fact that a large number of these youth were in

residential facilities at the time of their first interview and involved in the educational programmes provided in those facilities.

While there were clear differences between the two groups (ie; between the high involvement and no involvement in justice groups) in terms of risks and some differences around service use, generally there were no differences between the two groups in terms of access to resilience resources and other relational resources (such as peer group and family). Measures of prosocial behaviour did show a significant difference between the high and no justice involvement groups at Time 3, such that high justice youth reported fewer prosocial resources.

Reviewing quality of service use experiences across two services, significantly more youth reporting consistently positive service experiences at Time 1 had no justice involvement at Time 3. Conversely, significantly more youth reporting inconsistent or negative service experience group at Time 1 had high levels of engagement with the justice system at Time 3. In other words, consistently high quality service experiences at the beginning of the study were related to lower levels of engagement in the justice system at the end of the study.

The analyses raised questions about the nature and focus of service delivery for youth who report high levels of engagement in the justice system. Given that within this population of vulnerable, multiple-service using youth those with high levels of engagement in the justice system across time also reported significantly higher levels of externalising risk behaviours across a broad front, it might have been expected that they would also have reported higher levels of engagement in additional educational programmes, welfare support services and also mental health programmes as these behaviours also fall within the scope of these other three service systems. However, higher levels of involvement in the justice system and reported levels of externalising risk behaviours was not accompanied by higher levels of involvement of these other systems. This suggests that that in order to reduce the retention of youth in the justice system there may be a need for service providers, irrespective of the service system in which they are located, to provide programmes that support youth to effectively reduce risk behaviours and to be resourced to work with youth who present with these combinations of risk behaviours. It appears that when youth do have the opportunity to be involved with multiple service providers who work in respectful, empowering and relevant ways that youth are less likely to have intensive involvement in the justice system. In this regard, service supports, irrespective of the service system in which they are located,

constitute an important resource for vulnerable youth when they work in respectful and empowering ways and when they deliver support that is relevant to youth.

## **Introduction**

This report considers the relationship between involvement in the justice system and the broader contextual factors at play in the lives of vulnerable youth (including personal and contextual risks, resilience resources, and service use history and experiences), with a view to identifying factors that may influence the long term involvement of vulnerable youth with the justice system. The measures used in the analysis are contained in the Appendix of this report.

The youth who are the focus of this analysis ( $n = 498$ ) were purposefully selected through referrals from service providers who knew youth to be at risk of not graduating from high school or who were facing other risks around their safety and wellbeing. These youth (aged between 13 -17 at Time 1) were involved in one or more of four service systems at the time of their first interview: child welfare, youth justice, education supports additional to mainstream programming and mental health).

As part of a longitudinal study of transitions these youth completed three annual interviews between 2009 and 2013<sup>1</sup>. Youth were recruited from four sites: the greater Auckland area, Manawatu-Kāpiti, the greater Wellington area and the Dunedin metropolitan area. Youth were recruited through organisations working with vulnerable and marginalised youth<sup>2</sup>. All youth had received services from at least one service provider in the six months prior to participating in the study. The refusal rate was 2.5%. The research was approved by the University Ethics Committee prior to any data collection commencing.

## **Results**

### **1. *Identifying youth with high levels of involvement in the justice system at Time 1 and Time 3***

For the purposes of this report, youth were allocated to the groups ‘high’ and ‘no’ justice system involvement at their first and third interviews. Group allocation was based upon youth answers to the following three key questions related to engagement with youth justice services:

1. Have you been to the Youth Court?

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<sup>1</sup> The study is part of a larger international programme of research taking place in Canada, China, Colombia, New Zealand and South Africa. For more information see [www.youthsay.co.nz](http://www.youthsay.co.nz) and [www.resilienceproject.org](http://www.resilienceproject.org).

<sup>2</sup> A community saturation approach was taken to recruitment whereby all organisations that worked with youth in a locality were identified and, with their permission, their records were examined to identify potential youth; once an organisation’s list had been exhausted, researchers moved to the next organisation and reviewed their client lists to identify additional youth who could be recruited into the study. Practitioners from each agency first approached youth to seek their permission to meet with a researcher to learn more about the study, researchers then met with youth to seek their consent to participate.

2. Have you had a case heard against you in either the District or High Court?
3. Have you been sentenced to prison or a youth justice facility?

Youth who answered yes to any of these questions were assigned to the group 'high' justice system use and the remainder of the sample were allocated to the 'low' justice system use group. This process was conducted on data from Time 1 which captured lifetime involvement up to the first interview and again on data from Time 3 where data related to the previous twelve months. At Time 1 (Figure 1), 196 (39%) youth reported histories of high youth justice system involvement and 302 (61%) no involvement. Just under half of all youth in the sample ( $n = 498$ ) reported no involvement in the justice system at Time 1 (Figure 2) and/or Time 3 ( $n = 223$ , 44.79%).

Overall, the total number of youth who reported high involvement in the justice system decreased slightly between Time 1 and Time 3 (Figure 1) from 196 (39%) to 184 (36.9%). Of the 196 youth reporting high involvement in the justice system at Time 1, 105 (53.57%) retained high involvement at Time 3 (Figure 2). On the other hand, 79 youth who did not have histories of high involvement with the justice system at Time 1, reported high involvement at Time 3 (Figure 2). Based on the overall distribution of youth, the retention of 105 youth across Time 1 and Time 3 was higher than expected (53.57% compared with 36.94% expected)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Chi square test (with Yates Continuity Correction) revealed that this difference was significant ( $\chi^2 (1, n = 498) = 37.17, p = .000, \phi = .277$ ).

Figure 1

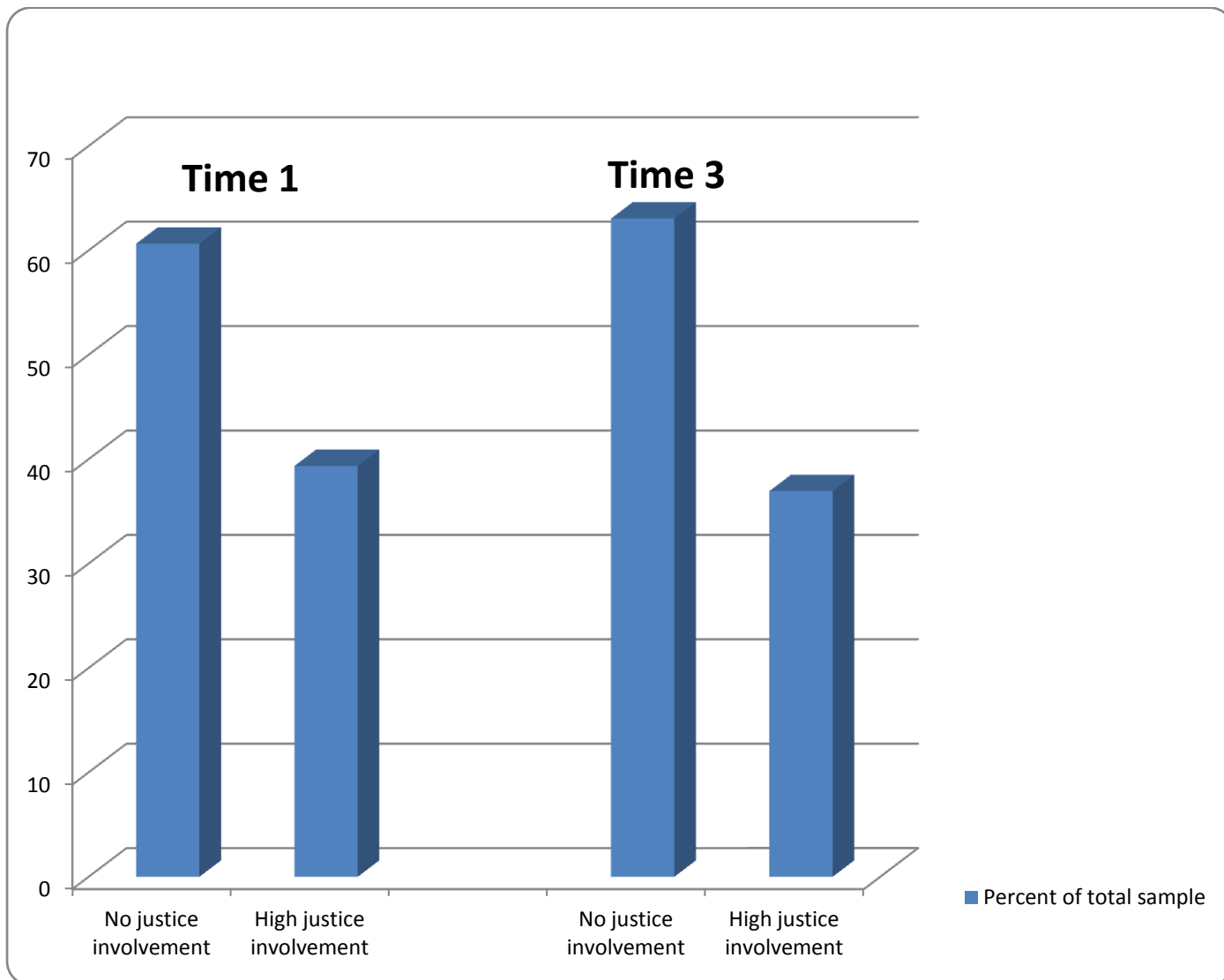
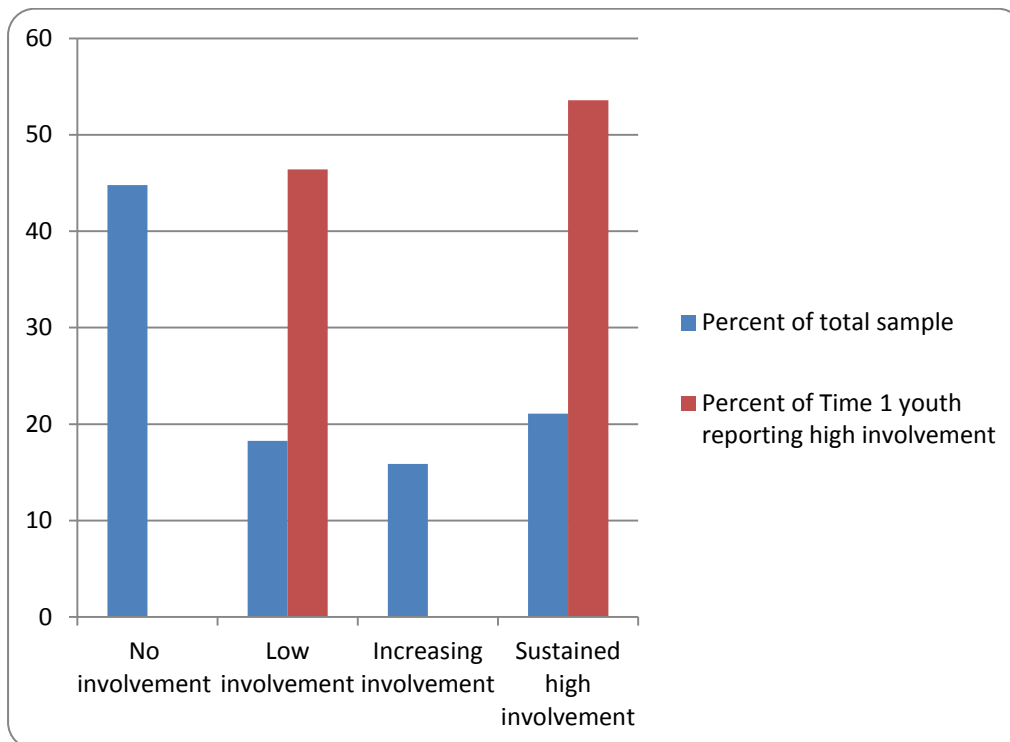




Figure 2



## 2. *Demographic differences between youth reporting different levels of engagement in the justice system*

At Time 1 there were significant demographic differences between youth reporting high involvement and no involvement in the justice system. As would be expected, youth with high youth justice involvement tended to be older ( $M = 15.51, SD = 1.045$ ) than those without this level of involvement ( $M = 15.16, SD = 1.17$ )<sup>4</sup>. At Time 3 the difference between the two groups in age apparent at Time 1 was no longer apparent (High involvement at Time 3:  $M = 15.32, SD = 1.034$ ; No involvement at Time 3:  $M = 15.29, SD = 1.19$ )<sup>5</sup>. Also a higher number of male youth reported histories of high youth justice involvement<sup>6</sup> although the effect size of this difference was small-moderate. Māori and Pacific youth were over-represented in the group of youth with histories of high youth justice system involvement<sup>7</sup>, the effect size of this difference was small-moderate. The gender and ethnicity differences between the high and no involvement groups observed at Time 1 remained at Time 3. Male youth reported higher

<sup>4</sup>  $t(496) = -3.411, p = .001$  (two tailed).

<sup>5</sup>  $t(496) = 4.608, p = .786$  (two tailed).

<sup>6</sup>  $\chi^2(1, n = 498) = 26.9, p = .000, \text{phi} = .232$ .

<sup>7</sup>  $\chi^2(3, n = 498) = 20.953, p = .000, \text{phi} = .205$ .

youth justice involvement than females<sup>8</sup>, although significant, the magnitude of this difference was moderate. As was the case at Time 1, Māori and Pacific youth reported higher youth justice histories than Pākehā youth at Time 3<sup>9</sup> again although significant the magnitude of this difference was small-moderate.

The subgroup of 105 youth who sustained high levels of involvement in the justice system across the three-year study period were different to those 393 youth who did not have sustained high levels of engagement in the justice system over time on both gender (where the magnitude of the difference was moderate)<sup>10</sup> and ethnicity (where the magnitude of the difference small-moderate)<sup>11</sup>. That is, the group with sustained engagement in the justice system across time had greater numbers of males and more Māori and Pacific youth than the group that had either episodic engagement (either Time 1 or Time 2) or no engagement at all. There were no age differences between the two groups<sup>12</sup>.

Approximately twice as many youth in the high justice group at Time 3 were in residential facilities at the time of their first interview compared to youth who were in the no justice group at Time 3<sup>13</sup>. At Time 3 there were no differences between high and no justice involved youth in terms of overall living arrangements<sup>14</sup>. While approximately equal numbers (no justice  $n = 26$  ; high justice  $n = 29$  ) were living in a range of institutional or custodial settings at Time 3, 13 of the high justice group compared with 4 of the no justice group were in prison. In contrast, 18 of the no justice group were in a range of supervised community accommodation compared with 11 of the high justice involvement group.

### **3. Patterns of Risk (Tables 1a & 1b)**

Youth who were in the high justice group at Time 1 ( $n = 196$ ) showed significantly higher levels of risk behaviour such as aggressive behaviour, theft, damage to property, substance use and involvement with anti-social peers (as measured by the 4HSQ Delinquency, 4HSQ Risk and negative peer impact measures) and, as would be expected, they also reported higher levels of involvement in justice-related services overall across the study. The difference between the two groups in terms of capacity to establish age appropriate relationships (SDQ Peer Problems) was apparent at Time 1 but not subsequently. Differences

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<sup>8</sup>  $\chi^2 (1, n = 498) = 50.163, p = .000, \phi = .317.$

<sup>9</sup>  $\chi^2 (3, n = 498) = 12.442, p = .006, \phi = .158.$

<sup>10</sup>  $\chi^2 (1, n = 498) = 38.639, p = .000, \phi = .284.$

<sup>11</sup>  $\chi^2 (3, n = 498) = 16.161, p = .001, \phi = .180.$

<sup>12</sup>  $t (496) = -1.142, p = .254$  (two tailed).

<sup>13</sup>  $\chi^2 = (10) n = 498) = 19.239, p = .037.$

<sup>14</sup>  $\chi^2 (14, n = 498) = 22.320, p = .072.$

between the two groups on conduct problems (SDQ conduct problems measure) were apparent at Time 1 and Time 2 but not at Time 3. There were no differences between the two groups on the measures of neighbourhood risks.

Youth who were in the high justice group at Time 1 ( $n = 184$ ) reported significantly higher engagement in delinquent behaviour and substance use throughout the study period (4HSQ Delinquency and 4HSQ Risk). These youth also reported slightly, but significantly, reduced levels of risk of depression at Time 1, but this pattern did not continue across Times 2 and 3 (CES-D-12-NLSCY). The 184 youth who reported high justice involvement at Time 3 also reported significantly higher levels of neighbourhood risks (such as feeling that people in their neighbourhoods could not be trusted) at Time 3.

In general terms, the same patterns of similarities and differences applied for the youth who reported sustained high levels of engagement in the justice system across the study (that is, who reported high levels of justice involvement at Time 1 and Time 3). These youth reported significantly higher individual externalising risks (i.e. engagement in higher risk behaviour, aggression and substance use) as well as risks around their peer group and, of course, higher levels of involvement in the justice system. There were no differences between the two groups in terms of risk of depression (CES-D-12-NLSCY)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Time 1:  $t(496) = 1.399$ ,  $p = .162$  (two tailed); Time 2:  $t(496) = -1.134$ ,  $p = .257$  (two tailed); Time 3:  $t(496) = 1.358$ ,  $p = .175$  (two tailed).

Table 1a

Mean and Standard Deviations for risk measures

	Justice involvement history	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
		<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
<b>Interview 1</b>							
SDQ Conduct Problems	No	3.52	2.01	2.84	1.90	2.31	1.91
	High	4.28	2.06	3.45	2.00	2.61	1.82
4HSQ Delinquency	No	3.01	2.65	2.35	2.64	1.66	2.31
	High	5.46	2.74	3.71	2.75	2.81	2.71
4HSQ Risk	No	3.27	2.16	3.44	2.09	3.36	1.85
	High	4.60	1.81	4.19	1.75	4.11	1.82
Depression	No	2.83	1.69	2.75	1.80	2.57	1.75
	High	2.77	1.61	2.46	1.70	2.30	1.54
Peer Group Impact	No	5.47	2.63	5.47	2.51	5.38	2.49
	High	7.25	2.19	6.67	2.08	6.19	2.27
Neighbourhood risk	No	6.40	0.95	6.78	1.17	6.65	1.23
	High	6.33	1.08	6.75	1.18	6.79	1.28
<b>Interview 3</b>							
SDQ Peer Problems	No	2.54	1.80	2.32	1.79	2.44	1.80
	High	2.61	1.58	2.54	1.56	2.58	1.64
SDQ Conduct Problems	No	3.51	1.99	2.80	1.88	2.08	1.70
	High	4.34	2.10	3.54	2.01	3.04	2.02
4HSQ Delinquency	No	3.19	2.76	2.08	2.40	1.21	1.86
	High	5.30	2.76	4.26	2.80	3.65	2.78
4HSQ Risk	No	3.51	2.22	3.43	2.07	3.25	1.83
	High	4.27	1.86	4.27	1.75	4.34	1.74
Depression	No	2.93	1.75	2.71	1.81	2.56	1.73
	High	2.58	1.46	2.51	1.67	2.28	1.57
Peer Group Impact	No	5.73	2.70	5.45	2.44	5.07	2.39
	High	6.90	2.28	6.78	2.14	6.77	2.14
Neighbourhood risk	No	6.36	0.97	6.74	1.15	6.62	1.28
	High	6.38	1.06	6.81	1.21	6.86	1.19
<b>Sustained high justice involvement at Times 1 and 3</b>							
SDQ Peer Problems	Yes	2.52	1.76	2.33	1.76	2.45	1.77
	No	2.77	1.54	2.64	1.49	2.65	1.66
SDQ Conduct Problems	Yes	3.65	2.04	2.95	1.94	2.27	1.85
	No	4.44	2.06	3.56	1.97	3.03	1.87
4HSQ Delinquency	Yes	3.45	2.79	2.56	2.69	1.70	2.30
	No	5.92	2.65	4.10	2.72	3.66	2.76
4HSQ Risk	Yes	3.59	2.17	3.63	2.05	3.48	1.83
	No	4.57	1.73	4.14	1.71	4.29	1.92
Depression	Yes	2.86	1.69	2.68	1.77	2.51	1.72
	No	2.61	1.50	2.46	1.73	2.26	1.52
Peer Group Impact	Yes	5.86	2.63	5.72	2.44	5.46	2.42
	No	7.31	2.20	6.79	2.16	6.57	2.30

Table 1b

Significance of differences in mean risk scores for youth reporting high and no justice involvement

	Time 1			Time 2			Time 3		
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>
<b>Interview 1</b>									
SDQ Peer Problems	-2.045	496	.041	-1.928	453.428	.054	-.290	496	.772
SDQ Conduct Problems	-4.106	496	.000	-3.443	496	.001	-1.758	496	.079
4HSQ Delinquency	-9.973	496	.000	-5.541	496	.000	-4.879	368.511	.000
4HSQ Risk	-7.409	464.905	.000	-4.340	465.482	.000	-4.468	496	.000
Depression	.435	496	.664	1.793	496	.074	1.756	496	.080
Peer Group Impact	-8.190	466.184	.000	-5.793	467.502	.000	-3.654	496	.000
Neighbourhood risk	.777	496	.438	.265	496	.791	-1.218	496	.224
<b>Interview 3</b>									
SDQ Peer Problems	-.488	496	.626	-1.467	426.348	.143	-.829	496	.408
SDQ Conduct Problems	-4.421	496	.000	-4.144	496	.000	-5.453	333.121	.000
4HSQ Delinquency	-8.234	496	.000	-8.862	338.709	.000	-10.567	280.500	.000
4HSQ Risk	-4.083	438.475	.000	-4.810	433.807	.000	-6.508	496	.000
Depression	2.444	437.369	.015	1.239	496	.216	1.780	496	.076
Peer Group Impact	-5.120	435.537	.000	-6.126	496	.000	-7.949	496	.000
Neighbourhood risk	-.135	496	.893	-.692	496	.489	-2.082	496	.038
<b>Sustained high justice involvement at Times 1 and 3</b>									
SDQ Peer Problems	-1.350	496	.178	-1.784	189.654	.076	-1.043	496	.298
SDQ Conduct Problems	-3.522	496	.000	-2.884	496	.004	-3.736	496	.000
4HSQ Delinquency	-8.135	496	.000	-5.194	496	.000	-6.687	144.815	.000
4HSQ Risk	-4.894	200.784	.000	-2.621	191.737	.009	-3.961	496	.000
Depression	1.399	496	.162	1.134	496	.257	1.358	496	.175
Peer Group Impact	-5.706	191.262	.000	-4.078	496	.000	-4.197	496	.000
Neighbourhood risk	.067	496	.947	.082	496	.935	-1.867	496	.063

#### 4. Patterns of Service Use (Tables 2a & 2b)

At Time 1, the 196 youth in the high justice involvement group reported significantly higher lifetime utilisation of child welfare services than the remainder of the sample, but this pattern was not sustained subsequently at Times 2 or 3<sup>16</sup>. Youth who identified high levels of justice involvement at this interview also later reported significantly lower levels of involvement in educational services at Time 3 (no justice  $M = 2.04$ ,  $SD = 2.98$ ; high justice  $M = 1.30$ ,  $SD = 2.41$ ).

The 184 youth in the high justice involvement group at Time 3 had higher engagement in educational programmes at the beginning of the study (no justice  $M = 1.69$ ,  $SD = 2.71$ ; high justice  $M = 1.84$ ,  $SD = 2.93$ )<sup>17</sup>, probably reflecting the greater proportion of this group who were in residential facilities at Time 1 and who were therefore able to access educational supports in those locations. These youth also had higher levels of involvement in child welfare services at Time 2, but this was not apparent at either Time 1 or Time 3<sup>18</sup>.

Child welfare system involvement was also significantly higher at Times 1 and 2 for those youth who had sustained high levels of involvement in the justice system across the study compared to youth who had no involvement<sup>19</sup>. There were no differences between youth who had sustained high levels of involvement and those who had no involvement across the study in terms of engagement with general health services and mental health services across time.

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<sup>16</sup> Time 1:  $t(496) = -4.435$ ,  $p = .000$  (two tailed); Time 2:  $t(496) = -1.432$ ,  $p = .155$  (two tailed); Time 3:  $t(477.48) = -1.717$ ,  $p = .087$  (two tailed).

<sup>17</sup> Time 1:  $t(496) = -2.111$ ,  $p = .035$ .

<sup>18</sup> Time 1:  $t(496) = -1.087$ ,  $p = .278$  (two tailed); Time 2:  $t(496) = -2.861$ ,  $p = .004$  (two tailed); Time 3:  $t(496) = -.620$ ,  $p = .5357$  (two tailed).

<sup>19</sup> Time 1:  $t(496) = -3.541$ ,  $p = .000$  (two tailed); Time 2:  $t(496) = -2.450$ ,  $p = .015$  (two tailed).

Table 2a

Mean and Standard Deviations for levels of service involvement

	Justice involvement history	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
		<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
<b>Interview 1</b>							
Health service	No	2.77	4.44	6.94	4.53	5.85	4.37
	High	3.52	4.24	6.56	4.53	5.55	4.22
Educational programmes	No	4.28	4.64	4.25	4.28	2.04	2.98
	High	3.01	4.83	3.96	4.19	1.30	2.41
Child Welfare services	No	5.46	4.90	3.61	4.10	2.21	3.85
	High	3.27	5.36	4.16	4.35	1.67	3.03
Mental health service	No	4.60	3.70	2.38	3.56	1.60	2.70
	High	2.83	3.89	2.62	3.61	1.75	3.17
Justice use	No	2.77	2.28	3.25	4.33	2.92	4.33
	High	9.79	4.58	7.86	5.62	5.14	4.96
<b>Interview 3</b>							
Health service	No	11.95	4.52	6.77	4.38	5.89	4.49
	High	11.72	4.08	6.84	4.78	5.46	3.99
Educational programmes	No	6.78	4.61	4.00	4.13	1.69	2.71
	High	7.71	4.86	4.37	4.43	1.84	2.93
Child Welfare services	No	6.29	5.16	3.42	3.78	1.92	3.67
	High	6.81	5.21	4.52	4.78	2.13	3.36
Mental health service	No	3.64	3.85	2.25	3.38	1.54	2.77
	High	3.57	3.65	2.85	3.87	1.88	3.09
Justice use	No	4.64	4.67	3.21	4.30	1.00	1.42
	High	8.89	5.45	8.22	5.55	8.56	4.53
<b>Sustained high justice involvement at Times 1 and 3</b>							
Health service	Yes	11.94	4.37	6.90	4.49	5.81	4.39
	No	11.59	4.33	6.40	4.65	5.45	4.00
Educational programmes	Yes	6.97	4.69	4.21	4.30	1.82	2.85
	No	7.71	4.81	3.83	4.04	1.48	2.55
Child welfare services	Yes	6.07	5.02	3.59	4.06	2.00	3.69
	No	8.06	5.48	4.71	4.61	1.98	3.00
Mental health services	Yes	3.61	3.83	2.44	3.68	1.53	2.68
	No	3.67	3.58	2.63	3.17	2.16	3.56
Justice use	Yes	4.55	4.34	3.91	4.76	2.52	3.92
	No	12.48	4.14	9.39	5.36	8.58	4.31

Table 2b

Significance of differences in mean service use scores for youth reporting high and no justice involvement

	Time 1			Time 2			Time 3		
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>
<b>Interview 1</b>									
SDQ Peer Problems	-2.045	496	.041	-1.928	453.428	.054	-.290	496	.772
SDQ Conduct Problems	-4.106	496	.000	-3.443	496	.001	-1.758	496	.079
4HSQ Delinquency	-9.973	496	.000	-5.541	496	.000	-4.879	368.511	.000
4HSQ Risk	-7.409	464.905	.000	-4.340	465.482	.000	-4.468	496	.000
Depression	.435	496	.664	1.793	496	.074	1.756	496	.080
Peer Group Impact	-8.190	466.184	.000	-5.793	467.502	.000	-3.654	496	.000
Neighbourhood risk	.777	496	.438	.265	496	.791	-1.218	496	.224
<b>Interview 3</b>									
SDQ Peer Problems	-.488	496	.626	-1.467	426.348	.143	-.829	496	.408
SDQ Conduct Problems	-4.421	496	.000	-4.144	496	.000	-5.453	333.121	.000
4HSQ Delinquency	-8.234	496	.000	-8.862	338.709	.000	-10.567	280.500	.000
4HSQ Risk	-4.083	438.475	.000	-4.810	433.807	.000	-6.508	496	.000
Depression	2.444	437.369	.015	1.239	496	.216	1.780	496	.076
Peer Group Impact	-5.120	435.537	.000	-6.126	496	.000	-7.949	496	.000
Neighbourhood risk	-.135	496	.893	-.692	496	.489	-2.082	496	.038
<b>Sustained high justice involvement at Times 1 and 3</b>									
SDQ Peer Problems	-1.350	496	.178	-1.784	189.654	.076	-1.043	496	.298
SDQ Conduct Problems	-3.522	496	.000	-2.884	496	.004	-3.736	496	.000
4HSQ Delinquency	-8.135	496	.000	-5.194	496	.000	-6.687	144.815	.000
4HSQ Risk	-4.894	200.784	.000	-2.621	191.737	.009	-3.961	496	.000
Depression	1.399	496	.162	1.134	496	.257	1.358	496	.175
Peer Group Impact	-5.706	191.262	.000	-4.078	496	.000	-4.197	496	.000
Neighbourhood risk	.067	496	.947	.082	496	.935	-1.867	496	.063



### **5. Resources and supports (Tables 3a & 3b)**

There were no differences between the youth who reported high justice involvement at either Time 1 or Time 3 on the measures of resilience (CYRM), prosociality (i.e. engagement in prosocial behaviour; SDQ Prosocial Scale), family involvement (parent/caregiver presence when youth woke up, went to sleep), and social or civic participation. However, at Time 3, youth who had sustained high levels of engagement in the justice system throughout the study reported significantly lower levels of prosocial behaviour than youth with no justice involvement (no justice  $M = 8.20$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ; high justice  $M = 8.57$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ )<sup>20</sup>.

### **6. Comparing results at Time 1 and Time 3 for four different levels of justice system involvement** (Figures 3a & 3b and Table 4)

As part of this initial exploration of the data, analyses were conducted on Time 1 and Time 3 data to ascertain differences in patterns of justice system involvement over time. For this analysis the sample of 498 youth was divided into four groups based on patterns of justice system involvement at the first and third interviews:

1. No involvement in the justice system across the study (youth with no involvement).
2. Justice system involvement at Time 1 but not Time 3 (youth with low involvement).
3. Justice system involvement at Time 3 but not Time 1 (youth with increasing involvement).
4. Justice system involvement sustained across the study (youth with sustained high involvement).

#### *Risks*

*Conduct problems* – youth with no involvement and youth with low involvement reported similar levels of conduct problems; these were the lowest levels across the four groups. Youth with sustained high involvement and youth with increasing involvement, reported similar, highest levels of conduct disorders. As involvement intensified across time levels of reported conduct disorders increased in a significant way.

*Delinquency* – Engagement in behaviour such as stealing, fighting and damaging property increased across the four groups, these differences were significant for all pairs

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<sup>20</sup> Time 3:  $t(496) = 2.113$ ,  $p = .035$  (two tailed).

Table 3a

Mean and Standard Deviations for resources and supports

	Justice involvement history	Time 1		Time 2		Time 3	
		<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>sd</i>
<b>Interview 1</b>							
CYRM Score	No	7.48	1.10	7.63	1.25	7.72	1.12
	High	7.44	1.12	7.68	1.03	7.74	1.03
SDQ Prosocial Behaviour	No	7.82	1.74	8.23	1.78	8.57	1.59
	High	7.59	1.75	8.10	1.84	8.37	1.63
Social participation	No	55.13	9.04	56.38	10.26	57.74	9.09
	High	55.59	9.26	56.37	9.07	57.63	8.52
Family Support	No	22.88	4.95	23.38	5.21	23.63	4.98
	High	22.91	5.22	24.18	4.30	24.11	4.21
<b>Interview 3</b>							
CYRM Score	No	7.46	1.15	7.65	1.18	7.76	1.11
	High	7.47	1.03	7.64	1.15	7.68	1.04
SDQ Prosocial Behaviour	No	7.84	1.76	8.24	1.81	8.57	1.57
	High	7.53	1.71	8.07	1.79	8.37	1.66
Social Participation	No	55.17	9.45	56.35	9.96	57.73	9.04
	High	55.55	8.55	56.43	9.55	57.64	8.58
Family Support	No	21.93	5.90	23.77	4.91	23.80	4.97
	High	22.85	5.52	23.59	4.87	23.86	4.23
<b>Sustained high justice involvement at Times 1 and 3</b>							
CYRM Score	Yes	7.47	1.12	7.66	1.19	7.76	1.10
	No	7.45	1.06	7.60	1.07	7.62	1.05
SDQ Prosocial Behaviour	Yes	7.80	1.75	8.24	1.77	8.57	1.57
	No	7.46	1.71	7.94	1.92	8.20	1.72
Social Participation	Yes	55.19	9.21	56.47	9.94	57.86	8.88
	No	55.79	8.81	56.04	9.31	57.12	8.84
Family Support	Yes	22.20	5.78	23.73	5.03	23.90	4.87
	No	22.55	5.78	23.59	4.33	23.55	4.02

except the group who had sustained high involvement across time and the group with increasing involvement.

*Risk* – the group with no involvement reported the lowest overall use of substances and involvement in other health risk behaviours and these differences were significant. The other three groups which had varying levels of involvement in the justice system reported turned similar rates involvement in health risk behaviours.

Table 3b

Significance of differences in mean support and resource scores for youth reporting high and no justice involvement

	Time 1			Time 2			Time 3		
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p (two tailed)</i>
<b>Interview 1</b>									
CYRM Score	.397	496	.692	-.451	467.419	.652	-.175	496	.861
SDQ Prosocial Behaviour	1.412	496	.159	.749	496	.454	1.381	496	.168
Social Participation	-.546	496	.586	.022	451.650	.982	.141	496	.888
Family Support	-.073	496	.942	-1.846	468.495	.066	-1.149	462.73	.251
<b>Interview 3</b>									
CYRM Score	-.176	496	.860	.140	496	.889	.740	496	.460
SDQ Prosocial Behaviour	1.925	496	.055	1.026	496	.305	1.338	496	.181
Social Participation	-.446	496	.656	-.087	496	.931	.108	496	.914
Family Support	-1.712	496	.087	.387	496	.699	-.133	433.202	.894
<b>Sustained high justice involvement at Times 1 and 3</b>									
CYRM Score	.229	496	.819	.445	496	.656	1.194	496	.233
SDQ Prosocial Behaviour	1.799	496	.073	1.500	496	.134	2.113	496	.035
Social Participation	-.607	496	.544	.403	496	.687	.756	496	.450
Family Support	-.552	496	.581	.263	496	.792	.766	193.673	.445

*Negative Peer Impact* – As with health risk behaviours and engagement in delinquent behaviour, youth who had no justice system involvement returned the lowest overall negative peer impact scores and these differences were significant. Youth with low involvement had lower exposure to negative peer impact than the other groups, whose levels of peer-related risk were similar.

Figure 4a

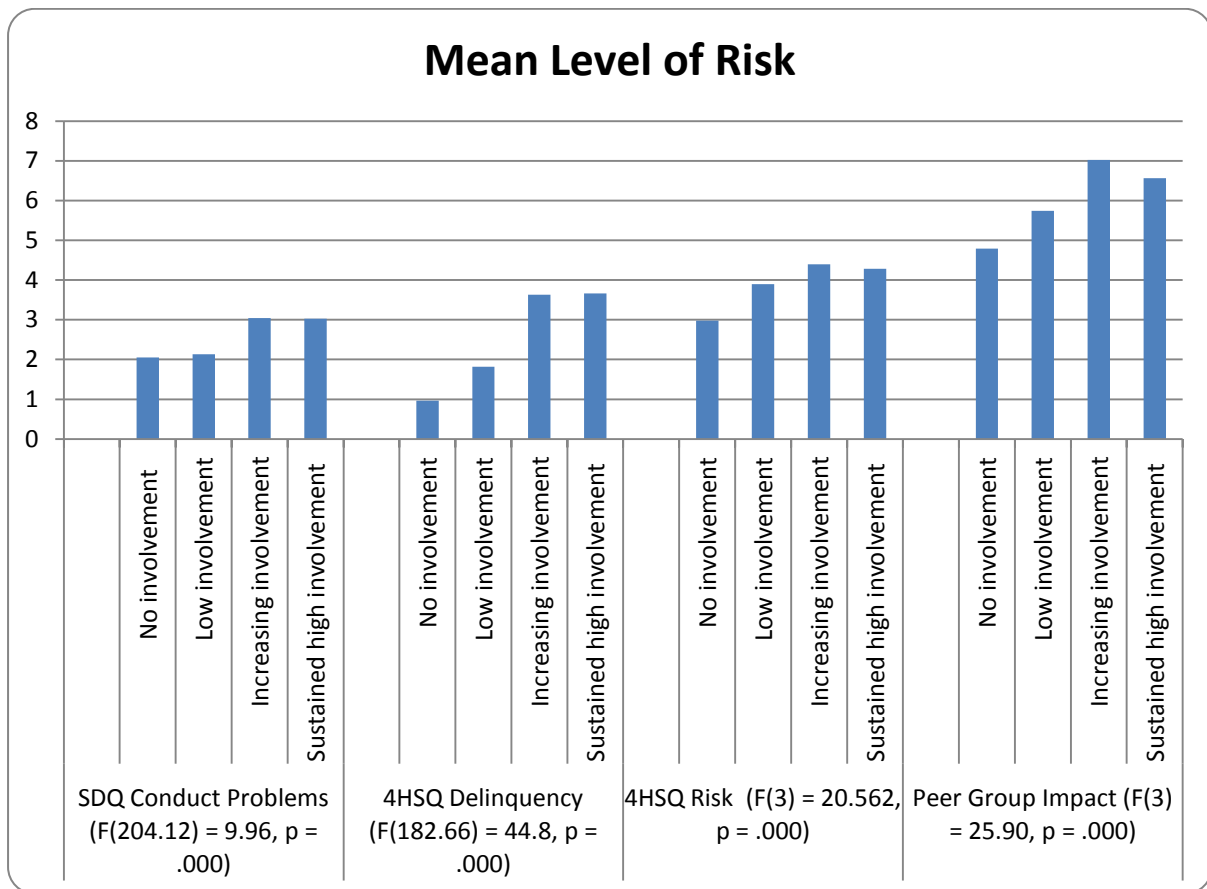
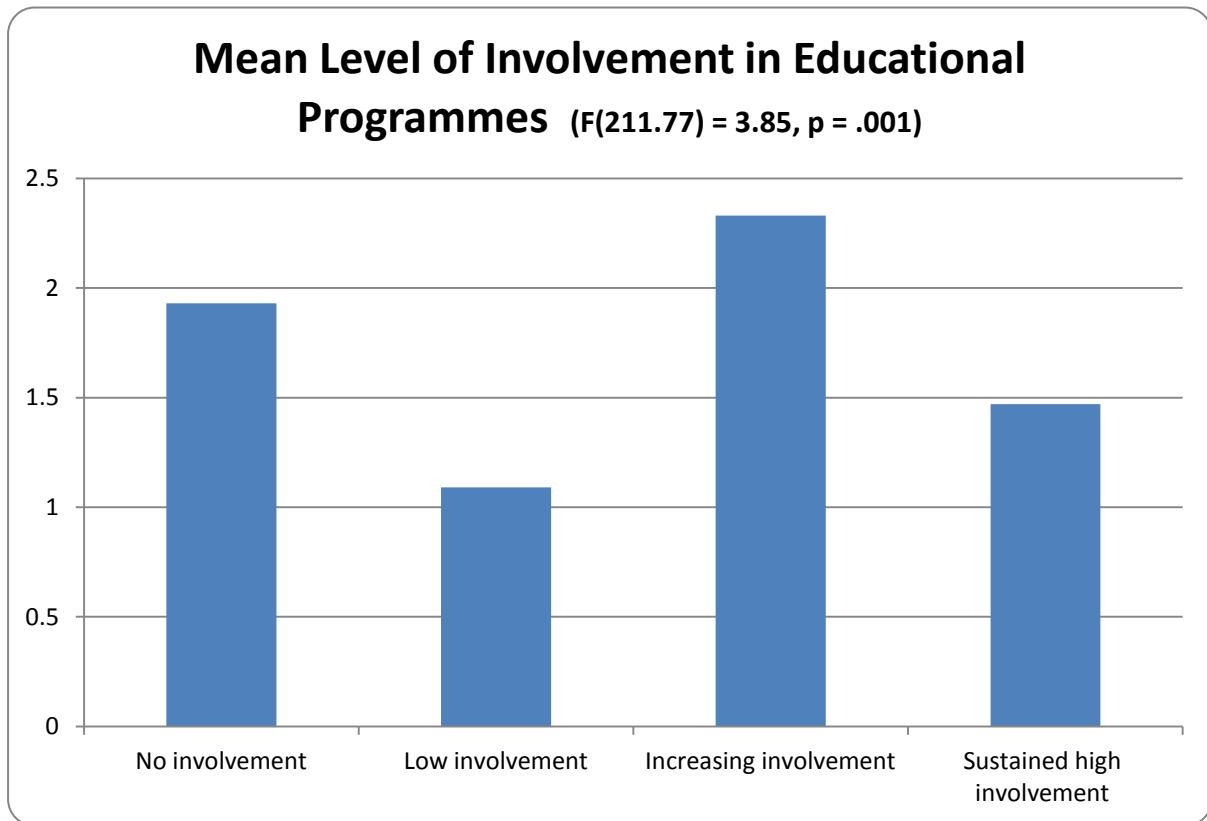


Figure 4b



#### *Involvement in Educational Programmes*

Youth with increasing involvement in the justice system reported the highest levels of engagement in educational programmes of all four groups while youth with low justice involvement had the lowest overall engagement rates in educational programmes. These engagement rates were similar to youth with sustained high involvement and they were significantly lower than those for the other two groups of youth. This pattern suggests that youth who have a period of high justice system involvement which ends, may struggle more than other youth to sustain educational engagement over time.

Table 4

Pairwise comparisons on scale scores at the third interview for youth with different levels of involvement in the justice system at Time 1 and Time 3

Time 3 Scale Scores	Low	Increasing	Sustained High
<b>*SDQ Conduct Problems</b>			
No involvement	.979	.002	.000
Low involvement		.015	.002
Increasing Involvement			1.000
<b>*4HSQ Delinquency</b>			
No involvement	.008	.000	.000
Low involvement		.000	.000
Involvement in T3 Not T1			1.000
<b>4HSQ Risk</b>			
No involvement	.000	.000	.000
Low involvement		.255	.437
Increasing Involvement			.968
<b>*Peer Group Impact</b>			
No involvement	.005	.000	.000
Low involvement		.000	.051
Increasing Involvement			.448
<b>*School</b>			
No involvement	.030	.782	.460
Low involvement		.030	.683
Increasing Involvement			.232
<b>*Justice involvement</b>			
No involvement	.916	.000	.000
Low involvement		.000	.000
Increasing Involvement			1.00

\**Welch's F*

### 7. *Consistency of Service Experiences at Time 1 and High Justice System Involvement at Time 3*

At Time 1 youth were asked to report on the quality of their experiences with two services that were working with them around the time of this first interview (see Appendix: Service Quality measure). A consistency of service experience score was created based on youth reports of their experience with these two services. These service consistency scores allowed for the consideration of young people's experiences depending on their position in one of the following three groupings:

- Group 1      *Positive* service experiences: youth reports two positive service experiences (youth scored above the mean for both services).

- Group 2      *Inconsistent* service experiences: youth reports one positive and one negative service experience (youth scored above the mean for one service and below the mean for the other).
- Group 3      *Negative* service experiences: youth reports two negative service experiences (youth scored below the mean for both services).

Analysis indicated a significant relationship between consistent service use experiences and long term engagement with justice services<sup>21</sup>, such that youth who reported consistently positive service experiences at Time 1 had lower levels of engagement in the justice system at Time 3. Youth who reported inconsistent or negative experiences at Time 1 had higher levels of justice system engagement at Time 3.

### **Concluding observations**

Within this large group of nearly 500 vulnerable young people, 196 came into the study with an extensive history of justice involvement; over half of these youth ( $n = 105$ , 53.57%) continued with this involvement through the study period. However, just under half of those youth with initial justice involvement ( $n = 91$ , 46.42%) at Time 1 did not retain involvement at Time 3. Seventy-nine youth (15.86% of the total original sample; or 43% of those with high involvement at Time 3) who were not involved in the justice system at Time 1, became involved during Time 3. Older youth, male youth and Māori and Pacific youth reported higher levels of engagement in the justice system at Time 1, and ethnicity and gender continued to differentiate the groups at Time 3.

The measures that consistently distinguished the group of youth who retained intensive involvement in the justice system across time, from the remainder of the vulnerable youth in this study, were those relating to externalised risk behaviour such as conduct disorders and health risk behaviours. These were the very behaviours that brought them into contact with the justice system. In terms of other risk factors however, including family and neighbourhood risks as well as resilience resources, there were no differences between the youth. Of course, it should be noted that the whole population of vulnerable youth ( $n= 498$ ) included in this analysis differed significantly from a comparison group on all of these measures (see [www.youthsay.co.nz](http://www.youthsay.co.nz) for further information on these findings). Across time youth with high levels of justice system involvement featured more prominently in child

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<sup>21</sup>  $\chi^2(2, n=498) = 8.513, p = .014$ .

welfare services, but this was not consistent, and perhaps warrants further investigation. For most of the study period these youth were minors and it could be assumed that the behaviour which brought them into contact with the justice system, should have brought them into contact more frequently with other services such as child welfare and additional education supports. The question is raised: is the behaviour that brings this subgroup of youth into contact with the criminal justice system their predominant coping strategy? And further, given the high levels of these externalised risk behaviours, why other systems such as health, education and welfare are not more involved in their lives?

The increased participation of the sustained high involvement group in educational programmes was interesting and possibly reflects their greater access to educational supports that were targeted properly to their needs while in residential settings, something their vulnerable peers who were not incarcerated may not have been able to access. It was also of note that in the analysis reviewing patterns of justice system involvement over time (See section 6), youth who came into the justice system for the first time at Time 3 reported the highest level of engagement in additional educational programmes, while youth who reported a low history of justice system involvement, also reported the lowest level of educational programme involvement at Time 3.

Finally, youth who reported consistently positive service experiences at Time 1 reported less involvement in the justice system at Time 3 than youth who either reported inconsistent service experiences or who reported two consistently negative service experiences. This suggests that when multiple services work with youth in respectful, empowering and relevant ways youth may be less likely to have intensive involvement in the justice system. In this regard, service supports, irrespective of the service system in which they are located, constitute an important resource for vulnerable youth when they are able to work in respectful and empowering ways and when they deliver support that is meaningful and relevant to youth.

In conclusion, this analysis raises some questions about the nature and focus of service delivery for youth who report high levels of engagement in the justice system. Given that within this population of vulnerable, multiple-service using youth those with high levels of engagement in the justice system across time also reported significantly higher levels of externalising risk behaviours across a broad front, it might have been expected that they would also have reported higher levels of engagement in additional educational programmes, welfare support services and also mental health programmes as these behaviours also fall within the scope of these other three service systems. However, higher levels of involvement



of youth in the justice system and elevated levels of externalising risk behaviours was not consistently accompanied by higher levels of involvement of these other systems. This suggests that that in order to reduce the retention of youth in the justice system there may be a need for service providers, irrespective of service system, to provide programmes that support youth to effectively reduce risk behaviours. This requires that providers are resourced and trained to work with youth who present with these combinations of risk behaviours. It appears that when youth do have the opportunity to be involved with multiple service providers who work in respectful, empowering and relevant ways that youth are less likely to have intensive involvement in the justice system. In this regard, service supports across the board constitute an important resource for vulnerable youth when they work in respectful and empowering ways and when they deliver support that is relevant to youth.

## Appendix: Measures

**Resilience:** Resilience was measured using the three sub-scales of the Child and Youth Resilience Measure – 28 (CYRM-28; Liebenberg, Ungar, & Van de Vijver, 2012). Items are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 = *Does not describe me at all* to 5 = *Describes me a lot*. The three CYRM sub-scales assess (1) individual resources including personal skills (such as ability to problem solve, cooperation, and awareness of personal strengths), peer support, and social skills ( $\alpha = .80$ ); (2) relationships with primary caregivers including physical and psychological caregiving ( $\alpha = .83$ ); and (3) contextual resources that facilitate connection to culture and community, the role of religious and spiritual beliefs, and engagement with and relevance of education ( $\alpha = .79$ ). The alpha coefficients in this study were .78, .79 and .79 respectively.

**Prosocial behaviour:** Prosocial behaviour was assessed using the SDQ prosocial behavior subscale (Goodman, 1997, 2001;  $\alpha = .66$ ) which assesses youth capacity for kindness, sharing and concern for others on a 3-point scale from 0 = *Not true* to 2 = *Certainly true*. The alpha coefficient for the scale was .63.

**Social participation:** This was assessed using a composite score of eight questions that measured the extent to which youth participated in community-based activities. Questions asked youth to rank themselves on a 5 point scale where 1 = *does not describe me at all* to 5 = *describes me a lot* in relation to questions, and to identify the frequency of their involvement in nominated activities. The alpha coefficient for this set of questions was .65.

**Family support:** These were assessed using a composite score of parent/legal guardian presence when youth woke up, returned from school or work, and went to sleep at night. The alpha coefficient in the present study was .65.

**Individual risk:** Individual risk was measured across two dimensions that captured internalising and externalising components. Peer problems were measured using the peer problems subscale of the SDQ questionnaire ( $\alpha = .61$ ; Goodman, Meltzer, & Bailey, 1998) which assesses the level of involvement in age-appropriate peer relationships, tendency to social isolation and preference for interaction with adults over peers. Items are measured on a 3-point scale from 0=*not true* to 2=*certainly true* with some items being reverse scored.

Lower scores are indicative of normative relationships while higher scores are indicative of peer relationship difficulties. The reliability of the scale in this study was .55. Cronbach alpha values are sensitive to the number of items and low scores are common for measures composed of fewer than 10 items. In these cases use of the inter-item correlation is recommended. The peer problems subscale has only five items, at .2 the mean inter-item correlation for these five items was within the recommended range (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). Externalising risk was assessed using a range of scales including, the Conduct Problems subscale of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 1997, 2001;  $\alpha = .60$ ), which includes shortness of temper and inclination for aggressive and violent responses, lying, theft and bullying. Items are measured on a 3-point scale from 0 = *not true* to 2 = *certainly true* with some items being reverse scored. The reliability of the scale in this study was supported, with an alpha coefficient of .70. The 4-H study of Positive Youth Development ( $\alpha = .73$ ; Theokas & Lerner, 2006) provided two scales to further assess youth externalising risks the 4HSQ Delinquency (frequency of behaviors such as theft, vandalism and aggression) and 4HSQ Risk (frequency of use of substances including alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs such as ecstasy, speed, heroin and crack). Individual items are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 = *never* to 5 = *5 or more times*. The alpha coefficients in the present study were .87 and .82 respectively.

The 12-item version of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale assessed internalising aspects of risk (CES-D-12-NLSCY;  $\alpha = .85$ ; Poulin, Hand, & Boudreau, 2005). Participants rated each item on a 4-point scale from 0 = *rarely or none of the time* to 3 = *all of the time* with some items being reverse scored. The reliability of the scale in the current study was strong, with an alpha coefficient of .80. Peer Impact was assessed using questions from the fourth and fifth cycles of the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth that obtained information relating to peer engagement in a range of anti-social and risk related behaviours. The alpha coefficient for this set of questions was .91.

**Neighbourhood risk:** This was assessed via a composite score using items from the Boston Youth Survey (BYS), with some items being reverse scored. Items assess community cohesion as well as levels of community trust and interaction. The alpha coefficient for this sample was .64. High scores on each of these measures represents increased risk.

**Service use:** At Time 1 *Service use history* comprised a composite score counting the number of services used by youth over their lifetime up to the point of the first interview. This measure is a simple count of the numbers of services youth had contact with; that is has the youth ever had contact with a service, and if so, how many times had they been a registered as client, it did not measure the numbers of times youth had contact with this provider nor did it measure the effectiveness of that contact. The service list included: child welfare, juvenile justice (including contact with the police), educational supports beyond regular classroom programming, mental health and general health services. At Times 2 and 3 service use data counted service utilisation in the preceding twelve months. The alpha coefficient this measure was .81.

**Service quality:** A *service quality* measure composed of 13 questions assessed personal agency (overall satisfaction with the service, having a say in how the service is provided, as well as relevance and accessibility of the service) and staff respect (respect and sensitivity for youth and their family including their beliefs, and staff engaging in clear communication with youth). Adapted from the Youth Services Survey, this descriptive measure assesses youth satisfaction with services as a whole with a particular focus on the extent to which youth experience service delivery as responsive to their situations and whether staff engage appropriately with them and their family or caregivers. It includes questions such as: “The people helping me stuck with me”; “I had a say in how this service was delivered to me”; “Staff were sensitive to my cultural and ethnic background”; “I had someone to talk to when I was in trouble”; and “I could get the service when I needed it”. Items are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

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