



Evaluation Report on
"The Right Track - Te Ara Tutuki Pai"
Programme
2011 - 2012

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*RIGHT TRACK IS AN EDUK8 CHARITABLE TRUST INITIATIVE
TE ARA TUTUKI PAI*

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1. INTRODUCION

New Zealand Police Youth Services are responsible for ensuring young offenders are held accountable for their offending and that their needs are acknowledged to prevent further offending.

Previously there were limited options to address the offending of young people committing driving offences carrying a penalty of imprisonment or driving related offences.

In response to this, The Right Track - Te Ara Tutuki Pai - Driver Offender Rehabilitation Programme (the programme) started in Counties-Manukau in April 2007. Since then 42 programmes have now run in Auckland, Waitematā, Hamilton and Christchurch Districts and cater for young people and from the age of 15 through to 25 years.

The programme co-ordinators are John and Helen Finch from EDUK8 Charitable Trust. This is a non-profit organisation that works collaboratively with various local agencies, including Child Youth and Families, Fire service, Ambulance and police. The presentations are delivered by community services, volunteers and community organisations and include components directed at Maori, Pacific and other ethnic groups.

This report gives an overview of the programme and evaluates the change in offending rates by participants before attending the programme and up to two years after. These figures are for the 2011 and 2012 programmes. This report focuses on the pan Auckland region.

The evaluation figures show after completing the Right Track programme participants offending rates are significantly reduced. This is consistent for both driver related offending and other criminal offending.

Although police can't endorse commercial programmes, (GI S586), Police can acknowledge a successful working partnership. Police are careful to remain neutral, especially when different organisations are vying for the same funding.

2. Programme Objectives

The objectives of the programme are to:

- Reduce driving offending,
- Increase road safety, and
- Educate, inform and inspire participants (learners) to make good choices and decisions for themselves, their peers, family and community.

3. Alignment to Prevention First

There is prima facie, alignment of the programme objectives to the police Prevention First National Operating Strategy across at least three of the five recognised drivers of crime. Specifically:

3.1.1. Youth

- Provides an intervention and development opportunity for identified at-risk youth by way of an alternative action to traditional youth offending responses
- May be tailored to the specific needs of young Maori and Pacific peoples
- Promotes and increases the safety of drivers aged 15-25 years.

- Provides an opportunity to work with an established group to educate and work with at-risk youth in relation to the dangers of abusing alcohol

3.1.2. Alcohol

- . Fosters a culture of responsible drinking (many referrals are for alcohol related offending).

3.1.3. Road Policing

- Promotes working with local partnerships to deliver road safety education
- Aligns with the governments Safer Journey's strategy.

In addition, the programme encourages family involvement and the strengthening of family support mechanisms in pursuit of improved behaviours and decision making through each learner being required to have a family support person accompany them on the journey through the programme. This encourages learning and longevity of the messages received.

4. Programme content and referral

The programme runs for 40 hours over four weeks, four evening sessions and three full days on Saturdays. It involves multi dimensional learning with interactive education sessions.

Most people who attend the Right Track are offenders, referred from either the District Court, Youth Court or through the youth Family Group Conference process. Previously some programmes have been funded for those considered at-risk, but who were not in the Justice system. Such programmes have not been run during 2011 and 2012 due to funding limitations.

Police support the programme by referring learners, presenting on the programme and participating in the sessions. Police also provide transport for participants and supporters and accommodation for certain sessions. Police input varies between areas, but are present for approximately 80% of the programme.

5. Referral to Right Track

Youth Aid officers refer 15-17 year olds who are either on Alternative Action (AA) plans, Intention to Charge (ITC) Family Group Conference (FGC) Plans, or Youth Court ordered FGC plans when their offending is driving related. This may be Excessive Breath Alcohol (EBA) offences, Sustained loss of traction or careless or dangerous driving causing death for example.

The funding now also includes District Court referrals for young adults aged 17-25 years appearing for driving related offending as mentioned above. In this case, it is the decision of the sentencing Judge to refer those deemed suitable for the Right Track - Te Ara Tutuki Pai.

The percentage of District Court referrals compared to Youth referrals varies between areas; however it averages at around 64%.

6. Contributors

Right Track is a community based initiative which involves presentations and interaction with people such as Auckland Spinal Unit staff, Fire Service, St John Ambulance, funeral directors, Police and many others. Some volunteer their own time to present to the group, some organisations donate staff time, and some speakers receive remuneration for their time.

Ngāti Whātua have been staunch supporters of the programme. The programme is opened and participants welcomed with a mihi and pōwhiri led by Kaumātua from Orakei Marae.

The level of support for the programme by the Courts is demonstrated, not only by referrals into the programme, but by the involvement of Court staff in the opening session. Staff include a Judge, Court attendant, Court Registrar, Duty Solicitors, Police Prosecutor; all of whom run a simulated Court hearing and sentencing.

A key element of the programme is involvement of police staff throughout all sessions for the purpose of relationship building and reinforcing of attitudinal messages delivered to participants. An important part of the learning process is discussion of those messages in open forums, which of course provides valuable opportunities for communicating Prevention First messages to participants and their supporters.

In the opening session of the programme participants are interviewed by a Police member. The questionnaire covers reasons for attending the programme, attitude towards their offending and what they hope to achieve from the 4 weeks. In the closing session the same Police Officer re-interviews participants, using the same questionnaire. In my experience over the 42 programmes the change in attitude and perceptions is significant and demonstrates the value of the programme. Of course this is a short term assessment and takes no account of the potential of outside influences to 'undo' what has been achieved.

Having a Police Officer available throughout the programme to respond to learner claims such as *"we were just having fun"*, or *"the cops pick on us because we're young / Maori / drive fast cars...."*, in a setting that facilitates open debate is invaluable. This interaction is core to changing the behaviours and beliefs of the participants. On the face of it that behavioural change is evidenced by the evaluated drop in post course offending.

7. Evaluation

EDUK8 do evaluations with participants at all stages of the programme, and they show extensive evidence that the participants are learning from the session. From a policing perspective, an evaluation of the offending rates before and after the programme provides a measure of offending behaviour changes.

During 2011 / 2012, there were 210 participants on the programme. With the written permission of the participants, EDUK8 provided the names of all student participants for evaluation. The evaluation figures show after attending the Right Track programme driver re-offending is reduced. There is also a notable reduction in re-offending across a wide range of crime-types.

As per the table below, the available statistics provide evidence that the Right Track - Te Ara Tutuki Pai programme reduces both driving offending and criminal offending.

This evaluation has tracked the participants at two different time periods. The measurement has been for up to a year, and then all offending after that first year.

	Driving Offences pre course	Driving Offences < 1 year post course	Driving Offences > 1 year post course	Criminal Offences pre course	Criminal Offences < 1 year post course	Criminal Offences > 1 year post course
2011	304	33	31	514	162	67
2012	430	39	x* ¹	551	74	x*
Total	734	69	31	1050	236	67

Prior to Right Track 5% of participants had not committed any driving offences², 28% had committed 1 driving offence, 67% had committed 2 or more driving offences³.

Up to a year after completing Right Track, 82% of all participants had not committed any further driving offences. A further 9% had only committed one further driving offence, and 9% committed more than one driving offence.

More than a year after completing Right Track, 84% of all participants had not committed any further driving offences. 11% committed one further offence, and 5% committed 2 or more. This further drop in overall offending may in fact not be entirely attributable to Right Track however the immediate post-programme statistics support the proposition that Right Track has a long term effect on all participants.

An apparent collateral benefit of Right Track is that it has a positive impact on criminal offending as well as reducing driving offending. Further, the 'ripple' effect via the family support persons who attend the programme with participants, and the passing of messages peer to peer by participants cannot be measured by the available statistics but based on anecdotal feedback. I believe it can be assumed the effect is both significant and positive.

Prior to Right Track 29% of participants had not committed any criminal offending, 14% had committed one offence, and 57% had committed 2 or more criminal offences.

¹ X* No statistics as yet as courses held in 2012.

² Driving offences refer to police codes preceded by a letter. This does not include unlawfully taking of motor vehicles or fleeing police. These are included in criminal offending.

³ Statistics are calculated by Police NIA occurrences where the learner is coded as an 'offender'. It is not calculated by convictions or Youth Court Orders.

Up to a year after completing Right Track 73% of all participants had not committed any criminal offences. 9% had committed one criminal offence, and 18% had committed 2 or more criminal offences.

More than a year after completing Right Track 74% of all participants had not committed any offending.

Looking at total offending, both driving and criminal, 64% of course participants in 2011 and 2012 did not commit any further offending in the first year, and 66% in the second.

This is the fourth evaluation conducted by police, and the results have continued to track between 79% - 84% non re-offending for driving offences. Over the last two years 210 young people have graduated from this programme. In 2011 their offending rate has reduced from 818 total offences before the course to 293 offences over a two year period and from 981 offences in 2012 to only 113 offences, a reduction of 62 % & 88% respectively.

Throughout the courses anecdotal evidence has emerged about how learners have stood up to mates, taken car keys off them and worked to change attitudes within peer groups. One learner rang police after his mate refused to give him the keys and drove away. I believe such attitude changes of participants and supporters, has a positive impact on the safety of our roads.

The data relied upon in this report demonstrates the impact on the offending of the participants of the course, and I submit that the impact on each is significant. At each course graduation supporters speak of their young ones and themselves becoming evangelists. They share the messages, the positive behaviour and decision making to a widening circle, but as yet there is no way of measuring the ripple effect that this programme has beyond the participants.

8. Course Outline With Participant Evaluation Comments

Every session of Right Track finishes with the participants completing an evaluation. John and Helen regularly send all those comments out to a large email group including Police staff, funders and presenters. Here are some quotes from participants and their supporters which illustrate the effectiveness of Right Track:

Session 1: Court - mock session - why you are here!

“ Made me think about the decisions I have to make in order to turn my life around”

Auckland March Learner 11

Session 2: Presentations from Police Serious Crash Unit, Brain Injury, a Police officer about a tragic road crash and others adversely affected by crashes. 'The Ripple Effect ' session on who is affected by a crash.

“It was a very interesting session. Really made me think about the choices I have to make to go down the right path.”

Auckland March Learner 13

“Made me think that I am responsible for what I do and can’t blame others.”

Manukau April Learner 13

“Hearing and seeing the tragic stories of real people are quite compelling and make you realize how easily people underestimate the value of decisions we make every day.”

North Auckland June Learner 1

Session 3: NZ Fire Service describes their job as they cut kids out of a car.

“How horrifying it would be to hear my daughter screaming in a car fire...”

Waitakere May Learner 16

“made me think about my actions and decisions when operating a motor vehicle”

Waitakere May Learner 15

Session 4: Risk management - practical session outside at Little Huia.

“Choices from the past got me here. Use the advice given and experience to think twice before actions.”

Auckland September Learner 9

“The importance of communicating with my friends, planning beforehand and having a sober driver and then having another plan ready in case the first one goes wrong”

Auckland September Learner 8

Session 5: Shattered Dreams - Tamati Paul - The story of a world champion sportsman who suffered horrific injuries and brain damage after a collision with a speeding drunk driver.

“ Yes, it made me think not to get in the car and not put my seatbelt on, I don’t want to end up in a crash and die because I did not bother to put my seatbelt on.”

Waitakere November Learner 3

Session 6: Police experience of attending a fatal crash, funeral directors and a visit to the Auckland Spinal Unit.

“That lives are so precious and can easily be taken away from one mistake. There is no such thing as an accident.”

Hamilton July Learner 4

Session 7: Graduation - All the participants talk to the group about the impact of Right Track

“ Best thing that has ever happened to me, glad to have done it. Yes, I shall do my best to spread the word”

Manukau October Learner 13

“ It was mean. Got to do heaps of stuff. It has made me a better person than before”

Waitakere August Learner 11

9. Future Courses And Recommendations

From my observations, there continues to be a high demand for this programme. The number of programmes run each year has increased as funding has become available, and the number of participants in the Auckland region increased from 98 to 112. The rates in which offending is reduced, in my view supports the need for this programme to continue to be available for offenders aged 15-25 years.

From information received, the Hamilton and Christchurch programmes have experienced similar reduced offending rates, again supporting the value of the Right Track programme (Information to confirm this would need to be sought through Hamilton police and Christchurch Corrections).

In line with police Prevention First Strategy and in my role as Youth Services Sergeant for East Auckland, I want to continue to support this programme and provide assistance where possible to facilitate change in attitude and behaviour of the participants, and foster continued reduction in offending rates.

With the apparent positive impact on offending behaviour the Right Track has, I would like to see this programme available to all areas of New Zealand to spread the impact and widen the effects, encouraging safer driver behaviour throughout New Zealand.

It is also my recommendation that this programme be available to youth at risk of becoming offenders, which would place prevention at the top of the cliff and potentially increase road safety and reduce road deaths. Currently funding is limited to those who have already committed offences and in some cases offences causing serious injury to others and death.

A further long term statistical evaluation is being conducted on two programmes run in Auckland 5 years ago, where youth at risk were included on the programme. Their behaviour can be tracked and compared to other youth who were deemed to be at risk of offending during the same time period.

10. Conclusion

The results of this evaluation suggest that the Right Track has a positive impact on reducing driving offending and other criminal behaviour. This supports the anecdotal evidence provided by participant's feedback which highlights a change in attitude and behaviour towards offending.

There is continued demand for the programme in the Auckland region and I believe police involvement continues to be a core element to the ongoing positive impact the Right Track appears to have on participants and supporters alike. The desired outcomes are in alignment with police Prevention First National Operating Strategy where police are committed to working with youth and families to increase road safety and reduce offending.

While The Right Track was not designed to reduce overall criminality, the course content and the relationships established between attending Police and the participants has had a wonderful collateral benefit, and the available data points to a significant positive impact on the levels of overall offending by those who attend the programme.

Although comment cannot be passed as to other influences that may have impacted the re-offending rates, in my view The Right Track - Te Ara Tutuki Pai - contributes to the changes of behaviour and making of better choices by both participants and supporters.

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