



2019 Aspire Evaluation Report

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About Aspire

For over a decade, youth development workers of The Salvation Army have been facilitating a range of youth development programmes with young people across Aotearoa. In 2014, they gathered to seek collaboration and conciliation of what made quality youth development programmes work for young people.

The result of this was 'Aspire' and the opportunity to partner with the Warehouse Group in 2015 to fund a now unified quality youth development programme, partnering with schools and based on experience and evidence, 'Aspire KIWI YOUTH DEVELOPMENT' was born.

Aspire had gained momentum from the one-year 2015 fund from the Warehouse Group. Seeking further partners became a priority if the programme was to survive post-2015. Significant partnerships with Jeff Trust, OCS, Warehouse Stationery, Warehouse Group and now the Ministry of Youth Development, along with a number of smaller private donors, means Aspire continues today with over 200 participants spread across Aotearoa.

As in 2015 and 2017, we have completed an extensive evaluation report in 2019 to assess impact, learnings and how we continue to innovate to respond to the needs of Rangatahi across Aotearoa. Almost 2000 young people have participated in Aspire since it commenced. We are now able to compare data from each of these years, and evaluation is identified later in this report.

Last year was again a proud achievement for both Aspire and The Salvation Army, with 240 participants engaged in the programme from Kaitaia to Invercargill, in weekly programmes with qualified and experienced youth development facilitators.

Aspire Approach

Aspire is an innovative year-long project designed to strengthen vulnerable young people and their families across New Zealand, through a comprehensive programme of personal development. Groups of 10–12 young people from communities across the country will be assisted through a four-stage development programme based on the 'Circle of Courage', led by specialist facilitators from The Salvation Army involving:

- a 30–35 week programme
- weekly sessions of 1.5 hours in partnership at the school. Sessions follow experiential learning pedagogy
- there are four modules: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity
- 3–4-days adventure experience at Blue Mountain Adventure Centre
- two Family engagement events
- community project component
- graduation night with school and whānau
- access and referral of young person and whānau, when appropriate, to additional Salvation Army services (welfare, social work, housing, counselling, youth groups and churches)
- led by qualified youth development workers.

Evidence Informed Approach

‘CIRCLE OF COURAGE’

Aspire is founded on quality youth development evidence. The ‘Circle of Courage’ was developed by Larry Bredtro, Martin Broken Leg and Leslie Du Toit in Indigenous American settlements and post-apartheid South Africa. It is based on four developmental stages: Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. Each term is allocated one of these stages as a module with a minimum of eight associated sessions, including the adventure component aligned to Mastery and the community project to Generosity. Individual sessions are designed to facilitate growth of skills that reflect the developmental stage. The ‘Circle of Courage’ is effective yet simple to articulate, gaining buy-in from schools, families and the young people across Aotearoa.



EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Each individual session has a developed sequence of activities to facilitate growth of the participants and the group. This approach is founded on David Kolb’s ‘Experiential Learning Cycle’ and from what is widely referred to as ‘Activity Based Learning’. This approach to the programme means our youth workers facilitate activities and learning moments rather than instruct knowledge. This starts with an activity, then participants explore in creative ways: What happened? Why did it happen?, and finally, Now what changes for them in their world or in the group? This last step is the learning moment.

PARTICIPATION

Increasing the level of positive participation of young people at home, school and the community is at the core of Aspire. This value is inspired and measured against Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation. Hart argues that without genuine participation and ownership by participants, limited learning will take place. Each session is sequenced to encourage this and facilitators look for where participants can lead, contribute and decide. This is best reflected in the community project that is planned and implemented by the participants during the Generosity module.

Facilitator Reflection on 2019

Young people have an incredible ability to give you hope as you enter into their lives.

It is really a privilege to walk through life with young people. The year 2019 was a year of growth with my group and myself as a facilitator. First day I’m so nervous, I feel like I’m at a job interview. I have only run groups that were compulsory, I had to hope I started well so they would want to come back. And they did, at the start a regular 6–8, and this doubled quickly. The school really supported the kaupapa of Aspire and were keen to partner further with us. Agreeing on our skill sets, we supported a Pasifika Dance Club in their school. This promoted student leadership opportunities for the Pasifika students and led to the first ever Pasifika awards night. Aspire is a great programme that opens a range of opportunities to see young people grow with the holistic support we can provide from The Salvation Army.

Isabel Lemanutau

ASPIRE FACILITATOR, WELLINGTON

School Partners

Intermediate and High Schools across Aotearoa have partnered again with Aspire to see young people reach their potential and develop holistically.

Partnerships with schools are not taken for granted and considerable work is put in place to establish these relationships. Aspire aims to ensure the programme aligns with and benefits the schools educational and social needs. Aspire must fit within the policies, procedures and values of the school. Quality relationships have been built over a number of years and remain a key point of initial connection for The Salvation Army and young people across Aotearoa.

Aspire would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all school partners from across Aotearoa and the personnel within the schools who act as the key point of contact.



School Partner Feed Back

Students that have leadership potential, but are just not on an even playing field with their peers, whether this is emotional, economic, social or whānau needs, the programme builds up resilience in our students so they cope better with everyday challenges. The activities help them to build self-confidence and how to be generous to the community, whether that is their school, peers or wider neighborhood. Finally, Aspire teaches young people success and how to celebrate and build from that success to further achievements. Our students are so excited and wait in anticipation for their weekly session or when the facilitators are at school. Over the year they build a sense of pride in themselves, this leads to them engaging further in school activity, and for me a special moment is when we celebrate their pride and success at the graduation with their whānau. Our school values deeply the role Aspire and the youth workers of The Salvation Army.

Cathy Loelu

ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL, AUCKLAND

We have been incredibly fortunate to have had the support of the Aspire team at Hutt Valley High for just over a year. In that time we have appreciated the strength of the relationships they have formed with our school and the young people through the Aspire programme. This year we have been fortunate to have programmes for our young women alongside those existing for our young men. This has been a much needed addition for us as a school, and particularly the beginning of a Pasifika girls group. As a school we have fully appreciated the involvement of the Aspire youth workers. The weekly programmes, the camps and the specific support offered to our Pasifika community have all been significant.

Claire Ross

HEAD OF GUIDANCE, WELLINGTON

Blue Mountain Adventure Centre

The Salvation Army Blue Mountain Adventure Centre (BMAC) is an outdoor adventure centre in the heart of New Zealand. Their mission is to help people discover and live out their God-given potential through the challenge of adventure.

The centre was established in 1990 and has become a wellknown and trusted outdoor education centre that is used by organisations, schools and various groups from around the country. Surrounded by the stunning adventure playground of Tongariro National Park, BMAC can be a place for reflection, learning, and of course, fun.

BMAC has been a consistent and a crucial partnership for the implementation of the Aspire programme. Seen by many who know Aspire as one of the key points of difference to other programmes, and by facilitators a significant growth opportunity for the participants that is long lasting. Funded as part of the programme each group attends a 3–4 day adventure camp in the middle part of the year, which includes: rafting, high ropes, caving, mountain biking and snow activities.

Aspire would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant partnership we have with BMAC and honour the amazing role the staff play in the development of both the participants and groups.



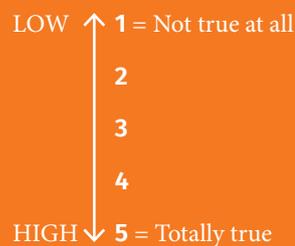
Evaluation Approach

To ensure Aspire was continuing to be an effective tool for the care and development of young kiwis a comprehensive evaluation was completed to measure growth and development of each young person and gauge the effectiveness of each group and its facilitation.

To gain this information, participants completed a range of measures and the growth they had observed at the completion each module or term. The modules encompassed the guiding theory of the 'Circle of Courage': Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. Further evaluation was completed on the importance of both the adventure component at Blue Mountain Adventure Centre, Community Project and the Facilitators

The Aspire evaluation process measured against 30 key indicators from basic human needs through to self-efficacy. Participants were asked to complete a series of self-ratings on a 1–5 scale across a number of values. These self-ratings were completed at the end of each module and included how they rated themselves both before the module and at the end to enable a 'before and after' comparison. Data has then been collated and analysed looking at themes and connections between questions asked.

1–5 Scale for Measuring Data



2019 Landscape

Aspire 2019 has seen 240 participants of diverse backgrounds meeting in 17 Intermediate and High Schools across rural and urban Aotearoa, as far north as Kaitiāia and as south as Invercargill.

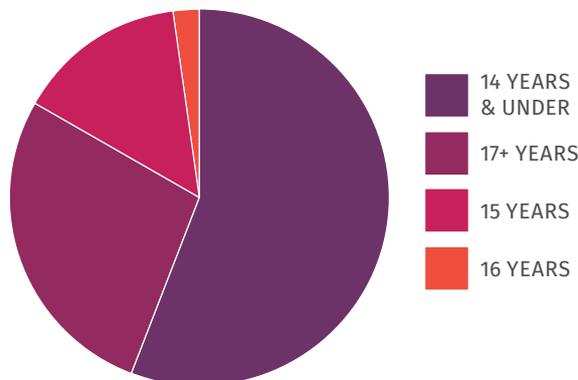
A total of 34 percent of groups were facilitated in wider Auckland region, but just as many in rural towns throughout the country with very similar success. We believe this is purely down to the quality of the facilitator’s ability to adapt and flex to the group’s needs rather than predesigned content as the only approach.

The ethnic make-up varied from group to group but reflected our modern and diverse country. As the graph shows we are working with large numbers of young people from the Māori and Pacific communities. This is not too different to other services of The Salvation Army. This being identified has triggered further work to ensure the programme reflects the needs of these communities.

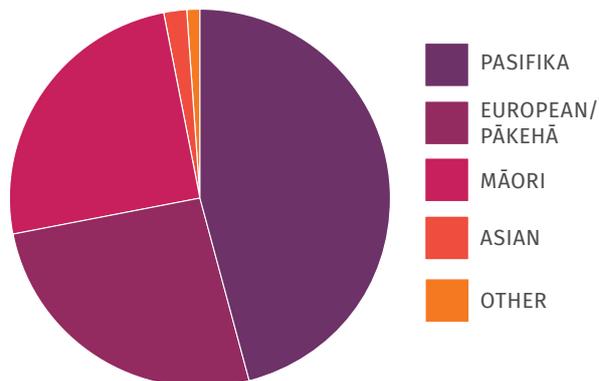
Aspire’s evidence-informed approach relies on experienced and trained facilitators. The Salvation Army has a great asset with these youth workers but growth is needed. In many cases, volunteers, LAB apprentices or high school gateway students are shadowing and supporting facilitators. This is growing a new generation of youth workers and capacity for Aspire to extend.

Selection of participants varied from site to site. Schools were key to advising selection of participants. Students identified for groups where primarily based on need for additional investment, high-risk factors or with untapped potential. Participants were often selected for challenges happening outside of school, peers or whānau.

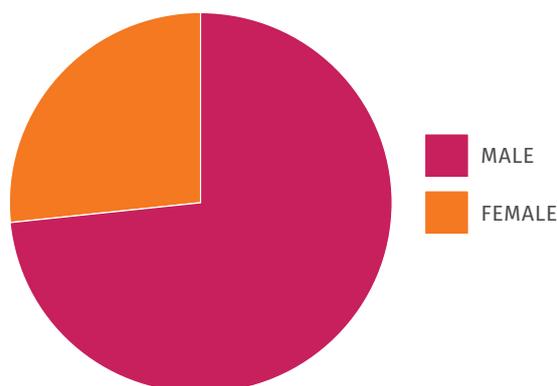
PARTICIPANT AGE (2019)



PARTICIPANT ETHNICITY (2019)



PARTICIPANT GENDER (2019)



Belonging

The first value was belonging. Belonging is about feeling accepted by others. Feeling that their views and opinions matter is important to helping youth gain a sense of positive identity. Believing that people notice when you are not around is linked to a strong sense of self-esteem and belonging.

Topics covered in the belonging module included group formation, teamwork, trust, respect, support networks and their social world. To gauge changes in their sense of belonging, participants were asked nine questions to rate themselves on a 1–5 scale, before the course and then after it.

1. If I have a problem, there is someone I can talk to about it.
2. I have good relationships with my family.
3. I have good relationships with my friends.
4. I have good relationships with other adults around me.
5. I care about my community and where I live.
6. People around me listen to what I have to say.
7. I feel safe.
8. People notice when I'm not around.
9. Adults in my community care about people my age.

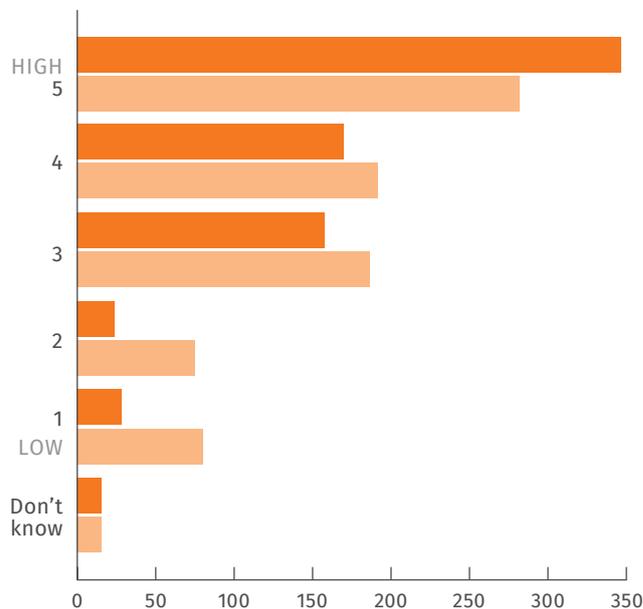
The ratings ranged from 1 low—not true at all) through to 5 (high—totally true). The first graph shows how many participants gave the various ratings before (pre-module), alongside the total giving ratings afterwards. The graph shows a small, but clear movement overall to higher ratings post-course.

Most of the ratings showed about a 10 percent increase over the course. The question about having someone to talk to about problems saw a 25 percent increase.

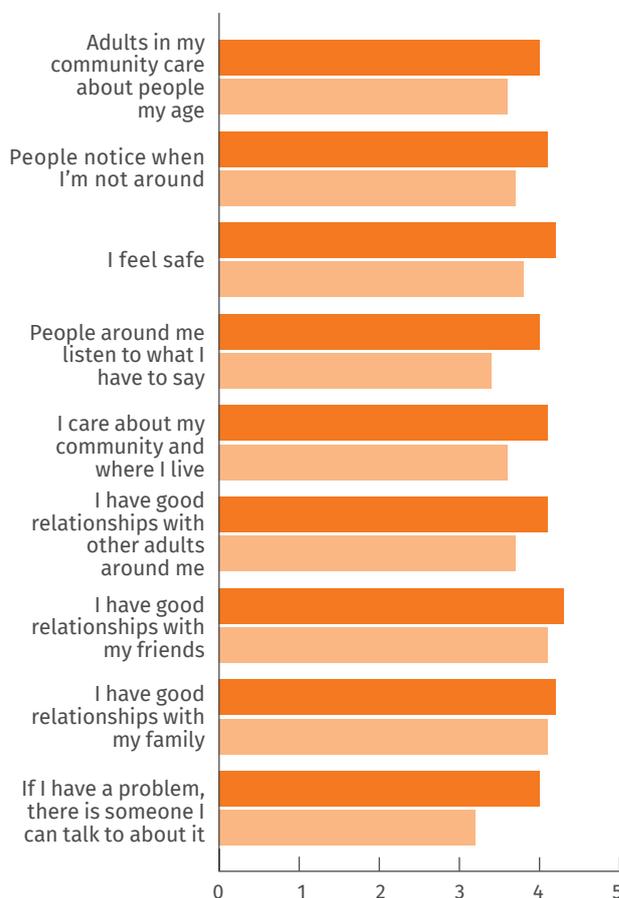
Two areas that stood out in the evaluation was how participants had an increased learning of how aware they were of the support people around them who they could talk to and trust and that they were genuinely interested in what they had to say. In both of these questions there was a clear shift of over 30 percent. As identified in previous research and evaluation, this can be just as much about the ability to identify these people, as it is an increase of these people.

KEY: ■ POST-MODULE ■ PRE-MODULE

CHANGE IN BELONGING RATINGS



CHANGE IN AVERAGE BELONGING RATINGS



In addition to the self-rating questions, participants were also asked a series of open questions in relation to belonging.

When asked what they thought ‘could be done to make your community a better place for people your age to grow up’, they gave a wide range of responses, which have been grouped into a number of broad themes below. The greatest response was around having a youth-friendly and supportive environment free of intimidation and negative behaviour.

Some stand out comments were:

- *Gang affiliations, without it things would be better.*
- *I think it would be good if others care about our decisions and what we think.*
- *Look after the environment.*
- *Stop violence against kids (sadly this came up regularly).*
- *Don’t make us feel trapped in school system.*

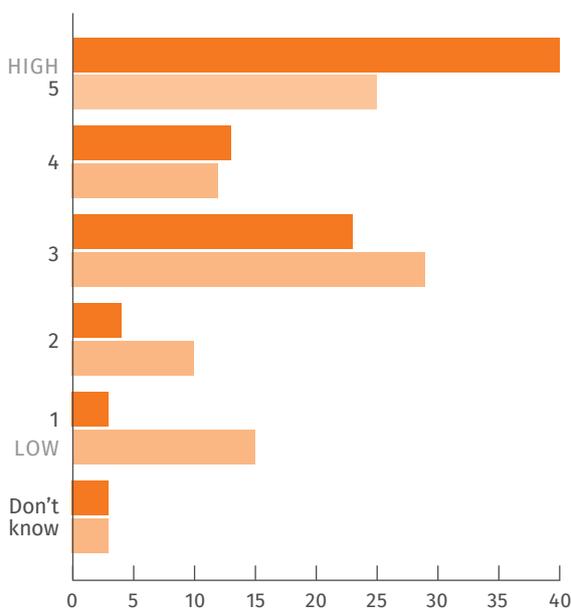
They were then asked what they thought they could do to help other young people in their community feel a sense of belonging. In contrast to the previous question, there was a much smaller range of responses to this question, which may reflect what they think they can do as young people, or a history of not being heard by adults.

Inspiring comments included:

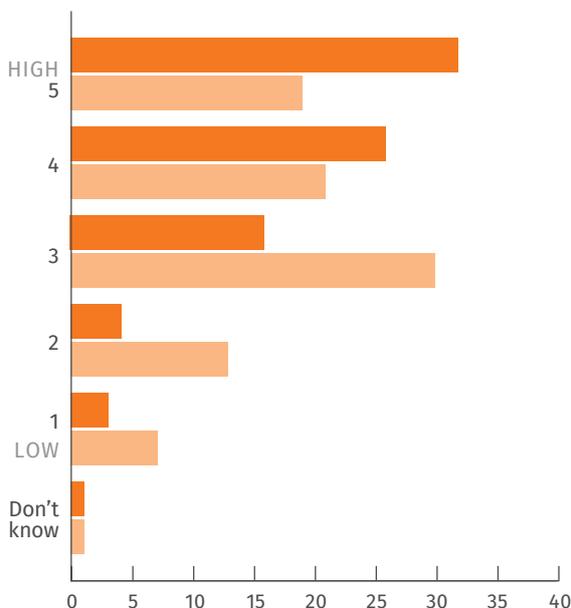
- *how to help be kind to everyone, don’t make them feel like no one*
- *well to help them feel safe at school and around everyone*
- *invite them with food*
- *lead by example*
- *let them know they have a community that loves them*
- *show them your friends.*

KEY: ■ POST-MODULE ■ PRE-MODULE

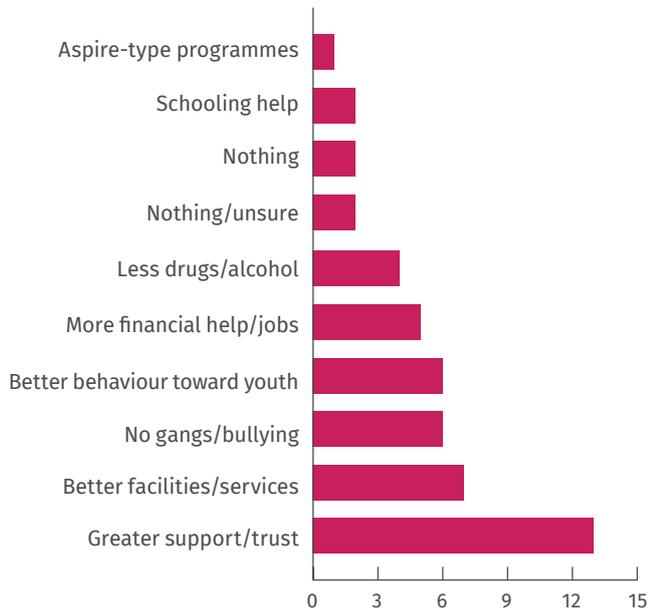
IF I HAVE A PROBLEM, THERE IS SOMEONE I CAN TALK TO ABOUT IT



PEOPLE AROUND ME LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY



HOW COMMUNITY CAN BE IMPROVED



HOW TO CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR YOUTH IN COMMUNITY



Mastery

The development of Mastery and competence in the context of Aspire is about learning and mastering new skills and is seen as a key part of positive youth development. When a young person can take pride in their competence in areas of strength, there is a willingness to learn new skills and knowledge comes more naturally. Identifying existing mastered skills or talents provides a platform from which a young person can grow.

Topics covered in the Mastery module included communication, self-control, creativity, self-esteem, goal-setting, peer support and problem-solving. Flexibility in the curriculum is given at this period of the programme to help facilitators identify meaningful skills or tasks that can be mastered. In 2019, groups used Taiaha, Pacific dance, language, art and sport to ensure the development of mastery is relevant to the participants, and also where the facilitators are skilled.

To assess changes in learning and mastering new skills, participants were asked to self-rate themselves (nine questions using the 1–5 scale) pre- and post-completion of the module.

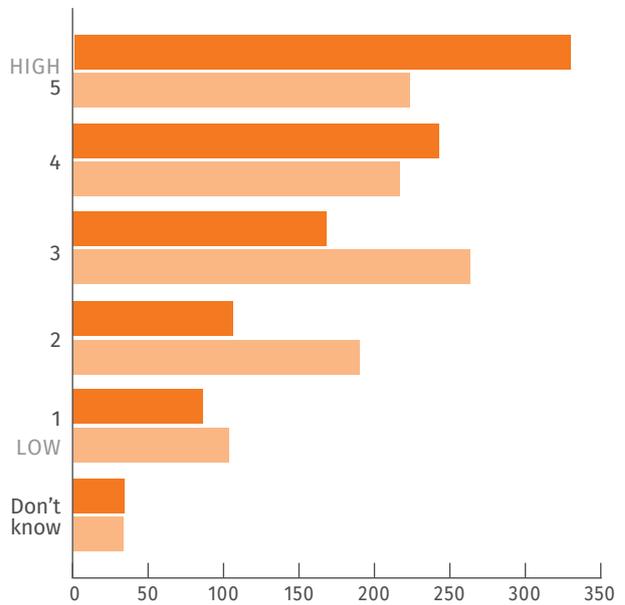
1. I like to learn new skills and try to do new things.
2. I find it easy to find things I am good at.
3. I enjoy being challenged.
4. I know how to put a plan in place for problem solving.
5. I have good self-control over my emotions and behaviours.
6. I know how to turn setbacks into successes.
7. I am good at working with people who are different.
8. I am scared to do things in case I fail.
9. I give up easily if I don't know how to do things.

The first graph shows a clear and substantial movement overall to higher ratings from pre- to post-module.

The second graph then shows the movement in ratings for each of the nine self-ratings. Two of the ratings moved more than 20 percent: 'I know how to put a plan in place for problem solving' and 'I know how to turn setbacks into successes'.

KEY: ■ POST-MODULE ■ PRE-MODULE

CHANGE IN MASTERY RATINGS



AVERAGE CHANGE IN MASTERY SELF-RATINGS



Independence and Generosity

Independence and Generosity were evaluated together and were the last of their personal attributes they were asked to self-rate, across nine questions on 1–5 scale.

Encouraging the growth of independence develops self-determination and confidence. The understanding that individuals are able to influence their future through their own decisions and actions is seen as an important cornerstone of positive youth development. It is linked to positive adult outcomes such as cultural identity, economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships and community involvement.

Nine questions asked.

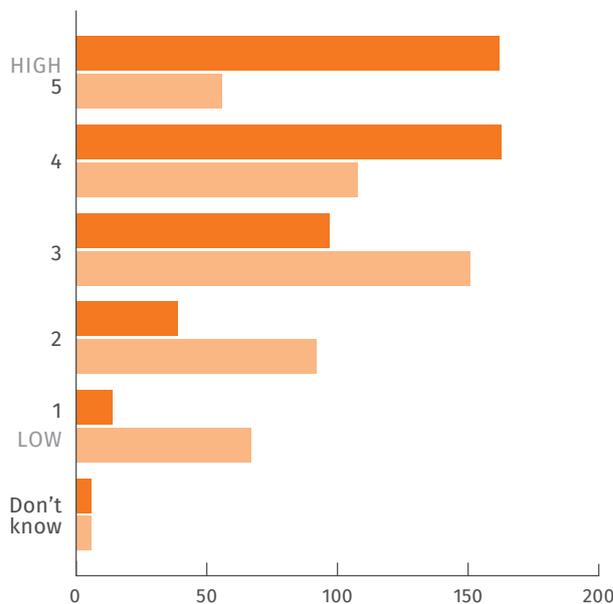
1. I feel in control of my life.
2. I know about myself and what makes me tick.
3. I have goals and a plan for the future.
4. I am confident I can reach my goals.
5. I understand where I fit in the world.
6. I believe that I can make a difference.
7. I help others.
8. I volunteer my time for something.
9. I believe I have something to contribute to the world.

It was exciting to see the average self-ratings pre-module were distinctly lower than the post-module ratings, as this evaluation is taken late in the course when the participants have engaged in the majority of the programme content. We are confident that even just the value of a regular programme and positive relationships with a youth worker is having a significant impact on young people’s lives.

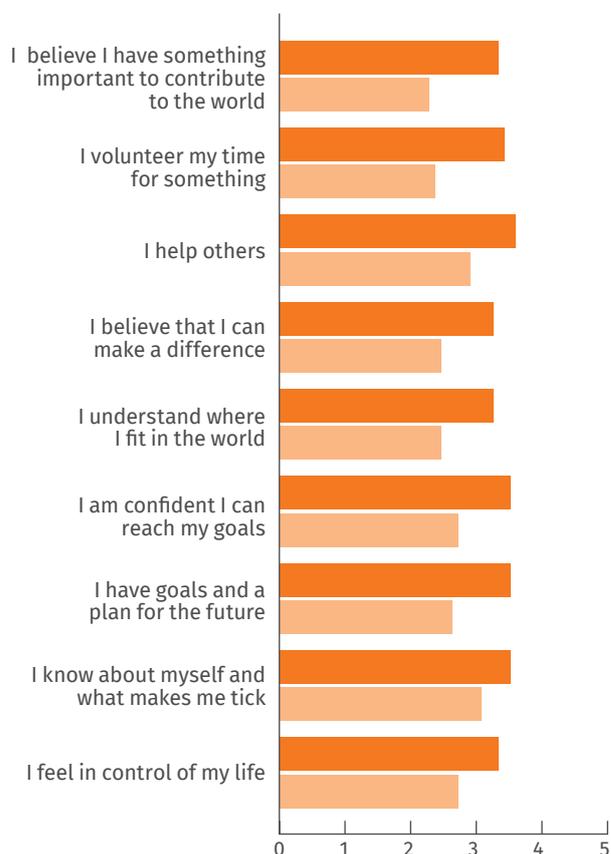
While self-ratings for all nine independence questions were generally lower than for Belonging and Mastery sections, they were consistent across all of the questions with the overall average change of 31 percent increase. All of these increases are exciting to be able to identify. Aspire realises the importance of being able to practise what they have learned in the programme by completing a community project. It is evident that having a go helps cement the learning into their own self-belief when we see such large shifts in rating of: I believe I have something to contribute to the world; I volunteer my time for something; and, I have goals and a plan for the future.

KEY: ■ POST-MODULE ■ PRE-MODULE

INDEPENDENCE OVERALL SELF-RATINGS



INDEPENDENCE AND GENEROSITY RATINGS

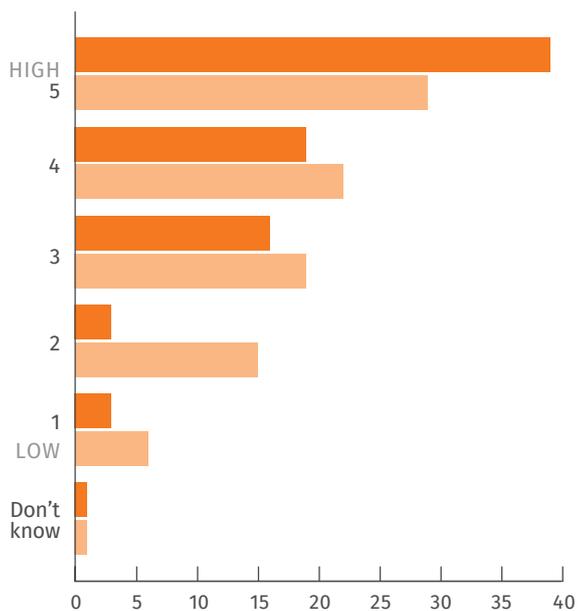


In 2019, we had a great range of amazing community projects from Pātaka Kai’s foodbank service to online mental health and environmental campaigns. In the Generosity module participants explore the needs in their community and how they can respond as a group with what they know, have learned and what they have. As in previous years, participants continue to inspire us with courage and innovation with their projects. The following graph shows a significant shift in how young people saw their community and how impacted they were when they contributed through these projects.



KEY: ■ POST-MODULE ■ PRE-MODULE

I CARE ABOUT MY COMMUNITY AND WHERE I LIVE



Programme and Facilitation

The Aspire participants were asked to rate, as part of the last evaluation, the role and value of their youth work facilitator (from '1—never' to '5—all the time') in terms of five statements.

1. My leader listens to me.
2. My leader keeps the session interactive.
3. I see my leader outside of the group time.
4. I learn something new each session.
5. My leader is someone I can trust.

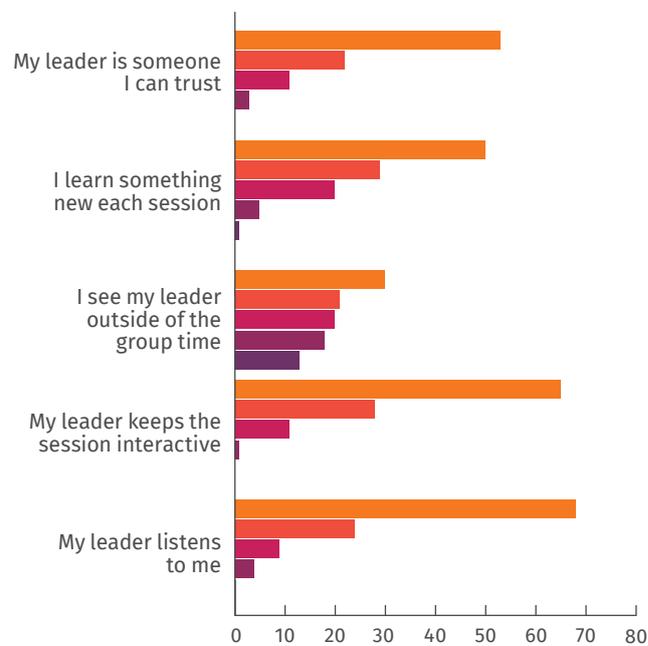
The 'Aspire Leadership Ratings' graph shows a pattern of very strong ratings for the leaders and facilitation of the programmes, especially in terms of personal qualities and course management skills. This data clearly shows the value of experienced, trained and well-informed facilitators who also show a genuineness in how they connect with young people. We are truly blessed with the personnel we have at Aspire. As the second graph suggests, there is genuine investment taking place, where young people identify themes valued higher—connection and support—over the importance of how fun or engaging an activity is.

When asked for comment on what they found helpful in their facilitator, we were in awe of what the majority of young people said, here is a small snapshot of what we heard.

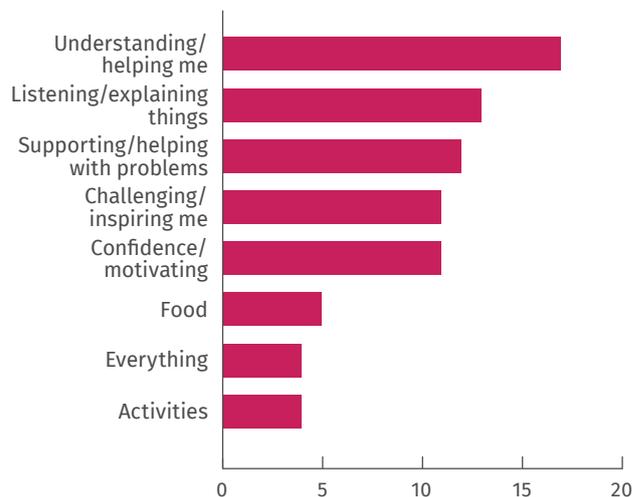
- She sits there and listens and stuff and always tries to help us. She even comes and checks on us when not on Aspire.
- He stands up for us when other adults don't believe us.
- He turns up to my rugby to watch me play.
- Encourages me to do stuff I might not think I'll do.
- Gives helpful advice to help our life for our future.
- They are always there no matter!!!!
- I find it helpful when my leaders show what it feels like to be an asset to my community.
- They listen to our opinions. Taking our opinions and actually trusting us.

KEY: 5 (ALL THE TIME) 4 (MOSTLY)
3 (SOMETIMES) 2 (NOT OFTEN) 1 (NEVER)

ASPIRE LEADERSHIP RATINGS



MOST USEFUL WITH LEADERS



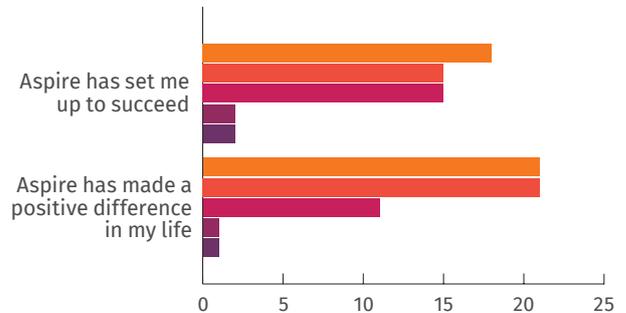
When we ask participants to evaluate the personal impact of the programme, we have consistently heard that Aspire plays a key role in their development and resilience. Most evident in the data, was identifying how Aspire had impacted their life. Specific comments included.

- I learned to trust people and be honest of others and learned to take control when no one wants to step in and help.
- I learned how to speak up, but also to let people speak because everyone’s ideas count.
- Self-control and learning about how drugs and alcohol impact me.
- Opening up, and working with people I wouldn’t normally work with.
- Teaching us about the community and how we should treat the community.
- I learned that everyone is different and that’s a good thing!!!!
- How to control my feelings and in general being confident about expressing myself.

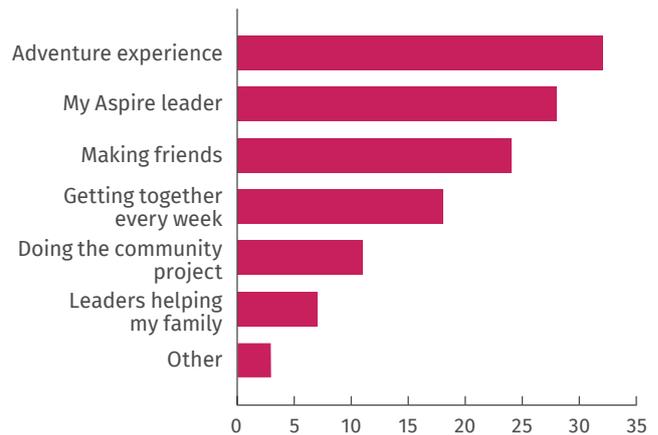
When we asked what it was that was the most influential element of Aspire, it was always going to be the investment of an epic adventure experience at Blue Mountain Adventure Centre. These experiences will be life-long memories for many of these young people, and Aspire facilitators are honoured to share this with them. This is closely followed by the role of the facilitators, again this acknowledges the immeasurable value of having quality adult facilitators who truly care about the Aspire programme and the young people they journey with.

KEY: ■ STRONGLY AGREE ■ AGREE ■ NEUTRAL ■ STRONGLY DISAGREE ■ DON'T KNOW

PROGRAMME IMPACT



MOST INFLUENTIAL ELEMENT OF ASPIRE



Summary



From the Aspire National Coordinator

It is a blessing to see and share the fruits of so many young people and their facilitators from the year 2019. Rangatahi ora and all that comes with this mahi is so important, I am deeply inspired to have been able to tell this story.

In summary, the 2019 data and report has produced clear evidence that the role of quality youth development led by well-informed adults who care deeply about Rangatahi and their journey can play a vital role in the future on Rangatahi in Aotearoa. We acknowledge that further work is needed in creating pathways for this growth to be cemented and capitalised through further external partnership and pathways within The Salvation Army.

Although not highlighted in the evaluations, further development in creating a programme which is inclusive for all rangatahi no matter their context, culture or lived experience, to ensure the programme can flex to support all rangatahi needs. Investing in an increased number of facilitators who can play the key role of programme facilitation is key and, even more importantly, as the significant adult for a bunch of rangatahi who just need that person in their corner.

Finally, I want to again thank all those who have partnered to make this happen: financial sponsors, resourcing, school partners, youth workers, parents and the participants.

Michael Smith
NATIONAL ASPIRE COORDINATOR



From the Territorial Director of Community Ministries

Aspire Youth Development Programme is coming up to its fifth year of delivery and is increasingly recognised as a life-changing transformative experience for the thousands of young people and whānau it has benefited. It has been a privilege to partner with the Ministry of Youth Development recently, and acknowledged the continued support of The Warehouse Group, without which The Salvation Army would be hampered in our ability to reach communities in Aotearoa.

One of the strengths of Aspire is its connectedness with other Salvation Army services and ministries and ability to provide some holistic support for whānau. However, the true success of Aspire is the dedicated and skilled youth workers that faithfully journey with young people, both within the programme and extending beyond the programme, we thank you for your passion and commitment.

Jono Bell
TERRITORIAL DIRECTOR COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

Acknowledgements

Aspire would like to honour the following resource and financial partners from 2019; without the generous support from these partners and a number of smaller private sponsors, Aspire would simply not exist. In 2015, The Warehouse Group got us started and we will be forever grateful to them. To this day, they continue to sponsor the programme. Other key partners like OCS and Nestlé have also been truly generous with resource and finance over the more recent future. We are now excited to be working with the Ministry of Youth Development through their Partnership Fund.

True partnership is when we are able to see our participants, schools and facilitators connect with our sponsor partners. Shared fundraisers, work experience and story-telling have been an a great addition to Aspire over 2019.



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