

# EVALUATION OF THE BLUE LIGHT INITIATIVE

September 2005

Prepared for NZ Police by Vicki Wilde and Mathea Roorda



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# Executive Summary

## ***Background to the evaluation***

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the New Zealand Blue Light initiative conducted by Vicki Wilde and Mathea Roorda. The purpose of the evaluation is to develop a detailed picture of Blue Light in New Zealand, including the organisational and governance structure, the range of activities that are delivered; to assess whether Blue Light is operating as intended, and the extent to which the initiative might be contributing to the Police goals of 'reduced youth offending' and 'increased community safety'.

The evaluation is based on data from 37 Blue Light branches. The evaluation methods included a written survey, telephone interviews and two case studies which involved face to face interviews with Blue Light staff, committee members, community representatives, and young people in North Rodney and Ngati Porou.

## ***Findings***

### **Governance and management**

A key issue identified by branch staff, Blue Light board members and the national coordinator is the degree of buy-in police management have to Blue Light. The board chair estimates that about 50 per cent of area commanders recognise and value the work Blue Light is doing. This support provides Blue Light staff with the mandate to plan activities and makes it easier to recruit and retain people to the Blue Light committees. However, findings from the written survey suggest a significant number of branches struggle to get support for their activities from police management. Two branches said they are in recess due to lack of support from management, and another is to close later this year.

Blue Light branches are accountable to their district commanders, not the national Blue Light coordinator or to national headquarters. The current organisational structure means that the national coordinator has no accurate assessment of the number of active Blue Light branches in New Zealand and what is happening at the branch level in terms of financial status, types of activities they are involved in and what they are achieving.

All but three of the branches that responded to the survey operate with a committee. Committees consist of police staff (sworn and non-sworn) and community members. A small number have members from community agencies, local government or central government. About half the branches surveyed operate with an annual business plan.

Most respondents said they are happy with the support their branch gets from the national Blue Light body. An area of need, identified by 20 respondents, was assistance with funding.

About 50 per cent of respondents identified funding as a barrier to their branch offering Blue Light activities.

## **Activities**

Nationally, 30 per cent of Blue Light branch activities in the last twelve months were one-off events and 26 per cent were annual. These tended to be bigger events which required either more organisational support and/or funding. Thirteen per cent of activities/events were provided monthly and tended to include mainly dances or sports events, while 8 per cent were provided weekly and tended to be linked with school programmes. A further 22 per cent were held in timeframes other than those given in the survey and tended to be more frequent than monthly.

The most common activities/events in the last 12 months, in descending order of prevalence were dances; fun days (including the national Rainbow's End Fun Day and locally organised fun days); camps; fishing trips/competitions ; sports events; PCT fear factor (including national and locally organised competition) and the rewards for kids programmes (including special activities/trips or camps)

In 13 branches, the level of Blue Light activity is increasing. Another 13 branches said the level of activity was staying the same while in 11 branches, the level of activity is decreasing. Costs/funding, time and staff support (including support from management) are important influences on the level of activity in Blue Light branches.

## **Success**

Respondents identified two ways they measure success. This is through young people's participation and enjoyment of activities and events, and through feedback they receive from participants, parents and the community.

The most successful activities include camps, dances, PCT fear factor and fun days, including those held at Rainbow's End. Not surprisingly, there is a link between activities considered successful and those that are most commonly held.

## **Outcomes**

It appears that many branches are achieving and often exceeding their Blue Light aims particularly building positive relationships between young people and Police, providing fun, safe, social and challenging activities and some believe they are reducing youth offending. Respondents said that many participants show changes in personal and social development as a result of their involvement in Blue Light activities. Where the Police emphasis was more strongly on law enforcement activities, branches faced more barriers to offering activities and achieving Blue Light aims. Few branches identified crash reduction as a specific aim although several did provide road safety education and related competitions. This area had the least evidence of outcomes across all branches.

## **Suggested changes**

Respondents offered three main suggestions for how Blue Light activity could be increased in branches. These included: branches having greater access to funding including securing funding in advance, more Police staff and community involvement (for some this meant having a paid coordinator and for some it meant recruiting people from a wide spectrum of the community, establishing a staff support officer and encouraging more Police members onto the committee), and having more support from Police management including more positive attitudes and valuing the pro-active approach to Policing that Blue Light offers.

# 1 Background

Blue Light is a youth-focused initiative, organised by New Zealand Police, which provides social, sporting and education activities in an environment free of alcohol, drugs and violence. While the target group for Blue Light activities is children and youth people aged between six and 18 years, Blue Light also encourages the involvement of parents, schools, community groups and volunteers.

The stated aims of Blue Light are to:

- encourage better relations between young people and their parents, the New Zealand Police and community
- prevent crime and antisocial behaviour, by exposing young people to different experiences and a healthy socialisation process in a safe, supervised environment, and to
- raise self esteem amongst young people.

Blue Light activities are conducted under the auspices of a registered society, Blue Light Ventures Incorporated (BLV). BLV has a national executive, a national coordinator and branches throughout New Zealand. The National Executive determines the national activities each year, while local branches devise their own local calendars of events.

The objectives for participants in Blue Light programmes include:

- increasing self awareness
- encouraging and assisting development of social skills
- increasing personal competence
- enhancing a sense of social responsibility
- providing opportunities to develop links
- creating trust, motivation and leadership, and
- enhancing police/youth perception and relationships.

# 2 Methodology

The evaluation objectives were to:

- describe the Blue Light initiative (including organisational and governance structure, roles of those involved, funding/resourcing and range of activities)
- assess the effectiveness of the governance and management structure
- assess whether Blue Light operates as intended (including an identification of what works well, problems and issues and level of satisfaction with activities)
- identify whether/how Blue Light contributes to Police's overarching aims of 'reduced youth offending' and 'increased community safety' (including whether relationship-building has occurred between police, young people, parents and the community).

This evaluation report is based on information received from 37 out of 58 Blue Light branches contacted (a response rate of 64%). This includes information from 34 written surveys, five telephone interviews with Blue Light branch representatives and two case studies (North Rodney and Ngati Porou). For some branches, multiple methods were used to collect data.

## **2.1 Written survey**

The key purpose of the written survey was to provide all Blue Light branches with an opportunity to describe how their committees work in terms of management and governance, and to reflect on what works well and to identify issues or problems with their relationship with national Blue Light, funding and activities. They were also asked to describe the sorts of changes they/others see in young people who participate in Blue Light activities, and to identify successful activities.

The written survey was sent by post to Blue Light branches on 3 May 2005 (to either the Blue Light chairperson or a Blue Light police contact person). Each survey was accompanied by a letter from Superintendent Steve Christian, National Manager, Youth Services, Office of the Police Commissioner, outlining the background to the evaluation and the importance of branches sharing their knowledge and experiences about the operation of the Blue Light initiative and identifying areas that are working well or that could be improved.

Two people did not complete the written survey, but replied stating that their branches no longer existed (1) or were yet to start operating (1). One branch received two surveys as they were duplicated in the database (identified by two different names). The total survey sample was thus reduced to 54 branches. Of these, 34 completed and returned their surveys by 27 May 2005 (a survey response rate of 63%).

Two of the 34 respondents who completed surveys said their branches had recently folded. These surveys have been counted as the respondents were able to answer some of the questions.

Not all respondents answered each question in the survey. In retrospect, the researchers believe the survey was too long (33 questions over 11 pages). In addition, some questions were asking for similar information. As a result, a number of respondents may have experienced 'survey fatigue'. This may account for some of the findings contradicting other findings (e.g. 58% of respondents said their branch had no difficulty finding funding for Blue Light activities, yet analysis of another section of the report suggests funding is an ongoing issue identified by many branches.

## **2.2 Telephone interviews**

A decision was made to conduct telephone interviews with six branch representatives. This was to enable the research team to pull out more detail in response to the survey questions than they might otherwise expect to get from the written responses alone. In fact, the level of detail and information that branches provided in their survey responses was generally good.

Six randomly selected branches (two in the South Island and four in the North Island) were to be contacted: three in city locations, one in a large regional town and two in rural locations.

These branches were not sent the written survey in the official mail out. However, two intended telephone respondents did return written surveys. This is because one branch was in the Blue Light directory twice under two names, so was sent a written survey to complete. The telephone interview was organised and underway before the evaluators knew the branch had already completed a survey, so the telephone interview data was added to the survey data.

It is not known how the other respondent received the written survey. A decision was made not to contact this branch for a telephone interview, but to instead contact an alternative branch. Despite a number of attempts, the evaluators were unable to reach the sixth branch for an interview.

The telephone interview questions were the same as in the written survey, but with additional prompts to elicit more in-depth information. In total, five branches were interviewed by telephone.

## **2.3 Case studies**

The purpose of the case studies was to provide a more in-depth examination of selected sites to describe implementation issues, strengths/weaknesses of Blue Light, levels of satisfaction with the structure and implementation of the initiative, and perceptions of value.

The two case study sites, Wellsford (North Rodney) and Ruatoria (Ngati Porou), were selected in consultation with the national Blue Light coordinator and the National Manager, Youth Services. North Rodney was selected because it has been in operation for more than 10 years and is considered a very active branch. On the other hand Ngati Porou was a new branch which operates in rural isolated communities, where there is a high percentage of Maori and a young population.

Information was gathered from the two case study sites via face-to-face individual and group interviews in and around the area. Interviews with community members, including young people, were set up by a key Blue Light representative in each branch.

In Ruatoria, young people, parents and community members (about 30) participated in an informal discussion at the police station on a Sunday afternoon, and the following morning, a group interview was held with Blue Light committee members and representatives from two community agencies and police staff.

In North Rodney, interviews were conducted with individuals including the coordinator of an alternative school, and a police youth aid officer. An informal group interview was organised with committee members including the police chair over lunch, and at the local school with young people who had participated in Blue Light activities who were invited to a group discussion (approximately 10 young people participated). The information gathered from each of these sites has been written up as case studies (Section 6) which also illustrate key findings.

## **3 Brief recent history of Blue Light**

Blue Light was started in Australia about 30 years ago. Following a New Zealand Police visit Australia they initiated a Blue Light programme here. From the mid 1980s through to the mid 1990s, Blue Light activities in New Zealand were predominantly discos for teenagers. Blue Light branches determined the activities and in the mid 1990s when there was an emphasis on community policing, some changes began to occur with new initiatives such as graffiti paint outs, diversion programmes, and behaviour rewards days being introduced. Also around the mid 1990s, Police (through Peter Doone, the then police commissioner) started to question whether Blue Light was a good use of police time and the number of Blue Light activities plateaued.

About two years ago, a national Blue Light coordinator was employed. Since his appointment, the range and number of Blue Light initiatives has grown, with a focus on building up the Blue Light image, branding and sponsorship. More recently a national administration and marketing officer was employed to work alongside the national coordinator.

The current Police policy emphasis on crime and crash reduction provides the policy context in which Blue Light initiatives operate while the governance and management structure outlined below provides the accountability and decision-making framework.

## 4 Findings

The evaluation findings are based on information collected from 35 active Blue Light branches and two branches that are in recess, but who completed the written survey.

In Section 4.1 we describe the governance and management structure of Blue Light at the national and branch levels, including who is involved, roles, decision making, what works well and what doesn't work well. Section 4.2 describes resourcing of Blue Light, including both funding and support. Section 4.3 provides a description of activities being undertaken by Blue Light branches. The following two sections (4.4 and 4.5) examine success, as viewed by those involved in organising Blue Light activities and the outcomes / changes they see for young people who participate. Section 4.6 outlines issues that Blue Light branches find challenging or are concerned about.

### 4.1 Governance and management

#### 4.1.1.1 National Blue Light

Blue Light has three patrons: the Police Commissioner, Youth Court Judge Becroft and Graeme Sinclair, who is also a Blue Light events sponsor.

Blue Light has a national board which has 10 members, including provision to co-opt others as required. Currently there are four women on the board which includes the first un-sworn member, a Child Youth and Family (CYF) coordinator. The chairperson is Mike Hill, Area Commander at North Shore City Police. Superintendent Steve Christian, National Manager Youth Services, is co-opted as the Commissioner's representative. The costs of running the national board are met by the Police, National Manager Youth Service's budget.

The national Blue Light coordinator, Brendon Crompton, has a background in youth education and community policing as a police officer. He is a trained teacher, has studied business management and has an extensive network of contacts. Brendon has been in the position since 2003. Board members interviewed for this evaluation remarked on the coordinator's drive, initiative and skills he brings to the job. One commented:

*He is both a coach and an entrepreneur. He works with passion. The coordinator's qualities give the board confidence in Blue Light.*

Currently the coordinator believes there are about 63 Blue Light branches nationally, although determining the exact number is difficult. This is discussed later in the report. The location of Blue Light branches do not necessarily coincide with police districts. The structure requires that each branch has a chairperson who is a sworn police officer, and a committee which may comprise police staff (sworn and non-sworn) and other members of the community.

#### 4.1.1.2 Decision making

The coordinator meets face-to-face with the national executive (board) twice per year: once at the AGM and again to plan national events and make decisions about large projects and initiatives such as developing and publishing the 'Street Smart' handbook. The board has a teleconference each month, with additional teleconferences when needed. The coordinator reports regularly to the board before each teleconference, to provide members with feedback on progress and the necessary information for them to make informed decisions. The board's decisions then provide the mandate for the coordinator to organise events or negotiate and implement initiatives. The

coordinator believes he has a lot of freedom to develop details around concepts agreed by the board, and he reports back to them on progress.

#### **4.1.1.3 What works well**

The general response from those interviewed was that the national board works well in terms of its approach, composition and communication. The coordinator said:

*Its role is governance, not control. We're given autonomy to run programmes; we're able to spread information without being bogged down in administration.*

Another comment reflected the importance of who is on the board:

*Having an area commander on the national executive is useful in terms of providing credibility.*

In relation to communication, one board member commented that having regular contact as a national executive via email and teleconferences was important; along with the regular reports and information they received from the coordinator, to inform decisions and keep them up to date with what is happening.

#### **4.1.1.4 Areas for development**

Four main issues were identified either by board members or the national coordinator. The first two are linked and relate to the degree of buy-in particularly amongst area commanders and how the value of Blue Light can be seen and measured in relation to Police strategic goals. There are 43 area commanders nationally. The board chair estimates that about 50% of them are supportive of Blue Light. He believes that youth aid is undervalued and that there is a greater need for police to understand 'alternative action':

*Investing in young people....about 22 per cent of offenders are young people – we need to divert them early.*

He said that if there is a choice between catching 'crooks' or investing in youth, it is seen as easier to go for short term gains. The police emphasis on statistical results further exacerbates this situation. It is easier to measure arrests and convictions than it is to measure investments in behaviour and attitude changes, which are key aims for Blue Light. A challenge that Blue Light faces is addressing a common question from police management: "how can you show me Blue Light is reducing youth crime?" He gave truancy services as an example of a long term investment which is having a positive impact on reducing youth offending.

The other two issues relate to organisational structure and accountability processes. The board's chairperson regards Blue Light as an organisation currently sitting somewhere between a volunteer organisation and a more structured formal organisation. Recent developments have seen the organisation move to a position where it has a structure and direction, and its activities have been aligned with the police strategic plan. There is now a need to ensure that branches are 'on board' with risk management protocols and procedures and that their financial accountabilities are also in line. At the moment the national coordinator does not have a clear idea about what is happening at the branch level (e.g. exactly how many active branches there are, what they are currently doing and their financial status). There are currently no reporting systems in place to inform the national coordinator about branch initiatives. Branch staff who are police officers report to their local supervisors, but not to national Blue Light, therefore a valuable feedback loop does not exist.

## **4.1.2 Blue Light branches**

There is no accurate assessment of the number of active Blue Light branches in New Zealand. The national Blue Light coordinator has a database of approximately 60 branches. However, the database is reliant on Blue Light branches keeping the national coordinator up-to-date with any changes, including those that go into recess and those that are newly formed. Two of the branches contacted for this evaluation said their branches are currently in recess and one is due to stop operating this year. A key issue for national Blue Light is that branches operate autonomously. They are accountable to their district commanders, not the national Blue Light coordinator or to Youth Services at Police national headquarters.

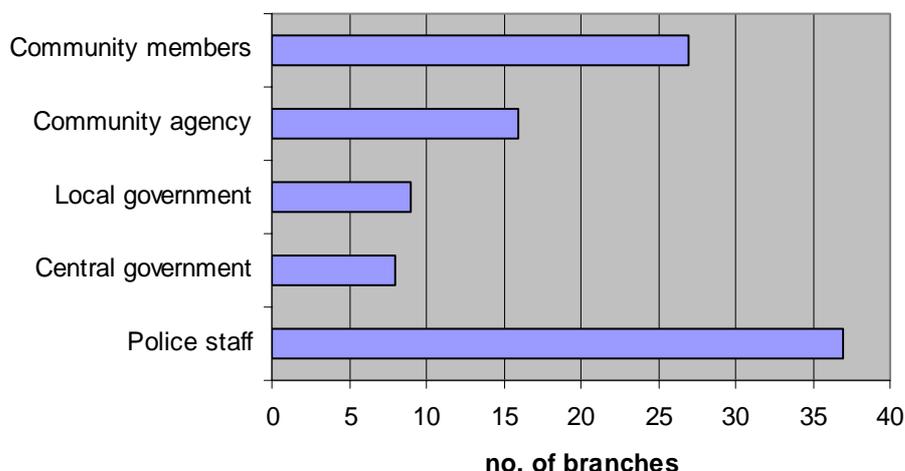
### **4.1.2.1 Composition of branch committees**

There are no Blue Light branches operating without some police involvement. All respondents said they have at least one police member involved in their Blue Light branch. All but three respondents report that their branches are managed by a committee, with police (either sworn or non-sworn) in key positions.

The three branches with no committee are managed by individual police staff, in one case a youth aid officer and each of the other two, a youth education officer. One respondent described themselves as a “one man band” – they think of the ideas for activities; find the funding and do the work. While these were exceptional arrangements, they highlight potential risks in relation to fundraising and accountability for the officers concerned. The other two indicated that they do not usually identify the activities and initiatives they organise as Blue Light. While they adhere to the Blue Light concept, they generally regard what they do as their job and have the support of the district commander.

Of the 34 branches operating with a committee, 27 (79%) said they have community members on their committees (Figure 1). A smaller number of committees have members from community agencies (16), local government members (9) or central government members (8). Community organisation staff included two youth services workers from community organisations and a health worker from a community health service. Of the three respondents who identified where their local government members came from, two are youth development staff at their local council and one is a crime prevention officer, also from the council. Most respondents did not state which central government agencies their members came from. Of the two that did, both members were from Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS).

**Figure 1: Composition of Blue Light branch committees**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

#### **4.1.2.2 Decision making within branches**

Where branches operate with a committee, respondents report that decisions about which activities to undertake are made either by all members of their committee, or by those who are willing to take responsibility for making events happen:

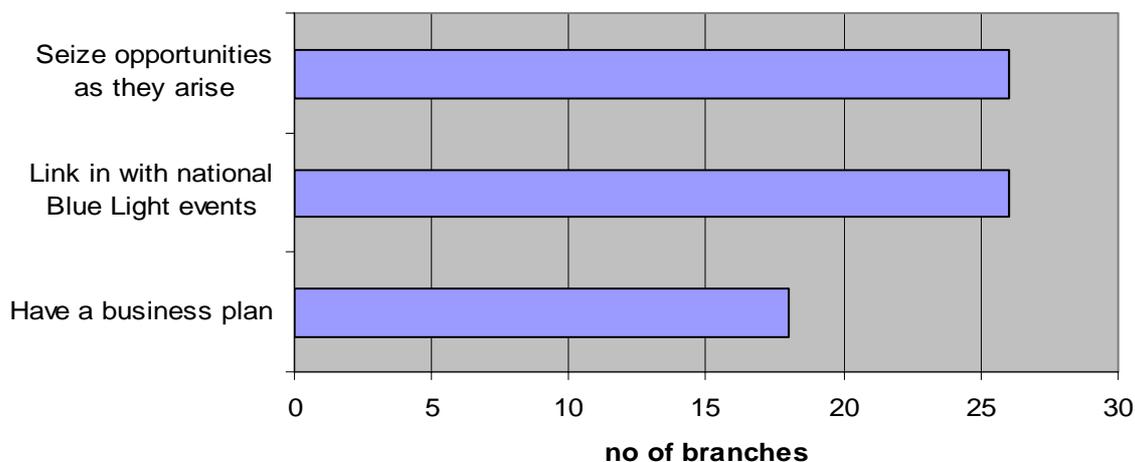
*(There are) a lot of time constraints; if someone has an idea and (is) willing to do it, (they are) allowed to organise (the project) and then advise if help (is) required.*

Eighteen respondents said their branch has an annual business plan, while 19 said they did not have one. Twenty six respondents said their branch seizes opportunities as they arise and the same number (though not always the same branches) said they link in with national Blue Light events (Figure 2).

The two case study sites reflect the different ways that decisions are made within branches. In North Rodney, where there is a paid coordinator and two other permanent part-time staff, the branch committee develops an annual business plan which includes local and nationally promoted events:

*The youth coordinator is very experienced and organises all the events and coordinates activities including meetings etc. He brings proposals to the committee meetings for all to discuss and make decisions and/or recommendations on. Matters are discussed until generally all are in agreement with the proposed course of action. Meetings are always informal and decisions are often guided by the experience/advice of the youth coordinator. We have youth and finance sub committees which meet as and when required.*

**Figure 2: How Blue Light branches make decisions about activities**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

One other branch also reported that they have a paid coordinator. Like North Rodney, this branch has a management team who oversee decision-making and the coordinator is responsible for running the programmes. In another branch, the committee makes decisions and uses an event manager to implement decisions relating to specific events. It is not known whether this person is employed on a contract basis or is a Blue Light employee.

In Ngati Porou, where the Blue Light activity is driven by a small number of police and community volunteers, the decision making process is much more relaxed. Decisions are made with “whoever is sitting around the table at the time”. Most activities occur within the school holidays, so the committee will meet just prior, to organise details. Other factors that drive or influence decision making include Police and volunteers’ time and availability, and requests from local children and young people (e.g. “when are we having another dance?”) Another principle that has underpinned the committee’s decisions to date is that whatever they do for the young people in Ruatoria, they have to repeat in four other areas, which comprise eight townships. This has implications for key people’s (police and committee members) time and energy. The expense of getting young people from Ngati Porou to National Blue Light activities is often prohibitive, so decisions are usually based on more manageable local activities.

Ngati Porou’s approach to decision making is similar to a number of other branches who report a low key approach to decision making:

*(we have) relaxed group discussions, if we don't all agree on a project we will not go ahead with it.*

Two branches are managed by sole police staff, both youth education officers. They are responsible for planning and managing activities by themselves. Five other respondents identified that decisions are driven by a few enthusiastic staff:

*Police drive it, if they don't it falls over.*

While respondents did not indicate whether all Blue Light chairpersons are police staff, an analysis of the national Blue Light database suggests this is the case. Two respondents said they would like to see non-police be able to chair meetings. Both respondents said that non-police committee members can feel precluded from decision making. As one respondent said:

*Some (non-police committee members) stay in the background because of this. Police end up doing the work, with others helping us out. These others haven't been acknowledged. Police can be seen as "greedy", they get to go on all the trips, some civilians don't realise they can go to the AGM (annual general meeting); they don't think they're entitled to go.*

Respondents were asked to identify what is not working well, in terms of governance and management. Four respondents said they had no governance issues. Ten respondents identified lack of support from their area controller as an issue:

*At times Blue Light isn't recognised or valued by police, which leads to unnecessary battles having to be fought and police officers on Blue Light having to work doubly hard to recruit and retain volunteers and committee members.*

#### **4.1.2.3 Support from national Blue Light**

Thirty four respondents (92%) said they were happy with the support their branch gets from the national Blue Light body. Respondents said they are kept informed by the national coordinator:

*Always good initiatives and ideas coming out. Good communication via newsletters etc*

*Last year I made enquiries regarding the setting up of our committee and was very happy with the response and all the support, which was just right.*

Two of these respondents said their one concern was the national Blue Light website. As one person said:

*(it) sucks. Needs upgrading to make it useful for actually getting information. It needs more than just photos.*

One respondent would like the national coordinator to ensure every branch has its own webpage on the national website:

*The national body should maintain the website and fund it.*

Three participants said they did not receive enough support from the national Blue Light body:

*Except for AGM and telling us what is happening nationally, there seems little or no support.*

*We don't really hear from them. We call them if we need some help.*

*The lower North Island and South seems to be too far from Mecca.*

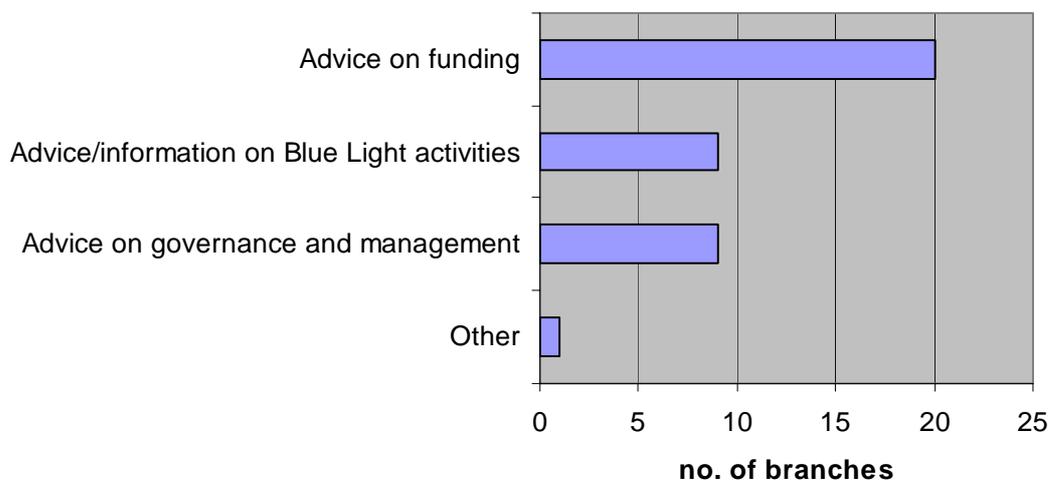
One respondent suggested using email more regularly to distribute the newsletter and publicise events.

Respondents were asked what support they would like from the national Blue Light coordinator that they are not currently getting (Figure 3). An area of need highlighted by 20 respondents (54%) was assistance with funding:

*Funding is always our biggest issue as there are no guarantees and money is scarce. Sources and avenues to obtain funding is always required and beneficial*

One respondent said it would be useful to know what funding national Blue Light has applied for.

**Figure 3: Support required from national Blue Light coordinator**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37)

Two respondents are concerned at the cost of Blue Light merchandise. One respondent said they could buy other clothing more cheaply “and it’s more trendy”. Some events were also expensive for the children in their area:

*Rainbows End was expensive for our kids. Seventy per cent of Blue Light national activities are applicable for our kids, but funding can get in the way.*

Nine respondents said they would like support with governance and management issues:

*The chair... would like some rules/guidelines for running a committee.*

The same number of respondents (though not always the same branches) would like more advice and information on Blue Light activities. One respondent suggested that there be a national database of members who are heading different activities, to enable sharing of information and ideas.

## 4.2 Funding

As mentioned in the previous section, funding is a key issue for many branches. In one rural community where local businesses are struggling to remain economically viable, a respondent commented:

*Funding options are extremely limited and there are a large number of organisations requesting the same dollar. Sponsorship is limited as many of the businesses are barely keeping their heads above water.*

Eighteen respondents (49%) said that funding was a barrier to their branch offering Blue light activities. Some nationally promoted activities are considered expensive. This is particularly so for branches in the South Island or in remote areas, but also the case for one Auckland branch.

The North Rodney branch has successfully accessed funding over the years to purchase equipment and even large items such as vehicles. However, funding remains an ongoing issue, especially for securing staff salaries. While the District Commander has paid for the youth coordinator’s salary until now, this funding is no longer considered secure, as there is currently a review of non-sworn positions in the district. The youth coordinator has no contract with the Police. Until now, he has simply invoiced the Police once a year:

*Always in the back of your mind you're worrying about the funding.*

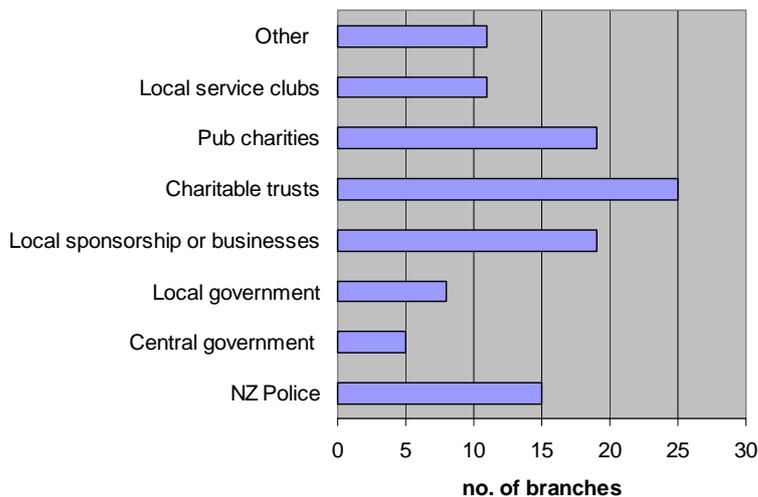
Two branches, including North Rodney, said that it is becoming more difficult to access traditional sources of funding such as Lottery, because the amounts they give out are reducing "all the time". Branches with bank assets find it difficult to access funding on an ongoing basis. One branch has more than \$5000 in the bank. They try to make events pay for themselves:

*But they never really do. (We) would like information on where and how to apply for funding.*

Just over 20 (58%) of respondents said that their branch had no difficulty finding funding for their Blue Light activities. This is a surprising finding, given that funding was an ongoing issue identified by many branches, including some who said they had no difficulty finding funding, and the fact that many branches would like support with funding from the national Blue Light coordinator.

Figure 4 shows the sources of funding accessed by branches over the past year. They include charitable trusts (25); local sponsorship, e.g. from businesses (19); pub charities (19). Least likely sources of funding are from central government agencies other than Police (5) and local government (9). Fifteen of the 37 respondents said they had received funding from NZ Police in the past year, with several stating that this had come from the NZ Police Association.

**Figure 4: Sources of funding**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

Eleven respondents said their branches have received funding from other sources, such as donations from individuals, marae, iwi and community organisations, diversion monies (i.e. money paid by offenders going through Police/community diversion programmes), investments and money raised through running dance parties. As one respondent said:

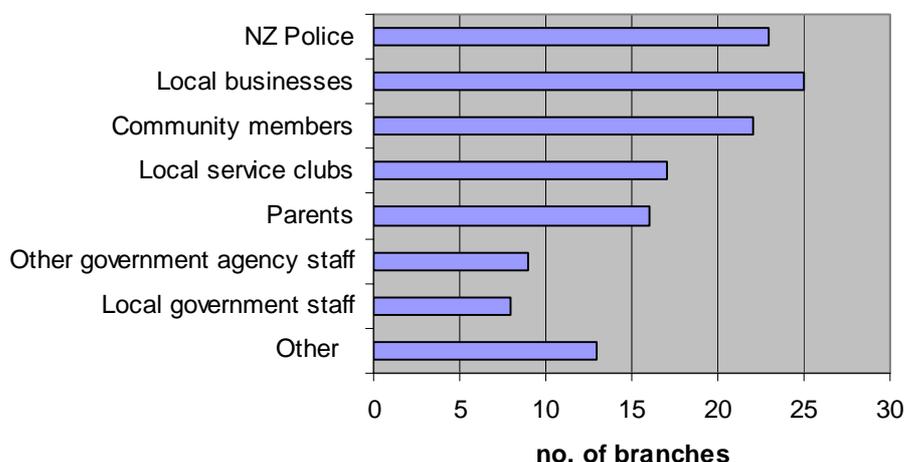
*We are self funding, we only use money we have made at previous events.*

#### **4.2.1 Support, other than funding**

Twenty three respondents said they had received non-financial, or in-kind support from police, both sworn and non-sworn. In-kind support includes services, personnel or products. As one chairperson said, police staff give many hours of their personal time to support Blue Light

activities. In-kind support comes from local businesses, NZ Police and community members (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Non-financial support to Blue Light**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

‘Other’ sources of support come from schools (including teachers, teacher aids, and school students; sports’ stars and music performers, Maori advisory groups, iwi social services, fire brigades, Air Training Corp. and aquatic centres.

*Staff availability - shifts make it hard to get frontline staff involved. It usually comes down to Youth Education and Youth Aid officers who are not on shift work.*

Lack of support from police management was identified as a major issue, but not the only reason that some branches are struggling to keep going. As with many voluntary organisations, a key issue for a number of respondents is the fact that much of the work organising Blue Light activities is reliant on a few people:

*Over work by key members.*

*Loss of enthusiasm by police with work and family pressures.*

This had led to the same people doing all the work:

*Always the same people on sub committees to organise events.*

*Finding others to take on the various roles.*

#### 4.2.2 Support from police management

Fourteen respondents (39%) said their branches received support from police management:

*All management are very supportive from inspector to senior sergeant of station.*

However, 10 respondents (27%) said they had no, or minimal, support from police management. As one person said:

*At times Blue Light isn't recognised or valued by police, which leads to unnecessary battles having to be fought and police officers on Blue Light having to work doubly hard to recruit and retain volunteers and committee members.*

Lack of support from police management was the reason two respondents said their branches are in recess. Another branch is due to close at the end of this year because of a lack of support from a supervisor.

A number of respondents said that police managers were focused on “reactive police work (which) must take priority”. As an example, one branch said that staff who had traditionally been involved in Blue Light activities (community constable, youth education and youth aid officers) were being asked to staff crime prevention cameras which had been installed in their town.

Another respondent said that a police supervisor had criticised those who participated in a Blue Light activity as they believed “it takes us away from core business”. Yet the respondent said the event (an all night party) had a huge impact on young people.

Where Blue Light is not recognised or valued by police management, those involved in Blue Light find it difficult to recruit and retain volunteers and committee members. As one respondent said:

*Backing of supervisors to release staff, and support from DC (District Commander) is very important.*

## **4.3 Activities**

This section outlines the Blue Light initiatives provided nationally, organised by the national coordinator. It then describes the frequency and type of activities/events offered by branches during the last twelve months and indicates links with national initiatives where applicable. It also shows the level of activity amongst branches and discusses some of the barriers identified by them which influence their level of activity.

### **4.3.1.1 National initiatives**

The national coordinator has been in position for almost two years and has been working to build the Blue Light image/brand and level of activity throughout the country. This is a key purpose for the national events he has organised. Some of the national initiatives are evident in branch level activities/events, which are more fully described in the next section. Examples of national initiatives include:

- Police Competency Test (PCT) Fear Factor - has been running for about seven years. This is an obstacle course which includes a water challenge, mind teaser, food challenge. Teams of four to five are sent from each school. Blue Light runs PCT events in Auckland, Christchurch, Central North Island, Dunedin and Whangarei. Each team is charged \$100, which is paid by either the school or their Blue Light branch.
- Rainbows End Fun day – runs over two days. Blue Light purchase subsidised tickets for \$13 and sell them for slightly more, thus making a small profit. This year Whangarei brought 11 bus loads of young people down for the event. N.B: this is not really a ‘national’ event, as it is not feasible for many branches located far away from Auckland to take young people there.
- Fishing events – Graham Sinclair, fishing icon, attends the fishing events. About 10 fishing days per year are held. A building supply company (who sponsor Graham’s TV programme on fishing) sponsor the Blue Light fishing events by supplying people power and substantial funding. Sometimes the company’s local branches make a separate donation.
- Halloween mega-dance – all branches are encouraged to run a Halloween dance. The national coordinator says this activity has been “hugely successful”. The idea is for children not to walk

the streets and to encourage parents to send their children in costume to a Blue Light dance which has a safety message.

- The national coordinator is currently developing a TV programme for young children.
- Streetsmart Handbook – the plan is to send 50,000 copies to every school leaver. The handbook covers topics such as sexual health, money, driving etc. The idea has come from a similar handbook that has been published in Australia for the past six years. The project is funded through telemarketing. The New Zealand handbook was developed by the coordinator in consultation with the Auckland College of Education, Family Planning, LTSA and mental health services. The handbook has a strong link to the ‘crime and crash’ focus of police.

In addition the national coordinator organises the national Blue Light conference, which includes sessions on how to fundraise, risk management plans and sharing good ideas. There is an Australasian Blue Light conference held every two years, which is attended by a few Blue Light personnel. The coordinator also produces a national newsletter which is sent out monthly to branches.

#### **4.3.1.2 Value of Blue Light and contributions to Police aims**

The national coordinator believes that participating in Blue Light is a very positive experience for staff. He says that policing can be a very negative job. Staff see Blue Light as proactive, giving value to the community. From a morale point of view “it’s fabulous for staff”.

The coordinator also believes a real strength of Blue Light activities/events lies in their ability to engage young people and parents in positive relationships with Police. He believes this is an important part of effective policing which results in more positive attitudes and increased community assurance. However, it is difficult to ascertain specifically how Blue Light activities/events contribute to Police aims of crime and crash reduction for several reasons. One is about attribution of outcomes and how you can reasonably assess cause and effect from activities/events which are generally not specifically targeted and regular, frequent, or consistent in their availability. Another is around the fact that most Blue Light activities/events are designed as pro-active engagement, encouraging youth participation and building positive relationships between police, young persons and parents. Some activities also involve education or some sort of learning. At this pro-active rather than reactive level, it is more difficult to measure what has been achieved at a preventive level. Lastly, without conducting a specific study of selected Blue Light activities in relation to crime or crash reduction, it is not possible to draw reliable conclusions about what and how it contributes to these Police aims.

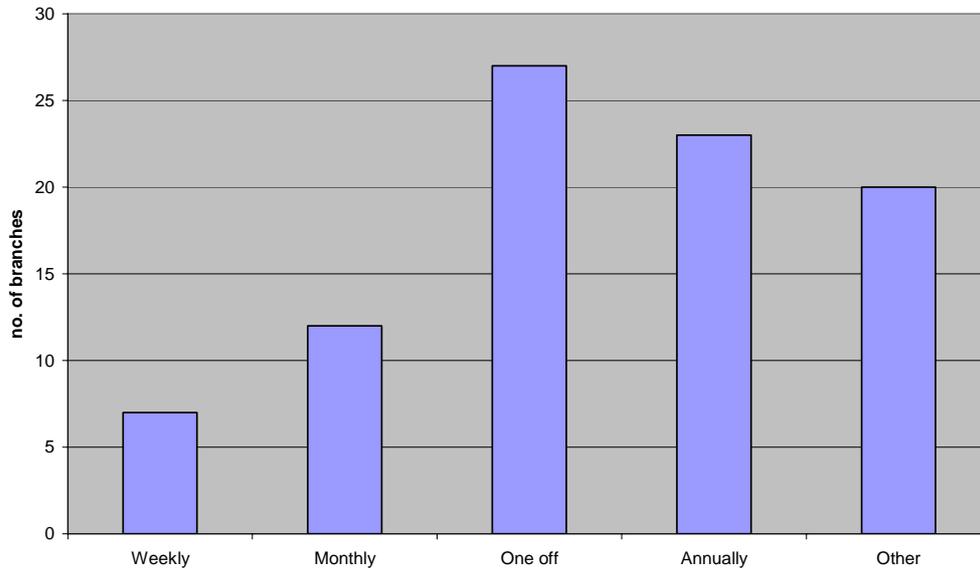
Examples of local initiatives which the national coordinator believes do contribute directly to the Police goals of crime and crash reduction include:

- Road safety poster competition - children were asked to design a poster. The winner got a \$1000 mountain bike and the posters were made into a calendar and given to sober drivers at police checkpoints
- Drink driving programme for youth in Napier
- In one area, Blue Light runs the truancy services for the Education Department and has three truancy officers. They have seen the following outcomes for youth: 40% less youth going to youth court, more going into alternative action programmes. The Area Commander believes there is a definite link between Blue Light and youth outcomes.

### 4.3.2 Branch level initiatives

This section describes the frequency, type and level of Blue Light activity being provided by the branches that responded to the survey. It also identifies the factors that influence the level of activity and the barriers branches face.

**Figure 6: Frequency of Blue Light activities/events in the last 12 months**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

#### 4.3.2.1 One-off activities

In the last 12 months, 27 branches (30%) provided one-off activities/events. These included a range in order of prevalence from dance parties - including 'discos' and more trendy 'phat jams' (8), fishing trips or competitions (7), pool parties (4), sports events (4), bike riding challenges (3) and camps (3). All night events, PCT fear factor, outward bound/tramps, 'take a kid to footy', trolley derby and rewards for kids were each identified by two branches as one-offs. Other one-off activities/events such as Blue Light art awards, mystery fun day, rail trail, Scribe concert, SADD programme promotion, ice skating and Santa parade were each identified by one branch. In some cases running an activity/event as a one-off gave the branch an opportunity to see how well it went so they could consider running it again, either as an annual or more frequent event.

#### 4.3.2.2 Annual activities

Twenty three branches (26%) ran annual activities/events. In descending order of prevalence these included: PCT challenges (12) - with some regional rather than national events, fun day out (11) - including eight Rainbows End Fun Day; camps (9) including targeted kids such as victim's, well done kids (reward for good behaviour), youth at risk, leadership, and three army boot camps; dances/discos (6) including mega dances and under age rage; fishing trip/competition (6), organised sports events (3) such as rugby games and Ban the Bash touch tournament, all night events (2), bike wise competitions (2), school holiday programmes (2), Halloween party (2) and surf trip (2). Several other activities identified by just one branch each included parachute festival, trolley derby and a youth leadership challenge.

#### **4.3.2.3 Monthly activities**

Twelve branches (13%) offered activities on a monthly basis during the last 12 months. Activities included: discos/dances (5), sports events (3) – touch rugby, cross country run and triathlon for children in year seven and eight; behaviour rewards for students selected by teachers, early intervention programme in primary schools, and a monthly programme in an alternative education school including a variety of activities from self esteem/team building, law related education, outdoor education, leadership training and risk management to bike safety and mountain bike competitions to free driving training.

#### **4.3.2.4 Weekly activities**

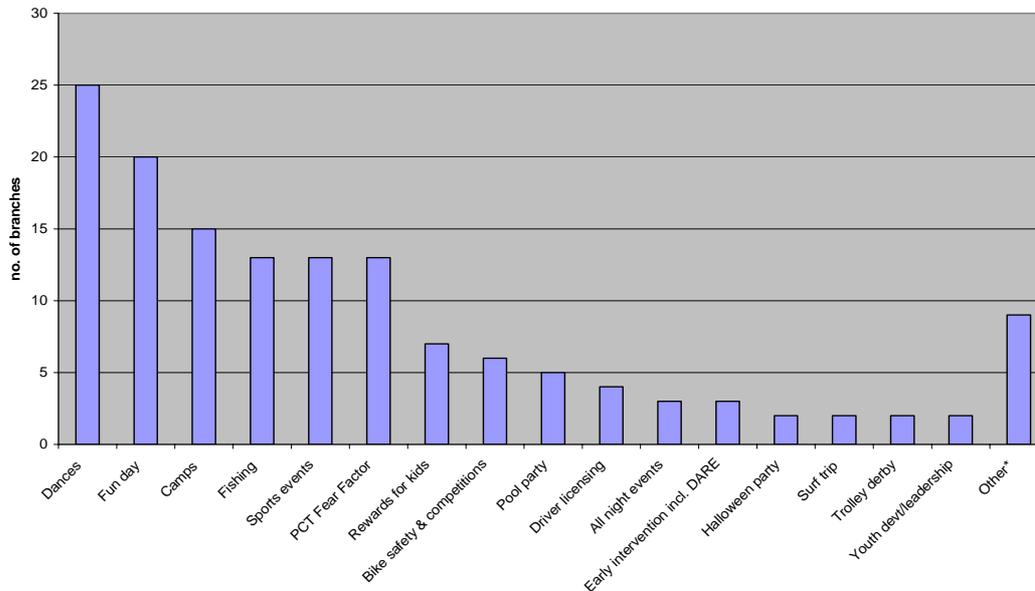
Only seven branches (8%) offered activities on a weekly basis. These were mainly focused around schools and included: DARE to make a change (2), weekly lunch time discos at schools (2) – although one ceased due to lack of staff in 2005, truancy contract – employing truancy officers, early intervention programme in primary schools for 8-10 year olds, and a youth development programme.

#### **4.3.2.5 Other**

Twenty branches (22%) offered activities/events where the frequency was different to the options provided in the survey (e.g. six weekly, three times a year or ongoing). The types of activities/events offered on this basis included day trips (5) – including helping families on school trips, holiday programmes and Rainbows End fun day, dances/discos (4), camps (4), sports (3), driver licensing/driver education programme (3), fishing trips or competitions (2), fear factor (2), and rewards for good behaviour (2). Other activities identified by one branch included providing support for local youth club activities, purchase of school equipment and books, Christmas parade choir, youth and parents “Discovery” camps and Franklin young writers’ award.

#### 4.3.2.6 Type of Blue Light branch activities/events

**Figure 7: Number & type of Blue Light activities/events provided by branches in the last 12 months.**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=39, more than one response possible)

Branches identified 25 types of activities/events which they offered during the last 12 months. This represented a total of approximately 164 Blue Light activities/events nationally during that period. The figure above shows sixteen types of activities/events plus 'other'.

The most common activity/event was dances, which 25 branches identified. Some still refer to 'discos', while others call these events dance parties, and one called theirs 'phat jams'. Some branches ran dances annually or as one-offs, while others scheduled them to coincide with school holidays or monthly. Two branches said they offered weekly dances at schools. As the above figure illustrates, the range of Blue Light activities is in fact much broader than dances.

Twenty branches identified fun days with over half including the Rainbows End fun day, and day trips often associated with school holiday programmes. The former were annual events as part of the national Blue Light initiative and the latter obviously linked with school holidays and locally organised.

There was a variety of camps (15) provided and these tended to be targeted to particular age groups and/or a focus such as victims, young people who had done well (i.e. reward for good behaviour with students usually being identified by a teacher), leadership skills, and army boot camps run cooperatively with the NZ Army. These were mainly locally organised with a few branches offering camps each school holidays.

Fishing competitions and the PCT Fear Factor challenge (both national initiatives) were the fourth most common, with 13 branches respectively providing these usually as annual or one-off events.

The same number of branches organised sports events. These tended to involve rugby, 'take a kid to footy', and touch including 'Ban the Bash' tournaments which were locally organised.

Rewards for kids, often referred to as "Well done kids" events were identified by seven branches. These tended to be run in conjunction with schools. Teachers usually nominated students who had done particularly well at school either in terms of good behaviour or other achievements. Rewards included activities such as a trip up in the police helicopter or on the police launch, going to a special destination for the day and having lunch provided, or going on a rewards camp.

Six branches identified bike safety and a variety of bike riding events and competitions that they organised over the last 12 months. Linked to the road safety theme, four branches also offered driver licensing and driver education programmes for older youth.

Five branches ran pool parties in conjunction with their local aquatic centre. These tended to be one-off events and targeted at particular age groups such as 9-12 year olds.

Three branches ran all night events either as a one-off or annual event. These events involved the participants in a variety of organised activities at different venues with the event running from early Friday evening to early Saturday morning and requiring a significant commitment of staff/adult time.

Four different activities/events including the Halloween party, surf trip, trolley derby and youth development programme/youth leadership challenge, were each offered by two branches. This collection of activities/events coincidentally illustrates the range of ages and interests to which Blue Light caters. The first targets younger age children by providing them with a safe environment in which to have fun and celebrate Halloween, while the surf trip caters to an older age group and follows a surfing competition. The trolley derby generally aims to involve the wider community, so is inclusive of children, teenagers, adults and local businesses, while the youth development programme and leadership challenge is specifically targeted.

Six branches identified nine 'other' activities/events which they alone offered or supported. These included: support for a local youth club, purchasing school equipment and books, Christmas parade choir, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Franklin young writers award, assistance with other police youth organisation, Blo kart day, weekend programme for 8-12 year olds and parents (BTG) and twice a year seven day programme for 13-18 year olds and parents (Discovery). The variety of these 'other' activities/events reflects the flexibility with which branches respond to a range of local situations.

#### **4.3.2.7 Summary**

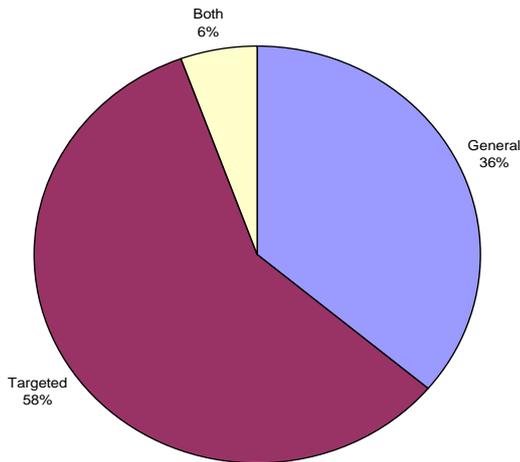
The seven most common activities/events in the last twelve months, in descending order of prevalence were:

- dances;
- fun days (including the national Rainbows End Fun Day and locally organised fun days);
- camps;
- fishing trips/competitions;
- sports events;
- PCT fear factor (including national and locally organised competition); and
- rewards for kids programmes (including special activities/trips or camps).

#### 4.3.2.8 Focus of activities

Over the past 12 months, 13 branches provided activities for general youth participation, while 21 provided targeted activities. Two specifically said they do both, although evidence suggests that is true also for branches which identified they offered targeted activities. Figure 7 illustrates focus of activities in percentages.

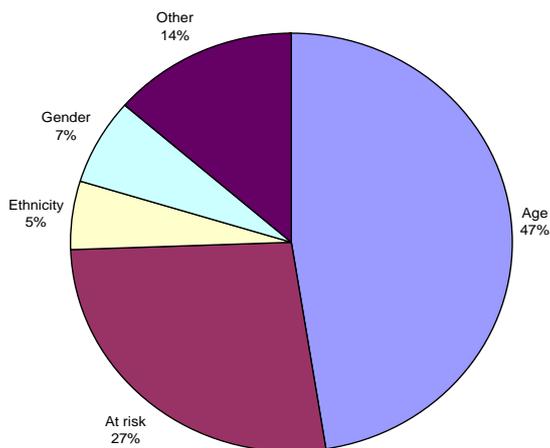
**Figure 8: Focus of activities**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

A further breakdown of targeted activities is given below. The diagram shows the percentage of branches that provided activities for particular target groups in the last 12 months.

**Figure 9: Targeted activities**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37, more than one response possible)

Twenty eight branches (47%) said they provided activities for specific age groups. Some branch responses to one question identified that they provide activities for general participation and in another question they also identified that some activities are age-group specific. This may account for the variation in response numbers between the previous section and this, where branches identified that they provide targeted activities. Generally the target age group for Blue Light activities is children between nine and 12 years.

'At risk' youth were the second most common target group with 16 branches (27%) providing activities ranging from 'at risk' youth boot camps, alternative education school-focused activities, and truant children, to a focus on children and parents where parents were struggling to fulfill parental duties, and youths with driving offences. Most respondents did not give details here.

Eight branches (14%) identified 'other' target groups although only three were different to those mentioned in the previous ('at risk') target group. They included children with special needs, rewards camp for kids with leadership potential and youth groups (i.e. church, scouts).

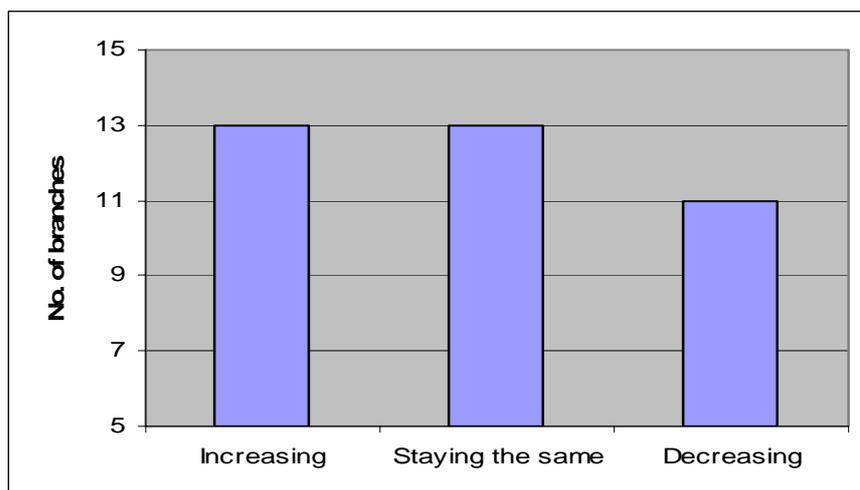
Four branches provided gender specific activities, which included a victims' camp for girls and another female victims of sexual abuse focused activity.

Only three branches indicated that they targeted activities on the basis of ethnicity, although there was no information about the sort of activities or the actual target groups. One branch indicated their activities were inclusive of Maori and another emphasised a family focus without being specific about what that meant in this context.

#### 4.3.2.9 Level of Blue Light activity

The same number of branches, 13 respectively identified their level of Blue Light activity as either increasing or staying about the same, while 11 branches said they were decreasing their level of activity. The following sections provide some explanation for the different levels of activity.

**Figure 10: Level of Blue Light activity**

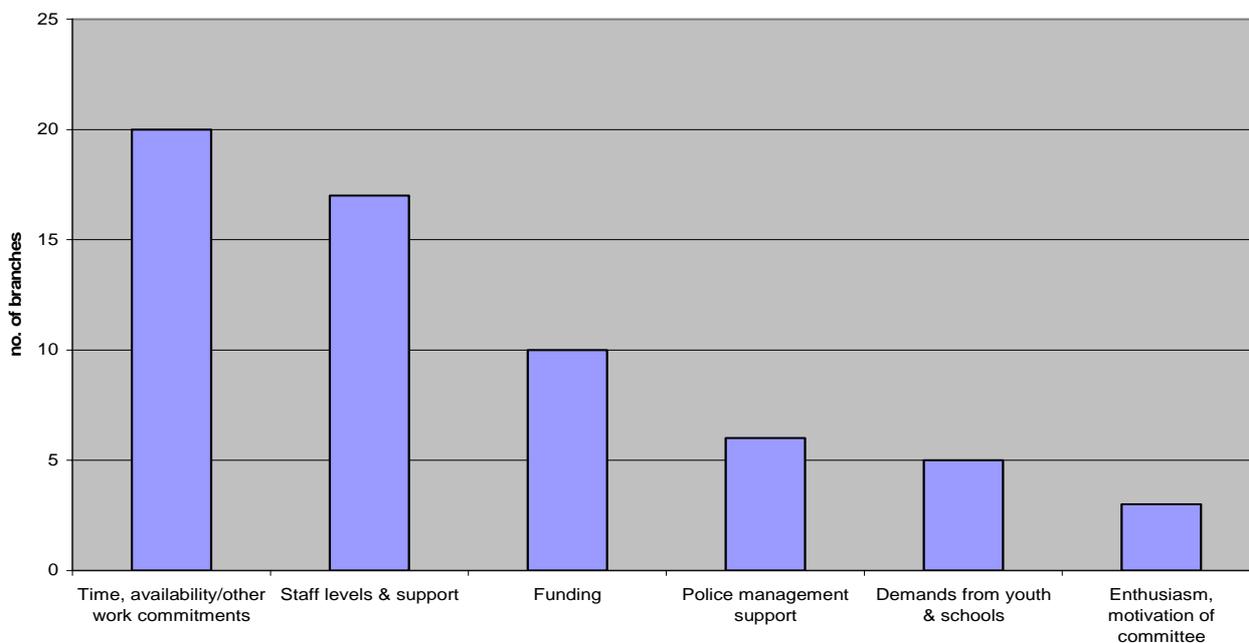


Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37)

#### 4.3.2.10 Influences on level of activity

Overall, 20 branches identified time, availability and other work commitments as important influences on their level of activity. Several respondents commented on competing work commitments, often also associated with staffing levels, as a negative influence.

**Figure 11: Factors that influence the level of branch activity**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37)

Seventeen branches identified staff levels and staff support (including the need for more staff to have the confidence to run events) as important influences. Ten identified funding as an important influence.

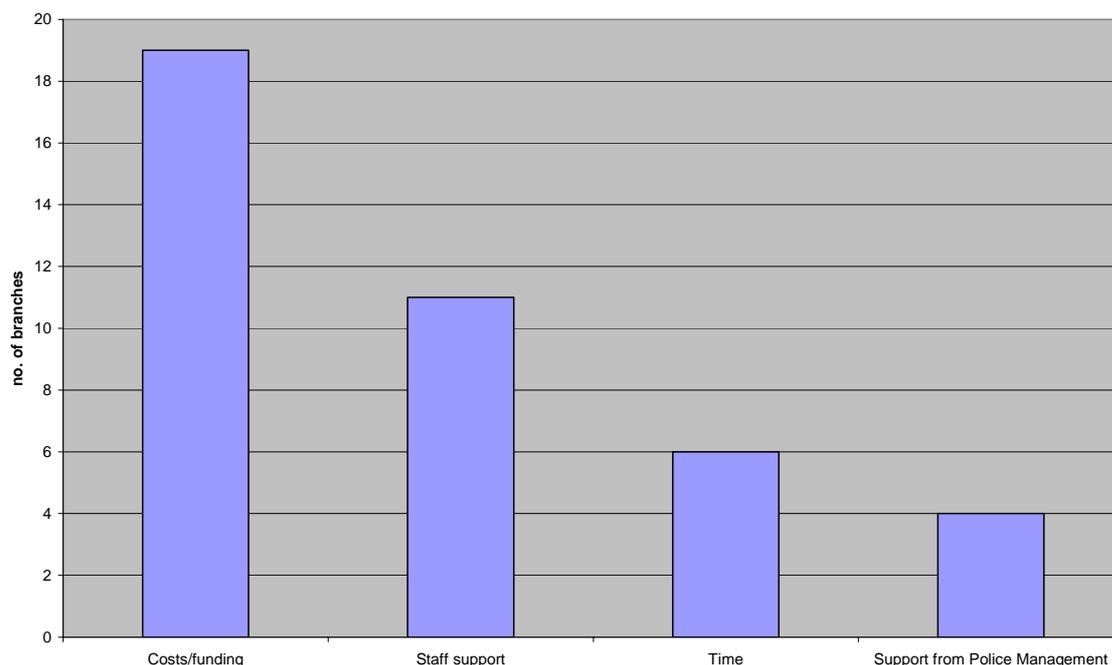
Support from Police management was identified by six branches, with five indicating lack of support as having a negative influence. The same five also identified the level of activity in their branch as decreasing.

Nine branches made suggestions for how they wanted to see the level of activity change. These included: the same big events with more smaller and more frequent activities/events, weekend activities, school holiday camps, taking children out of the area (from rural areas to towns/cities), covering a wider geographic area, involving more children, and developing a calendar of events.

#### 4.3.2.11 Barriers to activity

Some of the influences identified above are reflected here as barriers to the level of Blue Light activity in branches.

**Figure 12: Barriers to Blue Light branch activity**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37)

In contrast with the number of branches (10) which identified funding as an influence on the level of Blue Light activity, 19 identified costs/funding as a barrier. Specific references were made to how expensive it was to run camps and the costs (i.e. mainly travel) involved in attending national events. Branches in the South Island for instance did not see the Rainbows End fun day as at all feasible for them to attend.

Lack of staff support was identified as a barrier by 11 branches while six identified time and four lack of support from Police management as barriers. All three seem to be related.

The eleven branches, whose level of activity was decreasing, identified the following barriers:

- finance/funding (5 branches)
- staff availability/support (5)
- support from Police management including Police administration (4)
- time (2)

One respondent commented:

*More and more priority is being put on law enforcement activities .... rather than building relationships with kids and doing pro-active, preventive work through Blue Light.*

Overall, 26 respondents said there were activities they would like to provide but could not because of barriers.

#### **4.3.2.12 Changes suggested by branches**

Respondents identified three main ways to increase the level of Blue Light activity in their branches. These were:

- greater access to funding (13 branches) including securing funding in advance. One respondent commented: “too much time is spent trying to raise funds”.
- more Police staff and community involvement (9 branches). Several suggested having a paid coordinator.
- more support from Police management (5 branches). One suggestion included Police committing to Blue Light as a staff performance measure (pro-active initiatives). Other suggestions indicated a need for different attitudes such as valuing the pro-active approach to Policing that Blue Light offers and Police management support and acceptance to allow staff the time needed to organise activities.

## **4.4 Success**

This section investigates the way in which branches measure success and participant satisfaction, what they regard as their most successful activities, how they know participants are satisfied, and what makes activities successful.

### **4.4.1 Measuring success**

Respondents measure success through young people’s participation and enjoyment of activities/events, and the feedback they received from participants, parents and the community. Nine respondents said they used evaluation forms to get feedback from participants about activities.

Three respondents indicated they had little or no idea of how to measure success, and made the following comments in response to the survey question ‘how do you measure success?’:

*Not very well.*

*Good question! Please tell me how!*

*(It is) very difficult to evaluate.*

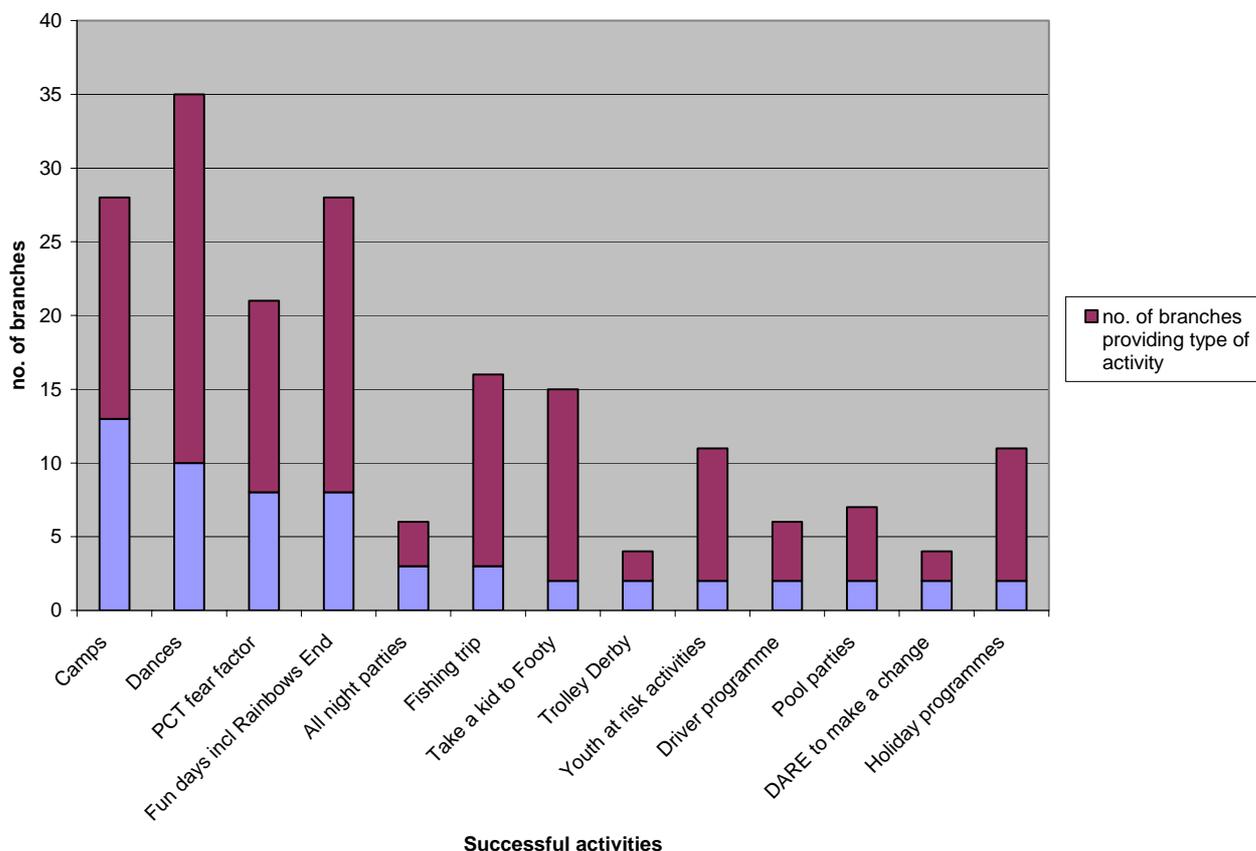
### **4.4.2 How branches know participants are satisfied**

Twenty eight respondents (75%) said they measured satisfaction through participants’ verbal feedback, smiles and the fact that they came back and/or asked for more. Nine (24%) said they used an evaluation form, and six (16%) said they received letters mainly from participants, parents and some written to the media.

### **4.4.3 What branches see as their most successful activities and how they know**

Responses in this area provided some interesting comparisons with those in section 5.3.2. Figure 11 shows both the most successful activities identified by branches (on the bottom portion of the bar) and the total number of branches that said they provided those types of activities (on the top portion of the bar).

**Figure 13: Most successful activities**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data

Branches identified the following as their most successful activities (the list is provided in descending order of ‘success’):

- Camps - including combined schools, well done kids, OPC, annual including Army, victims retreat, weekend, leadership, youth at risk and BLAST camps. The total number of branches that provided camps was fifteen. So thirteen out of fifteen branches regarded this activity as successful. In terms of measuring success, the duration of the activity (i.e. over a weekend or a week) and targeting participants enables success to be evaluated in a more meaningful way by both participants and staff/adults involved, than for instance, activities which are for general participation and last only a few hours.
- Dances, including discos, annual dances and regular school day discos. Twenty five branches provide dances, suggesting a disjunction between what is being offered and what is successful. There may be several reasons for this. Dances have been run by many branches for a long time and they may have lost their novelty for many branches in comparison with different activities provided. Also, the relatively unstructured nature of dances and the less well defined participant groups makes them difficult to evaluate. Success may simply be determined by the numbers of young people who turn up (tickets sold etc), whether they look happy and ask for more. Dances still appear to be the most common activity that new branches offer.

- PCT fear factor. Thirteen branches said they provided this activity. So just over half of branches also regard it as one of their most successful.
- Fun days including Rainbows End. In comparison, 20 branches provided this type of activity. There may be a number of reasons why less than half the total number of branches that offered this type of activity regarded it as most successful, including difficulties evaluating a relatively unstructured activity and costs to get children there.
- All night parties were identified as successful by three branches, the same number of branches that provided this type of activity. All night parties are targeted to a particular age group, cater for limited numbers, have a high novelty value for participants. They also require a lot of organisation. There are thus a number of factors that may be used in evaluating success.
- Fishing trips were identified as most successful by three respondents compared to a total of 13 branches that offered this type of activity.

The remaining activities were each identified by two branches as one of their most successful:

- Take a kid to Footy
- Trolley derby
- Youth at risk activities
- Driver programmes
- Pool parties
- DARE to make a change
- Holiday programmes

Branches said they know which activities are successful in one or both of the following ways. Twenty three (62%) of branches identified feedback including participants, teachers/school and parents as a key indicator and 20 (54%) identified participation and demand either for more activities and/or for 'places' or tickets where numbers were limited, as the other indicator.

#### **4.4.4 What makes Blue Light activities successful**

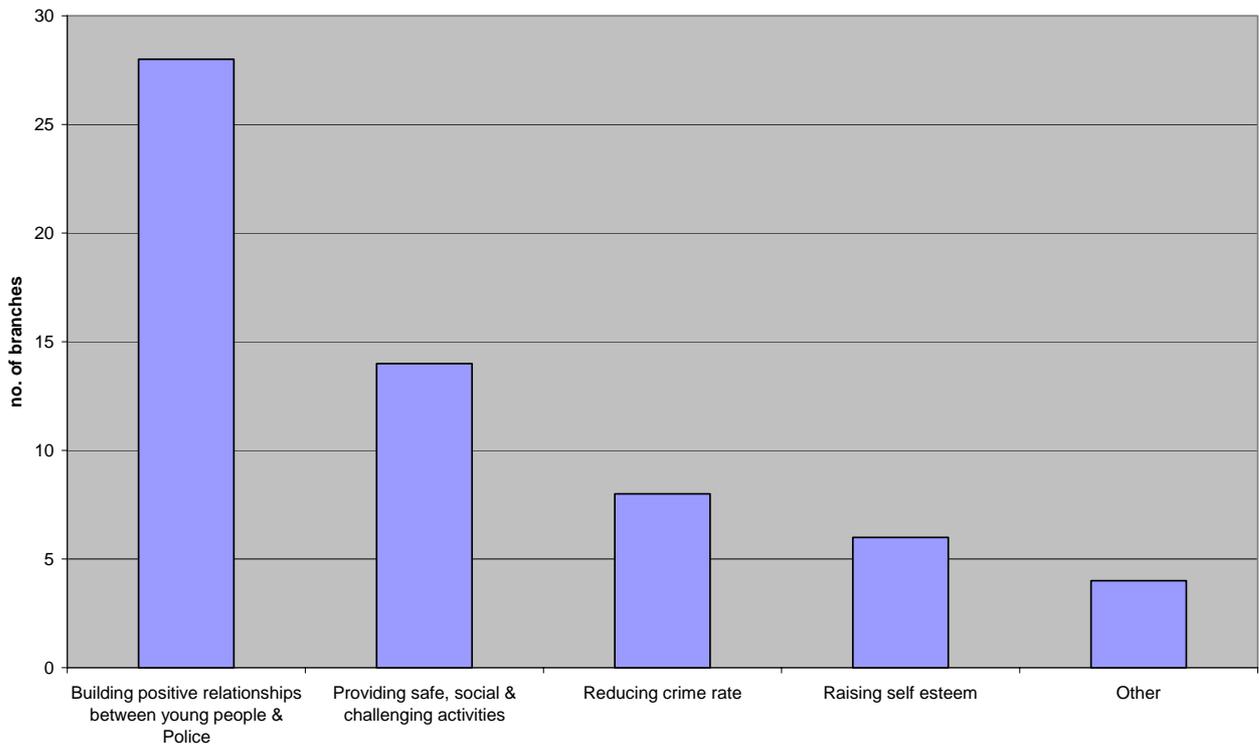
Respondents identified a list of features which they believe make Blue Light activities successful. Grouped under four key areas, features of successful activities included:

- being well organised, which includes team work (e.g. collaboration between agencies), good supervision of participants, safety and having risk management practices and procedures, having a well structured programme/timetable, strong boundaries and good planning. These features contribute to the positive public profile that Blue Light events are well organised and parents are comfortable for their children to be involved.
- the right type of activity, including fun, different or outside 'normal' activities for students and age specific. Camps were mentioned specifically as allowing more time (for staff) "to work with" participants.
- being adequately resources including money, staff, support from schools/teachers, youth and having parents involved.
- enthusiasm of youth, events organisers / the committee and the attitudes of youth attending.

## 4.5 Outcomes

In the absence of any specific outcomes indicators or methods for determining outcomes, the approach taken here is to describe the main aims identified by branches, whether in their view those aims are being achieved and the changes they see in or hear about participants.

**Figure 14: Main aims of Blue Light identified by branches**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37).

The main aim of Blue Light, as identified by 28 respondents, was to build positive relationships between young people and Police. This was followed by 14 branches who identified the main aim as providing safe, fun, social, new and challenging activities. Eight branches identified crime reduction as an aim and six, increased self esteem and personal development as main aims for participants. Four other branches identified the following aims:

- police and community working together to lead youth in the right direction and similarly
- whaka whanaungatanga – involving positive relationships between children and Police and parents and Police
- identifying youth at risk and tailoring activities to their needs, and
- mentoring.

### 4.5.1 Achievement of aims

Twenty seven (77%) of respondents considered their branch was achieving its Blue Light aims and eight (22%) thought they were not. Respondents identified a number of factors that told them Blue Light was achieving its aims. They ranged from the most common positive feedback from young

people, parents and schools to changed attitudes between young people and Police. Examples of comments included:

*Police are more popular with kids now and (they) see kids in a more positive light. Parents and kids (are) more open to Police.*

*Breaking down barriers with kids on the street is very important.*

Some respondents relayed stories of how and what changes occurred for participants. Examples included:

*(A) young man who is 20 now came up to me and asked 'how are you?' Said he remembered me from Ban the Bash, he now has a degree in management, and wants to join the police. (He) said that Ban the Bash had a positive impact on him.*

*Young people are more willing now to talk with Police. Establishing a skate park in [location] involved about 25 young people, service clubs, Police and the local council, who formed a committee to plan, organise and build a skate park for youth. This was a good example of working together and sharing responsibility.*

Finally, one respondent described outcomes in their community as a result of sustained Blue Light activity. These reflected the overall aims of Blue Light:

*We have a very low youth crime rate and a high resolution rate. Truancy is low. (There is) good rapport and healthy respect with and for the local police; minimal incidence of graffiti in area (generally caused by people passing through the town); low reports of family violence/domestics involving young people.*

#### 4.5.2 Changes in participants

As stated previously, in the absence of specified outcome indicators, respondents' observations of participants (including feedback from participants, parents and teachers) were used to indicate some of the changes or outcomes achieved through Blue Light activities. The chart below illustrates the main changes in participants, as identified by Blue Light respondents.

**Figure 15: Changes in Blue Light participants**



Source: written survey, telephone interview and case study data (n=37)

Almost all respondents (95%) identified changed perceptions and attitudes toward Police. This was consistent with both Blue Light and Police aims. Comments included:

*Kids start to relate to Police as people, not just a blue uniform. They come and ask questions, tell you their stories...*

*I have had a kid hurl verbal abuse and his friend (who was on a Blue Light event) pulled him up and defended the Police. I have heard comments like "man, cops are just like normal people. They even went on the rides with us".*

*A young person came to the area quite hostile towards and wary of the local police. After becoming involved with the Blue Light programmes and mixing with some of the local police, his attitude changed where he has now gained employment and is happy to talk with and liaise with the local police.*

Seventy per cent of respondents identified participants having an increased sense of trust and 65% identified increased personal competence. One commented:

*One child at camp encouraged with sport, ended up showing he was a very capable sportsman. Kids overcoming fear of swimming, heights etc.*

More than half the respondents identified increases in social skills including 64% social skills and 56% an increased sense of social responsibility as evident in Blue Light participants. These changes are reflective of Blue Light aims of providing safe, fun, social and challenging activities for youth, which provide opportunities for participants to learn new behaviours in a safe environment. One respondent commented:

*Kids stop swearing. (They're) becoming more respectful, confident. If they can communicate with a cop they can communicate with anyone!*

Young people interviewed as part of the evaluation also said they enjoyed Blue Light activities, doing something different and making new friends. A branch respondent who takes large groups of children on camp each school holidays said:

*You would have to attend a week long camp to see the personal changes in each kid; participating fully in activities – (this is) huge for kids with no social skills.*

Respondents identified the following personal development skills: increased motivation 56%, leadership skills (54%) and increased self esteem (54%). These outcomes are comparatively higher than those identified by branches as their main aims of Blue Light (refer section 5.5.1). However, they are consistent with the overall aims of Blue Light. An example given:

*We had a female on (the) programme who finally accepted counseling as she was a sexual abuse victim. Her self esteem came up and she returned to school and her social skills enhanced.*

Just over half (54%) identified reduction in youth offending and just over a quarter (27%) identified increased awareness of road safety as outcomes of Blue Light activity. This is comparatively more branches than the eight which identified these as their Blue Light aims (refer section 5.5.1). While respondents put less direct emphasis on the Police strategic aims of crime and crash reduction and comparatively more on relationship building and providing safe, fun, social and challenging activities, more than half the branches were never the less achieving outcomes related to crime and crash reduction. Examples of comments included:

*One family of chronic offenders – the twins stopped offending while participating in (the) PCT programme.*

*Both the driver programme and victims retreat have significantly reduced offending rates of the participants. We have statistical evidence to support this.*

*In (name of area), Blue Light run the truancy services for the Education Department and have three truancy officers. They have seen outcomes for youth with 40 % less youth going to youth court and more going into alternative action programmes. The Area Commander believes there is a definite link between Blue Light and youth outcomes.*

Other changes respondents identified, which are not shown in the above chart included:

- teens with special needs being willing to have a go at things they would not normally be offered
- participants having better relationships with parents
- young people goal setting and achieving their goals, and
- having more positive interactions with their peers.

## **4.6 Issues facing Blue Light branches**

This section provides a brief description of the main issues facing branches and any actions they had taken to address them.

### **4.6.1 Staff availability**

Most branches (16) identified lack of staff availability and support including getting frontline staff and people from outside Police involved. There was often a connection between adult involvement with Blue Light, including Police staff and community members/parents on the committee, and the fact that they had children who were also involved. One respondent commented:

*(There is an) expectation on police that they will do Blue Light activities. Enthusiasm wanes as your own kids grow past the age targets and (the) amount of other things police are involved in – in a small community.*

Several branches had been “searching for new enthusiastic staff” and profiling Blue Light to attract greater staff involvement. Two branches had secured a coordinator and were feeling optimistic that this would ease pressure on staff.

### **4.6.2 Lack of time**

Eleven branches identified lack of time to organise and run events, while balancing other work commitments and priorities as an issue. One respondent commented:

*(Lack of) time to do activities....the staff give many hours of personal time and as chairman I don't like them to over commit.*

One branch was addressing this issue by running fewer activities and being more selective about what they got involved in.

### **4.6.3 Funding**

Eleven branches also identified lack of funding as an issue for them. One branch had undertaken fundraising activities such as barbecues and raffles, while others had applied for funding from trusts and local charities. One respondent said that while they received some funding from CYFS and the community, the activities they could offer were still limited.

#### **4.6.4 Governance and management**

Six branches raised issues of governance and management as something that needed addressing. This included three elements: filling office positions on the committee (e.g. secretary and treasurer), keeping the committee together and representative of the community, and sustainability of the Blue Light initiative. One respondent made the following comment on how they would like to see Blue Light develop:

*Establishing an organisation that will endure, continue to be credible and promote the aims of Blue Light irrespective of who is working for the organisation; establishing a support base that will allow the work to continue; a career path for employees.*

Actions taken by some branches to address this issue included recruiting community members from a wide spectrum of the community, establishing a staff support officer and encouraging more members onto the committee.

#### **4.6.5 Police management support**

Four respondents identified lack of Police management support as an issue. This included getting district management on board. One branch said they would close this year due to lack of support from supervisors. Another respondent said they needed to:

*Get the district management on board to show that it is not a 'jolly'.*

One branch's request for supporting their annual plan was declined. Another branch had been providing evaluations of activities to keep the information flow in an upward direction through management. Greater promotion of Blue Light and its benefits amongst police, and especially with police management, is seen as one way to increase support.

#### **4.6.6 Other issues**

Three other issues were identified, each by one or two respondents. One was concerned about ensuring safety for kids at all activities, stating "risk management is compulsory". They provide ongoing training and discussion with staff involved. One raised concern about the lack of enthusiasm from young people for being involved, and two respondents wanted ideas for activities.

## 5 Conclusions

In summary, the objectives of this evaluation were to describe the Blue Light initiative (including governance and management and its effectiveness, funding/resourcing and range of activities), assess whether it operates as intended (including what works well, issues and level of satisfaction with activities) and identify whether/how it contributes to Police's overarching aims of 'reduced youth offending' and 'increased community safety' (including whether relationship-building has occurred between police, young people, parents and the community).

The evaluation is based on information received from 37 Blue Light branches throughout New Zealand. Information was gathered using a written survey sent to all branches, phone interviews, and face-to-face individual and group interviews for two branch case studies. The overall findings suggest the Blue Light initiative is achieving and often exceeding in its contribution to Police's overarching aims as stated above. However it is important to recognize but not undervalue, the findings are based on information received from branches which included anecdotal evidence and feedback they have received from Blue Light participants, parents and community.

Police involvement in Blue Light is variable around the country. Strong branches typically have positive support from local Police management and staff. They involve Police staff working alongside community members, with a shared commitment to provide fun, safe activities for children between six and 16 years. Activities range from those for general participation (such as the traditional discos/dances, and fun days) to those with a particular focus (e.g. age and/or gender specific rewards for kids, camps and PCT fear factor). Different types of activities require different levels of organisation, planning and resources (e.g. camps, all night parties compared with some dances). Nevertheless, a great deal of work is required to deliver safe and well organised activities. This includes accessing funding, organising and then being involved during the event.

Branches tended to measure the success of Blue Light activities in one or both of the following ways: feedback from participants, teachers/schools and parents and/or participation and demand, either for more activities or for 'places' or tickets where numbers were limited. Respondents identified a range of changes in Blue Light participants. The most prevalent were: changed perceptions and attitudes toward Police, an increased sense of trust, increased personal competence and social skills.

The degree of buy-in from police management is a key issue for the ongoing viability of Blue Light. The level of individuals' commitment evident amongst many branches is generally not sustainable without this support. In some cases, Police management sees Blue Light as part of the education or youth aid officer's job. However, other branches are struggling to exist with minimal Police support, and as the evaluation has identified, some branches in this situation have gone into recess or are about to close down. Where a dedicated resource is available to manage and organise Blue Light activities, branches are thriving. A small number of branches have paid coordinators.

The evaluation findings raise a question about what roles Police should have in terms of governance and management of Blue Light. Most branch committees involve non-sworn staff and/or community members who hold office positions (treasurer, secretary) while the role of chairperson remains a sworn Police officer position. For some Police staff, there is a tension in balancing time and work commitments with planning and organising Blue Light activities, applying for funding and also being involved in the events.

Funding is an issue identified by a number of branches. This includes finding the time to apply for funding, knowing where to go and how to approach funding applications, gathering support documentation and ensuring accountability for funds received. Information from branches, including the North Rodney case study, indicates that it is easier to secure funding for equipment

than it is for salaries, and there is increasing competition for scarce funding. This has real implications for the security of coordinator positions which are established with charity funding.

The Police have two strategic goals, namely increasing community safety and crime reduction. The findings suggest that Blue Light is achieving outcomes that are aligned with both these aims. This is reflected in the types of activities offered and in the outcomes reported, such as young people gaining personal and social skills, a greater sense of community responsibility, having more positive attitudes towards police, and increased community assurance.

Blue Light is about prevention rather than reaction. It is more difficult to measure what has been prevented than it is for instance, to measure actual offences committed. In addition, it is hard to measure the impact of Blue Light specifically, without establishing a clear focus on activities and desired outcomes and indicators of success. Given the range of activities and situations in which branches operate, it is not feasible to evaluate the effectiveness of Blue Light in its entirety, except in general and descriptive terms. Further evaluation studies would need to be conducted on specific activities with identified indicators for success, to further determine the contribution Blue Light makes to Police overarching aims.

## **6 Case studies**

### **6.1 North Rodney Case Study**

#### **6.1.1 The context**

North Rodney Blue Light is based in Wellsford, just north of Warkworth. Approximately 1000 young people attend school in Wellsford, from rural locations over a wide geographic location. Twenty seven per cent of the college students are Maori, while 50 per cent of the primary school population is Maori. The branch also serves the Warkworth area which is more affluent and has a smaller Maori population (15 per cent).

According to the Blue Light youth coordinator, rural isolation, transient families and a lack of resources such as counseling and transportation are some of the issues facing youth in this district.

#### **6.1.2 Home base**

The Blue Light 'set up' in North Rodney is impressive. Out the back of the Wellsford Police Station are two large purpose built storage sheds, stocked with disco/sound and outdoor equipment. Next door is an office for the Blue Light staff. Parked alongside are the Blue Light vehicles and two purpose-built trailers for transporting young people and gear.

There are four paid staff including two full time staff, one part timer and one contract worker.

#### **6.1.3 History**

A local police officer was the driving force behind establishing the branch in the mid 1990s. Within a short time the community had secured funding to pay a year's salary for a full time youth officer and the local Rotary Club donated a van. In the early years, the youth coordinator worked with a Maori youth worker to provide activities such as joint school holiday programmes and all night parties.

Within a short time the branch was facing a funding crisis. The officer who had driven the establishment of the branch had moved on, as had a number of committee members. The youth coordinator was left "finding the money for my own wages". A Blue Light committee member and local businessman offered to bring the youth coordinator onto his payroll. A local journalist rang the District Commander who agreed to fund the youth coordinator role. This arrangement has continued until quite recently.

The youth officer (now called the youth coordinator) has been with the branch for 10 years.

#### **6.1.4 Governance and management**

##### ***What works well?***

There are 15 committee members and four paid staff (Table One). The committee members say they are involved because they:

*Care about the kids in our community and about the future of the community.*

The paid staff include a fulltime community youth coordinator. The youth coordinator has managerial skills and prior experience working with youth at risk. His role is to develop programmes, promote Blue Light, facilitate community events and generally manage Blue Light

(e.g. organising funding applications). There is also a fulltime community youth worker who promotes and develops programmes in the Warkworth and Snells Beach area.

*Table One: Blue Light committee: who's involved*

	<b>No.</b>	<b>Roles</b>
Police staff	4	Chairperson, committee members
Community members	11	Treasurer, secretary, committee members
Paid staff	4	Youth coordinator, youth worker, staff support officer, contract event manager

The staff support officer is part-time. She helps with administration, funding applications, provides assistance with programmes when required and maintains an inventory of equipment. The events manager works on a contract basis, planning and developing specific (larger) events.

The branch has an annual business plan which includes local and nationally promoted events. Committee members meet monthly to discuss proposed activities. Day to day decisions are made by the youth coordinator in consultation with the youth worker sub-committee. Funding decisions are made in conjunction with the finance sub-committee and youth coordinator.

The branch has recently developed an 'outcomes framework' with support from a professional strategic planner. As a result, the branch now focuses on 'outcomes' rather than 'outputs'.

### **Risks**

The success of the branch relies to a large extent on one individual's drive and commitment – the youth coordinator. At times this one person has been responsible for 'wearing a number of hats': planning, organising, relationship building, administration, finding funding for his own wages and promoting Blue Light. Currently the branch has a strong committee and other paid staff to share the load. However, without secure funding, this position is tenuous.

## **6.1.5 Government and community support**

### ***What works well?***

The branch has traditionally been supported by frontline police, police education staff, youth aid officers and the District Commander. The Wellsford police sergeant says he endorses the work Blue Light does:

*because it's a great opportunity for staff to build positive relationships with young people.*

He is committed to releasing staff, where possible, to participate in Blue Light activities.

The youth coordinator provides annual reports and where-ever possible endeavours to meet face to face with the District Commander. In return, the District Commander has provided the branch with recognition and funding.

The branch has developed a relationship with the Army over many years, starting with an annual camp which started 15 years ago which involved several branches from the North Shore and Rodney.

Blue Light receives strong support from community organisations and local businesses. One local businessman says he supports Blue Light because he believes it gets good outcomes:

*(It's) successful in what it does. It's well resourced, structured and managed.*

### **Risks**

Not all police staff are supportive of Blue Light. The youth coordinator acknowledges that the branch needs to develop a better relationship with the local area manager and in particular, provide evidence of outcomes that enhance the area's goals and objectives.

## **6.1.6 Funding**

### **What works well?**

Over the years, the branch has been successful in accessing funding for equipment and even large items such as vehicles. One example is a vehicle donated to the branch. A local benefactor died, bequeathing money to be distributed to community organisations. In recognition of their work with local youth, Blue Light was the first organisation to be approached with an offer of funding.

### **Risks**

*Funding is always our biggest issue as there is no guarantee and money is scarce.*

While the District Commander has paid for the youth coordinator's salary until now, this funding is no longer considered secure, as there is currently a review of non-sworn positions in the district. The youth coordinator has no contract with the Police. Until now, he has simply invoiced the Police once a year. As a result:

*Always in the back of your mind you're worrying about the funding.*

Traditional sources of funding such as Lottery grants are "reducing all the time".

## **6.1.7 Activities**

Prior to the strategic planning process, decisions about what activities to get involved with were around outputs: "if there was good participation we'd run it again". Now decisions about what activities to get involved with are based on:

*whether we think we'll get the outcomes we want. Community members might come to us to say we want to run an event, (and ask) will Blue Light be a part of it? Now we're much more careful about where we put our resources.*

North Rodney has always run a range of activities, some of which have been high profile. The trolley derby, now a national event, started in North Rodney in 1998. They do not run the event anymore as it was "consuming our time and never had a pay-off".

Most activities are targeted to specific groups, based on age, gender, ethnicity, at risk youth.

Blue Light is a resource to local schools, including an alternative school for young people who have been excluded from mainstream high school. Under the auspices of Blue Light, the youth education officer and the youth coordinator deliver Dare to Make a Change (DARE) to local intermediate and high schools. DARE is a type of therapeutic story telling which revolves around a troubled adolescent who enters a mythical land and embarks on a journey of obstacles. Each session includes 'lessons' on topics such as peer pressure and encourages young people to discuss how they would make decisions in different situations.

### 6.1.8 Outcomes:

The branch has three aims, which are:

- to encourage better relations between youth people and their parents, the police and the community
- to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour by exposing young people to different experiences and a health socialisation process in a safe, supervised environment, and to
- raise self esteem amongst youth people.

The branch say they are achieving some of these aims, citing that they have a very low youth crime rate, a high resolution rate and that truancy is low. Young people generally have good rapport and a healthy respect with and for the local police. There is minimal incidence of graffiti in the area (where graffiti occurs it is thought to be caused by people passing through the town). There are also low reports of family violence / domestics involving young people.

One example given is that of a young person who came to the area quite hostile towards, and wary, of the local police. After becoming involved with the Blue Light programmes and mixing with some of the local police, his attitude changed. He is now in employment and is happy to talk with, and liaise with local police.

The youth coordinator says that the community is “very supportive of police”. He believes that this is because of the preventive focus that Blue Light has.

The branch recognises the importance of reporting ‘success’. This is an area where they are developing expertise.

The branch has recognised the need to change its focus and reporting to align with the Police national and area strategic outcomes for youth, i.e. “reducing youth crime’. The branch has actively set up systems of monitoring and evaluation to support these objectives. The balance is always where to put resources into the delivery of a programme or the administration of the programme.

Blue Light staff are confident that participants are satisfied with Blue Light activities:

*Because of the feedback they get from evaluation forms and verbal comments made by participants, parents and teachers.*

### 6.1.9 Future plans

The branch would like to establish a specific ‘design based’ camp to run activities from. The key barrier is the financial cost involved in establishing such an operation. They would also like to offer programmes to a larger catchment area, but are currently unable to because of the lack of paid staff required to run activities.

## **6.2 Ngati Porou Blue Light Ventures Incorporated**

### **6.2.1 Context**

The Ngati Porou Blue Light Ventures is based in Ruatoria and covers a large geographical area from Whangara in the south to Potikirua in the north. The area includes eight townships: Tolaga Bay, Tokomaru Bay, Te Puia Springs, Ruatoria, Tikitiki, Te Araroa, Rangitukia and Hicks Bay. The Ngati Porou area consists of 51 hapu and 48 marae.

The Ngati Porou Blue Light Ventures Business Plan states the population as 6,864 (2001 census) with an average of 30 per cent under the age of 15. In the Ngati Porou area 1,215 rangitahi (children) attend area and primary schools; many traveling long distances from remote areas. Others attend boarding schools outside the area and return in the weekends and school holidays.

The area has 12 kohanga reo, 15 primary schools, four area schools (i.e. primary to year 13) including Te Kura Kaupapa O Te Waiu O Ngati Porou, which is a total immersion school.

The main issues facing youth and the community identified in the business plan and by members of the Blue Light committee are rural isolation, high unemployment, lack of resources (the 2001 Census figures indicated median incomes for the area averaged \$13,660 per annum), the long term abuse of cannabis and its derivatives, and the more recent incidence of "P" (psuedoethydrine).

### **6.2.2 History**

The Ngati Porou Blue Light branch had its beginnings from a conversation around the kitchen table in the Ruatoria police station. Police officers and parents sat around the table discussing the local kids, who were bored and needed something different to do to keep them occupied and off the streets. One police officer had been an organiser of Blue Light activities in previous years in another Police district and told the others about it. One of the parents also remembered going to Blue Light activities in Te Puia as a child. As a result of their discussions, the group ran its first Blue Light disco in Ruatoria in the April 2002 school holidays with hired disco equipment from Tolaga Bay. It was a big success with about 60 children attending and lots of support from local parents, mothers in particular.

As word spread about the disco and other town centres wanted one too, the group decided that to be fair, they needed to repeat the discos around the other five townships in the area. The principle of ensuring all young people in the Ngati Porou area have an opportunity to attend remains a basis on which the committee operates.

### **6.2.3 Home base**

The Ruatoria police station and around the kitchen table in particular, is where most of the committee's decisions and planning occur, informally and always over a cup of tea. The disco equipment which was purchased by the branch with funding from the Lion Nathan Foundation, sits in the corner of the station ready to be loaded into a police truck and taken to the next dance venue either up or down the coast.

The group interviews which were undertaken to gather information for this case study also took place informally around the table, over pots of tea and biscuits at the station during a Sunday afternoon and Monday morning. On the Sunday, local children, young people and mothers dropped into the station to talk with the researchers about their experiences of Blue Light. They were as comfortable in that environment as they were enthusiastic about Blue Light. The respect,

warmth and ease between the children and young people and police officers, and mothers and police officers provided a tangible sense of the concept some described as whaka whanaungatanga – a key principle underpinning all branch activities. The value of these relationships was clearly highly regarded by the young people, mothers and police staff alike.

#### **6.2.4 Governance and management**

Ngati Porou Blue Light Ventures became incorporated in 2003 and developed its first business plan. The branch has a dedicated six member committee comprising two police officers, one non-sworn staff member and three parents/community members. The station sergeant is the chairman, one police officer is treasurer and one community member (St Johns Ambulance) is the secretary.

#### **6.2.5 What works well**

All members of the committee are motivated to encourage and provide fun, safe activities for all youth in the Ngati Porou area and have a commitment to supporting whanau.

The committee secretary visits the station daily and regular contact is maintained between all committee members. Prior to the school holidays the committee gets together and decides when to run another disco. Decision making and planning is done informally and with who ever is available at the time.

#### **6.2.6 Support from government and community**

##### ***What works well?***

The branch is supported by the local Ruatoria police, who provides staff, a regular meeting place ('home base'), transport and administrative support for activities. Police staff in other towns within the Ngati Porou area, are also regularly involved.

Two community agencies are very involved in the branch. These are Rural Education Assistance Programme (REAP) including a representative from Ruatoria and one from Hicks Bay, who support life long education and agencies working together to maximize resources and support for whanau. The Ngati Porou Community Injury Prevention Programme, which is funded by ACC, the Land Transport Safety Authority (LTSA) and the Health Funding Authority, donates prizes for giving to children at Blue Light events.

Some local businesses donate goods or provide discounts on items purchased for Blue Light activities, when they can. For instance, a bike was donated as a prize for a competition in the recent bike week programme. Local schools also play a key role in promoting events to children and parents.

#### **6.2.7 Funding**

##### ***What works well?***

The branch has received funding twice from the Lions Club with no prompting. It also received a substantial amount of funding from the Lions Nathan Foundation, which was used to purchase disco equipment to save the ongoing costs of hiring.

## **Challenges**

Applying for funding is new and challenging. The treasurer commented it would be good to have help or guidelines for fundraising including which funding bodies to apply to and how.

### **6.2.8 Activities**

The branch has run about 30 discos in five areas including Tolaga Bay, Tikitiki, Tokomaru Bay, Hicks Bay and Ruatoria. They are open to all young people from 6 – 16 years of age although parents often bring all their children, so there can be children younger than six years of age. The discos are well attended with an average of 50-60 young people and many dress up for the occasion.

Two senior college boys work with members of the committee and are the DJs for the discos. They are considered positive role models and are looked up to by the younger children.

The branch also ran a 'Bike Wise' week in conjunction with the Ngati Porou Runanga Injury Prevention Unit in 2005. Activities centered on road and bike safety, including wearing helmets and a bike riding skills competition. It ended with a bike rally around Ruatoria lead by the local sergeant of police. The event was supported by the local business community.

### **What works well?**

The discos are developed in consultation with rangitahi and communities. They are run in five main town centres to include all young people from in and around the six small towns in the area. Discos are promoted through local networks including Radio Ngati Porou, schools and by word of mouth in each local area. They are well supervised by uniformed police, whanau, local community members and members of the Blue Light committee, who give their time voluntarily. One of the police committee members said:

*Discos are not labour intensive. It's a matter of packing up the vehicle and driving up or down the coast on Fridays. (They're) done informally.*

There are police contacts in each area as well as a network of community support people who promote the event, provide a free venue (usually either a local marae or rugby club) and arrange for a local club (e.g. rugby club) to cater as a fundraising opportunity.

The young people decide what music they want and give a list to one of the parent/committee member's who downloads music from the internet and compiles discs. She also marks the tracks she thinks are inappropriate for younger children so they are not played until later in the evening.

In the spirit of inclusiveness and whaka whanaungatanga, police often pick up young people when they can't get to the disco or someone realizes a particular young person or family has not turned up. The discos also provide an opportunity for parents to "catch up with each other".

## **Challenges**

The branch faces several challenges. One is having enough time to organise and travel the large distances required to provide discos in each town. This is compounded by the fact that the branch chooses not to offer activities in only one town. There are also only a few people doing all the work, and parental support comes mainly from mothers.

Activities have to be affordable because most families are on limited incomes. This means either minimal or no charge for participation. Often there is a gold coin donation for entry, but no one is turned away.

Young people are asking for more discos, so the demand is increasing. For instance the older youth would like a separate disco for their age group. While this is a sign of success, the issue

facing the committee is how to meet the growing demand with limited time, people and funding resources. The committee would like to see a paid coordinator position established for the area.

### 6.2.9 Outcomes

The branch objectives for its Blue Light activities and programmes are to:

- reward rangitahi for positive behaviour
- encourage and assist development of social skills
- increase personal competence and confidence
- enhance social responsibility
- create trust, motivation and leadership and
- enhance Police/rangitahi perceptions and relationships.

The committee believes they are achieving some of these objectives. For instance, young people and parents alike said they now see the police “differently”. Blue Light activities have given them an opportunity to “get to know the cops as people”. One young person said:

*(I) didn't really know the cops before. Now (I) know them as people ... big help, friendly. (They're) easier to talk with, especially at discos.*

The discos provide younger children with positive role models in a safe, non-violent, drug and alcohol free environment. A feature of the discos is that “the kids look out for each other”. The demand for more discos and other Blue Light activities is growing. The committee members and other community people considered youth participation, support for each other, enjoyment and demand for more, as positive achievements.

There are also benefits for members of the committee and other community members involved. They build positive, supportive relationships with each other in an informal way. One police officer talked about Blue Light activities enabling police to develop “real” relationships with young people, so they can approach them for positive reasons as well as “telling them off” when necessary.

Another police officer stated that one young person they had got to know well had provided important information to help police solve a criminal investigation. The same officer also made the following comment in relation to the impact of Blue Light discos on offending:

*There are no kids roaming the streets on disco nights, no graffitiing, no hanging around the shops.*

### 6.2.10 Future plans

The branch would like to offer more activities and take groups of young people out of the area for urban ‘adventures’ such as Splash Planet in Napier, Te Papa and Parliament in Wellington, and to give them experiences of cities and other places around the country.

The branch has a goal this year to raise funds and award 10 young people with a trip to the national Rainbow’s End fun day. This will require serious fundraising, planning and organising to fairly select young people and meet the costs of travel (it is an eight hour bus trip from Ruatoria to Auckland), accommodation and entry to Rainbows End.

Ultimately the branch would like to have a paid coordinator to organise more activities and a van to transport young people around more easily.