

Proving the mahi works

Tauranga-based surfing programme for troubled youth Live For More is succeeding - and they can prove it.

Live for More uses surfing therapy to encourage rangatahi/young people to find freedom from their troubled pasts and live positive and fulfilling lives, one wave at a time. Operations Manager Megan Warn says they help troubled, high-risk youth break the cycle of drugs, alcohol and crime and see there is potential for their lives.



They take on between 20 and 30 new boys aged 17 to 25 each year, and have just graduated their 100th student, although the boys tend to come back to do different courses as they move back into their lives over the years.

“We also provide intensive clinical counselling, practical life navigation skills, mentoring and cultural sessions. Each boy gets assigned a clinician who deals with mental health and coping strategies, and a Youth Navigator who takes care of the practical details, like getting a Driver’s License and managing money.”

Referrals come from word of mouth - a bro does the course and gets a mate to do it too - or from Oranga Tamariki or Corrections.

The previous Live For More Operations Manager, Dave Degraaf, developed the outcomes framework to provide clear statistics about their success stories and measure their outcomes.

They have six long-term outcomes for the Tai Wātea programme - free from drugs, crime, gangs, prison, positive mental health and in employment or training.

To gather the information they survey each boy at six, 12, 18 and 24 months, but in a conversational, natural manner to get authentic answers. The data goes into their CRM - Customer Relationship Management - so they know what is working.

The results speak for themselves. The Outcomes Report for 2022 showed both the backgrounds of boys they work with, including race, gangs, youth prison and mental health or suicidal tendencies, and then how they had improved.

For the past year 36 percent were free from drugs and another 55 percent had reduced their use, 73 percent were out of the justice system, 70 percent were free from gangs (half used to be connected to a gang), 89 percent were free from prison, 96 percent had rated their mental health as positive and 68 percent were in employment or training.

“This is helpful in getting funding. Funders like to see results and if we can quantify with data and numbers you’re more likely to get funders to back you.”

Live For More also videos the boys telling their own stories, providing a powerful voice for boys who want to make changes in their own lives.