



SYNERGIA

## Young Driver Research, Mangere

Report for ACC and  
Auckland Transport

Gerardene Waldron

Adrian Field

5<sup>th</sup> July 2013

Synergia Ltd

P.O. Box 147 168

Ponsonby

Auckland 1144

[www.synergia.co.nz](http://www.synergia.co.nz)

# CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2. METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS .....	15
2.2 SAMPLE DESIGN .....	16
<b>3. SOCIAL NORMS ON UNLICENSED DRIVING OR BREACHING LICENCE CONDITIONS.....</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 UNLICENSED/BREACH DRIVING: EMBEDDED NORMS IN THIS COMMUNITY .....	18
3.2 PARENTAL AND FAMILIAL BOUNDARIES AND INFLUENCE .....	19
3.3 INFLUENCE OF PEERS .....	26
3.4 DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM .....	27
3.5 PERCEIVED RISK IS NOT ENOUGH OF A 'DISINCENTIVE' .....	29
3.6 I'M DOING IT FOR OTHERS .....	34
3.7 EMPATHY FOR FAMILIES IN 'SURVIVAL' MODE .....	36
3.8 WIDER COMMUNITY APPROVAL FOR UNLICENSED AND 'BREACH' DRIVING .....	36
<b>4. CHALLENGES WITH THE CURRENT GDLS PROPOSITION .....</b>	<b>38</b>
4.1 THE CHALLENGE OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING AND APPLICATION .....	38
4.2 THE PRICE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE GDLS IS NOT CHEAP .....	39
4.3 OBTAINING A LEARNER LICENCE .....	40
4.4 OBTAINING RESTRICTED AND FULL LICENCES .....	42
<b>5. VALUE PROPOSITIONS FOR CHANGE .....</b>	<b>49</b>
5.1 A MULTIFACETED APPROACH IS REQUIRED .....	49
5.2 OVERALL, A POSITIVE APPROACH IS REQUIRED .....	49
5.3 YOUNG DRIVERS .....	50
5.4 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY .....	52
5.5 OPTIMISING THE GDLS 'PRODUCT' .....	55
5.6 ADDRESSING SAFETY AMONG YOUNG 'PASSIVE' DRIVERS IN THIS COMMUNITY .....	58

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to extend our grateful thanks to the many people from Mangere who generously gave their time and insights from personal experience to inform this research.

A range of community leaders within Mangere supported this initiative, through expert advice on the issues that impact on driving norms in the area. We particularly acknowledge Ayr Jones of Auckland Council, Peter Sykes of the Mangere East Family Services Centre, Julia Lynch of New Zealand Police, and Filipe Motulalo and Atonio Tuipe'a of ACC.

We also wish to thank the staff of Mangere East Family Services Centre, Mangere East Community Learning Centre, and Mangere Town Centre Library, who allowed the research team use of their meeting rooms to conduct the research.

Our thanks are also extended to Deborah Grant of Strive, who connected our team with the Mangere Youth Providers Network as the research was unfolding.

We also wish to thank Nishadie Edirisuriya and Sarah Appleton-Dyer from Synergia for their support in the fieldwork and design phases of this research.

Finally, we acknowledge ACC and Auckland Transport who funded and managed this research.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of the social norms around driving, particularly young drivers driving unlicensed or in breach of their learners or restricted license, in order to inform the development of a community-based social marketing campaign targeting both the young drivers themselves and the community more broadly.

This locally based campaign is a component of the overall High Risk Young Driver project (HRYD) which in part aims to increase the numbers of young drivers in participating communities enter and progress through the Graduated Driver Licensing Scheme (GDLS), and consequently reduce numbers of those driving unlicensed or in breach of licence conditions.

In order to gain the level of insight required to meet the objectives of this research, in-depth one to one interviews were used, as well as projective interviewing techniques for younger drivers. The sample included:

- 12 interviews with young drivers aged between 16 and 24 years currently driving unlicensed or in breach of their learner or restricted licences, and selected so that their so their driving profile matched that of a 'passive' rather than an 'active' high risk young driver<sup>1</sup>.
- 8 interviews with parents/caregivers of young drivers currently driving unlicensed or in breach of their learner or restricted licences.
- 4 interviews with key informants from the Mangere community.

---

### Embedded community norms

---

The responses from all interviewees, young drivers, parents/caregivers and key informants, all point towards driving as an unlicensed driver or in breach of learner and restricted driving conditions being, for the most part, an embedded norm in this community. This type of driving is seen as widespread, and is seen as socially (if not legally) acceptable behaviour. As expected, there is a natural 'continuum' of how acceptable this kind of driving is for one individual versus another. However, even if someone does not personally 'condone' this kind of driving themselves, they still recognise it as a norm in general across the wider Mangere community.

---

<sup>1</sup> As defined by ACC's Draft Segmentation Model for Young Drivers, December 2012

---

### Influence of parents/caregivers

---

Overall, the interviews from this research suggest it is the influence of parents/caregivers on young drivers that is having a powerful effect in reinforcing the social acceptability of unlicensed and 'breach' driving. They are the gatekeepers to the family car(s) and hence have the greatest say over how, when and where it gets used by the young drivers in their family. Young people have a high 'drive' to drive and this research suggests that parents, not licensing laws, are setting the boundaries. Clearly not all parents/caregivers are the same in how they influence the young drivers in their respective families, and they were found to vary from each other; in terms of the extent to which some personally 'condoned' unlicensed or 'breach' driving, and also importantly in terms of the abilities of some to support and motivate young drivers through the GDLS.

Examples of well-intentioned attitudes and actions of many parents are reinforcing the 'norms' around this type of driving include:

- Preparing young drivers for the learner theory test by allowing them to drive or by preparing them for the restricted practical test by encouraging them to drive by themselves.
- Giving permission both explicitly and implicitly to drive unlicensed or in breach.

In many cases, parents/caregivers see no other option than to ask or allow their children to do this kind of driving. This dependence on young people to 'help out' by driving is especially felt by households with parents doing shift work, large families, solo parents and/or families with older or infirmed parents.

As a young person's parent and driving 'coach', parents/caregivers believe that they know what level of driving they are capable of and 'should' be allowed to drive to, rather than following what licence laws state that they should be doing.

---

### Perceptions of risk

---

This research also reveals that any levels of risk associated with this kind of driving behaviour are considered too minimal to act as any kind of significant deterrent or 'disincentive'. Overall this kind of driving is not considered as 'morally' wrong and perceived more as being 'non-compliant' and usually justifiable due to familial obligations and circumstance.

Young drivers have complex systems in place to avoid being 'caught' while driving unlicensed or in breach, and they and their parents/caregivers believe that their driving is being managed to keep it 'safe' (in fact even safer some believe than licensed young drivers).

---

### Influence of peers

---

The influence of peers is also a significant factor driving unlicensed and breach driving behaviour, as being a 'driver' is perceived as a something that other young people admire.

Being able to offer lifts to others is seen as a valued currency in gaining respect and kudos among peers (hence young drivers can be tempted to 'be the driver' before they are licensed to do so) and once a young person becomes 'the driver' in a group, they can start to lose control of how they manage their driving as the group rather than the individual starts to set the boundaries of how and when driving is done.

The extent of how embedded unlicensed driving and 'breach' driving is as a social norm in this community is also evident by not only the attitudes and behaviours of young drivers and their families, but also of the wider community – from car dealers who sell cars to anyone, to employers or church/social organisations that turn a blind-eye to how employees or members are driving.

---

### Barriers to licensing

---

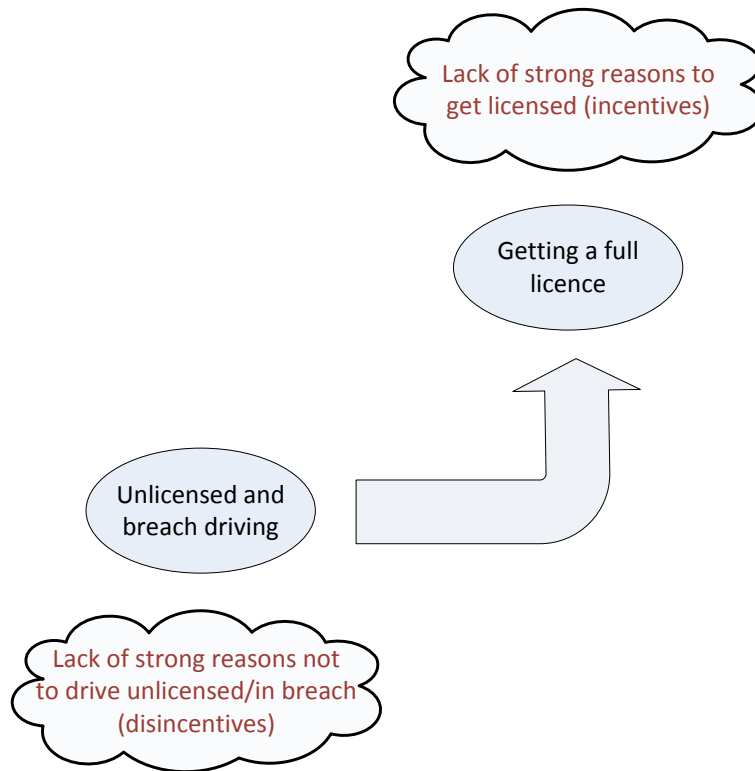
Importantly, this research also indicated that while it is socially acceptable to drive unlicensed and in 'breach', young drivers and their wider Mangere community are not 'against' getting licensed. There was among all the young passive drivers interviewed in this research, at least some level of underlying interest in becoming a fully licensed driver.

The problem is that because it is so accepted to drive unlicensed or in breach of their licence, there is no great sense of urgency or pressure to progress through the GDLS. Overall while it is acknowledged as being a 'good' thing to have a full licence, it is not necessarily a 'must have'. People in the community are seen to 'get by' all the time with whatever licence they have got as far as getting, or without one at all.

The other issue is that even when young drivers try to do the 'right thing' and try to engage with and progress through the GDLS, this doesn't always work out for them, either because of their own skill or knowledge shortcomings, or because of flaws in the current GDLS 'product'.

The diagram below summarises the factors that emerged to support an embedded system of individual, family and community norms, and which act as barriers to progression along the current GDLS system. With the compounding effects of a licensing process that is not especially user friendly, and a community where it is socially acceptable not to be fully licensed, it is inevitable that the desired numbers of young people are not progressing through the GDLS.

- Lack of urgency to progress – ‘nice to have’ not a ‘must have’
- Driving is the aspiration, not the licence
- Process is unfriendly and doesn’t provide motivation



- Family and peer norms implicitly/explicitly endorsing unlicensed or breach driving
- Low perceived risks (safety or of being caught)
- Avoidance systems in place (e.g. off-arterial travel, check points, driving behaviours)

---

#### Building a momentum for change

---

Overall it is clear that as there are multiple compounding factors leading to the prevalence of unlicensed and ‘breach’ driving in this community, there is equally a need for a multifaceted response to effect change.

From the insights that our research interviews provided about the extent to which unlicensed driving and driving in ‘breach’ is an embedded norm in this community, as well as an understanding of the reasons why, it would seem that effecting change by a ‘positive’ rather than a negative ‘anti’ approach, is the best way forward.

Explicit negative messaging about why *not* to drive in this way is likely to lack credibility, make people feel bad about themselves and fail to engage interest and

support. Furthermore, the more that the campaign highlights unlicensed or 'breach driving', the greater the likelihood that it may have the unintended consequence of even further normalising the very behaviour it is seeking to reduce. And finally, in terms of Mangere specifically, this is a community where many already feel under the 'spotlight' and of being judged by others, so a campaign that further reinforces feelings of vulnerability or inadequacy is not going to be able to gain the buy in required.

Having a positive campaign approach will also be necessary to encourage the level of community wide participation needed to effect change in this area (as organisations, community groups and businesses will see benefits in being associated with something that is 'lifting' their community).

---

#### Aspirational positioning for young drivers

---

In terms of possible campaign approaches to motivate greater interest among young drivers in becoming licensed, and to overcome the current 'slack' or 'complacent' attitude that prevails, the findings from this research suggest that a positioning (rather than a message per se) which conveys a sense of how becoming fully licensed can enable and 'free' them to be the kind of driver that they really want to is likely to have the most potential to appeal and influence (i.e. rather than just settling to be a driver who 'gets by' or 'makes do' with unlicensed or breach driving and the associated downsides).

In order to be truly effective however, it is also critical that the campaign has a secondary supporting message to let young drivers know that the process of becoming licensed has changed for the better and become more user friendly and that local drivers in Mangere are being better supported than even before to succeed – through a combination of such support as easier payments, better local and online pre-test support available, and a testing process that is more user friendly.

Without this supporting message, there is a risk that those that have already tried and failed to progress to getting a full licence will not engage with this campaign as they will have no reason to believe that the system is any different to before. It can also importantly have relevance to those who may not have yet engaged with the GDLS, but been put off by perceived challenges.

---

#### Optimising the GDLS process

---

The findings from this research suggest that the current GDLS product could be optimised and made more user-friendly by using a combination of methods to 'shepherd' anyone who has scheduled a learner's test or even simply taken part in a



community course to prepare for one, to progress to sitting their learner test and ultimately progressing on to become a fully licensed driver.

Becoming a fully licensed driver requires focus and self-motivation. What was clear from this research was how this is a skill and/or characteristic that many young drivers have not developed fully yet and as a result are not progressing through the GDLS.

Ways in which the GDLS can be optimised include

- Making it as easy as possible for applicants to schedule (and reschedule) tests in a way that will work best for them (such as in terms of timeframes and possibility of group bookings)
- Providing applicants with information about online and local pre-test 'support'
- Making payment easier by offering payment 'plans' that allow applicants to pay off the total amount of the application fee in small regular instalments in advance of their test
- Reviewing sign in processes for tests and how test assessors can be supported to be more 'customer friendly' and 'coach-like' in their approach
- Offering a greater variety of options about how and where applicants can be either instructed or tested, as well as options that enable applicants to determine their 'test-readiness' for practical tests as they currently can for the learner theory test
- Reviewing how applicants who fail any stage of the GDLS are followed-up and supported to have a better chance of succeeding on their next attempt.

---

#### Call to action to whānau to support their young drivers get licensed

---

In terms young drivers' families and the wider community, the call to action is to encourage and support young drivers to become fully licensed drivers and to support them to comply with the conditions of their learner and restricted licences while going through the process of becoming fully licensed.

This call to action is likely to have most appeal with parents/caregivers if it is leveraged from a positive, empathetic 'support' positioning (rather than one of policing their young drivers). Overall it is clear from this research that seeking their support to help young drivers to become fully licensed will be a much easier 'ask' than it will be to support young drivers comply with their learner and restricted licences, as it is about helping young people achieve something that they already have an inherent (albeit sometimes low) interest in. It is also an easier 'ask' as the wider family can benefit from having someone fully licensed to drive without fear of consequence or requiring elaborate systems of avoidance.

Examples of the kinds of things that families can do to better support their young drivers successfully progress through the GDLS include:

- Encouraging or enrolling young drivers to participate in test preparation courses or online modules, particularly ones in which 'doing' the test is part of the course.
- Offering to partner up with young drivers through the GDLS where relevant
- Updating their own knowledge of the 'new' road code
- Helping young drivers get a sense of what it's like to sit a practical test by either enrolling them for a one-off lesson with a test instructor who can bring them through a 'mock test' or by asking a recently licensed family member to take them through and even 'role-play' the experience
- Supporting them if they fail by not only encouraging them to try again, but to help them improve their knowledge, skills and confidence to set them up with the best chance of succeeding on the subsequent attempt
- Giving them a greater incentive to progress through the GDLS by reinforcing campaign messages about the benefits of being fully licensed, as well as where possible by curbing their breach driving behaviour.

---

#### The challenge to curb breach driving behaviour

---

Encouraging parents/caregivers and the wider family/whānau to support young drivers to 'do the right thing' and drive to the conditions of their licence, means asking them to not put young drivers in situations where they are required or enabled to drive in breach of their conditions and given the situational factors and norms highlighted in this report, this is a big 'ask' of families.

In asking parents/caregivers and their wider family/whānau to rise to such a challenge, it is critical that they are supported to do so through measures such as giving them the skills and resilience to say 'no' to young drivers wanting to drive in breach (and to follow through with consequences if they do), as well as where possible providing practical or other support for families to help meet the need that a young driver had previously been doing.

As highlighted earlier, much of the 'breach' driving that these young passive drivers are doing is to fulfil a family need, and there are strong feelings of solidarity and protectiveness with regard to local families in 'survival mode'. The campaign will need to be seen to recognise this to some level in order to maximise credibility and community buy-in. Challenging the widely accepted belief that driving in breach is sometimes in young drivers' best interests (such as preparing for a test) would also need to be addressed.

Any success that the campaign can have in supporting parents/caregivers and wider whānau to encourage young drivers to conform more to their learner and restricted licences should as a result increase the motivation of young drivers to progress to getting a full licence.

---

#### Community mobilisation

---

Given the community wide acceptance of unlicensed and breach driving, the more that the whole community gets behind young drivers to encourage and support them to progress through the GDLS the better. While employers and community leaders such as church ministers and sports club leaders were not interviewed for this stage of the research, the findings from interviews with other key informants, young drivers and parents/caregivers, suggest it will, as with young drivers' families, be an easier 'ask' to seek the support of the wider community to help more young drivers in their clubs, churches, marae, employment or other settings progress through the GDLS, than it will be to seek their support in helping their young members or employees to comply with the conditions of their licences.

Seeking their support to help more members become fully licensed should be an easier ask, as not only it is something that they would be likely to feel good about doing for their young drivers, but also because there are clear benefits that having more fully licensed members or employees can bring to their organisation or group.

The diagram on the following page displays the proposed newly framed system of norms and supportive structures and processes, where the resources of the community are directed towards supporting young people to become fully licensed.

---

#### Developing other skills and resilience factors

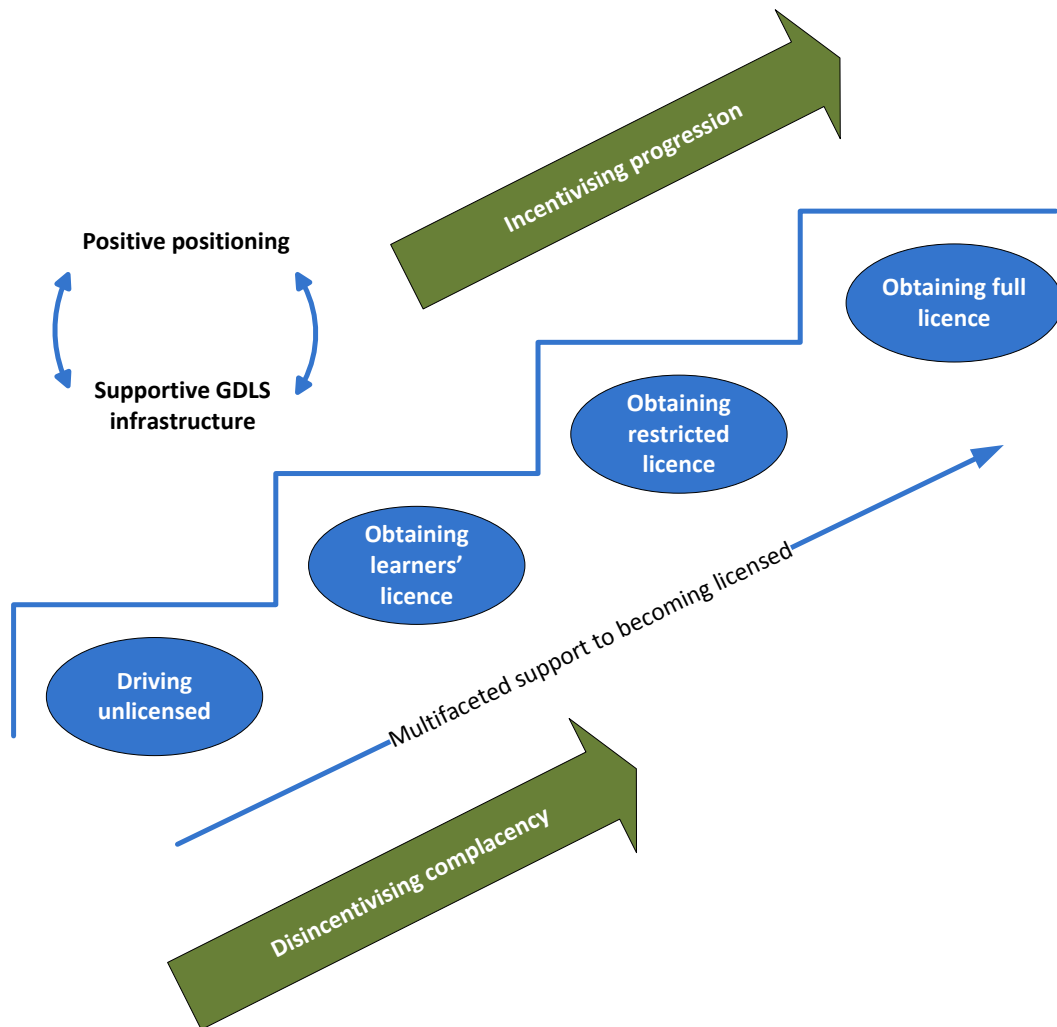
---

As outlined in the introduction, this locally based campaign is a component of the overall High Risk Young Driver project (HRYD) which not only has the key aim of increasing numbers of young drivers enter and progress through the GDLS, but to also result in positive changes in community attitudes to safe driving so that today's young drivers become safer drivers throughout their driving careers, contributing to a safer New Zealand road environment and reducing lifetime claim costs to ACC.

The findings from this research suggest that while progressing greater numbers of drivers through the GDLS will support safer driving to an extent (such as by testing their knowledge of the road code, technical driving skills and ability on the day to focus and anticipate situations), it will not be able to address the some 'attitude' and

'resilience' factors that can compromise young drivers' safety as they are considered harder to 'test for'.

To this end, participants in this research suggested that courses preparing drivers for any of the GDLS tests, or for general 'life skills' (i.e. as offered through schools and other educational and training facilities), incorporate modules to address the above as relevant. Ways of reaching and teaching these skills to drivers not included in such courses would also need to be considered.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of the social norms around driving, particularly young drivers driving unlicensed or in breach of their learners or restricted license, in order to inform the development of a community-based social marketing campaign targeting both the young drivers themselves and the community more broadly.

This locally based campaign is a component of the overall High Risk Young Driver project (HRYD) which has the following key aims:

- In the short/medium term, increased numbers of young drivers in participating communities enter and progress through the Graduated Driver Licensing Scheme (GDLS). This will reduce numbers of those driving unlicensed or in breach of licence conditions.
- To have positive changes in community attitudes to safe driving and aspirations, related to the positive social and economic benefits that come from gaining and keeping a full, clean driving licence.
- In the longer term, today's young drivers becoming safer drivers throughout their driving careers, contributing to a safer New Zealand road environment and reducing lifetime claim costs to ACC.

A secondary intended outcome of the research was that it would also provide useful insights to inform ACC's initial risk segmentation for young drivers, in particular with regard to 'passive' high risk drivers.

The specific research objectives that this research project was designed to answer included:

- What is the attitude to driving unlicensed or breaching licensing conditions?  
How acceptable is it?
- What are the reasons why people do these things?
- What is the attitude towards other types of risky driving behaviour?
- What are the underlying cultural/social factors that perpetuate these attitudes?
- What would be the necessary value proposition/motivation for change?
- Are there any other barriers/factors that prevent people from getting/progressing through the GDLS? (e.g. cost, difficulties getting to testing stations, learning/language difficulties, access to driver education).

- What perceived level of benefit (social, economic) is there to having a full driving license, if any?

In the sections that follow, we explore the range of factors that contribute to unlicensed driving, or driving in breach of conditions, being a commonplace aspect of social norms in the area. While these social norms do present challenges to the broader aims of the HYRD project, there are a range of opportunities that can be leveraged through community-based service development and configuration, alongside the development and promotion of key messages to support greater participation and progression through the GDLS and safer driving in the area.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

In order to gain the level of insight required to meet the objectives of this research, in-depth one to one interviews were conducted with young drivers aged between 16 and 24 years, as well as with parents/caregivers of young drivers of this age.

The interview approach with young drivers was substantially structured around a projective technique, in which the story of an imaginary person was put forward and discussed with the interview participant. The participant was able to construct the world of the character in the course of the discussions, which as the interview progressed were then related back to their own experience of driving and driver licensing.

This approach allowed us to develop a confidential one to one rapport with the participant, supporting open and frank discussion about risky and illegal driving behaviours and in-depth questioning about the drivers behind these.

Interviews with caregivers focused on discussion of the issues as they directly affected their families and the wider community.

Interviews were structured to last approximately 90 minutes and younger participants (16 and 17 year olds) were offered the choice of having the interview conducted with a friend or by themselves; in almost all cases the interviews were held without friends present.

Interviews were held in non-threatening familiar community locations (the Mangere Town Centre Library, Mangere East Community Learning Centre and Mangere East Family Services Centre).

Westfield vouchers and snacks were provided as koha to all research participants (except for the four key informant interviewees) as well as NZ Transport information packs.

At the close of interviews, young drivers were asked if they would be interested in being contacted should their help be needed in further campaign development.

## 2.2 SAMPLE DESIGN

### 2.2.1 (Passive) Young drivers

The young drivers recruited for this research were selected so their driving profile matched that of a 'passive' rather than an 'active' high risk young driver.<sup>2</sup> Filtering questions included whether or not they had ever been disqualified from driving, as well questions related to speeding and drink driving behaviour.

<b>Final Young Driver Interview Sample (12 interviews)</b>		
	<b><i>Driving unlicensed (i.e. don't currently have learners/restricted/full drivers licence)</i></b>	<b><i>Driving on a learners or restricted licence</i></b>
<b>16-17 year olds</b>	2 interviews	4 interviews
<b>18-24 year olds</b>	3 interviews	3 interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final ethnic mix: 6 Pacific Island, 4 Maori, 2 Other</li> <li>Final gender mix: 6 female, 6 male</li> </ul>		

### 2.2.2 Parents/caregivers of young drivers

The parents/caregivers recruited for this research were selected on the basis of having young 16-24 year old young drivers in their family. They were not the parents/caregivers of the young drivers interviewed (to ensure trust and confidence in gaining full and frank disclosure among young drivers interviewed).

<b>Parents/caregivers of young drivers (8 interviews)</b>		
	<b><i>Parents of young drivers driving unlicensed</i></b>	<b><i>Parents of young drivers driving with on a learners or restricted licence</i></b>
<b>Parents of 16-24 year olds</b>	4 interviews	4 Interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final ethnic mix: 4 Pacific Island; 3 Maori; 1 Other</li> <li>Final gender mix: 5 female; 3 male</li> </ul>		

<sup>2</sup> As defined by ACC's Draft Segmentation Model for Young Drivers, December 2012



---

### 2.2.3 Key informants

---

Interviews with four key informants in the local Mangere area were also conducted to gain insights from their experience with young people in the area about the factors that they believe are shaping this level of risky driving behaviour, and what they believe could support and motivate change, with particular regard to progressing more young people through GDLS.

<b>Key informants (4 interviews)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Julia Lynch, Road Policing Manager, Counties Manukau Police</li><li>2. Peter Sykes, Mangere East Family Services Centre</li><li>3. Filipe Motulalo and Atonio Tuipe'a, ACC Community Injury Prevention Consultants</li><li>4. Ayr Jones, Auckland Council</li></ol>

### 3. SOCIAL NORMS ON UNLICENSED DRIVING OR BREACHING LICENCE CONDITIONS

As outlined earlier, the primary purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of the social norms around driving, particularly young drivers driving unlicensed, or in breach of their learners or restricted licenses, in order to inform the development of a community-based social marketing campaign targeting both the young drivers themselves and the community more broadly.

This section of our report outlines our key findings with regard to the following specific research objectives:

- What is the attitude to driving unlicensed or breaching licensing conditions? How acceptable is it?
- What are the reasons why people do these things? What are the underlying cultural/social factors that perpetuate these attitudes?
- What is the attitude towards other types of risky driving behaviour?

#### 3.1 UNLICENSED/BREACH DRIVING: EMBEDDED NORMS IN THIS COMMUNITY

---

##### 3.1.1 Acceptability of unlicensed/breach driving

---

The responses from all groups of interviewees – young drivers, parents/caregivers and key informants from the wider community – all point towards driving as an unlicensed driver or in breach of learner and restricted driving conditions being, for the most part, an embedded norm in this community.

This type of driving is seen as widespread, and is seen as socially (if not legally) acceptable behaviour. While it is recognised that such driving is not necessarily 'compliant', there is no real sense of shame or taboo in talking about driving in this way. Research participants shared their stories about such driving behaviours very openly during interviews (including a young driver who intends to become a police officer), and also disclosed how openly they discuss it with friends and family in the day to day context of their lives (such as sharing tips about how not to get 'caught', or fines they received).

As expected, there is a natural 'continuum' of how acceptable this kind of driving is for one individual versus another. However, even if someone does not personally

'condone' this kind of driving themselves, they still recognise it as a norm in general across the wider Mangere community.

Importantly, this research also indicated that young drivers and their wider Mangere community are not 'against' getting licensed. There was among all the young passive drivers interviewed in this research, at least some level of underlying interest in becoming a fully licensed driver (naturally the levels of interest depending on the individual).

The problem is that because it is so accepted to drive unlicensed or in breach of their licence, there is no great sense of urgency or pressure to progress through the GDLS. Overall while it is acknowledged as being a 'good' thing to have a full licence, or something that they 'should' have, it is not necessarily 'a must have'. People in the community are seen to 'get by' all the time with whatever licence they have got as far as getting, or without one at all. This level of acceptance is in a sense giving young drivers permission to be 'slack' about getting fully licensed or driving in compliance with their conditions of their licence. There is always a socially acceptable reason to justify why it hasn't happened – yet.

---

### 3.1.2 Norms compounded by difficulties progressing through GDLS

---

The other issue is that even when young drivers try to do the 'right thing' and try to engage with and progress through the GDLS, this doesn't always work out for them, either because of their own skill or knowledge shortcomings, or because of flaws in the current GDLS 'product'. And because there is such a high level of social acceptance about not being licensed or driving in breach of one's licence, young drivers have no 'disincentive' to continue driving unlicensed or to remain on learner or restricted driver licences, which because they do not meet their current driving 'needs' lead them to drive in 'breach' of their conditions.

Our key findings about drivers' difficulties with the GDLS and what could be done to optimise the scheme (as well as relevant supporting mechanisms), are outlined in Section 4 and Section 5 of this report.

## 3.2 PARENTAL AND FAMILIAL BOUNDARIES AND INFLUENCE

Young people have a high 'drive' to drive – and this research suggests that parents, not licensing laws, are setting the boundaries. One of the most important factors to consider in understanding the prevalence of this kind of driving is how much driving is

associated with the rites of passage of becoming a young adult. While so many other adult behaviours, such as drinking and smoking can be accessed relatively freely at a young age, driving is one of the few adult activities that remains out of bounds for longer, given the need to have access to a car – a car is after all not as easily purchased with loose change from the bottom of your school bag!

Thus, and in particular for young teenage drivers, to be able to drive, and to be seen by one's peers to drive, is highly valued and seen as a marker of status, and consequently, these young people will naturally want to take whatever opportunities that they can to drive, without necessarily 'waiting' to pass due process.

However, what is also clear from this research, is how much many teenagers value not just the driving in itself, but also how they are being trusted by their parents to drive. The permission from parents to get behind the wheel of a car (supervised or in many cases in this research, unsupervised) is perceived as an unspoken sign of approval or recognition of maturity, and so can be a real boost to self-esteem and feeling good about oneself. Because they value this trust, and do not want to lose it, these teenage passive drivers will, for the most part, want to drive within what have been set as the acceptable limits by their parents (particularly when they are depending on their parents to give them access to a single shared family car). Many of the young twenty something drivers still living at home are also motivated to drive within these limits, as for them, this is how they are continued to be allowed access to the family car when they don't have one of their own.

The problem therefore is not so much with young passive drivers deliberately disobeying licensing laws, it is more to do with them driving instead to what many parents/caregivers are setting as rules of how, when and where they can drive, which are often not the same as those set by law.

---

### 3.2.1 Influence of parents/caregivers on young drivers

---

A key factor contributing to current levels of unlicensed and 'breach' driving among the people we interviewed is the role that the most well-intentioned parents/caregivers can play in influencing young drivers. They are the gatekeepers to the family car(s) and hence have the greatest say over how, when and where it gets used by the young drivers in their family. Clearly not all parents/caregivers are the same in how they influence the young drivers in their respective families, and they were found to vary from each other – not only in terms of the extent to which some personally 'condoned' unlicensed or 'breach' driving, but also importantly in terms of the abilities of some to support and motivate young drivers through the GDLS.

*"Like if I have sports practices or church stuff I ask them if I can take the car. I need to ask them. Yeah I can't drive without asking them."* [female, 16-17 years]

Overall, the influence of parents/caregivers on young drivers, through a combination of the following often well-intentioned attitudes and actions, is having a powerful effect in reinforcing the social acceptability of unlicensed and 'breach' driving.

---

### 3.2.2 Wanting to please their children

---

As much as young drivers want to please their parents, this research also found how parents also want to make their children happy. Thus, if a teenage son or daughter expresses an interest in wanting to learn to drive, or suggests that they believe that they are ready to drive by themselves, the natural response for many is to try and make it happen, as parents know how much it means to them. So long as they believe that the driving is being done 'safely', whether it does or doesn't follow the specific licence rules is not considered.

*"Mum's got her own car, that's okay, I'm not worried about her car. And Dad comes along, buys himself a car, and then the kids take the car. You know, you can't stop them and I don't mind them driving, you know, as long as they be careful what they do. No speeding, no drinking driving, and they do all that for me. You know so Dad goes to buy another car, and then the other kids start taking that one. So Dad got two cars but he doesn't drive, he catches the bus."*  
[Parent, male]

---

### 3.2.3 Setting what they believe are the appropriate 'driving rules'

---

As a young person's parent and driving 'coach', parents/caregivers believe that they know what level of driving they are capable of and 'should' be allowed to drive to, rather than following what licence laws state that they should be doing. For example, parents discussed looking for signs of 'preparedness' such as young drivers being able to confidently anticipate situations and respond, remaining focused and not getting distracted on the road.

*"I think for me in our situation it's okay for her to go off little errands, up the road. Because for me personally I feel confident in her confidence on the road"*  
[parent, female].

Thus for these parents,, even though they will be aware that a learner licence holder is 'meant' to always have a supervisor with them, this a condition that parents will often allow experienced young drivers to breach as they believe that they are ready to drive

in certain conditions, by themselves. This is especially the case for parents/caregivers who do not fully buy-into the GDLS and see the extra licence 'stages' and conditions that have been introduced as there to curb the behaviour of *other* risky young drivers, not their children.

While for the most part parents appear to know what the conditions are of specific licences, they will choose to ignore or bend them to suit the specific situation of their family. Situations where parents/caregivers are least likely to be aware of these conditions are when parents themselves do not hold a New Zealand licence and so are often reliant on what young drivers tell them about what the conditions are (which naturally can be 'tweaked' to suit the interests of the young driver!).

*"It's easy to persuade your parents into giving you the car, you know. They can't read English. They can't understand English. So it's your word against theirs"*  
[female, 18-24 years]

---

#### 3.2.4 Preparing young drivers for the learner theory test by driving

---

Most parents that we interviewed believe that the best way for young drivers to prepare for the learner theory test is by understanding the rules of the road, not just knowing them. In this regard, many believe that the only way that they can really engage young drivers to think about driving rules to this level is through personal driving experience, supervised or unsupervised. Examples of how and where young drivers were being taught before obtaining their learner licence included reversing up and down driveways, moving cars for family, practicing in car parks and local quiet streets and in some cases, longer distance open road driving.

*"My son, when he was around 13 he would have been just driving back and forwards in the driveway coz my in-laws have a huge home and big driveway, two lots of driveways, so he was able to reverse and learn how to turn left, so I was grateful there."* [parent, female]

The parents interviewed who did not 'condone' non-compliant driving behaviour use alternative approaches like 'companion' driving where they talk through what they are doing as they drive (rather than the young person driving) and involve young drivers by discussing what they have done or why.

---

#### 3.2.5 Preparing young drivers for the restricted practical test by encouraging them to drive by themselves

---

Once young drivers have passed the learner test, the majority of parents interviewed were more than happy for them to be doing at least some limited driving by

themselves. Not only did they see this as safe (and often convenient for them as the parent), but they also believed that such kind of driving was being helpful in preparing the young driver for their restricted test.

---

### 3.2.6 Explicitly giving permission to young drivers to drive unlicensed or in breach

---

Parents are giving explicit permission to young drivers in two main ways: Firstly, by explicitly 'coaching' young drivers how not to get caught driving in breach by police.

*"Because I have done it, told my oldest daughter to do that. When she pulled up right next, at the lights, right next to a police officer, and I was sitting at the back there. I said 'give the officer a wave and see what happens'. She goes 'no, I can't do that'. 'Do it'. So she gave him a smile and a wave and they waved back, so she carried on."* [parent, male]

Secondly, by asking or allowing them to drive in a way that is clearly not in accordance with their licence (e.g. asking a learner driver to drive to the dairy on an errand by themselves). Importantly, in many cases, parents/caregivers see no other option than to ask or allow their children to do this kind of driving. This dependence on young people to 'help out' by driving is especially felt by households with parents doing shift work, large families, solo parents and/or families with older or infirmed parents.

*"It's just because I'm the eldest at home. So with the siblings I have at home the next one down is fourteen and my Mum's recently got surgery done on her legs, so she doesn't necessarily move around too much and my Dad's always busy. So it's kind of just, they just tell me to go get something and I just jump in the car."* [male, 18-24 years]

*"Sometimes my son-in-laws, they start work in the early hours of the morning. So you know, one can start at three o'clock so he's off with the car because he needs to get to work and he'll come back during the day. I don't really mind that, nobody's going to get up to take him to work. So we're just nah, take the car yourself and he's happy with that."* [parent, male]

*"My mum is always cooking. And my dad's because he's a bit sick and he's getting old so he can't really, he can't drive anymore. Well, sometimes he will drive, but he wouldn't want to stand up and drive to the shop. Or like she will come home and she will be tired and she will just be like max shifts. And she will just be tired. She's pretty full on all day."* [female, 16-17 years]

---

### 3.2.7 Implicitly giving permission

---

Some parents implicitly gave permission to young drivers to drive unlicensed or in breach by not asking them about their intended driving. This included not asking if a restricted driver will be picking up friends, not asking if they will have a licensed driver with them or offering to go with them.

---

### 3.2.8 Rewarding young drivers with car access

---

Because parents know how much driving means to the young people in their family, the promise of their own car can often be used to reward good behaviour (e.g. such as not dropping out of school). The downsides of such a reward system are that:

- The 'reward' doesn't always match the driving competency of the recipient (such as in one case being promised a car for their own use on achieving their learners licence).

*"I told them, you want my car, get your [learners'] licence and then I might just let you go down the shop with it. So they did."* [parent, male]

*"My parents said if I get my learners I would be able to drive to school. That would be one thing I'm happy about, because they drop me off to school now and I have to find my own way home and my house is pretty far so yeah. So that would be good."* [female, 16-17 years]

- Having access to their own car means that driving becomes less of a 'privilege' compared to when they are allowed use of a shared family car.

---

### 3.2.9 Mixed messages

---

While parents/caregivers may be 'talking the talk' in terms of telling young drivers that they 'shouldn't' be driving in breach, few if any were following up with direct consequences if their children did drive this way. This research showed that many of parents/caregivers interviewed prefer to use the threat of the young driver getting caught by police (such as "it will be your responsibility if you get caught – you'll have to pay the fine") rather than taking responsibility themselves for delivering consequences (such as by prohibiting car use).

Because getting caught by the police is not a 'certainty' (compared with knowing that car access will be denied for a week), the outcome of such an approach is that the threatened consequences are of no real concern to the young driver and therefore not an effective deterrent. While they will justify using such an approach as part of teaching their children how to be independent (i.e. "you can only push your kids so far



– they need to make the decisions themselves at some point about what is right or wrong”), this type of parental behaviour also suggests that such parents do not like being the ‘bad guy’ and also that they don’t necessarily want to prohibit this kind of driving by their children, as they appreciate how having an extra driver in the family can make day to day life easier. Importantly, this is also understood by the young drivers in the family who can see that while their parents are talking the talk, their hearts aren’t really in it.

*“They just let us drive and tell us to be careful but they’re not really worried about the rules.” [male, 16-17 years]*

*“They don’t follow it through, they just try and persuade you [not to drive in breach], you know, your parents [female, 18-24 years]*

*“They’ll still tell you that you’ll be in trouble, and you’re like ‘well there’s nothing I can do about it, I have to do it’. So it’s not like you’ll ignore them, you’re like ‘I just have to do it, I have to go’. They’ll say ‘oh why don’t you take the bus, you know, take the bus and go?.’ But it’s like I don’t want to spend hours and hours on the bus. I don’t want to waste my time. If you miss a bus you have to wait thirty minutes at least for another bus. And then if you’re going to some place that you have to walk to your destination, it’s not like it’s just going to drop you at the door. You have to walk and that’s a hassle. And cabs are very expensive, you can’t afford cabs. So in the end the only way is to drive, and drive by yourself.” [male, 18-24 years]*

Other examples were parents who were long-term learner drivers, who had not become fully licensed drivers themselves, or parents on learner or restricted licences driving in breach.

*“Why use two people to do one job when you can you know do it with one? Coz I mean for me, I should have my partner with me at all times (learner driver), but then we need someone to look after the kids and that. I can’t do both. What would be the point of both of us going, loading up the car with the kids, just to go and do a one person job when he can stay home while I go out?” [parent, female].*

For some parents, sharing driving ‘stories’ from their past was used to try and teach their children what ‘not’ to do, and to learn from their experiences. While this approach can clearly benefit some young drivers, it may also have the opposite effect, by ‘normalising’ risky driving behaviour not just generally, but specifically in the context of a young driver’s family.

Overall it's clear that as the older children get, the harder it is for parents/caregivers to control their driving behaviour (as they become less dependent on parents' permission or approval).

*"I'm very independent, like I always try and teach them independency. And I say 'look no one else is going to help you in this life except for yourself, so you need to get up there, go do your own thing, sit your licence', you know. But it's frustrating, it is. I said 'look, you're over twenty now, you should be thinking for yourself. You know the rules, you know the law', so it's very frustrating. You know what young kids are like, they say 'don't tell me what to do, I know this, I know that', you know. So you step back and go 'okay then, you know this, you know that, you take charge'. But then they still haven't got a licence and they're driving!" [parent, female]*

We stress again that none of the above should be seen as imposing value judgements on the parenting ability or parental commitment of the people interviewed; nor were all these factors exhibited by all parents interviewed. The purpose is to highlight some aspects of parental norms that the research indicates contributes to unlicensed or breach driving.

### 3.3 INFLUENCE OF PEERS

The influence of peers is also a significant factor driving unlicensed and breach driving behaviour:

- Being a 'driver' is perceived as a something that other young people admire, hence the urgency to be seen behind a wheel, with or without a licence.
- Being able to offer lifts to others is seen as a valued currency in gaining respect and kudos among peers, hence young drivers can be tempted to 'be the driver' before they are licensed to do so.

Once seen as 'the driver' in a group, a young driver can start to lose control of how they manage their driving as the group rather than the individual starts to set the boundaries of how and when driving is done.

The greater the sense of being ' beholden' to the group (felt especially in the context of 'brotherhood' group dynamics), the harder it is to regain control of driving situations. A common example of how this dynamic leads to breach behaviour is when young drivers who bring others to parties are expected to do the 'full round trip' – regardless of time of night and/or whether they have been drinking themselves. Interestingly this

type of pressure seemed to be felt more by male young drivers interviewed rather than female young drivers.

*"Well, I think it might have been in my last year of high school, I didn't drink or do anything but then my friends, I became friends with people who did drink and they were like, 'oh man, you can drive, you should take us, we can't drive'; I was like, 'oh no, not really'. And then you know, they were just like, they'd just keep egging me on and eventually I started doing that. ...And then, I don't know, it started like, I started talking to girls a bit more and started like having to put on the show, like, 'oh, I can drive whoever needs a ride' and it all went from there."*  
[male, 18-24]

### 3.4 DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM

As outlined earlier, driving is a valued rite of passage into young adulthood. It is perceived to indicate to others that the young driver is mature enough to be trusted with a vehicle on the roads and to be a responsible person who is helping parents with family life and importantly. And when able to drive by themselves, it also valued hugely for how it 'frees' young people from being dependent on others – they are now in control of how they get from a to b, there is no longer a sense of being burden or beholden to others or to be anxious about being let down by others, they are independent.

*"Being able to get to places, like, without depending on anything else or anybody else, so like, you know you're gonna get there and gonna be on time"*  
[female 16-17 years].

*"I think he [projective character] believes that others are busy and he is a little bit that kind of person that thinks that, you know, I don't want to trouble someone for myself and don't want someone to think 'oh, again, he's trouble, what does he want now? Or that they would ignore him, not talk to him because he'll be asking them to do this or do that, favours and that sort of thing."* [male, 18-24 years]

*"It's more fun [when driving]. When one of us [friends] is driving like we don't need to worry. You've got a ride so you don't have to text your parents and stuff."* [female, 16-17 years]

*"I think it's good because it's so easy to get around. It's like nothing is impossible. If you have your own car and you can drive, it's like 'oh, okay I'll go, okay I can go', it's not a problem even to go up north and come back on*

*the same day if you can drive. You don't have to rely on anyone, you can do your own thing. You can actually be very productive that day if you can drive. You can work, you can study, you can do your sports, drop off or pick up your younger brothers or sisters. It's a good feeling, that feeling of 'I can just do it.'* [male, 18-24]

To this end, anything that takes away from their personal sense of independence, or how independent *others* see them as drivers, is an issue. This explains why for so many of the young learner drivers interviewed, that such behaviour as not displaying their L plates and driving without a supervisor are commonplace. Young drivers can see *why* they are meant to display L plates and how to can benefit them (i.e. such as other drivers being more 'forgiving' of their driving), however the emotional disadvantages far outweigh these rational benefits and so the L plate remains out of sight.

*"I think it [L plate] just draws police to the car"* [male, 16-17 years]

*"Oh that [L plate] means you're a nappy driver!"* [female, 18-24]

*"Like they [L plates] let other know you're a learner driver. But like when you're driving you want to be cool, like others to see you know how to drive. But these say that really you don't."* [female, 16-17 years]

*"I feel comfortable driving by myself and with parents it's like kind of turn up the old people - they're like watching and stuff and getting stressed. Shouting out, 'oh there, oh watch out'. So I just prefer to drive my myself, I feel like I know how to drive, I feel more calm and stuff without them."* [ female 16-17 years].

Furthermore, because they have such a strong desire to be independent, many of these young learner drivers do not like to ask for help. Thus even if they think they may need it, and would benefit from having a licensed driver with them in the car, they can often be reluctant to ask.

*"And you cannot have someone sitting beside you all the time, you can't be taking someone along all the time, because everybody's busy. So when you want to go somewhere you can't say 'can you come with me because I can't drive and I'm just going down the road?'. And you know, you're so proud sitting in that car and people are looking at you, 'wow, he's driving.' You don't want to accept the fact that you can't drive by yourself."* [male, 18-24 years].

Interestingly it appears that this reluctance to ask for driving support is not only driven from their desire for independence, but also because they are concerned that if they ask for help, and someone is not available to drive with them, that they will then be

denied to the opportunity to drive (i.e. as their act of asking will have signalled to others that they are not ready to drive by themselves). And of course being so keen to drive, they believe that it would have been better to have not asked at all, and still have had the chance to get behind the wheel, albeit somewhat nervously.

### 3.5 PERCEIVED RISK IS NOT ENOUGH OF A 'DISINCENTIVE'

This research also reveals that any levels of risk associated with this kind of driving behaviour are considered too minimal to act as any kind of significant deterrent or 'disincentive'. The absence of credible, personally relevant 'disincentives', makes it all the more acceptable (i.e. no reason not to do it), and is reinforcing social acceptance of unlicensed and 'breach' driving.

---

#### 3.5.1 What about the risk of getting 'caught'?

---

Overall, the greatest risk that young drivers and their families were concerned about in relation to driving unlicensed or in breach of their licence conditions, was getting 'caught' or 'snapped' by police (compared with any safety concerns).

*"So we just live at Mangere College down there, and a lot of the times they have check points. But because you know where they have them and I'm always like getting the kids to check if there is a check point, then I will go right around the roundabout and go a different way. Every morning it's a worry for me if I'm going to get stopped, if I'm going to get stopped. My luck is going to run out soon."* [parent, female]

As the risk of getting caught is ever present, so too are the feelings of anxiety related to it. Thus in order to try and minimise the risk (and consequently suppress their relative levels of anxiety), drivers all have a 'system' that they adopt to remain 'undetected'. The following tips and tricks were shared by young drivers and parents/ caregivers about can be done to avoid getting caught while driving unlicensed or in breach of their learner or restricted licences:

- **Avoid breaking other road rules so as not to draw attention to yourself.** The goal while driving unlicensed or in breach is to drive 'below the radar' of police. No speeding, breaking lights or not obeying give way signs, no erratic driving (i.e. no drinking and driving).
- **Don't display L plates** as otherwise you'll be driving a 'marked' car and will be a 'magnet' for police.

- **Drive at times when police are least likely to be doing road checks** (e.g. in the rain or week nights), or on routes where police are least likely to be (even if this means driving from A to K to W to get to B!).
- **Low attention** cars, such as choosing to drive Mum's people carrier rather than Dad's Holden.
- **Don't stress** – look cool and 'normal' (even if your heart is at twice its normal rate).
- **Have someone on the look-out** for road checks or parked police cars (either in the car or have your phone with you so a friend can send you an alert by text).
- **Have a plan if you see a check-out ahead** (i.e. such as 'hiding' out in a driveway)

*"Or usually when we see a checkpoint we always park at a nearby house and then we get out, like, pretending it's our house and then we wait a couple of minutes and then we come out and then we go back and then we turn around and go the opposite way."* [male, 16-17 years]

- **Have a plan if you do get caught** (i.e. pretend to have left licence at home, provide a 'good' excuse about why in breach, try to pass off someone else's licence as your own).

Drivers also shared that the more successful their 'system', and the longer that they drive and don't get caught, the more that the perceived risk of getting caught diminishes.

Interestingly while it's clear from the elaborate 'avoidance systems' being used that unlicensed or in breach drivers do not want to get caught by police, this research also shows that there is no strong social 'taboo' if they do get caught. This type of driving is not inherently viewed as 'bad' or 'criminal' behaviour. No-one is perceived as getting hurt or harmed, no morals are being compromised or commandments broken.

Compared to other 'law breaking' behaviour that they see around them, or have experienced themselves personally (e.g. where parents/grandparents talk about stealing cars in their younger days to learn to drive as just 'getting up to a bit of mischief'), this type of driving behaviour is viewed as simply 'non-compliant' or 'bending the rules'.

*"We used to get into a lot of trouble, lot of mischief. We would take off and steal a lot of cars and no one knew how to drive but we always knew that the car was stolen so if it got wrecked while trying to drive it, it's not our problem."* [parent, female]

The young drivers and their families who were interviewed do not believe that they are deliberately out to break the law, it's just that the 'conditions of compliance' don't match to their driving needs at that point in time.

*"I'm doing it for my family so I wouldn't think I'm breaking laws and stuff."*  
[female 16-17 years]

Furthermore, the fact that the consequence of this 'non-compliant' driving behaviour is for the most part a fine rather than a charge being laid, serves to further reinforce the view that it's not 'bad' behaviour per se, and consequently all the more easily 'justified' and made socially acceptable.

*"Like I said for myself financially I don't have that ninety dollars right now [to sit the learners test], you know. And then I don't have the time to go off and study. I fall into that category of okay if 'I get the fine I'll do the time'. I don't choose to deliberately go against the law. It's like I have no other option. And everything that you look at, that's what I mean, it's a whole range of factors that contribute to why I'm driving without a licence, why my daughter's driving without a licence, why people continue to get fines here (in Mangere)."*  
[parent, female].

In general, the possibility of having their car impounded was not as much of a top of mind concern for young drivers interviewed as expected, mainly because they didn't believe that they personally would get in that situation (i.e. that they wouldn't get caught twice and/or would be able to give an excuse to be 'let off').

In terms of parents/caregivers, they are for the most part no more worried about their children getting 'caught' than the young drivers themselves. In fact, many share tips and tricks with their children about how not to get caught. The only significant difference found between parent and young drivers perspectives in this regard, is how some parents will have a longer term perspective, 'an eye on the long game', and have some level of concern that if their son or daughter is continually being 'caught' by police that court appearances will eventuate, and possibly become an accepted norm, leading to other law-breaking behaviour also being accepted as a norm over time.

*"I only just got my full licence three years ago. I'm almost forty, you know. I've been holding on to a restricted for years, and you know, I try to stick within the legalities of what the law says you need to have. So that's the hardest thing for me, is her [daughter] not getting that licence. It's the worry about her getting caught, you know. She's never been caught, not at this stage. But if she did I think I'd really feel the guilt, for me it's guilt that it'll be her first offence ever and she's been such a good girl otherwise. I don't want her to kind of go the wrong way."* [parent, female]

---

### 3.5.2 What about perceived safety risks?

---

Overall, driving without a license or in breach of one's licence conditions is not considered an unsafe practice per se, and therefore further reinforces the 'acceptability' of this kind of driving.

Many young drivers interviewed were very aware of their own boundaries of safe driving and discussed how they tried to manage their driving in such way that they did not go out of their respective comfort zones where possible (e.g. only driving on the motorway at times of low traffic, not carrying especially vulnerable passengers like infants, and only testing speed limits when by themselves on quiet roads).

*"I only ever did it (speed) by myself. I didn't want, like, you know, if anything was to happen, people would be like, 'oh, you had others in the car.'"*

[male, 18-24 years]

*"I mean I would prefer to not have him [toddler son] in the car with me in case anything goes wrong...I think once I'm fully licensed and you know I've had that tick from someone else to say that I am a good driver, I'm a safe driver, then I will put him in the car with me and drive. But not at the moment." [female, 18-24 years]*

.In fact many the young drivers *and* parents/caregivers interviewed perceive that young drivers who drive unlicensed and in 'breach' at some level are going to be adopting even safer driving approaches than fully licensed young drivers due to:

- What they believe is their 'conservative' driving approach, adopted to remain under the radar and undetected by police.
- The fact that fully licensed young drivers have less to lose by breaking speed limits and other road rules and are consequently more likely to push the boundaries of 'safe' driving.

*"I think even on full licences people have done major crashes and they still do, like, not follow rules. They think oh, they've got a full licence they can do whatever they want. When you're on a restricted you are actually driving more carefully. If you get in trouble you'll be in really big trouble. If you're over the speed limit and someone stops you they ask for your licence, and if you're on a restricted then you're in trouble. You're more careful when you're on a restricted than on a full licence. Some of my friends, they're on a full licence, they'll just speed and they're like 'there's nobody around so go over the speed'. But me, I'll be like 'I'm on a restricted, if someone stops me I would be in really big trouble'." [male, 18-24 years]*



Thus, this research shows that the term 'passive'<sup>3</sup> is, as was hypothesised in segmenting young drivers overall, a quite suitable way to describe this group of young drivers.

Parents/caregivers also believe that they are also doing their part to minimise the risk of their young drivers on the road using a variety of techniques such as:

- Only permitting them to drive in situations that they believe are best suited to their capabilities
- Setting a time limit as to how long a trip to the dairy should take (e.g. no side journeys to pick up mates permitted).
- Telling young drivers that the fuel gauge will be checked on their return from 'errands' (i.e. again to ensure no side trips take place).
- Hiding or removing car keys from the home.
- Not paying for petrol (i.e. being up to the young people themselves to 'fund' their driving)
- Not permitting driving during 'risky' times e.g. rush hour, and weekend nights.

Thus while parents/caregivers may be inadvertently supporting breach driving behaviour, many are also trying to take steps to ensure that their young drivers are safe while driving this way..

*"Because my parents are quite busy with their own jobs and all that, they'll be sleeping in the evening. They'll sleep early, wake up early or sometimes they won't be home. So I'll just take the car. But earlier, when I was on my learners, my Mum would hide the keys or she would take the keys along with her to work and say 'you're not driving, and your cousin is not here and won't be here, so you're not driving'" [male, 18-24 years]*

*"They will always say if I go in the car please watch out, they will warn me of stuff and they will say if a car is indicating just make sure they go because sometimes cars they don't go when they indicate, and you know slow down always, slow down and think about the give way rules and all those things and that." [female, 16-17 years]*

Interestingly, young people, regardless of whether they have are fully licensed or not, are considered to share the same two main weaknesses on the road - getting distracted and being tempted to show off in front of peers. Given that this is an attitudinal issue, rather than a technical or knowledge deficit, it is not something that is perceived to be specifically associated with only unlicensed drivers and to be easily 'solved' by simply becoming fully licensed.

---

<sup>3</sup> As defined by ACC's Draft Segmentation Model for Young Drivers, December 2012

The recent death of four young drivers in the community, some of whom were known to interviewees, has clearly had an impact on young drivers as well as parent/caregivers. However, while this is prompting many to think about 'safety' – it is specifically in relation to 'actively risky' driving behaviour such as speeding and drink driving, rather than 'passive' unlicensed driving or driving in breach.

Older unlicensed drivers are especially likely to believe that they are just as safe as fully licensed drivers given their many years of driving experience and so feel it 'unfair' that they be automatically branded as a risky driver. For example, one of the parents/caregivers interviewed who has been driving unlicensed for over 15 years discussed how she takes exception to media coverage that seeks to blame unlicensed driving for accidents as she believes such accidents 'could have happened to anyone', that fully licensed drivers could also have made errors of judgement, such as speeding.

The main concern for the parents/caregivers interviewed in this research was about the safety of their young drivers being threatened by other *riskier* drivers (i.e. drunk and speeding drivers). The concern was that the young novice drivers would not have the skills to respond to such situations (i.e. that simply driving to the rules and being 'conservative' drivers, would not be enough to protect them).

Interestingly even though they expressed concern about young people driving at times when such risks were higher (i.e. at night, weekends), young drivers were not necessarily being prohibited from driving during these times (for example, needing to get back home from late night work shifts, and twenty something drivers having their own car and so are harder to 'control' than younger teenage drivers depending on access to the family vehicle).

### 3.6 I'M DOING IT FOR OTHERS

Another factor that is reinforcing the acceptability of unlicensed driving or driving in breach is the justification that this behaviour is permitted because it is being done to help others.

*"Yeah they [parents] depend on like us, especially if we're running out of food, just popping to the dairy, the closest dairy. Or well like pick up like your sisters, or your brother who is working. Yeah stuff like that."* [female, 16-17 years]

People in general like to please others, and prefer not to say 'no' (in particular in Pacific communities) so when this is coupled with the fact that young people are seeking opportunities to drive anyway, then it becomes even easier for them to say 'yes' to driving in situations that they know are not in compliance with their licence (if they have any).

*"I'm the person that can't say no as well, like if someone just asks me, I'm like, yeah, all good. I don't like letting them down and just, like, when you see them and you say no, they make that face like, oh, that's alright but you know inside that they're sad."* [male, 18-24 years]

This is especially evident in terms of the call on them to be 'the sober driver'. While on one hand it is great for the community that there is such a call for sober drivers rather than people drinking and driving, on the downside, this is putting pressure on young drivers who are not necessarily qualified (legally or skills wise) to fulfil the role. No young person wants to be responsible for family or friends driving while drunk and so will always comply. .

*"One time they [daughters] were over at my house and they had to go and pick something up from Aunty's house and it was at night and you know, I was really worried when she went. But yeah, I was drinking so I couldn't drive and they had to go and get a mattress from the Aunty's house because the girls were sleeping over, the teenagers. You know, I just had a couple of wines after work so I was like 'oh can you can go, I can't drive.' But when she did go, I was like 'oh my God, I should've gone.'" [parent, female]*

We also discovered through this research that when driving is being done to be of service to others, this can help limit a young driver's anxiety about being 'caught' by police, as they believe that they may either be 'let off', or at least not have to personally pay the fine (hoping instead that those that asked them would help out).

*"It would be really half their fault [parents] and half my fault coz I would be the one that's driving and they would be the one that told me to drive."*  
[female, 16-17 years]

*"The reason I agreed to drive them was because they were like, 'oh you know, people do this all the time' and 'just tell them you're the sober driver and we were too drunk to drive'. And so we did get stopped and I did say that to the police and they [police] said, 'oh, not good enough'" and I got fined.*  
[male, 18-24]

### 3.7 EMPATHY FOR FAMILIES IN 'SURVIVAL' MODE

Another factor reinforcing the current levels of acceptability of non-licensed and 'in-breach' driving in this community is the expectation that families who are considered to be in 'survival mode' should have the right to some level of leeway with regard to meeting licence requirements.

Interviews with both younger drivers and parent/caregivers showed that there is a high degree of empathy in this community for those that are seen to be struggling to meet the day to day needs of their families. There are strong feelings of solidarity and protectiveness with regard to these families and many consider it 'unfair' that they should be expected to find the focus and/or financial means to support everyone driving in their family 'to do it by the book'.

### 3.8 WIDER COMMUNITY APPROVAL FOR UNLICENSED AND 'BREACH' DRIVING

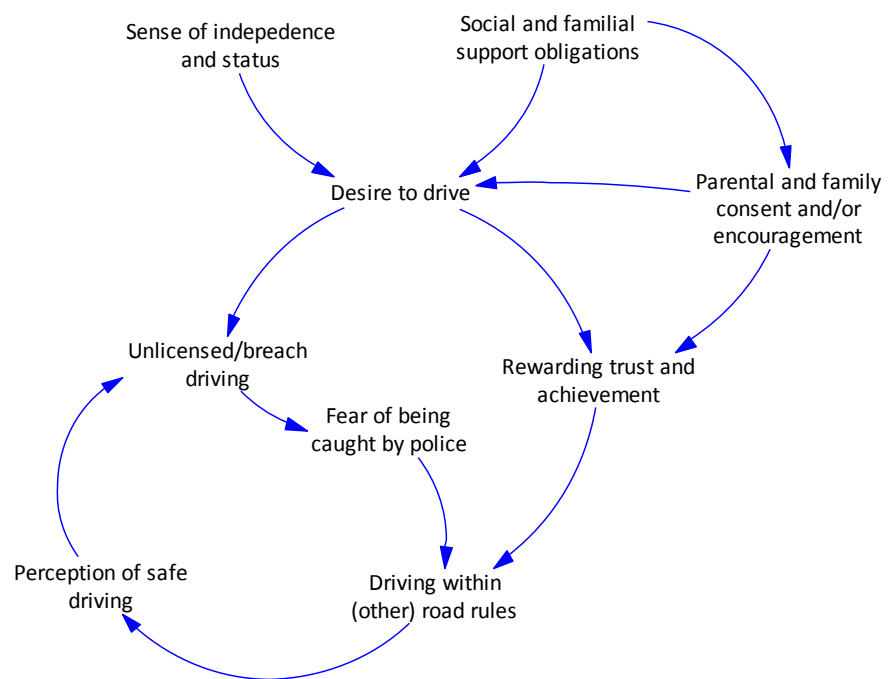
The extent of how embedded unlicensed driving and 'breach' driving is as a social norm in this community is also evident by not only the attitudes and behaviours of young drivers and their families, but also of the wider community. Examples of wider community acceptance include:

- Car dealerships selling cars to drivers who do not have a full (if any licence).
- Churches and other social and cultural organisations turning a blind eye, or not asking, as to how younger members travel to and from their activities.
- Employers not checking whether employees are qualified to drive in ways that they are asking them to for their work, or explicitly allowing them to for the sake of convenience or because they believe it is in the best interests of their employee (i.e. to enable to keep their job, as 'training' for the next level up of their licence).

The diagram below provides a simple depiction of the multiple social, familial, cultural and economic forces at play, that together are supporting and reinforcing unlicensed or breach driving among young people. These encompass:

- The sense of independence and status that come with being able to drive; allied with in many cases, the familial and social sense of obligation that reinforce the desire to drive;

- The willingness of parents to tacitly or explicitly support this, as a way of rewarding trust and achievement by their children
- The fear of being caught by young people, and a corresponding desire to return the trust shown in them by their parents, by driving in a way that is perceived as safe and within the (non-licensing) road rules
- The way in which these combine to mutually support a culture of unlicensed or breach driving.



## 4. CHALLENGES WITH THE CURRENT GDLS PROPOSITION

As outlined earlier, the prevalence of unlicensed driving and 'breach' driving in this community is due to both the social norms that make it so acceptable, as well as drivers' difficulties in progressing through the Graduated Driving Learning Scheme (GDLS). As can be seen from the following findings, young drivers' lack of progression through the GDLS can be attributed to not only to shortcomings in their respective levels of knowledge, skills and personal motivation, but also because of flaws in the current GDLS 'product'.

### 4.1 THE CHALLENGE OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING AND APPLICATION

Becoming a fully licensed driver requires focus and self-motivation. What was clear from this research was how this is a skill and/or characteristic that many young drivers have not developed fully yet and as a result are not progressing through the GDLS.

Thus the irony is that while driving is valued by many young people as a sign of their increasing independence and passage into adulthood, they don't necessarily have the maturity and focus required to progress through the GDLS.

For many young drivers, it seemed that they had best chance of success of progressing when being 'corralled' or 'shepherded' through the process (such as through school courses, or parents booking them into lessons, tests) rather than making the journey independently themselves.

*"My Dad is going to enrol me in a defensive driving course before I do my restricted."* [female, 16-17 years]

*"You know I don't want to sit there and say to her (daughter) you should go and do your licence. And be all strict and that. I want her to do what she wants. I don't want her to do what I want – I want it come from her own self."* [parent, female]

The solo journey of progressing through the scheme is one that people can be easily distracted off course from, especially when there is such a low perceived need for reaching the final destination. Thus while a young driver may have in principle agreed to do what they need to in order to get licensed, there are so many other things to agree to as well (e.g. family commitments, fun with friends, work), that they lose focus and stray off course. To have the singularity of focus to turn up for tests and

prepare as required, means sometimes having to say 'no' to other invitations or requests for one's time – something that many young people find hard to do.

Interestingly this challenge to remain focused was discovered not only through our experience of interviewing young drivers and parents, but also through our experience in encouraging young driver participation in interviews. While they agreed to take part, and were confirmed right up to the evening before the interview, many did not end up showing up on the day itself (even when they knew that were going to receive an incentive for their time). This was more of an issue with 18-24 year old young drivers (both male and female) rather than the younger 16-17 year old drivers. A revised approach of confirming interviews also on the day itself as well as increasing the incentive offered, helped us finally reach our target sample with these young drivers. This research shows how a similar 'shepherding' approach can also be adopted to support greater progression through the GDLS (as outlined in Section 5).

#### 4.2 THE PRICE OF PARTICIPATING IN THE GDLS IS NOT CHEAP

A clear finding from this research is that while the cost of doing any single stage of the GDLS for will for the most part not prevent young drivers from participating in the scheme per se, it can however have a delaying effect. Because the price of participating in any of the GDLS tests is not 'cheap':

- Young drivers (and their parents/caregivers if funding the test) do not want to waste their money by failing. This 'price of entry' makes them reflect on whether they are really ready or whether they would be better putting off doing their relevant test until they have a better chance of success.
- Young drivers need to be focused and organised to have the full amount ready for when they also have the time (and motivation) to sit the test. This is especially relevant for the twenty-something drivers who are expected to fund, book and show up for the test independently of their parents/caregivers.

*"So he [projective character] has to try and see if he can pay because he might have no lunch or petrol for the week because he had to get the licence. Yeah, I reckon that's one of the things stopping him. And basic laziness."*  
[male 18-24]

- The cost of participating in the GDLS has to compete with other financial demands. Thus while there may be enough cash in the personal or family 'kitty' to pay for a test in a given week, if other unforeseen financial demands

are given a higher priority (e.g. a night out with mates, a doctor's visit, a new tyre), then the test will have to wait for another time

Schools and other courses where the cost of preparation and test itself were heavily subsidised were greatly appreciated in this regard.

### 4.3 OBTAINING A LEARNER LICENCE

As highlighted earlier, a key finding from this research is that unlicensed drivers are not a 'disinterested' population per se. Overall, there is among passive drivers at least some level of underlying interest in becoming fully licensed. Overall, the greatest interest in 'getting the learners' seems to be from the younger aged drivers – 16 and 17 year olds, who rely more than the 'twenty-somethings' on driving as a symbol of their coming of age into young adulthood and who place a greater value the independence that driving can offer them. At this younger age, drivers are also more reliant on their parents/caregivers for car and driving access, and to this end have a greater incentive to do what is asked of them in order to drive.

Based on our interviews with young drivers, as well as feedback from parents/caregivers of young drivers, the following were identified as the key 'stumbling blocks' that can prevent them from obtaining it:

- They can lose **confidence and motivation** by not immediately sitting the test on completing preparation courses.
- They can be **intimidated** by the registration process: Being asked in such a public place as a test centre about personal private details, in particular whether you are a permanent resident or not in NZ, can in fact be intimidating to the point that people disengage and don't continue the registration and testing process.
- They can be **put off by the wait time** to do their learner test if they turn up on an ad-hoc basis to do it. For example drivers talked about wanting to act on impulse to do their test when events finally lined up in their favour (i.e. having the time and money available to do the test), but then being put off by the perceived or actual wait time
- They can find it hard to **concentrate and focus** in busy test centres
- They can **underestimate how difficult** the theory test can be and fail: Because so many young people are already driving before they sit their learner test there can be a tendency to think that they know more than they do. Test



questions which do not specifically apply to day to day driving situations were seen as the 'trickier' ones to get right.

*"The first time, when I first did the learners back many years ago, the questions were about things that would happen to me on the road. When I re-sat it again there were questions about things that would never ever happen to anybody - I just kept thinking 'who would do that?' I kept thinking they're making these questions up - questions that you know had nothing to do really with normal driving."*

[parent, female]

However, young drivers that use online simulated multi-choice testing sites such as [www.nzdriving.com](http://www.nzdriving.com), found them as a very helpful tool in knowing whether they were ready or not to sit the test. Interestingly such tools are also being used by some as a means of learning the road code.

*"My brother did it that way. He never read those books, he never went to driving course, he just learnt on that website."*

[female, 18-24 years]

*"It's like doing the test. You get, I think thirty five questions. And you do it again and again and if you start getting 100% or 95% then you feel like, you know, yeah, you're ready."* [male, 18-24 years]

When a young driver does 'stumble' and not pass their learner theory first time, this research shows that there are some real opportunities for improving how they could be better supported to pass it on a subsequent attempt and successfully transition from being an unlicensed driver to a licensed learner driver.

*"My daughter has failed [her learners], four times. She's got to try it again before July because she's got to go back to court again. The car was confiscated. And that's actually her main reason why she's going for the licence. The court, the judge, keeps sending her back again. Every time we go to court, the judge tells her, okay, come back in a couple of months time when you've tried; when you've sat the licence again. He just keeps telling her she has to go and sit the licence. And we're trying to say, well, she doesn't want to do it anymore, you know? She keeps failing all the time. She's actually getting to the point where she just can't be bothered anymore."* [parent, female]

Currently the only support that a failed test participant gets is an explanation from test centre staff about what they got wrong and what the right answers should have been. There is no further follow up contact or attempts to re-engage this 'want to be learner' driver. While initially many will be encouraged by others or self-motivated to reattempt the test, problems start to arise when they are still not passing after multiple

attempts. Confidence and self-esteem has been at least undermined, often significantly so, and parents and the young driver are left to figure out for themselves what else they could have done better to prepare for the test.

#### 4.4 OBTAINING RESTRICTED AND FULL LICENCES

In terms of progressing to having a restricted licence, and ultimately a full drivers licence, the following range of factors were identified as the key stumbling blocks that can prevent young drivers from obtaining them.

---

##### 4.4.1 Motivation to apply for their restricted test diminishes over time

---

For many drivers interviewed, once they obtain their learner's licence, the motivation to sit their restricted test can rapidly diminish. There are a number of factors contributing to this which include:

- Perception of the learner licence as 'the' licence, not 'a' licence.
- Being permitted to drive by themselves on their learners and therefore not having the same sense of urgency to get their restricted as someone who can only permitted to drive with a supervisor.

Importantly, the longer learner drivers are driving by themselves, the less anxious they become about getting 'caught' in breach, and so by the time the required six month 'wait' period has passed to sit their restricted test (as this is how it is seen rather than being a 'training' period), they have less motivation to do so.

*"It makes you feel unstoppable [on getting learner's] and then it makes you want to go and sit your restricted straight away but you have to wait. Yeah you lose interest. I think you lose interest straight away I think after a month and then you're like 'oh it's too long'. Yeah it's like I want to keep going but I can't, I have to wait."* [female, 18-24 years]

---

##### 4.4.2 Motivation to progress on to applying for their full licence similarly diminishes

---

While the additional benefits that the full licence offers the holder in terms of being able to legally carry passengers, drive anytime and any place (i.e. overseas included) are appreciated, the complacency factor can hold drivers back (i.e. as they are content to 'make do' on their restricted licence rather than deal with perceived 'hassle' and cost of final full licence test).

---

#### 4.4.3 The scheduling process becomes too difficult

---

One of the issues with the current GDLS 'product' is that some test centres are asking restricted and full licence applicants to schedule tests at least a month in advance. While this isn't a problem for some (who like the idea of one more month to prepare), for other young people with multiple areas of commitment (i.e. part time work, study, sports, social and church life), this can be a really big ask as often their schedules are relatively 'fluid' (as well as the available cashflow to fund the test). While it is understood that such a length of time may be required because of user demand (i.e. that there is a virtual 'queue' of people ahead of them), they find it frustrating that they return to the back of the queue if they need to reschedule, and thus end up having to think a month out in advance again.

*"I booked an appointment in Manukau and that was for in one's month's time. And that month I had my assignments and I went okay, that should be okay, a weekend, Sunday, should be okay. But then I had so much work on the Sunday that I had to reschedule it. Then I got a date which was a month away again. And that one I couldn't get a test for the weekend, it was during the week. And then I had, I think, that week we had exams or something and so I just cancelled that. And after that month I was going to Aussie, so I was like oh, I just cancelled it for now and will book it later."* [male, 18-24 years]

---

#### 4.4.4 They are put off by their driving test 'assessor'

---

One of the most common reasons given as to why for young drivers fail their restricted (and/or full licence) practical test is due to what they perceive as the 'unfriendly' manner of many test assessors. By a simple lack of warmth and friendly engagement on meeting test applicants, assessors can give them the impression that they are going to fail before the test has even started, not to mind how nervous they can make applicants feel during the test.

*"She came back, her face as screwed up and she said oh, I failed. When she told me what she failed on I said yeah, well that can be understandable, you turned the corner too fast, but how did you feel. She goes oh, it was a bit nerve racking, the guy was sort of unfriendly (laugh), you know, because he wouldn't talk to me."* [parent, male]

*"They should treat you the way you'd like to be treated. Like, you wouldn't say, 'turn right', 'turn left', to a friend."* [male, 16-17 years]

*"He [brother] said when he met his examiner he went to shake his hand and blah blah blah and the guy just said 'so, where's your car?'. 'Where's your car? Show me your car', so that he can check the car. And then it was just 'sit*

*in the car', and my brother was like 'oh gosh I'm going to fail'. And sure enough, he failed."* [female, 18-24 years]

Test assessors who are friendly and who talk or coach applicants through the test are really valued for not only putting applicants at ease (and giving them greater chance of success), but also in making the test a learning experience in itself.

*The first time wasn't a really good experience because the guy who took the test was really rude and I didn't feel very comfortable sitting there because it wasn't a really good start. Because I asked him, 'hey how are you doing?', and there was no response. And I knew I was not going to clear it. You know how you have that feeling, looking at the test and thinking I'm sure he's going to fail me. The second time was not that bad, the second time was better. There was a really nice lady. She was really good. She was very friendly and she was actually talking to me. She told me very clearly take left, right, straight and then asked me to stop. She told me I did one mistake, she said you didn't indicate there and you should have done that or you would have been in trouble. Okay, let's move on and we started again and then finished. She said 'I'll give you 90%, you did well but there are just these few things you need to work on'."* [male, 18-24 years]

The other reported difficulty with practical tests was for older applicants for whom English was not their first language. While they were not necessarily expecting that they would be able to do the test in their own language (though that would have been the ideal), they struggled if the assessor also wasn't a native English speaker from another country than their own (i.e. two way communication in terms of accents and language abilities were challenging).

---

#### 4.4.5 They overestimate how difficult the test will be and 'stall'

---

As highlighted earlier, the 'price of entry' to any stage of the GDLS is not cheap and so if a young driver and/or their parents/caregivers are not convinced of their ability to pass, then it is likely that they will 'stall' rather than sitting the test as originally planned. This can become a significant 'stumbling block' to progressing through the GDLS as there is a risk that the young driver will lose their momentum and interest in progressing on to the next stage.

---

#### 4.4.6 They underestimate how difficult the test will be and fail

---

As with the learner theory test, young drivers can also overestimate their driving capability because they believe they already know how to drive. Unfortunately because there is no current means of assessing their 'level of preparedness' as easily as they were able to do for the learner test (i.e. by doing the online simulated test), they are reliant on either their own judgement or on their parents/caregivers to give them the 'thumbs up' to do the test.

While parents/caregivers who are funding the test (particularly for younger drivers) have naturally a vested interest in them succeeding first time, they can still get this call wrong. For many, it is not until they sit their test that their shortcomings in driving are revealed – despite as earlier indicated, they had been driving on an underlying assumption that they were good and safe drivers.

*"I think she was in a bad mood eh, the lady. And it was raining, and it was busy traffic. And I don't know, I guess I like to blame those things but she said everything was bad. When we were driving we were turning and usually when I turn somewhere I kind of edge closer to that side, edge closer to the side I'm turning. So if I'm turning left I'll edge closer to that side of the road and then I'll turn left. But she was a bike lane, and she said I was going in the bike lane and I'm not supposed to do that... And then there was also another Learners driver in front of me getting her test as well, and she was driving real slow, and she said I was going too close. And then she said we're going through a, I think it was construction on the road, so there must have been a sign, but I must've not seen the sign and she said I was going over the limit. And then we were going through the lights, and just before I was about to go past the light, sometime between that the light went orange. And to me it seemed a bit too late to stop, so I ran it and she said, yeah, it was just fail from there." [male, 18-24 years]*

---

#### 4.4.7 Reluctance to have driving lessons

---

While many young drivers and parents/caregivers can see value in having driving lessons, there is overall a reluctance to take them up. They are considered as a 'nice to have' rather than a necessity given their cost. The main benefits that they are perceived to offer are:

- Letting a driver know if they are 'test' ready (and thereby ensuring that they are not wasting their money by sitting a test that they are going to fail).
  - However there is a level of concern here that some instructors may be tempted to look after their own best interests and encourage further lessons (and costs) for an applicant to be test ready

- Being able to bring to life what the test experience will be like
- Ensuring that young drivers are up to speed on the most recent road rules (as they may have changed from when they did their learners).

Thus even if a young person might value one or more lessons, they are likely to be relatively reticent to seek them out given concerns that the family cannot afford to pay for them, and/or because of their concern that their 'home coach' may take offence at the suggestion that someone knows more than them!

Overall, for general driving instruction, an experienced licensed driver from the extended family is perceived to be just as good as an 'instructor' and importantly, more familiar, more comfortable and more fun to drive with and of course, free of charge!.

*"I kind of don't really like spending my money on things like that. Oh to me I just think it's a waste of time, especially when you think you can just practice yourself."* [male, 18-24 years]

Importantly, driving instruction is not perceived as solely the responsibility of parents/caregivers, as many young drivers (and their parents) find the experience too fraught and instead rely on older siblings, grandparents, cousins, uncles or aunts to be their coach. Of the young drivers interviewed for this research, the majority are relying on older (than them) members of the extended family network. Other 'instructors' include fully licensed peers.

*"Because you're learning, obviously you'll do mistakes when you're learning. So Dad was like 'oh, you can't do that!'. And I'm learning you know, you need to tell me nicely. Yeah, I think my cousin did a better job. He would give me lessons about three or four times a week. He would be more frank to me, he would actually tell me his experience, when he used to drive, this is what he learnt, this is what he used to do wrong. So it was more easy with him than with my parents."* [male, 18-24 years]

---

#### 4.4.8 They find the 'artificial' nature of the driving test difficult to adapt to

---

Some young drivers found the lack of personal control in the driving test environment difficult to adjust to (i.e. the instructor calling the shots about where to drive and what to do, rather than them personally). For such drivers, the ideal would have been to be given a specific destination to drive to, with the assessor simply observing how well they drove (or didn't) over the journey.

*"You don't have control of what you want to do. So you can't just go 'no, I'm going to do this first'. 'And I'm going to do it this way', and you can't tell him*

*you want to do this and that, he just tells you how to do it. Or he just tells you 'I want you to do this and you've got to do it'.*" [female, 18-24 years]

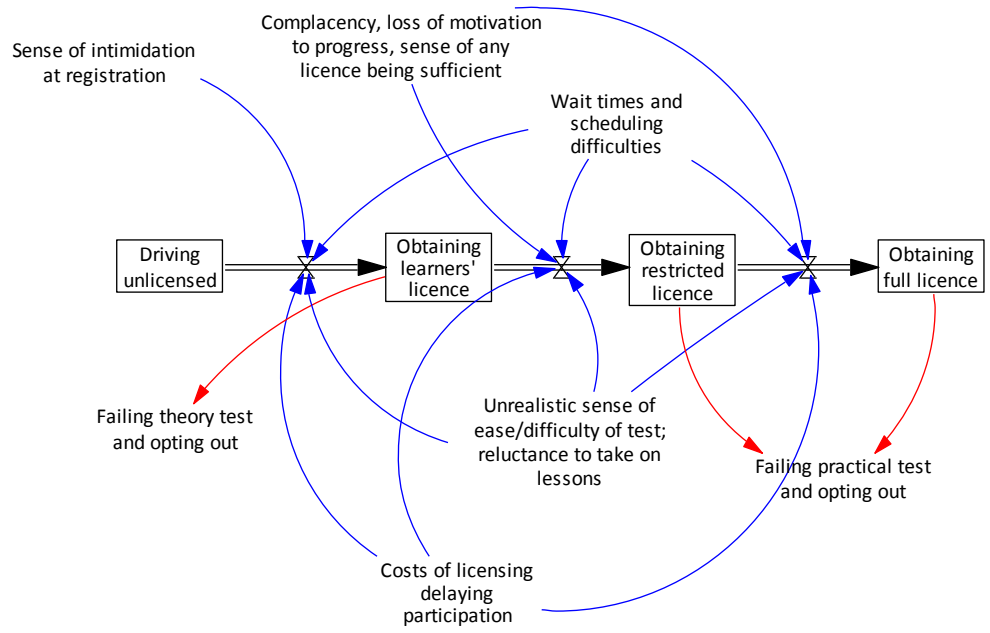
The need to have a 'test worthy' car for the practical restricted or full licence test was *not* raised by the majority of young drivers and/or parents/caregivers as a potential stumbling block to obtaining these licences. When asked specifically about it, the general view was that even if there was not a 'test worthy' car in their home, that someone in the extended family would have one that they could use or that they would be able to access a car from the test centre for an additional fee. The main stumbling block in relation to their car was remembering to double check *before* the test that the car was as test worthy as expected.

As with the learners test, the only 'support' that a failed practical test participant gets is an explanation from test centre staff about what they got wrong and what the right driving approach should have been. There is no further follow up contact or attempts to re-engage this 'want to be' restricted or full licence holder.

*"The practical I've heard a lot of cases where they're nervous, a lot of kids are nervous. And they end up failing and they get into a depression, yeah. It depends who's around in the environment to pick them back up and encourage them to perhaps study again. But if you're not getting that then those kids are likely to just break the law and please themselves."* [parent, female]

Thus with the compounding effects of a licensing process that is not especially user friendly, and a community where it is socially acceptable not to be fully licensed, it is not surprising that the desired numbers of young people are not progressing through the GDLS and instead are relying on alternative systems to enable their driving. These include police avoidance 'systems' (as discussed earlier) or thinking that getting licensed overseas (particularly in the Pacific) will be a viable alternative.

The diagram below summarises what participants in this research identified as the key barriers to progression along the GDLS system.





## 5. VALUE PROPOSITIONS FOR CHANGE

### 5.1 A MULTIFACETED APPROACH IS REQUIRED

In addition to understanding the key factors that are leading to the current levels of unlicensed driving and driving in 'breach' of learner and restricted licences (i.e. in terms of social norms and the GDLS 'product' itself), a key objective of this research was also importantly to explore what might be the necessary value proposition(s) to motivate change, resulting in greater numbers of young people progressing through the GDLS and lower levels of breach driving across the Mangere community.

Overall it is clear that in order to achieve these goals, addressing how the community feels about getting licensed (or not), as well optimising the GDLS product itself will be required. As there are multiple compounding factors leading to the prevalence of unlicensed and 'breach' driving in this community, there is equally a need for a multifaceted response to effect change.

### 5.2 OVERALL, A POSITIVE APPROACH IS REQUIRED

From the insights that our research interviews provided about the extent to which unlicensed driving and driving in 'breach' is an embedded norm in this community, as well as an understanding of the reasons why, it would seem that effecting change by a 'positive' rather than a negative 'anti' approach, is the best way forward.

Explicit negative messaging about why *not* to drive in this way is likely to lack credibility, make people feel bad about themselves and fail to engage interest and support. Furthermore, the more that the campaign highlights unlicensed or 'breach driving', the greater the likelihood that it may have the unintended consequence of even further normalising the very behaviour it is seeking to reduce. And finally, in terms of Mangere specifically, this is a community where many already feel under the 'spotlight' and of being judged by others, so a campaign that further reinforces feelings of vulnerability or inadequacy is not going to be able to gain the buy-in required.

*"They (police) see South Auckland as quite a downgraded area you know, that's why a lot of the time we get targeted you know. So if there's a police check and if they're got to get their quota of whatever you know, in the first half hour, then they'll be here."* [parent, female]

Having a 'positive' campaign approach will also be necessary to encourage the level of community wide participation needed to effect change in this area (as organisations, community groups and businesses will see benefits in being associated with something that is 'lifting' their community).

### 5.3 YOUNG DRIVERS

In terms of possible campaign approaches to motivate greater interest among young drivers in becoming licensed, and to overcome the current 'slack' or 'complacent' attitude that prevails, the findings from this research suggest that a positioning (rather than a message per se) which conveys a sense of how becoming fully licensed can enable and 'free' them to be the kind of driver that they really want to be (i.e. rather than just settling to be a driver who 'gets by' or 'makes do' with unlicensed or breach driving and the associated downsides), would have appeal because:

- It taps into the sense of freedom and independence that young drivers value so much about driving.

*"Freedom. So it's just you, the car and you know and what you see in front of you. So it's just, pretty much being free."* [female, 18-24 years]

*"No, I don't think you're a safer driver when you get your (full) licence. You're just within the law. You're just the same person that was driving yesterday, today but you're just, you're free. You're kind of free, you've got that 'oh, you know', when the cops come past.*

*Because now when me and the girls are in the car and the police come past they're like 'oh shit, the cops, you know'. And it's like 'why are you worrying about the cops for, I have a full licence. See I don't have to worry about the cops because I have a full licence' and I was trying to tell them that. And they're like oh shut up Mum."* [parent, female]

- The licensing is positioned as second place to the driving, and importantly as enabling and supporting their driving – not constricting it.
- It acknowledges that there is a multi-stage process to becoming a fully licensed driver, and that every test is taking them one step closer (i.e. 'becoming' a fully licensed driver rather than 'being' a fully licensed driver).
- It can be used to subtly acknowledge how fully licensed drivers are free to drive when and where they want without the anxiety of being caught, but without having to explicitly refer to it (and hence avoid the risk of normalising

'police avoidance' driving behaviour). It also can be used subtly acknowledge that young drivers do not aspire to driving 'under the radar' all their lives.

*"Like, at three o'clock in the morning sometimes I'll just like be able to get up and be like, oh, I want a Big Mac and I'd just drive over there in my clothes and it's like, legal for me to do that, so that's pretty cool."*

[male, 18-24 years]

- It allows the campaign the freedom and flexibility to tap into what different target groups value and enjoy most about driving. From the interviews conducted as part of this research, examples of possible targeting options include:
  - For Pacific young drivers: Tapping into being now being able to relax when driving around the local community and being able to fully enjoy the social side of driving, picking up others anytime, anyplace, and anywhere.
  - For Maori young drivers: Tapping into the freedom of being able to travel far and wide across the country to visit whānau, the sense of being able to get away from it all (i.e. being on the open road, the sense of distance, of time out from day to day home pressures), and the enjoyment of the roadie experience itself.

The benefit of being more employable is not likely to have the same universal strength of engagement as the above suggested positioning as many currently believe that in this context, a full licence only benefits those wanting to work specifically as a 'professional' driver (i.e. taxi driver, forklift operator or courier), thus any communication would need to work hard to dispel this myth.

Furthermore, because 'being more employable' appeals more on a rational than emotional level, it would have to work hard to engage hearts as well as minds of younger drivers. However, in terms of overall campaign communications, highlighting enhanced employability (and explaining that this is not just in the assumed context) would be beneficial.

In order to be truly effective however, it also critical that the campaign has a secondary supporting message to let young drivers know that the process of becoming licensed has changed for the better and become more user friendly and that local drivers in Mangere are being better supported than even before to succeed (e.g. staged payments, better local and online pre-test support available, and testing process more user friendly). Without this supporting message, there is a risk that those that have already tried and failed to progress to getting a full licence will not engage with this campaign as they will have no reason to believe that the system is

any different to before. It can also importantly have relevance to those who may not have yet engaged with the GDLS, but been put off by perceived challenges.

The other factor that needs to be considered in developing the positioning and messages for this campaign (and what makes it so challenging) is that care also needs to be taken to not negatively stereotype those who are trying to do the right thing with where they are at in the licensing process in order to glorify benefits of having a full licence.

In other words, while valued benefits of having a full licence include *not* having to ask other people to drive you from A to B (and pick you up) or *not* having to drive a car with L plates, campaign messaging needs to recognise that these are still 'desired' behaviours (for example, if someone isn't licensed, they *should* be depending on others to drive them, and if someone is on a learner licence, they *should* be displaying L plates).

If the campaign needs a more straightforward solution, there was one excellent suggestion from a young driver to encourage greater interest among her peers which was to make it a legal obligation that drivers display on the windscreen of their car their current licence (ideally colour coded to make it easy for police to see what licence conditions that car should be driven in accordance with). The harder to 'avoid' detection of non-compliant driving, the bigger the incentive to progress through the GDLS.

#### 5.4 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

In terms of young drivers' families and the wider community, the call to action is to encourage and support young drivers to become fully licensed drivers and to support them to comply with the conditions of their learner and restricted licences while going through the process of becoming fully licensed.

*"Yes, family support is massive and I think that's what is actually keeping me on track. If it was me living, I wouldn't say okay, now I'm doing a part time job fifteen hours and week and full time study, I wouldn't say okay you know my next pay will go to my full licence. I would just say I've got expenses and I'm happy with staying on my restricted"* [male, 18-24].

This call to action is likely to have most appeal with parents/caregivers if it is leveraged from a positive, empathetic 'support' positioning (rather than one of policing their young drivers).

*"The message I want to be spreading in Mangere is we can achieve, we can do it, let's do it. Let's get together and get on the same waka and go together and be proud."* [parent, female]

---

#### 5.4.1 Family support for young drivers to progress through the GDLS

---

Overall it is clear from this research that seeking family support to help young drivers to become fully licensed will be a much easier 'ask' than it will be to ask them to support young drivers comply with their learner and restricted licences, as it is about helping young people achieve something that they already have an inherent (albeit sometimes low) interest in. The fact that a fully licensed young driver can also provide better driving support to a family than an unlicensed one, can also be used as an incentive to leverage their support.

Examples of the kinds of things that families can do to better support their young drivers successfully progress through the GDLS include:

- Encouraging or enrolling young drivers to participate in test preparation courses or online modules as relevant, particularly preparation courses where doing the test is part of the course.
- Offering to partner up with young drivers through the GDLS where relevant (i.e. in cases where parents have not become fully licensed themselves)
- Updating their own knowledge of the 'new' road code
- Helping young drivers get a sense of what it's like to sit a practical test by either enrolling them for a one-off lesson with a test instructor who can bring them through a 'mock test' or by asking a recently licensed family member to take them through and even 'role-play' the experience
- Supporting them if they fail by not only encouraging them to try again, but to help them improve their knowledge, skills and confidence to set them up with the best chance of succeeding on the subsequent attempt
- Giving them a greater incentive to progress through the GDLS by reinforcing campaign messages about the benefits of being fully licensed, as well as where possible by curbing their breach driving behaviour (see 5.4.2 below)
- Helping them develop the focus, resilience and self-motivation to 'stay the course' and progress to becoming a fully licensed driver. As highlighted earlier while a young driver may have in principle agreed to 'get' licensed, there are so many other things that they feel tempted or obligated to agree to as well,

that can lose focus and stray off course. Parents/caregivers and/or wider family or community supporters such as teachers, can play a big role in helping them develop this valuable life skill.

---

#### 5.4.2 Family support for young drivers to comply with the conditions of their licences

---

Encouraging parents/caregivers and the wider family/whānau to support young drivers to 'do the right thing' and drive to the conditions of their licence, means asking them to not put young drivers in situations where they are required or enabled to drive in breach of their conditions. In other words, to put young people's needs over their own. - a big 'ask' indeed.

In asking parents/caregivers and their wider family/whānau to rise to such a challenge, it is critical that they are supported to do so through measures such as giving them the skills and resilience to say 'no' to young drivers wanting to drive in breach (and to follow through with consequences if they do), as well as where possible providing practical or other support for families to help meet the need that a young driver had previously been doing. As highlighted earlier, much of the 'breach' driving that these young passive drivers are doing is to fulfil a family need, and there are strong feelings of solidarity and protectiveness with regard to local families in 'survival mode'. The campaign will need to be seen to recognise this to some level in order to maximise credibility and community buy-in.

Challenging the widely accepted belief that driving in breach is sometimes in young drivers' best interests (such as preparing for a test) would also need to be addressed.

Any success that the campaign can have in supporting parents/caregivers and wider whānau to encourage young drivers to conform more to their learner and restricted licences should as a result increase the motivation of young drivers to progress to getting a full licence, (as it's no longer (or at least /ess) acceptable to drive 'as if' they had one.

---

#### 5.4.3 Wider community support for young drivers

---

Given the community wide acceptance of unlicensed and breach driving, the more that the whole community gets behind young drivers to encourage and support them to progress through the GDLS the better.

While employers and community leaders such as church ministers and sports club leaders were not interviewed for this stage of the research, the findings from interviews with other key informants, young drivers and parents/caregivers, suggest it will, as with young drivers' families, be an easier 'ask' to seek the support of the wider

community to help more young drivers in their clubs, churches, marae or employment progress through the GDLS, than it will be to seek their support in helping their young members or employees to comply with the conditions of their licences.

Supporting young drivers to comply with licence conditions means no longer turning a blind eye to how their driving is happening, and this may be out of the comfort zone of those running such clubs and organisations (i.e. seen as more of a parental 'permission' issue). Many groups may in fact even be concerned that curbing breach driving behaviour in the community could in fact inhibit young people's ability to participate as fully in their particular activities.

However, seeking their support to help more members become fully licensed should be an easier ask, as not only it is something that they would be likely to feel good about doing for their young drivers, but also because there are clear benefits that having more fully licensed members or employees can bring to their organisation or group.

Examples of how community groups and locally based businesses could do their part to support more young Mangere drivers through the GDLS include:

- Enabling community based GDLS preparation and/or testing to take place at their venues (i.e. valued as familiar, non-threatening locations by young drivers and their families)
- Being part of a community wide 'shepherding' process to encourage young drivers become fully licensed (for example, engaging with young members/employees in a non-judgemental conversation about 'where they are at' with getting licensed, pointing them where necessary as to where they can get further help, such as funded courses).

## 5.5 OPTIMISING THE GDLS 'PRODUCT'

As highlighted earlier, the findings from this research suggest that the current levels of unlicensed driving and general lack of progression through the GDLS, is attributable not only to unlicensed and 'breach' driving being such an accepted norm in this community, but also to the fact that when young drivers do try to engage with and progress through the GDLS, this doesn't always work out for them either because of their own skill or knowledge shortcomings, or because of flaws in the current GDLS 'product'.

The findings from this research suggest that the current GDLS product could be optimised and made more user-friendly by:

- Using a combination of methods to 'shepherd' anyone who has scheduled a learner's test or even simply taken part in a community course to prepare for one, to progress to sitting their learner test and ultimately progressing on to become a fully licensed driver. Looking at ways in which the momentum to progress to becoming a fully licensed driver can be maintained right from when a young driver first applies to do their learners test will be critical to increasing the number of fully licensed drivers in this community.
- Making it as easy as possible for applicants to schedule (and reschedule) tests in a way that will work best for them (such as in terms of time frames, possibility of group bookings)
- Giving applicants who have registered for any of the three GDLS tests a text (or other) links to preparation tips and information about online and local test 'support'.
- Making payment easier by offering payment 'plans' that allow applicants to pay off the total amount of the application fee in small regular instalments in advance of their test.
  - This concept is already a familiar to families who need to pay for household items through hire purchase, or indeed for those who currently 'manage' their fine repayments by having them referred to the courts system in order to have the ability to repay them in small regular amounts than as a one-off total amount (and are even prepared to pay the extra premium of the court processing fee for this option).

*"A typical Island family in South Auckland is not going to have four hundred dollars, sitting in their wallets to pay off a fine. But by going to court and paying that extra hundred and thirty dollars in court fees, means that you can start paying off your fine in ten dollar payments. That's the only way. It has to go to the court, with the police you can't do small repayments."* [parent, female].
- Reviewing on the day test sign-in processes (i.e. in terms of personal information asked in public test centre environments).
- Reviewing how restricted and full licence test assessors are trained and incentivised for their role so that they are supported to be more 'customer friendly' and 'coach-like' in their approach. One young driver suggested for example that if assessors could call applicants the day before their test, this would help them feel more at ease when meeting the assessor in person on



the day of the test itself, as well as reinforcing their likelihood to turn up on to do the test.

- Offering a greater variety of options about how and where applicants can be either instructed or tested (e.g. community centres vs. 'official' unfamiliar test centres, options where groups of friends can be facilitated to sit tests together (e.g. block bookings). Despite the initial outward 'bravado' that some young drivers can appear to have, many are shy of new and unfamiliar situations and experiences, and so the more that can be done to keep the instructing and/or testing process as familiar and unthreatening for them the better. The concept of a group booking option is likely to appeal in particular (but not exclusively) to Pacific Island young drivers, especially those for whom peers are powerful influencers.

*"There's a driving school at this marae, just down the road... This instructor comes in and brings his car and he just takes people for half an hour drives, 20 minute drives for the youth ...They take like \$30 off it and then you've got to pay the rest."* [male, 16-17 years]

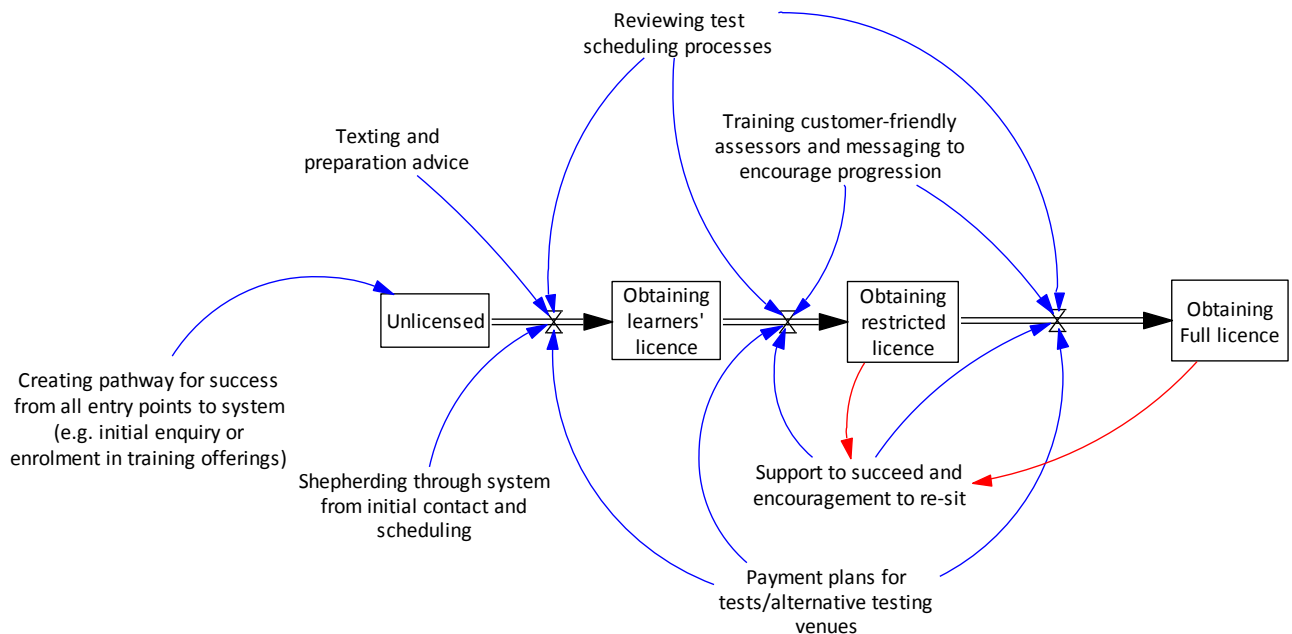
*"But I think down by Countdown we need to have some kind of driver's building where, I know there's a library and stuff, but if it was actually displayed as 'come and learn how to take your licence' or something like that. 'Everyone's welcome, come and educate yourself'. Let's make Mangere a safer driving place. And let's show New Zealand that all these kids here in Mangere are educated, are able to achieve, that we're not a decile blah, blah, blah."* [parent, female]

*"Sometimes, like people are too shy to use public transport when they've been driving all their lives. To try something new is really really hard. Especially when you do the same routine every day and then everything that you've got around you is normal to you, yeah."* [male, 18-24 years]

Offering such options for limited time periods would potentially further support take-up (as applicants who favour these over current 'standard' testing options would have to take action to be able to avail of them)

- Offering options so that applicants can determine their 'test-readiness' for practical tests as they currently can for the learner theory test. For example possibly offering a one-off lesson with a test instructor who can bring them through a 'mock test' so that they can not only get a sense of whether they are likely to pass, but also prepare them for what the test will be like.
- Reviewing how applicants who fail any stage of the GDLS are followed-up and supported to have a better chance of succeeding on their next attempt.

The diagram below illustrates some of the supportive processes that would optimise each stage of the licensing process to better enable a more rapid progression through the system:



## 5.6 ADDRESSING SAFETY AMONG YOUNG 'PASSIVE' DRIVERS IN THIS COMMUNITY

As outlined in the introduction to this report, this locally based campaign is a component of the overall High Risk Young Driver project (HRYD) which not only has the key aim of increasing numbers of young drivers enter and progress through the GDLS to reduce numbers of those driving unlicensed or in breach of licence conditions, but to also result in positive changes in community attitudes to safe driving so that today's young drivers become safer drivers throughout their driving careers, contributing to a safer New Zealand road environment and reducing lifetime claim costs to ACC.

The findings from this research suggest that while progressing greater numbers of drivers through the GDLS will support safer driving to an extent (such as by testing their knowledge of the road code, technical driving skills and ability on the day to focus and anticipate situations) it will not be able to address the following 'attitude' and

'resilience' factors that can compromise young drivers' safety as they are considered harder to 'test for':

- Getting distracted by friends inside or outside of the vehicle. This research suggests that distraction by friends outside of a car is a bigger safety risk than expected. Not only are young drivers on the 'look out' for friends, but they are also looking, and waiting for friends to see them (e.g. getting the nod that they have been noticed behind the wheel). In a community such as Mangere which is close knit and familial (particularly for Pacific families), this increases the risk of this type of distraction even further, as there is greater likelihood for young drivers to see people known to them.
- Being tempted to show off in front of peers (again inside or outside the car).
- Not being able to say 'no' to familial or in particular to peer pressure to drive outside of the limits of one's own driving 'comfort zone'
- Being tempted to 'let loose' when becoming licensed after a long period of driving unlicensed or in breach, and under pressure to drive extra conservatively. Consequences such as a getting a speeding ticket are considered worth the risk when driving on a full licence compared the consequences when caught speeding as an unlicensed driver (i.e. potentially having the car impounded or being fined \$400).

To this end, participants in this research suggested that courses preparing drivers for any of the GDLS tests, or for general 'life skills' (i.e. as offered through schools and other educational and training facilities), incorporate modules to address the above as relevant. Ways of reaching and teaching these skills to drivers not included in such courses (i.e. past school age), would also need to be considered.