

# AN EVALUATION OF THE STEPPING OUT PROGRAMME

**PRESERVATION**

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## AN EVALUATION OF THE STEPPING OUT PROGRAMME

The enclosed report on the Stepping Out programme has been published by this Department. It results from a 1986 Cabinet decision to set up a programme of research in conjunction with the Stepping Out pilot programme in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot. It is hoped the report will be of interest to those who were involved in the pilot programme, and also to those with a more general interest in social policy and the situation of long-term beneficiaries.

The results of two surveys are presented in the report, firstly a mail survey and secondly an interview survey. An analysis of benefit statistics is also presented. An assessment is then made of the effectiveness of the Stepping Out programme.

If further copies of the report are required, they are available from the Research Section, Head Office, Department of Social Welfare, P O Box 27015, Wellington, New Zealand.

David Preston  
Assistant Director-General (Policy Development)  
for Director-General

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AN EVALUATION OF THE STEPPING OUT PROGRAMME

In 1987 a pilot programme called Stepping Out was set up jointly by the Departments of Social Welfare and Labour, and a number of social service agencies. The programme aimed to promote access to social services and to facilitate a transition from benefit to training or paid employment for long-term social welfare beneficiaries. Those in the target groups for the programme included unemployment beneficiaries, widows beneficiaries and domestic purposes beneficiaries who did not have young children. The programme involved mailing an information kit about local sources of help (social services, training and employment services) to beneficiaries in three districts, with fieldworkers offering more direct assistance in one district.

Survey research to evaluate the effectiveness of Stepping Out was conducted at two levels. Firstly, a mail survey of all those in the target groups was responded to by 460 people, a response rate of 27%. Secondly, 246 people were interviewed as part of a more in-depth sample survey.

Results from both surveys showed that the programme was not effective in facilitating movement from benefit to paid employment. The information kit was rated as not personally helpful by the majority of those surveyed. The fieldworkers were rated as helpful, mainly in terms of providing support, but not in terms of facilitating movement into employment. An examination of benefit statistics supported these findings.

Information on barriers to paid workforce participation was sought from those beneficiaries surveyed. For sole parents, family responsibilities were cited most often as the main barrier they perceived. For all beneficiary types, a lack of job skills and health or disability problems were commonly perceived barriers, as well as a lack of jobs.

About two thirds of those interviewed were interested in having job training. Most said they would like to have a paid job in the future which was different from (and more highly skilled than) the paid jobs they had had in the past.

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AN EVALUATION OF  
THE STEPPING OUT PROGRAMME

Mike Rochford and Niti Pawakapan

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Opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Social Welfare.

Copies of this report may be obtained from:

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Enquiries concerning its content should be addressed to the authors at the above address.

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1986, a working party of officials from the Departments of Labour and Social Welfare and the Treasury developed for the Cabinet Policy Committee a proposal for a new programme to help beneficiaries move off benefits and into employment. The proposal was motivated by four general aims. The first was to ensure that people who had received social welfare benefits for a long period of time have opportunities to find employment. A second aim was to counteract the known ill-effects (social, mental and physical health) of welfare dependence. Thirdly, it aimed to break the link between unemployment and welfare dependence. And, fourthly, it aimed to reduce government expenditure by reducing the numbers dependent on income maintenance.

The programme was to apply to the following specific groups: domestic purposes beneficiaries (DPBs) and widows beneficiaries (WBs) aged under 50 years, without dependent children or with dependent children aged 10 years or more, who had been on the benefit for 2 years or more; and unemployment beneficiaries (UBs) who had been unemployed for 12 months or more. The programme came to be called the "Stepping Out Programme".

It was recognised that there were difficulties in assisting the target groups to return to the workforce owing to the labour market situation. It was also felt that members of the target groups were likely to: lack self-confidence; lack references and experience in the paid workforce; be socially isolated with minimal supportive networks; and find it difficult to identify their own personal strengths. The programme therefore aimed to help the target groups to overcome the barriers to their taking employment and to ensure that they were aware of social services available to assist them.

Staff from the Departments of Social Welfare and Labour and a number of social service agencies agreed to establish three pilot projects to test the programme. It was decided that the pilot projects would operate in Takapuna, Tauranga and Wellington, for a twelve month period commencing in March 1987. In each area a steering committee was established to facilitate networking of all parties involved. Thus information-sharing about social services available, and assistance and opportunities in respect of training and employment in the area, was provided for. Information kits were then sent to all members of the target groups in each pilot district. The kits contained a list of local contacts for training, employment and social service assistance, as well as reply-paid cards to request further information.

The reasons for the pilot district selection were that Takapuna and Wellington had reasonably buoyant labour markets, so that the programme was more likely to succeed there, while Tauranga was also included as a provincial area with a rate of unemployment and number of labour market vacancies that were close to national average figures. In addition, it was decided that the Takapuna project would include a key difference in order to test the effects of a more intensive approach. Consequently, two field workers were employed on a contract basis to undertake personal visits to members of the target groups in this area to offer more direct assistance. The workers were responsible to the Takapuna pilot project steering

committee and had a thorough knowledge of local training and employment opportunities and social services available including childcare, support groups and voluntary agency activities.

A research programme was established in conjunction with the pilot projects. The main aims of the research were:

- (a) to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot approaches in terms of facilitating the target groups to enter the paid workforce (including a comparison of the information-only approach with the approach which included more direct personal assistance);
- (b) to identify any other benefits which may have resulted;
- (c) to determine what were the main barriers to the participation of the target group in the paid workforce, based on the perceptions of the target groups themselves;
- (d) to obtain information about the target groups so as to provide a more informed basis for social policy development;
- (e) to assess, as far as was practicable, the likely extent of labour displacement in the pilot areas which resulted from the programme.

Surveys were conducted at two levels: (i) mail questionnaires were sent to all members of the target groups in each pilot area; and (ii) a more in-depth survey of a smaller sample group was carried out by means of face-to-face interviews. The interview survey aimed to cover 250 randomly selected members of the target groups, which constituted a sample of approximately one in seven.

## THE MAIL SURVEY

### THE METHODOLOGY

#### (1) The Mail-Out Procedures

The Stepping Out mail survey involved mailing a questionnaire to all those in the target groups for the Stepping Out pilot programme. The names and addresses of people in the target groups had been drawn from the computer databases of the Department of Social Welfare before the programme began. Some 1,820 questionnaires were mailed out between August 1987 and January 1988. These mailouts were staggered in six instalments, corresponding to the six mailouts of Stepping Out information kits which took place between May and October 1987, so that people received their questionnaires approximately three months after receiving their information kits. A second copy of the questionnaire, with a reminder letter, was sent to each person two weeks after the first copy was mailed. A copy of the questionnaire is attached (Appendix 1).

#### (2) The Target Groups

The composition of the target groups, in terms of benefit type, in the three districts is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Target Group Numbers by District and Benefit Type

<u>District</u>	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>	<u>Total</u>
Takapuna	453	63	84	600
Tauranga	283	41	255	579
Wellington	<u>216</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>397</u>	<u>641</u>
Total	952	132	736	1820

#### (3) The Response Rate

In total, 460 questionnaires were returned. These were coded and entered into a computer database. Some 27% of all the questionnaires mailed out were returned (based on an adjusted total of 1731, after excluding 89 "returned to sender" unanswered). The response rate was therefore 27%. While this is low, it is reasonably comparable with usual rates of response to mail surveys. Table 2 shows the response rates by district and benefit type, again excluding those "returned to sender" from both the numbers mailed out and the numbers returned. Because WBs formed only a small group, and were selected for the target population using the same criteria as for DPBs, they have been combined with DPBs in the report of findings. Actual numbers of returned questionnaires are given in brackets.

Table 2: Response Rates by District and Benefit Type

<u>District</u>	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>	<u>Total</u>
Takapuna	35% (175)	18% (14)	33% (189)
Tauranga	29% (92)	22% (53)	26% (145)
Wellington	28% (65)	16% (60)	21% (125)
Total	32% (332)	18% (128)	27% (460)

One UB who could not be classified by district has been omitted from the district breakdown above. There was a higher response rate from DPBs and WBs (32%) than from UBs (18%). There was also a higher response rate from Takapuna than from either Tauranga or Wellington. This is partially due to the different mix of benefit types in each district, although Takapuna had a higher response rate within the DPB/WB group.

#### (4) Characteristics of the Sample

Of the 460 respondents, 63% were DPBs, 9% were WBs and 28% were UBs. The lower response rate of UBs meant that this group was under-represented in the sample of respondents. However, the age and sex characteristics of the respondent sample were as would have been expected from the characteristics of the target population (within each benefit type). Women made up 95% of the DPB/WB respondents, and 33% of UBs. UBs were a younger group, with 69% aged under 35 years, whereas 82% of DPB/WBs were aged 35-51 years.

## THE RESULTS

Because of the low response rate, the following results should be treated with some caution. Additional comments are made on this in the text, where they are warranted.

#### (1) Reactions to the Information Kit

Responses to the question "Did you get an information kit called 'Stepping Out' in the mail recently?" are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Receipt of Kit by Benefit Type

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>I Don't Remember</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>(n)</u>
DPB/WB	92% (302)	5% (18)	3% (10)	100%	(330)
UB	53% (64)	37% (45)	10% (12)	100%	(121)

(missing values=9)

It is clear that there was a difference between the two benefit groups in terms of reporting receipt of the kit. Because some addresses were updated between mailouts, it is possible that some people who received the questionnaire did not receive the "Stepping Out" kit. However, it is unlikely that 47% of UBs changed address within three months and the high level of "No" responses by UBs is likely to include many who did receive the kit but didn't remember it, perhaps reflecting a lesser impact which the kit had on UBs compared with DPB/WBs. The lower response rates for UBs would tend to reinforce this conclusion.

In subsequent questions about the information kit, the percentage figures presented are based only on those who said "Yes" to the above question, i.e. those who remembered receiving the information kit, a total of 366 people.

Responses to the question "What did you think of this information kit?" are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Value of Kit by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Not helpful to anyone	1%	5%
Not helpful to me, but maybe helpful to others	56%	46%
Of some help to me	33%	36%
Very helpful to me	10%	13%
Total	100% (n=293) (missing values=12)	100% (n=61)

Among those who remembered the kit, there was no significant difference between the proportions of beneficiaries in the two groups who found it personally helpful.

The DPB/WB group was examined separately to see if those who found the kit helpful had distinctive characteristics. Those who found the kit personally helpful were more likely to be younger, to have younger children, to have fewer school qualifications, to expect a full-time job within two years, and to prefer a full-time job to being on benefit. It might be expected that those who expected and preferred a full-time job would have found the kit more helpful, and those people tended to be younger, with younger children. It is not clear why those without school qualifications were more likely to find the kit helpful, but perhaps their awareness of the sources of help listed had been lower, and hence the kit was of greater value in raising that awareness. The number of UBs was too small to analyse in this way.

Responses to the question "Was the kit easy to understand?" are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Ease of Understanding by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	98%	95%
No	2%	5%
Total	100% (n=294)	100% (n=59) (missing values=13)

There was an overwhelming endorsement of the kit by the respondent group as being easy to understand. It is possible that those who found it more difficult to understand would have been less likely to respond to the survey. The above figures may therefore overestimate the ease of understanding to some extent.

(2) Contact with Sources of Assistance

Responses to the question "Have you contacted anyone on the contact list in the information kit?" are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Contact by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	31%	21%
No	69%	79%
Total	100% (n=289)	100% (n=63) (missing values=14)

DPB/WBs were more likely to have contacted someone on the contact list than UBs. This difference is statistically significant at the 95% level of confidence, but see Table 11 for the influence of district on this result. We can surmise that those who didn't respond to the questionnaire may have been less likely to make contact, so that the true rates of contact in the total target groups may have been lower.

Those DPB/WBs who made contact with a source of assistance were compared with DPB/WBs who did not make contact, but the two groups were not markedly different on the characteristics examined.

For those who made contact (n=102), responses to the question "When you contacted someone, were they able to help you or put you in contact with someone who could?" are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Value of Contact by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	78%	80%
No	22%	20%
Total	100% (n=81)	100% (n=10) (missing values=11)

This table shows that most of those who contacted someone found that contact helpful.

Those who did contact someone were also asked about specific outcomes that had come about as a result of this contact. The proportion (out of those who answered these questions) who answered "Yes" are shown in Table 8 for the various outcomes specified.

Table 8: Outcomes of Contact by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Joined a support group or made new friends	17% (14)	27% (3)
Started or signed up for a training course	22% (18)	36% (4)
Have a paid job	3% (3)	31% (4)
Have a full-time paid job	2% (2)	8% (1)
Have done voluntary work	8% (7)	17% (2)
Anything else good	29% (24)	31% (4)
Anything bad	12% (10)	9% (1)

Because these percentages are based on small numbers, particularly for UBs, the actual numbers are given in brackets in the above table. It should be noted that the above percentages were calculated using as a base only those who made contact and who responded to that particular question. For example, the 4 UBs who started or signed up for a training course as a result of such a contact represent 36% of the 11 UBs who responded to the question on training courses, 31% of the 13 UBs who contacted someone on the contact list, 6% of the 64 UBs who remembered getting the kit, and 3% of the 128 UBs who returned a questionnaire. Beyond that it is difficult to know what the rates of outcomes would have been among the total target group, though these would probably have been proportionately lower than among those who returned questionnaires.



However, in Table 8 the focus is on the effectiveness of contact, and the table shows that there were positive outcomes for a substantial proportion of those who made contact with a source of assistance. In fact, 69% of UBs and 30% of DPB/WBs who made contact reported at least one of the specified outcomes in Table 8 (support/training/job/voluntary work). The difference between the two benefit groups is significant, although it should be remembered that only a handful of UBs reported these outcomes. Given the lower response rate, lower recall rate and lower contact rate for UBs, it cannot be said that "Stepping Out" was more effective for this group.

### (3) Outcomes of Stepping Out

To shift the focus to the overall effectiveness of the "Stepping Out" information kit (rather than the effectiveness of contact), Table 9 presents the same figures as in Table 8, but recalculated as percentages of all those who remembered receiving the kit.

Table 9: Outcomes of the Information Kit by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Joined a support group or made new friends	5% (14)	5% (3)
Started or signed up for a training course	6% (18)	6% (4)
Have a paid job	1% (3)	6% (4)
Have a full-time paid job	1% (2)	2% (1)
Have done voluntary work	2% (7)	3% (2)
Anything else good	8% (24)	6% (4)
Anything bad	3% (10)	2% (1)
Total who remembered getting the kit	100% (302)	100% (64)

A total of 14% (9) of UBs and 9% (27) of DPB/WBs who recalled receiving a kit reported at least one of the specified outcomes in Table 9 (support/training/job/voluntary work). The difference between the two benefit groups is not significant at the 95% level of confidence.

Some 28 people said that something else good happened as a result of contact, and the most common thing reported was that it was helpful to discuss their situation (13 cases). Other things reported included obtaining helpful information, participating in community programmes, obtaining help for another person and finding someone else who suffered from the same rare disease as a child in the family. Of the 11 people who said something bad happened as a result of contact, in 6 cases this was because they felt frustration that the outcome of the contact was not more positive. Of the

other five people, three reported that they encountered negative attitudes from people contacted, while two made general criticisms of the Stepping Out programme, but did not describe their personal experiences.

Responses to the question "Do you think the 'Stepping Out' scheme is a good idea?" are shown in Table 10. These figures include only those who remembered receiving the "Stepping Out" kit.

Table 10: Approval of "Stepping Out" by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>	
Yes	97%	77%	
No	3%	23%	
	(n=273)	(n=56)	(missing values=37)

Although the great majority of beneficiaries in both groups said that "Stepping Out" was a good idea, DPB/WBs were significantly more likely to respond "Yes" than UBs (at the 95% level of confidence). No doubt the level of approval would have been lower among non-respondents.

#### (4) Differences Between Districts

Because there was a district variation in the "Stepping Out" programme in that fieldworkers were engaged in Takapuna district to make contact with the target sample, and because more questionnaires were returned from Takapuna than from either of the other two districts, comparisons between districts have been restricted to a single set of comparisons between Takapuna and the other two districts (Wellington and Tauranga) combined.

When asked what they thought of the information kit, similar proportions in Takapuna and Tauranga/Wellington found it personally helpful. However, there was a significant difference in the proportions who contacted someone on the local contact list. People in Takapuna were more likely to contact someone, as Table 11 shows:

Table 11: Percentage Making Contact by District and Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>	<u>Total</u>
Takapuna	41% (63/153)	27% (3/11)	40% (66/164)
Tauranga/Wellington	19% (26/136)	20% (10/51)	19% (36/187)
			(missing values=15)

The actual numbers used to calculate the percentages are shown in brackets above, expressed as proportions.

Within the DPB/WB group, the difference between Takapuna and Tauranga/Wellington is also significant (although that within the UB group is not). This means that the overall difference between Takapuna and Tauranga/Wellington cannot be attributed to the different proportions of beneficiary types in each district. Table 6 showed that DPB/WBs were more likely to make contact than UBs, but within districts the differences between beneficiary groups were not significant, despite the apparent difference between DPBs and UBs in Takapuna shown in Table 11. This apparent difference arises only because there was a very small number (11) of UBs in Takapuna who recalled receiving the kit (with a proportionately large margin of error), so that any comparisons based on these cases are not very meaningful.

Although people in Takapuna were more likely to make contact with someone and, having made contact, were equally likely to find the contact helpful (81%, compared with 74% for Tauranga/Wellington, not a significant difference), they were less likely to report a specific positive outcome as a result of contact. Of those who made contact, people in Tauranga/Wellington were significantly more likely to report one or more of the following outcomes: joining a support group or making new friends, taking part in a training course, or taking on a paid job or voluntary work (43%, compared with 30% in Takapuna). However, when this was expressed as a proportion of those who received the information kit, this difference was not significant (Table 12 gives details).

Table 12: Percentage of those who Received Kits who Reported a Specific Outcome of Contact by District

	<u>Takapuna</u>	<u>Tauranga/Wellington</u>	
Outcome reported	12% (20)	8% (16)	
Total	100% (171)	100% (194)	(missing value=1)

It appears from Table 12 that the tendency for Takapuna people to be more likely to make contact was counterbalanced to some degree by the tendency for the Tauranga/Wellington people who made contact to get more out of it, with the net result that similar levels of specific outcomes were achieved in both districts. There remained a slightly higher level of these reported in Takapuna, but this was not statistically significant. Overall, then, it may have been that there was a limit to what could be achieved through the contacts, and that increasing the rate of contact did not necessarily increase the rate of specific outcomes.

The mail survey did not contain any specific questions about the fieldworkers in Takapuna, as it was primarily designed as an evaluation of the information kit. It is likely, however, that the presence of the fieldworkers would have had some influence on the results, such as the higher rate of contacts in Takapuna (for example, respondents may not have correctly recalled whether any contacts resulted from the information kit or from a fieldworker visit). Information on the results relating to the fieldworkers is presented in the section of this report concerned with the interview survey results.

(5) Perceptions of Choices and Future Job Prospects

The following results relate only to those respondents who were still receiving a benefit at the time they completed the questionnaire (n=404). Respondents were asked "At the moment, which of these choices suits you best?". Three alternatives were listed, and responses were:

Table 13: Preferred Choices by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Getting a Social Welfare benefit only	33%	18%
Having a part-time paid job and getting a Social Welfare benefit	50%	22%
Having a full-time paid job	17%	60%
Total	100% (n=283)	100% (n=101)

(missing values=20)

Of those DPB/WBs who preferred paid work, three quarters wanted a part-time rather than a full-time paid job. This could be a key reason why so few started a full-time paid job as a result of Stepping Out. There was a clear difference between the benefit groups here, with only a minority of DPB/WBs preferring full-time paid employment immediately. However, a majority of people on both benefit types expected to be employed full-time at some stage in the future. This is shown by responses to a further question "Do you think you will have a full-time paid job at some time in the next two years?"

Table 14: Future Job Prospects by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	63%	77%
No	37%	23%
Total	100% (n=245)	100% (n=95) (missing values=64)

Taking Tables 13 and 14 in conjunction, it appears that many of these long-term beneficiaries perceived the barriers to their full-time labour force participation to be temporary only.

In the case of the above results, there is no reason to believe that those who returned questionnaires would have different views from the total target group.

Respondents were asked about these barriers with the question "If you would like a paid job, what do you think is stopping you from getting one?" Seven reasons were listed, and the respondents were requested to indicate all that applied to them. Many respondents also wrote down other reasons which were not listed. In Table 15 below, responses are divided into those which were prompted by the listing and those which were unprompted. The percentages are based on all those beneficiaries who responded to the question, and because multiple responses were possible they do not add to 100%.

Table 15: Barriers to Employment by Benefit Type

<u>Prompted Reasons</u>	<u>DPB/WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
I don't have the right job skills	35%	46%
Lack of good child care	26%	2%
Not enough jobs around	21%	48%
Employers are prejudiced against me	8%	16%
I don't have a good work record	4%	24%
I don't know how to go about getting a job	3%	8%
I have given up looking for work	3%	6%
<u>Unprompted Reasons</u>		
Children's needs have priority	19%	0%
Health or injury problems	14%	13%
I am too old	7%	3%
Not worth while financially	6%	2%
Caring for a relative	5%	0%
Training or studying	4%	2%
Other reasons	18%	24%
	(n=204)	(n=93)

A perceived lack of job skills was clearly an important barrier for both beneficiary groups. This indicates possible training needs for a substantial proportion of these groups. (The training needs of beneficiaries are addressed in a report entitled "The Effectiveness of the Training Incentive Allowance" available from the Evaluation Unit of the Department of Social Welfare.) Barriers involving childcare or children's needs were reported by a large proportion of the DPB/WB group, even though their children were at least 10 years old. The perceived poor employment situation was frequently cited as a barrier, particularly by UBs. A proportion of both groups (roughly one in seven) reported that they were held back by health or injury problems. This finding was reinforced by results from the interview survey (Table 25).

## THE INTERVIEW SURVEY

### THE METHODOLOGY

#### (1) The Sampling Method

The initial selection of names for the interview survey was made from a card index of all those who were part of the Stepping Out pilot target groups. The sample was systematically selected, with a randomly selected starting point. That is, the first card was randomly selected from the first seven cards and every seventh card was selected thereafter. Such a sample can be regarded as equivalent to a random sample of those in the target groups. To ensure that the desired sample size of around 250 interviews was reached, replacement names were selected for non-respondents who either couldn't be contacted or who declined to be interviewed. These replacements were selected on the basis of their similarity to the non-respondents. That is, each replacement was matched as closely as possible to the non-respondent it replaced in terms of benefit type, benefit duration, district and area within district, as well as age and gender characteristics.

#### (2) The Interviewing Procedures

The interviewing was contracted out to research interviewers recruited from outside of the department. For each name in the sample, an attempt was made to get a current address and telephone number from the district office benefit file. Initial contact was then made by telephone, where possible, and agreement to participate in the survey was sought. If this was obtained, a suitable time and place for the interview was arranged. Respondents were given an assurance of confidentiality, and told they would receive a summary of results. Interviewing took place over an 8 month period, from January to August 1988. Interviews occurred, on average, 8 months after respondents received the Stepping Out information kits (which were mailed in six instalments between May and October 1987). The interviews were conducted using a structured questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is attached (Appendix 2).

#### (3) The Response Rate

People sampled who were no longer beneficiaries proved to be difficult to contact because the department did not have a current address in many cases. That is, the department did not have records of any change of address of ex-beneficiaries. People who were still beneficiaries at the time of contact for interview could also be difficult to contact because they were a highly mobile population, sometimes changing address several times in one year. As a result, many of those originally sampled had to be replaced. Of those interviewed, 55% were people originally sampled and 45% were replacements. While the raw response rate was 55%, the procedure of matching replacements to non-respondents minimised many sources of bias. Nevertheless, people who declined to be interviewed may have tended to have more negative views of the scheme, and to this degree the following results may have contained a small amount of positive bias towards the scheme.

However, because UBs were particularly difficult to contact (because they were more mobile and had a higher turnover than the other benefit types), the matching of replacements to non-respondents by benefit type was relaxed to some extent. This was done because the interviewers were spending a considerable amount of time attempting to contact UBs. As a result, UBs were under-represented in the interview sample (30%, compared with 40% of the target population). It is also likely that the ex-beneficiary group was under-represented in the sample because of the difficulty in tracing them. Some 246 completed questionnaires were eventually coded and entered into a computer database.

(4) Characteristics of the Sample

The 246 respondents were distributed by district and benefit type as follows:

Table 16: Distribution of Respondents

<u>District</u>	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Takapuna	68 (15%)	8 (13%)	5 (6%)	81 (14%)
Tauranga	45 (16%)	7 (17%)	26 (10%)	78 (13%)
Wellington	<u>37</u> (17%)	<u>6</u> (21%)	<u>44</u> (11%)	<u>87</u> (14%)
Total	150 (16%)	21 (16%)	75 (10%)	246 (14%)

The figures in brackets above show the respondents as a percentage of total target group numbers (as shown in Table 1). (Note that these percentages are based on unadjusted target group numbers, unlike the percentages in Table 2.) These percentages are, in effect, the response rates for the sub-groups by benefit type and district. The under-representation of UBs is apparent in the table.

A breakdown by sex showed that 95% of DPBs, 100% of WBs and 35% of UBs were women. The average age and age ranges of the respondent groups were (in years):

Table 17: Age by Benefit Type

<u>Benefit Type</u>	<u>Age Range</u>	<u>Average Age</u>
DPB	29-51	41
WB	37-51	46
UB	17-51	32

These sex and age characteristics are very similar to those of the mail survey respondents. The proportions whose benefit remained current at the time of interview were:

Table 18: Benefit Current by Benefit Type

DPB	83%	(124)
WB	95%	(20)
UB	67%	(50)

The average total time spent on benefit since leaving school by those interviewed (at the time of the interview) was 7 years 9 months for DPBs, 9 years 5 months for WBs and 3 years 9 months for UBs. Although the number of WBs in the sample was small, they have been treated separately in the following report of results (unlike the treatment in the section on mail survey results), because the sample was expected to be more representative given the higher response rate. However, it should be borne in mind that there is a large margin of error for WB results, up to 20 percentage points in some tables.

## THE RESULTS

### (1) The Information Kit

Some 90% of all those surveyed remembered getting Stepping Out information kits, a total of 222 people. There was little difference between districts in this proportion, but DPBs (94%) were more likely than UBs (83%) to remember the kit. Nevertheless, the proportion of UBs who remembered the kit was considerably higher than in the mail survey (53%), and this may have been due to interviewers prompting those whose recall was tentative.

Of those who remembered getting the information kit, 27% said that they did something as a result. This group comprised 11% who contacted someone, 10% who returned the reply-paid card (requesting more information) and 5% who did something else (eg. looked for work, discussed it with friends, kept it for future reference). People in Takapuna were more likely to contact someone (21%) than people in Tauranga or Wellington (9% and 4% respectively). However, this may have been due to the presence of fieldworkers in Takapuna who were actively contacting those in the target group, possibly leading to some faulty recall as to who initiated contact. Overall, the proportion who contacted someone (11%) was lower than in the mail survey (see Table 6). It is possible that those who initiated contact were more likely to respond to the mail survey, so the interview survey figure may be more representative of the target groups.

Respondents were asked "Was the information kit of help to you? In what way?" The responses are reported below in terms of percentages of those who reported receiving the kit.

Overall, 31% said the kit was of help. This varied by district as follows:



Table 19: Kit Helpfulness by District

	<u>"Yes"</u>	
Takapuna	47%	(n=75)
Tauranga	30%	(n=70)
Wellington	17%	(n=77)

The kit was clearly seen as least helpful in the Wellington district. Although respondents were asked specifically about the kit, the higher proportion of Takapuna respondents who saw it as helpful may be partly attributable to the reinforcing effect of the fieldworkers in that district. Also, Takapuna had the highest proportion of respondents on DPB, whereas Wellington had the lowest. This will have influenced the above results, as Table 20 below shows that DPBs were more likely to see the kit as helpful.

Variation by benefit type was as follows:

Table 20: Kit Helpfulness by Benefit Type

	<u>"Yes"</u>	
DPB	38%	(n=141)
WB	32%	(n= 19)
UB	15%	(n= 62)

The kit was reported as least helpful by those on UB. This differs from the mail survey results, and may be due to the inclusion of those UBs on whom the kit had little impact, but whose recall of it was triggered by the interviewer (who would have been likely to record that they hadn't received it, or couldn't remember if they had, in the mail survey). Those who were still on benefit at the time of interview were more likely to have found the kit helpful than those whose benefit had ceased, as shown below (5 cases of benefits suspended or transferred have been omitted):

Table 21: Kit Helpfulness by Benefit Status

	<u>"Yes"</u>	
Benefit current	34%	(n=179)
Benefit ceased	21%	(n= 38)

This result indicates that it is (probably) not the case that the efficacy of the Stepping Out kit is being underestimated because ex-beneficiaries are likely to be under-represented in the sample interviewed. In fact, if a higher proportion of those interviewed had been ex-beneficiaries, then the overall proportion reporting the kit as being of help would probably have been smaller.

This result also indicates that the kit was not very effective in helping beneficiaries to move off benefit and into employment, a primary aim of the programme. If it had been more effective in meeting this aim, it would be expected that ex-beneficiaries would have found the kit more helpful than those who remained on benefit. The result may indicate that the kit was found to be more useful in providing assistance or support to deal with the negative effects of unemployment.

The ways in which the kit was regarded as helpful are shown below, given as a percentage of those who reported receiving the kit, with actual numbers in brackets. Each respondent was coded into only one of the following categories, and the order of the categories in the table reflects the coding priority if more than one type of help was reported. The table confirms that the kit's value was largely found to be the support it offered, rather than as a means of gaining employment.

Table 22: Outcomes of Information Kit

<u>Type of Help</u>		<u>n</u>
Gained employment	1%	(2)
Started work-related training	2%	(5)
Started other courses	1%	(3)
Personal growth promoted	6%	(14)
Support provided	15%	(34)
Other benefits	5%	(11)
Not helped	<u>69%</u>	<u>(153)</u>
	100%	(222)

The responses coded in "other benefits" mostly related to information or ideas gained from the kit. The two people who found employment as a result of Stepping Out were both in Tauranga. One had found part-time employment and remained on benefit, and the other was on a ten week work probation scheme and her benefit was suspended. Of the five people who had started work-related training, four were in Tauranga and one was in Wellington. One person (in Tauranga) had started on an ACCESS scheme and had gone off benefit, while the other four remained on benefit. The three people who started other courses were all in Takapuna and one was no longer on benefit. This means that even out of the ten people who had found employment or gone onto training courses, only two had actually gone off benefit (and one other had had her benefit suspended), while the others all continued to receive the benefit. Those on training courses may eventually go off benefit as a result, but the numbers involved would still be small.

In summary, the Stepping Out kit was perceived as not personally helpful by a majority of those who received it, and only a small minority attributed specific changes in their circumstances to the kit. Very few indeed had found employment or gone onto training courses through the kit, and even these had mainly remained on benefit. The kit's value, to those who did find it helpful, was largely in the support it offered. These results are similar to the findings of the mail survey.

(2) The Fieldworkers in Takapuna

Of those interviewed in Takapuna, 55 (68%) recalled being contacted by a Stepping Out fieldworker. Although the fieldworkers tried to contact everyone, it was not feasible for the two part-time fieldworkers to have lengthy contact with all 600 members of the target groups in Takapuna. It is likely that brief contact (which was often by phone) would not be recalled by some after a period of seven months or more. Of those contacted, 65% felt that the fieldworker was helpful. When this figure is compared with the 31% overall who felt that the information kit was helpful, it is clear that the fieldworkers had had a greater positive impact than the information kit alone. Many people made favourable comments about the fieldworkers.

The reported outcomes which resulted from the contact with fieldworkers are given below. Again, the most frequent reported outcome is "support". No one who was interviewed said that they had gained employment as a result of contact with the fieldworker. However, the proportion who said they had started courses as a result, particularly non-work-related courses, was higher than that for the information kit (see Table 22). This seems to be a specific outcome facilitated more effectively by the fieldworkers than by the information kit.

Table 23: Outcomes of Fieldworker Contact

	<u>% of those contacted</u>	<u>n</u>
Started work-related training	4%	(2)
Started other courses	13%	(7)
Personal growth promoted	5%	(3)
Support provided	33%	(18)
Other help	15%	(8)
No outcome	<u>31%</u>	<u>(17)</u>
Total contacted	100%	(55)

The "other" category included responses such as "Received extra help for my mother" and "Helped get older daughters into training". It should be noted that the boundaries between providing support, promoting personal growth and providing other help are not clear cut, but represent an attempt by the researchers to categorise responses.

The outcomes have not been broken down by benefit type because of the predominance of DPBs in Takapuna. The 55 people who recalled being contacted by fieldworkers comprised 50 DPBs, four WBs and one UB. Takapuna therefore had a predominance of those beneficiary types who were less likely to want full-time paid employment immediately. This would have reduced the prospects of moving people off benefit and into employment.

Of the 81 people interviewed in Takapuna, 14 (17%) were ex-beneficiaries at the time of interview. Of these 14, six recalled being contacted by a fieldworker. This group is of particular interest because of the possible influence of the fieldworkers on their movement off benefit. Of these six, two had already moved off DPB to take up full-time employment before fieldworker contact. Of the remaining four (all DPBs), three rated the fieldworker as helpful, the fourth said "pleasant - but not needed". While none specifically linked the Stepping Out programme to their movement off benefit, the effect of fieldworker contact could be seen as a possible influence in three cases (i.e. 5% of all those contacted). In only one of those three cases was the ex-beneficiary in full-time employment. It is not known why the other two were no longer on benefit.

Of the eight ex-beneficiaries who did not recall contact with a fieldworker, seven recalled getting the information kit. However, only one person said the kit was helpful, and she was unable to take up employment because of a serious accident.

In summary, a majority of those contacted by a Stepping Out fieldworker said they had been helped by the fieldworker in some way. There is no definite evidence that anyone moved off benefit because of the Stepping Out programme, although it is possible that for a very small minority the contact was a contributing factor to their movement off benefit.

### (3) Overall Assessment of the Scheme

Respondents in all districts were asked "Do you think the Stepping Out scheme would be helpful to people?" Of those who remembered either receiving the information kit or being contacted by a fieldworker, the replies were:

Table 24: Helpfulness of Stepping Out

		<u>n</u>
Yes	87%	(197)
No	3%	(7)
Unsure	7%	(15)
No Response	<u>3%</u>	<u>(7)</u>
Total	100%	(226)

Clearly, the overwhelming majority of respondents had a positive attitude towards the Stepping Out programme. Those on UB were less likely to say "Yes" (71%) than those on DPB or WB (93%). There was also some variation by district, with the percentage saying "Yes" being 96% in Tauranga, 90% in Takapuna and 77% in Wellington. It is likely that the lower percentage in Wellington is related to the higher proportion of UBs there.

Respondents were also asked "Is there anything about the Stepping Out scheme which you feel should be changed?" Some 51% said "Yes", and the most common change suggested was more personal contact through home visits, etc. Other suggestions included more comprehensive information, more practical help, more emphasis on helping people to find employment and reaching people earlier when they first become beneficiaries. The fact that so many people felt that Stepping Out should be changed, even though most had a positive attitude towards it, suggests that while the programme was in an area where people felt a need for assistance, it was not very successful in actually meeting their needs.

#### (4) Barriers to Paid Employment

One objective of the research was to determine what people perceived as the main barriers to their taking paid employment. Respondents were asked "What is the main thing that stops you having a full-time paid job at the moment?" The responses of those who remained on their original benefit at the time of interview were as follows (all three districts combined):

Table 25: Barriers to Paid Employment by Benefit Type

<u>Main Barrier</u>	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Not enough jobs around	6% (8)	10% (2)	22% (11)
Don't have the right job skills	13% (16)	5% (1)	14% (7)
Children need fulltime care	38% (47)	25% (5)	2% (1)
Caring for a relative	3% (4)	10% (2)	2% (1)
Health problems/disability	16% (20)	25% (5)	28% (14)
Not worth while financially	9% (11)	0% (0)	2% (1)
Lack of suitable childcare	3% (4)	0% (0)	2% (1)
Training or studying	3% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Transport problems	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (3)
Other reasons	<u>8% (10)</u>	<u>25% (5)</u>	<u>22% (11)</u>
Total	100% (124)	100% (20)	100% (50)

The results in this table may appear to be different from the mail survey results (Table 15), but it should be noted that the two sets of results are not strictly comparable because of the different ways in which the questions on barriers were asked in the two surveys. The two sets of results are not necessarily incompatible, therefore, although the possibility of bias in the mail survey due to the low response rate has been referred to previously.

One thing which emerges from Table 25 is that a substantial proportion of sole parent beneficiaries, although their children are older, felt that full-time paid employment would prevent them giving the children the care they need. This is not just a matter of childcare facilities being unavailable, since only 3% of DPBs cited this as the main barrier to employment. It appears that many in this group would prefer to remain full-time parents.

Another feature of the table is the surprising proportion of people on all benefit types who cited health problems or disabilities as the main barrier which prevented them from finding employment. It might be expected that most of these people would be eligible for sickness or invalids benefit. However, there may be little incentive for those on DPB or WB to transfer to SB or IB, since the benefit rates would be similar, while for those on the lower rates of UB, the necessity of obtaining medical certificates might present a barrier to transferring to SB or IB.

The above barriers notwithstanding, it seems clear that if jobs were available at the right skill levels and with adequate remuneration then about one quarter of DPBs and most UBs would take up employment. This is shown in the responses to the question "Do you want to take on a full-time paid job at the moment?"

Table 26: Job Wanted by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	24% (30)	25% (5)	72% (36)
No	75% (93)	75% (15)	26% (13)
Unsure	<u>1% (1)</u>	<u>0% (0)</u>	<u>2% (1)</u>
	100% (124)	100% (20)	100% (50)

Although UBs are required to look for employment, given the proportion who reported health problems in the previous table, it should not be surprising that less than 100% said "Yes" above. For those on DPB or WB, three-quarters did not want full-time paid employment immediately. The results in the previous table suggest that the main reason for this is family responsibilities. Given these results, a programme such as Stepping Out cannot be expected to produce large scale movements off benefit in the short term when so many in the target group perceived remaining on benefit as their preferred option.

Responses to the question "Does the thought of starting a paid job frighten you in any way?" were as follows:

Table 27: Job Start Anxiety by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	52% (n=124)	40% (n=20)	34% (n=50)

These responses suggest that lack of self-esteem and lack of self-confidence were significant barriers for people in the target group.

In spite of these barriers, however, a high proportion of the group had been job-seeking. Responses to the question "Have you applied for a paid job in the last year?" were as follows:

Table 28: Job Application by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	52% (n=124)	50% (n=20)	72% (n=50)

Many were also thinking about their future employment prospects, as shown by responses to the question "Is there any particular kind of job training you would like to have?"

Table 29: Job Training Wanted by Benefit Type

	<u>DPB</u>	<u>WB</u>	<u>UB</u>
Yes	64% (n=124)	35% (n=20)	68% (n=50)

In most cases, the kind of job training wanted related to professional (38%) or clerical (31%) types of jobs.

These results show that most of these beneficiaries were not resigned to long-term benefit dependency. They were looking to return to the paid labour force in the future, and with higher skill levels. Support for long-term beneficiaries who want job training could be a fruitful area for further development. There is a training incentive allowance already available to beneficiaries, but take-up of the allowance is not high and this programme is currently under review to see if it can be made more effective.

Respondents were asked what their last full-time paid job was, what their usual occupation was, and also what paid job they would like to have. Only 23% of beneficiaries said they would like to have the same sort of job that they had last had, while only 34% said they would like to have a job which matched their usual occupation. They were also asked what sort of paid job they were best qualified for through training or experience, and this did not match their last full-time job in 47% of cases. Taken in conjunction with the high proportion who wanted job training, a picture emerges of people who were dissatisfied with their employment history, and who wanted to move into different occupations in the future. The desired occupations were more likely to be professional or technical, while occupations people wanted to move away from were likely to be labouring, service and clerical occupations.

When asked if they would be better off if they had a full-time paid job, a majority (63%) of beneficiaries said "Yes". UBs (78%) were more likely to say "Yes" than DPBs (59%), and this difference may be related to the fact that most UBs receive a lower rate of benefit than most DPBs. Being financially better off was the most common sort of improvement mentioned by those who said "Yes", although some said they would be better off socially or emotionally. Of those who said they would not be better off (36% of beneficiaries), 45% gave financial reasons, 30% gave other reasons, while 25% did not give any reasons. However, about half of those who thought that they would not be financially better off said they would be better off in social or emotional terms. As was also shown by responses to previous questions on barriers to employment, only a minority (16%) perceived full-time employment as not worthwhile financially. Of these, some linked their prospective low pay to their perceived lack of skills. A few said that the costs of working (transport, childcare) would offset any gains compared with the benefit level.

Beneficiaries were asked to name the main things they disliked about being on benefit. Only 5% said there was nothing they disliked. Some 40% mentioned financial constraints, and 41% cited the social stigma which beneficiaries face. DPBs were more likely to mention social stigma, and were also more likely to say that people who were prejudiced against beneficiaries caused them problems (43% compared with 10% of WBs and 24% of UBs).

Asked whether their benefit was enough for an adequate standard of living, 57% of beneficiaries said it was not. Of the 43% who said it was, many qualified their answer by indicating that they could only just make ends meet. Overall, then, there is evidence that these groups were not complacent or apathetic about their situation. While many regarded being on a benefit as their best option at that time, it is clear that it was not seen as an ideal situation.

#### (5) Support Networks

Questions about beneficiaries' sources of support were included to provide information about the target groups in accordance with the research objectives. In particular,



these questions sought to test the hypothesis that members of the target groups were likely to be socially isolated with minimal supportive networks.

The figures below apply only to those who remained on their benefit at the time of interview, as was also the case in the previous section.

Of those with children, 14% said they needed childcare which wasn't available in their area. Of the whole group, with or without children, 27% belonged to community groups, while 18% had received help from community groups. Some 58% said they knew what social services were available in their area, and 34% had received help from social service groups. These figures may have been influenced by the Stepping Out programme itself, which aimed to raise awareness of social services. When asked "Do you have contact with others who are on benefit?", 62% said "Yes". A high proportion, 81%, said there was someone they could turn to if they needed to talk about problems.

A majority of respondents seemed to have at least some access to support networks, therefore, although there were some gaps in awareness of social services. There was variation by benefit type and district, with DPBs, WBs and those in Takapuna having the highest levels of awareness of what social services were available. The activities of the fieldworkers in Takapuna may have resulted in the higher level of awareness there.

These findings appear to cast doubt on the hypothesis that members target groups were likely to be socially isolated with minimal supportive networks. However, it is possible that these beneficiaries were relatively socially isolated compared with the general population. No definite conclusions can be drawn in the absence of comparative information.

## (6) Summary

In conclusion, the information-kit-only approach helped only a minority of those in the target groups, although it seemed to work better in Tauranga than in Wellington. The more intensive approach in Takapuna was helpful to the majority of the target group, although this help was described by many in terms of being supportive rather than bringing about specific outcomes, such as finding employment or getting onto a training course. It is difficult, therefore, to determine the exact effect of Stepping Out on the target group. The majority remained on benefit some eight months after the pilot scheme, but it may not be realistic to have expected otherwise with a group of long-term beneficiaries such as this.

There were marked differences between DPBs and WBs on one hand, and UBs on the other, in terms of perceived barriers to employment. Feelings of responsibility towards their children seemed to be the biggest barrier for sole parents. While most of those on DPB or WB did not want full-time employment immediately, most UBs did. About two-thirds of both DPBs and UBs expressed a desire for job training. There seemed to be a general mis-match between past employment history and future job aspirations, with training seen as the way to overcome this mis-match.

### BENEFIT STATISTICS

As an additional component of the Stepping Out evaluation, departmental benefit statistics were examined in the three pilot districts, as well as in three neighbouring districts and nationwide. In making comparisons between pilot and other districts, it is not possible, of course, to attribute any differences which emerge to the agency of the Stepping Out scheme, since benefit trends in any one district will be influenced by local economic and social conditions, and since no two districts are identical in terms of demographic composition, which would further confound comparisons. Bearing this limitation in mind, benefit figures were examined to see if there were any marked changes in the pilot districts which might possibly have resulted from the Stepping Out programme. Neighbouring districts were chosen as comparison districts on the grounds that any changes in local conditions were likely to be accompanied by similar changes in neighbouring districts.

The number of beneficiaries in the target groups in each of these districts, and nationwide, were identified (using age of beneficiary, age of children and benefit duration characteristics) at the end of each quarter over the period September 1986 to June 1988. If the Stepping Out programme had facilitated movement off benefit for a significant number of beneficiaries, then an abnormal decline in benefit numbers should be discernable. Unfortunately this examination was limited by the following factors:

- (i) WB statistics were only available for the dates 31 March 1987 and 31 March 1988.
- (ii) UB data were not available for benefits ceasing in the December 1986 and March 1987 quarters.
- (iii) DPB data were not available for both ceased and current benefits in the June 1987 and September 1987 quarters.
- (iv) Boundary changes in both the Takapuna district (from late 1987) and its comparison district of Auckland (from early 1988) limited the comparability of statistics from these districts over time.

Despite these deficiencies in the available data, it was possible to conclude that target group numbers in the Tauranga and Wellington districts did not show any abnormal decline which might be attributable to the Stepping Out programme. This was the case for all three benefit types. To illustrate this, in the following table, DPB statistics are given for 31 March 1987 (just prior to the commencement of the Stepping Out programme), and 30 June 1988, 15 months later. Both current numbers of beneficiaries and numbers of benefits ceased in the previous three months are given for DPBs meeting the target group definition.

Table 30: DPB Target Group by District, March 1987 and June 1988

<u>District</u>	<u>Current</u>			<u>Ceased During Quarter</u>		
	<u>Mar 87</u>	<u>Jun 88</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Mar 87</u>	<u>Jun 88</u>	<u>Change</u>
Tauranga	259	271	+4.6%	10	10	-
Whakatane	118	88	-25.4%	5	5	-
Wellington	198	184	-7.1%	8	9	+12.5
Lower Hutt	230	232	+0.9%	11	20	+81.8%
New Zealand	9,177	8608	-6.2%	299	460	+53.8%

In Tauranga target group numbers increased slightly, while those in its neighbour, Whakatane, declined. In Wellington, a small decrease in benefit numbers was apparent, while its neighbour, Lower Hutt, had experienced an increase. However, the decrease in Wellington was close to the national average in proportionate terms, and Lower Hutt had a larger increase in ceased benefits in the June 88 quarter than Wellington. There appears to be no clear evidence, therefore, of any Stepping Out effect for the DPB group in either district.

A similar table for UBs follows next, except that the June 1987 quarter replaces the March 1987 quarter because of the missing data noted above.

Table 31: UB Target Group by District, June 1987 and June 1988

<u>District</u>	<u>Current</u>			<u>Ceased During Quarter</u>		
	<u>Jun 87</u>	<u>Jun 88</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Jun 87</u>	<u>Jun 88</u>	<u>Change</u>
Tauranga	269	222	-17.5%	39	9	-76.9%
Whakatane	494	355	-28.1%	84	18	-78.6%
Wellington	457	319	-30.2%	108	25	-76.9%
Lower Hutt	263	199	-24.3%	47	22	-53.2%
New Zealand	18,780	15,802	-15.9%	2,964	1,096	-63.0%

There was a general decline in numbers in the target groups, but also a decline in the numbers going off benefit. This suggests that the rate of decline in the target groups had decreased during that period. The decline in Tauranga was lower than that in Whakatane, suggesting that there was no Stepping Out effect. The decline in UB numbers in Wellington was higher than in Lower Hutt and higher than the national average, but the decline in numbers going off benefit was also sharper than either Lower Hutt or the national average, so a major impact resulting from Stepping Out seems unlikely.

There were no quarterly data available on WBs ceasing. In the following table, the number of target group WBs current on 31 March 1987 and 31 March 1988 are shown:

Table 32: WB Target Group by District, March 1987 and March 1988

<u>District</u>	<u>Current</u>		<u>Change</u>
	<u>March 87</u>	<u>March 88</u>	
Tauranga	44	38	-13.6%
Whakatane	33	31	-6.1%
Wellington	29	35	+20.7%
Lower Hutt	45	40	-11.1%
Takapuna	74	67	-9.5%
Auckland	96	34	-64.6%
New Zealand	1,630	1,712	+5.0%

The sharp decline in Auckland can be attributed to a reduction in the district boundaries. Takapuna's boundaries were also reduced in this period, but not to the same extent. These two districts cannot be sensibly compared on these figures, therefore, but it can be noted that even with the reduction in boundaries, the number of WBs in Takapuna remained relatively stable. In the other districts, numbers were small, and the directions of change in Tauranga and Wellington relative to their comparison districts were the opposite of those shown in Table 30 for DPB numbers. Once again, no consistent Stepping Out effect is apparent, since numbers in Wellington had actually grown, while Tauranga showed only a slightly larger decrease than Whakatane.

In Takapuna and Auckland the picture is complicated by boundary changes, as noted above. To allow for comparability, ceased benefits have been calculated as a percentage of current benefits for the DPB group in the following table.

Table 33: DPB Target Group, % Ceased by District, March 1987 and June 1988

<u>District</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>March 87</u>		<u>Current</u>	<u>June 88</u>	
		<u>Ceased</u>	<u>% Ceased</u>		<u>Ceased</u>	<u>% Ceased</u>
Takapuna	404	16	4.0%	253	24	9.5%
Auckland	485	6	1.2%	163	5	3.1%
New Zealand	9,177	299	3.3%	8,608	460	5.3%

In June 1988, the proportion of ceased DPBs was higher in Takapuna than in Auckland or New Zealand as a whole. However, this was also the case in March 1987 (before Stepping Out began). When the September 1986 and December 1986 quarters were examined, Takapuna had again had a higher proportion of ceased benefits, suggesting that there was a higher turnover of DPBs in Takapuna generally (whereas Auckland appeared to have a lower than average turnover).

Nevertheless, the proportion of ceased DPBs increased in Takapuna from 4.0% to 9.5% between March 1987 and June 1988. This was greater than the nationwide increase (from 3.3% to 5.3%), so the impact of Stepping Out is a possible explanation for part of the increase. If the increase in ceased benefits over and above the national increase were attributed to the Stepping Out programme, then approximately nine DPBs might have moved off benefit in the three months prior to 30 June 1988 because of Stepping Out. If Stepping Out did have an impact on benefit numbers, therefore, the impact was not large. This is in accord with the survey findings that only a small minority attributed a change in their circumstances to Stepping Out.

The following table is similar to Table 33, but shows the UB target group.

Table 34: UB Target Group, % Ceased by District, June 1987 and June 1988

<u>District</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>June 87</u> <u>Ceased</u>	<u>% Ceased</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>June 88</u> <u>Ceased</u>	<u>% Ceased</u>
Takapuna	163	35	21.5%	74	14	18.9%
Auckland	596	136	22.8%	210	20	9.5%
New Zealand	18,780	2,964	15.8%	15,802	1,096	6.9%

In Takapuna the proportion of ceased UBs declined between the June 1987 and June 1988 quarters. However, the decline was smaller in Takapuna than it was in Auckland or nationwide. Once again, a Stepping Out effect can not be ruled out, but the numbers would have been small (maybe five beneficiaries in the June 1988 quarter).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of both the mail survey and the interview survey are substantially in agreement as to the outcomes of the Stepping Out pilot projects. The majority of respondents thought that Stepping Out was a good idea, but only a very small minority felt that Stepping Out had helped them to go off the benefit or make some other specific change in their circumstances, such as studying or training. The benefit statistics examined support these findings.

The information kit alone was not regarded as personally helpful by most of the beneficiaries targeted. In the Takapuna pilot, which also involved fieldworkers providing support to beneficiaries, the scheme was described as more helpful, but again only a small minority were facilitated into full-time study, training or employment. While some of the positive effects of Stepping Out (in terms of facilitating movement into employment) might be expected to show up only over the longer term, it would be reasonable to expect that some indication of these would have emerged in the interview survey (which was conducted some eight months after the pilot began).

Whether the Stepping Out programme is considered to have been a success or not depends on what level of outcomes are considered to justify the resources put into the scheme. Most members of the target groups had a positive attitude to Stepping Out, including those who said they had not been personally helped by it. It could be argued that even if Stepping Out led to only a small minority entering paid employment or further education, but was perceived positively by the majority, then it would still be justified as long as the savings on benefit payments outweighed the cost of the scheme. However, it could also be argued that such resources would be better deployed on more effective policies. It should also be noted that the evidence on the rate of moving off benefit through the agency of the scheme reported in this paper suggests that the scheme may have fallen short of paying for itself.

When this research was planned, it was intended to measure labour displacement in the pilot districts as a result of Stepping Out. That is, a measure was wanted of the extent to which people in the target groups moved into jobs that other unemployed people would otherwise have taken. However, it was concluded that it was not possible to measure labour displacement sufficiently accurately to answer this question. Plans were then revised to get some indication of labour displacement by comparing the types of jobs gained by beneficiaries (as a result of Stepping Out) with the number of vacancies in those types of jobs in the pilot districts. As it turned out, the number of people who reported gaining a job as a result of Stepping Out was so small that the issue of labour displacement hardly arises. No attempt was made, therefore, to assess the extent of labour displacement. Judging by the usual occupations reported by beneficiaries in the interview survey, a high proportion of the target groups would have moved into unskilled or semi-skilled jobs if they had been facilitated into the paid labour force. Given the difficult employment situation (in particular for jobs at this level), it is likely that had the scheme had more success in

getting beneficiaries into employment some degree of labour displacement would have been likely.

The mail survey showed that a majority of beneficiaries expected to be in full-time employment within two years. The interview survey showed that a majority of beneficiaries had applied for a job in the previous year, and that a majority would like job training in the future. While there was a substantial number of beneficiaries (particularly DPB/WBs) who were not in the market for a job immediately, among those who did want a job, only a small minority were discouraged to the point of giving up looking for work. Low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence, however, did emerge as barriers to finding employment for many people. For sole parent beneficiaries, responsibility for their children seemed to be the major reason why three quarters of them did not want full-time employment in the short term. Those in the target groups had older than average children, but it appeared that parents were as much concerned about the care of older children as about younger children. Provision of more after school and school holiday childcare or activity programmes could go some way towards reducing this barrier, although there may be difficulties catering for older children in this manner. Part-time employment would have been the preferred option for about half of the sole parent beneficiaries. Policies which promote part-time employment, therefore, may lead to greater self-confidence, less social isolation, and an easier transition to full-time employment in the future.

For unemployment beneficiaries, major barriers to employment were a perceived lack of jobs, a perceived lack of job skills and health or injury problems. The incidence of health problems suggests that some of the target population might have been more appropriately placed on a different benefit, such as sickness benefit. The forthcoming introduction of Universal Benefit will solve some problems of misclassification, although there will be a separate incapacity scheme, so some potential for misclassification will remain. Job skills deficits could be tackled through training programmes, something that most of those surveyed were interested in. One of the aims of Stepping Out was to facilitate the target groups into job training, but success was achieved with only a few. The challenge seems to be to find more effective means of translating the desire for training into reality than those currently available.

These research results apply only to the target groups in the pilot districts. Apart from the possibility that the pilot districts might have been unrepresentative of New Zealand as a whole, the target groups were selected on criteria of age of beneficiary, age of children and benefit duration which made them highly unrepresentative of these beneficiary groups as a whole. Caution must therefore be exercised when generalising from these results. Nevertheless, when new policies are being developed, it would not be unreasonable to assume that policies which meet the needs of these target groups would have a wider applicability.

APPENDICES

THE SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

APPENDIX 1 The Mail Survey Questionnaire

APPENDIX 2 The Interview Survey Questionnaire



APPENDIX 1. The Mail Survey Questionnaire

**"STEPPING OUT" — WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Please read the questions below and put a tick (✓) in the box next to the statement which best describes your answer.

(1) Did you get an information kit called "Stepping Out" in the mail recently?

- Yes                       No                       I don't remember

If your answer was "No" or "I don't remember", please skip questions (2)-(14) and go to question (15).

(2) What did you think of this information kit?

- Not helpful to anyone  
 Not helpful to me but may be helpful to others  
 Of some help to me  
 Very helpful to me

(3) Was the kit easy to understand?

- Yes                       No

(4) Did you pass it on to someone else who found it useful?

- Yes                       No

(5) Have you contacted anyone on the local contact list in the information kit?

- Yes                       No                      → If "No" go to question (13).

(6) When you contacted someone, were they able to help you or put you in contact with someone who could?

- Yes                       No

(7) Have you joined a support group or made new friends as a result of this contact?

- Yes                       No

(8) Have you started or signed up for a training course as a result of this contact?

- Yes                       No

(9a) Do you have a paid job as a result of this contact?

- Yes                       No

(9b) (If "Yes") Is this job                       Full-time                      or                       Part-time?

(10) Have you done voluntary work as a result of this contact?

Yes  No

(11) Did anything else good happen as a result of this contact?

Yes  No

If "Yes", what was it?

.....  
.....  
.....

(12) Did anything bad happen as a result of this contact?

Yes  No

If "Yes", what was it?

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(13) Do you think the "Stepping Out" scheme is a good idea?

Yes  No

Why?

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(14) Can you think of anything that would make the "Stepping Out" scheme better?

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(15) Are you getting a Social Welfare benefit at the moment?

Yes  No ———▶ If "No" go to question (19)

(16) At the moment, which of these choices suits you best?

- Getting a Social Welfare benefit only
- Having a part-time paid job and getting a Social Welfare benefit
- Having a full-time paid job

If you chose "Getting a Social Welfare benefit only" go to question (18)

(17) If you would like a paid job, what do you think is stopping you from getting one?  
(Tick all the reasons that apply to you)

- Not enough jobs around
- I don't have the right job skills
- I don't have a good work record
- Employers are prejudiced against me
- I don't know how to go about getting a job
- Lack of good childcare (eg. after school and during school holidays)
- I've given up looking for work
- Other reasons (please explain)

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(18) Do you think you will have a full-time paid job at sometime in the next two years?

- Yes                       No

For the following questions, please tick the boxes which apply to you.

(19)  Female  Male

(20) Age

17-24 years  25-34 years  
 35-44 years  45 years or more

(21) School Qualifications

None  School Certificate  
 Sixth Form Certificate or University Entrance

(22) Please list any other qualifications since leaving school:

.....  
.....

(23) What is your usual job when you have full-time paid work?  
(If you have never had full-time paid work, please write "NIL").

.....

(24) Do you have any children (either your own or others) who you are caring for and who live with you?

Yes.  No ———▶ .If "No" go to question (26)

(25) What is the age of your youngest child who is living with you?

.....

(26) Is there anything else you would like to say?

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.....

Thank you for taking the time to fill this in.

APPENDIX 2. The Interview Survey Questionnaire

"STEPPING OUT" QUESTIONNAIRE

1 Do you remember getting an information kit called "Stepping Out" in the mail a few months ago?

Yes                       No - GO TO Q.6

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(IF YES)  
2 What did you think of this information kit?

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.....  
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3 Is there some way that the information kit could be improved?

Yes                       No

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.....

4 Did you do anything as a result of getting the information kit? What was that?

Yes

No

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.....  
.....

5 Was the information kit of help to you? In what way?

Yes

No

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6 What are the main things you dislike about being on benefit?

.....  
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7 What is the total amount of time that you have spent on benefit since leaving school?

.....  
.....  
.....

8a Do you think that some people are prejudiced against people who get a Social Welfare benefit?

Yes  No - GO TO Q.9

8b Does this cause you any problems?

Yes  No

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.....  
.....

9 Is your benefit enough for an adequate standard of living?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

10 Would you be better off if you had a full-time paid job?  
(FULL-TIME = 30 HOURS PER WEEK OR MORE)

Yes  No

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.....  
.....

11 Do you think that being on a benefit is your best option at the moment?

Yes - GO TO Q.13  No

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(IF "No")

12. What option would you prefer?

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13 Do you belong to any community groups or beneficiaries organisations?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

14 Have you received help from community groups?

Yes  No

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.....  
.....

15 Do you have contact with others who are on benefit?

Yes  No

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.....  
.....



16 If you need to talk about any problems you might have, is there someone you can turn to?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

17 Do you know what social services are available in your area?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

18 Is there any social service group which you think could be helpful to you?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

19 Have you received help from social service groups?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

20 Are there any courses you would like to do or qualifications you would like to study for (e.g. health, budgeting or personal development courses, polytechnic or university study)?

Yes  No

.....  
.....  
.....

21 Is there any particular kind of job training you would like to have?

Yes  No

.....  
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.....

22 Do you think you have enough information about jobs and training in your local area?

Yes  No

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.....  
.....

23 What is the main thing that stops you having a full-time paid job at the moment?

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24 Is there anything else which stops you having a full-time paid job?

Yes  No

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25 Have you applied for a paid job in the last year?

Yes  No

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26 What sort of paid job are you best qualified for through training or experience?

.....  
.....  
.....

27 What was the last full-time paid job you had?

.....  
.....  
.....

28 Is that your usual occupation?

Yes  No ASK FOR USUAL OCCUPATION

.....  
.....  
.....

29 Do you want to take on a full-time paid job at the moment?

Yes

No

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.....

30 What sort of paid job would you like to have?

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.....

31 Does the thought of starting a paid job frighten you in any way? Why?

Yes

No

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.....  
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(IF THE RESPONDENT HAS DEPENDENT CHILDREN THEN GO TO Q.32 -  
Q.34 IF THE RESPONDENT HAS NO DEPENDENT CHILDREN THEN GO TO  
Q.35)

32 Do you feel you should remain at home full-time because of your children?

Yes

No

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.....

33 Would your children be okay at home after school if you were not there?

Yes

No

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

34 Is there any sort of childcare which you need, but which isn't available in your area.

Yes

No

.....

.....

.....

35 (TAKAPUNA ONLY - WELLINGTON AND TAURANGA INTERVIEWS GO TO QUESTION 38)

Have you been contacted by a "Stepping Out" fieldworker?

Yes

No - GO TO Q.36

PHONE/FACE-TO-FACE (DELETE ONE)

.....  
.....  
.....

36 (IF YES)

What was the result of this contact?

.....  
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37 How helpful was the fieldworker?

.....  
.....  
.....

38 Do you think the "Stepping Out" scheme would be helpful to people?

Yes

No

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



Date Due

12 SEP 1990			
28 MAY 1994			
28 SEP 1994			
26 NOV 1994			
16 OCT 97			

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**Information Centre  
Dept. of Social Welfare  
Private Bag 21  
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361.  
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53485

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