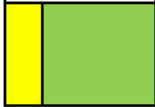







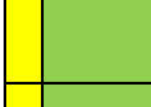

Oranga Tamariki Residence Visit (Unannounced OPCAT Visit)

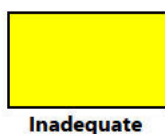
Epuni Care and Protection Residence

Visit date: s 9(2)(a) OIA 2019. Report date: 18 November 2019

Overall Assessment	2019	
		

Please note that we changed our rating scale to a 4 point rating scale on 1 July 2019. See Appendices 2 and 3 for our new OPCAT rating scale and previous ratings.

OPCAT Domains	2019
Treatment	
Protection system	
Material conditions	
Activities & contact with others	
Medical services & care	
Personnel	
Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori	



(REMOVED ACHIEVED NOT ACHIEVED)

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Key findings and recommendations.....	5
Domain 1: Treatment.....	7
Domain 2: Protection system.....	10
Domain 3: Material conditions.....	12
Domain 4: Activities and contact with others.....	15
Domain 5: Medical services and care.....	16
Domain 6: Personnel.....	17
Domain 7: Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori.....	19
Appendix One: Why we visit (legislative background).....	20
Appendix Two: Interpretation of ratings.....	21
Appendix Three: Previous OPCAT ratings.....	22
Appendix Four: Our monitoring approach.....	23

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Introduction

1. On s 9(2)(a) OIA 2019 s 9(2)(a) OIA from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) conducted an unannounced monitoring visit to Epuni care and protection residence, Lower Hutt.

Purpose of visit

1. The purpose of our visit was to assess the quality of Oranga Tamariki's services against the seven domains relevant to our role as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT). See [Appendix 1](#)

Structure of this report

2. This report shares the findings from our visit to Epuni care and protection residence and makes recommendations for actions to address the issues identified. For the convenience of readers, we first list our key findings and recommendations. We then describe our findings for each of the seven OPCAT domains. For each OPCAT domain, we provide a statement that summarises the reasons for our rating for that domain. Finally, we provide the evidence for our overall domain finding as a list of strengths and areas for development.

Context

3. Epuni care and protection residence is a 10 bed secure residence in Lower Hutt, Wellington. At the time of our visit, there were 9 children and young people placed in the residence.

s 9(2)(a) OIA

4. Most children and young people placed in care and protection residences have learning, behavioural, attachment and/or mental health needs that require ongoing and specialist support. For some, forming relationships with people who are unfamiliar to them and engaging in semi-structured interview processes is extremely challenging. During the two days we spent at the Epuni residence, we engaged with children and young people in various ways. Our first interactions were via a guided tour of the residence. We then moved on to a mixture of informal conversations and 'show and tell' sessions where children and young people talked us through various aspects of their life in the residence. We conducted formal interviews with four children and young people.
5. Epuni residence has been through a period of uncertainty over the last 15 months, with 4 different managers filling the role while the residence manager recovered from an extended period of illness. Since the manager returned, there has been a period of refocusing on the vision for the residence. We received feedback from a variety of staff and from the Grievance Panel that a clear vision is now in place.
6. While the intention to phase out care and protection residences is strongly supported by this office, we recognise that this changing environment creates uncertainty for staff. We are aware that the residence manager and leadership team need to actively manage this at Epuni residence.

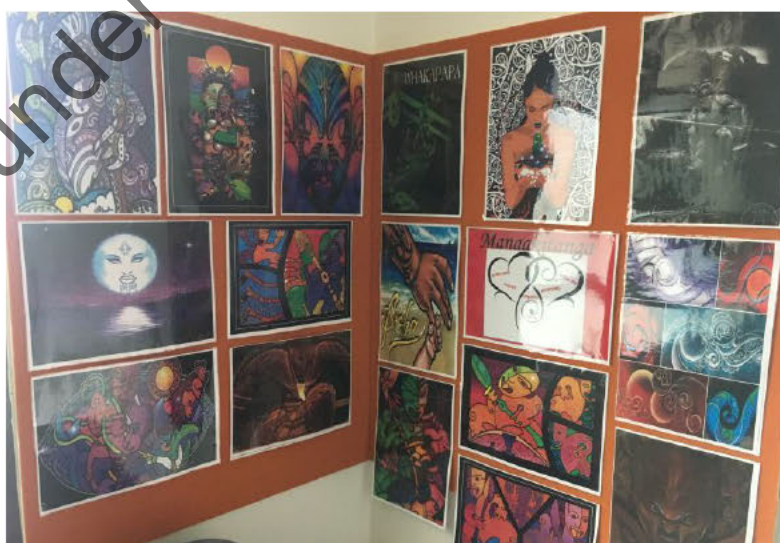


Photo: Artwork in whānau visiting room

Key findings and recommendations

7. In assessing these ratings we have applied our new OPCAT evaluative framework, effective from 1 July 2019. This is currently being developed in consultation with Oranga Tamariki and Barnardos. We changed our OPCAT rating system from a 5 point to 4 point rating scale. Please see [Appendix 2](#) for more information on our new rating system and [Appendix 3](#) for the previous ratings for this residence using our former rating scale.



Overall Rating: Good with inadequate elements.

8. Our overall rating for Epuni residence is good with inadequate elements. This is a similar level of assessment to the rating of well placed with developing elements at our previous OPCAT visit in s 9(2)(a) CIA 2018, where we used a different, five-point rating scale.
9. While we have changed our rating scale, it is still evident that the following domains have improved since our last visit: **Activities and Contact with others** and **Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori**:

We evaluated four domains as at a similar level as our last visit: **Medical Services and Care, Treatment, Personnel** and **Protection System**

We rated the following domain as having regressed since our last visit: **Material Conditions**

10. Our monitoring assessment identified that the residence has many strengths. Children and young people experience:
- Positive role modelling from staff
 - Opportunities to have a say in the day to day running of the residence
 - Changes occurring in response to their complaints, suggestions and feedback
 - Learning to understand their strengths, needs and tools to support them to self-regulate
 - Strengthened connections to whakapapa or where they are from
 - Individualised activities in the residence and the community which enable them to meet their goals
11. We identified several areas for the residence's development:
- Children and young people need to be more involved in the development and reviews of their plans
 - The Behaviour Management System does not cater to the needs of children and young people
 - The run down physical environment has negative effects on the wellbeing of children and young people

- Care staff need more support to ensure they always follow health and care plans
- Some children and young people with complex needs waiting for long periods to transition to specialised placements

Recommendations

For the National Office, Oranga Tamariki

- Rec 1: The DCE Care Services ensures that while children and young people continue to be placed in care and protection residences, the physical environments are maintained to a high standard. (Ref pg 12-14)
- Rec 2: The DCEs Services for Children and Families North and South ensure that all site social workers provide children and young people, and their whānau, with clear, factual information about residential placements. (Ref pg 11)
- Rec 3: The DCE Care Services reviews the criteria and steps in the decision making process when considering employing people with low level or historical convictions (where these convictions are not specified under the Vulnerable Children Act) to establish whether undue barriers are in place for appointment of residential staff. (Ref pg 18)
- Rec 4: The GM Care and Protection Residences continues to encourage the sharing of good practice at monthly leadership meetings between residences to improve outcomes for Māori, e.g. the use of whakapapa books. (Ref pgs 7, 8)
- Rec 5: The DCEs Services for Children and Families North and South ensure that planning for specialised placements suitable for children with complex needs begins as early as possible, so that long extensions to care and protection residence placements can be minimised. (Ref pg 9)
- Rec 6: The DCE Care Services reviews whether the current supervision policy is meeting the needs of residential staff. (Ref pg 18)

For the Residence

- Rec 7: The Residence Manager and Leadership Team ensure that all care staff have regular access to training and coaching that supports them to consistently follow children and young people's health and care plans. (Ref pgs 16, 18)
- Rec 8: The Residence Manager and Leadership Team, along with the clinical team and the site social workers, ensure that children and young people have meaningful input into their review meetings and are fully involved in the development of their plans. (Ref pg 9)
- Rec 9: The Residence Manager, Leadership Team and kaimahi Māori partner with mana whenua to develop a plan with goals for improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori with time framed actions, including how to enable the recruitment of kaimahi Māori and embedding the use of tikanga in everyday practice. (Ref pgs 17,19)

Findings for each OPCAT domain

Domain 1: Treatment



Good with inadequate elements

12. We rated most elements of treatment practice as good. We observed engaged, skilled interactions between staff and children and young people. Children and young people are also supported to strengthen their connection to their cultural identity. The inadequate elements are: the Behaviour Management System which does not meet the needs of children and young people; and the need for children and young people to be more involved in the development and reviews of their plans.

Strengths

- **Staff are skilled at developing relationships with children and young people.** The importance placed on relationships is led and modelled by the Residence Manager and the Senior Leadership Team and embodied by care staff. We observed genuine, warm and engaging interactions between staff and children and young people. The children and young people we spoke to identified staff they were able to get along with and trust. As one young person told us *"Good staff are the ones that know how to interact with us."*
- **Children and young people have formal and informal opportunities to have a say in day to day matters.** Children and young people told us if they wanted to have a say they could easily talk to staff or the senior leadership team. Every Monday there are core programmes delivered which provide a forum to have a say on particular topics. The Residence Manager also spends time on the floor with children throughout the day and the Team Leader Operations (TLOs) and Case Leaders have open door policies where they make themselves available to talk with children and young people when needed.
- **Children and young people are supported to strengthen their connection to their cultural identity.** We are pleased that there has been a significant improvement in this area since our last monitoring visit. A senior staff member has taken on the role of working with site social workers and whānau to support children and young people to find out more about their whakapapa or where they are from. All tamariki, Māori and non-Māori, are then provided with a book with stories about their whakapapa or background. These include role models from their hapū and iwi or from their relevant cultural background. This is particularly empowering for children and young people who have difficult relationships with their whānau. Children and young people were very proud to show us their books. Some told us that finding out more about their whakapapa or where they are from has helped

them to have a stronger sense of their identity. As one young person told us, *"I'm gonna compare [my whakapapa book] to kumara... if you go deeper, there is bigger, sweeter ones. [Staff member] digs out the biggest kumara. It actually makes me feel like I am actually getting to understand my Māori side."* We also heard that ██████ young people recently had very successful transitions out of the residence due to connections with their wider whānau and hapū facilitated and supported by the residence.

- **Children and young people are learning to understand their strengths and needs.** The principles behind the Alert programme provide the base for the residence's therapeutic model of care. This programme is supported by a psychologist and an occupational therapist. The Alert Program focuses on teaching self-regulation skills. For example, by using an analogy of an engine, staff, children and young people can become aware of whether they are running 'high' or 'low' or 'just right'. Children and young people learn how to change their level of alertness to enable them to engage, relate to others and be ready to learn. They were able to tell us how they can recognise and respond to their regulatory needs and that using sensory tools with the Alert Program helps them. Staff are also supporting children and young people by intervening early to prevent escalation. This is evidenced by a reduction in the use of physical restraints and secure care.

Ongoing training will be critical for staff to better understand trauma. This will provide greater consistency and will support staff, children and young people to self-regulate and practice their skills for managing their emotions in challenging situations.

Areas for development

- **The Behaviour Management System (BMS) conflicts with the therapeutic model of the residence.** The BMS focusses on rewarding adult-determined target behaviours. Children and young people have points given and taken away depending on whether they meet these targets. Staff told us that they attempt to adapt the BMS to the individual needs of children and young people by setting different daily goals. However, children and young people are often more focused on the potential to lose points than developing positive behaviours. One staff member told us *"Once the [young person] drops their level they believe it is the end of their world"*. In contrast, the Alert programme supports staff, children and young people to develop insights into their behavioural responses and use coping skills to regulate themselves. Staff have noticed that individualised and developmentally appropriate responses, such as spending time with a child on an activity of interest, are more effective than BMS at promoting positive behaviours.

We encourage the residence and National Office to evaluate whether the BMS is still necessary as the principles of the ALERT system become more ingrained in everyday practice.

- **Children and young people need to be more involved in the development and reviews of plans to ensure they feel empowered at a time of change.**

It was clear that some of the children and young people we spoke to did not know everything that was included in their plans. Children and young people also don't regularly attend their Multi Agency Team (MAT) review meetings. One young person told us "[My case leader] hardly tells me when my MAT meetings are up. I want to go. [redacted] never notifies me." Case leaders told us that the change to weekly MAT meetings means that children and young people do not see change at each meeting and it is difficult to maintain their interest in attending. Currently, case leaders consult children and young people and make themselves available to meet more informally. However, they are also working on finding ways to involve children more in MAT meetings.

We understand the challenges of maintaining the engagement of children and young people in their plans especially when their placements are extended multiple times. At the same time, it is important that they remain at the centre of their plans to ensure they have agency, ownership and are in agreement with their plans.

Furthermore, we found some variability in the type of language used in plans. When we read to a child what was written in their plan, they said "No one in my family is named 'kin'." Using plain language helps children understand and engage with their plans. The residence will soon begin to use the new 'All About Me' plan format and resources to support planning. We look forward to the impact that this will have for children and young people.

- **Some children and young people with complex needs waiting for long periods to transition to specialised placements.** s 9(2)(a) OIA

While we understand that bespoke specialised placements are being created to meet the complex needs of these children and young people, we are concerned about the time this takes and the impact for children and young people living in an institutional environment for this length of time.

Domain 2: Protection system



Good with inadequate elements

13. We have rated this domain as predominately good to reflect that the residence has a good standard of practice. Children and young people are well supported when admitted to the residence. Whaia te Māramatanga (complaints, feedback and suggestions system) is administered well and works well for children and young people. Three inadequate elements are acting as a constraint on the residence's ability to improve this rating and need be addressed nationally: the accessibility of Whaia te Māramatanga for children and young people with communication challenges; appropriate follow up when investigating complaints of **s 9(2)(a) OIA** and a lack of clear, factual information given to children and young people by site social workers about residential placements.

Strengths

- **Children and young people are well supported through the admission process.** Case leaders complete comprehensive admissions screening and give young people information about the residence. This process often happens gradually as appropriate for the child or young person. A whakatau is held as soon as practicable where staff and children or young people already living at the residence play roles in welcoming the new child or young person to Epuni residence. We were also encouraged to hear that another child or young person often supports the admission process by taking their new peer on a tour and explaining about the residence from their perspective.
- **Whaia te Māramatanga (WTM) is administered well and works well for children and young people.** As well as informal means of making complaints or suggestions, children and young people told us they are supported to use WTM. Those that we spoke to know how WTM works. They said changes often happen because of their use of WTM. One young person told us, "[WTM] is always successful, always get a result." We are encouraged to hear that Grievance Advocates have been recruited and are visiting the residence regularly. We heard from the grievance panel that they are visiting regularly to build relationships with young people and staff, and that they have a productive working relationship with the residence leadership team.

Areas for development

- **Whaia te Māramatanga needs to be accessible for all children and young people.** From our review of the grievance register and discussions with children and young people, it is clear that many of them find it difficult to communicate orally and in writing.

To ensure WTM is accessible for all children and young people, the available methods of submitting a WTM, such as via audio recording need to be expanded. We are aware that Oranga Tamariki has been reviewing the Residential Care Regulations. Since our visit, improvements to Whaia te Māramatanga have been agreed. We look forward to these being implemented in a timely manner and to hearing about tangible benefits for children and young people.

- **Appropriate responses are needed when children and young people make complaints**

s 9(2)(a) OIA

The investigation of this complaint raised questions of how complaints of this nature are allocated. The residence leadership team needs to ensure that investigations of a sensitive nature are allocated in an informed way, considering the gender, skills and knowledge of the investigator. Furthermore, a report of concern needs to be made and the two investigations carried out in tandem. The child or young person needs to be kept informed of the outcome of the report of concern, in accordance with Regulation 69 of the National Care Standards. At our next visit we will evaluate whether these processes are being followed.

- **Children and young people need clear, factual information when they transition to residence.** We are concerned that we continue to hear on our visits to residences about site social workers giving misleading information to children and young people about their residence placements. This practice does not align with Oranga Tamariki values, the principles of the Oranga Tamariki Act or new Care Standard Regulations. It leads to anxiety and mistrust for children and young people. The residence endeavours to provide clarity about their placement for children and young people once they arrive at Epuni residence. However, this is often not able to mitigate the impact of the misleading information on children and young people and their whānau. Support is needed from national office to lead change in this practice.

Domain 3: Material conditions



Inadequate with harmful elements

14. Our rating reflects the run-down physical condition of many aspects of the residence. This has negative impacts on the well-being of children and young people placed there. To improve this rating, Oranga Tamariki national office needs to prioritise refurbishment of the residence. Without evidence of significant improvements at our next visit, this rating is likely to regress further at our next visit.

Children and young people's voice

"I think they need to repaint the walls."

"It's really messy in [secure] and it looks ugly."

"I think they need a bigger courtyard... a grass space."

"I don't think it's a happy environment...plastic chairs, carpet all hoary, and the couches have got blood stains on them and are yuk as. I feel like they don't clean them."

s 9(2)(a) OIA

"The mattress I have got has moulded to my back. Mattresses are supposed to be flat but mine has a cradle. The feet part is raised."

"I really like mashed potatoes. It's just nice and warm. It's a Wellington thing. We need to have warm food because it's so cold here."

"Sometimes (the food) is good, sometimes its yuck."

Strengths

- **Children and young people are supported to have a say in the menu.** This has been an area of improvement since our last monitoring visit. As part of regular after school programming run by care staff, children and young people are consulted on their meal preferences by designing their preferred menu for the week. Kitchen staff attempt to respond to the suggestions made and are also flexible with their menu planning, such as changing the menu on the day to suit the weather. **s 9(2)(a) OIA**

s 9(2)(a) OIA

Areas for development

- **The physical environment needs maintenance and refurbishment.** The large, secure, institutional environment of the residence is not a child friendly design, and most spaces used by children and young people are very run down. The residence manager has a limited budget and has prioritised refreshing public facing and frequently used places, specifically the whānau visiting room and the TV lounge. Children and young people expressed concerns about the condition and cleanliness of many parts of the environment. Staff also told us that the environment is difficult for them to be in.

From our observations and discussions, our main concerns are:

- There is confronting and explicit tagging on walls, windows and furnishings.
- Chairs in the main unit have stains on them. s 9(2)(a) OIA
- Hard surfaces and background noise from heavy doors means many areas are echoey and loud.
- The 'My Space' area, provided near the main unit space for children and young people to have a space alone to self-regulate, and the phone room, are both run down and have only hard surfaces.
- There is minimal outdoor grass area that is easily accessed.
- Both trampolines have broken parts.
- The heated indoor pool is not warm enough for some children and young people.

We understand that major refurbishment is not planned as Oranga Tamariki are planning to transition from using large residences to smaller community homes. However, high needs children and young people continue to be placed in the residence with the aim of assessment and stabilisation. Their living environment needs to support this by providing a child friendly environment that caters to their needs. This includes sensory needs and feeling cared for and safe. The current environment is instead having a negative impact on their wellbeing.

- **Bedding needs replacing.** We heard from some children and young people that their beds are not comfortable. One young person chose to move their mattress onto the floor each night as they found the base uncomfortable. Another young person told us the mattress has moulded to the shape of their body. Upon inspection, mattresses appeared soft and worn out. In addition to replacing old and worn out mattresses, we also recommend resourcing the residence to allow children to personalise their environments more such as choosing their own bedding.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Milo cereal Veggies barrow	Chicken App noodles Sabcd	take always once every 1 day buffet chicken Marinated Chicken nibbel Chicken Nuggets
Snack		

Photo: Child menu suggestion



Photo: Refurbishment of whānau room



Photo: Secure unit room



Photo: Toilet in secure unit room



Photo: Tagging on couch



Photo: Partially broken trampoline and only secure grass area

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Domain 4: Activities and contact with others



Good

15. This domain has been rated as good because children and young people enjoy individualised activities and are supported to have contact with their whānau. Asking children and young people for their input into group activities programming will further strengthen this rating.

Strengths

- **Children and young people enjoy individualised activities, especially ones that engage them in the local community.** These include playing for a local soccer team, boxing at a local gym and spending time in the community with a mentor. Residence staff manage risk so that all children and young people regularly spend time off site, for example visiting the local pool or undertaking acts of service in the community, such as mowing lawns. As one child said, *"There's heaps of things to do."* We observed children and young people enjoying time with staff during the day and after school on their specific interests.

Children and young people had mixed views on the group activities in the residence, One said, *"We did a listening programme. [It was] fun"* and another told us, *"[Activity Based Learning activities], they are boring."* As we recommended in our previous two reports, we encourage the residence to ask children and young people about their preferences for group activities programming.

- **Contact with whānau is supported.** All children we spoke to had easy access to phone contact with their whānau. s 9(2)(a) OIA Staff work to overcome the challenges to whānau visiting and to make visits successful when they occur. The residence manager also supports whānau members who are unable to visit the residence by speaking to them on the phone. Despite the efforts of residence management and staff, many children and young people continue to have difficult relationships with whānau due to their complex histories, *"I don't remember my family."*

Domain 5: Medical services and care



Good

16. The rating reflects the good access that children and young people at Epuni residence have to primary and specialist health services. The consistent implementation of health plans will further strengthen this rating.

Strengths

- **Children and young people have good access to primary health care services.** Nurses are available at the residence every day; sometimes two nurses attend to ensure they are at MAT meetings. Children and young people we spoke to told us that they have their needs met. One young person told us, "*Medical is up here* [points to highest rating]. *I am actually quite healthy.*" Health staff and residence staff all told us that the health needs of children and young people in residence are becoming more and more complex. For example, while we were at the residence, s 9(2)(a) OIA

s 9(2)(a) OIA

- **Specialist services can be easily accessed.** All children receive dental, vision and hearing checks while placed at the residence. Several children and young people have regular reviews with a paediatrician. While a psychiatrist no longer visits the residence on a fortnightly schedule, Infant, Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Services (ICAFS) can be accessed on a case by case basis. An Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Practitioner also provides support.

Areas for development

- **Care staff need more support to ensure they always follow health plans.** Health staff are providing an increasing amount of coaching to care teams in order to support them to manage significant health needs. Health staff also support care teams to administer medication and ensure that children and young people take it. We were concerned to hear that health plans are not always followed. For example, care staff have been allowing a young person s 9(2)(a) OIA to dilute their prescribed nutritional supplement. Care plans must be closely followed for the safety of all children, young people and staff.

Domain 6: Personnel



Good with inadequate elements

17. This domain is predominantly rated as good due to sufficient staffing levels, staff displaying positive behaviour towards children and young people, and staff receiving appropriate training. However, more consistent and regular supervision, supporting staff to consistently follow care plans, and improving the residence's flexibility in recruiting skilled and reliable care staff, will improve this rating.

Strengths

- **Staff role model positive behaviour.** Creating a positive culture and addressing negative behaviour has been a focus for the residence manager and senior leadership team. We observed staff relating positively to each other and warm engaging interactions between staff and children and young people. One staff member told us *"There is good role modelling, especially some of the guys for the boys."*

The residence currently only has three permanent members of staff who are Māori. Increasing numbers of Māori staff will ensure that tamariki Māori also have strengthened access to positive role models from their own culture.

- **Staffing levels are adequate.** Staff levels allow children and young people to attend visits with whānau and individualised offsite activities. During our visit we observed staffing levels that were sufficient to ensure two staff members were able to supervise **s 9(2)(a) OIA**
s 9(2)(a) OIA
- **Staff receive skilled training and coaching.** Recent training has focussed on Oranga Tamariki Practice standards and Care Standards in preparation for changes coming into place on 1 July 2019. At the handover discussion, we observed a shift leader using skilled, specific coaching on how to support the needs of children and young people. Training for staff on the Alert program was scheduled to occur just after our visit. While it is anticipated that this could address some of the need for training around the impacts of trauma, further comprehensive training on trauma is needed to support staff to work with children and young people.
- **Staff access to group supervision.** The TLOs currently provide group supervision for care teams. One staff member told us *"Group supervision helps us to debrief together."* A psychologist also provides additional group supervision on a case by case basis. One TLO is currently waiting for the next national delivery of supervision training and in the meantime

is being coached by the residence manager in the provision of supervision. We are pleased to hear that cultural supervision will soon be provided for all staff.

Areas for development

- **Care staff require better access to regular individual supervision.** TLOs are available for individual supervision when deemed necessary and practicable. Some staff told us they would like more time for professional supervision in addition to coaching and mentoring. We acknowledge that Epuni residence is meeting the Oranga Tamariki supervision policy guidelines and that TLOs provide individual supervision when possible among other responsibilities. However, we encourage Oranga Tamariki national office to review whether the supervision policy is sufficient to support all staff in their high demand roles.
- **Care staff need training, supervision and coaching to follow care plans more rigorously.** We heard from the clinical team and Health and Education stakeholders that there are positive relationships with the residence leadership. Care teams and case leaders use written notes and discussions at shift handovers to communicate relevant, up to date information about children and young people. Furthermore, MAT meetings work well for staff and stakeholders. However, we heard some concerns from clinical and health teams about care plans and operational plans not being followed correctly. This means that children and young people receive conflicting messages from different staff. Care staff need to maintain therapeutic relationships with children and young people to ensure the safety of all in the residence. We encourage the residence to ensure that care staff have the time to spend in training and coaching with clinical and health teams to fully understand care plans and ensure they are followed.
- **Employment vetting processes sometimes impact on the recruitment of staff with relevant life experience.** The residence's leadership team makes genuine attempts to recruit staff with the cultural experience, credibility and skills required to relate to the cohort of children and young people placed at the residence. However, Oranga Tamariki recruitment policy has a high threshold for previous convictions. Some applicants with key skills and attributes are not able to be employed due to the number of previous low level and/or historical convictions. These are not specified offences under the Vulnerable Children's Act but are deemed to exceed the threshold. We suggest that the criteria and processes for employing people with low level historical convictions in residences need to be reviewed.

Domain 7: Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori



Good with inadequate elements

18. The practical involvement of mana whenua and the support to grow staff cultural capability is good. The inadequate element reflects the residence's need to develop a strategic plan for improving outcomes for Mokopuna Maori.

Strengths

- **Partnerships with mana whenua are having meaningful impacts for the residence.** The residence manager has been building relationships with Te Runanga o Te Ati Awa. This is reflected in the partnership with mana whenua to develop the supervised group home Te Awe and the development of a contract for cultural supervision.
- **Staff are supported to build their cultural capability.** A senior staff member has been instrumental in enabling staff to build their understanding and use of tikanga. Staff we spoke with expressed a strong desire to learn more about tikanga and to be able to stand and do their pepeha. Practical actions, such as providing a format for a mihi whakatau process, have supported staff to feel confident to take lead roles. At our next visit, we look forward to tikanga being more evident in everyday activities, e.g., karakia before kai. We expect that cultural supervision will also support the growing cultural capability of staff.

Areas for Development

- **A plan is needed for the residence's actions to improve outcomes for mokopuna Māori.** The residence has been focussed on developing an understanding of section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act which has come into force as of 1 July 2019. Staff we spoke to appear to be at an early of stage of understanding the implications for their work. The next step is the development of a plan with time framed actions to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for mokopuna Maori. We will be assessing the quality and measurable impact of this plan at our next OPCAT visit.

Appendix One: Why we visit (legislative background)

19. The Children's Commissioner has a statutory responsibility to monitor and assess the services provided under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Specifically, section 13(1) (b) of the Children and young people's Commissioner Act 2003, states that the Commissioner must monitor and assess the policies and practices of Child, Youth and Family and encourage the development of policies and services that are designed to promote the welfare of children and young people and children and young people.
20. In addition, the Office of the Children's Commissioner is designated as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Crimes of Torture Act (1989). This Act contains New Zealand's practical mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), which was itself ratified by New Zealand in 2007. Our role is to visit youth justice and care and protection residences to ensure compliance with OPCAT.

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Appendix Two: Interpretation of ratings

21. The Table below provides a quick reference to the meanings of ratings given in the report.

The overall question our OPCAT monitoring seeks to answer is: *To what extent does Oranga Tamariki have the enablers in place that support children and young people to have the desired experience (for each element that we assess under each domain)?* Enablers we look at include: systems, structures, policies, procedures, opportunities and practice.

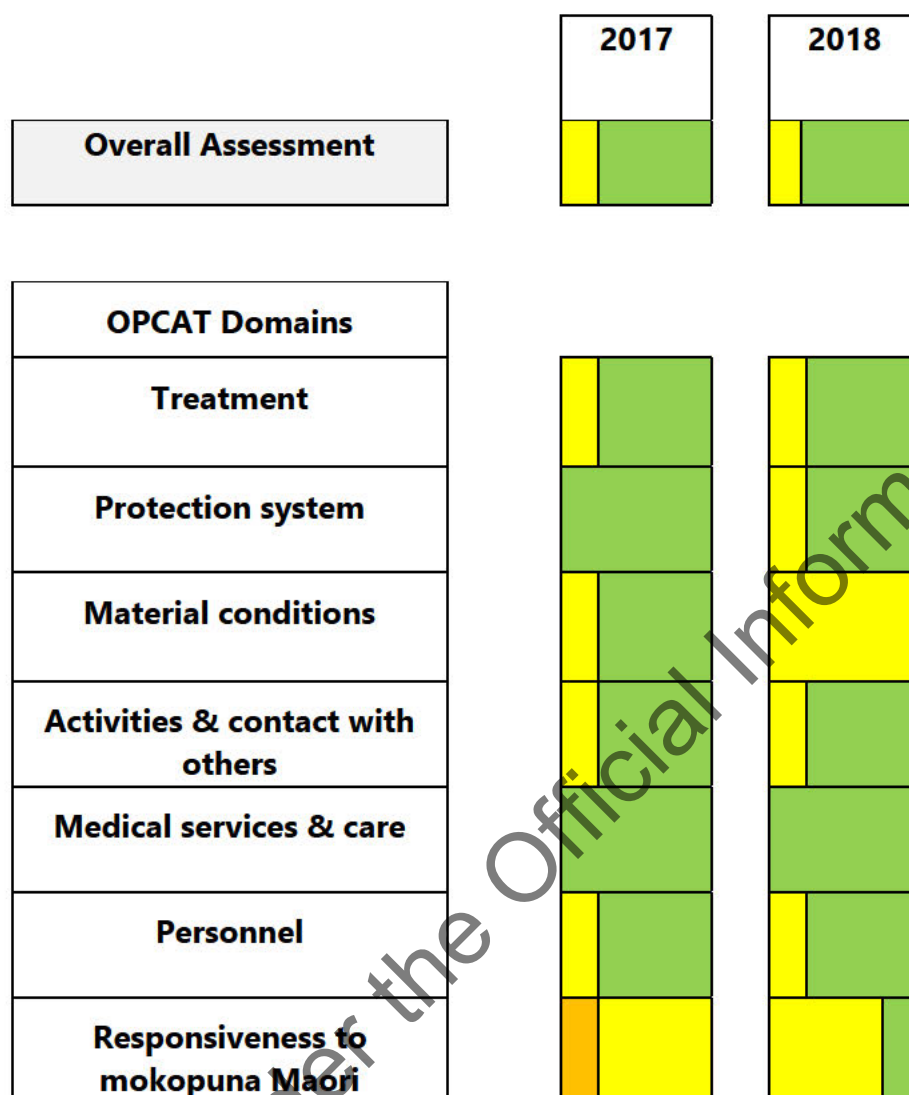
Each OPCAT domain is made up of multiple elements. For each element, the framework provides a description of the enablers of good practice and the desired experience for children and young people

Rating	Assessment	What it means
	Excellent	The organisation does an <i>excellent</i> job of enabling children and young people to have the desired experience.
	Good	The organisation does a <i>good</i> job of enabling children and young people to have the desired experience.
	Inadequate / Needs improvement	The organisation does an <i>inadequate</i> job of enabling children and young people to have the desired experience.
	Harmful	The enablers are not in place, the experience is <i>harmful</i> for children and young people. Note that 'harmful' typically implies an element of intentional, negligent, rejecting, or undermining practice or environment. However, if the consequences of a practice or environment are harmful enough, then they may receive a rating of harmful, even if the practice or environment is not intentionally harmful.

Note: Even though staff experiences and practices are taken into account, it is the children and young people's experiences that anchor the ratings, not the experience of staff.

Appendix Three: Previous OPCAT ratings

22. Note these ratings used our previous 5 point rating scale.



Appendix Four: Our monitoring approach

Our reports are based on information gathered before, during and after visits to the residences. This includes accuracy meetings based on our draft reports.

In the context of our OPCAT visits, we use Mana Mokopuna principles and resources to engage children and young people in conversation about their experiences in the residence. For more information on our Mana Mokopuna approach, see our [website](#).

1. Our visit to Epuni Care and Protection Residence included interviews with:

- Children and young people
- Residence Staff
 - Residence Manager
 - Team Leaders Operations (TLO)
 - Team Leader of Clinical Practice (TLCP)
 - Care team
 - Clinical team
 - Health team
 - Education team
 - Programme Coordinator
 - Grievance Co-ordinator
 - Grievance Panel

The following sources of information also informed our analysis:

- Visual inspection of the residence
- Observations of interactions in the residence between children, young people and staff
- Informal discussions with staff
- Informal discussions with children and young people on topics of interest.
- Previous Oranga Tamariki internal audit report
- Grievance quarterly reports
- Grievance files
- Training register
- Children and young people's files at the residence (including Individual Care Plans)
- Secure care register, secure care log book
- Daily logs