

**Response to recommendations from the Office of
the Children's Commissioner monitoring visit to:**

Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi

Visit date – 21-23 February 2023

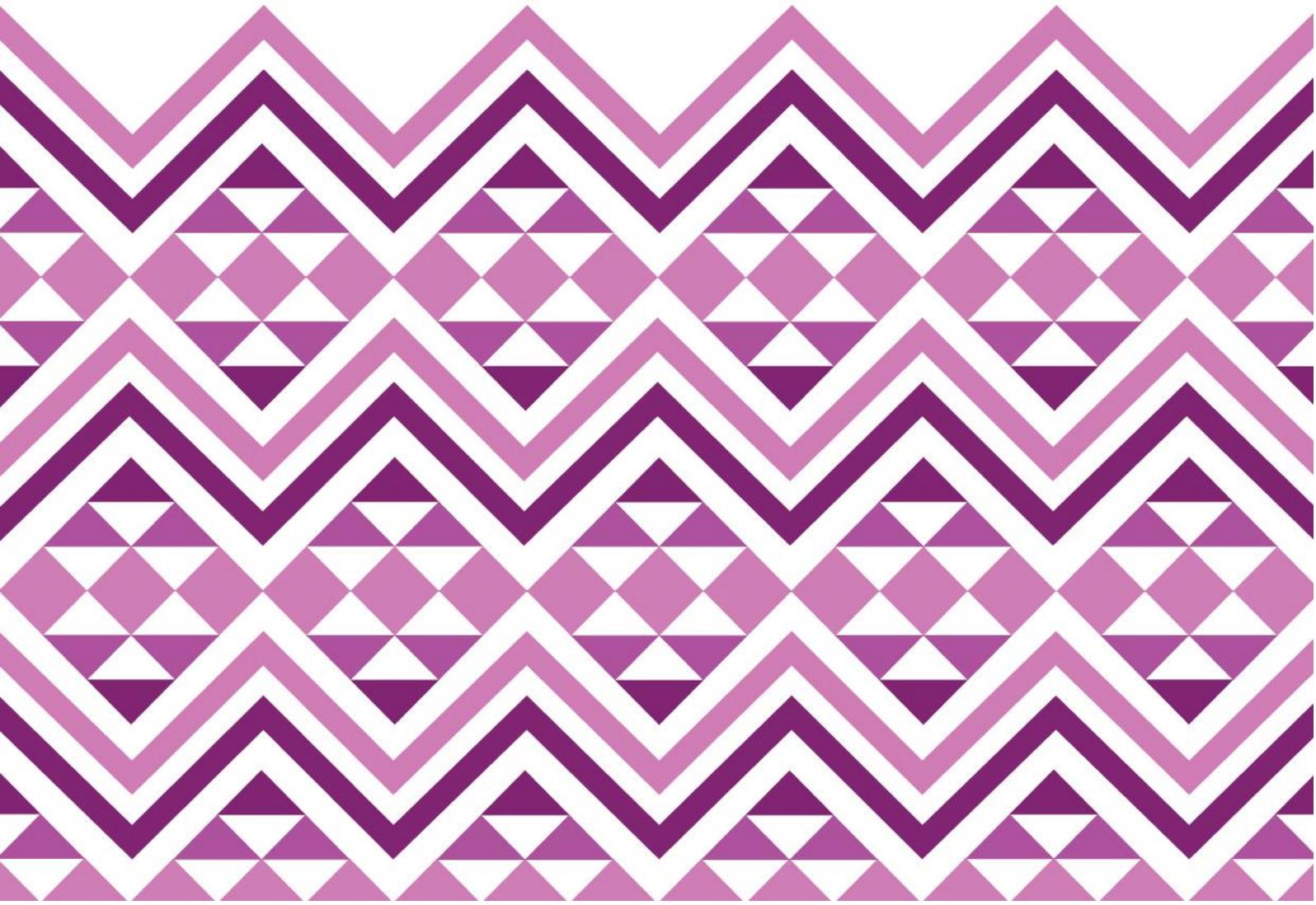


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Introduction

Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi is a specialist residential therapeutic programme for youth who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). The residence is owned by Oranga Tamariki, and managed and operated by Barnardos, a national non-government organisation approved to deliver care services under section 396 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. It is located in Christchurch.

In February 2023, staff from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) completed an announced monitoring visit to Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi Residence.

Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi has capacity for eight rangatahi. The legal status under which rangatahi are detained at the residence include s.78 and s.101 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of Oranga Tamariki services against the seven domains relevant to the OCC's role as a National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Cruelty (OPCAT). The seven domains are:

- Domain 1: Treatment
- Domain 2: Protection systems
- Domain 3: Material conditions
- Domain 4: Activities and contact with others
- Domain 5: Medical services and care
- Domain 6: Personnel
- Domain 7: Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori

The draft OPCAT report for Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi Residence was shared with Oranga Tamariki on 2 May 2023 and with Barnardos on 4 May 2023. We have worked collaboratively with Barnardos in preparing this response. Barnardos have prepared a separate report to respond to the Systemic and Facility Recommendations.

Recommendations Summary

The February 2023 OPCAT report for Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi examines the conditions and treatment of mokopuna, identifies improvements required, and makes recommendations aimed at strengthening protections, improving treatment and conditions, and preventing ill-treatment. OCC found no evidence that mokopuna had been subjected to torture, or cruel, or degrading punishment.

We value the feedback we receive from the OCC and use recommendations to make improvements where possible. For this report, the OCC acknowledged a number of areas of excellent practice and a range of positive observations about the quality of the care mokopuna were receiving at Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi. Oranga Tamariki has undertaken to respond to the Systemic Recommendations that relate to the property, the grievance process, the admission process, and concurrently sourcing placements. Barnardos will respond to Systemic Recommendations four and five, and to the Facility Recommendations.

Strengthening practice is an organisational priority and we continue to work towards ensuring consistent, quality practice, that is collaborative, culturally responsive and meets the needs of tamariki and rangatahi. We are committed to achieving better outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi.

The Oranga Tamariki response to the Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi Residence OPCAT report Systemic recommendations are detailed in the remaining sections of this report. Barnardos have prepared a separate report to respond to the Systemic Recommendations and Facility Recommendations.

Recommendations	Progress
Systemic Recommendations	
1. Streamline the property management process between Oranga Tamariki and Barnardos to ensure timely repair and refurbishment	Accepted
2. Urgently refurbish the kitchen and finalise the instalment of outside water fountains and inside water coolers.	Accepted
3. Review the grievance process to be independent and impartial.	Accepted
4. Only refer mokopuna that clearly meet the admission criteria and carefully consider the impact of placement on existing mokopuna in the facility	Accepted
5. Source placement options for mokopuna in the community concurrent to their placement in Te Poutama to prevent the unnecessary detainment of mokopuna who have completed their treatment.	Accepted
Facility Recommendations	
1. Prioritise supervision that focuses on consistency of care and implementation of treatment plans	Accepted
2. Include practical components in the induction training so that new staff have the opportunity to put theory into practice before formally working with mokopuna.	Accepted
3. Ensure staff professional development plans are completed and those who are promoted have access to appropriate training.	Accepted
4. Develop relationships with local education communities of practice to enable teaching staff access to relevant professional support, resources, and information.	Accepted
5. Amend assessments to include a stronger emphasis on the cultural identity and needs of mokopuna to inform their treatment and care plans.	Accepted

Response to Systemic Recommendations

Below are the Oranga Tamariki responses to the systemic recommendations made in the Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi OPCAT report.

Recommendation 1

Streamline the property management process between Oranga Tamariki and Barnardos to ensure timely repair and refurbishment.

Response

It is important to us, our valued partners and the mokopuna we care for that renovations, repairs and maintenance occur in a timely way. The supporting model for maintenance is currently being considered in consultation with Barnardos and our other Residence Managers. The review will address the need for clarity about responsibilities between infrastructure and each residence. As part of this review, we are currently trialling a number of changes:

- A dedicated residence maintenance team
- Clarifying the security and building standards for each residence
- Health and safety processes for escorting contractors working in residences
- Agreed Service Level Agreements for critical asset repair

We have identified the need to have residence specific kaimahi from the infrastructure team located in close proximity to each residence. We are currently trialling this in Christchurch, with a role being established to manage Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo, Te Oranga and Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi. The kaimahi for this role is expected to start in the coming months. This will improve our ability to respond to property matters more efficiently by removing barriers with residences having a dedicated and local point of contact.

We will monitor progress against this recommendation for the next six months, and if no further issues arise, we will consider this completed.

Recommendation 2

Urgently refurbish the kitchen and finalise the instalment of outside water fountains and inside water coolers.

Response

We are pleased to report that the property damage in the kitchen at Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi was repaired on 16 March 2023 and the final refurbishments were completed on 26 May 2023. The installation of the water fountain and indoor water coolers will be completed by 30 June 2023.

We are continuing to explore other potential improvements to the facility with Barnardos.

We will monitor progress against this recommendation over the next month and we will consider this completed once the water coolers and fountain are installed.

Recommendation 3

Review the grievance process to be independent and impartial.

Response

As part of the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018, every tamariki and rangatahi is entitled to receive information about what they can expect when they are in our care or custody and be supported to raise any concerns they have. This includes ensuring information about making complaints, accessing support services and independent advocacy is available to all tamariki and rangatahi.

In August 2021, the Manaaki Kōrero project, commenced to review the Oranga Tamariki feedback and complaints systems. Specifically, this work focuses on:

- Delivering immediate improvements to the residential grievance process, including informing our review of the Oranga Tamariki (Residential Care) Regulations 1996.
- Designing and delivering fit for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau non-residential feedback and complaint processes, including enhancements to existing processes.
- Develop mechanisms to enable tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to get information, advice and assistance when needed.

Feedback from key kaimahi is being sought to support this work. Oranga Tamariki have partnered with VOYCE Whakarongo Mai to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to co-design Manaaki Kōrero. Manaaki Kōrero will inform the future operating approach for all feedback and complaints processes across Oranga Tamariki residences. We will work with Barnardos to ensure that the insights and learning from Manaaki Kōrero are shared with Barnardos for Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai regularly visit Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi while tamariki and rangatahi are present at the facility. VOYCE Whakarongo Mai has open access to all our residential facilities, and their presence is always welcomed.

When tamariki and rangatahi arrive at Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi they receive an 'easi-rights booklet' that includes information about how to make a complaint and access independent advocacy. This information is explained in a way that is appropriate for their age, development, language, and disability. Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi also have information on display about the role of VOYCE Whakarongo Mai.

Rangatahi can have access to a phone to contact VOYCE Whakarongo Mai and the option to meet representatives when they visit the residence. They can also request a visit from a VOYCE representative when they need advocacy for a specific concern. In addition, other options for expressing themselves, such as video calling and recording, can be used with tamariki and rangatahi as required.

Recommendation 4

Only refer mokopuna that clearly meet the admission criteria and carefully consider the impact of placement on existing mokopuna in the facility.

Response

Referrals to Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi are made at the recommendation of third-party Community Based Treatment Providers (CBTP) and these referrals generally meet the criteria for admission. All referrals are sent from social workers to the Oranga Tamariki National Hub, with the recommendation from CBTP included in the referral documents.

The referrals are reviewed by an Oranga Tamariki High Needs Service (HNS) Senior Advisor to ensure all information is included and then sent on to Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi. Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi assess the new referrals and carefully consider the impact of placement on other rangatahi. HNS, the Site social work team, and any others involved with the rangatahi are involved in placement planning.

HNS recently asked for a short-term placement for a rangatahi with behavioural needs that were outside of what we normally refer. HNS worked with Barnardos to fund the additional staff and training that was needed to ensure the success of this placement.

A meeting with CBTPs, Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi and Oranga Tamariki HNS is planned in the near future to review processes for making referrals and decisions about entry.

We will monitor progress against this recommendation over the next quarter and provide an update on what changes, if any, are made.

Recommendation 5

Source placement options for mokopuna in the community concurrent to their placement in Te Poutama to prevent the unnecessary detainment of mokopuna who have completed their treatment.

Response

We hold regular monthly case consults with the referring site social worker and Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi to progress concurrent planning for placements once residential treatment is completed. We also hold three-monthly case conferences with rangatahi, whānau, the site social worker, Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi kaimahi, and CBTPs. These consults focus on transition planning in the final six months of treatment.

If there are challenges identifying the transition placement, we involve a wider team of kaimahi to identify and secure a safe, stable living arrangement. HNS and Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi have developed clear escalation pathways that are in place to address challenges with developing appropriate transition plans.

We consider this recommendation is complete.