



**Response from Oranga Tamariki to recommendations  
from the Mana Mokopuna monitoring visit to:**

# **Whakatakapokai Youth Justice Residence**

**Visit date – February 2024**

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## Introduction

Whakatakapokai Youth Justice Residence (Whakatakapokai) is an Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) run youth justice residence. The facility is located in Tāmaki Makaurau.

In February 2024, staff from Mana Mokopuna—Children and Young People’s Commission (Mana Mokopuna) completed an unannounced monitoring visit to the facility.

The facility has capacity to take 15 rangatahi. The legal status which rangatahi can be detained at the residence include:

- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 - s 238(1)(d) and s 311
- Criminal Procedure Act 2011 – s 173, s 174 and s 175

The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of Oranga Tamariki services against the seven domains relevant to Mana Mokopuna’s role as a National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (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 Whakatakapokai was shared with Oranga Tamariki on 15 May 2024.

## Recommendations Summary

The OPCAT report for Whakatakapokai makes 11 recommendations, of which 10 are accepted and one is not accepted.

Oranga Tamariki is committed to strengthening practice as a priority and we continue to work towards ensuring consistent, quality practice, that is inclusive, collaborative, culturally responsive and meets the needs of tamariki and rangatahi. We are committed to achieving better outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi and we value the feedback and insights provided by Mana Mokopuna.

Recommendations	Status
<b>Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations</b>	
1. Te Waharoa induction to be reviewed and updated to ensure it contains the practical components and core responsibilities that kaimahi are required to carry out when working in residence.	Accepted
2. Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities for mokopuna and undertake at least the minimum contact visits required as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Accepted
3. Prioritise the continuity of care for mokopuna to transition out of residence, through strengthening partnerships with providers such as Odyssey House and Tū Maia currently working in the facility to maintain care and support for mokopuna post-residence.	Accepted
<b>Facility Recommendations</b>	
1. Whakatakapokai requires an urgent reset. Mokopuna admissions should remain on hold and priority given to ensure all staff undergo critical training.	Accepted
2. Urgently implement a set training day for all kaimahi, including the leadership team working in the residence within the current roster. Trainings days should be comprehensive and provide on-going professional development opportunities for kaimahi, that meet the ever-evolving needs of mokopuna.	Accepted
3. Employ a pool of dedicated kaimahi, consisting of cleaners, residential training lead, human resources, and medical team to be solely employed at Whakatakapokai, so resources are not shared with another residence and mokopuna are able to have timely access to support.	Accepted
4. Members of senior leadership to be visible and provide support for kaimahi working in the units to prevent on-going tensions and silos within the residence.	Accepted
5. Leadership team to create an action plan alongside the Kaiwhakaue to address the disparities of mokopuna Māori and set measurable outcomes as determined by Whakatakapokai.	Accepted
6. Allocate a designated room, that is readily accessible, allows privacy to enable assessments to occur for mokopuna with professionals without interruption.	Not Accepted
7. Reinstate MAT hui to occur on a regular basis with all professionals, whānau and mokopuna from admission into the residence until discharge back into the community.	Accepted
8. Employ a residential programme coordinator to ensure there is variety and consistency in vocational and interest-based age-appropriate programmes for mokopuna to participate in.	Accepted

The responses to the Whakatakapokai OPCAT report recommendations are detailed in the remaining sections of this report.

## Response to Systemic Recommendations

Below are our responses to the systemic recommendations made in the Whakatakāpokai OPCAT report.

### Recommendation 1

*Te Waharoa induction to be reviewed and updated to ensure it contains the practical components and core responsibilities that kaimahi are required to carry out when working in residence.*

#### Response

Te Waharoa is the induction training for new residential youth workers. Before any staff begin working on the floor in a Residence, they complete this programme. We have made a number of changes to this training to ensure new kaimahi are well prepared for the realities of working in a secure residence, including having the skills to pro-socially engage with rangatahi and safely de-escalate situations involving rangatahi in their care.

Changes we have made include:

- the duration of induction has increased in length from 4 weeks to 6 weeks.
- content of the 'mana in relationships' component of the training was reviewed by three Youth Justice Senior Psychologists and amended to better include a trauma informed approach.
- extended Safe Tactical Approach and Response training.
- other changes to better support and guide staff in their engagement with rangatahi and in safely deescalating heightened behaviour.
- Substances and Choices Scale (SACS), Kessler and Suicide screening training is being delivered by Quality Practice and Experiences to ensure training is consistent nationally.
- the number of initial observation (buddy) shifts has increased from 5 to 10 where new recruits shadow an existing staff member to learn the requirements of the role. A revised observation booklet has been introduced and observations from the buddy shifts are recorded and completion of the required shifts is signed off by a team leader.

We continually review and improve our induction and other training to ensure it is responding to emerging needs and the complexities of the rangatahi we work with. Additionally, kaimahi are receiving training in our new Standard Operating Procedures, which includes new approaches to engage and de-escalate situations with rangatahi.

Work is underway to achieve sustainable and enduring improvements for rangatahi, tamariki and kaimahi via a pilot of a new operating model which Oranga Tamariki is running at Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo, our youth justice residence in Christchurch. This will run for six months and commenced in May 2024. Elements we are testing include smaller cohort groups, new staff rosters, and improved training and leadership development. As part of the pilot, the residential youth worker curriculum will also be reviewed. The pilot will allow us to test these in a controlled environment, learning and adapting as we go, to make sure the new ways of working are fit for purpose and enduring. The final evaluation is scheduled for 15 December 2024.

### Recommendation 2

*Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities for mokopuna and undertake at least the minimum contact visits required as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.*

#### Response

All tamariki in care are entitled to be visited by their (allocated field) social worker. This includes their Care and Protection Social Worker for tamariki and rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki for reasons of Care and Protection alongside Youth Justice matters. This is set out in regulation 27 of the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018 (the National Care Standards).

Visits by social workers with tamariki and rangatahi help to build and maintain relationships. Visits are an opportunity to support tamariki and rangatahi to understand what is happening in their lives and to have a say about matters that are important to them. This contact with rangatahi allows social workers to monitor

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their safety and wellbeing and to ensure that their All About Me Plan (AAMP) and placement are meeting their needs and promoting their best interests.

Our policy and guidance state that the frequency of visits to tamariki and rangatahi is based on an assessment of their individual needs and contact will regularly take place in between kanohi ki te kanohi visits. The frequency of face-to-face visits is determined in consultation with tamariki and rangatahi, their carer and, wherever possible, their whānau. Once the frequency of visits has been determined, the rationale for this needs to be approved by the (field) social worker's supervisor and recorded in case notes. The frequency of visits should also be recorded in the AAMP to ensure the tamariki/rangatahi knows what is planned. The number of visits must be reviewed regularly, including when there has been a change in the circumstance or needs of the tamariki or rangatahi. The AAMP must be updated if the frequency is altered to ensure it reflects the needs and wishes of the tamariki/rangatahi.

We are offering support to sites and regions to help with planning and organising key social work activities, including visits to children in care. This includes drop-in sessions on Whiti (data and analytics tool), demand modelling, and organisational tips and tricks.

We also intend to undertake data hygiene work on the recording of visits to tamariki in care. While this work will not on its own increase actual contact with tamariki and rangatahi, it will help us identify and correct any recording errors, and this will help with effective planning.

Tamariki should be visited by their allocated social worker in person. However, as tamariki may normally reside significant distances from areas where Residences are located, in-person visits are not viable on every occasion. Our policy makes provision for when "te tamaiti is in a residence and their social worker can't physically visit, a video call, such as through Skype can be used to complete the visit or engagement."

We agree regular engagement with rangatahi by social workers is vitally important. We would also like to note that visiting case notes for rangatahi residing in Whakatapokai for the seven weeks up to, and including, Mana Mokopuna's visit show many rangatahi were regularly contacted by their social workers during this time. Four of the 10 rangatahi were visited or engaged with by field social workers at least every week, and a further three received visits or engagements every week bar one over that period. Our records show the outstanding three rangatahi were visited or contacted for only four or less of those seven weeks. We accept this falls short of the frequency of engagement rangatahi need and should expect.

Visits to tamariki and rangatahi in care, regardless of their care arrangement, are a priority focus for Oranga Tamariki. We have, and continue to, undertake work to support regular engagements with tamariki in care, including when they are residing in a Residence. This includes:

- Regional Managers receive weekly information regarding overdue visits so that there is oversight and remedial action can be undertaken. Visiting data is also shared with key support and leadership roles in Oranga Tamariki.
- In November last year our Director Systems and Contingencies, Bill Searle, shared his expectations about visiting with all Youth Justice kaimahi. The expectations are:
  - That tamariki and rangatahi placed in a Youth Justice Residence or Community Home should as a minimum have weekly contact with their field social worker.
  - In addition to weekly contact a monthly face to face contact is required as a minimum unless there are compelling reasons for this not to happen. Where monthly face to face visits cannot occur for compelling reasons approval for contact via electronic means e.g. Teams or Skype or phone must be obtained from the YJ Site Manager.
  - By exception a co-worker allocated from the closest site can be considered for face-to-face contact if there is an anticipated lengthy remand or sentence. This would involve negotiation with the nearest site, be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and in best interests of rangatahi and for continuity of relationship.
  - Any exceptions to face to face monthly contact in addition to approval by the YJ Site Manager must be documented and recorded in CYRAS.
- We have established a liaison Manager for the two residences in Tamaki Makaurau. This is intended to provide an identified liaison point for any issues that may arise like contacts not being made or visits not being completed.

- We have developed and sent out visiting 'tips and tricks'. These are less practice guidance and more practical tips to support planning and making the most of visits to tamariki in care. They have a particular focus on review tamariki plans with them during visits.

It is a requirement that rangatahi who are placed on a remand order by the Youth Court and stay in a youth justice residence are reviewed every 14 days. The purpose of this is to establish if the rangatahi needs to be brought back to the Youth Court to determine whether another custody status under section 238 would be appropriate if an alternative placement option is available. The first review is done by way of a family group conference. The youth justice social worker completes any subsequent reviews.

The National Youth Justice Operational Support Team closely monitors performance in relation to the completion of 14-day remand reviews, and this information is disseminated to operational regions to help inform, guide, and where necessary, strengthen this practice. The completion of these reviews is an organisational priority, as the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 requires a 'child or young person who commits an offence or is alleged to have committed an offence to be kept in the community so far as that is practicable and consistent with the need to ensure the safety of the public'; and 'that any sanctions imposed should take the least restrictive form appropriate in the circumstances.'

Additionally, the Office of the Chief Social Worker is progressing work to establish an evidence-based, safe and appropriate caseload benchmark for social workers, which would provide best practice guidance about the size of caseloads to enable quality practice. It should be noted that most YJ social work caseloads are at reasonable levels which should enable visiting to occur. However, when completed, this mahi should support workforce planning and resource allocation for sites and regions. As a result, social workers over all would likely have a caseload of fewer rangatahi which would enable an improved frequency and quality of visits. This should lead into improved transition plans and rangatahi exiting the system to get back to their whānau and communities earlier than they currently do.

### Recommendation 3

*Prioritise the continuity of care for mokopuna to transition out of residence, through strengthening partnerships with providers such as Odyssey House and Tū Māiā currently working in the facility to maintain care and support for mokopuna post-residence.*

### Response

Being able to understand and prepare for transitions gives rangatahi increased certainty and control over their future and helps contribute to a successful outcome for them. Every rangatahi completing a stay in a residence needs a plan to be in place to ensure positive and supportive reintegration into their community.

Rangatahi are encouraged by their social worker and residence kaimahi to actively participate in transition planning alongside their whānau and providers. It is important for the rangatahi and their whānau to understand the plan and help agree to what supports and strategies are put in place. This helps to support positive and sustainable behaviour change by the rangatahi. It is also a good opportunity to identify, address and resolve any concerns or issues between the rangatahi and their whānau prior to returning home.

It is important to note that the Youth Court plays a crucial role in approving the transition plan for rangatahi leaving a residence. The decisions of the Court impact what support rangatahi can access, including mentors through supported bail, mentoring orders, conditions of a Court Order, and other wrap around support options if required.

Since the reset, Whakatakapokai has commenced working more closely with other Oranga Tamariki sites within the region and our Service Delivery team. There has also been a renewed multi-agency approach, involving providers such as Odyssey House and Tū Māiā. This includes a stronger external presence at our monthly MAT meetings and an additional Kaiarahi, who commenced in February 2024, has facilitated meetings with service providers to get the MAT hui back on track. The strengthening of relationships with attendees at MAT meetings to enable better care and support for rangatahi post-residence is a priority, although we acknowledge this is a work in progress.

## Response to Facility Recommendations

Below are our responses to the facility recommendations made in the Whakatakapokai OPCAT report.

### Recommendation 1

*Whakatakapokai requires an urgent reset. Mokopuna admissions should remain on hold and priority given to ensure all staff undergo critical training.*

#### Response

Since Mana Mokopuna's visit, a full reset of Whakatakapokai, including the pausing of admissions has occurred. This full reset allowed for training for all kaimahi, covering Oranga Tamariki purpose and Whakatakapokai model of care, role clarification and expectations Secure Care, Searches, Line of Sight Standard Operating Procedures for all kaimahi, Health and Safety processes, Duty of Care, Incident processes, and Reports of Concern.

In addition, the Kaiarahi group has received training covering learning styles, leadership styles, working styles and managing conflict along with performance development and planning for kaimahi, organisational policies and procedures.

The allegations raised have been taken seriously with the following actions taken:

- An Incident Management Team, co-chaired by the Director of Residences and Homes and General Manager Regional Services, was stood up.
- Report of Concern follow ups, including provision of necessary supporting documentation and CCTV footage.
- An internal investigation.
- A police investigation.
- The Residence Manager advised kamahi in person about their safety and security responsibilities, duty of care and the consequences of not complying.
- Kaimahi have been reminded of both internal and independent avenues for escalating concerns and the need for timely disclosures.
- Hui have been held with VOYCE-Whakarongo Mai, Kidz First Centre for Youth Health, Tū Māiā and Kingslea School.

### Recommendation 2

*Urgently implement a set training day for all kaimahi, including the leadership team working in the residence within the current roster. Trainings days should be comprehensive and provide on-going professional development opportunities for kaimahi, that meet the ever-evolving needs of mokopuna.*

#### Response

As noted earlier in our response, before kaimahi begin working on the floor in any residence they first complete Te Waharoa, a six-week induction programme.

While we acknowledge the difficulty in running regular training for kaimahi, a number of trainings have been held since Mana Mokopuna's visit. Since the reset at Whakatakapokai, the following training has been completed: Delivery of the 21 SOPs covering Secure Care, Searches, Line of Sight, Use of Force, Unauthorised items, Enhanced Observations, Reporting harm to tamariki and rangatahi, and Disclosures of abuse and harm.

While we have no current permanent solution for training without a change of roster, we can confirm that rosters and training are a key focus of the current pilot at Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo. The pilot roster includes both training days and opportunities for supervision and micro-learning. Once an evaluation of this pilot is complete (which should be before the end of 2024), we will look to implement the successful elements across residences, which includes a roster that supports regular training.

In the meantime, on the job coaching and self-directed learning is supported, as well as monthly wellbeing supervision with the Whakatakapokai psychologist and the offer of staff voluntarily attending



a monthly training in overtime. A fifth Kaiarahi started in February 2024 which allows for one Kaiarahi per week to focus on training, coaching and supervision.

### Recommendation 3

*Employ a pool of dedicated kaimahi, consisting of cleaners, residential training lead, human resources, and medical team to be solely employed at Whakatakapokai, so resources are not shared with another residence and mokopuna are able to have timely access to support.*

#### Response

We would like to clarify that cleaning services are not shared between Korowai Manaaki and Whakatakapokai. Whakatakapokai employs its own onsite cleaner and their work is supplemented by external cleaners who are employed as part of the Oranga Tamariki national cleaning contracts. In situations where additional cleaning at sites is required, the site can arrange that via our contracted external providers.

Recently the medical team have been short staffed due to vacancies and a long-term injury. Despite this, the team have always responded to seeing rangatahi at Whakatakapokai when asked to do so and have provided assessments within the required timeframes (24-48 hours nursing assessment and GP within five working days). Two clinics have been run each week, one which is nurse led while the other is GP led. The medical team have now recruited two more nurses and will continue to ensure nurses are allocated to Whakatakapokai to enable the needs of rangatahi to be met.

### Recommendation 4

*Members of senior leadership to be visible and provide support for kaimahi working in the units to prevent on-going tensions and silos within the residence.*

#### Response

The Whakatakapokai Senior Leadership Team includes the Residence Manager, Manager Residence Operations, Senior Psychologist, Quality Lead and Team Leader Support Services which are Monday to Friday business hour positions.

Senior leader roles focus primarily on supporting and developing our frontline leaders (Kaiarahi, Team Leader Logistics, Programme Co-ordinator and Kaiwhakaue), critical incident support, delivery of training, delivery of specific supervision packages, attendance at daily handovers, and on-call after hours support. Senior leaders also cover frontline leader positions in the event of unplanned absences and have an open-door policy. Examples are the Manager Residence Operations working on the floor to cover Kaiarahi absences and the Senior Psychologist managing the Rangatahi Mentor teams while the facility were recruiting for Kaiarahi vacancies.

Since Mana Mokopuna's visit, senior leaders have considered different ways of increasing visibility in the unit within the limitations of work patterns and available space. A breakout room attached to the secure unit is now being utilised as a working area for senior leaders who are aiming towards being based in the units on a more regular scheduled basis so kaimahi have a clearer understanding their availability.

### Recommendation 5

*Leadership team to create an action plan, led by the Kaiwhakaue, to address the disparities of mokopuna Maori and set measurable outcomes as determined by Whakatakapokai*

#### Response

We are committed to addressing disparities experienced by and affecting mokopuna Māori. One way that Whakatakapokai does this is by prioritising rangatahi contact with whānau. We note Mana Mokopuna heard of instances where the leadership team had approved and arranged flights, accommodation and grocery vouchers to enable whānau to see their rangatahi. This is important to

ensure relationships between rangatahi and whānau are maintained despite distance or socio-economic factors.

A Whakatakopokai residence plan has been started and is being reviewed regularly. We also note that the Kaiwhakaue, who is a member of the wider Leadership team, has a key role in training and embedding Whakamana Tangata concepts within the residence culture. An evaluation of Whakatakopokai Youth Justice – Whakamana Tangata in practice was published in May 2023 and speaks positively of the integration of Whakamana Tangata at Whakatakopokai. The leadership group is largely unchanged since that report.<sup>1</sup>

Since Mana Mokopuna's visit, and due to the reduced number of rangatahi placed, the Kaiwhakaue has been able to run daily coaching and targeted training to kaimahi on a variety of Whakamana Tangata concepts and approaches. The main focus of the workshops was the hui whakapiri and restorative meetings. The workshops were split into three phases: preparation, participation and follow through. Preparation is verbal de-escalation and restorative conversations 1 on 1; the participation phase is a structured mediation focussed on restoration and healing; and the follow through is about kaimahi accountability tasks, rangatahi accountability tasks and progress conversations and potential changes in their plans.

#### Recommendation 6

*Allocate a designated room, that is readily accessible, allows privacy to enable assessments to occur for mokopuna with professionals without interruption.*

#### Response

While we appreciate Mana Mokopuna's recommendation, we note that Whakatakopokai has multiple private rooms and spaces available on site for use by service providers. This includes:

- In the Community Hub: a GP room, a consult room, a programme room
- In the Secure Units: Patiki whanau room, Patiki First Aid Room, Huarakau whanau room, Huarakau First Aid Room
- Outside of the Secure Units: Taupaepae/Green Room

Since Mana Mokopuna's visit, Whakatakopokai leadership have contacted service providers to discuss their needs for when they are on site. No concerns were raised about a lack of accessible and private rooms to hold appointments. Should any provider have difficulty with designated rooms and spaces, they are aware they can raise this directly with the Residence Manager and Manager Residence Operations at the time or at the weekly operations hui they have are invited to.

#### Recommendation 7

*Reinstate MAT hui to occur on a regular basis with all professionals, whānau and mokopuna from admission into the residence until discharge back into the community.*

#### Response

Rangatahi Mentors are responsible for convening and recording the weekly Multi Agency Team (MAT) hui. Feedback from Rangatahi Mentors is that they are scheduling MAT hui which are not being attended by professionals due to scheduling conflicts.

Since Mana Mokopuna's visit and establishing the Incident Management Team, communications have improved between site social workers and rangatahi mentors. As previously noted, a fifth Kaiarahi commenced duties in February 2024. This means the Rangatahi Mentor group now has a dedicated manager overseeing their day-to-day duties and supporting them to achieve compliance with Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018. This Kaiarahi has completed hui with service providers to get MAT hui back on track, and there are opportunities for development.

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<sup>1</sup> [Evaluation of Whakatakopokai Youth Justice Residence: Whakamana Tangata in Practice](#)

**Recommendation 8**

*Employ a residential programme coordinator to ensure there is variety and consistency in vocational and interest-based age-appropriate programmes for mokopuna to participate in.*

**Response**

At the time of Mana Mokopuna's visit, Whakatakapokai had been without a residential programme coordinator for several weeks. The Residence Manager has stepped in over the last few months while Oranga Tamariki considers recruitment.

Since Mana Mokopuna's visit, the arrival of an additional Kaiarahi has enabled improved monitoring and support of programme and activity delivery from the Kaiarahi group. One Kaiarahi is dedicated to managing performance in this area and has met with the Korowai Manaaki Programme Coordinator to discuss the sharing of resources and networks, as well as ongoing education for kaimahi. This is an area of development.