



MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

Kaitiaki Remand Home OPCAT Monitoring Report

Visit date: November 2025

Report date: February 2026

Kia kuru pounamu te rongō

All mokopuna* live their best lives

✱

Drawing from the wisdom of Te Ao Māori, we have adopted the term mokopuna to describe all children and young people we advocate for, aged under 18 years of age in Aotearoa New Zealand. This acknowledges the special status held by mokopuna in their families, whānau, hapū and iwi and reflects that in all we do. Referring to the people we advocate for as mokopuna draws them closer to us and reminds us that who they are, and where they come from matters for their identity, belonging and well-being, at every stage of their lives.

Please note for clarity, in this report, we use the term 'mokopuna' to describe a group of children and young people, and tamaiti for a specific child or young person.

Contents

The role of Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People’s Commission	4
About this Visit	4
About this Report	5
About this Facility	5
Key findings	5
Recommendations	6
Concluding Observations from the United Nations	7
Detailed findings by Domain	8
Appendix One – Progress on previous recommendations	23
Appendix Two – Gathering Information	26

Introduction

The role of Mana Mokopuna – Children's Commissioner

Mana Mokopuna – Children's Commissioner (Mana Mokopuna) is an independent advocate for all children and young people (mokopuna) under the age of 18 and for those who are care-experienced, under the age of 25. Mana Mokopuna advocates for children's rights to be recognised and upheld, provides advice and guidance to government and other agencies, advocates for system-level changes, and ensures children's voices are heard in decisions that affect them.

Our organisation is one of five bodies¹ designated as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in Aotearoa New Zealand as per the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

The New Zealand legislation relating to OPCAT is contained in the Crimes of Torture Act 1989. The role of the NPM is to visit places where people are deprived of their liberty. For Mana Mokopuna, this means:

- Kōrero (talk) with mokopuna to understand their care experiences living in a facility from which they cannot freely leave.
- Engaging with kaimahi (staff) and other professionals working in facilities to understand the highlights, challenges and barriers in relation to the care and treatment experienced by mokopuna and their whānau.
- Making recommendations aimed at strengthening protections, improving treatment and conditions, and preventing torture, cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment both at system and facility levels.

About this visit

Mana Mokopuna conducted an unannounced visit to Kaitiaki Remand Home (Kaitiaki or 'the whare') run by Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita on 11-13 November 2025 as part of the NPM visit programme. The objective of our OPCAT Monitoring as the NPM is to prevent ill-treatment in all places where mokopuna are deprived of their liberty by regularly monitoring and assessing the standard of care experienced in these facilities.

¹ The NPM in Aotearoa New Zealand is coordinated centrally by Kahui Tika Tangata - the Human Rights Commission, and comprises of Mana Mokopuna, The Ombudsman, the Independent Police Conduct Authority and the Inspector of Service Penal Establishments.

About this report

This report shares the findings from the monitoring visit and recommends actions to address any issues identified. The report outlines the quality of mokopuna experience at the facility and provides evidence of the findings based on information gathered before, during, and after the on-site visit.

About this facility

Facility Name:	Kaitiaki Remand Home operated by Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita
Region:	Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland)
Operating capacity:	Five bed capacity for mokopuna tāne aged 12-17 years old (up to their 18th birthday) and operate 365 days a year. This is a five-bedroom home that also includes an office space for kaimahi, large dining/ kitchen area, large lounge, and recreation room, two bathrooms for mokopuna and a laundry. The outside has a converted garage for a gym, basketball hoop, grassed lawn area, and a deck with a BBQ. There were four mokopuna in the whare at the time of the visit.
Status under which mokopuna are detained: s235, s238(1)(d), of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Mokopuna can also be admitted into the whare under the following Care and Protection statuses: s48, 78, 101, 102, 110(2a), 139, and 140 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.	

Key findings

Mana Mokopuna found no evidence of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment) during the visit to Kaitiaki Remand Home.

Positive areas:

- Mokopuna reported feeling well supported by whare kaimahi. They shared that their relationships with kaimahi are positive and that kaimahi engage with them calmly which helps them to feel safe and supported.
- Kaimahi have established strong routines and processes, including a well-established admission process that supports mokopuna to settle in quickly.
- Training for kaimahi has improved and new kaimahi report feeling well prepared and supported in their roles to work with mokopuna.
- Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita is undergoing an organisational shift to strengthen practice in te ao Māori me ona tikanga, which will be progressively

implemented within the Kaitiaki Remand Home. During our Monitoring visit, mokopuna were observed participating in karakia and kaimahi shared that they are learning karakia displayed within the whare.

Areas of advocacy:

- Engagement with Oranga Tamariki site social workers was inconsistent, and there was evidence of delays in organising whānau visits and medical appointments.
- Mokopuna expressed a need for stronger transition support from Oranga Tamariki when leaving the whare. While support is generally good during their time living in the Kaitiaki Remand Home, dedicated support reduces significantly once mokopuna return to their home communities which mokopuna said they find hard to manage.
- Mokopuna would like more off-site activities, increased opportunities to kōrero with whānau and an upgrade of the gym equipment at the whare.
- The Kaitiaki Remand Home is clean however, it requires maintenance and general refreshing, particularly internal paint work and the installation of frosted windows in shared living and activity spaces to improve privacy and safety.
- Kaimahi indicated they would like greater visibility and presence from their leadership team to feel more supported, guided, and confident in their daily mahi with mokopuna.
- Mokopuna raised concerns with the OPCAT Monitoring team regarding their care and treatment while in Police cells, including incidents involving dog bites (these concerns were passed on to the Independent Police Conduct Authority as the NPM group who monitor treatment in Police Custody).

Recommendations

2025 Systemic and Oranga Tamariki National Office focused Recommendations

As a result of the findings of our OPCAT monitoring visit in November 2025, Mana Mokopuna makes the following recommendations:

	Recommendation
1	Set clear, nationally monitored expectations to ensure consistent, timely, and accountable social worker engagement with mokopuna.
2	Strengthen transition and step-down planning to ensure clear ownership and continuity of care for mokopuna beyond Kaitiaki Remand Home.
3	Provide funding certainty and timely decisions to address long-standing property and maintenance issues at Kaitiaki Remand Home.

2025 Facility Recommendations for Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Piritā

	Recommendation
1	Increase leadership visibility through regular on-site presence to strengthen relationships, provide real-time guidance, and reinforce consistent practice.
2	Strengthen structured supervision for all kaimahi that supports kaimahi wellbeing, reflective practice, and sustained quality of care for mokopuna.
3	Expand offsite and recreational activities to reduce boredom, support reintegration, and respond directly to mokopuna voice.
4	Explore opportunities to strengthen whānau contact within existing safety and operational constraints exploring flexible approaches while maintaining advocacy with Oranga Tamariki for systemic improvements
5	Continue embedding tikanga Māori and organisational Pou into daily practice to strengthen cultural identity, belonging, and wellbeing for mokopuna.

Concluding Observations from the United Nations

In February 2023, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child ('the UN Committee') released its Concluding Observations² for New Zealand's sixth periodic review on its implementation of the Children's Convention³ and how the Government is protecting and advancing the rights of mokopuna in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In August 2023, the United Nations Committee Against Torture also released Concluding Observations⁴ for New Zealand's seventh periodic review regarding the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment⁵.

Many of the recommendations from both sets of Concluding Observations are directly relevant to aspects of treatment experienced by mokopuna at the Kaitiaki Remand Home. There continues to be significant work required by agencies (State and non-State organisations) that are responsible for detaining and depriving children and young people of their liberty, to ensure that their practice and work in this context is, in all respects, consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of both the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee Against Torture.

² Refer CRC/C/NZL/CO/6 [G2302344 \(3\).pdf](#)

³ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

⁴ Refer CAT/C/NZL/CO/7 [G2315464.pdf](#)

⁵ [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment | OHCHR](#)

Detailed key findings by domain

Treatment

This domain focuses on any allegations of torture or ill-treatment, use of seclusion, use of restraint and use of force. We also examine models of therapeutic care provided to mokopuna to understand their experience.

Kaitiaki Remand Home feels like a home

Creating a home-like environment for mokopuna is essential, as it helps them to feel safe, valued, and comfortable during what can be a stressful time, particularly when they are adjusting to an unfamiliar setting. Kaimahi working day-to-day in the whare play a vital role in nurturing a sense of belonging, supporting mokopuna to engage positively with kaimahi and their peers, and to feel generally well cared for during their time in the remand whare.

Mokopuna spoke positively about their time living at the Kaitiaki Remand Home, describing it as “solid as,” “like a school camp” or “a holiday” and that it “feels like a home.” Mokopuna highlighted strong support from kaimahi as a positive and shared how kaimahi spend time getting to know them. Mokopuna said that they felt like kaimahi genuinely cared about them and were there for them.

Mokopuna highlighted the following positive experiences in the whare:

- Good access to kai
- Long showers
- Access to the gym in the garage
- Personalising bedrooms and the ability to use chalkboard painted walls to tag or write on
- The ability to do their own clothes washing
- Being taken off-site to engage in activities in the community
- Positive support from kaimahi and peers
- Activities such as “jamming cards with the boys,” playing basketball and sharing kai helped build a sense of belonging.

*“[we get] way more support in the house. On the outs you’re trying to survive”.
(Mokopuna)*



(left) Front grassed garden, (centre) basketball area and (right) a mokopuna bedroom

Creating safety through relationships, not restraints

Mokopuna safety is a priority at Kaitiaki Remand Home, with a strong organisational focus on relational trauma-informed care approaches that prioritise de-escalation before any force or restraint⁶ is considered and used on mokopuna. When mokopuna become highly agitated and there is an immediate risk to their own safety or the safety of others in the whare, kaimahi may be required to intervene to restore safety. Restraint or physical holds are only applied when there is an immediate safety concern; this is only used as a last resort and all attempts to de-escalate and support mokopuna have been unsuccessful. Relational de-escalation strategies observed on this monitoring visit included engaging mokopuna through calm one-to-one support.

*"[kaimahi] talk to you 1:1, calm you down and tell you you're safe."
(Mokopuna)*

Kaimahi also emphasised that any form of restraints are rarely used.

*"We have CPI⁷ training but haven't had to use it."
(Kaimahi)*

The Trainer and Health & Safety Officer for Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita who provides training and oversees health and safety practice for all kaimahi across all the homes managed by the organisation, highlighted clear expectations that if restraint is used documentation must be of a high standard. They emphasised that kaimahi must be able to clearly articulate and justify every step of the intervention. The emphasis on accountability and reflective practice extends beyond the immediate response and is embedded within robust incident review processes that support on-going kaimahi learning.

⁶ [Managing serious and imminent harm by tamariki and rangatahi | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

⁷ [Safety Intervention Foundation Training | Crisis Prevention Institute \(CPI\)](#)

Incident reviews and debriefs are a strong feature of practice and are used as a tool for learning, accountability and continuous improvement rather than blame. The Trainer and Health & Safety Officer leads structured debriefs with kaimahi to reflect on what occurred, what worked well, and what could be improved. High-level incidents such as serious assault or absconding are also reviewed by the Programme Manager, CPI Instructor, and Chief Operations Officer for Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita to ensure the response is appropriate, child-centred and culturally aligned. The Clinical Manager also completes a root-cause⁸ analysis for patterned behaviour, prompting tailored support for kaimahi such as anger-management coaching delivered by the organisation's mental health worker.

Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita continues to build kaimahi capability through refresher training in trauma-informed care, Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and situational awareness.⁹ This emphasis on high quality, trauma-informed practice reinforces an organisational culture where mokopuna safety and support is emphasised through consistency of expectation and steady relationships and guidance rather than control through punitive practice and restraint.

Genuine relationships define Kaitiaki Remand Home

Strong, respectful and genuine relationships are defining what good care looks like in the Kaitiaki Remand Home. Mokopuna and kaimahi engage together in daily activities creating an environment of belonging. During this November 2025 OPCAT Monitoring visit, Mana Mokopuna observed mokopuna and kaimahi frequently playing basketball, eating kai together, watching movies and playing cards which all helped to foster a sense of belonging and normalcy for mokopuna.

Interactions between mokopuna and interactions between mokopuna and kaimahi were observed as relaxed, involving a lot of humour and good-natured banter, and showing each other mutual respect. Mokopuna frequently approached kaimahi for conversation, reassurance or support. Kaimahi responded promptly with patience, calmness, and clear boundaries to ensure mokopuna needs are being met. Mokopuna said:

"They [kaimahi] keep us busy" and "are supportive" of us.

"They [kaimahi] respect us all day, everyday".

The challenge of mixing mokopuna with different support needs

Mokopuna can be admitted into the remand home with a mix of legal statuses under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Some mokopuna have only care and protection needs (with temporary custody granted in favour of the State) and other mokopuna are there on remand pending their legal matters being heard in the Youth Court. These groups often have very

⁸ [ROOT CAUSE definition and meaning | Collins English Dictionary](#)

⁹ [Situation awareness - Wikipedia](#)

different support and developmental needs, particularly in relation to mokopuna on remand not being able to freely leave the whare. Kaimahi identified on-going challenges with absconding, as one kaimahi noted, *"Seen a few mokopuna come through, a lot have absconded."* These challenges are compounded by the differences in legal status in that Care and Protection mokopuna are able to freely leave the whare, while mokopuna on remand may be charged and transferred to a secure Youth Justice Residence for the same behaviour. This disparity can create confusion and tension within the whare, with mokopuna encouraging each other to leave without fully understanding the potential consequences. Managing these risks places additional pressure on kaimahi and can result in mokopuna who are legally able to freely leave the whare, experiencing restricted liberty by default as there are not enough kaimahi on shift to safely manage two separate groups of mokopuna.

Mana Mokopuna acknowledges that stresses on placement numbers can mean that Care and Protection and Youth Justice mokopuna are admitted into the same whare. However, Mana Mokopuna strongly suggests this is kept to a minimum and that clear policies, placement practices, and operational safeguards are put into place to avoid the unintended consequences detailed above when these two groups of mokopuna are housed together.

Role modelling guides mokopuna behaviour

Building on these strong relational foundations with kaimahi, mokopuna demonstrated positive peer relationships and collective responsibility for maintaining respect and safety within the whare. Mana Mokopuna saw how mokopuna encouraged each other and corrected inappropriate behaviour respectfully. For example, when te tamaiti was asked to lead or participate in karakia, other mokopuna supported the one leading rather than making fun of the practice. The OPCAT Monitoring team also observed on several occasions mokopuna holding one another to account and correcting behaviour. An example was when a tamaiti began tagging on the wall in the gym. The other mokopuna respectfully told them to stop and said, *"we don't do that here."* Te tamaiti apologised and immediately began to clean it off. Mokopuna shared that they respect kaimahi because kaimahi respect them. Mokopuna indicated that the whare feels like a home with mokopuna and kaimahi working together to uphold respect during their time spent together.

"We respect the whare"
(Mokopuna)

Transitions described as "One lane of support"

While mokopuna at Kaitiaki Remand Home experience genuine and supportive relationships, challenges remain particularly for those arriving from Youth Justice Residences. Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita actively work to smooth these pathways with kaimahi

supporting mokopuna into new environments to maintain relational continuity and stability. Care plans guide safe transitions and help ensure mokopuna feel supported at each stage of their journey.

In response, kaimahi intentionally focus on supporting mokopuna to settle into the whare, particularly those transitioning from other residences and placements.¹⁰ Kaimahi noted that transitions are most effective when kaimahi from the previous placement accompany mokopuna during the initial hand-over. Mana Mokopuna advocates for continuity of care and relational stability when mokopuna move between placements as this approach helps maintain trusted relationships, manage expectations and ease the transition process. These strong consistent relationships with kaimahi create the conditions for mokopuna to feel safe, valued and accountable, which in turn shapes how they relate to and support one another within the whare. During this November 2025 OPCAT monitoring visit, the team observed a tamaiti being admitted who had come from a Youth Justice Residence. Both kaimahi from the residence and the whare supported a gradual integration using calm relational engagement which included allowing te tamaiti time to self-regulate, access to kai, one-to-one kōrero with trusted adults, and whare kaimahi maintaining a settled reassuring environment rather than rushing through the admission process.

Despite these structured processes kaimahi highlighted that transitions back to whānau and community often lack consistent and meaningful support. Mokopuna shared feelings of limited contact with social workers and whānau during planning stages, describing poor communication and a sense that their voices were not being heard during the Family Group Conferences (FGC). Several mokopuna said decisions were often made about them rather than with them leaving them unclear about expectations, available supports, and next steps once they are able to leave the remand whare.

Mokopuna also spoke about the pressures faced by their whānau, particularly financial stress, which are not always adequately addressed in transition planning. Many expressed a strong desire to financially contribute to their whānau by finding employment and earning money but felt there was little practical assistance to help them access work or training in the community upon release. The absence of clear pathways into employment, education or mentoring increased mokopuna anxiety about returning to environments where structure and support may be limited.

Kaimahi noted that stronger leadership alignment and accountability across services could enable more successful step-down placements for when mokopuna return to whānau or community environments where supports are inconsistent or minimal. While several

¹⁰ Mokopuna can come into the whare directly from the community or via step-down referrals. Weekly hui are held in which a panel consider mokopuna on remand who are in secure Youth Justice residences for step-down into a community-based remand whare to ensure suitability of placement for mokopuna and residence bed availability in across the country.

mokopuna have transitioned successfully in recent months, the experiences described by mokopuna during this November 2025 OPCAT monitoring visit reflect a clear call for greater consistency, stronger communication and sustained support as mokopuna reconnect with whānau and community.

Mokopuna have a right to planned, supported, and rights-based transitions, including assessment, preparation, and on-going advice and assistance from Oranga Tamariki grounded in the paramountcy of their wellbeing and best interests. Mokopuna also have a right to have their views heard,¹¹ to special protection and assistance when deprived of family care,¹² and to social reintegration and recovery.¹³ This requires the State to actively support safe, stable, and dignified pathways into adulthood. Consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Crown must uphold the mana of tamaiti, actively protect the rights and wellbeing of tamariki Māori, and support whakapapa and whānau connections through partnership, participation, and equity in all transition decisions and supports.

¹¹ Article 12 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

¹² Article 20 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

¹³ Articles 39 and 40 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Material Conditions

This domain assesses the quality and quantity of food, access to outside spaces, hygiene facilities, clothing, bedding, lighting and ventilation available to mokopuna. It focuses on understanding how the living conditions in secure facilities contribute to the well-being and dignity of mokopuna.

An environment that nurtures wellbeing, identity and belonging

Kaitiaki Remand Home provides a safe environment that supports mokopuna wellbeing. Regular property checks are conducted by the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placement Team. This ensures timely reporting and a proactive response to address any issues identified. Recent upgrades, on-going repairs and an increased focus on creating a warm homelike environment, reflect a clear commitment to supporting mokopuna with dignity and care.



(Left) Mokopuna bedroom and (Right) clean, mould-free bathroom

Since the previous OPCAT Monitoring visit in May 2025, there has been a noticeable improvement in the cleanliness and maintenance of Kaitiaki Remand Home. Earlier reports highlighted delays in repairs, black mould in bathrooms and on curtains in a bedroom as well as issues with tagging. During this November 2025 OPCAT monitoring visit, we noted the following:

- bathrooms and curtains were free of mould
- lawns had been mowed
- gutters decluttered
- contractors had been engaged to explore kitchen upgrades, although timelines for these works are still being finalised.

These changes reflect strengthened property management. Mana Mokopuna noted that some issues remain, including unfrosted windows in the activity room, which have been outstanding since the October 2023 OPCAT visit. As a result, the games room is not used as often as mokopuna would like due to privacy concerns, as it faces a main street and a nearby bus stop used by mokopuna in the community travelling to and from school. The lack of frosting on

the windows has resulted in unwanted interactions between mokopuna in the remand whare and mokopuna walking on the street. There is also an on-going need for internal painting.



Unfrosted windows in the activity room with a direct view to a busy suburban road frequently used by mokopuna.

Steady improvements and consistent attention to maintenance reinforces to mokopuna that the remand whare is a safe, nurturing and functional environment. Mana Mokopuna recommends that the remaining upgrades, including frosting the windows in the activity room and internal painting, are progressed with urgency to sustain a clean, safe, and supportive environment for mokopuna.

The role of the Oranga Tamariki Property team

The Oranga Tamariki, Tāmaki Makaurau Property and Facilities Manager oversees homes from Tāmaki Makaurau to Kaitiaki which includes the Kaitiaki Remand Home, ensuring the environment remains safe and functional. The team consists of six kaimahi who manage 88 offices and 181 owned and leased homes and workspaces.

Kaimahi described clear systems that help them identify and report property issues quickly and any property reports that detail issues are sent directly to Oranga Tamariki National Office. Recent improvements such as gutter clearing, landscaping, and regular checks by the Property Managers show a shift towards being more proactive around maintenance.

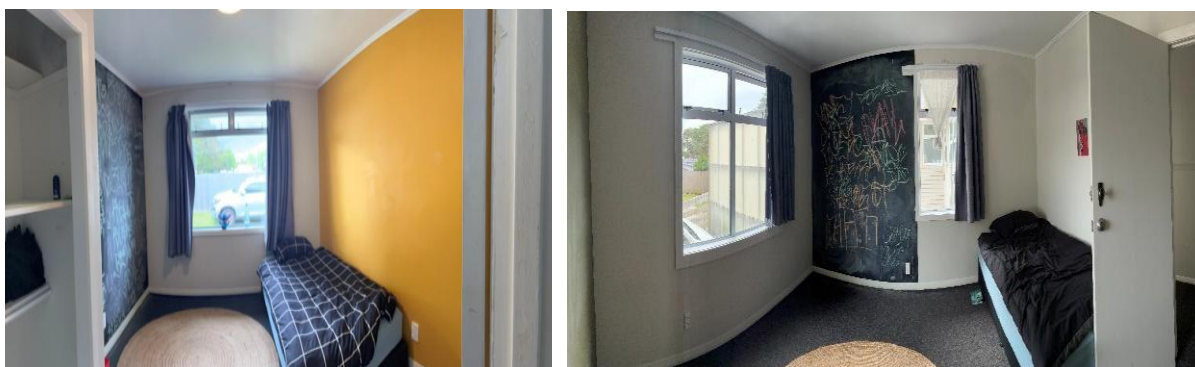
Planned upgrades for Kaitiaki Remand Home include:

- New Carpet
- Internal painting
- Refreshed kitchen design
- Window frosting to the activity room



(Left) Paint peeling and tagging, and (Right) current kitchen area

Tagging by mokopuna continues to be a challenge and somewhat managed by the use of chalkboards in mokopuna bedrooms. Small things that create a homelike environment such as soft furnishings, bookcases, cushions, artwork and opportunities for mokopuna to personalise their rooms also contribute to mokopuna wellbeing. The property team did acknowledge that Oranga Tamariki budget constraints and schedule timetabling can contribute to property maintenance delays.



Chalkboard walls in mokopuna bedrooms

Mana Mokopuna hopes to see the scheduled maintenance including the internal painting and frosting on the activity room windows completed at the next OPCAT monitoring visit.

Kai that connects and extends care

Access to kai at Kaitiaki Remand Home supports not only physical health and wellbeing but also fosters independence, teaches responsibility and contributes to an environment where mokopuna feel cared for. The May 2025 OPCAT Monitoring report recommended a review of the food budget to ensure it reflects the current cost of living and suggested considering changes to the Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita purchase orders used for grocery shopping that would enable kaimahi to shop at a closer supermarket (the purchase orders are made out to Pak n Save Manukau and the remand where is located on the North Shore of Tāmaki Makaurau).

During our visit we heard that kaimahi were unsure of the exact food budget. Despite this, kaimahi continue to manage the food budget as effectively as possible by adjusting spending according to the number of mokopuna in the whare. Mana Mokopuna observed mokopuna helping themselves to food throughout each day of the on-site visit. One tamaiti shared that it was their fourth meal of the day and that they had enjoyed a smoothie while waiting for dinner.

Kaimahi prepare nutritious meals for mokopuna, and mokopuna frequently spoke positively about the food they received while in the whare. House Leaders are responsible for shopping and managing the kai budget. Mana Mokopuna noted that the pantry, fridge and freezer were well stocked. Mokopuna expressed appreciation for the kai with one commenting that they were *“grateful for the kai”* they received at the whare.



(Left) Pantry, (Centre) apples on the kitchen bench, (right) freezer stocks.

Kaitiaki Remand Home provides a safe, nurturing and culturally responsive environment where mokopuna wellbeing and identity are prioritised. Kaimahi in the whare are upholding mokopuna rights to a good standard of living as per Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as their rights under Articles 2 and 3¹⁴ of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

¹⁴ [Human Rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#)

Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori

This domain focuses on identity and belonging, which are fundamental for all mokopuna to thrive. We note commitment to Mātauranga Māori and the extent to which Māori values are upheld, cultural capacity is expanded and mokopuna are supported to explore their whakapapa.

Vision of a kaupapa aligned, tikanga-driven model of care

Reconnect Family Services-Te Ope Pirita is actively strengthening its identity by moving toward a practice model grounded in Te Ao Māori. The new model is centred on embedding the organisational Pou which are Kaitiakitanga, Kotahitanga, Whānaungatanga, and Manaakitanga¹⁵ to create a holistic and culturally aligned environment that nurtures wellbeing, identity and belonging for mokopuna and whānau. In a practical sense, this move represents a transition from ad-hoc attempts to incorporate cultural elements into everyday life, to a tikanga-based framework that guides daily practice in the whare and provides kaimahi with clearer expectations and tools to support mokopuna.

The Mana Whakahaere Māori employed by Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita has been a key figure in leading this cultural shift, connecting the Pirita¹⁶ to the broader mahi of Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita. This role also holds the responsibility to raise whānau voice and ensure it is factored in when decisions about mokopuna are made. Kaimahi described the Pou as emphasising unity, relationships and care, and reinforcing the aspiration to become an organisation where culture is not tokenistic, but the foundation of practice.

"In the home you will see karakia, what staff are doing currently is slowly going to grow as our staff learn more, our staff are [currently] more clueless than the young people themselves around te ao Māori."
(Kaimahi)

Te ao Māori me ōna tikanga are becoming increasingly visible within daily routines at Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita Head office, supported by the Mana Whakahaere Māori through the provision of mentoring, advocacy, and cultural leadership. Kaimahi are actively developing competencies through noho marae, wānanga, and hands-on learning opportunities that help them embed tikanga into everyday interactions. Current expectations include the ability to confidently deliver an opening karakia, recite a mihimihi, lead or support waiata, and close with karakia.

Kaimahi described the shift from a recent organisation wide noho marae at Papakura Marae as a significant step in building collective understanding of tikanga Māori. Other kaimahi

¹⁵ [About Us – Reconnect – Family Services](#)

¹⁶ [Pirita - Te Aka Māori Dictionary](#)

reflected on their evolving roles, such as acting as a Kaitiaki to ensure whānau and rangatahi voices are heard.

*"Our organisation is PI [Pacific Island] dominated hence the noho marae was great as a lot of us don't have that knowledge."
(Kaimahi)*

The Mana Whakahaere Māori continues to strengthen relationships with Mana Whenua, hapū, and cultural leaders within the community to further support this practice shift, with aspirations to engage kaimahi in Poukai, Tainui hui¹⁷, and Koroneihana¹⁸ to deepen cultural grounding.

Mokopuna also become active participants in the practice change. For example, we observed mokopuna leading karakia in te reo Māori with guidance from kaimahi during this November 2025 OPCAT Monitoring visit. These opportunities strengthen mokopuna cultural identity and model the shift toward a culturally confident and responsive organisation. As these practices continue grow, Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita is positioned to realise its vision of a kaupapa aligned, tikanga-driven model of care.

Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita is actively embedding a kaupapa Māori, tikanga-driven model of care that strengthens mokopuna wellbeing, cultural identity and belonging upholding mokopuna rights under Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Articles 2, 3 and 4¹⁹ of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

¹⁷ [hui - Te Aka Māori Dictionary](#)

¹⁸ [Koroneihana: coronation anniversary celebration | Kīngitanga – the Māori King movement | Te Ara Encyclopaedia of New Zealand](#)

¹⁹ [Human Rights and Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#)

Activities and access to others

This domain focuses on the opportunities available to mokopuna to engage in quality, youth friendly activities inside and outside secure facilities, including education and vocational activities. It is concerned with how the personal development of mokopuna is supported, including contact with friends and whānau.

Whānau contact and strengthening connection

Maintaining strong whānau connection is critical to mokopuna wellbeing and supports their emotional regulation, sense of belonging, and identity. At Kaitiaki Remand Home, kaimahi prioritise maintaining whānau connection and contact is facilitated through scheduled phone calls providing consistency and routine. Mokopuna have expressed a desire for longer and more frequent contact, particularly on weekends, when they are not in school.

*“Phone calls still occurring, 15-minute set phone calls, we’d like 30 minutes sometimes [...] It would be good to have two phone calls on the weekend. One in the morning and one at night.
(Mokopuna)*

Despite these routines, barriers to whānau contact remain. Processes lack consistency and at times Oranga Tamariki site social workers are not providing essential contact details prior to mokopuna admission into the whare. This places additional pressure on whare kaimahi to follow up through the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placement Team so they can facilitate mokopuna phone calls. One tamaiti described not seeing their whānau during their first three weeks at Kaitiaki Remand Home despite previously having visits in a Youth Justice Residence due to administrative delays. Te tamaiti said they were unable to reach their social worker after multiple attempts to try and arrange a visit. Delays in being able to see or speak to whānau prolongs disconnection and increases mokopuna frustration particularly when they are placed outside their home region and away from whānau.

Mana Mokopuna recommends that Kaitiaki Remand Home continue to explore flexible approaches to strengthening whānau contact within existing safety and operational constraints, including opportunities for longer or more frequent phone calls, particularly on weekends. All mokopuna have the right to meaningful, consistent whānau connection and active advocacy from Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita is required to ensure all mokopuna arrive with appropriate contact details.

Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service²⁰ tailor education to make learning fun

Education at Kaitiaki Remand Home is designed to engage mokopuna in learning while supporting positive routines and motivation. Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service (TYMS) kaiako deliver lessons tailored to the interests and needs of the mokopuna, ensuring learning is interactive, flexible, and enjoyable. As part of the education programme, TYMS also provide off-site learning activities on Tuesdays, supporting broader engagement and real-world learning experiences. Strong relationships between kaimahi, mokopuna, and kaiako underpins engagement and participation in lessons.

During this November 2025 OPCAT Monitoring visit, mokopuna and kaimahi went off-site to Orewa Beach. A tamaiti shared that during their visit they “*popped manus*”, played a block game and basketball. TYMS had originally planned to visit the TYMS head office to use their gymnasium for their off-site activity, but the gym was unavailable so changed the activity to Orewa Beach. It was pleasing to see how kaiako could be agile in arranging another off-site location to ensure mokopuna did not miss out on their community activity.

Mokopuna shared how their kaiako play games and make learning fun. They also outlined that they are attentive to mokopuna needs and when mokopuna start to get bored, kaiako change the lesson focus to make education engaging. Mokopuna also shared the challenges they have experienced in mainstream education. They explained that despite being disengaged for long periods of time, they have been motivated to re-engage because of the way education is run at Kaitiaki Remand Home. Mokopuna said that if the kaiako from TYMS was their kaiako at Kura in the community, they would love it and go every day and not want to miss a day.

The tailored approach from TYMS kaiako fosters skill development, confidence, and motivation, ensuring mokopuna benefit fully from educational opportunities. A continued focus on innovative, interactive and adaptable teaching will further strengthen engagement and learning outcomes for all mokopuna who are placed in the remand where.

Under Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, mokopuna have the right to good quality education that helps develop their personalities, talents and abilities. This right is being upheld at the Kaitiaki Remand where.

²⁰ [Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service \(TYMS\) - Home](#)

Mokopuna would like more off-site activities to support reintegration back into the community

Off-site activities provided at the Kaitiaki remand where are typically planned for weekends with consideration for kaimahi availability, mokopuna dynamics, and risk assessments. Recent offsite activities included going to the Otahuhu Pools, the local beach, and the Samoan Parade which was a pre-game parade for Samoa vs Tonga in the Rugby League Pacific Championship.

While these outings are valued some mokopuna shared a desire for more variety and frequency of off-site experiences. Mana Mokopuna recommends that the Kaitiaki Leadership Team look at expanding the range of appropriate off-site activities and the regularity in which mokopuna can go offsite so that they remain connected to life in the community.

*"most afternoons we spend at the whare watching Netflix" and
"it's boring as,"
(Mokopuna)*

Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms mokopuna right to meaningful play and recreation. Expanding the range and frequency of offsite activities is recommended to better support prosocial engagement and transition back into the community.

Personnel

This domain focuses on the relationship between kaimahi and mokopuna, and the recruitment, training, support and supervision offered to the kaimahi team. In order for facilities to provide therapeutic care and a safe environment for mokopuna, kaimahi must be highly skilled, trained and supported.

Leadership team visibility would strengthen safety and practice

The leadership team plays a central role in shaping the culture, wellbeing, and capability of kaimahi working in the Kaitiaki Remand Home. Over the past year, the leadership team has undergone significant change and development. Several experienced kaimahi have moved into new leadership roles within the organisation, creating gaps that required recruitment and a period of transition for kaimahi working in the Kaitiaki Remand Home. A kaimahi who had worked in the whare for many years has become the new Team Leader and kaimahi said this has brought fresh oversight to how the whare is run. The Programme Manager has taken on additional responsibilities which include overseeing operations across three homes run by Reconnect Family Service - Te Ope Pirita, managing kaimahi, supporting Human Resource matters and stakeholder engagement. Due to funding constraints²¹ there is currently no case leader at Kaitiaki Remand Home with the Programme Manager also covering these responsibilities in addition to their existing duties.

The Programme Manager and Team Leader acknowledged their strong collaborative approach to delivering the right care for mokopuna and their ability to work effectively together. Kaimahi shared that the leadership team is functioning well and has a positive impact however, they expressed a desire for the Programme Manager to be more visibly present onsite. Kaimahi also shared that an increased presence from the Programme Manager would strengthen relationships, provide direct support, and reinforce consistent practice.

"Love this job and want to be the best remand home in New Zealand"
(Kaimahi)

Despite the personnel challenges and changes over the past year, kaimahi take pride in their mahi and remain committed to creating the best possible environment for mokopuna. They described their work as rewarding and meaningful, often highlighting the positive impact they strive to make each day. The leadership team has focused on improving processes including structured shift logs, Microsoft Teams reporting, and refined rostering while balancing kaimahi

²¹ The whare is funded through direct service contracts with Oranga Tamariki. The value of these contracts are reviewed at regular intervals and kaimahi indicated there was no funding for a case leader at the time of this November 2025 visit.

wellbeing needs. Strong teamwork and accountability across the board contribute directly to a stable and supportive environment for mokopuna.

Kaimahi capacity and stability

Kaimahi levels at Kaitiaki Remand Home are manageable and there is flexibility to bring in extra kaimahi support when there are four mokopuna and when dynamic risk levels due to mokopuna behaviour increases, creating safety risks. Recent workforce changes included four new kaimahi on-boarded and roster rotations continuing to ensure fairness for all kaimahi having the same number of shifts. Operational guidance such as providing good line-of-sight, supervision, good shift communication and updated suicide risk assessments, support kaimahi to perform confidently. Admissions are carefully managed through the Oranga Tamariki Regional Placement Team and the After-Hours Service with the Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita Leadership Team ensuring new placements are suitable and do not dysregulate other mokopuna in the whare.

When additional kaimahi cover is required and casual kaimahi are unavailable the Senate Nursing Bureau²² is used as a last resort with preference always given to Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita kaimahi to maintain consistency for mokopuna across all whare.

The October 2023 OPCAT Monitoring report highlighted that kaimahi had intentionally adopted twelve-hour shifts to foster relational continuity and build meaningful connections with mokopuna. Since then, the schedule has transitioned to three eight-hour shifts with a maximum of sixteen hours per kaimahi per day. The May 2025 report identified that some kaimahi were regularly working 24-hour shifts. This was not evident on this November 2025 OPCAT Monitoring visit, however, reinforces the importance of strong leadership oversight and active attention to kaimahi wellbeing, noting the safety risks of overly long shifts and the careful management required when double or back-fill shifts are needed.

Kaimahi led and supportive induction experience

Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita induction for Kaitiaki Remand Home gives new kaimahi baseline cultural learning, clinical insight, operational training and practical shadowing in the form of buddy shifts. Kaimahi said they can then indicate to managers when they are ready to go into the roster as fully trained kaimahi. Kaimahi indicated this gives them confidence to 'go live' when they are ready rather than feeling like they are thrown in the deep end and hoping for the best. This is supported by the Team Leader who regularly checks in and builds new kaimahi up so they can be well prepared.

"Learned a lot on the job after induction"
(Kaimahi)

²² [Senate](#)

Kaimahi told the Monitoring Team during this November 2025 OPCAT Monitoring visit that their induction experience was positive and supportive and that it helped them transition effectively into their roles and responsibilities. They described the induction as informative and useful providing baseline knowledge while noting that full confidence is gained through on-the-job practical learning.

Induction training covers a broad range of topics, including:

- Te Ope Pirita Reconnect organisational overview
- Māori and Pacific whakapapa and cultural learning
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) training
- Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI)²³ training for mokopuna behaviour management and de-escalation
- First aid
- Communication systems and administrative tasks
- Shadowing and practical observation
- PARTH – a training model to guide practitioners to build genuine, trusting relationships with vulnerable young people
- Child protection training

Having members of the Leadership Team involved in the induction training was highlighted as a key strength by kaimahi, ensuring new kaimahi receive regular check-ins focused on safety, correct use of tools, and understanding neurodiversity.

*“Induction was good and took two and half weeks to feel comfortable”
(Kaimahi)*

Recent improvements have further strengthened the induction process. One change that was highlighted by kaimahi was moving from Standard Operating Procedure readings to practical, scenario-based learning supported by an induction handbook. The structured pathway now includes a week for training and orientation, a week for shadowing, and, depending on the new kaimahi confidence, then progression to live duties. This approach reinforces expectations for early communication and contributes to a transparent, safe, and supportive team culture.

Practice driven training and professional development

Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita provides a wide-ranging training programme designed to build capability across clinical, cultural, behavioural, and operational areas. Kaimahi have access to diverse training opportunities, including:

²³ [Crisis Prevention Institute \(CPI\) | CPI Training | New Zealand](#)

- Neurodiversity and spectrum disorders (ADHD, FASD, Autism)
- Trauma-informed practice
- Rainbow workshops
- Māori cultural workshops and noho marae
- First Aid
- CPI training
- Oranga Tamariki caregiving training
- Oranga Tamariki placement process training

Training is intentionally grounded in practice. Kaimahi value realistic scenarios, one to two weeks of buddy shifts before working independently, and early opportunities to practice engaging with mokopuna and completing administrative tasks. The Clinical Manager also plays a key role by translating complex reports into practical strategies and providing coaching following critical incidents such as self-harm or behavioural escalations.

The training programme continues to evolve in response to practice needs, incident trends, and policy changes. Updates include revised child protection training, modules addressing mokopuna in the whare with mixed legal statuses, and organisation-wide support for kaimahi working between houses within the Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita network. Development of supervision training for House Leaders is underway along with broader leadership capability development.

Strengthening supervision for overall impact

Kaimahi consistently emphasised the value of supervision as an essential tool supporting their wellbeing, reflective practice, and professional growth. Kaimahi highlighted supervision as a space to address client-related concerns, receive emotional support, reflect on team dynamics, and strengthen relationships with the leadership team. Kaimahi explained that supervision provides an *“opportunity to vent, get it out, express how we feel,”* and work on *“how we can be better as a team.”*

Despite this recognition, access to structured supervision is inconsistent. Current practice often relies on ad-hoc check-ins, with formal supervision occurring only when issues arise. Supervision requires a consistent, structured and proactive approach ensuring all kaimahi have access to regular support and professional guidance. Mana Mokopuna recommends a formalised approach to supervision that is developed and implemented for all kaimahi working directly with mokopuna.

Protection Systems

This domain examines how well-informed mokopuna are upon entering a facility. We also assess measures that protect and uphold the rights and dignity of mokopuna, including complaints procedures and recording systems.

There is an effective partnership with the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placement team

Kaitiaki Remand Home maintains a strong relationship with the Oranga Tamariki Placement Team, who are consistently described by kaimahi as “awesome” and easy to work with. The Placement Team provides clear communication, timely coordination and reliable follow-up activity, often stepping in to progress social worker actions when their communication with kaimahi at the whare has stalled. Kaimahi also noted that the Placement Team fosters an environment where they can have straight-up and honest conversations strengthening trust and transparency. Their responsiveness not only reduces pressure on whare kaimahi but it also ensures that critical information flows smoothly between the Ministry of Education, Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita supporting operational stability and better outcomes for mokopuna.

Social workers are “hit and miss” when advocating for mokopuna in care

Oranga Tamariki site social worker responsiveness remains highly inconsistent placing strain on Kaitiaki Remand Home kaimahi and directly affecting mokopuna wellbeing. Kaimahi reported on-going difficulties engaging with Oranga Tamariki site social workers. Often requests require multiple follow-up emails and kaimahi said they have resorted to including the Placement Team in correspondence to help get traction.

Mokopuna also shared their frustration with the lack of engagement, poor communication, and limited support from their Oranga Tamariki site social workers. Some described Oranga Tamariki social workers as “useless” and stated they “*should be there for you.*” Mokopuna told the Monitoring Team that it can be difficult to contact their social worker and that they often feel unheard and unsupported. These concerns were consistently raised during the visit and reflect systemic issues beyond the control of Kaitiaki Remand Home.

*“They [social worker] don’t see or call me on the outs,”
(Mokopuna)*

While some Oranga Tamariki site social workers maintain effective communication, others were described as “hit and miss,” resulting in mokopuna experiencing extended periods without contact. Mokopuna shared that their relationships with Oranga Tamariki site social

workers felt transactional rather than relational and said that their social workers did not know them beyond incident-based interactions. Mokopuna described limited engagement when they were “on the outs [living in the community],” with interactions primarily focused on problems rather than wellbeing. One tamaiti shared, “When I’m in trouble, they only ask, ‘What did you do now?’” These experiences left mokopuna feeling unsupported and unseen and contributes to mokopuna disengagement and frustration with the care system.

Inconsistent engagement and weakened trust leads to poor or delayed communication for mokopuna, increasing their emotional distress and the risk of behavioural escalation. Remand home kaimahi shared examples of mokopuna reacting strongly when significant information such as extensions to their stay at Kaitiaki Remand Home is communicated by phone rather than in person, leaving kaimahi to manage the emotional and behavioural impact within the whare. The absence of consistent relational engagement significantly impacts mokopuna sense of belonging, safety, and emotional regulation within the whare.

*“They make us kick off when they say we need to be here longer.”
(Mokopuna)*

Clear expectations can transform how social workers and Kaitiaki Remand Home kaimahi collaborate

Unclear expectations between Oranga Tamariki site social workers and remand home kaimahi results in gaps and inefficiencies. Some Oranga Tamariki site social workers incorrectly assume the whare will manage tasks such as medical bookings or broader care coordination. The Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita Programme Manager looking after the whare frequently needs to redirect Oranga Tamariki site social workers to their own internal processes or National Care Standards²⁴ to ensure compliance and accountability. If Kaitiaki Remand Home kaimahi did not have the great relationship they have with the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placement Team, kaimahi said constantly working through these things with site social workers would be an issue. Mana Mokopuna was asked by mokopuna in the whare to advocate for greater Oranga Tamariki site social worker involvement as some indicated they had not had a visit during their first three weeks at the Kaitiaki Remand Home. Mana Mokopuna raised this as an issue on behalf of mokopuna to the Oranga Tamariki Placement Team who instantly contacted this tamaiti regarding their concern. Mokopuna told Mana Mokopuna before the on-site visit had concluded that their Oranga Tamariki site social worker had made contact. Both kaimahi and mokopuna recognise that clearer role boundaries and consistent follow-through with promises are critical for delivering safe, stable, and effective care for mokopuna.

²⁴ [National Care Standards | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)

Consistent Oranga Tamariki site social worker communication promotes high quality care for mokopuna, in line with s4 and s13 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, Articles 3, 12 and 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 1 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Mixing mokopuna who have different support needs and legal statuses creates pressure for kaimahi

Mixing mokopuna who have Care and Protection and Youth Justice orders presents safety and operational challenges for kaimahi working in the remand where. The Oranga Tamariki Placement team and the Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita Programme Manager work hard and consider group dynamics carefully before accepting new admissions.

Kaimahi shared that Care and Protection mokopuna can sometimes influence Youth Justice mokopuna to abscond, resulting in Youth Justice mokopuna facing Youth Court charges while Care and Protection mokopuna receive non-court related consequences. Kaimahi observed and shared that Care and Protection mokopuna are more likely to leave the where due to fewer repercussions.

Kaimahi experiences with mixing statuses varies. While some initially felt mixing was a poor decision, training on placements has helped them to build an understanding of the rationale. The Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita Programme Manager reports few issues overall with most of the concerns relating to high-risk offenders targeting Care and Protection mokopuna who can be considered vulnerable. Kaimahi consistently emphasised that whilst dynamics can be difficult, providing care remains the priority even when mixing is necessary.

Practically, mixing statuses does affect day-to-day routines, transitions and behavioural trends. Kaimahi shared that there has been an increase in admissions for mokopuna with complex behavioural needs and traumatic histories. New arrivals often include high and complex need mokopuna such as those with neurodiversity or FASD. With these challenges kaimahi at the Kaitiaki Remand Home show strong adaptability and commitment with kaimahi and the Leadership Team proactively managing group dynamics and maintaining a caring and supportive environment where mokopuna continue to feel safe regardless of their legal status.

Championing mokopuna voice

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai (VOYCE)²⁵ maintains a consistent presence at the Kaitiaki Remand Home, visiting at least fortnightly and engaging with mokopuna. Kaimahi described VOYCE as “awesome,” friendly, approachable and that they often bring kai which helps to build rapport. Kaimahi said that some mokopuna do open up to VOYCE particularly when Oranga Tamariki

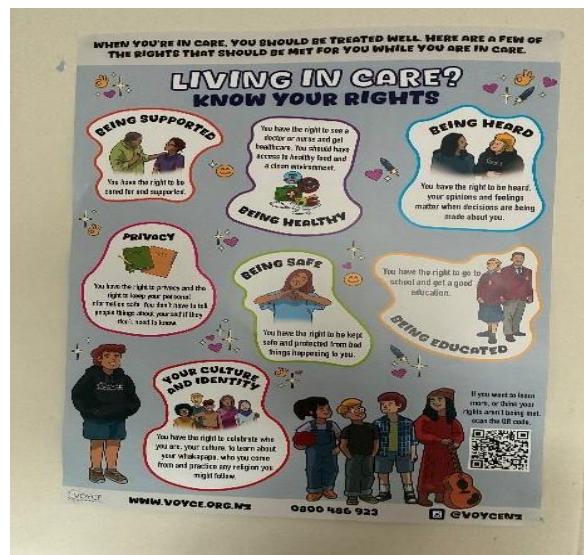
²⁵ [Home - VOYCE - WHAKARONGO MAI](#)

social workers are unavailable, highlighting the trust and connection established through these regular visits. Engagement with VOYCE does vary amongst mokopuna. Some actively participate and seek guidance while others engage only when needing support to access their social worker or whānau. Despite this, VOYCE remains a valued resource and kaimahi encourage mokopuna to connect with them regularly.

In addition to fostering relationships, VOYCE plays a vital advocacy role for mokopuna. This includes negotiating practical changes such as:

- advocating to increase whānau phone calls from 10 to 30 minutes
- supporting mokopuna to request whānau visits
- supporting mokopuna to request a new social worker

By raising these concerns, VOYCE ensures that mokopuna voices are heard and their wellbeing is prioritised.



VOYCE Whakarongo Mai poster in Kaitiaki Remand Home

VOYCE has also identified operational and structural challenges within the where that may affect mokopuna. These include recruitment gaps, the need for an 'anchor person'²⁶ in the remand where, and how boredom contributes to occasional absconding.

Overall, the relationship between VOYCE and kaimahi is largely positive, underpinned by mutual respect and a shared focus on mokopuna wellbeing. Occasional tensions have been reported with VOYCE kaimahi noting some resistance from kaimahi to engage with them. However, collaborative approaches, encouragement from kaimahi and consistent advocacy from VOYCE contribute to a supportive and responsive environment for mokopuna.

²⁶ [ANCHOR Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

Medical services and care

This domain focuses on how the physical and mental health rights and needs of mokopuna re met, in order to uphold their wellbeing, privacy and dignity.

Access to timely medical care is social worker dependent

General medical care and first aid at Kaitiaki Remand Home is grounded in clear, consistent and safe practice. Kaimahi are first-aid trained and Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita have clear processes and policy around medical care and medication dispensing. However, kaimahi outlined to Mana Mokopuna that offsite medical care and medical appointments are the responsibility of Oranga Tamariki site social workers to arrange. Kaimahi said this can result in delays for mokopuna accessing timely medical care and is often dependent on how engaged the Oranga Tamariki site social worker is in the day-to-day life of mokopuna on their caseload and how fast they respond to requests for appointments. Confusion can also occur when appointments have been made for mokopuna and providers then try and liaise directly with where kaimahi when these kaimahi do not have the details around what the appointment is for. One kaimahi shared *“An orthopedic surgeon called me to organise an appointment, I told Oranga Tamariki that’s not our role.”* Unclear expectations and communications between Oranga Tamariki site social workers and kaimahi working in the where who have the day-to-day care of mokopuna, can lead to mokopuna experiencing delayed treatment. Kaimahi working in the where explained that they use the Tamaki Makaurau Placements Team as a point of escalation if site social workers have not picked up appointment requests fast enough. Whilst this approach reportedly gets traction, kaimahi explained that they should not need to escalate their requests for mokopuna to access medical care.

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health and that States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services. It is important that Oranga Tamariki site social workers are responsive to requests for mokopuna health treatment to ensure this right is upheld at all times.

Medication is well managed in the where

Oranga Tamariki site social workers provide medication on arrival with mokopuna, and if this does not occur, Kaitiaki Remand Home kaimahi will immediately follow up with the Oranga Tamariki Placement Team. Kaimahi have the responsibility to safely administer and monitor mokopuna medication. All kaimahi are trained to administer medication, complete medication logs, and conduct mouth checks to confirm medication has been taken. Kaimahi know that

they cannot administer medication that has not been prescribed for mokopuna without first checking with the Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita Programme Manager or Clinical Manager.²⁷ The monitoring team reviewed medication in and out forms which is a record of what kaimahi have given to mokopuna. Another kaimahi signs off the entry that the medication was administered and taken. Mana Mokopuna reviewed medication logs which were detailed, up to date, and completed in accordance with internal medication management policy.

²⁷ As per the Reconnect Family Service Te Ope Pirita Medication Policy.

Appendix One

Progress on 2023 Recommendations

The below table provides an assessment of OPCAT Monitoring recommendations made in the previous October 2023 OPCAT monitoring report for Kaitiaki Remand Home. Mana Mokopuna acknowledges that work on systemic recommendations is being led at an Oranga Tamariki National Office level. The progress detailed here relates to- the day-to-day operations of this particular facility that were reported, observed or evidenced during the visit and are assessed to have made **good**, **limited**, **some**, or **no progress**:

2023 Systemic Recommendations for Oranga Tamariki

	2023 Recommendation	Progress as of November 2025
1	Support community-run remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.	No progress in terms of an independent complaint process being available to all mokopuna in facilities that deprive them of their liberty. Good progress in terms of Kaitiaki Remand Home have independent advocates on-site should mokopuna wish to engage with them. VOYCE Whakarongo Mai now has a consistent fortnightly (and sometimes weekly if the need is there) presence and Kaiwhakamana (VOYCE advocates) are well known and trusted by mokopuna. VOYCE regularly advocates for mokopuna on matters such as whānau contact and social worker engagement improvements.
2	Ensure All About Me Plans are up to date as per the Oranga Tamariki policy and provided to the Kaitiaki Remand Home prior to the admission.	Limited progress : Care planning has improved through stronger collaboration with the responsive Oranga Tamariki Placement Team. However, inconsistencies remain in the quality of written information from Oranga Tamariki site social workers at admission. This consistent lack of vital information often requires kaimahi follow-up from Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita.
3	Ensure property maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely manner and remand homes are regularly updated with progress.	Good progress for this whare : There have been significant improvements in property maintenance and communications for Kaitiaki Remand Home. For example, the basketball hoop has been fixed and is now functional with mokopuna frequently using it during this November 2025 OPCAT visit, mold in bathrooms and a bedroom has been resolved, lawns are regularly maintained, gutters cleared, and engagement with contractors is on-going regarding further upgrades to the whare. Outstanding issues include unfrosted activity room windows and on-going internal refresh (painting) delays due to funding and contractor timeframes.
4	Ensure mokopuna access to timely medical care that does not rely on their assigned Oranga Tamariki social worker being available to escort to medical appointments.	Limited progress : Oranga Tamariki social worker responsiveness overall remains inconsistent, and health appointment coordination can still be unclear. In terms of medical care provided in the whare, medication administration practices are safe and well documented. Where Oranga Tamariki site social worker engagement is poor, requests for medical appointments are escalated quickly through the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placements Team who Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita kaimahi say are very responsive.
5	Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities including minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Limited progress : Mokopuna contact with social workers remains variable and dependent on individual social worker responsiveness. Kaimahi continue to actively facilitate and follow up contact, including escalation through the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placement Team when required. However, some mokopuna reported delays or difficulty making contact, impacting their care and support.

2023 Recommendations for Kaitiaki Remand Home

	2023 Recommendation	Progress as of November 2025
1	Eliminate the use of kaimahi personal cell phones to record information relating to mokopuna.	No progress: Kaimahi continue to use personal devices for Microsoft Teams communication. While this supports continuity and responsiveness, a dedicated organisational solution has not yet been fully implemented, and reliance on personal phones remains.
2	Solidify and implement practice for working with mokopuna Māori in line with the Reconnect Pou and establish a connection with mana whenua.	Some progress: Reconnect Family Services - Te Ope Pirita is steadily embedding a tikanga-driven model of care. Kaimahi are developing skills through noho marae, wānanga and mentoring gaining confidence in karakia, waiata and mihimihi. Mokopuna are increasingly participating with some leading karakia under guidance. These practices show progress toward making tikanga a core, practice-based part of daily care.
3	Kaitiaki leadership to ensure kaimahi have regular formal, professional, external, and cultural supervision when working with mokopuna.	Some progress: Internal supervision continues to be available through team leaders but can be ad-hoc. Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita should look to introduce consistent, structured supervision for all kaimahi who work directly with mokopuna to support their wellbeing, reflective practice, and a high standard of care.
4	Review the current whānau contact arrangement to increase contact time mokopuna have with whānau.	Some progress: Mokopuna continue to have good opportunities to speak with their whānau, although face-to-face contact remains limited and dependent on their site social worker to organise and support. Mana Mokopuna recommends exploring flexible ways to strengthen whānau contact within Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita operational constraints, while continuing to advocate with Oranga Tamariki for systemic improvements.
5	Work with mokopuna to establish regular activities and outings to provide variety in their structured day.	Some progress: Planned offsite activities are occurring primarily on weekends and through their education provider. This provides positive opportunities for mokopuna engagement beyond the remand whare. However, off-site activities remain limited in frequency and variety, particularly during weekdays. Mokopuna feedback indicates on-going boredom and a desire for more regular and varied activities.

Appendix Two:

Gathering information

Mana Mokopuna gathered a range of information and evidence to support the analysis and develop findings for this report. These collectively form the basis of our recommendations.

Method	Role
Interviews and informal discussions with mokopuna and kaimahi.	
Interviews and informal discussions with kaimahi and external stakeholders	■ Mokopuna ■ Chief Executive Officer ■ Kaitiaki Residential Programme Manager ■ Kaitiaki Residential Team Lead ■ Trainer and Health and Safety Officer ■ Clinical Manager ■ House Leader ■ Kaimahi working shifts in the whare ■ VOYCE Whakarongo Mai ■ Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placement Team ■ Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Property and Facilities Manager
Documentation	■ All About Me Plans ■ Admission Form ■ Admission List since June 2025 ■ College Road Booklet ■ Complaints Form and Policy ■ Daily Schedule ■ Discharge Form ■ Māori competencies ■ Medication Policy ■ Medication Logs ■ Responding to allegations of abuse ■ Roster ■ Kaimahi list ■ Supervision Policy
Observations and engagements with mokopuna	Observations occurred across shifts. This includes shift handovers, mealtimes, education and structured activities and mokopuna 'down time' (where activity and engagement with kaimahi and other mokopuna is self-directed).