



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

Puketai Care and Protection Residence

Visit date – December 2023

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Introduction

Puketai Care and Protection Residence (Puketai) is an Oranga Tamariki run care and protection residence for tamariki and rangatahi. The facility is located in Ōtepoti.

In December 2023, 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 eight tamariki and rangatahi. Under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, the legal status which rangatahi are detained on remand at the home include:

- section 78 – Custody of child or young person pending determination of proceedings or in urgent cases, and
- section 101 – Custody orders.

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 was shared with Oranga Tamariki on 6 March 2024.

Recommendations Summary

The OPCAT report for Puketai makes nine recommendations, of which eight are accepted and one has already been actioned.

We value the feedback we receive from Mana Mokopuna and use recommendations to make improvements. For this report, Mana Mokopuna acknowledged several areas of excellent practice and made a range of positive observations about the high quality of care mokopuna were receiving at the facility.

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
Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations	
1. Develop a clear process with details and timeframes when finding and approving bespoke placement options for mokopuna. Ensure it is communicated and adhered to, so mokopuna bespoke plans are signed off in a timely manner.	Accepted
2. Urgently address the radio and technology issues Puketai is experiencing to support the operations of the residence.	Accepted
3. Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities for mokopuna and minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Accepted
4. Ensure mokopuna and their whānau are well prepared, informed and supported when transitioning between care arrangements in line with Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Accepted
5. Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education to ensure funding is prioritised to meet mokopuna educational needs whilst in residence and continues to remain in place once mokopuna transition back into the community.	Accepted
Facility Recommendations	
1. Continue developing the trauma informed model of care and advocating for mokopuna needs.	Accepted
2. Prioritise resource to build the cultural capability of kaimahi to better meet the needs of mokopuna Māori.	Accepted
3. Urgently put in place support for the Kaiwhakaako to strengthen the work being done to embed the practice framework that supports Māori centered practice and develop the cultural capability of all kaimahi at Puketai.	Accepted
4. Continue employing residential social workers and youth workers to ensure best practice and continuity of care for mokopuna.	Accepted

The responses to the Puketai 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 Puketai OPCAT report.

Recommendation 1

Develop a clear process with details and timeframes when finding and approving bespoke placement options for mokopuna. Ensure it is communicated and adhered to, so mokopuna bespoke plans are signed off in a timely manner.

Response

We are working with specific care partners and developing new care capacity contracts to ensure timely progression of care plans and transitions to next steps for tamariki and rangatahi. This means we will have appropriate placements more readily available, and better collaboration between Oranga Tamariki and care providers who deliver the complex services, ensuring rangatahi needs are being met. These contracts also allow care partners to develop capability and improve the quality of practice. We have made significant progress on expanding care capacity contracts for the tamariki and rangatahi already identified as needing “bespoke placements”.

Bespoke placements are now referred to as Individual Care Response (ICR) placements. Tamariki and rangatahi who require ICR placements often have significantly higher support needs for mental health and/or disability. These rangatahi may also require complex behavioural safety plans for dysregulated behaviour like physical violence toward caregivers or high-risk behaviours like stealing cars, driving dangerously, fire lighting, or other behaviours that whānau or non-whānau caregivers are not able to manage safely within their own homes. We are working with care partners who have disability support, trauma expertise and experience in providing high levels of support to move existing ICR placements into care capacity response contracts.

Some of the tamariki and rangatahi presently approaching transition from Puketai are awaiting specific ICR placements. This requires endorsement by relevant Service Delivery senior leaders; delegation for approval is through the Chief Executive.

A new care capacity group home has recently opened on Middleton Road in Dunedin, with Te Kaika (Ngāi Tahu-affiliated) contracted to provide the care service for the facility. The first tamariki/rangatahi is set to transition into the home in mid-April 2024. The care model is based on transitioning tamariki and rangatahi with high support needs back to whānau and progressing the next steps identified in their plan within the context of their whānau.

Recommendation 2

Urgently address the radio and technology issues Puketai is experiencing to support the operations of the residence.

Response

In August 2023, Oranga Tamariki trialled new Motorola radios at Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo Youth Justice Residence in Christchurch, with a view to distributing these to all residences nationally. Reliable radios are essential for maintaining quick and efficient communication throughout residences, and effective radios will impact on improved safety.

The trial of radios was successful, and these have now been rolled out to most residences, including Puketai. The new radios ensure clear communication between kaimahi regardless of their location on the site. Previous models had dead spots or static which prevented kaimahi from hearing each other and responding quickly.

There is also a new emergency alert feature that can immediately let the CCTV control room know there is a problem and support is needed. Anecdotal evidence from residence kaimahi around the motu is that staff are finding the new radios much better, with messages now clearer, the radio itself being lighter, and the antenna not getting in the way of clothing or catching on other items.

Recommendation 3

Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities for mokopuna and minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.

Response

All tamariki in care are entitled to be visited by their social worker. 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. These visits are also 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 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 states 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 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.

Tamariki must be visited by their allocated social worker in person wherever possible. 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."¹

We recognise that the visiting practices observed by Mana Mokopuna during the monitoring visit fall below our expectations. Visits to tamariki and rangatahi in care, regardless of their care arrangement, are a priority focus for Service Delivery. Regional Managers receive weekly information regarding overdue visits so that there is oversight and remediation.

Over January and February 2024, Oranga Tamariki redeployed a number of registered social workers from non-frontline facing roles to support sites to focus on core areas of social work practice such as visits to tamariki and rangatahi in care. Other work was deferred to support prioritising a reduction in overdue visits. Further planning around how sites and regions organise key social work activities is being developed and will be led by our Service Delivery team.

Additionally, the Chief Social Worker is progressing work to establish an evidence-based, safe and appropriate caseload benchmark for social workers, which would effectively institute a caseload limit. When completed, this mahi should support workforce planning and resource allocation for sites and regions. As a result, social workers would likely have a caseload of fewer tamariki and rangatahi which would enable an improved frequency and quality of visits. This should lead into improved transition plans and tamariki and rangatahi exiting the system to get back to their whānau and communities earlier than they currently do.

Recommendation 4

Ensure mokopuna and their whānau are well prepared, informed and supported when transitioning between care arrangements in line with Oranga Tamariki Policy.

Response

We acknowledge the importance of ensuring the right supports are implemented for whānau prior to tamariki and rangatahi being transitioned home or back into a community placement. Tamariki and rangatahi are entitled to expect they will be supported through care transitions: Part Five of the National Care Standards sets out what is required.

¹ [Visiting and engaging with tamariki in care | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

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

Tamariki and rangatahi are encouraged by their social worker and residence kaimahi to actively participate in transition planning alongside their whānau. However, we acknowledge that in some cases the visiting practices of social workers fall short of the expected level and may lead to the “rushed” transitions for some tamariki and rangatahi into and out of residence. It is anticipated that the work outlined in response to Recommendation 3 regarding social workers visiting tamariki and rangatahi in residences will help better inform and improve transition planning for when they go back to their whānau and communities.

It is important for tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau to have input into their plan, understand it, and agree to what supports and strategies are put in place. This helps to support positive and sustainable behaviour change by the tamariki and rangatahi. We recognise that for a transition plan to be successful, all parties involved in the plan need to follow through with their agreed actions. It is also a good opportunity to identify, address and resolve any concerns or issues between tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau before returning home.

Residence kaimahi provide valuable input into plans having worked closely with the tamariki and rangatahi. The plans include recommendations regarding support to enable the tamariki and rangatahi to reintegrate back into the community in a way that keeps them connected with whānau, and other natural supports when their time in residence ends.

Recommendation 5

Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education to ensure funding is prioritised to meet mokopuna educational needs whilst in residence and continues to remain in place once mokopuna transition back into the community.

Response

All tamariki and rangatahi have a right to receive an education. Oranga Tamariki fully understands the need to ensure tamariki and rangatahi in residences have the appropriate levels of support in the classroom, and as they transition out to their community school setting, to enable them to participate and achieve in education. Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Education have been building stronger relationships, with work underway to support improved educational outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi. Through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan and in response to the Education Review Office report on education provision in Oranga Tamariki residences, there has been joint work programmes between the two Ministries. This has included developing “National Guidelines for the Provision of Education with Care and Protection and Youth Justice Residences” which sits as a new Schedule to the Memorandum of Understanding.

The purpose of this Schedule is to:

- set out a description of the key roles and responsibilities of the various organisations involved in the provision of education within care and protection residences and youth justice residences; and
- specifically outline the commitments made by the parties to this Schedule to each other.

Day-to-day operational responsibilities are agreed to on a residence-by-residence basis between each School Board/Contracted Provider and Oranga Tamariki in a separate Residence Education Operational Agreement.

It is the intention of both Ministries to maintain and strengthen these relationships and agreements with the goal of improving the educational experience for tamariki and rangatahi in residences and during transition back to the community.

Response to Facility Recommendations

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

Recommendation 1

Continue developing the trauma informed model of care and advocating for mokopuna needs.

Response

It is pleasing to see Mana Mokopuna's finding that Puketai kaimahi maintain a high standard of trauma-informed practice that meets the needs of tamariki and rangatahi. We agree with the assessment that trauma-informed practice is essential to ensuring tamariki and rangatahi have their needs addressed appropriately whilst in care and paves the way for establishing healthy, positive relationships between tamariki and rangatahi, and between tamariki and rangatahi and kaimahi. Kaimahi use of the Relational Learning Framework at Puketai helps foster positive relationships to understand how adverse childhood experiences impact upon tamariki and rangatahi views of themselves and the world around them. This allows kaimahi to empathise with, and understand, tamariki and rangatahi behaviours within the context of their upbringing.

Leadership at Puketai are committed to continuing the high standards observed by Mana Mokopuna and to ongoing improvement of the trauma-informed model of care.

Recommendation 2

Prioritise resource to build the cultural capability of kaimahi to better meet the needs of mokopuna Māori.

Response

Oranga Tamariki is committed to developing the cultural competency of its kaimahi at Puketai and across the Ministry. An important part of the Oranga Tamariki Future Direction Plan (FDP) is the development for staff (in conjunction with Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi and Te Wānanga o Raukawa) of a suite of appropriate cultural competency programmes to ensure staff can engage with whānau and wider communities in culturally responsive ways.

The first phase of this work is Tū Māia, a 21-week learning programme designed and delivered by Te Hāpai Ō partners, and Māori Tertiary providers. The aim is for Oranga Tamariki kaimahi to build cultural capability and competencies to ensure a culturally authentic, inclusive, fair workplace, where oranga tamariki is the focus. Tū Māia is aligned to Te Arawhiti Māori Crown Relations Capability Framework (Whāinga Amorangi) competency areas, including:

- Understanding racial equity and institutional racism.
- New Zealand history and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- Worldview knowledge.
- Tikanga/kawa.
- Te reo Māori.
- Engagement with Māori.

All Oranga Tamariki kaimahi, including those at Puketai, will be encouraged to attend Tū Māia over the next two years. At the time of Mana Mokopuna's visit last December, one kaimahi was completing the programme.

We acknowledge this recommendation follows on from the previous visit by Mana Mokopuna in April 2022, which proposed Puketai leadership "ensure all staff engage in on-going cultural development, are supported to learn te reo Māori and have the ability to engage in a wide range of cultural activity with mokopuna." While Puketai leadership accepts there has been limited progress, some of the work that has occurred since the last visit, and which is ongoing, includes:

- All kaimahi have had the opportunity to engage in learning cycles 1 and 2 of the Kaupapa Māori Practice Framework.
- All Puketai staff have been supported to complete the Tikanga Māori course through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, with new staff being provided information about enrolling and support if they wish to complete the course.

- Kaimahi-led learning has meant staff have been involved in a variety of other formal learning opportunities, including Tū Māia, Te Reo and Māori arts through Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.
- Kaimahi continue to work alongside mokopuna to learn through experience at weekly Mau Rākau and Carving, and skilled kaimahi continue to engage tamariki in carving alongside them in between formal sessions.
- Kaimahi continue to work together to learn the processes around Mihi Whakatau, engaging alongside tamariki and rangatahi in learning waiata and karakia, and participating in the process when visitors are welcomed at Puketai.

Recommendation 3

Urgently put in place support for the Kaiwhakaako to strengthen the work being done to embed the practice framework that supports Māori centered practice and develop the cultural capability of all kaimahi at Puketai

Response

The Kaiwhakaako position at Puketai is presently vacant, and over the last few months Oranga Tamariki has been navigating a recruitment pause due to budget considerations. This has impacted on the recruitment of kaimahi such as the Kaiwhakaako position. While this role is vacant, other skilled kaimahi at Puketai continue to work with their colleagues and tamariki and rangatahi around learning waiata and karakia, and practicing their own pepeha, as noted in our response to the previous recommendation.

Recommendation 4

Continue employing residential social workers and youth workers to ensure best practice and continuity of care for mokopuna.

Response

In July 2023, a Workforce Development Framework was implemented for care and protection residences. This Framework focuses on building and promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement in every aspect of care and protection residential services and its operational delivery. Recent workforce development initiatives include:

- Establishing an induction and training baseline for all new kaimahi, which is flexible and can be deployed nationwide.
- Establishing a recognised youth worker qualification pathway through CareerForce.
- Setting up a core instructor group for 'Safety Interventions: Advanced and Emergency'.
- Undertaking the appointment of Training Facilitators in residences, who will work closely with the National Training Lead to deliver the annual training cycle.

We agree with Mana Mokopuna's assessment that recruitment processes need to be robust alongside acting quickly when quality candidates apply to maintain a high-functioning workforce. At the time of Mana Mokopuna's visit to Puketai, Oranga Tamariki had been impacted by a recruitment pause during November 2023 which influenced the timeliness of the recruitment of kaimahi. Presently, Oranga Tamariki has a recruitment freeze throughout the Ministry pending a restructure; however, residential youth worker roles and Residence Managers are exempt, and recruitment will continue to these positions.