



Hillcrest Home

OPCAT Monitoring Report

Visit Date: October 2023

Report Date: December 2023



Kia kuru pounamu te rongo

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 wellbeing, at every stage of their lives.



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Introduction

The role of Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission

Mana Mokopuna - Children and Young People's Commission (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 up to 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 a designated National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) 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 function at Mana Mokopuna is to visit places where mokopuna are deprived of their liberty, and:

- Examine the conditions and treatment of mokopuna
- Identify any improvements required or problems needing to be addressed
- Make recommendations aimed at strengthening protections, improving treatment and conditions, and preventing ill-treatment.

About this visit

Mana Mokopuna conducted an announced visit to Hillcrest Home (Hillcrest) as part of its OPCAT NPM monitoring visit programme. The facility is owned and run by Oranga Tamariki. The objective of our OPCAT Monitoring as a 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.

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 the experience of mokopuna at the facility and provides evidence of the findings based on information gathered before, during and after the visit.



About this facility

Facility Name:	Hillcrest Home
Region:	Kirikiriroa (Hamilton)
Operating capacity:	Six beds for tāne aged 14-17 years old. Four mokopuna were on-site during the monitoring visit.
Status under which mokopuna are detained: s238(1)(d), s235 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 Hillcrest Home.

Mana Mokopuna reports the following findings:

Challenges

- There is a lack of communication, documentation and responsiveness pertaining to care of mokopuna by Oranga Tamariki site social workers.
- Whānau are not adequately supported when mokopuna transition home, which is a key contributing factor to mokopuna re-offending and readmissions into the home.
- Mokopuna have access to a complaints system and independent advocacy, however this availability is not clear to them.
- Mokopuna belongings should not be stored in black rubbish bags.
- Whānau connection is prioritised, however challenges with administration can compromise access to whānau for mokopuna.

Areas of strength

- The leadership team has developed a strong culture within the home based on Māori concepts and values that enhance and strengthen mokopuna relationships.
- Hillcrest Home has a robust admission process with a supportive approach to mokopuna transitioning into the home.
- The basic needs of mokopuna are met to a high standard within the home.
- Mokopuna have access to facilities and resources that enhance wellbeing.
- Their legal status is not a barrier for mokopuna to access positive healthy relationships and meaningful experiences that enhance wellbeing.
- Hillcrest Home has a thorough recruitment process to ensure people who are employed in the whare put mokopuna needs at the centre and provide quality care.
- Kaimahi go above and beyond to support all needs of mokopuna, feel well supported and value their leadership team.
- Te reo Māori me ona tikanga and mātauranga Māori is embedded and practiced within Hillcrest Home.



Recommendations

2023 Systemic Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	Support remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.
2	Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities ¹ for mokopuna and minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy. ²
3	Ensure whānau contact occurs without restriction of funding or administrative barriers.
4	Ensure the right supports are implemented for whānau prior to mokopuna being transitioned home and in line with Oranga Tamariki policy. ³
5	Eliminate the reliance on hospital accident and emergency services when mokopuna require non-urgent medical treatment.
6	Embed NZQA units for educational activities and learning options and activities in collaboration with Ministry of Education.

2023 Facility Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	Ensure kaimahi clearly understand the internal complaints system for mokopuna.
2	Improve visibility of mokopuna rights and access to independent advocacy support.
3	Ensure best practice is always followed for shift de-briefs, training is consistent, and learnings are tested and implemented across all shifts.
4	Ensure supervision to prevent staff burn-out and support kaimahi ora.

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 Observations⁴ for New Zealand's sixth periodic review on

¹ [Allocating a key worker and co-worker | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

² [Working with rangatahi and tamariki in remand homes | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

³ [Returning children and young people safely home | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

⁴ Refer CRC/C/NZL/CO/6



its implementation of the Children’s Convention⁵ 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 Observations⁶ for New Zealand’s seventh periodic review regarding the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment⁷.

Many of the recommendations from both sets of Concluding Observations relate to aspects of treatment experienced by mokopuna in Hillcrest and where relevant these are highlighted throughout the body of the report.

⁵ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

⁶ Refer CAT/C/NZL/CO/7

⁷ [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment | OHCHR](#)



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.

Strong leadership lays a strong foundation

The Team Leader Operations exemplifies strong te ao Māori knowledge and understanding. The natural leadership style is grounded by being tika and pono and by practicing Māori values and principles of kotahitanga⁸, whānaungatanga⁹ and ukaipotanga. These principles lay a strong foundation of culture and mauri¹⁰ within Hillcrest Home.

Whānaungatanga allows kaimahi (staff) to better understand the needs of mokopuna, their triggers and how to best manage behaviours leading to meaningful engagements and relationships in the home. This is displayed through mokopuna being viewed as people rather than their behaviour. Daily check-ins provide opportunities of kotahitanga - for mokopuna and kaimahi to come together as a whānau. Sharing karakia¹¹ and waiata¹² creates a space where mokopuna can contribute to kōrero¹³ freely and be heard by kaimahi. This enables a sense of safety for mokopuna and a greater sense of belonging in Hillcrest Home (ukaipotanga).

*"They (staff) actually listen to the boys. Everyone has an opportunity to voice their opinion."
(Whānau of mokopuna)*

Kaimahi lead with good values, principles, and skills

The foundations set by the leadership team enables kaimahi to lead with good values and principles contributing to healthy relationships with mokopuna. Kaimahi develop mokopuna interests through their personal experience, skills and strengths. Kaimahi have backgrounds in te ao Māori, sport and exercise, music, arts, and a wealth of experience in youth and community development. One kaimahi had composed a waiata for Hillcrest Home that explains the significance and history of local iwi and the aspirations the home has for mokopuna. Kaimahi and mokopuna were observed singing this waiata during the visit. Another kaimahi with a sport and exercise background was seen demonstrating correct and safe exercise techniques to mokopuna eager to learn how to lift weights.

These examples highlight how strong foundations of good values and principles can positively impact on kaimahi forming meaningful relationships with mokopuna and their experience

⁸ kotahitanga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

⁹ whanaungatanga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

¹⁰ mauri - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

¹¹ karakia - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

¹² waiata - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

¹³ [kōrero - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](http://maoridictionary.co.nz)



within Hillcrest Home being more than a place of detention, but a place of growth and development.

Kaimahi are creative and meaningful in their engagements

Kaimahi at Hillcrest Home are attentive to the needs of mokopuna and are flexible and creative in their approach. This is from small engagements throughout the day to intentional activities that nurture mokopuna interests to keep mokopuna engaged which in turn prevents boredom and the risk of mokopuna absconding.

One kaimahi shared that they try to work with mokopuna in twenty-minute windows to help maintain mokopuna engagement. This is to allow flexibility for mokopuna who cannot focus on one activity for a prolonged period. This was observed during a one-to-one engagement with a mokopuna diagnosed with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). The kaimahi developed a two-hour plan consisting of twenty-minute activities which included card games, table tennis, basketball, and cooking. The kaimahi successfully engaged the mokopuna for the duration of this time and the mokopuna was able to maintain a manageable level of behaviour.

Kaimahi also take time to learn and utilise mokopuna interests when developing activities and ensure their voice is incorporated into schedule planning. This makes for meaningful engagements where mokopuna can develop areas of interest and kaimahi are able to build on supporting these aspirations. An example was a mokopuna who had an interest in cooking and allocated kaimahi would speak with him about what he wanted to cook and then would source the ingredients to make this happen. Mokopuna would lead the cooking with the support of kaimahi and during the visit this mokopuna was seen making a cheesecake and mozzarella sticks.

No use of force or seclusion in the whare

Mokopuna said that they have not been restrained and have not seen other mokopuna being restrained whilst in the Hillcrest Home. Kaimahi also said that there is no seclusion and use of force used in the home. Instead, kaimahi use a range of de-escalation strategies when dealing with mokopuna who are presenting with challenging behaviours. Kaimahi use strategies such as swapping out staff, one to one engagement, and whānau phone calls. Kaimahi said that sometimes mokopuna just need to hear a familiar voice or they need space to cool down if behaviour is heightened.

*"When he was escalated in behaviour, staff would call me to support him. Staff were equipped to deal with it but sometimes they just need their mum."
(Whānau of mokopuna).*

This was observed on the visit, as a mokopuna was escalating in negative behaviour and the decision was made that he could not go on the planned offsite activity. Kaimahi were seen making a plan and decided the kaimahi mokopuna was directing negative behaviour towards



was to be swapped out. The kaimahi with the better rapport with the mokopuna would remain behind and provide one-to-one attention through engagements to help mitigate the presenting challenging behaviour. This strategy displayed awareness and understanding of presenting mokopuna needs resulting in mokopuna de-escalating.

"If situations arose, they (mokopuna) were given space to calm down or the situation to die down. Things got addressed my boy felt".

(Whānau of mokopuna)

Social Work practice is inconsistent and unresponsive to mokopuna

Kaimahi said that Oranga Tamariki site social work practice is inconsistent for mokopuna. Hillcrest Home receives referrals from the Oranga Tamariki Youth Justice National Placement team for new admissions into the home. Hillcrest Home expects to receive as much information in the referral as possible to assess risks and ensure safe transition plans into the home. Kaimahi said that not all mokopuna have sufficient documentation or information making placement into the home difficult.

Communication and responsiveness from Oranga Tamariki site social workers is also inconsistent having significant impact on mokopuna. Examples include:

- Kaimahi shared mokopuna access to mentors, support, and plans to transition out of the home is dependent on what social worker mokopuna is allocated.
- Some social workers have great communication and contact mokopuna regularly. Whereas other social workers have minimal contact with mokopuna and are unresponsive to kaimahi following up mokopuna queries on their behalf.
- It is challenging getting social workers to visit mokopuna from local sites, compared to social workers who are out of the region.
- Declined funding requests for additional clothing and contact with whānau.

Whilst Hillcrest do have funding to purchase basic clothing for mokopuna, kaimahi said they can experience challenges when requesting purchase orders from site social workers.

Whānau also expressed similar experiences with inconsistent communication from Oranga Tamariki site social workers regarding updates and plans pertaining to their mokopuna.

"My boy has spent 207 days in care, this case leader was one of two social workers that actually upheld her job and went above and beyond for my boy".

No clear timeframe significantly impacts on the progress of mokopuna in the home, as there is no sense of stability and mokopuna can become anxious not knowing their next steps, which leads to a sense of hopelessness. This was evident on the visit as a mokopuna shared he was feeling frustrated, as he had no plan or clarity around how long he would be on remand at



Hillcrest. Another mokopuna had a Family Group Conference (FGC), ending in a non-agreement leaving him with no clarity of next steps and a prolonged time on remand. Kaimahi said mokopuna often feel like giving up due to the lack of direction and clarity.

Lack of support for whānau sets mokopuna up to fail

“As a parent you are a rabbit in headlights and cannot comprehend. I have no idea what the sections are and the jargon terms in the system”.

(Whānau of mokopuna)

Kaimahi said when mokopuna do transition out of the home back to whānau, this often occurs with minimal support which they believe contributes to mokopuna re-offending and the perpetuation of a cycle of re-admission. Kaimahi shared examples of whānau contacting the home after mokopuna are discharged asking for help when behaviour was escalating or for copies of routine and schedules to support mokopuna at home. Kaimahi shared it is great whānau can trust Hillcrest and have the relationship, however it is challenging as it is not their role and they are limited with what support can be provided to whānau once mokopuna leave.

This was also evident in planning for mokopuna to return to community education. Kaimahi said that Oranga Tamariki site social workers often do not implement support for mokopuna with their education plan which contributes to mokopuna coming back into the home. Mokopuna thrive on a set day programme to combat boredom which can, and often does, lead to offending. Whānau should be provided with the necessary resources and support to meet the needs of mokopuna.

“You are pretty much left to our own devices. We updated people involved, but the case leader was the only one who responded or reached out to offer support to continue the goals for my boy he had set at Hillcrest Home.”

(Whānau of mokopuna)

Oranga Tamariki policy states a positive and supported transition for mokopuna must occur¹⁴. Mokopuna and whānau must be well prepared, involved in decision making, and that the right supports are in place required to assist mokopuna to transition back home. This support includes on-going plan reviews and monitoring once a mokopuna returns home, to ensure “supports do not drop off too soon and that mokopuna and their whānau are provided with consistent, reliable, enduring and practical support while they all adjust to living as a whānau again”.¹⁵

¹⁴ [Transitions within care | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

¹⁵ [Returning children and young people safely home | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)



Section 5(1)(c) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989¹⁶ states “recognising the primary responsibility for caring for and nurturing the well-being and development of mokopuna lies with their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group”. Thus, whānau should be provided with the necessary resources and support to meet the needs of their mokopuna.

¹⁶ [Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 \(as at 06 October 2023\), Public Act 5 Principles to be applied in exercise of powers under this Act – New Zealand Legislation](#)



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.

Robust admissions process

Kaimahi across shifts within the Hillcrest Home have a clear understanding of the admission process for mokopuna and are supported by the Team Leader Operations who is on call 24/7. Kaimahi require the following documentation for mokopuna admissions from Oranga Tamariki Social Workers:

- Remand Options Investigation Tool (ROIT)¹⁷
- Summary of facts
- Community remand assessment tool
- Remand Request
- All About Me Plan¹⁸
- And other relevant documentation and information outlining medical needs, approved contact lists, and behaviours mokopuna are presenting with.

Kaimahi were able to consistently articulate the internal processes for admissions into the whare, which include:

- Allowing time for whānaungatanga by meeting mokopuna prior to arriving to ensure there is familiarity and connection
- Kaimahi, if needed, can support and accompany mokopuna travelling from afar.
- Requesting additional assessments and safety plans to support mokopuna needs and behaviours
- Mokopuna receive a guided tour of the home, an induction of house rules, and their rights
- Providing kai (food) and time for mokopuna to rest and become familiar with the new environment.

These processes ensure that Hillcrest Home can better understand the circumstances of mokopuna and identify risks and insights when developing plans for mokopuna for their time in the home. Kaimahi understand mokopuna transitioning into the home may have anxiety and stress in an unfamiliar setting and do their best to be welcoming during this period.

¹⁷ ROIT-Prototyping-Evaluation-Summary-Report.pdf (orangatamariki.govt.nz)

¹⁸ All About Me plan | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki



Mana Mokopuna observed a new admission to the home being allowed to join the rest of the group in his own time. The mokopuna was allowed to sleep in with kaimahi regularly checking in and offering food and drink. Kaimahi were aware of the circumstances of the new admission and wanted to ensure he was well rested, not pressured, and to feel welcome which would ease him into his new environment.

Complaints process and access to advocacy is not clear for mokopuna

Upon admission into Hillcrest Home mokopuna are provided information about their rights, access to VOYCE Whakarongo Mai,¹⁹ and how they can make a complaint. Despite kaimahi advising mokopuna of the complaints process on admission, one mokopuna said they did not know how to make a complaint.

Hillcrest Home have a complaint form available to mokopuna to fill out by themselves or with the support of kaimahi. This form is then received by the Team Leader Operations who reviews the complaints and responds to mokopuna. Mana Mokopuna were provided examples of this and noted the responses from the Team Leader Operations were clear and personalised for mokopuna. The case leader often supports mokopuna with making complaints. The main themes are mokopuna requesting to change Oranga Tamariki site social workers or Family Group Conference co-ordinators or about kaimahi from previous placements they have been in.

The complaints process at Hillcrest is an internal one and therefore not independent. Access to independent complaints systems was raised as an issue in New Zealand's sixth periodic review of the implementation of the Children's Convention²⁰.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai visits the whare regularly

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai visits the whare fortnightly to engage with and provide advocacy support for mokopuna. However, due to the nature of a remand period where mokopuna can transition in and out of the whare frequently, engagement with VOYCE Whakarongo Mai advocates can be limited. VOYCE Whakarongo Mai acknowledge their advocacy as a vital part of the protection system for mokopuna in places of detention, and are therefore exploring, in collaboration with Hillcrest Home kaimahi, opportunities to ensure mokopuna complaints are not getting missed.

¹⁹ [VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai - advocacy for children with care experience](#)

²⁰ CRC/C/NZL/CO/6 28(f)



Providing mokopuna with clear understanding of how to make a complaint and how they can access independent youth advocacy, supports their right to express their views and be heard in line with articles 11 and 13²¹ of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and section 11 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

²¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR



Material Conditions

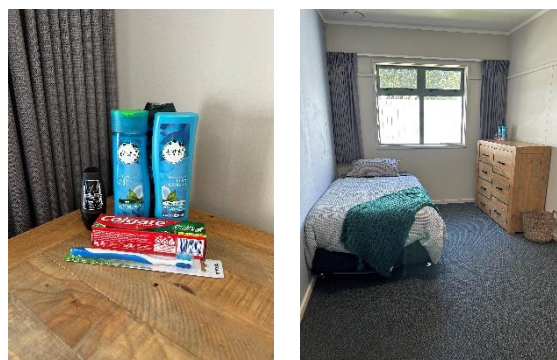
This domain assesses the quality and quantity of food, access to outside spaces, hygiene facilities, clothing, bedding, lighting and ventilation. It focuses on understanding how the living conditions in secure facilities contribute to the wellbeing and dignity of mokopuna.

Hillcrest is homely and provides a positive physical environment for mokopuna

*"We are a home first, facility afterwards".
(Kaimahi at Hillcrest)*

Hillcrest's front door is locked from the outside, but can be opened from the inside, allowing anyone to leave the facility freely. Inside the home there is a large open living area connecting the lounge, dining area and kitchen. The living area is functional and comfortable for mokopuna with access to boardgames, table tennis, books, a PlayStation, and television. Interior walls in the living area are painted in colours that support the sensory needs of mokopuna in consultation with a clinical psychologist. The artwork that decorates the living areas tells the pūrākau²² of the local iwi.

Two corridors to the left and right of the open living area led to bedroom wings and break out rooms for privacy during whānau calls. Bedrooms are equipped with king single beds and sets of drawers. Mokopuna are welcome to personalise their space by hanging art or posters. Mana Mokopuna observed one room prepared for a new admission. This room was clean and tidy with the bed made and a variety of hygiene products on top of the drawers.



A bedrooms at Hillcrest

Additional to the open living area are large windows and double doors opening out into the backyard offering an abundance of natural light. The rear of the home is fully fenced and surrounded by neighbouring buildings and a backdrop of large trees. The backyard has a

²² pūrākau - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

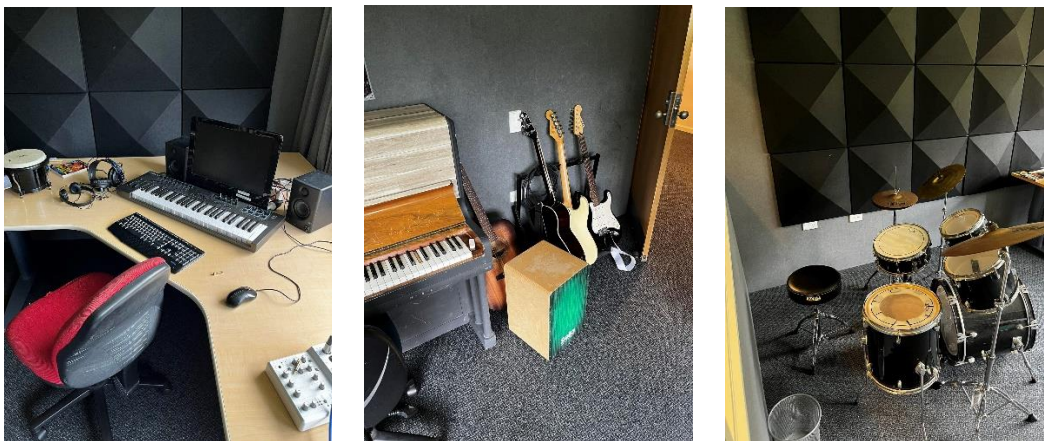


basketball court, raised garden beds, a shed filled with sports gear, gym equipment and recreational resources as well as a chicken coop. Mokopuna were observed frequently checking on the chickens and providing leftover kai.

There is a standalone building in the backyard that is referred to as 'the whare'. This is used as a general office space, for team hui (meetings), training, education for mokopuna and the multimedia programme. While mokopuna are tasked with their own cleaning duties and general upkeep of personal belongings, Mana Mokopuna saw a cleaner in the home maintaining the whare every day.

Music room supports mokopuna engagement

There is a well-resourced music room containing various instruments including acoustic and electric guitars, drums, piano and keyboards. The room also has a computer, recording equipment and software that allows mokopuna to create their own music.



Music studio and equipment at Hillcrest

A number of Hillcrest kaimahi are talented and trained musicians who teach mokopuna how to play instruments and support them to record music. It is not uncommon for kaimahi and mokopuna to make music together which has the advantage of teaching mokopuna new skills as well as an avenue to communicate and express themselves. Mokopuna were seen in the music room rapping over beats while others watched close by in support. All mokopuna were engaged in the activity and were supported by a kaimahi who was helping to record them.

Hillcrest Home meets the basic needs of mokopuna

Mokopuna receive clothing, shelter, warmth and kai to ensure their basic needs of mokopuna are met. Mokopuna can help themselves to fruit and snacks from the kitchen anytime. They are allocated individual milk bottles to control usage and a menu outlining the day's meals is posted on the fridge.

Mokopuna have their own personal clothing when admitted into the whare and are also provided one pair of pants and two t-shirts by Hillcrest Home. Some mokopuna entering the



home do not have sufficient clothing and kaimahi submit requests for clothing through to the allocated Oranga Tamariki site social worker. Kaimahi said this can be a lengthy process and requires constant follow up. When there are delays in getting clothing grants, kaimahi supply mokopuna with interim clothing via the home lost property items.

Mana Mokopuna observed mokopuna belongings (pictured below) dropped off to the whare by an Oranga Tamariki site social worker in a black rubbish bag. This bag is not a suitable way to store or transport belongings because it does not give regard to the importance of mokopuna or their material things.



Clothes for mokopuna

Mokopuna have the right to have their personal belongings with them, are looked after and have a bag that should be of a size, suitability and durability to hold the belongings of mokopuna.²³ Mokopuna belongings being stored in a black rubbish bag is unacceptable.

²³ Storing personal belongings | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki



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 connection is prioritised at Hillcrest

Hillcrest Home ensure whānau contact with mokopuna is prioritised. Although contact with mokopuna is initiated by whānau, Hillcrest Home understands that maintaining whānau connection can positively impact behaviour and support mokopuna needs. Hillcrest Home is proactive in ensuring mokopuna have regular phone calls to whānau on their approved contact lists with no time limits.

Mana Mokopuna spoke with whānau who advised phone calls were regular. Hillcrest Home was able to accommodate the needs of mokopuna and whānau where face to face contact was not easily accessible by allowing longer times on phone calls.

"He could ring as many times as he wanted. It was amazing considering we were in Wellington. There is a set time frame for phone calls but allowed us to have longer due to location."

(whānau member)

Hillcrest Home also supports whānau face-to-face contact utilising a self-contained unit previously used for transitioning mokopuna on supervision with activity orders²⁴. This is used for whānau day visits and can provide accommodation for whānau travelling from outside of the region if required. Hillcrest Home also facilitates whānau visits off-site to not disturb other mokopuna within the home which are conducted at local parks. Safety plans are put in place with mokopuna and their whānau as a reminder of the rules of the home as a prevention to mitigate risk to mokopuna progress.

For whānau who live outside the region, contact with mokopuna is of great importance. The whare Case Leader ensures that whānau are informed of mokopuna progress and updates whānau regularly.

"We would receive weekly rundown of mokopuna downfalls and achievements for the week and what the home as a whole were achieving."

(Whānau of mokopuna).

²⁴ Youth Court Orders – s283 | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki



Hillcrest Home ensures mokopuna are provided with opportunities to connect and maintain relationships with their whānau on a regular basis in alignment with UNCROC article 9(3)²⁵ to support mokopuna progress whilst on remand.

Funding impacts on mokopuna contact with whānau

For whānau of mokopuna within Hillcrest Home finding transportation and support for travel costs and accommodation can prevent contact with their mokopuna. Hillcrest Home support whānau contact by requesting support from Oranga Tamariki sites to help alleviate costs. This process has been challenging and is an ongoing barrier for Hillcrest Home who are constantly experiencing little to no progress when making funding requests to Oranga Tamariki sites.

Kaimahi shared concerns about the restrictions and inconsistencies across Oranga Tamariki sites. With some sites having no issue with requests, whilst others advising there is no budget for such requests. On one occasion kaimahi from Hillcrest Home followed up a funding request for whānau contact by phone and report being laughed at by Oranga Tamariki site kaimahi stating there was no money and the request would not be approved. This barrier is detrimental for whānau and mokopuna. Both whānau and mokopuna often experience isolation, anxiety, and stress in places of detention and whānau are a key determinant for mokopuna to successfully navigate and transition out of remand.

Whānau shared with Mana Mokopuna:

"As a mum you worry about your kid 24/7 even when there 22 or 30, at Hillcrest out of all the places he went to he was the safest. I could sleep knowing he would be safe and not assaulted by staff members. You knew it when you walked into the home."

In accordance with Oranga Tamariki policy and Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 wherever possible mokopuna relationship with their whānau should be maintained and strengthened, they should participate in decisions and regard should be had to their views²⁶. This is essential to the health and wellbeing of mokopuna as it provides mokopuna a sense of belonging and identity. Funding restrictions should not be a barrier for mokopuna having contact with their whānau.

²⁵ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

²⁶ Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 (as at 06 October 2023), Public Act – New Zealand Legislation



Mokopuna legal status is not a barrier for Hillcrest

Hillcrest Home exemplifies how mokopuna with a legal status of s238(1)(d)²⁷ under 24/7 supervision and care can engage in meaningful positive activities that enhance the oranga²⁸ of mokopuna within the home and the community. There are no limits around the activities as long as there is opportunity for mokopuna to learn and thorough risk management planning occurs. The leadership team are supportive of community-based activity and encouraging of kaimahi when plans are presented.

Activities include:

- Fishing
- Horse riding
- Mountain biking
- Walks
- Swimming
- Driving range
- Indoor rock climbing
- Day trips to Rotorua and Tauranga
- Beach and BBQ in the summer
- Cooking
- Physical education such as basketball and lifting weights.

Mokopuna also have access to a range of programmes facilitated by external providers. These include a multimedia storytelling programme²⁹ through role play of games, a music programme and a criminogenic programme³⁰ called – ‘Game of two halves’.

Mana Mokopuna observed the criminogenic programme Futures Psychology³¹ facilitate weekly. Mokopuna during the session were fully engaged and observed contributing to the discussions occurring throughout the activity. Mokopuna and the facilitator could be heard discussing personal values of self and the values of others, with mokopuna able to engage in critical thinking by posing questions that encouraged empathy for whānau, community, police, and the victims of their offending.

Mokopuna have access to education

The Kauri Centre³² oversee the educational provision of mokopuna within Hillcrest Home and provide guidance and training for kaimahi to embed educational outcomes when developing

²⁷ Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 (as at 06 October 2023), Public Act 238 Custody of child or young person pending hearing – New Zealand Legislation

²⁸ oranga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

²⁹ Multimedia Storytelling (google.com)

³⁰ Criminogenic needs are dynamic attributes of an offender that, when changed, are associated with the possibility of recidivism. Criminogenic programmes are those aimed at addressing these needs to provide pro-social outcomes.

³¹ Futures is your ONE STOP PSYCHOLOGY SHOP

³² Alternative education provider in Kirikiriroa.



activities for mokopuna called learning opportunities ('learning ops'). Learning ops are educational activities planned and delivered by kaimahi. These are one-hour sessions that occur Wednesday to Friday.

Learning ops are aligned to one of eight executive functions that address mokopuna cognitive processes of behaviour and tailored where possible to develop mokopuna interests. Mana Mokopuna observed a cooking learning op which included life skills, measurement, time, instruction, and food safety as part of the educational outcome for mokopuna. Mokopuna engaged well throughout the week in this learning op. Mokopuna can also request specific work on numeracy, literacy and NCEA credits and this is delivered by the Kauri Centre manager on a one-to-one basis for mokopuna.

The Kauri Centre delivers physical education and more recently te reo Māori programmes to mokopuna. Te Reo Māori has been introduced this year as an educational pathway to assist in meeting the needs of mokopuna Māori who make up the majority of mokopuna admitted into the home. This was identified by leadership as an opportunity to develop and strengthen mokopuna identity and belonging.

Access to education at the Hillcrest Home is good with a variety of activities that are delivered practically and tailored to meet the individual learning needs of mokopuna. Mana Mokopuna encourage opportunities to expand on educational achievement through embedding NZQA standards and vocational skills in educational activities and learning ops to enhance mokopuna educational success during their time at the Hillcrest Home.

Under Article 28 of the Children's Convention, mokopuna have the right to good quality education that helps develop their personalities, talents, and abilities to the full.



Medical services and care

This domain focuses on how the physical and mental health of mokopuna are met, in order to uphold their decency, privacy and dignity.

Hillcrest Home provide full care of mokopuna

"We take full care of the boys when they come into the whare as we want it to be as homely as possible".

(Hillcrest kaimahi).

Hillcrest Home endeavours to respond to all needs of mokopuna while in their care, including transporting them to medical appointments. However, meeting the medical needs of mokopuna can be challenging. Enrolling mokopuna into a GP practice has been problematic, as clinics in Kirikiriroa are not accepting enrolments of new or casual patients. This is resulting in kaimahi having to take mokopuna to the accident and emergency department at the local hospital to be seen by a doctor for non-urgent matters, which is not appropriate and can be time intensive.

Individual remand homes should have assigned Medical Centres where mokopuna placed in homes can have unrestricted access to general practitioners and registered nurses. Under Article 24 of the Children's Convention,³³ timely medical care is a right.

³³ Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR



Personnel

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

Leadership at Hillcrest Home is exceptional

The leadership team lead by example and foster positive relationships with mokopuna, whānau and kaimahi. The Team Leader Operations is well respected within the home by both mokopuna and kaimahi with a wealth of knowledge gained through previous roles working as a residential youth worker and case leader for the Hillcrest Home.

Kaimahi across shifts advised that the Team Leader Operations is the best manager they have ever worked for, providing good leadership and support with a strong emphasis on kaimahi wellbeing and whānau. This was observed by Mana Mokopuna during a team hui where the Team Leader Operations spoke with kaimahi on the importance of personal wellbeing and self-care in this line of work.

The Team Leader Operations is supported by a case leader who works as a conduit between mokopuna and Oranga Tamariki site social workers. This kaimahi supports mokopuna with whānau contact, understanding their plans, and ensuring needs are met. Mana Mokopuna spoke with whānau who advised that the case leader “*went above and beyond*” and “*was made for the job*”. Whānau believed that the case leader plays a pivotal role in mokopuna being able to complete their time at Hillcrest Home.

“She really listened to our boy and was a big success as to why he was able to not abscond with the support from us as a whānau.”
(Whānau member)

Kaimahi feel valued and supported

Leadership ensure kaimahi are well supported in their roles to support mokopuna. Kaimahi have access to a union, counselling, and receive on-going training such as how to best support mokopuna with FASD. Kaimahi are equipped with resources such as FASD information cards which they regularly refer to. During a team hui kaimahi were observed using the cards to discuss engagement strategies and expressed how useful they were.



Recruitment process is extensive to ensure quality kaimahi are employed in the whare

Hillcrest Home has a rigorous recruitment process to ensure kaimahi are the right fit. Mana Mokopuna observed part of the interview process and sat in the interview debriefs and the initial selection process. Interviews with applicants were conducted by a panel of Hillcrest Home kaimahi for both permanent and casual roles.

Applicants were interviewed and completed several roleplay scenarios simulating real-life situations at Hillcrest Home. These scenarios were as follows:

- Music – Applicants were asked to rap over a beat or play one of the music instruments. This was to observe applicant's willingness to give things a go and encourage mokopuna to do the same.
- Education – Applicants were tasked to create a weekly planner based on a topic and develop the learning opportunities and send in an email form to manager. This was to assess the organisational and writing skills of the applicant.
- Mokopuna engagement – Applicants played board games with kaimahi pretending to be mokopuna who would begin to push boundaries not wanting to go to bed. The focus of this scenario was to observe how the applicant would respond and redirect mokopuna behaviours.
- Sport – Applicants were asked to play basketball or table tennis. This was to get to know the applicant and assess their willingness to give things a go.

These role plays were designed to determine applicant's reactions and response to real-life scenarios in real time. Kaimahi would share observations and constructive feedback at the end of each interview, focusing on their suitability for working with mokopuna in the home and amongst the current team.

Mokopuna are usually taken off-site during interviews, however, were present for the current round of interviews. During an interview a mokopuna began knocking on the window disrupting the conversation. Kaimahi shared during a debrief that it is good to have mokopuna present as it gave the applicants a sense of the environment and what the role entails with some applicants expressing that they had never seen that type of behaviour before.

For this round of interviews, kaimahi also took the opportunity to involve mokopuna in the selection process. There were two applicants who were assessed to be of equal suitability and kaimahi decided to consult mokopuna as to who the successful applicant would be. This gave



mokopuna the ability to participate³⁴ in this recruitment process and a decision was made based on mokopuna recommendation.

Kaimahi work intensively with mokopuna within remand homes providing guidance and supporting their needs. Hillcrest Home ensures their kaimahi are highly skilled and trained to best care for mokopuna and create a safe environment.

Courageous kōrero improves practice

Leadership encourage courageous kōrero amongst kaimahi to nurture development and maintain accountability. These courageous kōrero are designed to be a continuous practice development tool for kaimahi working alongside mokopuna. Kaimahi meet and kōrero at the end of each shift, guided by tika and pono values which allow open and honest discussion to reflect on the shift, areas of development, and identify improvements and successes.

Mana Mokopuna observed a team debrief where kaimahi were able to share moments in the shift that required attention as well as acknowledging good kaimahi practice. The leadership team was also in attendance and contributed in the debrief. This signified the openness of kaimahi to be always learning and developing as a team to best meet the needs of mokopuna in the home.

³⁴ Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 (as at 06 October 2023), Public Act 11 Child's or young person's participation and views – New Zealand Legislation



Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori

This domain focuses on identity and belonging, which are fundamental for all mokopuna to thrive. We assess 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 through an indigenous lens

The vision for Hillcrest Home is to emulate the concept of marae, where mokopuna Māori experience intrinsic ways of being and doing as Māori. Marae is a focal point for Māori communities across Aotearoa and are places that instil ways in which whānau Māori interact with the world and are guided by Māori values and principles.

Mokopuna Māori make up the majority of admissions into Hillcrest Home and the Team Leader Operations believes this trauma informed practice of connecting mokopuna Māori to their cultural identity will have a positive effect, much like it did for him growing up on a marae. Hillcrest Home supports mokopuna to participate in their culture, tikanga and language through education activities, daily karakia, waiata, and engagement with kaimahi Māori.

In accordance with Article 11 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People,³⁵ Hillcrest supports and implements activities that empower mokopuna Māori to practice their cultural traditions and customs.

Mana Mokopuna observed kaimahi and mokopuna recite karakia and perform waiata during daily check-ins. Mokopuna and kaimahi introduced themselves as part of whānaungatanga with the Mana Mokopuna visit team. Mokopuna were also observed reciting karakia throughout the visit, including blessing kai during mealtime. One mokopuna expressed he would like to do more karakia every day.

Tuakana-teina approach

Mana Mokopuna observed positive role modelling that fostered healthy relationships and supportive environments for mokopuna Māori and kaimahi to thrive in their culture. Hillcrest Home has strong Māori role models across the team, providing opportunities for mokopuna Māori to engage in taonga such as language, tikanga and mātauranga.

Mana Mokopuna spoke with whānau who shared that kaimahi Māori at Hillcrest Home had inspired their mokopuna to pursue education beyond the home and that he could dream bigger than he could ever imagine.

³⁵ [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(A/RES/61/295\)](#)



“For a grown Māori man to tell a young Māori boy that, it really boosted him”.
(whānau member)

Kaimahi said that the leadership team and experienced kaimahi not only provide good support when working with mokopuna but are helpful and supportive with developing kaimahi cultural capabilities to support mokopuna. This was observed during daily karakia with two kaimahi fluent in te reo Māori present. A non-Māori kaimahi was supported to confidently lead karakia, waiata, and introduced himself using his pepeha.

Mokopuna and kaimahi peer-to-peer support and mentoring naturally occurs as part of the culture envisioned by the Team Leader Operations. This approach aligns with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and demonstrates that efforts are in place to enhance mokopuna Māori rangatiratanga through access to language and culture.

The integration of te ao Māori practices at Hillcrest Home guarantees Māori protection of all taonga, including language and customs. This integration is imperative to improving the wellbeing of mokopuna Māori and aligns with recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Committee against Torture.³⁶ This practice also aligns with the legislative duty of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki as per s7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.³⁷

³⁶ CRC/C/NZL/CO/6 Para 27 and Paras 42,43 and CAT/C/NZL/CO/7 paras 37, 38.

³⁷ Practice for working effectively with Māori | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki



Progress on 2021 Recommendations

The below table provides an assessment of OPCAT Monitoring recommendations made in the previous 2021 report about Hillcrest. Mana Mokopuna acknowledges that work on system recommendations is being led at the Oranga Tamariki National Office level. The progress detailed here is a facility reflection relating to day-to-day operations at Hillcrest.

2021 System Recommendations

	2021 Recommendation	Progress as at October 2023
1	End the placement of young people with supervision with activity orders together with young people on remand.	Complete – Hillcrest Home closed supervision with activities provision in April 2022. Hillcrest is now primarily a remand home.
2	Provide independent advocacy for young people at remand homes.	Some progress – VOYCE Whakarongomai visits Hillcrest Home fortnightly, however the complaints system for mokopuna is managed by the home and is therefore not independent. Mokopuna are still unsure about their rights and how to access advocacy.
3	Improve the Transition Service at Hillcrest for young people returning to their whānau and communities.	Oranga Tamariki is no longer provide this transition service.

2021 Facility Recommendations

	2021 Recommendation	Progress as at October 2023
1	Develop clear rules and expectations in consultation with young people.	Good progress – Hillcrest has clear outline of rules and expectations that outline five rules of the home and room expectations for mokopuna that kaimahi also adhere to.
2	Investigate and stop the use of incentives by stakeholders to speak with young people.	Complete – Mokopuna receive no incentives by stakeholders.
3	Re-engage the Kauri Centre to design and deliver education programmes, instead of relying on youth workers to do so.	Good progress – Kauri Centre has established regular education within Hillcrest Home and provides training and support for youth workers delivering learning opportunities.
4	Te Maioha o Parekarangi to provide more support and regular peer supervision to the Team Leader.	Good progress – Team Lead Operations has several responsibilities, but said he feels well supported in his role, has access to supervision and is also provided support through previous managers.
5	Provide appropriate training and professional development for all staff.	Good progress – All kaimahi at Hillcrest Home have completed CPI training as well as FASD training. All kaimahi have access to counselling and clinical supervision.



Appendix

Gathering information

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

Method	Role
Interviews and informal discussions with mokopuna	
Interviews and informal discussions with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Team Leader Operations▪ Youth Workers (across all shifts)▪ Case Leader
Interviews and informal discussions with external stakeholders and advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Whānau interviews▪ VOYCE Whakarongo Mai▪ Futures Psychology▪ Multimedia Programme Co-ordinator▪ Kauri Centre (Education Provider)
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Admission list▪ Admission process▪ All About Me Plans (AAMPs)▪ Admission Request▪ Complaint form▪ Executive functions used to inform learning opportunities.▪ Hillcrest expectations/rules▪ Hillcrest interview questions and assessment for new kaimahi▪ Individual Care Plans (ICPs).▪ Learning Ops unit plans▪ Māori cultural framework▪ Remand Options Investigation Tools (ROIT)▪ Remand flow chart▪ Safety plans▪ Weekly calendar▪ Weekly meal plans
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Observations occurred across all shifts. These included shift handovers, mealtimes, education, activities, karakia, and programmes facilitated by external providers.