



**MANA
MOKOPUNA**
Children & Young People's Commission

Kaitiaki Remand Home

OPCAT Monitoring Report

Visit Date: October 2023

Report Date: December 2023



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 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 the Kaitiaki Remand Home as part of its OPCAT NPM monitoring visit programme. The community organisation providing the remand home service is Reconnect Family Services. 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:	Kaitiaki Remand Home
Region:	Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland)
Operating capacity:	5 bed capacity for mokopuna tāne aged 14-17. ¹ There were four mokopuna on-site during the visit.
Status under which mokopuna are detained: ss235, 238(1)(d) Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Mokopuna can be admitted into the home but not detained, under the following statuses: ss48, 78, 101, 110(2)(b) and s139 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 the Kaitiaki Remand Home.

Mana Mokopuna reports the following findings:

- Inconsistent information and communication from Oranga Tamariki social workers impacts negatively on mokopuna care.
- Contraband is present in the whare, which mainly consists of cigarettes, vapes, and cell phones.
- Mokopuna complaints require independent advocacy.
- Whānau contact is restricted.
- Mokopuna Māori are over-represented and kaimahi want to do more to support them.
- The whare is homely, but requires some routine maintenance and an update of some resources.
- The Case Lead is pivotal in holding Oranga Tamariki to account to ensure statutory responsibilities, which include accurate information on care plans and basic care needs for mokopuna are met.
- Reconnect Family Services pou lay a strong foundation for positive relationships to be established between mokopuna and kaimahi.
- There is a robust process for admission into the Reconnect home.
- Kaimahi feel well supported and valued by their leadership team.
- Kaimahi demonstrate quality and consistent practice.

¹ [Kaitiaki Residential -Reconnect](#)



Recommendations

2023 Systemic Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	Support community-run remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.
2	Ensure All About Me Plans are up to date as per the Oranga Tamariki policy ² and provided to the Kaitiaki Remand Home prior to the admission.
3	Ensure property maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely manner and remand homes are regularly updated with progress.
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.
5	Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities including minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy. ³

2023 Facility Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	Eliminate the use of kaimahi personal cell phones to record information relating to mokopuna.
2	Solidify and implement practice for working with mokopuna Māori in line with the Reconnect Pou and establish a connection with mana whenua.
3	Kaitiaki leadership to ensure kaimahi have regular formal, professional, external, and cultural supervision when working with mokopuna.
4	Review the current whānau contact arrangement to increase contact time mokopuna have with whānau.
5	Work with mokopuna to establish regular activities and outings to provide variety in their structured day.

² [All About Me plan | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

³ <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/policy/working-with-rangatahi-and-tamariki-in-remand-homes/>



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 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 the Kaitiaki Home and where relevant these are highlighted throughout the body of the report.

⁴ Refer CRC/C/NZL/CO/6

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.

Reconnect Pou lay strong foundations for kaimahi to build positive relationships with mokopuna

The relationships formed between mokopuna and kaimahi are based on four pillars (or pou): whānaungatanga⁸, kaitiakitanga,⁹ kotahitanga¹⁰ and hauora¹¹. These lay the foundation for kaimahi to reconnect mokopuna positively back to their whānau¹² and hāpori¹³. These pou are exemplified through the passionate kaimahi working in the home. Kaimahi regularly said how much they love turning up to work, spending intentional time getting to know mokopuna, and supporting them during their time in the whare.

This was evident through the positive interactions mokopuna and kaimahi have with each other. For example, kaimahi and mokopuna regularly work out together in the gym (located in the garage). Together mokopuna and kaimahi support one another to push themselves, engage in new exercises, create circuits and routines together. This also contributed to the establishment of an in-house rule that whenever a mokopuna said the word “bored”, a workout session would take place for everyone. This approach encourages mokopuna to independently find ways of keeping active using whare resources rather than doing nothing and saying they are bored. Kaimahi are very pro-active in keeping mokopuna busy as they recognise that boredom is one of the main contributing factors to mokopuna leaving placements and absconding.

Inconsistent information provided by Oranga Tamariki prohibits quality care of mokopuna

The information and communication from Oranga Tamariki social workers with regards to mokopuna is inconsistent. All About Me Plans (AAMPs)¹⁴ are one of the primary documents social workers are required to complete and provide to the whare before mokopuna are admitted.

⁸ [whanaungatanga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/whanaungatanga)

⁹ [kaitiakitanga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/kaitiakitanga)

¹⁰ [kotahitanga - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/kotahitanga)

¹¹ [hauora - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/hauora)

¹² [whanau - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/whanau)

¹³ [hapori - Te Aka Māori Dictionary \(maoridictionary.co.nz\)](https://www.maoridictionary.co.nz/hapori)

¹⁴ [All About Me plan | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)



Mana Mokopuna reviewed the AAMPs and noted the following:

- No mokopuna voice within the plans
- Plans stated '*refer to the Tuituia Assessment*'¹⁵ regarding needs of mokopuna, which kaimahi in the Reconnect home cannot access unless a copy is requested from the Oranga Tamariki client management database¹⁶
- Some plans had minimal detail about mokopuna except for the name of mokopuna and their date of birth
- In the section that details when social workers are to next visit mokopuna, no date was stipulated and instead '*to be ascertained*' was entered. This creates uncertainty for mokopuna about when to expect visits from their social worker¹⁷.

Mana Mokopuna observed an interaction between an Oranga Tamariki social worker and a mokopuna in their care. The mokopuna did not know the social worker was coming to visit. The social worker did not enter the whare, and simply asked questions in the doorway before leaving again. The mokopuna said '*that was s****'.

s19 (c) of the Oranga Tamariki National Care standards state the frequency of visits by a visitor and the reason for the frequency is to be stipulated in plans for mokopuna who are in care. 'To be ascertained' is not sufficient in terms of ensuring the needs of mokopuna are met as it does not clearly outline frequency of visits mokopuna will have from their social worker.

Kaimahi also said there is a lack of communication from social workers regarding:

- Transporting mokopuna to court appearances so kaimahi can prepare mokopuna and ease anxieties. Kaimahi showed Mana Mokopuna the admission board in the office, which outlined important dates and pick up times. Kaimahi knew mokopuna were to appear the next week in the Youth Court, but the times and days were still 'to be confirmed' by their social workers.
- Kaimahi have been asked to facilitate Audio Visual Link (AVL) court appearances in the whare. This is not the role of kaimahi and statutory social workers should be the ones preparing mokopuna for Youth Court appearances.
- Mokopuna are dropped back to the whare from court or appointments with minimal handover from social workers to kaimahi.
- Kaimahi will often ascertain the outcome of Family Group Conferences¹⁸ or court by what mokopuna say and how they behave, when social workers have not communicated this.

¹⁵ [The Tuituia framework and domains | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

¹⁶ Reconnect Family Services do not have access to the CYRAS client management data base used by Oranga Tamariki.

¹⁷ [Assessing the frequency of visits to tamariki in care | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

¹⁸ [Family group conferencing | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)



Plans that lack detail and communication that is infrequent can create frustrations for mokopuna. Kaimahi must be equipped with detailed information to keep their practice consistent and relevant to mokopuna needs.

The Case Lead plays an invaluable role advocating for mokopuna needs

Social workers not fulfilling their primary responsibilities has contributed to Reconnect Family Services implementing a Case Lead role. The purpose of this role is to be the conduit between Oranga Tamariki and the whare. The Case Lead is a strong advocate to ensure mokopuna needs are addressed and information and documentation required to care for mokopuna is obtained. The Case Lead also alleviates the pressure from kaimahi in the whare so they can focus purely on the day-to-day care of mokopuna.

Social workers have key practice responsibilities for mokopuna including maintaining regular contact with other professionals involved in their care, ensuring communication with agency staff is open, transparent and regular to ensure the All About Me plan is followed.¹⁹ Inconsistencies of social workers fulfilling their primary responsibilities for mokopuna can negatively impact on their care.

Relational practice and active participation are more effective than secure care and use of force

Kaimahi in the whare do not use secure care and use of force to de-escalate behaviour. Rather, kaimahi implement relational practice and active participation to support mokopuna. Kaimahi expressed the importance of getting to know mokopuna, their triggers, behaviours, and routines to inform their approaches in engagement. This was evident as one mokopuna became frustrated during an education lesson and no longer wanted to participate. Kaimahi saw the behaviours escalating and intervened immediately by encouraging the mokopuna to move into the gym. This allowed mokopuna space to think clearly, release frustration by being active in the gym and unpack the situation before integrating back into the lesson. This exemplifies the positive relationships established between mokopuna and kaimahi and the strategies used to de-escalate behaviour. Secure care is not an option, and kaimahi put significant effort into pre-empting behaviours and working with mokopuna to de-escalate situations.

¹⁹ [Allocating a key worker and co-worker | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)



Reconnect kaimahi value relational practice and active participation as an approach, where mokopuna are treated as taonga and offered special protection, rather than resorting to secure care and use of force. This aligns with Article 2 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Article 37(a) of the Children’s Convention.²⁰

Contraband is present in the whare

Contraband including vapes, cell phones and cigarettes are regularly found in the whare. Kaitiaki Remand Home has clear policies regarding contraband not being permitted in the home.

However, kaimahi and the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau placement team inform social workers that all items on the unapproved list must be removed from mokopuna possession before they arrive at the whare to mitigate any issues on admission. On arrival, mokopuna are asked by kaimahi to empty their pockets and socks to check for items being smuggled in, as physical pat-down searches do not occur. The focus is on developing a space where mokopuna can be honest about contraband they may have and be provided with the opportunity to hand this into their social worker to look after during their stay in the whare.

²⁰ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)



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.

The admission process is robust

Referrals for mokopuna are received from the Oranga Tamariki Regional Placement team and After-Hours Service. The Regional Placement team manage the placement admissions for all community homes in Tāmaki Makaurau. The following documentation is provided to the whare:

- Placement request
- SKS screen
- Observations about mokopuna presentation
- Custody order
- All About Me Plan
- Approved contact list
- Medications

When Reconnect Family Services receives a placement request, the leadership team assesses the referral, which includes matching prospective new mokopuna with those already living in the whare. It is important that mokopuna who are already settled in the whare are able to remain settled, and that kaimahi can continue to appropriately manage safety for everyone. Kaimahi could share examples of when mokopuna are re-admitted into the whare. One of the mokopuna had already spent time in the whare and had been a positive influence amongst others in the whare. Therefore, kaimahi had no concerns about current mokopuna dynamics and the placement request was accepted. Whereas another referral was for a mokopuna who was involved in a serious assault and influenced others to abscond, creating safety concerns and having a negative impact on mokopuna progressing through their care plans. This mokopuna was therefore not admitted to the whare.

Clear admission criteria is paramount in keeping an even dynamic in the whare to contribute to maintaining the safety of mokopuna and kaimahi. The leadership team manage admissions well, often despite the lack of information provided by Oranga Tamariki.

Kaimahi value mokopuna voice to accurately record information

Kaimahi ensure that mokopuna understand what is required of them when they come to live in the whare. Kaimahi said that the more mokopuna understand and the more they 'buy in' to whare routines, the better their stay will be. Mana Mokopuna saw ways kaimahi ensure



mokopuna voice is captured in admission paperwork, noting much of the information was captured using mokopuna own words and phrases.

Mana Mokopuna reviewed documentation processes noting:

- Reconnect paperwork is extensive, all mokopuna files are clearly marked with the required documentation in them
- The admission form and questions kaimahi must ask mokopuna when coming into the whare, such as how they are feeling, are recorded in the exact words mokopuna have used
- Admission forms with house rules require mokopuna to sign as acknowledgement they agree and have been informed of these upon admission
- A checklist of processes that are required to be explained to mokopuna, such as what it means to be on a s238(1)(d), requires both kaimahi and mokopuna signatures to acknowledge this has occurred
- Shift notes are detailed and clear outlining key updates on mokopuna especially behaviour. Night shift staff also complete regular checks on mokopuna throughout the night and record observations
- Microsoft Teams is the primary platform kaimahi use to communicate and provide updates regarding mokopuna. Having this platform allows multiple kaimahi to input information into a single form or shift log.

Mana Mokopuna did note that as there is only one desktop computer for the whare, kaimahi are using personal cell phones with the Microsoft Teams application to record personal information for mokopuna. Personal cell phones are not appropriate and may not have the required technology security features to keep mokopuna information safe. Mana Mokopuna recommend Reconnect Family Services equip kaimahi with work cell phones to mitigate possible information breaches and breaches to mokopuna privacy rights and confidentiality.

Mokopuna complaints require independent advocacy

Complaints are dealt with by the Kaitiaki Residential Programme manager and are reviewed promptly. All involved in the complaint, including mokopuna, are interviewed to gather information and assist in resolution. Complaints are recorded and inputted into an incident register.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai²¹ does not visit the whare unless required. Kaimahi used an example when mokopuna were not receiving updates from their social worker and they asked to speak to VOYCE Whakarongo Mai about their concerns. Kaimahi arranged the visit on behalf of mokopuna.

²¹ [VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai - advocacy for children with care experience](#)



The complaints process at Kaitiaki remand home is not independent of kaimahi as complaints are reviewed internally. A lack of access to independent complaints systems within the Oranga Tamariki system was raised as an issue of concern in New Zealand's sixth periodic review of the implementation of the Children's Convention²².

²² CRC/C/NZL/CO/6 28(f)



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.

The whare is homely and mokopuna feel relaxed

The whare is a large five bedroom home situated on a corner section of two busy roads. The whare consists of two wings joined by a hallway. One wing has a large living area, kitchen, dining area, laundry, and bathroom. The second wing has additional bathrooms, bedrooms, a large games room and an office for kaimahi. Mokopuna spend most of their time in the lounge, dining and kitchen area. Education takes place at a table in the lounge and there are comfortable couches, a TV, books, and board games available for mokopuna to use. The kitchen looks out into the living area and contains a large dining table where mokopuna and kaimahi eat together.

There is a garage which has been converted into a gym. The gym is equipped with weights, boxing bag and gloves, exercise bike and a pull-up bar. There is also a large tyre and 'battle ropes' or gym ropes regularly used to add variety to work outs. Mokopuna enjoyed the ability to work out and the gym was also used as a de-escalation tool by kaimahi.

The bedrooms have chalk board paint on the walls to enable mokopuna to personalise their room and shelves to store personal items. There is minimal furniture in the bedrooms with only a bed and a small built-in wardrobe with shelves. During the day the bedroom wing is locked and only opened when required.



Lounge and kitchen area



The whare needs updating to provide better living conditions for mokopuna

Kaimahi raised the need for the whare to be updated by the Regional Oranga Tamariki Property and Placement teams. The leadership team continues to be persistent with requests and the need for faster responses to provide better living conditions for mokopuna.

These concerns include:

- The basketball hoop is broken and has required fixing for over six months. One mokopuna who is on their second admission into the whare, voiced his concern that it was still not fixed.
- Recently the washing machine broke and kaimahi needed to go to the local laundromat to wash mokopuna clothes as it took over two weeks to be repaired.
- The dishwasher broke during the visit and the repair agents commented that rats had chewed through the drainpipes.
- There is paint peeling off the ceilings and the walls inside the whare.
- Kaimahi said that mokopuna are limited in terms of personalising their room due to restrictions set by Oranga Tamariki (as the property owners). For example, mokopuna cannot stick artwork to their bedroom walls.
- The large games room has large windows that look out to one of the main streets. There is no perimeter fence for privacy or frosting on the large windows. Kaimahi and mokopuna said they do not use the games room as often as they would like due to the lack of privacy and the public being able to look in. There have been times when passing mokopuna have shouted at mokopuna inside the whare and mokopuna have responded by shouting back.
- The office admission board can be seen from the outside of the front of the whare. Kaimahi have suggested installing a door-like cover so that when the board is not being used, the information can be covered and mokopuna privacy is upheld.



Broken basketball hoop and peeling paint in the bathrooms.

There are nutritious meals available for mokopuna

Mokopuna said that the kai is “always on!” with the meals being filling and nutritious. For example, lunches included chicken wraps with a variety of healthy fillings and hotdogs with



large fruit platters. Kaimahi prepare a range of meals with mokopuna input and a meal plan is visible on the wall in the dining area so mokopuna know what the meals for the week will be. Mokopuna engage in karakia before mealtimes and were seen taking the lead in this. Throughout the visit mokopuna were observed continuously helping themselves to the fruit bowl and going into the cupboard full of kai for snacks.

A significant increase in contracted funding has meant that kaimahi can provide nutritious meals for mokopuna and have enough kai to feed them well. Kaimahi did say that the Oranga Tamariki generated purchase orders used to buy weekly groceries must be used at a supermarket in Manukau, which is a considerable distance to drive when there are adequate supermarkets closer.

Mana Mokopuna recommends that Reconnect Family Services investigate how to make the purchase of groceries more efficient, as kaimahi explained that grocery shopping on the other side of Tāmaki Makaurau has a significant impact on the daily operation for the whare. Kaimahi said taking several hours to go grocery shopping is highlighted as even more of an issue when staffing is short, or the whare is at capacity.



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 is restricted

Kaimahi expressed the need to change current rules around whānau contact as it is restrictive and impacts negatively on mokopuna. An example of this occurred when a mokopuna was notified that a whānau member was hospitalised and wanted to see them immediately. However, the mokopuna had to wait until his social worker was available to take him. This resulted in the mokopuna being disappointed and emotionally dysregulated as he was concerned for his whānau. When the mokopuna did go to see his whānau member and returned to the whare, he appeared happier and more settled.

The following rules and restrictions govern contact with whānau for mokopuna while in the whare:

- No whānau visits occur at the whare
- Oranga Tamariki social workers are responsible for arranging whānau contact.
- Mokopuna can have one 15 minute phone call a day. However, whānau can be called to support mokopuna if they are upset or dysregulated. An example is if mokopuna are talking about leaving the whare (absconding).
- Social workers approve contact lists for mokopuna. However, there are sometimes delays in social workers approving a phone number leaving mokopuna without the ability to contact their whānau.

Articles 2 and 3 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi acknowledge that mokopuna and whānau are taonga and emphasises the need for both Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect to actively prioritise the protection and significance of whānau involvement in decisions that support equitable outcomes.

Education for mokopuna is customised to meet their needs.

Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service ('TYMS')²³ has been contracted by the Ministry of Education to deliver an educational programme for mokopuna in the whare from 10:00am to 2:00pm daily. Kaiako at TYMS develop customised programmes that encompass essential life skills, basic numeracy, literacy skills, problem solving and recreational activities. As the length of stay

²³ [Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service \(TYMS\) - Home](#)



for mokopuna in the whare can vary, kaiako adapt their programme to account for varying remand lengths and focus on fostering a positive narrative about education.

Kaiako bring their own unique teaching style with a common goal that they work with mokopuna meeting their needs at their pace and level. For example, one mokopuna was engaged in a numeracy and literacy task, and when the mokopuna became distracted, the kaiako was able to redirect the mokopuna by engaging with them outside to do physical education. Another example was when a kaiako gave mokopuna opportunity to carve a pounamu pendant for someone significant in their life. During this process, the mokopuna got frustrated and the kaiako allowed them space and encouraged re-engagement when they were ready. The mokopuna later finished their pounamu and were extremely proud to show Mana Mokopuna what they had created.

Kaimahi did say the quality of education could be better by providing more variation in the learning material. Kaimahi and mokopuna said what is taught can be repetitive. Mokopuna said they would like more vocational opportunities such as CV writing, drivers and forklift licensing to be available to them. A mokopuna who has been readmitted to the whare for a second time said the education material was the same as his last stay in the whare.

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.

Offsite activity options can be limited for mokopuna in the Kaitiaki remand home

Kaimahi are creative in designing in-house activities for mokopuna to engage in. These include:

- Creating gym workouts in the garage
- Utilising the field next door to play sport
- Watching movies and playing games kaimahi develop (ice-breaker type games that kaimahi facilitate for mokopuna).



The gym

Mokopuna and kaimahi both said they wanted to engage in more offsite activities in the community. However, kaimahi said managing the risk when mokopuna are on a custodial



remand status is difficult. The current offsite activities involve going to parks or beaches that are far away from the public, and utilising quiet fishing spots to ensure public safety and prevent the risk of mokopuna absconding. Kaimahi and the leadership team want mokopuna to have access to a wider range of community-based activities to engage in on a consistent basis. As one kaimahi said, it helps to transition mokopuna back into community when they can continue to attend activities they start in the remand whare.

The whare leadership team acknowledge the importance of staying connected to community, and are in the process of planning regular activities that involve key community professionals. For example, volleyball tournaments involving teams from Community Policing and Oranga Tamariki local site offices.

Involving mokopuna in pro-social activities gives them the opportunity to see a pathway away from offending. It is important that mokopuna have the ability to interact with their community and build relationships that will help them after their time within the Youth Justice system.



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.

Kaimahi consistently advocate for the medical needs of mokopuna to be met

Reconnect Family Services continues to mitigate the risk of unaddressed medical needs for mokopuna and consistently push for these to be met. Oranga Tamariki social workers are responsible for arranging and taking mokopuna to medical appointments in a timely manner, however this is not always occurring.

This was evident on the visit as a mokopuna had wounds that required re-dressing. Social workers were coming to pick the mokopuna up for court and had been informed a medical appointment was required. However, after court, the mokopuna was returned to the whare and told kaimahi that the *"social worker did not have time to take him."*

Kaitiaki Remand Home escalated this through the Oranga Tamariki Regional Placement team, to ensure the mokopuna got the medical care they required and entitled to. Later that evening, a social worker took the mokopuna to get his wounds redressed. The mokopuna told Mana Mokopuna the next day that they had to wait at an Accident and Emergency clinic for hours for his wound to be re-dressed. The re-dressing took five minutes which the mokopuna could have been avoided if social workers had taken him earlier.

All remand homes should have the ability to escort mokopuna to and from medical services when the need arises. Individual remand homes should have assigned medical centres to ensure mokopuna get the care they are entitled to. Under Article 24 of the Children's Convention, timely medical care is a right.²⁴

Clear policies and procedures for medication

Kaitiaki Remand Home has clear policies and procedures to administer medication for mokopuna. Medication is stored in a locked cupboard in the office and a medication chart is completed. Medication charts were reviewed demonstrating accurate and detailed recording including whether mokopuna had refused their medication.

²⁴ [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 promotes a solid foundation for consistent care for mokopuna

The Kaitiaki residential manager entrusts in the Case Lead and the Residential team leader to manage the operations of the whare. The two roles have a close working relationship, where collaboration and consistency are key in decision-making. This strong working relationship was evident when referrals were received - the two kaimahi would come together to assess and share ideas so no decision was made in isolation. The strong foundation amongst the leadership team provides positive role-modelling for kaimahi..

Leadership is visible and valued

Members of the leadership team are regularly visible in the whare, spending time with mokopuna and supporting kaimahi. This was evident throughout the visit, when team leaders and managers would engage in games, education, and gym work outs with mokopuna. The leadership team regularly check-in with kaimahi, and weekly hui are arranged for kaimahi to share how they are feeling, and what is on top for them so that managers can acknowledge any worries and put in supports where needed. Kaimahi said numerous times that they appreciate the manager being visible on the floor, explaining that she engages well with mokopuna and has a good understanding of what it is like for kaimahi working with mokopuna.

Kaimahi said there had been several changes in the manager role with some kaimahi saying the current manager is their third in a relatively short period of time. Kaimahi spoke about the mutual respect, encouragement, positivity, and trust that now exists amongst kaimahi and with their leadership team. Kaimahi said they feel safe and valued to voice their opinions and the manager is proactive in addressing issues that arise. This was evident as kaimahi across different shifts were genuinely enthusiastic about their mahi and love their job. An example of this was when a kaimahi arrived for work, immediately got out of their car and joined the daily workout, providing encouragement and laughter, showing mokopuna they were happy to be there. It is evident that the leadership style sets the tone for the whare.



Kaimahi demonstrate consistent practice and care for mokopuna

The leadership team spoke about their focus is on employing the right calibre of kaimahi to ensure mokopuna needs are met and that they receive a consistent high level of care. Reconnect remand home has capacity for five mokopuna at any one time. If there are more than three mokopuna, a third kaimahi is added to the day shifts to ensure suitable kaimahi to mokopuna ratios. If there are shortages of staff, it is rare for Reconnect Family Services to use contingency kaimahi from outside their organisation. Reconnect Family Services can utilise kaimahi from other programmes across their service lines who have a good understanding of the operations of the remand home. This goes a long way to enabling a consistent model of care for mokopuna. Kaimahi spoke about previous experiences with external staff who would often just sit and watch, and not engage or support mokopuna in their daily activities.

Mana Mokopuna noted that kaimahi retention is good. There are many kaimahi working in the whare who have done so for many years. Kaimahi are also largely consistent across shifts, which helps mokopuna build meaningful relationships. Kaimahi are rostered on for twelve-hour shifts, shifts are from 6am–6pm, and if needing a third kaimahi, they will do 8am–8pm. Establishing twelve-hour shifts was a choice made by kaimahi as they wanted to provide consistency and allow valuable time to be spent on building relationships with mokopuna.

Reconnect Family Services to ensure kaimahi have regular supervision

As a group, kaimahi in the Kaitiaki home effectively provide their own peer supervision. There is a high level of trust across the group with several kaimahi having worked with each other for many years. Kaimahi said they feel comfortable holding each other accountable and providing good support when things go well. Whilst Reconnect pay for kaimahi supervision, the whare leadership team need to ensure kaimahi working with mokopuna engage in regular, formal, professional, external, and cultural supervision. Supervision is vital to maintaining consistent mokopuna centric practice, professional development and kaimahi wellbeing.

Reconnect Family Services is creative in strengthening external relationships

The leadership team are continuously looking for innovative ways of strengthening their relationships with external stakeholders. Reconnect Family Services are wanting to create community-based events for external agencies to connect, collaborate and support mokopuna. An example of this is organising volleyball and touch tournaments, where a team from Oranga Tamariki, Police Youth Aid, TYMES, Mana Whenua²⁵, mokopuna and kaimahi from Reconnect Family Services would come together to compete in a friendly competition. The purpose of this is a fun way of building networks, providing mokopuna with opportunities to

²⁵ Reconnect Family Services did not identify who the key people to connect with are, but that this relationship with Mana Mokopuna is a work in progress and their desire to make the connections for mokopuna.



engage with the different organisations involved in their care, and a chance to change negative perceptions mokopuna may have to foster positive respectful relationships moving forward.

In addition to social events, the three community organisations working in the remand homes in Tāmaki Makaurau have developed an initiative where hui are held weekly, and a Microsoft Teams chat has been set up with representatives from all the agencies. The purpose of this is to share experiences, insights, trends, challenges, and merge processes, such as house rules to navigate innovative ways of establishing best practice across the region. The focus is on creating a continuity of care given mokopuna are often being placed in all homes across the region. Kaimahi said the initiative is working well and has been beneficial for them in identifying different aspects of operations to improve in the Reconnect whare.

Relationships with Oranga Tamariki need to be consistent.

The Oranga Tamariki Regional Placement Team and the Kaitiaki Home leadership team have established and maintain a positive working relationship. This relationship was described by both organisations as “*awesome*,” due to the open, honest communication daily and ability for accountability to ensure the needs of mokopuna are being met. However, the challenge is the after-hours service. The Placements Team work Monday to Friday during business hours. Therefore, to achieve consistency with how referrals come into the whare, Kaitiaki remand home have a dedicated after-hours team to manage admissions. Whilst a recruitment process is completed for two kaimahi dedicated to the management of referrals, senior youth workers, the case lead and the residential team leader have this responsibility. The two new kaimahi will alleviate the workload and administrative responsibilities for these senior kaimahi, enabling them to focus on the well-being of mokopuna and the smooth operation of the whare.

However, kaimahi did say that working with Oranga Tamariki social workers in sites outside of Tāmaki Makaurau is a challenge. The reasons for this were:

- Response times when mokopuna or kaimahi need contact with social workers is inconsistent
- There is difficulty getting clothing to mokopuna in a timely manner
- Maintaining whānau contact is difficult
- Updates on plans can be sporadic.

Kaimahi working in the whare and the leadership team have highlighted this as an area requiring attention. Mokopuna have the right to quality care regardless of whether they are placed near or far from home.



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.

Kaimahi want to support mokopuna Māori

70% of mokopuna admitted into the whare over the last six months whakapapa Māori. A lack of te ao and tikanga Māori incorporated in the whare has highlighted for all kaimahi an eagerness and willingness to play their part in addressing the on-going issue of over-representation of mokopuna Māori in places of detention. Furthermore, kaimahi said they want to encourage and foster opportunities for mokopuna to continue discovering their whakapapa and developing confidence in who they are.

Kaimahi said *“there needs to be more cultural stuff in this house, to help the boys connect to their own roots”* and they want to be equipped with the skills to support mokopuna Māori. An example shared was kaimahi must identify whether mokopuna are Māori on the admission form. If they tick ‘yes’ kaimahi are unsure how to provide care to positively uphold this and it becomes a ‘tick box exercise’ with no meaning.

This concern was evident during the first day of our Monitoring team’s visit as one mokopuna Māori stood up during introductions and confidently said his pepeha. This mokopuna later shared that his social worker had placed him on, and he had completed, a twelve week course that worked on identity, belonging, and learning lifeskills in the taiao. The mokopuna enjoyed this time, however, sustaining this is difficult when there are no programmes in the whare to support mokopuna Māori. The leadership team acknowledge more work is required in this area, and are working with Reconnect Family Services to provide practical solutions so kaimahi are equipped and confident to meet the needs of mokopuna Māori who stay in the whare.

Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989²⁶ stipulates the State’s practical commitment to ensure practice, policies and processes reduce disparities for mokopuna Māori so that *“no Tamaiti Māori will need state care.”*²⁷

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

²⁷ [Section 7AA - What we do | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)



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 staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kaitiaki Residential Programme Manager ▪ Residential Team Leader ▪ Case Lead ▪ Senior Youth Workers ▪ Residential Youth Workers
Interviews with stakeholders and advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TYMS Education ▪ Oranga Tamariki Regional Placement Team ▪ Oranga Tamariki Property Team ▪ VOYCE Whakarongo Mai
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Admission and discharge forms ▪ Absconding Policy ▪ College Client Register ▪ Complaints Policy ▪ Alcohol and Drug Policy ▪ Health and Safety Policy ▪ Incident reporting form ▪ Medication Policy ▪ Medication Chart ▪ Nga Pou o te Oranga – Reconnect framework ▪ Rangatahi protection Policy ▪ Reconnect policy treasure hunt ▪ Reconnect well-being check form ▪ Incident reporting form ▪ Search of Rangatahi and Possession Policy ▪ Restraint minimisation Policy ▪ Suicide prevention Policy ▪ Vehicle Policy ▪ Visitors Policy ▪ Supervision Policy ▪ Water safety Policy ▪ All About Me Plans ▪ Mokopuna admission files ▪ Remand checklist
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observations occurred across shifts. This included shift handovers, mealtimes, education, activities, karakia, mokopuna engagements with social workers, and remand checks.