



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

Hillcrest Remand Home

Visit date – October 2023

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Introduction

Hillcrest Remand Home (Hillcrest) is an Oranga Tamariki run Youth Justice community remand home for tāne aged 14 to 17 years old who are detained in the custody of Oranga Tamariki. The facility is located in Kirikiriroa.

In October 2023, staff from Mana Mokopuna—Children and Young People’s Commission (Mana Mokopuna) completed an announced monitoring visit to the facility.

The facility has capacity to take six rangatahi. Under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, the legal status which rangatahi are detained on remand at the home include:

- section 235 - Child or young person who is arrested may be placed in custody of chief executive;
- section 238(1)(d) - Custody of child or young person pending hearing.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of Oranga Tamariki services against the seven domains relevant to Mana Mokopuna’s role as a National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Cruelty (OPCAT). The seven domains are:

- Domain 1: Treatment
- Domain 2: Protection systems
- Domain 3: Material conditions
- Domain 4: Activities and contact with others
- Domain 5: Medical services and care
- Domain 6: Personnel
- Domain 7: Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori.

The draft OPCAT report was shared with Oranga Tamariki on 22 December 2023.

Recommendations Summary

The OPCAT report for Hillcrest makes 10 recommendations, all of which are accepted.

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

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

Recommendations	Status
Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations	
1. Support remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.	Accepted
2. Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities for mokopuna and minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Accepted
3. Ensure whānau contact occurs without restriction of funding or administrative barriers.	Accepted
4. Ensuring the right supports are implemented for whānau prior to mokopuna being transitioned home and in line with Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Accepted
5. Eliminate the reliance on hospital accident and emergency services when mokopuna require non-urgent medical treatment.	Accepted
6. Improve mokopuna opportunities to access NZQA accreditation in collaboration with Ministry of Education.	Accepted
Reconnect Family Services Limited Recommendations	
1. Ensure there is a clear understanding for all kaimahi of the internal complaints system for mokopuna.	Accepted
2. Improve visibility within the home of mokopuna rights and ability to access independent advocacy support.	Accepted
3. Ensure best practice is always followed for shift de-briefs, training is consistent, and learnings are tested and implemented across all shifts.	Accepted
4. Ensure supervision for kaimahi to prevent staff burn-out and support kaimahi ora.	Accepted

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

Response to Systemic Recommendations

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

Recommendation 1

Support remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.

Response

As part of the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018, every tamaiti and rangatahi is entitled to receive information about what they can expect in our care or custody, and that of our partners, and to be supported to raise any concerns they have. This includes ensuring information about making complaints, accessing support services, and independent advocacy is available to all tamariki and rangatahi. This applies to the facility and to all our provider-run youth justice community remand homes.

Complaints and the importance of having an independent complaints process is something that has been raised with the team leaders of Oranga Tamariki-run and contracted provider-run youth justice community remand homes. Oranga Tamariki supports all our homes to have their own complaints system in place in relation to the actions of their own staff and their service, recognising there is a process in place for Oranga Tamariki actions that is our responsibility.

Oranga Tamariki has partnered with VOYCE—Whakarongo Mai (VOYCE) to collaboratively design and deliver Manaaki Kōrero – with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau – improved feedback, complaints, grievance, information, advice and assistance processes. Manaaki Kōrero is a three-year programme of work with VOYCE across all Oranga Tamariki settings, with a planned completion date of June 2026.

VOYCE also provide independent advocacy for rangatahi in care. Rangatahi can have phone contact with VOYCE and have the option of meeting VOYCE representatives when they visit the facility. They can also request a visit from a VOYCE representative when they need advocacy for a specific concern or a complaint. Other options for expressing themselves, such as video calling and recording, can be used with tamariki and rangatahi as required.

The new Oversight legislation provides a strengthened complaints and investigation function for children in the care or custody of the state led by the Office of the Ombudsman. Rangatahi can now approach the Ombudsman directly at any point, before, during or following a complaint being considered by Oranga Tamariki.

The Office of the Ombudsman has developed a range of resources to promote the use of their new complaints service. Posters and stickers advertising the rights to access the independent complaint service have been shared with our residences and remand homes. We are also working with the Office of the Ombudsman to promote awareness of their new 0800 number across our facilities, ensuring that rangatahi can access this at any time.

Recommendation 2

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

Response

Visiting rangatahi while in care is important. Visits by social workers with rangatahi help to build and maintain relationships, help to understand what is happening in their lives, monitor their safety and wellbeing and ensure that their All About Me Plan (AAMP) and placement are meeting their needs and promoting their best interests.

Our policy and guidance states that the frequency of visits to rangatahi is based on an assessment of their individual needs. The frequency is determined in consultation with rangatahi, their carer and wherever possible their whānau. The frequency and rationale need to be approved by the social worker's supervisor with the approval recorded in case notes and the frequency recorded in the AAMP for the rangatahi. The frequency of visits must be reviewed regularly, including when there has been

a change in the circumstance or needs for the rangatahi. The AAMP must be updated if the frequency is altered to ensure it reflects the needs and wishes of rangatahi.

Rangatahi must be visited by their allocated social worker wherever possible and the social worker's supervisor will arrange for other kaimahi to visit if the social worker is not able to. A video call can be used to complete the visit if it is not possible to meet in person.

The Youth Justice Community Placements Team, who oversee admissions into remand homes, seek to ensure that all social workers have current visiting details for rangatahi confirmed in their AAMP when receiving and processing admission applications.

Recommendation 3

Ensure whānau contact occurs without restriction of funding or administrative barriers.

Response

We acknowledge how important it is to maintain and strengthen relationships between rangatahi and their whānau. Positive whānau contact is encouraged and should be prioritised when rangatahi are in a remand home. It is important that rangatahi stay connected to their whānau and the communities that they come from.

Visits with whānau and significant others are planned by Hillcrest kaimahi in consultation with other key Oranga Tamariki kaimahi. The Youth Justice Community Placements Team will continue to work closely with other parts of the organisation to explore how administrative barriers can be lessened when arranging out of region travel for whānau visiting remand homes, where these are found to exist.

Oranga Tamariki support regular quality contact for rangatahi with their whānau. In addition to visits kanohi ki te kanohi, when this is possible, we are exploring utilising technology solutions to maximise additional contact opportunities where travel is not possible.

Recommendation 4

Ensuring the right supports are implemented for whānau prior to mokopuna being transitioned home and in line with Oranga Tamariki Policy.

Response

Ensuring the right supports are implemented for whānau prior to rangatahi being transitioned home is important. We want all rangatahi who transition from a remand home back to their home, or elsewhere, to be successful, and having the right supports in place for whānau helps to achieve this.

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

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

The social worker allocated to the rangatahi while in the remand home leads the process for preparing the transition plan and this gets presented to the Youth Court for approval. Remand home kaimahi provide values input into plans having worked closely with the rangatahi. The plans include recommendations regarding support to enable the rangatahi to reintegrate back into the community in a way that keeps them connected with whānau, and other natural supports when the youth justice placement ends.

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

Recommendation 5

Eliminate the reliance on hospital accident and emergency services when mokopuna require non-urgent medical treatment.

Response

Oranga Tamariki recognises the need for timely access to quality health care for rangatahi who are placed in our remand homes. We acknowledge that the current approach at Hillcrest has involved relying on hospital services to access medical treatment if required. This arrangement relates to the challenges of enrolling rangatahi with local primary health care providers due to the short duration of their remand periods, and we accept that another solution is appropriate.

We are committed to improving the provision of primary healthcare at Hillcrest in partnership with Te Whatu Ora, the Ministry of Health. Oranga Tamariki and Te Whatu Ora recognise, as part of our commitment to the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan, the importance of working together to ensure that rangatahi in care with the highest needs receive the support and services they require to prevent harm and realise oranga tamariki.

We have recently engaged with Te Whatu Ora to explore options for increasing access to primary healthcare services at homes providing community remand placements in other parts of the country. Over the coming months, we will continue to work with Te Whatu Ora to explore new health provision options for Hillcrest that are more fit for purpose than the current health arrangement.

Recommendation 6

Improve mokopuna opportunities to access NZQA accreditation in collaboration with Ministry of Education.

Response

Oranga Tamariki recognises the importance of improving opportunities for education for rangatahi who are remanded and placed in remand homes. A positive experience of school and education can be a significant protective factor. It is important we understand and respond to the educational needs of rangatahi as they can determine future wellbeing and success.

Since Hillcrest began providing community remand placements, the Kauri Centre, which was an alternative education provider, had provided an education service to the home. This arrangement was jointly funded by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Oranga Tamariki. At the end of 2023 the Kauri Centre closed, ending the provision of education at Hillcrest by this provider.

Hillcrest management kaimahi are working with local MoE officials to discuss how education has operated at the service in the past, and what the provision of a new education service could look like. We anticipate over the coming months that a new education service for Hillcrest will be procured by MoE, with this providing rangatahi with opportunities to work towards gaining credits for NZQA accreditation. This work is a priority.

Careful consideration will be given to planning the new education service, as the nature of a remand period means rangatahi can transition in and out of the whare frequently at short notice. Many rangatahi are placed in a remand home for around three weeks before their period of remand ends. An important part of the new education service will include providing continuity for rangatahi between the home and their next education and/or training provider.

Response to Facility Recommendations

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

Recommendation 1

Ensure there is a clear understanding for all kaimahi of the internal complaints system for mokopuna.

Response

Ensuring that kaimahi at Hillcrest have a clear understanding of our internal complaints processes for rangatahi is essential. Oranga Tamariki must ensure that rangatahi receive support to make a complaint or provide feedback or raise an issue of concern, including helping them to understand the complaint process, to make the complaint, and to understand the possible outcomes of making a complaint.

Hillcrest strives to achieve excellent practice and takes a continuous improvement approach to its operations. Following your monitoring visit to Hillcrest, a number of actions have been undertaken. All kaimahi have received a reminder of the importance of understanding our external and internal complaints processes, how rangatahi can utilise internal or independent advocacy and/or support when making complaints, and we have increased the use of complaints collateral around the whare.

As noted in our response to systemic recommendation 1, there is considerable work underway to strengthen complaints process across the organisation. Oranga Tamariki has partnered with VOYCE in a three-year programme of work to collaboratively design and deliver Manaaki Kōrero – with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau – improved feedback, complaints, grievance, information, advice and assistance processes.

The new Oversight legislation provides a strengthened complaints and investigation function for children in the care or custody of the state led by the Office of the Ombudsman. Again, as noted in our response to systemic recommendation 1, we continue to work with the Office of the Ombudsman to educate, implement, embed the new practices for Oranga Tamariki kaimahi and young people in care.

Recommendation 2

Improve visibility within the home of mokopuna rights and ability to access independent advocacy support.

Response

Ensuring tamariki and rangatahi know and understand their rights and entitlements is a critical part of the role of kaimahi at Hillcrest. Under the National Care Standards, the specific information that needs to be covered during our conversations with tamariki and rangatahi includes:

- why they are in care
- what they can expect when they are in care, including:
 - the timing of their needs assessment
 - their rights (as specified in the Statement of Rights)
 - how often they will be visited by their social worker
 - who they can contact if they have concerns
- how their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group will be involved in decision-making, and why they'll have that level of involvement
- how te tamaiti or rangatahi can be involved in decision-making, and how their views will be used to help make decisions about them
- the independent services that are available — including advocacy and Māori services
- their right to confidentiality and privacy
- how things about them are recorded, and how they can access that record
- how they can provide feedback or make a complaint, including:
 - what constitutes feedback, and what constitutes a complaint
 - who they can contact if they want to provide feedback or make a complaint
 - what they can expect if they provide feedback or make a complaint, including timeframes, what will be recorded, and how they will be kept informed

- where they can go to make a complaint
- what processes or mechanisms are available if they are not satisfied with the response to their complaint
- the support available to them if they need help to express their views
- the support available to them if they need to express their views.

The Hillcrest management team have increased the rights-based collateral visible and accessible to rangatahi in the whare. This has included providing additional 'My Rights, My Voice' posters and booklets which explain the rights and entitlement for rangatahi in a child-friendly manner. Additional collateral in relation to VOYCE and the Office of the Ombudsman have also been sought externally.

Hillcrest kaimahi are committed to continuing to strengthen the practice of advising rangatahi of their rights during their stay and before they leave. We are pleased that your report acknowledges that kaimahi ensure rangatahi are made aware of their rights on admission to Hillcrest.

Please also refer to systemic recommendation 1, which outlines in more detail the role of VOYCE and the advocacy service they provide to rangatahi.

Recommendation 3

Ensure best practice is always followed for shift de-briefs, training is consistent, and learnings are tested and implemented across all shifts.

Response

Hillcrest is committed to following best practice for shift briefings, consistent training, and ensuring that kaimahi reflect on their practice approach and take a continuous learning approach.

We recognise the need for consistency in practice between shifts. It is important that Hillcrest kaimahi provide the rangatahi at Hillcrest with a structured, predictable living environment that helps them feel safe. At Hillcrest there are shift planning meetings that occur before all shifts, with the purpose of the meetings being to:

- Identify any risks or concerns from the current shift.
- Identify risks/potential risks for the next shift.
- Discuss offsite appointments or movements.
- Identify the general 'mood' within the remand home.
- Allocate tasks to team members, e.g. daily log, gym programmes, phone calls, kitchen etc.

At the end of each shift, a debriefing process is completed. The purpose of this process is to discuss how the shift progressed and plan how any learnings can be applied to the next shift. All kaimahi are encouraged by the leadership team to actively participate in this process. It is pleasing to read in your report that you observed a team debriefing where areas for improvement were noted by kaimahi as well as areas of good practice, and that the leadership team attended and contributed.

Our focus on consistently delivering high quality training at Hillcrest for kaimahi is ongoing. We are pleased your report notes that kaimahi feel valued and supported, receiving ongoing training.

Recommendation 4

Ensure supervision for kaimahi to prevent staff burn-out and support kaimahi ora.

Response

Oranga Tamariki is committed to developing supervision and encourages kaimahi to make use of all forms of supervision (supervisor/supervisee supervision, group supervision, peer supervision, cultural supervision) to reflect, learn and stretch. Focusing on kaimahi ora is also an important part of the supervision process.

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The development of supervision is an organisational priority. We have committed to introducing micro-credentialing for supervision and other specialist areas, which recognises the skills and knowledge that are required by supervisors and other specialist roles.

In line with our new practice shift and framework, over the next year, Oranga Tamariki is also updating its supervision policy to reflect our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, mana-enhancing practice, and Te Ao Māori principles of oranga that support mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga. We are developing a permanent policy for cultural supervision; increasing the cultural competence of our workforce is an organisational priority.

As per our supervision policy, youth workers are provided with group supervision every three weeks. In some instances, when youth workers have specific development needs, one-to-one supervision is provided. Further work on supervision practice will be developed throughout 2024 to include a more specific focus on supervision practice for remand homes and residences. Increasing the frequency and type of supervision for youth workers is being considered as part of this work.

In addition, we are focused on ensuring Hillcrest kaimahi understand how to fully benefit from group supervision opportunities like daily briefings and debriefings before and after each shift to support their individual learning and reflection. Kaimahi are also encouraged to actively take part in training days every three weeks, further developing their practice. Other types of learning and development like coaching and mentoring, and advice and guidance are also available.