



**Response from Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect Family Services Limited to recommendations from the Mana Mokopuna monitoring visit to:**

# **Kaitiaki Remand Home**

**Visit date – October 2023**

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## Introduction

The Kaitiaki Remand Home is a Youth Justice Community Remand home. The facility is owned by Oranga Tamariki and managed and operated by Reconnect Family Services Limited (Reconnect), a national non-government organisation approved to deliver care services under section 396 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. The facility is located in Tāmaki Makaurau.

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 five 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 services against the seven domains relevant to the 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 and Reconnect on 21 December 2023. Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect have collaborated to prepare this joint response to the Systemic and Facility Recommendations.

## Recommendations Summary

The OPCAT report makes 10 recommendations, of which nine are accepted and one is not 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 rangatahi were receiving at the whare.

Reconnect and 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
<b>Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations</b>	
1. Support community run remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.	Accepted
2. Ensure All About Me Plans are up to date as per the Oranga Tamariki policy and provided to the Reconnect remand home prior to the admission.	Accepted
3. Ensure property maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely manner and remand homes are regularly updated with progress.	Accepted
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.	Accepted
5. Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities including minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.	Accepted
<b>Reconnect Family Services Limited Recommendations</b>	
1. Eliminate the use of kaimahi personal cell phones to record information relating to mokopuna.	Accepted
2. Solidify and implement practice for working with mokopuna Māori in line with the Reconnect Pou and establish a connection with mana whenua.	Accepted
3. Introduce a supervision policy to support kaimahi both professionally and culturally.	Not Accepted
4. Review the current whānau contact arrangement to increase contact time mokopuna have with whānau.	Accepted
5. Work with mokopuna to establish regular activities and outings to provide variety in their structured day.	Accepted

The Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect responses to the Kaitiaki Remand Home OPCAT report recommendations are detailed in the remaining sections of this report.

## Response to Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations

Below are the Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect responses to the systemic recommendations made in the Reconnect Family Services – Kaitiaki Remand Home OPCAT report.

### Recommendation 1

*Support community-run remand homes to develop an independent complaints system for mokopuna.*

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

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 whare, 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 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.

Rangatahi can have phone contact with VOYCE and the option to meet their representatives when they visit the whare. They can also request a visit from a VOYCE representative when they need advocacy for a specific concern. Other options for expressing themselves, such as video calling and recording, can be used with tamariki and rangatahi where needed.

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 have developed a range of resources to promote the use of this service. Posters and stickers advertising the rights to access the independent complaint service have been shared with our Residences and Remand homes. We continue to work with the Office of the Ombudsman to provide information material such as posters to residences and homes promoting awareness of the Oversight legislative changes. These materials also advise rangatahi of the 0800 number for the Office of the Ombudsman and that rangatahi can call it at any time.

#### Response – Reconnect

In addition to our complaints policy, our residential kaimahi meet with rangatahi to explain the complaint process and their rights. Our Memorandum of Understanding with VOYCE also states that we will include them as requested and needed. Rangatahi can obtain information about VOYCE, including contact information, through the "Welcome to Our Home" booklet. In 2022, we agreed with VOYCE that one page of the "Welcome to Our Home" booklet would be dedicated to their information. We provide child-friendly instructions on how to raise complaints.

The Reconnect complaints policy notes that external parties may be involved in any complaints or investigations as deemed appropriate by the Chief Operations Officer. However, we do acknowledge the powers of the Ombudsman to investigate under the Ombudsman Act, which is now extended to providers under the Oversight legislation. We are looking to review and update our complaints policy accordingly.

We are aware that Oranga Tamariki continue to work with the Office of the Ombudsman regarding the provision of posters and information material regarding the complaints and will ensure these are distributed to the whare.

## Recommendation 2

*Ensure All About Me Plans are up to date as per the Oranga Tamariki policy and provided to the Reconnect remand home prior to the admission.*

### Response – Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki acknowledges the importance of providing Reconnect, or any provider-run service, with a current All About Me Plan (AAMP) when a referral is made by Oranga Tamariki to place a rangatahi in their service. Providing a service provider with key information about a rangatahi is crucial for understanding the individual needs of a rangatahi, and the impact this may have on their care while in a community home.

The AAMP is designed to enable Oranga Tamariki to support and respond to the needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care in line with the National Care Standards. The AAMP helps everyone involved support the needs and objectives of tamariki or rangatahi, by recording planning information that is responsive to their changing needs and circumstances and advances their long-term goals and outcomes.

There is also a tamariki-version of the AAMP. The tamariki AAMP is written in language appropriate to the age, development level or disability of te tamaiti or rangatahi, to ensure they understand it.

At times, particularly outside of business hours, admissions to remand homes can occur at short notice after a rangatahi is arrested by the Police, and some information may not be available until the next day or after the weekend. In these instances, an AAMP cannot be immediately completed in full. This can also occur when a rangatahi is not previously known to Oranga Tamariki and new information needs to be obtained before a completed AAMP can be given to a provider-run service. In these circumstances, we follow up as soon as possible to complete AAMPs and circulate updated information.

During business hours, referrals for Reconnect are managed by the Regional Placement and Resources Team. Afterhours referrals are received by the Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre, and then provided to local afterhours or duty social workers who liaise directly with the Kaitiaki Remand Home.

Oranga Tamariki will continue to work together with all stakeholders to ensure a clear understanding of the referral process for Reconnect. It is anticipated that this will support the consistent and timely provision of AAMPs and other essential referral documentation.

### Response – Reconnect

AAMPs are crucial for providing our kaimahi with vital information about rangatahi entering our care. These plans serve as the foundation for building whakawhanaungatanga and shaping the necessary support systems for the well-being of the rangatahi during their time with us. Once a placement request is approved, we require an AAMP from Oranga Tamariki before the rangatahi arrives at the home. It is important to note that our intake process at Reconnect is stringent, and we cannot accept admissions without the necessary intake information, including the AAMPs.

The quality of these plans varies based on several factors:

- *History with Oranga Tamariki:* Rangatahi who are new to the system often have limited information available. This poses a challenge for social workers who need to gather comprehensive details in a short time.
- *Social Worker's Experience:* The quality of the plans is influenced by the social worker's expertise and experience. Different social workers may produce plans of varying quality.
- *Urgency in Placement Request:* The urgency of the placement request can impact the thoroughness of the reports. Social workers may face challenges in compiling detailed information when time is limited, especially in after-hours requests.

In instances where the AAMPs lack sufficient information, Reconnect collaborates closely with Oranga Tamariki and the Regional Placements Team to ensure that we receive the necessary and appropriate information required for the well-being of the rangatahi in our care.

**Recommendation 3**

*Ensure property maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely manner and remand homes are regularly updated with progress.*

**Response – Oranga Tamariki**

It is important to us, our valued partners and the rangatahi we care for that renovations, repairs and maintenance occur in a timely way. We work closely with Reconnect to ensure that they are consulted and included in the choices and decisions about this work. The current process with Reconnect includes:

- A designated Property Facilities Manager working closely with the Reconnect Programme Manager and Kaitiaki Residential Leader.
- Home Checks are completed six-monthly by the Property Facilities Manager to assess the condition of the home and identify any repair and maintenance requirements.
- All maintenance, repairs and health and safety requests are lodged by Reconnect kaimahi through an 0800 number. This is a 24/7 service. Jobs are assessed on a case-by-case basis and response times range from two hours, next day, seven days or long term.

A routine home check was completed on 2 February 2024 by the Property Facilities Manager. Timeframes for delivering any required repairs and maintenance will be agreed in consultation with Reconnect. Coordinating the timing of the contractors to complete the repairs and maintenance is important to ensure the least possible disruption to rangatahi living in the whare.

Matters raised in the report and since resolved include:

- Oranga Tamariki fixed the broken basketball hoop in late 2023 following supplier and system delays.
- A site technician attended and found that the washing machine required repairs. The relevant parts were sought from a specialist supplier outside of the region and installed once received.
- The visibility issue with the admission board has been resolved, with Oranga Tamariki reinstating the net curtains previously present in the staff office to obscure view of the board.

One further matter which was identified was paint peeling off the ceilings and walls. Oranga Tamariki will assess the areas requiring attention and complete the necessary repairs by May 2024.

We note the comment regarding there being no perimeter fence or frosting on the large windows of the games room. This has been discussed at length with Reconnect Leadership and partially addressed with tinted glass on the windows when double glazing was installed in March 2023. Council restrictions on front boundary fences in the Northcote area limit immediate solutions to this issue, as the permitted height for a fully paled fence is currently 1.4m. Extensive landscaping is required to achieve sufficient coverage of the area required to obscure the view from the street. This will be assessed for completion in the upcoming financial year (2024/25).

Oranga Tamariki encourage care providers to allow rangatahi to personalise their bedrooms as this makes a house feel like a home. Options to personalise spaces include the use of posters, permanent decals or painting a feature wall with chalk paint in bedrooms. Rangatahi are given chalk and use the space for personal expression, as seen in a photo in the report. Posters and pictures can be displayed using blue-tack and 3M strips, although we prefer not to use pins due to safety concerns and the volume of rangatahi in the whare.

Oranga Tamariki will continue to work closely with Reconnect to arrange the required repairs and maintenance.

**Response – Reconnect**

Kaimahi follow the Regional Oranga Tamariki property management process when reporting any property damage, maintenance or repairs needed. Kaimahi aim to report any required maintenance as soon as it appears.

We appreciate that organising and coordinating contractors to complete maintenance in a timely manner can be challenging when managing financial approvals, contractor availability, and resourcing.

Reconnect have recently appointed an administrator who helps to oversee any facilities used by Reconnect. Their role also supports kaimahi in follow up with the Oranga Tamariki property management

team on any outstanding maintenance requests. This role will also ensure any furniture or other items that are the responsibility of Reconnect will be regularly checked, repaired or replaced as required. Our joint goal with Oranga Tamariki is to provide safe, quality homes for rangatahi.

#### Recommendation 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.*

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki recognises the need for timely access to quality health care for rangatahi who are remanded in custody. Oranga Tamariki recently engaged with Te Whatu Ora to explore options for increasing access to primary healthcare services at homes providing community remand placements in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Te Whatu Ora is working with a health provider to put a new service in place for rangatahi at the whare. The proposal is to involve virtual and face to face options for medical appointments, including with doctors and other allied health professionals. This will assist with supporting the rangatahi at the whare with any presenting health needs and the management of these, for example, prescribing and renewing prescriptions for medication, and consideration of broader health needs such as updating and undertaking new immunisations.

An operating proposal for access to this virtual and face to face health service at the whare is currently being developed by the health provider, with a goal to commence service delivery with this (or another) health provider as soon as possible.

#### Response – Reconnect

Every rangatahi under our care is entitled to receive appropriate and timely medical attention as needed. In non-emergency situations, the Case Lead will initiate contact with the Oranga Tamariki placements team or Rapid Response Team (if afterhours). Subsequently, an Oranga Tamariki social worker will be coordinated to facilitate the transportation of rangatahi for their medical appointments.

We are required to adhere to remand requirements, which always mandate the presence of two kaimahi during the transportation of rangatahi. However, due to the setup of the home and staffing constraints – we are funded for 2 to 3 staff per shift – Reconnect often faces challenges in providing transportation for medical appointments if other rangatahi are concurrently placed in the home. Despite constraints such as staffing and home dynamics, it is crucial to emphasise that emergency medical situations take precedence. Regardless of any challenges posed by staffing or home dynamics, our top priority is to promptly address and respond to any emergency medical needs of the rangatahi under our care.

#### Recommendation 5

*Ensure social workers adhere to their practice responsibilities including minimum contact visits as per Oranga Tamariki Policy.*

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

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 AAMP and placement are meeting their needs and promoting their best interests.

The policy and guidance states that the frequency of visits to rangatahi is based on an assessment of their individual need. 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.

As part of the referral process for rangatahi who are entering the whare, the Regional Placement Team reminds social workers of the requirement to provide an AAMP that is as up-to-date or current as possible. It is important that rangatahi and staff at the whare are consulted by the social worker when determining contact arrangements.

The report refers to a Case Lead role which Reconnect have implemented as a conduit between Oranga Tamariki and the whare to help support social workers. Oranga Tamariki funds this role and we are proud of this collaborative approach we have with Reconnect supporting social work practice.

Quality and regular engagement with young people by their social worker is, and continues to be, a key priority area of focus. This year we have made engagement with [tamariki and rangatahi children](#) a focus of site-based learning. ~~W,~~ we are also in the process of introducing new engagement tools to support quality engagement. Through the Whiti Dashboard, service delivery teams are also more closely monitoring to ensure children are being seen regularly. As a result, we are seeing improvements in the frequency of visiting overall. This will be a continued area of focus in 2024.

### **Response – Reconnect**

It is essential for rangatahi to maintain their communication with their Oranga Tamariki social worker while in our care. Reconnect kaimahi support this connection by supporting rangatahi to make regular phone contact with their social workers. Our Case Lead is also in weekly communication with Oranga Tamariki to ensure that this contact is happening.

Reconnect employs a comprehensive procedure to monitor rangatahi visitors, ensuring early detection of non-visits by social workers. This proactive approach enables Reconnect to promptly bring attention to the matter, ultimately alerting Oranga Tamariki placement teams to address the issue.

## Response to Reconnect Facility Recommendations

Below are the Reconnect and Oranga Tamariki responses to the facility recommendations made in the Reconnect Family Services – Kaitiaki Remand Home OPCAT report.

### Recommendation 1

*Eliminate the use of kaimahi personal cell phones to record information relating to mokopuna.*

#### Response – Reconnect

We understand the importance of safeguarding client information, and we take this responsibility very seriously. One of the measures we take is, that all our staff members are bound to a confidentiality contract, underscoring their commitment to maintaining the privacy and security of client data.

In addition to our existing measures, we are actively exploring ways to enhance the security of our communication platform. Our team is dedicated to implementing every possible security feature available within the application used for work communications.

Furthermore, we will eliminate the use of client names and instead utilise initials within our communication channels. We are currently reviewing our internal procedures to implement this change where applicable, ensuring that only essential information is shared and that client identities are protected to the greatest extent possible.

We are looking to increase the number and availability of work devices in the house.

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki encourages the use of information technology to its fullest potential in ways that are appropriate for the work being undertaken. Information technology creates efficiencies and increased opportunities to collaborate. When utilising this technology, it is important that we are mindful of security risks and that we make sure that the information of those we work with is appropriately protected. We are supportive of Reconnect increasing the number and availability of work devices in the whare, and acknowledge their ongoing work to ensure the appropriate measures are in place to support this technology use.

### Recommendation 2

*Solidify and implement practice for working with mokopuna Māori in line with the Reconnect Pou and establish a connection with mana whenua.*

#### Response – Reconnect

The Reconnect Chief Executive Officer is currently working with mana whenua to appoint a new Mana Whakahaere – Cultural Leader. Under our previous Cultural Leaders, we had an active tikanga programme running throughout the organisation. Our intention is to meaningfully reinstate that under the new leader.

We have long established cultural assessments for rangatahi that help identify cultural well-being needs. These are carried out by experienced staff and engage rangatahi in a conversation about whakapapa, and their own cultural knowledge.

We are working with kaimahi Māori to develop specific activities that can be embedded in daily routines in the house. These include karakia, te reo games, outings to local places of cultural significance.

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

Since 2021, Oranga Tamariki has embarked on paradigm shift with our Practice Approach, shifting from western models of practice to a Māori-centred position that includes a practice framework informed by mātauranga Māori. Our Practice Approach guides social work practice to be viewed from a te ao Māori perspective with the intention of reducing inequities and improving outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. Our practice is moving to one that understands the context of whakapapa, with oranga as the frame.

Our mahi on the Practice Approach is also supported by Te Hapai Ō, our comprehensive approach to growing Māori cultural capability at Oranga Tamariki. Te Hapai Ō is our response to Whāinga Amorangi, the cultural competency framework for the for public service developed by Te Arawhiti (Office for Māori Crown Relations).

We support the efforts by Reconnect to reinstate their tikanga programme across their organisation and the ongoing commitment in their mahi to improving outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori.

### Recommendation 3

*Introduce a supervision policy to support kaimahi both professionally and culturally.*

#### Response – Reconnect

Reconnect has an existing supervision policy. It appears that this policy was not requested or provided during the audit. Reconnect understands the importance of kaimahi receiving regular supervision to support best practice, promote kaimahi well-being, and encourage self-reflection.

Reconnect kaimahi are supported with monthly internal supervision, and external supervision for those kaimahi registered to a professional body as per the Reconnect Supervision policy. Kaimahi also have the option of requesting supervision from other qualified staff across our other Reconnect programmes.

There is provision to provide cultural supervision under the guidance of the Cultural Leader (position currently vacant) with support from the Training Coordinator.

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki encourages the use of group supervision for kaimahi who work in homes providing community remand placements, which can be facilitated by management, or facilitated by an external, trained supervisor such as a qualified social work supervisor, or counsellor with supervision qualifications. It is noted that kaimahi at the whare have a high level of trust and are comfortable holding each other to account and providing support. We understand that this policy was in place before the visit and there may have been a misunderstanding as to this not being provided or sighted during Mana Mokopuna's visit. We note that this has since been provided to Mana Mokopuna therefore the recommendation is not accepted.

### Recommendation 4

*Review the current whānau contact arrangement to increase contact time mokopuna have with whānau.*

#### Response – Reconnect

It is important to clarify that the restrictions on whānau contact are not a rule implemented by Reconnect, but rather a result of the approved contact determined by Oranga Tamariki. Reconnect acknowledges the significance of whānau connections and welcomes any opportunity for flexibility in these arrangements.

Reconnect is committed to advocating for rangatahi to have regular physical contact with their whānau within the guidelines established by Oranga Tamariki. While the constraints may limit direct contact, Reconnect ensures that rangatahi are engaged in regular and meaningful conversations with their whānau to maintain strong connections and support networks.

#### Response – Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki acknowledge how important it is to maintain and strengthen relationships between rangatahi and their whānau. Positive whānau contact should be encouraged and prioritised when rangatahi are in a remand home. Visits with whānau and significant others should be planned in consultation with the remand home staff and Oranga Tamariki kaimahi. It is important that rangatahi stay connected to their whānau and the communities that they come from.

### Recommendation 5

*Work with mokopuna to establish regular activities and outings to provide variety in their structured day.*

#### **Response – Reconnect**

Over the past year, we have actively increased our outings, ensuring intentional and diverse activities for our clients. Despite the challenges we face in accommodating rangatahi restrictions as well as attempting to avoid certain areas of Auckland that are triggering for our clients, we have taken steps to mitigate risks while prioritising engaging experiences. Regular outings and group activities have become integral to our programme. We have placed a significant emphasis on teaching rangatahi about pro-social activities and positive contributions to the community. These activities not only contribute to their personal development but also create a sense of community and belonging.

#### **Response – Oranga Tamariki**

We are working with Reconnect to provide any support required regarding risk management and planning to support a range of purposeful regular on and off-site activities, and also access to unique one-off activities. Participating in a range of activities while placed in a remand home is important to keep rangatahi connected to the community, broaden their interests and experiences, introduce them to new vocational pathways and options, and show them new and fun ways of being active.