



Korowai Manaaki

OPCAT Monitoring Follow-Up Report

Visit Date: 27-29 February 2024

Report Date: May 2024



Kia kuru pounamu te rongo

All mokopuna* live their best lives

- * Drawing from the wisdom of Te Ao Māori, we have adopted the term mokopuna to describe all children and young people we advocate for, aged under 18 years of age in Aotearoa New Zealand. This acknowledges the special status held by mokopuna in their families, whānau, hapū and iwi and reflects that in all we do. Referring to the people we advocate for as mokopuna draws them closer to us and reminds us that who they are, and where they come from matters for their identity, belonging and wellbeing, at every stage of their lives.



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Introduction

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

Mana Mokopuna - Children and Young People’s Commission (Mana Mokopuna) is an independent advocate for all children and young people (mokopuna) under the age of 18, and for those who are care-experienced up to the age of 25. Mana Mokopuna advocates for children’s rights to be recognised and upheld, provides advice and guidance to government and other agencies, advocates for system-level changes, and ensures children’s voices are heard in decisions that affect them.

Our organisation is a designated National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) as per the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

The New Zealand legislation relating to OPCAT is contained in the Crimes of Torture Act (1989). The role of the NPM function at Mana Mokopuna is to visit places where mokopuna are detained, 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 unannounced visit to Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence (Korowai Manaaki) in February 2024 due to concerns raised directly with the Commission by members of the public. 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 highlights issues and concerns detected by the Mana Mokopuna OPCAT monitoring team during our visit to Korowai Manaaki. It also outlines progress made towards completing recommendations made in the last 2022 full visit and the 2023 follow-up visit.



About this facility

Facility Name: Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence operated by Oranga Tamariki
Region: Tamaki Makaurau
Operating capacity: 46 bed capacity. Korowai Manaaki is made up of five units where mokopuna stay. These contain bedrooms, bathrooms, dining area, kitchen, television room and rooms for mokopuna to regulate themselves and or have phone conversations. There is also one further unit designated as Secure Care. 28 mokopuna were on-site during the visit.
Status under which mokopuna can be detained: Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 – s235, s238(1)(d) and s311, Criminal Procedure Act 2011 – s173 and s175, sentenced under the Corrections Act 2004 – s34A.

Key Findings

The threshold for torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment) as per the OPCAT¹ was not met during the visit to Korowai Manaaki. However, there are serious concerns regarding kaimahi practice at Korowai Manaaki and a lack of stable leadership which is needed to improve the overall culture of the residence for everyone.

Mana Mokopuna reports the following findings:

- There are concerns for mokopuna health and safety due to the amount of contraband available in the residence, in particular cannabis and vapes, and the frequency with which these are being used by mokopuna.
- As well as matches and lighters, mokopuna are making their own ignition devices that pose a personal safety and fire hazard risk.
- Several mokopuna require a high level of mental health support and kaimahi do not have the specialised training and knowledge required to meet their individual needs.
- Practice by some kaimahi is inappropriate and concerning. This includes kaimahi allegedly bringing contraband into the residence, poking keys into the backs of mokopuna to move them along in physical spaces in the residence and allowing mokopuna to use their personal cell phones. Kaimahi were observed playfighting with mokopuna, swearing at them, and reminding them not to 'snitch' when talking to Mana Mokopuna during our visit.
- There is a distinct lack of programmes outside of education for mokopuna.

¹ [Definitions we use | Mana Mokopuna](#)



- Most days during the visit, mokopuna were observed playing video games or watching YouTube with sexualised and drug-related content.
- Independent advocates do not always have access to units and some mokopuna do not have access to independent advocates or their allocated social workers for long periods of time.
- There is a lack of detail in incident reporting and some incidents are not being recorded at all. Kaimahi feel unsafe to report practice concerns due to a bullying culture.
- Induction training is not fit-for-purpose and many staff do not have the experience necessary to work with vulnerable mokopuna.
- There is no Kaiwhakae to provide culturally appropriate support to kaimahi to support mokopuna Māori to connect to their whakapapa, use te reo Māori, and engage in their culture.

Recommendations

2024 Systemic Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	Urgently implement practical ways to mitigate contraband such as cannabis and vapes entering secure residences.
2	Provide suitable on-site resource ² to support mokopuna with high and complex mental health needs.
3	Ensure mokopuna have access to a fit-for-purpose, independent complaints system, and ensure that mokopuna understand how to access it.
4	Review the residence recruitment strategy to ensure all kaimahi have the adequate skills and experience to work appropriately with high and complex needs mokopuna.
5	Review induction training to ensure new kaimahi are well prepared for the realities of working in a secure residence and that they have the skills to pro-socially engage with mokopuna and safely de-escalate situations involving mokopuna in their care.
6	Ensure mokopuna are visited by their allocated social workers ³ and that remand reviews are completed ⁴ for individual mokopuna with a view to minimising pre-trial detention timeframes. ⁵

² This may include employing specialist kaimahi or providing intensive training for existing kaimahi who care for mokopuna with significant mental health needs.

³ Aligning to National Care Standards and practice advice as per [Assessing the frequency of visits to tamariki in care | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

⁴ As per s242(1)(A) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

⁵ CRC/C/NZL/CO/6, para 38(b)



2024 Facility Recommendations

	Recommendation
1	Complete an internal practice audit and ensure all kaimahi have an agreed understanding of professional practice expectations and have the skills to pro-socially engage with mokopuna and safely de-escalate situations involving mokopuna in their care.
2	Leadership team to create an action plan alongside the Kaiwhakaue to address the disparities of mokopuna Māori and set measurable outcomes as determined by Korowai Manaaki.
3	Provide training to all residence kaimahi outlining the importance of independent advocacy for mokopuna and how kaimahi can empower mokopuna to access independent advocates and have a voice in how they are cared for, as well as to raise any complaints or concerns they have about their care and treatment.
4	Implement a schedule of meaningful, culturally inclusive activity programmes that can be delivered to mokopuna outside of the school structured day.
5	Consider regularly changing shift teams to enable all kaimahi the opportunity to work with different people under different Team Leaders as a way to build a more positive, aligned, and collective culture of care for mokopuna amongst kaimahi.

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 Observations⁶ for New Zealand's sixth periodic review on its implementation of the Children's Convention⁷ 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 Observations⁸ for New Zealand's seventh periodic review regarding the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment⁹.

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

⁶ Refer CRC/C/NZL/CO/6

⁷ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

⁸ Refer CAT/C/NZL/CO/7

⁹ [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment | OHCHR](#)



There are safety concerns for mokopuna in Korowai Manaaki

Kaimahi practice is unprofessional and inappropriate

Mokopuna who have been removed from their community are entitled to a high standard of care whilst in residence¹⁰, and to be safe. However, some mokopuna at Korowai Manaaki have reported kaimahi using physical violence and verbal abuse against them,¹¹ and mokopuna said kaimahi make them feel like they are not worth anything. There are a few permanent kaimahi working in Korowai Manaaki who display good practice and engagement strategies with mokopuna. These staff are passionate about their work and want to see the facility performing better. However, there are many kaimahi who do not operate with a trauma-informed lens or show any care for mokopuna in their practice.

Dangerous kaimahi practice observed during our monitoring visit included:

- **The inability to set appropriate boundaries for mokopuna, including:**
 - giving mokopuna their personal (kaimahi-owned) cell phones to use
 - unblocking phone numbers for mokopuna to have prolonged phone calls to those not on their approved contact list. Phone numbers are then 're-blocked' so other kaimahi do not know of the protocol breach
 - calling mokopuna by their tag names
 - asking mokopuna for their social media account details and adding mokopuna to their social media contacts
 - not shutting down sexual advances from mokopuna. Examples include mokopuna touching kaimahi bottoms and this not being stopped or reported
 - Mokopuna who had been released from Korowai Manaaki were reported to be returning to the residence following their release to "visit" kaimahi they had developed inappropriate relationships with.
- **Buying compliance**
 - Kaimahi are 'buying' good behaviour from mokopuna with food and hygiene care items
 - Kaimahi also disclosed that some colleagues buy compliance by asking for 'rent' such as used vapes and other contraband from mokopuna to keep the appearance of being on top of the contraband issue. Kaimahi then explained that those kaimahi then continue to bring in new contraband to keep mokopuna compliant.

¹⁰[Oranga Tamariki \(Residential Care\) Regulations 1996 \(SR 1996/354\) \(as at 01 July 2023\) 3 Right to professional and planned standards of care – New Zealand Legislation](#)

¹¹ Grievance complaints reviewed by Mana Mokopuna. Some kaimahi were going through employment relations/ HR processes at the time of the visit.



- **Team Leaders constantly reminded kaimahi of basic safety practices in shift handovers, however, these were not always followed.** The monitoring team observed the following:
 - A lack of line of sight for all kaimahi including professionals visiting the units.
 - Mokopuna waiting in their bedrooms with doors open during shower times when doors should be closed. When the doors are open, mokopuna are wandering up and down the unit bedroom wings which can create an environment for assaults on each other and kaimahi cannot keep line of sight effectively.
 - Kaimahi not intervening immediately when playfighting started between mokopuna, leading to more assaults.¹²
 - Kaimahi instigating playfighting and shadow boxing with mokopuna.
- **Inappropriate practice**
 - Kaimahi swearing at mokopuna and calling them crude names.
 - Kaimahi treating mokopuna without feeling or empathy. An example was given of a kaimahi poking their key into the back of mokopuna to force them to move back to the unit.
 - Kaimahi are sharing confidential information with mokopuna. At times mokopuna knew who new admissions were before they arrived on the units.
- **Mokopuna were using pens to draw on themselves and each other.**
 - Mana Mokopuna observed a situation where one mokopuna unzipped another's jersey and proceeded to draw on their bare chest. Kaimahi did nothing to stop the behaviour and simply said they would collect the pen later when questioned by Mana Mokopuna.
 - Pens are regularly used to make sharpened weapons.

Currently, Korowai Manaaki kaimahi are focused on the containment of mokopuna rather than providing a therapeutic environment with a positive impact. The current model of care does little to promote a trauma-informed approach when working with mokopuna with adverse childhood experiences. Kaimahi practice needs to improve significantly in order to ensure mokopuna and kaimahi safety and to support mokopuna on their rehabilitation journey.

Mokopuna at Korowai Manaaki are at risk of harm and are not receiving the standard of care they are entitled to. The relationship between kaimahi and mokopuna should always be professional and have due regard for the well-being, culture, and needs of mokopuna residing in the facility.¹³

¹² Evidence of playfighting leading to assaults was documented in data supplied by Oranga Tamariki.

¹³[Oranga Tamariki \(Residential Care\) Regulations 1996 \(SR 1996/354\) \(as at 01 July 2023\) 3 Right to professional and planned standards of care – New Zealand Legislation](#)



There is a physical bullying and “snitch” culture at Korowai Manaaki

Mokopuna should have access to trusted adults who can facilitate the resolution of issues and support them to have their voice heard. However, some kaimahi at Korowai Manaaki manage their units by employing intimidation and fear. There were examples of kaimahi standing over mokopuna who were talking with Mana Mokopuna and using language such as ‘you better not be snitching.’ A fundamental right for mokopuna held in places of detention is the ability to speak freely and have access to an independent complaints system.¹⁴ Mokopuna in these instances were actively discouraged from informing external advocates of their treatment inside the facility.

There were also examples of mokopuna holding each other to account to not disclose information. Mokopuna would hint to each other that they were getting too detailed with how life was in the residence by using the word ‘itch’ with each other – ‘itch’ being short for snitch. Once mokopuna heard this word, they would re-direct or leave the conversation. Some mokopuna however, told Mana Mokopuna they do not feel safe at Korowai Manaaki and that they found some kaimahi “scary”.

The lack of an independent complaints system has been highlighted by the UN Committee Against Torture for mokopuna in secure residences (juvenile detention).¹⁵ The Committee recommends that states parties, including New Zealand, ensure information about mokopuna rights, and access to effective, independent, confidential and accessible complaint mechanisms is available to all mokopuna in Youth Justice residences.

Kaimahi also reported they do not feel safe or supported to draw attention to poor practice out of fear of retribution from their colleagues. Mana Mokopuna was told about instances of both mokopuna and kaimahi being targeted in group mokopuna assaults, where some kaimahi would give mokopuna the ‘green light’ to rush¹⁶ someone after escalating their concerns. Homemade weapons or ‘shanks’ are being made regularly and used when mokopuna assault each other or kaimahi.

¹⁴ [Oranga Tamariki \(Residential Care\) Regulations 1996 \(SR 1996/354\) \(as at 01 July 2023\) 15 Right of access to grievance procedure – New Zealand Legislation](#)

¹⁵ CAT/C/NZL/CO/7, para 38(i)

¹⁶ Planned assault usually by a group.



Weapon made from a bracket from a table tennis table

Kaimahi felt little is done to address or follow up their concerns, even when incidents get reported. This is resulting in the under-reporting of incidents. Critical information is not being shared across shift teams,¹⁷ which is resulting in unsafe kaimahi practice and a dangerous environment for mokopuna.

Youth Justice residences – including Korowai Manaaki – cannot meet the needs of mokopuna with significant mental health concerns

At the time of the visit, there were several mokopuna in the residence with significant mental health diagnoses, including active psychosis and suicidal ideation. Korowai Manaaki is not set up to meet the needs of these mokopuna as there is a critical lack of mental health trained or experienced kaimahi who can support these mokopuna therapeutically. A number of kaimahi expressed concern for the safety of these mokopuna and the kaimahi assigned to look after them. With a lack of specifically skilled kaimahi, resources or equipment, detailed plans covering individual mokopuna mental health needs become redundant and the best kaimahi can do is contact on-call crisis teams when mokopuna escalate.

Due to this lack of specialist support, mokopuna are at risk of their mental health deteriorating further while in Korowai Manaaki. Mana Mokopuna also noted examples where mokopuna with suicidal ideations were given MP3 players by kaimahi despite risk assessments for mokopuna prohibiting use of the player and headphones. There were also examples of Secure Care being used as a de-escalation area for mokopuna to manage their mental health needs. The practice of seclusion of any kind is not consistent with the rights of children under the Children's Convention¹⁸ and this practice needs to be addressed immediately.

Mokopuna with high and complex mental health needs have the right to therapeutic care in fit-for-purpose, specialist placements and facilities. However, if mokopuna with such high and

¹⁷ During the visit, several kaimahi across different roles were not made aware of a cannabis incident in one of the units the previous evening, despite that unit working in spaces like the kitchens. They only found out about the incident several hours after starting their work day.

¹⁸ Article 37 of the Children's Convention and also paras 95(g)-(h) of General Comment No. 24 [tbinternet.ohchr.org/ layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/GC/24&Lang=en](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/article/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/GC/24&Lang=en), Concluding Observations from the Committee Against Torture CAT/C/NZL/CO/7, para 38(h), and [The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners \(unodc.org\)](https://www.unodc.org/) Rule 45(2).



complex needs continue to be admitted into Youth Justice residences, highly skilled mental health trained kaimahi need to be employed to support them.

Cannabis and vapes are freely available in the residence

Between October 2023 and February 2024, there were over 20 recorded incidents of mokopuna found either smoking or having illegal substances in their possession. Some kaimahi told Mana Mokopuna that residence kaimahi are responsible for bringing in contraband and there is evidence visitors are also supplying illegal substances.¹⁹ Mokopuna are sharing what contraband they have with other mokopuna in their units, resulting in regular access to cannabis and vapes for anyone wishing to use them. Our monitoring team was told of one mokopuna who had been under the influence of cannabis for multiple days in a row despite not having any external visits.²⁰ Kaimahi said that some other kaimahi let mokopuna smoke cannabis to help keep them 'chill', with the perception that those who are under the influence are easier to manage.

Article 33 of the Children's Convention requires Oranga Tamariki take all appropriate measures to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs.²¹

Many kaimahi expressed concern about the interaction of cannabis with prescription medicines mokopuna were taking, and the impact this has on unit dynamics. Some kaimahi were particularly worried for those mokopuna with mental health diagnoses, as cannabis is known to negatively interact with prescription medication by increasing side effects and altering medication concentration.²² Kaimahi said cannabis use by mokopuna added to already difficult unit dynamics, making it harder for kaimahi to work with mokopuna. Consequently, kaimahi said they do not always feel safe when they come to work because of mokopuna behaviour.

It is illegal to supply mokopuna under the age of 18 with vapes²³ and cannabis²⁴. Despite mokopuna being held in a secure Youth Justice facility that is run by the State, contraband has been entering Korowai Manaaki regularly, and is being regularly used by mokopuna. The negative health impacts and the supplying of illegal substances to mokopuna is a significant concern. There are also health, safety and property concerns arising from how mokopuna are lighting joints in the residence. Kaimahi told Mana Mokopuna that mokopuna have access to matches and lighters (which they should not have access to in the residence) and are making

¹⁹ Whilst on the visit, our monitoring team was shown CCTV footage where contraband was given to mokopuna by visitors.

²⁰ Visit log information supplied by Oranga Tamariki

²¹ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

²² There is significant research regarding the negative health impacts of cannabis. An example: [CBD and other medications: Proceed with caution - Harvard Health](#)

²³ It is illegal to supply vapes both directly and indirectly to mokopuna under the age of 18 (Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Act 2020).

²⁴ S6(d) Misuse of Drugs Act 1975

their own ignition devices using batteries and wires removed from their MP3 players. Mana Mokopuna was also told some mokopuna have attempted to get a spark by inserting wires into electrical sockets and are making their own 'bongs' from rubbish and whole apples.



Bong made from rubbish found in a unit during the visit (left), spare battery used to create a spark (right)

Mokopuna are putting themselves and kaimahi in danger, as there is a significant risk of fire within the residence as a result of these uncontrolled initiatives, and due to mokopuna also using devices to light fires with material such as toilet paper.

During and immediately following on from our visit, Mana Mokopuna challenged the Korowai Manaaki and Oranga Tamariki senior leadership teams to investigate ways to halt the influx of contraband, especially cannabis, from entering the residence. While we acknowledge that there are no legal powers for residence management to search visitors or kaimahi entering a Youth Justice residence, there are practical solutions available to limit the entry of contraband into Korowai Manaaki. Examples discussed with Oranga Tamariki National Office included additional line of sight for whānau visits, employing the use of drug detection dogs, limiting the ability for kaimahi to take their own backpacks onto the units, and issuing kaimahi with clear plastic work bags as a required way of bringing any personal items into the residence at the start of shifts.

Oranga Tamariki is bound by the Children's Convention²⁵ and Article 3²⁶ of Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure the safety of mokopuna in state care.

²⁵ [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR refer article 19](#)

²⁶ [The three articles of the Treaty of Waitangi – Nation and government – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)



Mokopuna have a right to education and a lack of engagement and meaningful activity heightens unit dynamics

Mokopuna were also observed gambling for food, playing video games, and watching music videos with sexualised content, guns, and drug paraphernalia on the projector after school. At times these activities were occurring at approximately 1:30pm²⁷, meaning mokopuna were not participating in education, which they have a right to be accessing and engaged in. It was reported that it is difficult to get mokopuna back into education after they have been allowed to do these activities on their breaks.

Kaimahi inability to engage mokopuna in meaningful activities is heightening unit dynamics and resulting in an increased number of assaults. Kaimahi said that meaningful activities keep mokopuna engaged, which helps prevent them from planning assaults. Although kaimahi had written daily programme proposals for mokopuna, these were rarely followed through. Instead, many of the activities recorded in the logbooks noted 'passive recreation' including 'film studies' and 'music therapy,' which translated to playing cards, watching YouTube and listening to music with inappropriate content.

Mokopuna have a right to an education and to participate in age-appropriate recreational activities under Articles 28 and 31 of the Children's Convention. Mokopuna at Korowai Manaaki are bored without enough meaningful activities, which is leading to a high number of planned assaults.

The kaimahi induction programme is not preparing kaimahi to work with mokopuna

In order for kaimahi to provide mokopuna with the quality care they are entitled to at Korowai Manaaki, they need to be properly inducted and trained and bring relevant professional experience. Many kaimahi Mana Mokopuna spoke to at Korowai Manaaki were young, inexperienced, and did not come from youth work backgrounds. Mana Mokopuna noted to the Leadership Team during our visit that it was at times difficult to distinguish kaimahi from mokopuna. As a result of kaimahi and mokopuna being close in age, some kaimahi treat mokopuna as peers in order to build rapport, which is leading to blurred boundaries and many kaimahi using the word 'corrupt' to describe the current operational environment in the residence.

Although staffing levels have improved and Te Waharoa induction training is occurring at Korowai Manaaki, many kaimahi said this is not sufficient for them to do their job well once rostered on to the units. One said that the induction training does not prepare them for the realities of working and engaging with mokopuna and especially those with high and complex

²⁷ Evidenced in the Daily Logbooks



needs and who have had a range of adverse childhood experiences. Others noted that completing Shift Planning and Debriefing Sheets (SPADS), recording notes in daily unit logbooks, as well as the ability to enter information into MySafety²⁸ is not covered in induction training and something kaimahi need to learn on the job while working in the units. One kaimahi asked if Korowai Manaaki leaders are truly committed to safety, how is it that training to keep mokopuna and kaimahi safe is not prioritised.

Induction training should be comprehensive enough to cover all aspects of the role that needs to be performed by kaimahi and provide them with sufficient time on the units to learn essential tasks, before being part of allocated shift numbers. Youth Justice kaimahi work with some of the most high and complex need mokopuna, and therefore thorough and appropriate training and experience is vitally important.

Essential independent advocates are not always able to speak with mokopuna

Independent advocates are essential for mokopuna detained in residential care facilities, as they are one of the few ways mokopuna can share concerns with someone impartial to residence operations. Independent advocates told Mana Mokopuna they often feel unsafe and out of place when visiting mokopuna in Korowai Manaaki. Advocates said that there are some occasions when they are prevented from entering units, resulting in prolonged periods of time between visits for some mokopuna.

Mana Mokopuna was also told of instances where mokopuna were prevented from accessing the grievance forms or were discouraged from doing so by kaimahi working in the residence. Many kaimahi referred to the forms as 'snitch forms' which can deter young people using them to voice their concerns.

The grievance process continues to be reliant on kaimahi ability to ensure it is used correctly. When this is not done well, incidents and concerns are either not reported or when they are, they are not being treated with transparency, further compromising mokopuna safety .

Mokopuna have the right to access independent advocates and the grievance system.²⁹ The residence manager is required to uphold and maintain the integrity of the grievance process for the safety of mokopuna in their facility. This right is not being realised for mokopuna at Korowai Manaaki.

²⁸ MySafety is the system used to log health, safety and security incidents across all Oranga Tamariki run residences.

²⁹ [Oranga Tamariki \(Residential Care\) Regulations 1996 \(SR 1996/354\) \(as at 01 July 2023\) 15 Right of access to grievance procedure – New Zealand Legislation](#)



Mokopuna in Korowai Manaaki are not being visited by their Oranga Tamariki site social workers

Allocated Oranga Tamariki site social workers are key contacts and advocates for mokopuna while in residence. A social worker's role is to provide a familiar face, emotional support, and regular updates to help progress and transition mokopuna out of residence. Several mokopuna at Korowai Manaaki at the time of our visit had not been visited by their social worker for several months.

Mokopuna plans were not always completed and kaimahi reported social workers do not always attend court appearances, medical appointments, or Multidisciplinary Assessment Team (MAT) meetings. Kaimahi reported that some social workers only provide updates when prompted and do not always make the effort to visit mokopuna, even when they are based in the local area. This results in mokopuna spending prolonged periods of time in residence and minimises their ability to report updates and concerns to their social worker, further removing another protective factor.

As part of Oranga Tamariki practice standards, social workers are required to see mokopuna regularly face-to-face and ideally alone, in order to build trust, understand their needs, and ensure they have a say in decisions that impact them.³⁰

The mana of Mokopuna Māori is not upheld in Korowai Manaaki

Mokopuna Māori continue to be overrepresented in places of detention,³¹ including in Korowai Manaaki. However, minimal emphasis is placed on reducing these disparities or promoting the rights of mokopuna Māori when they are in residence. During our monitoring visit, mokopuna were proud to share their whakapapa and culture, and some mokopuna we spoke to choose to kōrēro using te reo Māori. Despite this, little is done to support mokopuna Māori to grow their matauranga or knowledge of Te Ao Māori.

Section 7AA³² of the Oranga Tamariki Act, states that practices within the Oranga Tamariki system should have regard for the whakapapa (genealogy) of mokopuna. Mokopuna Māori need to have access to culture and activities that encourage them to explore their identity in a positive way. Korowai Manaaki is not meeting the needs of mokopuna Māori.

³⁰ [See and engage tamariki | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

³¹ [Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#)

³² [Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 No 24 \(as at 06 October 2023\), Public Act 7AA Duties of chief executive in relation to Treaty of Waitangi \(Tiriti o Waitangi\) – New Zealand Legislation](#)



The challenges that Korowai Manaaki currently faces as a facility in upholding the mana of mokopuna Māori are:

- Korowai Manaaki no longer has a Kaiwhakaue³³. This has direct effect for kaimahi working with mokopuna Māori to provide best care and support them using concepts informed by Te Ao Māori. It also limits the ability of kaimahi to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in their work with mokopuna.
- With no Kaiwhakaue, Korowai Manaaki does not have the capability to embed and support kaimahi to meet their requirements under s7AA(2)(b) of the Oranga Tamariki Act and to deliver Whakamana Tangata³⁴ which aims to build the mana and culture of kaimahi interacting with mokopuna Māori.
- There is no support for mokopuna Māori to engage in their culture, learn their whakapapa, and kōrero te reo Māori.
- There is a lack of cultural-specific programmes. Mana Mokopuna was told of a proposal to restore the on-site wharenuī and this included working with mokopuna to create carvings for the building. However, this has now been put on hold indefinitely due to budget constraints.

Mokopuna Māori do not have any supports at Korowai Manaaki to build and connect to their whakapapa (heritage and genealogy), speak their own language, and engage in their culture, which is inconsistent with Articles 1, 2, and 3 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

A lack of leadership stability creates operational issues

Kaimahi practice is inconsistent

Supportive and consistent leadership and direction is essential in any organisation, particularly in a Youth Justice residence. Korowai Manaaki has had four residence managers since the *Rapid Review into Secure Residences and a sample of Community-based Remand homes* (Rapid Review)³⁵ was announced in July 2023. It has been a very unsettling time for those working at Korowai Manaaki and this lack of stability has resulted in kaimahi needing to adapt to different leadership styles and expectations. Kaimahi still do not have a clear understanding of what good practice looks like at Korowai Manaaki.

Some kaimahi hold the view that the purpose of the residence is to secure and contain mokopuna, whilst other kaimahi envisage a trauma-informed, therapeutic environment that

³³ [kaiwhakaue-position-description-june-2020.pdf \(msd.govt.nz\)](#)

³⁴ [Whakamana te tamaiti: Practice empowering tamariki Māori | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#)

³⁵ [Secure-residence-review.pdf \(orangatamariki.govt.nz\)](#)



provides support, pro-social modelling, and opportunities for mokopuna to realise their potential. Some kaimahi said they weren't here to 'punish' mokopuna, whilst others saw themselves as 'babysitters,' simply there to provide an adult presence in the units. Some felt frustrated at the lack of improvement and progress for the residence, and multiple kaimahi described the culture as 'corrupt' with a lack of transparency across all levels. Without clear guidance from the residence management team and Oranga Tamariki National Office, kaimahi have been left to fill the void with their own ideas and ways of operating. This has created inconsistency across unit shift teams and between the management team, clinical team, Team Leader Operations and shift lead groups.

This lack of consistency is having an effect on mokopuna and unit dynamics. Many mokopuna thrive on structure and routine, however the inconsistencies in direction and routine driven by kaimahi can create confusion and an unstable living environment. For example, when one shift allows loud music with inappropriate content to be played on YouTube and the next shift does not, mokopuna have the opportunity to pressure kaimahi to let them watch what they want. Likewise, if kaimahi allow mokopuna to make prolonged phone calls to unapproved numbers, mokopuna get upset when they are not afforded the same treatment from the next shift of kaimahi.

The inconsistent practice approach which is the status quo at Korowai Manaaki is contributing to volatile unit dynamics leading to assaults, regular use of force, and a high use of Secure Care.³⁶ None of these things are in the best interests of mokopuna, and they are inconsistent with children's rights.

Communication needs to be consistent across teams and from management

Clear and consistent communication between teams is essential for both mokopuna and kaimahi safety. Currently, there is a communication breakdown between the leadership team at Korowai Manaaki and those responsible for running the units. There is a persistent culture of teams being pitched against each other and working in opposition rather than cohesively.

Certain shift teams were labelled as 'weak' because they had kaimahi who regularly reported incidents, were willing to call out poor practice, or there was a belief that these kaimahi were inexperienced. These kaimahi explained that at times, they felt set up to fail by the previous shift teams. Examples given included the previous shift team letting mokopuna do anything, as they knew the next shift team would have trouble regulating them afterwards (and thereby setting the next team up to fail on their shift). Some kaimahi also wondered whether mokopuna assaults on them had been set up by the previous shift.

Communication between shift teams is lacking. Some kaimahi were not told of serious incidents, there was a lack of detail recorded in the daily logbooks, and some shifts were not

³⁶ Data provided by Oranga Tamariki.



accurately completing SPADS or incident reports. An example of this was when a mokopuna broke a bone during an activity, however no incident report was completed and treatment was subsequently delayed until the next day. Not having all the information necessary to keep everyone safe contributes to the feeling that some kaimahi have been set up to fail, and not able to do their best mahi for and with mokopuna.

Overall, kaimahi said they wanted good communications, productive relationships, and cohesion across all facets of the residence, however many did not believe this is happening at Korowai Manaaki.

Shift teams become cliques and there is a lack of experience in key roles

In order to address the issues identified, experienced practitioners need to be appointed to key roles at Korowai Manaaki. Currently kaimahi with little to no experience are promoted into shift lead or Team Leader Operations (TLO) positions, and some of these kaimahi do not feel confident or able to lead practice. Kaimahi are completing their induction and within two months shift leading for a unit. One kaimahi described working in these roles with little training as the 'sink or swim' mentality.

TLOs are there to provide supervision, and to continuously look to improve kaimahi practice and the quality of care mokopuna receive. However, a high number of TLOs are promoted from youth work roles within the residence and must therefore supervise or coach former peers. Mana Mokopuna observed TLOs being highly involved in day-to-day unit activity, which takes them away from their core role of providing oversight and an escalation point for kaimahi. Many kaimahi said TLOs do not correct poor practice, as they either do not see it because they are too busy on the units, or they do not have the confidence or practice knowledge to correct kaimahi who were once their direct peers.

Shift teams and their TLOs rarely change. Some kaimahi said having a former peer manage a team creates a duality in loyalty, and that sometimes, loyalty to peers overtakes loyalty to the kaupapa (purpose) of the residence and to mokopuna. Kaimahi pointed to this situation as a way to potentially cover up malpractice, blur practice boundaries, and reduce transparency. Many kaimahi believe regularly changing and mixing shift teams would eliminate cliques, increase transparency, and with highly trained TLOs, improve practice outcomes.

Strong practice leads who communicate well and develop the strengths of all kaimahi working at Korowai Manaaki will have a positive impact on the safety of the residence and the quality of the care that mokopuna receive.



Appendix One

Progress on 2022 recommendations

This table provides an assessment of OPCAT Monitoring recommendations made in the previous October 2022 report about Korowai Manaaki. Mana Mokopuna acknowledges that work on system recommendations is being led at the Oranga Tamariki National Office level. Progress for systemic recommendations is assessed according to information gained from kaimahi working in the residence and observations by the monitoring team.

2022 System Recommendations

2022 Recommendation	Progress as at February 2024
<p>1</p> <p>Develop a national strategy to address recruitment and retention issues for staff across all residences. Appropriate staffing levels and staff expertise must urgently be put in place in all residences to ensure the safety of both mokopuna and the staff working with them.</p>	<p>Limited progress. There are additional kaimahi working in the residence since our last visit. However, many do not have backgrounds or experience of working with high and complex need mokopuna. Many kaimahi who we spoke with said they had come from construction roles or security. Some kaimahi commented that they did not realise when applying for or being inducted into the roles the level of engagement with mokopuna that is required in their jobs at Korowai Manaaki. They assumed it was more of a 'babysitting' type role. Some kaimahi who have been recruited are very young and close to the age of mokopuna they are caring for. It is hard to distinguish between kaimahi and mokopuna and the closeness in age is blurring professional boundaries.</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Develop a nationwide package of training programmes that sits alongside the Oranga Tamariki Te Waharoa Induction programme.</p>	<p>No progress. Kaimahi are working within a 'secure and contain' model. There is very little evidence that kaimahi working directly with mokopuna understand trauma-informed practice (this knowledge is limited to the clinical team). Some staff practice remains highly inappropriate and dangerous. There is significant concern from kaimahi that Korowai Manaaki cannot meet the therapeutic needs of mokopuna – especially those with significant mental health diagnoses.</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Review the grievance process. It should be independent and impartial and provide a clear mechanism for keeping mokopuna informed of progress.</p>	<p>No progress. The Whaia te Maramatanga process still lacks independence and is not child-centred. Mokopuna refer to the grievance boxes as 'snitch boxes' and this is reinforced by kaimahi. Mokopuna were reminded on numerous occasions both by kaimahi and other mokopuna to not 'snitch' when talking to Mana Mokopuna.</p>
<p>4</p> <p>Regularly review s238(1)(d) custody statuses as per s242(1A) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. The findings of each review should be shared with the residence to help inform transitions out of custody.</p>	<p>Limited progress. There is some evidence of remand reviews taking place for mokopuna by their site social workers. However, some lacked detail or were copied and pasted from previous reviews. Time on remand for mokopuna is still an issue with over 90% of mokopuna in Korowai Manaaki being on remand at the time of the visit. Several had been on remand for over 100 days, with some over 200 and 300 days on remand.</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Urgently roll out the National Medication Training for all staff.</p>	<p>Limited progress at the residence. There is a dedicated person assigned to dispense medications during the week at Korowai Manaaki. Medication errors have decreased, however there are still occasions where there is confusion around where medication is kept, who has administered medication, and the training needed to ensure mokopuna safety.</p>



2022 Facility Recommendations

	2022 Recommendation	Progress as at February 2024
1	Reduce the high use of Secure Care, restraint holds, and searches	No progress. The use of Secure Care and restraint holds remains regular. Searches have increased due to the amount of contraband entering the residence.
2	Ensure all staff receive the full Te Waharoa Induction Programme before working in open units.	Good progress. All kaimahi spoken to said they had completed Te Waharoa training. Many kaimahi in the units were on observation shifts or had recently 'gone live'. However, feedback from kaimahi was that the training is not fit-for-purpose and does not adequately prepare kaimahi when they work with mokopuna on the units. Kaimahi highlighted practical things like filling in required documentation (SPADs and logbooks) as lacking in terms of training. Kaimahi commented that new staff are slow to react in emergencies as they are not confident in terms of using what they have learnt in practice.
3	Ensure mokopuna attend their medical appointments in a timely manner. Consent to receive treatment should be on individual care plans and accessible to medical staff.	Access to medical staff was not raised as an issue during this visit.
4	Increase access to cultural programmes and invest in the cultural capability of kaimahi Māori. Te Rōpū should be re-ignited.	No progress. Mokopuna were not seen to have any access to culturally appropriate activity outside of the education delivery by Kingslea School. The renovation of the whareniui and carving programme has been put on hold due to budget constraints. Te reo Māori was not used in the units and kaimahi did not facilitate cultural activity, learning or share their matāuranga regarding te ao Māori. Mokopuna Māori do not have their needs met and residence policy does not align with s7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act or with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
5	Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings should be held regularly with key staff from health, education, clinical and case work teams.	Some progress. Morning stand up hui were held daily with all areas of the residence present, including health and education. However, communications between teams is lacking. Kaimahi explained that more can be done to work cohesively using the skills of each team to better the care for mokopuna. Areas to collaborate include case reviews/ incident reviews, use of force reviews, more clinical input into daily unit operations.

Mana Mokopuna notes that concerns raised during and following our last OPCAT Monitoring visit to Korowai Manaaki in 2023 largely still remain. These concerns were echoed in the *Rapid Review* released in September 2023 by Oranga Tamariki. Mana Mokopuna is very concerned at the lack of progress regarding kaimahi practice, use of Secure Care and restraint, and the amount of contraband coming into the residence. Whilst the threshold for torture and ill-treatment was not met on this visit, the residence does not meet minimum standards for care of mokopuna in key areas and is not upholding rights for mokopuna established under the United Nations Rights of the Child and Te Tiriti o Waitangi (both detailed throughout the report).



Appendix Two

Gathering information

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

Method	Role
Interviews and informal discussions with mokopuna	
Interviews and informal discussions with staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Manager Residence Operations▪ Quality Lead▪ Team Leader Clinical Practice▪ Team Leader Operations▪ Case Leaders▪ Shift Leader▪ Programme Co-ordinator▪ Kingslea School teachers▪ Nurses▪ Senior psychologist▪ Senior Medical Officer▪ Residential Youth Workers▪ Voyce Whakarongo Mai▪ Grievance Panel members▪ Odyssey House AoD counsellor▪ Telus counsellor
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Serious Event Notifications▪ My Safety Incidents▪ Incident reports▪ All About Me Plans▪ Remand Review samples▪ Grievance Panel quarterly reports▪ Reports of Concerns▪ Secure Care Register and open unit daily logbooks▪ Case notes▪ Shift Planning and Debriefing Sheets▪ Monthly reporting▪ Search and seizure forms▪ Activity Proposals
Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Unit routines and mokopuna engagement with kaimahi and each other.▪ Activities, recreation, gym time and education.▪ Shift handovers.▪ Internal and external environment.