“A place to talk peacefully”

what helps and what gets in the way

Mokopuna voices on healing from family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

MANA MOKOPUNA
Children & Young People’s Commission

NOVEMBER 2024

CONTENT WARNING: this report contains discussions of violence, including sexual violence, trauma, abuse, racism, and other distressing content. This report may be triggering or distressing. We encourage you to protect your wairua when engaging with this content and seek support if you need to.

Acknowledgements

Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission acknowledges the mokopuna and whānau who entrusted us with the taonga that are their experiences, wisdom, insights, and hope for a better Aotearoa New Zealand. We understand that this can be a heavy kaupapa for those who participated, and we are deeply grateful. We thank our community connectors who put their time and resource behind our project and enabled us to connect with mokopuna and whānau. We also want to thank our Ethics Committee, who so generously gave their time and whakaaro to this project. Thank you for your collective mātauranga from specialist perspectives and the role you all played in advising on our methodology. Finally, we acknowledge our project partner Te Puna Aonui for their commitment to centring mokopuna and whānau within their kaupapa of eliminating family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand.
Ngā mihi nunui ki a koutou katoa.

About us

Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission listens to, engages with, and seeks to reflect the voices of mokopuna and share them with decision-makers. We work with mokopuna from all around Aotearoa New Zealand to understand what they think about a range of topics that are important to them and in their lives. We then share their thoughts and perspectives so they can guide government and community decision-making that affects mokopuna. Mokopuna voice guides our work and advocacy that we undertake for and with mokopuna. Learn more about our organisation on page 6 of this report. The Mai World team leads our engagement work with mokopuna.
To connect with the Mai World team, contact us at: voices@manamokopuna.org.nz

Note on the use of the word 'mokopuna'

At Mana Mokopuna, we have adopted the term 'mokopuna' to describe all children and young people we advocate for. 'Mokopuna' brings together 'moko' (imprint or tattoo) and 'puna' (spring of water). Mokopuna describes that we are descendants, and/or grandchildren, and how we need to think across generations for a better present and future. We acknowledge the special status held by mokopuna in their families, whānau, hapū and iwi and reflect that in all we do. Referring to children and young 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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Foreword

As Chief Children's Commissioner, I listen closely and deeply to the voices of the mokopuna - children and young people - of Aotearoa New Zealand, and I invite you to listen, too.

For theirs are voices that speak with clarity and vision on the issues that matter to them, and which affect their childhoods and young lives. After all, it is mokopuna themselves who know their own experiences and lives best.

In my work as the independent advocate working for and with mokopuna, together with our Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission team, I amplify the voices of mokopuna on the big and important issues affecting their lives. I also encourage others to pay attention to what they have to say, the solutions they have to the challenges in their lives, and to work in ways that facilitate their participation to shape a better Aotearoa New Zealand for all mokopuna now, and into the future.

This mokopuna voices report presents the direct, unfiltered insights and ideas of mokopuna who have lived experience of family violence and/or sexual violence. It is so important that the voices and views of mokopuna are heard and brought into the light on this kaupapa. This is because family violence and sexual violence are adverse childhood experiences affecting thousands of mokopuna in our country every year. Despite this, they are often silent victims, suffering significant and long-term impacts of these hugely detrimental experiences that none of them should go through.

Every child is born with boundless potential and should be able to experience their full potential in every respect. When it occurs, family violence and sexual violence has a negative bearing on this boundless potential, and on a wide range of children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the right of all children to live free from all forms of violence, and the right to life, survival and development.

Given the scale of the problem in Aotearoa New Zealand, a much stronger focus on preventing family violence and sexual violence from occurring in the lives of mokopuna is needed. Te Aorerekura – The National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence makes this clear. Alongside a stronger focus on violence prevention that places mokopuna and their rights and wellbeing central, it is crucial to ensure that when they do reach out for help after violence, or to prevent further violence occurring, that there is help available that will work for them, in timely and effective ways, to meet their specific needs, healing and recovery, so they can find hope again.

Through this report, you will learn about what 'good' looks like in our communities for mokopuna who are reaching out for this help due to family violence and/or sexual violence. I mihi to those who have bravely shared their experiences and perspectives. Like others who every day are reaching out for help from the darkness of having experienced violence, they have shown immense courage and strength in taking that step. I also mihi to the whānau who have shared their perspectives through this report, highlighting that in order for mokopuna to heal from family violence and sexual violence, whānau healing – in many instances intergenerational – is necessary, too. This outlines the need for safe and healthy relationships to be woven around mokopuna, at all times, through the care, love and strength of whānau.

It is essential that mokopuna are heard and taken seriously as we shape new ways forward under Te Aorerekura, and as a nation, to eliminate family violence and sexual violence, and to ensure all mokopuna can grow up safe, living their best lives every day. The voices in this report must be listened to and acted on. This will help us to build on what 'good' looks like in responding to family violence and sexual violence, and so that all mokopuna who speak up about it are cared for in ways that keep them safe and help them to experience healing into the future, nurtured to protect their precious and boundless potential.

Dr Claire Achmad

Te Kaikōmihana Matua | Chief Children's Commissioner

Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission

Mana Mokopuna is an Independent Crown Entity, established under the Children and Young People's Commission Act 2022. Mana Mokopuna is governed by a Board, led by the Chief Children's Commissioner. Our role is to promote and advance the rights, interests, full participation, rights, interests, and wellbeing of all children and young people (mokopuna) under 18 years of age, within the context of their families, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities. Our mandate extends to young people under 25 years old who are, or have been, in state care or custody in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We are committed to:

- giving effect to our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) and the Treaty of Waitangi (the Treaty), recognising and respecting Māori participation, leadership and te ao Māori approaches in the performance of our functions; and

- advancing and monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Children's Convention) in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially by Government.

The work of Mana Mokopuna is underpinned by:

- the Children's Convention and Te Tiriti;

- the child or young person within (without limitation) the context of their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities;

- the diversity of children and young people in all its forms;

- high aspirations for the wellbeing of all children and young people, including responsive systems and structures that support them;

- the need to give priority children and young people who are disadvantaged, and the issues affecting them;

- children and young people's rights to participate in matters affecting them, and the need to hear from, and be informed by, children and young people;

- other international human rights instruments relevant to, and that affect, children and young people.

Our children's rights-based approach

Mana Mokopuna is underpinned by a rights-based approach. The rights of mokopuna Māori guaranteed by Te Tiriti and the Treaty are fundamental, and the impact of ongoing colonisation is significant in the context of family violence and sexual violence. Tangata whenua, especially mokopuna Māori, bear an inequitable and high burden of harm and trauma in this space.

Kāwanatanga systems established to respond to family violence have in too many cases done nothing to interrupt harm and in fact caused further, enduring harm to whānau Māori. Mana Mokopuna advocates for mokopuna, whānau, hapū and iwi-led solutions to prevent, address, and heal from violence. This approach is consistent with what mokopuna tell us they want and need.

All children in Aotearoa New Zealand have the right to be safe and protected from all forms of violence under Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Children's Convention). As a party to the Children's Convention, the New Zealand Government has a duty to take measures to prevent children from experiencing any form of violence.

Children's rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent, which encourages a holistic approach to keeping children safe from violence. This means the right of all mokopuna to be safe from violence needs to be considered in conjunction with, for example, their rights: to be guided by their parents, whānau and communities (article 5); when separated from parents following abuse or neglect (article 9); when in alternative care (article 20); to be protected from sexual exploitation (article 34); to be protected from torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (article 37); and to be supported to heal from violence (article 39).

Four principles guide the application of the Children's Convention. Every right of the child should be interpreted in light of these guiding principles, and given effect to, in ways that respect and uphold these principles, which are also substantive rights that every child has:

- Non-discrimination – all rights apply to every child, without discrimination; every mokopuna has the right to be safe from violence, without discrimination (Article 2)

- Best interests – the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all actions concerning them, including prevention of, responses to, and healing from violence (Article 3)

- The right to life and maximum possible survival and development (Article 6)

- Participation – the right of mokopuna to have a say, be listened to and be respected as an active participant in their own lives and the things that are important to them (Article 12).

Mana Mokopuna upholds the rights of mokopuna through all of our work, including our engagements and broader mahi under this report.

Ending all forms of violence against children is a priority identified by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

This report contributes to New Zealand's response to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2023 recommendation that children participate in the development of a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combatting all forms of violence against children.

When it considered New Zealand's sixth periodic report under the Children's Convention in 2023, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child identified ending all forms of violence against mokopuna as an area in need of urgent action and attention by the Government. The UN Committee stated that:[1]

The Committee remains seriously concerned about the persistent rates of abuse, neglect and violence against children, particularly domestic violence, noting the higher risk faced by Māori, Pasifika, LGBTI children, and children with disabilities.

The Committee is also concerned about the limited access to child-friendly reporting channels, physical and psychological rehabilitation and health services, including mental health services, available to children who have suffered violence, trauma or abuse.

Specifically, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child made the following five urgent recommendations to the Government:

Violence against children, including sexual violence, abuse and neglect

Strengthen and centralise the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on children who are victims of all forms of violence, such as domestic violence, bullying and sexual exploitation and abuse, with a view to assessing the extent of the phenomenon and formulating and implementing, with the participation of children, a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating all forms of violence against children, with special attention to the situation of Māori, Pasifika, LGBTI children and children with disabilities;

Allocate adequate resources to the National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence Action Plan (2021-2023) and future action plans to strengthen the multidisciplinary and multisectoral response, including cooperation between relevant service providers, in addressing all cases of violence against children;

Ensure and promote the mandatory reporting of cases of violence against children, in particular through intensified awareness-raising among children, parents and professionals working with or for children, about its forms, negative impacts and on victim identification and how to access assistance, protection and support;

Facilitate access to child friendly, multidisciplinary and multisectoral assistance and protection services for children who are victims of violence, including psychological support, to ensure their recovery and reintegration, and means to seek remedies for the violation of their rights;

Invest in culturally-specific, community-based initiatives to equip families and communities to prevent and respond to cases of child abuse, neglect and violence, in coordination with civil society organisations.

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1 Concluding Observations on the sixth periodic report of New Zealand, 28 February 2023.

About this report

This report is the outcome of a collaboration between Mana Mokopuna and Te Puna Aonui Interdepartmental Executive Board. Te Puna Aonui asked the Office of the Children's Commissioner (predecessor to Mana Mokopuna) to engage with children and young people to ensure their voices were included in Te Aorerekura National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence (Te Aorerekura) including subsequent Action Plans issued under Te Aorerekura.

Mana Mokopuna acknowledges and echoes the calls from the community for further input from mokopuna in Te Aorerekura, and a further focus on preventing family and sexual violence affecting mokopuna in Aotearoa New Zealand through Te Aorerekura. This report was written to ensure that mokopuna and their whānau who have experienced family violence and/or sexual violence had their views heard and meaningfully incorporated into Te Aorerekura, as well as informing the broader advocacy of Mana Mokopuna. Mokopuna can and should be given all opportunities to exercise their right to have a say on matters that are important to them. That includes having a voice on their experiences of violence and what helped them to get through this and prevent further harm from occurring.

This project was led by the Mana Mokopuna Participation and Engagement team - Mai World. We used a village/community connector model to engage with mokopuna and whānau in their own communities where they are safe and supported to share their voices and experiences. We engaged with community connectors, mokopuna and whānau from six regions across Aotearoa between May and July 2024. We have not disclosed the regions in this report in order to maintain the confidentiality of those who spoke with us.

We set out to hear from mokopuna and whānau who were on healing journeys after experiencing family violence and/or sexual violence. We wanted to learn about what getting help was like for these mokopuna and whānau – specifically, the things that worked well; the things that didn't work and got in the way; and the things that needed to change to make their healing journey the best it could be.

We also spoke with kaimahi (staff) working with mokopuna to ensure we understood the broader landscape of working in the sector. While this report is informed by what we heard from kaimahi, we have decided to keep the presentation of kaimahi voice and views separate. This allows us to ensure we can do justice to all voices and explore the issues and whakaaro separately. We intend to publish a report on kaimahi views shortly.

For this project, the following people spoke with us:

- 41 mokopuna
- 24 whānau members, including 2 whānau-led initiatives[2]
- 46 kaimahi from 14 organisations

We interviewed thirteen whānau whose mokopuna were also part of this project, while eleven did not have mokopuna involved in the interviews. Additionally, all but three of the organisations where we spoke with kaimahi were connected to the mokopuna and/or whānau we engaged with.

We conducted semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility in exploring the areas of inquiry. Open-ended questions were designed to guide the interviews, enabling participants to discuss topics of importance to them. Mokopuna were able to have a support person of their choice present during the interview. Many mokopuna took up this offer.

A detailed methodology can be found on page 74.

While these engagements were undertaken in partnership with Te Puna Aonui to inform its mahi focusing on Te Aorerekura, we believe the insights and solutions from mokopuna and whānau can create change throughout Aotearoa New Zealand beyond systems-level change. We present the voices, experiences, and solutions of the mokopuna and whānau who contributed to this project, and we ask you to reflect on the role you can play within your own communities to contribute to a safer Aotearoa for all mokopuna and whānau.

2 In the context of this report, a whānau-led initiative refers to a whānau taking the lead in their own healing journey following experiences of family violence and/or sexual violence. These initiatives are guided by the unique values, knowledge, and cultural practices of a particular whānau, focusing on the wellbeing of both mokopuna and the wider whānau.

What we heard from mokopuna and whānau

This report outlines nine themes based on the voices of mokopuna and whānau. Each section describes what works, what gets in the way, and what needs to change. The themes are as follows:

- Safety
- Healing for our whole whānau
- Supportive people
- Effective communication
- Supportive services
- Youth-friendly spaces and activities
- Cultural support and responsiveness
- Self-advocacy and empowerment
- Systemic issues

We also include illustrated examples of ideal services as imagined by mokopuna. Finally, we present our calls to action based on what we heard from mokopuna.

Like all Mana Mokopuna – Children and Young People's Commission's voices reports, this report has a focus on presenting the unfiltered views and voices of mokopuna.

Safety

WHAT WORKS

Physical safety

Underpinning everything we heard from mokopuna was their desire for safety. Mokopuna expressed a strong desire to feel physically safe, particularly from violence, and emphasised the importance of stable housing to support mokopuna safety. They described safety as being free from violence, with a specific focus on the role of adults in intervening - either by removing them from dangerous situations or ensuring that violent individuals are removed from the environments that mokopuna are in.

One mokopuna highlighted the pivotal decision of his mother to intervene and protect him and his siblings from violence, stating:

> **"Yeah, my mum. She helped me for getting rid of my dad."**

Another mokopuna shared a similar sentiment, explaining that, **"Getting me out, getting me away and stuff like that"** was what helped them to begin their healing journey, emphasising how important it is for mokopuna to be distanced and protected from violent situations.

The concept of safety also encompassed the crucial need for and importance of a nurturing environment filled with love, and devoid of violence. As one mokopuna put it:

> **"No adults bashing you every hour I think, just aroha, aroha everywhere, everywhere. There's aroha spreading through the house, through the rooms, the kitchen, even in the toilet sometimes. Yeah aroha everywhere. That's what I wish for the whole country to be – aroha."**

This vision of a home filled with love speaks to how mokopuna have an innate need to be safe, both physically and emotionally, and the importance of having adults around who can provide loving, safe, supportive environments for mokopuna to grow up in.

Emotional safety

Beyond the need for physical safety, mokopuna also emphasised the critical importance of emotional safety. They expressed the need for supportive environments where they can feel secure and be themselves.

One mokopuna articulated this need clearly, saying:

> **"So, when I'm in a safe place, I feel like there's nothing to be scared of, or I don't need to be afraid about what I need to say because I can say it, I can kōrero freely basically."**

This highlights how a secure environment fosters open communication, mokopuna participation and self-expression.

Another mokopuna reinforced this idea, sharing:

> **“Like just being comfortable, like just being able to be who you are…being in a judgement free environment.”**

While this aspect of safety is important for all mokopuna, it is especially vital for mokopuna involved with Oranga Tamariki, where stability significantly contributes to their overall sense of security.

One care-experienced mokopuna described a respite home where the environment made her feel safe, explaining:

> **“You know, it was like a home and it had activities in it and I felt safe, I felt safe in that [respite] home.”**

This reinforces how a nurturing space creates safety and security for mokopuna.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Violence

The mokopuna who participated in conversations with us with were clear: experiencing and/or witnessing violence does not make them feel safe. They expressed feelings of exhaustion and frustration from growing up in unsafe environments.

One mokopuna told us:

> **“I’ve been there in front of violence for like my whole life now, I’m sick of it and I just want to focus on me aye and my mum.”**

She emphasised that **“violence or drinking, driving, crashing cars […]. People going to jail in my family…”** was deeply harmful to her as a child.

When asked, “what would have been helpful?” she responded simply, **“[…] everyone getting along.”**

Another mokopuna told us that the violence he experienced at the hands of his father caused **“a lot of trauma.”** He explained further, saying:

> **“I have trauma from scaredness and the dark and I really wish, wished that I had parents who would help me [..].”**

All the mokopuna who shared their experiences of violence described these memories with sadness, anger, and frustration. Some were adamant in expressing to us that violence would have no place in their own futures.

One mokopuna, who had regularly witnessed violence growing up, told us:

> **“I used to watch my mum, like when I was little, I used to watch my mum get beaten up. So it was like, I kind of put myself into that, you know, to see what it was like and then I realised like, I don’t want to live like that. I don’t want to be like my mum.”**

Their stories show just how deep the scars of violence run. The mokopuna are asking for something different—not just for themselves, but for future generations too. They remind us that creating a safe and nurturing environment is crucial for the wellbeing of all mokopuna.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

More youth housing

To create a safer Aotearoa, several mokopuna emphasised the urgent need for more youth housing. They called on the government to prioritise addressing homelessness and ensuring that all mokopuna have safe, stable places to live. One mokopuna articulated this need, stating that if they were Prime Minister, they would **“make sure they’re [mokopuna] in safe homes.”**

Some mokopuna wished for quicker access to housing for young people, especially those who need to leave dangerous situations. One mokopuna expressed the urgency of this issue:

> **“I wish I could say giving young people their own home quick. So they have their own space. It’s [the violence] not their fault.”**

Furthermore, there is a critical need for housing options specifically designed for mokopuna under 18. One mokopuna urged the government to **“find a place for people that have nowhere to go underneath the age of 16.”** He shared his own struggles to find housing at a young age, which led him to spend several years being homeless.

This is especially important because mokopuna under 18 often can’t sign leases or find independent housing, but they desperately need a safe place to escape violence, and a place that can provide them with the possibility to transition to something safer and more stable in the long-term. It’s vital to implement accessible housing solutions that cater to the unique needs of young people, especially those who have experienced violence.

Mokopuna highlighted the critical role of these youth-specific housing initiatives in providing safety and stability. One noted the positive impact such programmes have had, stating:

> **“And it [housing initiative] gets you out of, from all the toxic-ness, you know, fighting people for no reason, drinking and smoking, you don’t want to live that life.”**

Expanding these initiatives is vital for creating healthier, more supportive environments for youth, so that they can reach their aspirations and be safe.

More community spaces

In addition to housing solutions, mokopuna called for the government to make their communities safer. Many expressed a strong desire for more community spaces, believing that having **“more things to do”** would help keep them safe and “off the streets.”

One mokopuna urged the Government:

“Make a safe place everywhere for kids that have no home, another safe place for them, like unlucky kids and then all try and make it like our world.”

Another mokopuna shared their vision for a community space with us:

“An organisation… just a place where kids can go to… be involved in activities and have a filler… Just to give the kids something that they know, ‘Oh yes, we’re open today.’”

This call for accessible community spaces was particularly strong among mokopuna in rural areas, where opportunities are often limited.

It’s clear that creating more community spaces available for mokopuna would help them feel safer, happier, and more secure in their communities. All spaces for mokopuna should be inclusive, non-judgemental, supportive and value mokopuna for who they are as mokopuna.

Whānau perspectives on safety

Whānau reiterated the need for safety. First and foremost, they recognised the importance of being physically safe. For some, this meant moving themselves and their mokopuna away from violence. We heard from one whānau member that, **“A fresh start without family and friends in a new location helped me and my kids feel happy and safe.”**

Whānau talked about how having **“love in the house”** was a fundamental component of a safe and secure environment for mokopuna.

They also talked about emotional safety and the necessity of having safe spaces for healing. One whānau member told us they need a **“safe place to trust yourself to heal and be on the healing journey.”**

We heard that having **“safe spaces where we [whānau] can learn and f*** up without judgement”** was important for whānau to be themselves, and to access support for preventing family and/or sexual violence and healing from it when it happens.

Whānau supported the call for more youth-friendly community spaces. They wanted safe hubs in communities where mokopuna could go when home is not safe, along with more community-based spaces and activities for mokopuna. One whānau talked about how community spirit was lacking, and that each suburb would benefit from **“a community environment for teenagers to go.”**

Healing for our whole whānau

WHAT WORKS

Being with whānau

Most mokopuna told us that spending time with their whānau was important and helped them feel good and safe. One mokopuna reflected:

“Just playing with my siblings outside, yeah that’s something that made me feel safe and at peace.”

Another added, **“Feeling good to me is just being with my Mum in a good home and no negative energies around…”**

Mokopuna instinctively turn to their whānau for support, and long to feel secure and protected within those relationships, including intergenerational and sibling relationships:

“When I’m feeling a bit worried, I’ll talk to my sister and stuff like that.”

“Yeah, I usually I talk to Nan or Pop or we go out somewhere, so I can actually cool down and be collected.”

Being able to rely on their whānau for safety is key to helping mokopuna navigate difficult emotions and the trauma caused by family and/or sexual violence.

Whānau-led healing

For some mokopuna, their whānau—not outside services—were the most crucial source of support when healing from family violence and/or sexual violence, even when the violence was occurring within their own whānau. These mokopuna described how their whānau wrapped around them during times of trauma, offering care and stability. The role of whānau in their healing journey was vital, providing strength and a sense of belonging.

One mokopuna shared a powerful experience of her family stepping in during a dangerous situation when she was in a violent relationship. Her brother encouraged their dad to take action, leading to their intervention and sending her away to spend time with whānau in another country to break up their relationship and ensure her physical safety. Although her whānau sent her away without warning from her ex-partner, she recognised that this sudden action was ultimately for the best:

“It was better for me to get pulled away than sitting there and saying goodbye. ’Cos it, yeah it was a real, it was not a relationship you’d want to be in.”

When we asked another mokopuna if she primarily received help from her whānau or from services, she answered, **“Mainly by my family and they were always around […].”**

She elaborated further, stressing the importance of the support from her family during her darkest times:

> **"When I started going through suicidal chain of thoughts… How many things I could do to remove myself from this earth. They stepped in, my family, and supported me through that journey of suicide I was going through."**

One mokopuna Māori emphasised that his whānau were central to his healing process:

> **"Whānau's basically, probably in all the answers I'm going to say."**

This deep connection was not only about support but also about legacy, creating a different, healthier and safer future. He expressed his desire to pass on this experience of healing that his whānau led, telling us:

> **"Yeah and I really love this haerenga, I want to keep going and I want to pass it down to my tamariki and I want to pass it down to my mokopuna, my grandchildren. Then it will go down until, yeah forever."**

Wraparound whānau support

Mokopuna we spoke with who had received wraparound support for their entire whānau found it incredibly helpful when services extended their efforts to include their parents, siblings, and other whānau members.

One mokopuna shared how a support worker helped her communicate with her dad, telling us:

> **"And one time I was quite upset with my Dad and his partner at the time, and she [my support worker] talked to them and it made me feel better. 'Cos I can't communicate to my Dad quite well, so she kind of helped me in a way, you know, I could tell her and then she would tell my Dad."**

This illustrates how effective communication support can bridge gaps within whānau and make a significant difference in a child's emotional wellbeing.

Another mokopuna described a positive experience she'd had with a service, who'd helped her whole whānau, telling us:

> **"Well, she [support worker] wasn't there just for me. She was there for Mum and my brothers as well, helping us all get along and talking to my Mum and all of that. To try and help improve the homelife."**

Another mokopuna described how a policewoman helped her whole family, telling us **"she just like helped me get into something and then it just helped like the rest of us like, a bit better and feel a bit better after that […]."**

This underscores the importance of providing comprehensive support that includes the entire family, fostering better communication and healing for everyone involved. While many mokopuna had not experienced this kind of wraparound support, almost all of them expressed a strong desire for it, recognising how beneficial it could have been for their whānau. Those who had received this kind of support highlighted that this support came from a range of places in the community, showing the collective effort required to make change.

Whānau perspectives on healing for the whole whānau

Many of the whānau we spoke with recognised the importance of healing as a collective process for their entire whānau. For some, this involved seeking support for their own trauma—whether past or present—which, in turn, positively impacted their mokopuna. One whānau member highlighted the value of being validated and supported by an organisation, particularly in receiving parenting guidance and advice.

For others, healing meant holistic support that encompassed the entire whānau. One whānau member emphasised the need for services, especially Oranga Tamariki, to **"wrap around and walk alongside the whānau."** They believed that this collaborative approach was key to fostering healing for all members of the whānau. Many spoke about the effectiveness of **"empowering communities and whānau to heal their own,"** believing that true support and healing should take place **"within the village."**

We also heard from a whānau who, after having poor experiences with outside services, realised that the best support for their mokopuna and whānau had to come from within. They were determined and capable of healing together, which allowed them to live authentically within te ao Māori and free from violence. This journey involved having difficult conversations and acknowledging that **"we haven't done the best job."** However, the knowledge that they were creating lasting change for their mokopuna made these conversations easier to navigate.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Intergenerational cycles of violence

Several mokopuna recognised that their parents' own trauma and past experiences of violence made it hard for them to break the cycle. It was clear that these mokopuna were aware of the different factors that contribute to generational cycles of violence, and how these "got in the way" of healing.

Some mokopuna told us that because violence had been common in their whānau for generations, it had become normalised – and this also got in the way of their whole whānau getting support, healing and charting a new course. What they shared with us highlighted the isolation of these mokopuna from finding support within their families and whānau. One mokopuna explained, **"[…] in my family there is no support. Like I can't go to my sisters and that because they have their own trauma, and it is bigger than mine."**

Another mokopuna wished for help for her whole whānau, but noted **"with my family, they don't think they need help so they don't ask."**

One mokopuna emphasised how violence had become part of her family's identity, telling us that **"our family is really like gang violence – that's how they find safety."**

This highlights the complexities involved in addressing these cycles, especially when violence is normalised and perpetuated across generations. As one mokopuna pointed out:

> **"[…] she [counsellor] made me realise that my mum's been through a lot too and that my mum went through a lot when she was younger. She just hasn't healed from that and that's not my fault, nor is it her fault."**

These insights reveal how intergenerational trauma creates barriers to healing, underscoring the urgent need for supportive interventions that address these cycles of violence.

Whānau perspectives on intergenerational cycles

Whānau also spoke about the impact of intergenerational cycles of violence. Many whānau members spoke about the violence they had grown up with, and how it had become a feature in their lives as an adult. Most whānau were mindful of their own experiences, ensuring their mokopuna were kept safe, as one whānau member put it, **"I don't want my daughter to experience the things I did as a child."** Other whānau recognised that the cycles have perpetuated through the effects of colonisation and institutional racism, meaning that years of violence have been **"swept under the carpet."**

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

More support for the whole whānau

Many of the mokopuna who shared their insights with us with told us that they wanted more support for their whole whānau – especially their parents, caregivers and/or guardians – to heal from family violence and sexual violence.

When we asked one mokopuna what support she wished she'd had when she was younger, she said, **"I would have liked my mum to have more support."** Another shared that, **"being able to sort things out with my Dad the right way"** would have made a difference for her and her whānau.

Another mokopuna wished for more opportunities for parents and mokopuna to heal together, telling us she would like **"[support] groups and even like bring their kids along, so that they can like honestly communicate how it's [violence] affecting them."**

One mokopuna emphasised how much it would have meant to have her whole whānau involved in the healing process:

> **"[...] what I really wish I had, the help I had, was my healing. I really wish I had healing with my parents."**

These mokopuna clearly recognised that their own wellbeing was deeply connected to the healing and support their whole whānau received, reflecting the symbiotic nature of relationships between mokopuna, parents and whānau.

Supportive people

WHAT WORKS

Positive relationships

When we asked mokopuna about 'what good support looks like', almost all of them highlighted the key support people in their lives and the positive relationships they share with them.

As one mokopuna expressed, **"We've got like a bond, me and [counsellor]."**

For some mokopuna their key person who they had a significant positive relationship with was a youth worker, social worker, or a counsellor – for other mokopuna, this was a trusted teacher, coach, family member or friend.

One mokopuna shared, **"It's more like the person that's there for you. So, she's like an older sister to me, she's like family to me."**

Mokopuna emphasised the significant impact these individuals had on their lives, almost always focusing on the difference these key people made rather than the services they represented.

> **"With the experience I've had with [youth worker], it's been more than what I imagined."**

These insights underscore the importance of strong, supportive relationships in fostering a sense of safety and belonging for mokopuna, crucial to their healing and recovery.

Trust

Mokopuna highlighted to us that the cornerstone of these positive relationships is trust. Mokopuna stressed the importance of feeling safe with support people, which facilitates trust and openness. As one mokopuna put it:

> **"So, that's what makes me feel safe, being around trust[ed] ones."**

For some mokopuna, trust was easier to establish with individuals who were already familiar to them or known through a family member. For others, trust developed gradually and was often nurtured through shared experiences, such as enjoying kai together. One mokopuna shared:

> **"But, you know, I can open up to anyone really so, but it makes, it does make it easier if they know someone in my family, or if I already know them."**

Another mokopuna echoed this sentiment, saying:

> **"I think it was just trusting my Nana a whole lot aye, and what she had to say."**

Additionally, one mokopuna reflected on the role of food in building comfort:

> **"Probably bring me a feed of like Maccas back then or something and then I'll get comfortable with you, have a munch, then I'll tell you."**

These insights highlight that trust, whether built through familiarity or shared experiences, is vital for mokopuna to feel secure in their relationships with support people.

Talking freely

Mokopuna highlighted the critical role of being able to talk freely with their trusted person. They valued having a safe person to vent to and to discuss their trauma with.

> **"...I go to a pakeke and say what I have to say, like I'm hurt, I'm sad, I'm angry and then they'll help me through with it..."**

One young person told us, that she had **"always wanted to talk about it"** – "it" being her trauma. She then explained that **"...the moment I got to get a hold of [youth worker], I got to tell him everything, you know, he made me feel safe enough to tell him everything."**

Another mokopuna reflected that talking about their trauma **"made me realise a lot of the stuff that happened was bad."** They explained that their support person **"helped [them] get rid of the rose-tinted glasses and realise some things are not good."**

Having a trusted person to call on, whether it was a support worker, parent, sibling, or friend, was essential for all mokopuna. Mokopuna valued supportive conversations characterised by empathy and advice, and where the other person listened to them with care. One mokopuna said that for him, **"probably just like hearing...good words, you know, like they just help a lot."**

> **"I just go park myself up in my old man's room and we just start talking - two hours."**

> **"I don't want people to feel sorry for me or whatever. I just need just someone to know."**

Empathy and understanding

Mokopuna emphasised the importance of adults showing genuine care for them and their experiences, especially after enduring family and sexual violence. One mokopuna told us that what had helped him the most was, **"People that listened and cared and loved for me."**

Some mokopuna expressed that for them, listening – and acting on what they had shared – was a clear indication that someone actually cared. One mokopuna articulated this feeling, stating:

> **"...we spoke to like police and that and they were able to, you know, deal with it and that makes me think that they're doing something about it, and they really care, yeah."**

Another mokopuna highlighted how crucial it is for adults to show their emotions, particularly anger about the trauma that mokopuna have endured. They said, **"Seeing you guys [interviewers] angry about it [their sexual assault] kind of makes me feel good. 'Cos people are never angry about it, they're just lenient, like 'oh well'."**

This underscores the importance of validating mokopuna experiences and the need for adults to actively express empathy. Showing understanding is also incredibly important in these situations. As one mokopuna articulated:

> **"That was helpful, understanding. Not needing to say from the get-go like go right to the bone about what's happening. It's like with [friend], when she sees me crying she gets it, I only have to say 2 words [...] she will just get it."**

Lived experience

Mokopuna shared that it was particularly helpful when the support people they engaged with had their own lived experiences related to what they were going through. One mokopuna noted that **"[...] like offering their [support workers'] own personal advice and what they went through and like, using that to tell me that it's going to be good,"** really helped her in her own healing journey.

Another mokopuna shared a transformative experience with a caring teacher who significantly impacted his life by sharing her own lived experience:

> **"[My teacher], [...] she would come over. [...] She came over with a book and some musical stuff for me and she told me, 'cos I was at a dark time, like I wanted to just give up and die. But she came over and talked to me about how her son attempted to commit suicide [...] So, she helped me turn my life around and I play the instrument, like the guitar and stuff like that which helped me."**

This story illustrates how sharing personal hardships and journeys to recovery and hope can create a deep connection and inspire mokopuna to find their own paths to healing, showing in action through lived experience what is possible, for mokopuna to relate to.

Additionally, one mokopuna reflected on a particular support worker, saying:

> **"'Cos there was like one support worker and I could just tell that she hadn't had an easy life. Not that she was like f**** up or anything but you could just tell she's experienced life, she can relate. People that are also relatable."**

This highlights how important it for support workers to be relatable, reinforcing the idea that services should consider hiring support workers who have lived experience of family violence and/or sexual violence can significantly impact the healing process.

Reliable and consistent support

Mokopuna highlighted how crucial it is to have consistent support in their lives. They described the comfort that came from knowing their support people would be there regularly. One mokopuna told us about a mentor who had really helped him, telling us, **"he's [mentor] a cool guy, he's funny and I could talk to him and he would do the same thing every Wednesday."**

Another mokopuna noted, **"I have a teacher at my school and she's helped me my whole high school life and we have conversations and she's talked to me, [...] she's just available."**

They explained the significance of having regular, daily interactions with this teacher, explaining, **“it’s the daily conversations and building a strong connection with somebody and ensures that way someone will just be able to open up to you slowly [...]”**

Overall, mokopuna stressed that having consistent support and ongoing, trusted relationships with adults creates a sense of safety and makes it easier for them to open up about what they’re going through. Having that adult who they can trust to always show up for them is what mokopuna want.

Dependability

In addition to consistency, mokopuna expressed the importance of being able to rely on their support workers. One mokopuna simply stated, **“Just knowing someone has my back,”** was incredibly helpful for them. This spoke to the importance of mokopuna feeling like they will be prioritised by these support workers.

Another highlighted the dependability of their support worker, saying, **“she just drops whatever, real selfless and just kind of picks me up.”**

Finally, another mokopuna told us that for her, **“It’s better to talk to somebody that you’re gonna be able to talk to you know, have there constantly, and open up to [...]”** highlighting the importance of support workers having that stable, reliable presence that mokopuna can depend and rely on.

Following through

Mokopuna also stressed that reliability meant support people following through on promises and taking concrete steps to help them. One shared their appreciation for when support workers listened and acted promptly, stating, **“When they actually like listen and actually like go, like do what they’re going to say and like do it not two months later [...]”**

Another emphasised the importance of support workers taking action, explaining for her that it’s helpful when **“[...] you [support worker] actually get stuff done and you take me seriously.”**

A mokopuna’s experience with the police illustrated this point well. They recounted a positive experience they’d had where they felt that the police had listened and acted promptly:

> **“[...] when something like that [violence] happened to me in my old foster home [...] They [the police] came immediately, took me out and took me to the police station until Oranga Tamariki responded back which was like in the morning like from, I had to sleep in the police station that night. Yeah, they actually do something about it.”**

Peer support

Several mokopuna shared that they sought and received valuable support from their peer group and friends during difficult times. These mokopuna recognised the important role their peers played in their wellbeing, especially during some of the hardest moments in their lives. For many, turning to friends for help during crisis felt like a natural choice.

One mokopuna described the comfort of connecting with a friend, saying:

> **“How long have I known him? Seven years, I go over to his house because I don’t like anybody coming over to mine. But I go over to his and when I do, we sit down and we play video games and I just talk to him and he listens and then he’ll talk to me and, you know, he understands where I come from ’cos, you know.”**

Another mokopuna shared about the solidarity of support within their friend group:

> **“[...] me and my friend group, like we all know that if we ever need to talk to someone, like we got each other.”**

A village of support

Many mokopuna were clear that getting support isn’t just about one person or one service, it’s about having a village around them that cares for, respects, values and shows up for them. We heard about how important it was to have a community around them, whether it’s teachers, friends, whānau or other adults. One mokopuna explained they get support from **“some of my teachers, and some of my friends and then, some of my friends’ parents...”** This was reinforced by another mokopuna, who said, **“being supported means a community, I think.”** Mokopuna Māori told us that caring for mokopuna was the responsibility of many, not just parents. They said, **“it takes a whole tribe to tiaki, to protect tamariki, it takes a whole tribe.”** It’s clear that having a collective approach to care and support helped mokopuna feel safer and more connected to the people around them.

Whānau perspectives on supportive people

Having trust in people or services that were supporting them was hugely important for whānau. This was especially important for those from small or rural communities. Like mokopuna, many whānau found it easier to trust people they already know, in particular, other whānau members. One whānau member thought it was important that services remember to **"be patient with us."** They talked about how it was hard for women to know what support they needed, stating that **"we're fragile and especially if we are being abused, our trust goes out the door."**

Like mokopuna, whānau also valued working with kaimahi who had lived experience. Some whānau expressed frustration with services and systems that dictated what they should do, often without any personal understanding of abuse. Others shared that knowing the kaimahi had relevant lived experience would have made it easier for them to open up or seek help. One whānau member told us it made them feel safe. They said they liked **"someone who is open and makes connections, makes you feel safe through shared life experience."**

Whānau spoke about the difference it made when kaimahi showed real commitment, with one sharing how they were sceptical at first, but their perspective changed when kaimahi actually followed through, doing what they said they would do. Another whānau member recalled, **"I said if they were real and they really wanna help, tell them to come down to my house... I got home, and they were all sitting on my deck! I was still in shock they even came..."** These experiences highlighted how persistence, genuine presence and follow-through built trust.

One whānau member appreciated that kaimahi didn't judge or push, explaining, **"She didn't force me to do anything, she didn't sit in front of me with a clipboard...Never asked me why I did things. Just asked, 'what can we do now?' 'Where do we go from here?'"** This approach helped whānau feel seen and empowered to move forward on their own terms. We heard from other whānau how helpful it was when kaimahi proactively offered help and support as well as when services were open with them about what they could and could not do.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

"Forced" into help

Many mokopuna told us that "being forced into help" before a connection is made and trust is built with kaimahi doesn't work. They were clear that they were much less likely to feel comfortable and open up if they were being forced to speak with a person or a service they didn't know or trust. One mokopuna recounted a negative experience he had with a service, sharing that he **"felt like they [the service] were forcing you to talk more than trying to get to know you."**

Another mokopuna explained the importance of wanting to engage in help, on their own terms:

> **"[...] my main thing with like interviews and like getting help is I got to want to do it, yeah. Like if I'm getting forced to do it, or other people wanting it for me, yeah it just doesn't work."**

Several mokopuna also felt that **"getting like looked down on"** and feeling judged was not helpful in making them feel safe or in building trust. They emphasised how being judged or misunderstood only made it harder to open up and feel comfortable, especially when discussing such a significant and personally vulnerable topic.

For some, being forced into situations without building trust only added to their distress. As one mokopuna said:

> **"I just know that that [being forced into help] did not help, that just made it worse. Getting people turn up at my door to take me away."**

These reflections highlight that without first forming a genuine connection, forcing mokopuna into help and making them feel judged in the process can add to pre-existing trauma, undermine confidence and trust, and hinder the healing process.

Breaching privacy and trust

Several mokopuna shared negative experiences about having their trust breached by a support person, whānau member or service. One mokopuna, who had experienced sexual violence, told us how painful it was to have their trauma shared with other people, without their consent. They said, **"The only person who really knew was my mum and like everyone she told. People I don't even know probably know."**

Other mokopuna spoke about feeling let down by professionals, such as school counsellors, who alerted their parents about the things they'd told those professionals in confidence. One mokopuna explained to us how this experience led to her distrust counsellors and other support services, saying:

> **"You don't know where it's [the information] gonna go. Coz I remember when I was in school and I went for my first counselling session. I told them one thing and my mum found out... It was nothing dangerous like I was gonna harm myself, but it was something very personal that I wouldn't want my mother to know."**

Another mokopuna had a similar experience, explaining how their father found out they were seeing a counsellor, which caused additional stress:

“Like I used to go to counsellors and all that too when I was at school but my Dad had been alerted that I was going to counselling sessions and he didn’t like that, you know, like you’ve got no reason to go sort of thing.”

These experiences highlight how breaches of privacy can deeply affect mokopuna, leading to mistrust of services and making them hesitant to seek help when they need it most. Their experiences emphasise the importance of support people and services maintaining professional obligations, such as confidentiality.

Inconsistent and unreliable support

Several mokopuna spoke openly about the harm caused by inconsistent and unreliable support from professionals and services. Many shared experiences where workers failed to maintain contact, make follow-up efforts, or follow through on their promises, which only deepened their sense of mistrust and isolation.

For some mokopuna, inconsistency of professional support was a recurring problem. One described the frustration of barely seeing their case worker, despite supposedly having their support:

“So, long story short, I had a case worker there for about a year. I saw her three times in a year.”

Another mokopuna highlighted the emotional toll of building connections with workers, only for them to move on to another role:

“I hate when people like make a connection and then leave.”

The lack of consistent engagement left mokopuna feeling disconnected and let down by their support people. As one mokopuna put it:

“Definitely like not consistent, like not only being there for the moment, like that follow up is really important for me.”

In addition to inconsistency, mokopuna also shared their frustration with workers who didn’t follow through on promises. One mokopuna recalled how their navigation support worker repeatedly set appointments but failed to show up:

“Again, had a navigation support worker that kept on making appointments but never showed up.”

The impact of these broken promises can be particularly profound on mokopuna who have experienced violence, as they often rely on adults to guide them through healing from that trauma, especially when they have already been let down by many of the significant adults in their lives. As one mokopuna explained:

“I’d hear a lot of false promises if you know what I mean and it was just, I think social workers definitely shouldn’t make a promise unless they can, you know, keep that promise. Because as a kid, the only thing you really have is what you’re told by adults because when you are young, you really trust adults.”

Another mokopuna described how frustrating it was when support workers would talk to her, but failed to take any action afterward:

“Saying they want to have a chat. They have a chat and nothing happens after the chat, or they just don’t ever get back to me.”

The experiences shared by mokopuna highlight how inconsistency and a lack of follow-through can erode trust in support systems, leaving them feeling even more vulnerable. Reliable, consistent support is crucial in fostering the sense of safety and trust mokopuna need as they navigate complex and challenging situations.

Whānau perspectives on building trust

Whānau told us how essential it was for support people to take the time to get to know them. We heard that when this does not happen, whānau are unable to build trust, and are unwilling to share their story. They wanted support people to be open and share a bit about themselves. One whānau member told us how he did not like when counsellors asked him to share about his trauma in the first session before taking the time to get to know each other. This shows the importance of whakawhanaungatanga and time spent building relationships.

We also heard about harm and stress caused by support people not following through on their commitments. One whānau spoke about how when she and her mokopuna had moved out of a refuge, they received no follow-up support, even though they were told there would be.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Hire the right people, including those with lived experience

Mokopuna highlighted the need for services to hire “the right people” who can effectively support mokopuna who have experienced family and/or sexual violence. They wanted kaimahi who had the right skills and attitude for the job.

Several mokopuna urged for better training. One stated that **“Support workers should have better training, so that they actually know what they’re talking about.”** While another said, **“I just think they need better learning, like to be taught better.”** Mokopuna expressed a strong preference for not hiring **“just anyone just for a pay cheque.”**

One care-experienced young person said, **“Change the way they treat the kids in the facility, first of all change the staff, bring in better and good working staff that treat the kids well.”**

It was important to mokopuna that those who were supporting them had good attitudes, and the skills and ability to do a good job of caring for and working well with mokopuna.

To this end, many mokopuna called for the inclusion of individuals with lived experience in support roles. One care-experienced mokopuna suggested that Oranga Tamariki should **“hire more experienced young people, create more roles for young people at Oranga Tamariki.”**

Another mokopuna stressed the importance of mental health workers having personal experience, saying, **“I feel like, if you haven’t been depressed, you can’t be someone talking to a depressed person trying to help them.”**

Mokopuna are clear: having support from adults with lived experience is helpful in providing the kind of meaningful care and understanding they need.

More peer support groups

Some mokopuna expressed a desire for more support groups where they could connect with others who have experienced similar trauma, such as sexual abuse. They highlighted the importance of having spaces to share their experiences and feelings with others who truly understand.

One mokopuna suggested having **"[...]Maybe just like a support group for people to talk about [their experiences of sexual abuse]"** would be helpful.

Another mokopuna shared their vision for a 'buddy system' if they were in charge of a service:

> **"[...] Like having a buddy [...] having a buddy the same age that's, I don't know, understood what's going on [...] A buddy that's really supportive and will be there for you, no matter if you cry in front of them or not."**

Additionally, another mokopuna expressed the need for support groups where individuals wouldn't feel judged:

> **"I feel like if everybody that's struggling with domestic violence could just like talk to one another without the fear of being judged."**

Overall, these insights from mokopuna illustrate the critical role of peer support groups in their healing journeys, enabling them to connect, share, and uplift one another. This underscores the significance of providing mokopuna opportunities to form relationships with other mokopuna who have faced similar challenges, reassuring them that they are not alone.

Effective communication

WHAT WORKS

Being listened to and believed

Mokopuna were clear about the significant role that being genuinely listened to played in their healing journey. It helped them find the words to express their needs and being heard contributed to their overall sense of wellbeing.

> **"She would sit there and listen, 'cos that's all I wanted was someone to listen to how I feel, and she did that."**

> **"I would know that they're actually listening to what I'm saying instead of interrupting me."**

Some mokopuna also emphasised that effective communication isn't just about speaking and listening - it's about acting based on what's been shared.

> **"Reaching out to people and then those people listening to you. I was brought up with there's three forms of... communication – talking, listening, and acting."**

It was crucial for mokopuna that when they shared their stories with adults - whether they were whānau members, teachers, or other support workers - they were believed.

When we asked a group of mokopuna what made them feel safe enough to express their feelings about the violence occurring in their families, they said, **"Because they believe in us, they believe in what we say."**

Being believed fosters trust and encourages mokopuna to open up, knowing their voices will be heard, respected, and valued.

This was particularly important in their healing process as they navigated their experiences, with one mokopuna sharing, **"When I was looking for the help, I needed to figure out all the stuff, what was happening to me and how it wasn't my fault."**

Another reinforced this sentiment by stating, **"And just helping me understand that none of it was my fault."**

Clear communication

Several mokopuna emphasised the value of clear communication in their interactions with support workers and organisations. They appreciated when adults took the time to explain what was happening and kept them updated, particularly during delays.

For example, one mokopuna told us she liked when an organisation, **"put me in [a room] with a safe person who sits down, explains to me what's going on."** This kind of clarity helped her feel more secure and informed.

Another mokopuna recounted a positive experience during an initial consultation, sharing:

> **"I think it was when we had first got in contact with [service] and we did the consultation like meeting, where he actually sat down and explained things to us. [...] he sat down with us and started explaining things and like asked us about our situation and we were like, this is what's happening, this is what we need help with, [...] that's what like really helped with like a lot."**

The clear communication during this meeting was crucial; it allowed the mokopuna to understand the process and what to expect moving forward, reducing any anxiety they may have had about engaging in counselling there.

Additionally, another mokopuna expressed the importance of support workers keeping her updated, stating that it was helpful when they **"actually [...] like keep me updated if it's going to take long."**

Overall, these insights highlight how clear communication fosters trust and understanding, making it easier for mokopuna to navigate their experiences.

Honesty

Some mokopuna stressed the importance of honesty in their interactions with adults. These mokopuna highlighted how honest communication fosters trust and clarity, making it easier for them to navigate their experiences.

One mokopuna reflected on the impact of honest dialogue in their support experience, stating:

> **"The biggest one so far that honestly really helped me is with meeting you [social worker- present in interview] because you're nice to talk to but you're also honest, and you've genuinely helped me realise that stuff that I thought was normal was actually really not f*** normal."**

Another mokopuna noted the reassurance that comes from his whānau being honest and open about challenges they've faced, saying:

> **"Yeah, that's why I'm not really worried about what's happening 'cos I already know what's going to happen because of the adults [being honest with us]. So, I think it's a really good thing for the tamariki to know everything."**

This emphasis on honesty illustrates how crucial it is for mokopuna to have clear and open communication with their support networks, allowing them to feel informed and empowered in their healing journeys.

Whānau perspectives on communication

Whānau agreed with mokopuna on the importance of being listened to and being believed, particularly when mokopuna were reaching out for support or disclosing harm. Whānau spoke about wanting **"people to act urgently on what the child is saying about harm."** This was especially important for whānau who had endured violence as a child. They wanted their mokopuna to be heard, to be accepted and to know that help would be provided quickly and safely to prevent any further harm. One whānau member told us that they wanted their mokopuna to know that **"someone has their back."**

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Not being listened to or believed

Mokopuna shared that not being listened to or heard by adults can be incredibly harmful and may discourage them from seeking help in the future. Many mokopuna described experiences where their feelings were dismissed or overlooked when they tried to reach out for support.

One mokopuna expressed frustration about having their experiences downplayed, saying:

> **"...You'll be surprised how many people just downplay your feelings. Whenever I try and talk about being sexually abused or like abused in general, when I was younger, they just kind of tried to change the subject."**

Other mokopuna explained how being ignored affected their willingness to seek further support, as it undermined their trust in services. As one mokopuna explained:

> **"I'll be honest I really didn't wanna follow up with them [the service] 'cos of my experience with her. I don't even think she was being condescending on purpose, but like you're hearing me but you're really not just registering."**

This sense of not being truly heard can seriously hinder the healing process for mokopuna, making it harder for them to reach out again for help. If they don't feel like their concerns are taken seriously, they may become reluctant to reach out for help again, fearing that their voices will be disregarded once more.

In addition to not feeling heard, several mokopuna also shared the pain of not being believed. One mokopuna recounted an especially hurtful experience when their parent didn't believe them, after they disclosed to their parent that they had been raped by another family member:

> **"Yeah, and she just told me not to tell anyone. First, she told me she didn't believe me."**

Another mokopuna expressed the frustration of constantly being misunderstood, often being told they were lying when they tried to talk to adults about the violence they were experiencing:

> **"I was always like misunderstood, 'I was lying', I was yeah, I was like, no one believed me. So I just kind of like drifted away from that [asking for help] ..."**

One mokopuna shared how frustrating it was not being believed by professionals, with the effects of the trauma she'd endured as a result of sexual violence dismissed as something trivial or typical:

> **"Yeah, at points I think they just didn't probably, like the first few ones, I don't' think they probably believed me. They were just like "Oh, they're fine, you know, they're just having like a little teenager thing" like, you know."**

Not being believed – especially after disclosing something as serious as violence, including sexual violence – can leave mokopuna feeling isolated and unsupported. It takes immense courage for them to speak up and share their experiences, yet when adults dismiss their accounts as exaggerations, misunderstandings, or fabrications, it compounds their trauma. This dismissal undermines their confidence and makes it even harder for them to trust or seek help again.

Being made to retell the story

Some mokopuna spoke about the frustration and emotional strain of having to repeatedly retell their stories to different support workers and services. For some, this process felt unnecessary and even re-traumatising, especially when the information was already available in service files.

One mokopuna explained how much she "hates" doing this, saying:

> **"There was this one person who like, every time I've been to places, they always ask me things that they already know. Like my background, my age, my name, all of that. That drives me f*****g crazy. [...] I was at [service] one time and this lady came in and she wanted to do an interview [...] and she kept asking me [...] questions and I'm like, don't you already know them. Like isn't it on your file, why are you asking me."**

Another mokopuna described how having to repeatedly tell her story to different counsellors became exhausting and counterproductive:

> **"I have gone to like quite a few counsellors before here [current service] and most of them, when I went, they were like mild to moderate stuff and they just would repeat the same thing over and over again and I'd have to like repeat my whole story over and over and over again. And yeah, and to the point where it was just like, 'We can just stop this 'cos it's not helping.'"**

She added that it **"gets a bit annoying"** and even led to her and her sister joking about it:

> **"[...] like at one point me and my sister joked about having just to write it down on a paper and just give it to the person – here you go. Just like a bullet point of everything."**

Having to retell their story meant mokopuna often had to revisit traumatic experiences over and over.

Lack of communication

Mokopuna also highlighted the distress they felt when there was a lack of communication from those responsible for supporting them. Without regular updates or reassurance, they were left in the dark, which only heightened their anxiety and uncertainty.

One mokopuna recalled feeling completely isolated when they were uplifted by Oranga Tamariki without any clear communication or compassion:

> **"...On the day that I got uplifted I was like, yeah, kind of like locked up. There was no compassion and I think for someone who is like 11 years old and they've just been uplifted, maybe like show them some compassion, tell them what's going on. They kind of just put me in a room and I'd be like 'what's happening?' and they're like 'oh we don't know yet'. And like there was no support."**

Another mokopuna talked about the frustration of being left with no information or guidance from a support person:

> **"Like no updates or anything and I'm just, I don't know what to do. Then it's like, what do I do."**

These experiences show how important clear and regular communication and a mokopuna-centred approach is for mokopuna, especially during times of upheaval and uncertainty.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Clearer and more consistent communication

Mokopuna told us they wanted more consistent communication from kaimahi. We heard from one mokopuna that they wanted communication from their support worker to **"stay constant... that would have helped me, but no one was constant."**

Mokopuna want to understand what is happening, and when they didn't receive clear updates from kaimahi they worried. One mokopuna shared, **"I wish they [social worker] told me 'cos I was really worried that time. So yeah, that's what I really wanted that time, the help I really wanted."**

Mokopuna also stressed the need for kaimahi to be clear and accurate when explaining what was going to happen, so there's no room for misunderstandings. Consistent, reliable updates helped mokopuna feel less confused and more secure in what was happening.

Better listening and understanding

Mokopuna emphasised how crucial it is for adults to truly listen and understand them, rather than making decisions based on what adults think is best. They wanted to feel heard, respected, and supported when opening up about their experiences.

One mokopuna explained this, saying she would like it if social workers at Oranga Tamariki would make sure they are **"Listening to the kids. Yeah and not what they [Oranga Tamariki] want for the kids."**

Another mokopuna highlighted the need for adults to genuinely engage and imagine themselves in the mokopuna's situation and take a mokopuna-centred perspective before deciding what to do:

> **"Just to listen to the stories and picture yourself in it and what would you do, you know, instead of being in a seat and just "Yeah this is going to be the best thing".**

How adults respond to disclosures of violence and abuse

When mokopuna disclosed experiences of violence, they stressed the importance of adults staying calm, being sincere in their responses, and giving them the practical support they need. One mokopuna shared what they wanted after disclosing abuse:

> **"[...] just give the help that I need and stuff. Or like just deal with what's been happening."**

Another mokopuna voiced frustration about inaction, stressing that when mokopuna ask for help, adults need to take immediate steps:

> **"Well simply like, I don't know of anybody else's situation and everything but I feel like when kids ask that, like they need to get out of home, I think there should be something done about it."**

Mokopuna wanted adults to respond with empathy and care after their disclosures of violence and/or abuse making them feel understood and supported. As one mokopuna said:

“Yeah, I honestly just wanted them to talk and be a friend to me and just tell me it’s going to be okay.”

Additionally, mokopuna emphasised the need for support people to be non-judgemental and supportive in their responses, which made them feel safer and more comfortable during their healing process:

“I’d like them to be neutral, not like neutral but like kind about it. Not judgmental, and not freak out, but be there to support me in that situation. And like their ears only.”

Reach out and be straight up

While many mokopuna understood that asking for help is an important step in the healing process, they also wanted adults to be proactive. They appreciated when adults asked directly if they were experiencing violence, without tiptoeing around the issue. Respectful, straightforward conversations were valued. One mokopuna expressed this, urging adults: **“Come up to me and ask about it, just be straight up, don’t hint at it.”**

Another mokopuna wanted adults to be clear and direct, and to encourage them to speak freely:

“Don’t be shy to tell me what’s happening. That’s what I’d like to hear.”

One mokopuna emphasised that avoiding the issue or using vague language wasn’t helpful:

“Instead of beating around the bush, want someone being straight up.”

Be private and discreet

Mokopuna also wanted these conversations to happen in a way that protected their privacy, given the gravity of these kinds of disclosures. They didn’t want their experiences to be made public, especially in front of peers or in places where others could overhear.

One mokopuna shared how they would prefer teachers handle these sensitive discussions discreetly:

“Probably like, if it was a teacher situation, just like, you like slip a note to the person, stay after class, have a talk with you. Like don’t put it out in the open kind of situation [...]”

Another mokopuna explained that while they understood it might be hard to approach individuals directly, doing so privately was also crucial:

“I know you can’t pull people out individually and say you can go to counselling. But maybe like in the more just closed, smaller space without everyone being there.”

The setting for these conversations was just as important. One mokopuna urged that social workers bring mokopuna to private, safe spaces to talk where they feel comfortable to talk and have hard conversations:

“I think provide a safe rest place not a glass room, that’s like definitely one [...] thing I would do.”

Supportive services

WHAT WORKS

Counselling

Several of the mokopuna we spoke with told us that counselling, as well as other types of clinical support – e.g. from psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists – was especially helpful when they sought support for family violence and/or sexual violence.

One mokopuna explained how valuable counselling was for her, saying:

> **"I can get stuff off my chest and then [my counsellor] like talks me through it and gives me and Mum ideas of stuff."**

The ability to choose their counsellor was also important to mokopuna, as they wanted to connect with someone who they felt comfortable with. One mokopuna described a positive experience he had with his alcohol and drug counsellor, sharing:

> **"...he's actually like a real mean [i.e. good] person to talk to...I find it easier opening up to him about things because, like, it doesn't feel so serious when I speak to someone. Like we're always laughing you know."**

Many mokopuna suggested that others experiencing family violence and/or sexual violence should try to find a counsellor. Some told us they wished they had access to counselling earlier. When we asked one mokopuna what help she wished she'd had when she was younger, she answered:

> **"I'd probably say having like, maybe like a counsellor or something like that."**

These reflections highlight the crucial role that counselling, and other kinds of clinical support, can play in supporting mokopuna on their healing journeys. However, it is essential that these services are provided in ways that meet the needs of each individual mokopuna.

Whānau perspectives on counselling

Many whānau also spoke about how useful counselling had been on their journey to healing. Whānau also talked about how getting support from counsellors and psychologists helped them to support their mokopuna better, from working through their trauma to parenting support.

When asked what worked well, one whānau member told us, **"counselling and support from a psychologist... because at the end of the day my trauma, what has happened to me, has impacted on my whānau."** Another found it especially helpful to receive counselling through a kaupapa Māori provider, someone who could help her with their situation as well as help navigate the system. We also heard from whānau that support with recovery from addiction was helpful in letting them see the harm their addiction had caused, and how normalised it had been in their community. Whānau acknowledged that healing took time and work and required professional support.

Practical support

Mokopuna also spoke about how services that offered practical support was sometimes just as important as providing clinical support such as counselling. Practical support often included assistance with essential life skills, such as obtaining identification (i.e. driver licence), securing housing, and managing daily responsibilities. It helped them find safety and navigate the challenges they faced in the aftermath of violence. Many times, support people went above and beyond their usual roles to ensure that mokopuna received the help they needed, enabling them to move forward with life and creating the necessary space to heal.

For instance, one mokopuna described the dedication of a youth worker who actively sought stable housing for them:

> **"He [youth worker] was pushing everyone, he was basically annoying everyone to hurry up and do all their jobs and then he would always check if I had a place to stay the night and if I didn't, then he would always try and find somewhere for me, and he wouldn't really sleep until I had a place to stay."**

Another mokopuna highlighted the importance of practical support in managing necessary documentation:

> **"Even getting like my licence and passports and all that."**

One mokopuna noted that their youth worker provided more effective support than the mental health clinicians she'd previously worked with:

> **"She's [youth worker] someone who's helping me with my rent and she was more help than like the counsellors and mental health and psychiatrists."**

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Mokopuna told us about the issues and barriers they faced when they tried to access services. Often these were not the fault of the services themselves, rather they were a symptom of systemic issues such as inadequate funding or poor contracts.

Lack of awareness of services

Most of the mokopuna we spoke with told us that they **"don't really know much about services,"** which made it hard to find support. Mokopuna were clear that the lack of advertising of services – particularly in the places they frequent most, such as schools ¬– created a barrier to seeking help. As one mokopuna explained:

> **"So I just feel like a lot of support that's offered, isn't really well advertised. Therefore, it's kind of hard to access if it's not being advertised."**

We heard that, while several mokopuna had vague ideas about "therapy" and some of the more widely-known, national services – many had no idea where to start, in terms of accessing services in their community. As one mokopuna put it, **"I don't know what's out there that's gonna help me apart from therapy coz that's what everybody says, is therapy."**

Another mokopuna explained, **“Yeah… like I don’t know of any other places where you can get help with like domestic violence and stuff. I don’t think any of us do.”**

One mokopuna described her experience of seeking support from her doctor:

> **“They gave us this sheet of like places that could help. But they just gave us no information on it… And they gave us no information on like how to contact them, like what they’re like, what they specialise in and just like their staff maybe and it was just like really confusing when you’re just starting off. ’Cos you don’t know like actually how to start contact… or start communication, or like even just looking at who their counsellors were or something like that. And it was really hard to start off with because we had no idea where to go, how to do it and like, who to contact.”**

This underscores that accessing support services should be straightforward, with clear information on how to contact them and what they offer, so mokopuna can navigate available help effectively.

Inability to access services

Several mokopuna told us that strict eligibility criteria for accessing services – e.g. minimum age requirements, referral requirements, etc – prevented them from accessing the support they needed.

One mokopuna told us that they reached out to two different services after being raped, only to be told they **“had to be 16 to sign up with them.”**

They felt frustrated and let down, sarcastically saying, **“Like yeah, only 16-year-olds can be raped… But the sexual abuse happened from when I was seven to 10 so …”**

They were clear that, had either of these services tried to at least redirect them to another service – they would have started getting support **“at least a year earlier.”**

Another mokopuna was frustrated that, in order to access the mental health support, she needed (as a result of her trauma from violence), she had to be hospitalised first. She told us:

> **“They only let me in because I was in hospital on an OD…, they sent me to the psych ward part and then they’re like, ‘ok you need help, now you can be in the service.’”**

One mokopuna from a rural community told us that there simply weren’t enough services in their town. When asked why they accessed a specific service, they said **“I’m gonna be real honest with you. There was no one else…there’s no one here. There’s nothing.”**

Affordability

For many mokopuna who did manage to find services or supports they were keen to engage with, financial cost often got in the way of them being able to access them.

One mokopuna told us that she wants to receive specialised support, as the free counselling that she has accessed in the past hasn’t been helpful for supporting her healing. However, she is unable to afford the appointments. She explained:

> **“I would want to see a counsellor that specialises in trauma and how your body holds trauma, instead of just going to a free counsellor where you just talk about it and re-live your trauma and leave feeling worse.”**

She is currently saving up her own money to be able to see a particular counsellor, because she is determined to **“get proper counselling” so that her “trauma doesn’t affect [her daughter].”**

Another mokopuna told us that a lot of whānau want to get their mokopuna the help they need but, **“they just can’t, they don’t have the extra money for it. Or there’s just some people that just won’t pay for it. ’Cos I mean, why should you have to pay for help.”**

Waitlists

For other mokopuna who managed to find services that could help them heal from family violence and/or sexual violence, encountering long waitlists to get into a service was a common experience.

One mokopuna told us that for ACC sensitive claims counselling, “the waitlists are atrocious.” She had already been on a waitlist for counselling for some time when we spoke with her and told us she still had **“like 10 months to go.”**

We also heard from another mokopuna that they were on a service’s waitlist, **“for about a year […] before I actually saw help.”**

She reiterated that **“there are so many of us that just like, actually need help. But then it’s just like, there’s like hardly enough counsellors to keep track with everybody and there’s like people like me, on like waitlists for like a year or more sometimes…”**

The impact of waiting is especially damaging for mokopuna who are ready to access professional support but are unable to receive it in a timely manner.

Helplines

Some of the mokopuna we spoke with did not have positive experiences of counselling – especially through phone counselling services and helplines.

Mokopuna were frustrated by calling helplines only to be placed on hold for hours **“like almost two hours.”** One mokopuna told us her friends, **“all just like joke about it to each other because we’re all depressed and we’re like ‘don’t call [helpline] because you’re going to be on it till you’re dead.’”**

Mokopuna were also frustrated by the support they received when they finally were put through to someone. One mokopuna lamented, **“Yeah, and then…when you finally get on and then you get a real c*** on the line and you’re like “f*** okay thanks, I’ve waited all this time for you thanks”.**

Whānau perspectives on accessing services

Whānau were also frustrated by the inaccessibility of services due to eligibility, affordability, and waitlists. We heard that for some, not meeting eligibility criteria left them feeling hopeless, not knowing where to turn to for help. One whānau member told us they **"had doors shut from every drug rehab place because I didn't fit that criteria... how am I supposed to get the help I need?"** Another whānau member found that strict criteria sometimes meant not getting help at all. She said, **"Doesn't matter if you show up with a black eye and crying kids, if you don't fit the criteria, you're not getting the help."** These barriers made it even harder for whānau to access the support they desperately needed in times of crisis.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Better advertising and availability of services

Mokopuna told us that knowing what support is out there would have made getting help easier. They called for more advertising of services. One mokopuna suggested that to improve visibility of services **"some signs around the town would be good 'cos there's some people that would rather, like just show up at this place [a service] without telling anyone."**

A few mokopuna told us that advertising of services online would be helpful. One mokopuna wished for "like a website or something" where she could find out more detailed information, at a human level, about the counsellors working there – **"even just a little blurb on them, so you can like feel how they are as a person and... get kind of get a feel of like how the vibe of the place is going to be."**

Mokopuna wanted to know and be supported to understand what their options were when it came to support. One mokopuna said they wanted **"understandable options. I feel like maybe there were, but I wasn't aware of the options."**

Along with better advertising of services that exist, mokopuna also thought that services need to be made more available to them. For some, this meant creating more services, while for others it meant making services more visible and easier to get into. One mokopuna told us it would be helpful to **"Just make more things, more services available."**

Mokopuna were clear that better visibility and accessible information about services would be helpful in empowering them to seek the support they need.

More funding for services

Mokopuna also called for services to be funded better by the Government. They thought that more funding would help get more and better support in place for mokopuna. One mokopuna told us that if he was the Prime Minister, he would put money towards helping mokopuna stay safe. He said, **"the Prime Minister should be putting that money in a place where it should be, instead of the money going all over the place. Because then it doesn't help the people that really need the support."**

Other mokopuna thought that extra funding should go to ensuring services can hire more staff, with one mokopuna saying she would **"pay them lots of money."**

More funding for mental health services was important for many mokopuna who spoke to us, emphasising the connection between family violence, sexual violence, and their impacts on mental health.

For one, this was because there were few services available in their rural town. They said, **"I would give a lot more money towards mental health stuff in general...there's no one here. There's nothing...it kinda confuses me why there's so, not so much help."** Another mokopuna told us that mental health is poorly funded, and **"we just need more."**

Mokopuna were acutely aware of how funding impacts their ability to access and receive the services they want. There were strong calls from mokopuna for the Government to provide more funding for all support services.

Designated 'navigation' support

Several mokopuna expressed that they would have appreciated support in navigating the systems and services for responding to and preventing family and sexual violence. For one mokopuna, beginning the process of getting help was difficult. She said:

> **"...it was just so confusing. And like if we had known the process beforehand, I think we would have gotten like help a lot faster. But it was just that [...] we had no idea where to start and where to go."**

She said what would have been useful was someone to walk alongside her and her whānau to help them with getting started. **"Because it was a hard process for me and my family to actually start getting help, it like took us ages, it took us months to actually even just start contact with the first person that we started with."**

Another mokopuna had worked out a system with a school social worker, to ensure she could manage expectations from all agencies involved. **"I made sure that everyone went through her and then she tells me, instead of getting phone calls from everyone [multiple other agencies]."**

Knowing how to access services, which ones to approach, and what they offer would help mokopuna obtain support more easily and quickly. Additionally, having assistance in managing multiple services would be beneficial for mokopuna in these situations.

Youth-friendly spaces & activities

WHAT WORKS

Activities and warm spaces

When we asked mokopuna "what do you do to feel better when you're feeling worried or scared?" nearly all of them spoke about the activities they sought comfort in. Some of the activities mokopuna mentioned included listening to music and podcasts, reading, drawing, going to the gym, singing, and playing guitar.

> **"...drawing, sketching and painting. It really like, it relieves me...."**

> **"would rather go train which is normally just running around the block, you know, sweat it out, go to the gym."**

So it's not surprising that mokopuna also told us activity-based support is also something that works well. Mokopuna described experiences with social workers, youth workers, and counsellors who would take them out for coffee and other activities, instead of **"just sitting down, nothing."**

One mokopuna told us that her mentor, whom she'd connected with through a local mentoring service, had helped her a lot. **"...We'll go out for coffee, we'll go out for walks, go to places, do fun things, activities. Basically, anything really."**

Another shared a positive experience with an activity-based service, where **"It was cool and like [we'd] just do programmes and went to a camp. It's like a fun space doing activities and it would get my mind out of a lot of things."**

One care-experienced mokopuna had strong, positive memories from her stay at a respite home even though her stay was brief. She explained that at the respite home **"people would hang out, they'd encourage you, they'd be like 'come into the kitchen let's play a game, let's cook together', like you'd have these like mentors...it was like a home and it had activities in it and I felt safe, I felt safe in that [name] home."**

Mokopuna also felt more comfortable in spaces that were designed to be youth-friendly. They spoke about hang out spaces, bright colours and artwork. One mokopuna, whose whole whānau is on a healing journey, told us about the physical changes they'd made in their own home to make it more child-friendly. He especially loved how they'd converted their garage into a classroom, and proudly described how they **"they covered it up with walls, they made the floor a mat 'cos it was concrete before and they put a lot of Māori pictures up."**

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Poorly designed spaces

Mokopuna told us about poorly designed spaces that did not help them to feel safe or supported.

One care-experienced mokopuna reflected on her experience when she was first uplifted by Oranga Tamariki, wishing the social worker had brought her to a private, comfortable space to speak. Instead, the Oranga Tamariki office she was taken to felt cold and unwelcoming. She described it as, **"...just corporate. There was no like love..."** highlighting how the sterile setting made an already awful situation even worse for her.

The lack of privacy in the space worsened her discomfort. She explained, **"So they had like this glass room, and there was a seat so they could all see me and I could see them but they could still do their work. They could still see everything I was doing and they like could lock you in there. And they'd put me and other kids, it wasn't just me, and then you'd just all be in there. It almost kind of made you feel, made me feel a bit like an animal, like a caged animal."**

Another mokopuna spoke about the dreary environment of a refuge she stayed at after fleeing a violent relationship, saying, **"[refuge] is so depressing...like barely no colour. When you go to the gate aye, it was so depressing, like a little playground for the kids, it looked dead, it looked like oh, this is out of a horror movie or something."**

When physical spaces are poorly designed and not child-friendly, they ultimately fail to provide the safety and support mokopuna need, reinforcing the importance of creating environments that truly foster their wellbeing and healing.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Services should have child and youth-friendly environments

Mokopuna told us they wanted services to be more youth-friendly. They thought spaces should be welcoming, comfortable and safe. One mokopuna suggested the kind of space they wanted would be **"...youth friendly, actually having things on the wall instead of just staring at nothing."** Another spoke about her dream space being **"fun and colourful."** This highlights how the physical space can either engage or alienate mokopuna, making them feel comfortable and supported or ill at ease.

Mokopuna wanted spaces where they can relax, have fun, and connect with others. Some mokopuna shared ideas about services having board games and gaming consoles, **"play Twister, pull out the bloody Xbox,"** one mokopuna suggested, envisioning a space where mokopuna could gather and feel at home. Others spoke about the need for spaces to have sensory rooms and fidget toys, creating both physically and emotionally youth-friendly spaces.

More things to do

Mokopuna also talked about the need for more activities and things to do in their communities.

This was especially relevant for those from small or rural communities. One mokopuna spoke about how there was little to do where they live, she said **“I’d just love some more shops and more opportunities for kids my age.”** Another from a small community suggested community dinners, where people could connect, would be beneficial.

We heard from mokopuna who wanted more sports days in their community and another who thought community festivals were a good way to bring people together.

Cultural support and responsiveness

WHAT WORKS

Healing for mokopuna Māori

Many mokopuna Māori who were part of this project shared with us how it’s helpful to have Māori support workers, who understand them and their culture. When we asked one mokopuna if they thought having a Māori counsellor was important for them, she said, **“Yeah, it helps a lot,”** and explained why, saying:

> **“’Cos, they understand, so it makes it easier for me to come out and speak a lot more.”**

Mokopuna Māori also shared how learning about their whakapapa has played a powerful role in their healing. One mokopuna described the significance of this connection, saying:

> **“Growing up, so my family didn’t have no clue about where we came from and like just for me to be educated on that and then to go back to my whānau and be like ‘hey, like this is where’, you know [...] where we come from too.”**

For many mokopuna Māori, mātauranga Māori—the knowledge and wisdom of Māori—has been central to their healing journey. They spoke about how cultural practices provided a sense of safety and wellbeing for both themselves and their whānau. As one mokopuna explained:

> **“So, when I get help, I can find, I don’t know, healing, healing my wairua or tinana, whakaaro, my thoughts, hinengaro yeah, and kōrero. So help really means a lot to me.”**

His sibling emphasised this point, telling us that, to him:

> **“I think getting help means mahuru te atu wairoa, [...], you go find wisdom mātauranga, kōrero [...]. I think that means like karakia, waiata, anything matauranga Māori is basically Māori wisdom.”**

This mokopuna was also clear that learning te reo also helped him, telling us, **“I think te reo Māori helped me too.”**

Another mokopuna reflected on the wisdom of their Māori ancestors, highlighting the deep healing found within their traditions:

> **“That’s what I really like about our tūpuna...they don’t know just wisdom, but they know how to heal stuff, heal bruises, heal your mindset and yeah, heal your mamae from like trauma and stuff.”**

They also emphasised the protective role of tikanga in their lives, describing how it helps keep them safe and grounded. One mokopuna shared:

“So tikanga keeps us safe from getting hurt, feeling bad, feeling sad sometimes… I have a whānau and tikanga. Yeah, that’s what feeling safe and feeling good means to me.”

Whānau perspectives on the importance of te ao Māori

We heard from whānau who also found healing through kaupapa Māori services. One whānau told us being supported by the service to get back to their marae and reconnect with wānanga helped them to heal. This reconnection ultimately meant the service could pull back their support as it was no longer required.

Whānau Māori told us about the importance of letting **“Māori be Māori.”** Like mokopuna, we heard from whānau that knowing your whakapapa, who you are, where you belong and where you come from is an essential part of healing.

Whānau Māori also explained how living authentically in te ao Māori and being proud of being Māori helped. We heard that reconnection to culture through te reo, kapa haka and the use of tohunga and wānanga, **“learning the old ways to heal the trauma”** worked for Māori.

Healing for Pasifika Mokopuna

Mokopuna Pasifika shared how essential it is for them to have support from people who are from, and therefore understand, their culture. One mokopuna expressed this clearly, saying:

“People who understand me… I wouldn’t go to a non-Pacific only because they wouldn’t understand where I am coming from.”

Having someone from their culture to talk to made mokopuna feel safer and more comfortable discussing the unique experiences of being Pasifika in Aotearoa. One mokopuna highlighted how having a teacher from his own culture allowed for a deeper understanding of these dynamics, explaining:

“[Pacific] Island teachers understand the consequences of what they do. They would suggest a lot, like why don’t we involve your parents in this?”

Speaking to someone who shares their cultural background made it easier for mokopuna Pasifika to open up. As one mokopuna told us, **“’Cos, they understand, so it makes it easier for me to come out and speak a lot more.”**

Overall, having support from people who share their cultural background plays a vital role in fostering a sense of safety and understanding for mokopuna Pasifika as they navigate growing up in Aotearoa, especially in the context of family violence and/or sexual violence.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Not understanding culture

Mokopuna shared how it could be difficult to open up to people who didn’t understand their culture or lived experiences. This lack of cultural understanding often created barriers to receiving the support they needed, leaving them feeling misunderstood and, at times, harmed by the process.

One mokopuna highlighted this potential for disconnect, saying:

“Maybe the views that are normal to me might be very weird and go against what their normal looks like.”

Another mokopuna emphasised that this lack of cultural understanding can make it feel like the support isn’t helpful:

“Yea just not having that understanding [of my culture] doesn’t help when I’m trying to seek for that support.”

For some mokopuna Māori, the absence of Te Ao Māori in their support systems left them feeling like true healing wasn’t possible. One mokopuna highlighted this, explaining how the lack of mātauranga Māori hindered their journey towards healing:

“Yeah, just no help, no true healing, no Te Ao Māori basically.”

Mokopuna were clear that they need to feel their cultural identity is recognised, respected, and understood to truly heal.

Whānau perspectives on racism

Whānau Māori were acutely aware of colonisation and its harmful effects on Māori throughout generations. Multiple whānau also recognised that colonialism was the biggest form of violence that Māori suffer. They noted how this led to institutional racism, which made it hard to seek and receive the support they wanted and needed.

One whānau member bluntly told us if she was white, she would be more comfortable coming forward and asking for support. She said if more was done to address racism, then **“Māori would feel safer to come out [and get support for family violence].”**

Whānau Māori shared their views with us about what they saw as racist political rhetoric and policies. They told us this had left them feeling unsafe, angry, and hurt. One whānau told us, **“they’re looking at us like sh**…and it’s sad because I know it’s affecting my [mokopuna].”**

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

More support workers who understand culture

Many mokopuna, especially Māori and Pasifika, emphasised the need for more culturally aligned support.

One care-experienced mokopuna suggested that matching caregivers and children from the same culture would make a big difference, saying, **“I would first of all put the Polynesian and cultural people into other Polynesian and culture people houses,”** highlighting how much easier it is when caregivers share the same background as mokopuna.

He explained this further, telling us: **“Because [...] it makes it easier for let’s say, two parents that take in a Polynesian kid that is Tongan and they’re also Tongan, it makes it easier to look after that kid.”**

Another Pasifika mokopuna reinforced the importance of cultural competency within services, pointing out how damaging it can be when this is missing:

> **“Services need to understand what people are going through, for example, you wouldn’t send a palagi social worker to a Samoan household, and have that Samoan boy try to explain to them their Samoan culture, what’s happening, why they do this, why is their culture like this, why are these things happening, and all they’re gonna do is ring the Police, put you in OT get another family, but having sources with people that understand like Māori to Māori or Samoan to Samoan, I know that’s a challenge but money would be better invested in those areas as that’s how growth happens and that’s how security, safety and people feeling more comfortable happen.”**

Support workers who culturally align with mokopuna may be able to foster trust, reduce misunderstandings and potentially lead to better outcomes in their care, wellbeing and personal growth. Ensuring mokopuna are surrounded by people who understand their identity is key to creating a system where they feel safe and respected.

More kaupapa Māori services and approaches

Mokopuna Māori wished for more support grounded in mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori.

Mokopuna suggested that rehab services, for instance, could be enhanced by adopting kaupapa Māori approaches, saying, **“cover it [the service] with something that’s like Māori and like, you know, you’re not just battling an addiction, you’re also finding out more about yourself.”**

Another mokopuna told us that if he were the Prime Minister, he would set up more opportunities for all mokopuna and whānau to learn in ways rooted in mātauranga Māori, explaining that he would:

> **“Probably show them what I’ve been through first and then tell them what te ao Māori has done for me and then maybe give them some ideas about how their lives should be. [...] It’s about sharing our mātauranga and our tikanga with other whānau and it actually helped them.”**

Expanding kaupapa Māori services and approaches offers mokopuna Māori the opportunity to connect with their culture and heal in ways that resonate deeply with their values and identity. Support rooted in Te Ao Māori empowers mokopuna to navigate their challenges while embracing who they are, contributing to more holistic and meaningful healing.

Whānau perspectives on the need for more kaupapa Māori supports

Whānau Māori told us that services need to understand who they are, their culture, their whakapapa, and their history. They told us that when Pākehā services do not acknowledge or respect their different tikanga, this results in further harm for them, is disempowering and not inclusive.

Whānau Māori saw that there were clear solutions to help with healing from trauma. We heard that support should allow Māori to **“have freedom to re-learn, re-set, re-educate ourselves - and not in a system that doesn’t work for ourselves.”** Whānau Māori wanted more kaupapa Māori supports and services to be available to them, along with support that came from within their own whānau.

Self-advocacy and empowerment

WHAT WORKS

Asking for help

When we asked mokopuna what the most important thing for other mokopuna to know when experiencing family violence and/or sexual violence is, they repeatedly told us: **“asking for help.”** Their advice for other young people included:

> **“But I just want, you know, definitely talk about it, definitely go get help and not go back in the situations like I did.”**

> **“Just do it [ask for help], honestly. Find it. do it. You’ll never know. You just never know. Honestly you just need to do it. I wish I did it earlier.”**

The mokopuna we spoke with were clear that reaching out and asking a trusted adult for help is one of the most important steps on the journey to accessing support when family violence or sexual violence has occurred, and to prevent further harm.

> **“Talk to a trusted adult and tell them your concerns, or a trusted friend that can help you.”**

> **“The important thing to me was that I spoke up and asked for help and like, I reached out and that opened many opportunities for me. Now I’m in university, and I own a car, I do counselling.”**

Having a voice

Once mokopuna found help, they made it clear that they wanted to have a voice and a say in their healing journeys. They spoke highly of support people who helped them to write down their goals and worked together with them on a plan.

> **“He said write down your goals, what I wanted to do. What I wanted to achieve, stuff like that. And then he just started.”**

> **“It’s been helpful that I don’t have to do things I don’t really want to. I can be myself…”**

Mokopuna Māori also told us how their connection to Te Ao Māori helped them to feel as though they had a voice, and it was important.

> **“Every tamariki has a voice. Ka pai.”**

> **“I was blind, let’s just say blind – not literally but spiritually. I was blind to te ao Māori and Te Reo Māori because with those two combined inside me, then I have a voice. I know how I’m feeling. I know who I am. I know where I should be and I can find, I don’t know, I can find my culture.”**

Even though it took several tries for most mokopuna that we interviewed to find help, most recognised that finding the courage to speak up, have a say – and remaining resilient in that courage – is what led them to the healing journey they’re on today. **“Some people might not listen so they do need to try their hardest with getting their word out. But trying different places to go to for help and not relying on one person.”**

Resilience

Mokopuna also stressed the importance of **“sticking with it [help]”** once you have support in place - **“even if you don’t feel you need the help.”** One mokopuna recognised that the pathway wasn’t always straightforward, **“on the bettering journey, … there’s always stops… you’ve just got to push through.”**

Some mokopuna viewed resilience and help differently – they wanted to be strong, and to help themselves, instead of relying on others for support. One mokopuna told us, **“I just want to do it by myself aye.”**

Another young person shared their experience of pushing through difficult times:

> **“I got to be tough for myself anyways, there’s no time to be down ‘cos then, won’t even get to the gym. I wouldn’t even be able to find a job or anything. So, you know, you still got to put on a fake mask and get out of that front door and keep moving on, carrying on day by day.”**

For several mokopuna, resilience was about finding strength within themselves to keep going - whether that was in trying to get the right help, or pushing through once they were on the healing journey.

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Hard to reach out

Many mokopuna shared just how hard it is to reach out and ask for help. One mokopuna reminded us that **“it’s really, really hard to reach out for support.”** She reiterated that **“there’s so many factors into someone deciding to reach out for help.”**

Another mokopuna explained, **“that’s probably like one of the hardest things for young people, is knowing that they have to actually find help if they need it. Like they have to talk to people that will talk to other people to get that help.”**

Several mokopuna told us about all kinds of internal struggles they face in deciding to ask for help, such as a lack of trust in kaimahi, being reluctant to open up, and feeling isolated – meaning they feel a need to **“staunch it [the trauma] through”** on their own.

A lot of mokopuna told us they tend to isolate themselves – by **“closing off”** and **“going radio silent,”** because they simply don’t like asking for others for help.

Fear of the aftermath

Many mokopuna expressed fear about what might happen after reaching out for help, particularly regarding their families and personal safety. They worried about the risks they faced after seeking support, especially if the abuse comes from a family member. One mokopuna explained this, saying:

> **"I suppose you always hear like people say, like if a woman's in a domestic [abuse] relationship they always say, you know, like get help. But it's not always that easy and then like once you ask for help, what can you do, you know, you've made your environment no longer safe and now you've got to go back into that environment fearing for what could happen."**

Another mokopuna echoed this sentiment, sharing her anxiety about the potential consequences:

> **"Yeah a bit and just like worried about the aftermath and all that. That was my like, you know, what's the outcome of everything going to be."**

The fear is even more pronounced when the abuser is a family member:

> **"But if it was someone other than my family, I reckon it would have been way much different. But it was even scarier saying that my uncle done it, because it's your family..."**

When we asked one mokopuna about the possibility of disclosing his experiences of family violence to adults outside of his whānau, he was clear that he would hesitate before taking any action that might harm his whānau:

> **"I wouldn't ever put myself out like that, especially as a Samoan, you wouldn't want to ruin your family's image and make out that your family like 'ka'uvalea' and make your family look stupid, and it's a daily reminder not to open your mouth, realistically speaking. The amount of respect that you have for your own family, like I said, you wouldn't hate them enough to want to destroy them, I wouldn't, I could never go that far."**

These fears show how tough it is for mokopuna to seek help when they're caught between wanting to be safe and their loyalty to whānau. The reality of ongoing whānau relationships can further complicate matters, impacting whānau dynamics and creating tension between seeking support and staying connected to their loved ones.

Stigma

Mokopuna recognised that stigma is a significant overarching barrier that contributes to the various internal fears and hesitations they face when asking for help. One mokopuna explained that because of the stigma in seeking support she **"wouldn't want to look like a pussy in front of..."** her friends.

Other mokopuna reminded us that stigma can be even worse for certain genders, cultures, and communities. As one mokopuna pointed out how gender stereotypes exacerbate the stigma of reaching out, saying:

> **"You can't just go up to people and say, 'Hey have you been part of family violence' or what-not because, well, there's kind of that stigma in New Zealand especially with blokes. You just don't go up to them."**

Cultural norms also play a significant role in perpetuating stigma. As one mokopuna pointed out:

> **"In most Islander households kids are too afraid to speak because... they might tell you you're being too weak or you're not being a man."**

Additionally, stigma can be especially challenging for mokopuna navigating their identities, on top of dealing with the trauma of experiencing family violence and/or sexual violence. One mokopuna expressed:

> **"It's really hard, especially me being LGBTQ, that goes against what my parents believe in..."**

It's clear that the stigma surrounding asking for help can be a huge barrier for mokopuna. Factors like gender norms and cultural expectations only add to that pressure, making it even tougher for them to seek the support they truly need.

Whānau perspectives on barriers to asking for help

The whānau who spoke with us also described several barriers that made it hard for them to reach out or ask others for help. We heard that feelings of whakamā, or shame, often got in the way of deciding to ask for support for family violence and/or sexual violence. Several parents and caregivers told us that they find it embarrassing and uncomfortable to ask for help and were worried about feeling judged or looked down on. Many whānau told us that even the idea of asking for help was enough of a barrier for them to not do it, because it is so difficult.

Whānau living in rural places found it even harder to reach out because of the tight-knit nature of these communities. They explained that **"nothing is more embarrassing than the whole town knowing your business."** Those living in small communities told us it can be difficult to find trustworthy services that will ensure confidentiality.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Remove the stigma

Mokopuna in Aotearoa are calling on adults to "remove the stigma" in order to make it easier for them to ask for help when they have experienced family violence and/or sexual violence. They talked about **"finding a way to make it not embarrassing to say I need to talk to someone."**

Mokopuna were acutely aware of feeling embarrassed for needing or wanting help, and were clear that adults hold the responsibility for breaking down this barrier.

Mokopuna stressed the need for everyone to know that **“it’s not uncool to talk about your feelings and your problems.”**

One mokopuna told us she wanted other kids to know:

> **“[...] that it’s okay and that you’re not a freak for talking out and that actually asking questions and reaching out is not bad and it’s actually healthy.”**

By creating an environment where asking for help - especially regarding family violence and sexual violence - is accepted and encouraged, adults can foster a culture that makes it easier for mokopuna to feel comfortable seeking the support they need.

More ways to learn about family violence and sexual violence

Mokopuna recognised that one way to decrease the negative stigma associated with seeking support for family violence and/or sexual violence is for schools and communities to offer more education about it.

Mokopuna told us they wanted this education to take place either in their communities, or at school. One mokopuna wished for, **“[...] classes for people that struggle with domestic violence.”** She envisioned these ‘classes’ as places where both victims and perpetrators of violence could, **“deal with their trauma, just kind of help them figure out why they do it,”** and **“help them find a better, a more positive way of getting out those nasty feelings.”**

She also urged for more education about healthy relationships (i.e. what’s ‘normal’ and acceptable).

Some mokopuna remembered ‘safety classes’ they took in schools and thought that bringing it up at school was helpful. However, it is important that these lessons are detailed and specifically centred around how violence can, and most often occurs, at home. One mokopuna emphasised this, explaining:

> **“Yeah, and also teach a lot more in schools. ‘Cos... when I was in primary school, I never got any in depth lessons about like family centred violence. We had one talk I can remember when I was younger and it was about, it was... like a cartoon video of a strange man coming up to a little girl... like ‘hey there’s some puppies in my van, do you wanna come see?’ and don’t get me wrong that stuff does happen, strangers do hurt children and that, but let’s be honest its mostly family members and friends of family doing it. And they never taught me that. I just thought it was like, coz I was a child... and I thought ‘oh well its bad if a stranger does it, but because it’s my uncle, oh its fine then.”**

Mokopuna are clear that creating more learning opportunities about family violence and sexual violence in schools and communities can contribute to a more informed society that understands the complexities of these issues, ultimately leading to safer environments for mokopuna.

Whānau perspectives on education and awareness of family violence and sexual violence

Whānau also called for more education and increased awareness about family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa. Some whānau wanted more education for their mokopuna about how to protect themselves – physically, mentally, and emotionally. Other whānau wanted mokopuna to be taught more about ‘what is safe’ when it comes to sexual behaviour. Several whānau wanted it to be more normal to talk about family violence and sexual violence – as one whānau member put it, **“the only way to beat sexual abuse is to bring it into life. Talk about it.”**

Systemic issues

The majority of the mokopuna who shared their experiences with us spoke about the negative and harmful experiences they had received from the 'system'. Specifically, we heard about primarily negative experiences with Oranga Tamariki, police, the justice system, and the mental health system.

Mokopuna did not feel seen, heard, supported, or kept safe by the system created to ensure their safety. In many cases, the perpetuation of this harm has been generational.

Oranga Tamariki

Mokopuna who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki spoke about their deep frustrations with a system that often fails to uphold its duty of care to mokopuna. Many told us about feelings of neglect, manipulation, and harm, both emotional and physical, during their time in the system.

"Growing up in care that was not so great."

"Whenever I asked if we can go, like get something to eat, like I'm hungry. I was living with vegans...I wanted to eat extra food, I was always hungry... She [Oranga Tamariki social worker] would say that I'm just an ungrateful, spoiled brat."

Mokopuna were concerned about how some Oranga Tamariki social workers neglected their duty of care to keep mokopuna safe, rather they contributed to the harm.

"They don't help, they ruin things. Seriously, they will break up families."

"She [Oranga Tamariki social worker] was lying to me about things that my Mum was saying that she wasn't saying. So, it would make me and Mum have fallouts and me get mad at her. She was just stirring the pot, she was just stirring it all up."

"Like OTs came but they don't know how, my mum just smokes dope... It does, it really does, I got a hiding but like a big hiding."

Mokopuna recounted the dehumanising moments they experienced when they were uplifted by Oranga Tamariki and reflected on how being in the system meant losing their sense of identity and their connection to their whānau.

"Cos it's just like when your OT, it feels like you're adopted, you don't know anything about yourself. Who wants to get their like identification stolen off them."

"And just not having a lot of like compassion. Like I remember when I was being uplifted, I definitely felt like a job to them, it didn't actually feel like they were there for me."

"Cos like my cousin, she went through like the system aye, she didn't even know her name, she didn't know that she had like even siblings and stuff until she came back this year and I was like, G you've got like nine siblings."

One mokopuna shared a lot with us about her extremely negative experiences living in a foster home where she felt completely unsafe. She told us that, even though she'd grown up in a violent home:

"What I had at home, even though that was dangerous, almost felt safer, than when I was in this foster home. It was hell. It was like I was a prisoner. [...] It was the worst nine months of my life."

She explained that witnessing another mokopuna in the home be constantly – and violently – bullied by two older mokopuna really scared and traumatised her, especially because the caregiver never intervened. She said,

"[...] I'd watch those movies, those YouTube videos of what foster care was like and it looked like a nightmare, and I was like, surely it's not like that in real – oh it was, it was, if not worse. Like actually seeing a grown woman turning her eye to that abuse..."

While mokopuna can often understand why Oranga Tamariki were involved or why they were removed from their families, we heard from several mokopuna that they were moved from one unsafe home and placed into another unsafe home.

"...Then I was placed in foster care with my older sister. That only lasted about three months before psychiatrists split us up and pretty much, they wanted to find a family for me that was trauma-informed, so they knew about trauma. I was placed with my Home for Life family, but they were not trauma-informed at all."

"But this lady, she was awful [...], for me, like my biggest support breakdown was the home because I'd go home every day feeling like I was going home to a prison. I cried myself to sleep every morning. I ran away because I just couldn't be there."

Whānau perspectives on Oranga Tamariki

Whānau also experienced harm from Oranga Tamariki. They spoke about being scared of Oranga Tamariki and being scared to reach out for help in family violence and/or sexual violence situations because they knew this meant Oranga Tamariki would likely get involved. One whānau member acknowledged this was why **"most of our women and children don't get out [of violent situations]."** Whānau spoke about how they thought they were going to get help and find safety, but instead found that organisations they turned to such as the police contacted Oranga Tamariki instead.

Whānau wanted support from Oranga Tamariki, they wanted the organisation to listen and to walk alongside them, however we heard that once Oranga Tamariki became involved, abuse was often perpetuated. **"Oranga Tamariki took my kids and left me with the abuser, and then the abuse gets worse because it's my fault the kids are gone."**

Some whānau we spoke to were caring for mokopuna from within their own whānau. These whānau members had intervened to ensure mokopuna were safe, but told us that they were left unsupported both financially and practically by Oranga Tamariki, despite becoming caregivers.

These experiences show that Oranga Tamariki must look at whānau as a whole, in order to ensure the wellbeing of mokopuna.

Police

We heard about experiences where young people felt let down by the police, after trying to seek support for family violence.

> **"Police, they would like just come and just talk and leave, like just talk to the Dad, see the problem and leave. Just write a report about it and do nothing."**

> **"...so there was like no legal right there, and the police was like 'Yeah, we can't do anything..."**

Some of the young people we interviewed, who were survivors of sexual violence, had also felt let down, and even traumatised, after trying to disclose the abuse they had endured to police.

One young woman told us about her experience trying to report sexual abuse when she was younger. She was interviewed by a male police officer, was required to give graphic detail, and had no support person with her.

> **"Yeah, well when I was younger I had made a complaint about a sexual act that like happened and I remember going to the police station and getting halfway through the interview, like how they record you and all that but I went like, I just like freaked out and I was like yeah, no I don't want to do this anymore."**

Despite her efforts to provide information, she felt it wasn't enough:

> **"I thought I was going into enough detail, like these are the dates that it happened, it went on for this long, dah-dah-dah, and it was that guy, and it was like nah, not enough."**

Reflecting on the experience, she expressed the emotional toll it took on her:

> **"Yeah and I just felt, after it I just felt, like now I know it's their f*** up and not mine but I just remember walking out and being like 'how embarrassing', yeah. I was like what the heck, all that for nothing."**

Ultimately, she decided not to try and involve the police any further after that – which led to another family member being sexually abused by the same person. She was clear about her feelings on the matter:

> **"I've said that I didn't want anything to do with it [the current investigation] because when I was little and I did make that complaint nothing happened, yeah."**

Whānau perspectives on police

Whānau also told us about feeling let down by police. We heard about whānau turning to the police for help and safety when they didn't know where else to go. While this led to some receiving the support they needed, for others it was not helpful. One whānau member spoke about how long it took for police to respond once they called, sometimes up to one hour, even though they were in a small town. Another told us that police often couldn't stop the violence they were suffering, saying **"no matter how many times I called, went to the hospital, they didn't stop him."** They thought the system broke down because police weren't able to properly follow up on whether a perpetrator was following bail conditions.

We also heard from a whānau who made a conscious decision to not go to police when harm was occurring in their whānau. They told us they worried it would not get dealt with, and they did not want their whānau to have to experience the justice system. They were able to manage the situation through support from their wider whānau.

The justice system

One mokopuna told us about her only experience going to court to support a family member and how an incident unfolded there. She didn't feel safe or protected and felt betrayed by the system for not ensuring that court felt safe. She was clear about how this incident impacted her trust in the justice system, declaring that **"Even if my [whānau member] has another court case, I'm not going."**

Other mokopuna felt that the Courts were preventing them from living the lives they wanted. They explained that – because of their father's parental rights, despite the fact they were no longer in contact with him – they couldn't travel without his permission.

Mokopuna also voiced confusion and frustration at the ongoing prevalence of violence, despite legal protections already in place. As one mokopuna pointed out:

> **"When my mum [...] told us that, I'd say to ban abuse to children, or to ban abuse to wāhine women and to men and then she said that that's already banned. What – I mean, I was like what the? It's already banned then why are they still doing it?"**

The mental health system

While some mokopuna spoke with us about their positive experiences with mental health support, many also described their poor experiences with the broader mental health system. They told us about a lack of communication, bad practice and struggling to get into services.

Several mokopuna told us about how it's common knowledge that there are issues with accessing mental health support in Aotearoa. One mokopuna said, **"I don't know anyone that says the mental health system is good, or to go through them. Everyone I know says it's bad."** Another told us that their attempt to access support through the hospital had been unsuccessful, and potentially furthered the harm. They said, **"A little bit more damaging, but I was just I was definitely disappointed, but I wasn't really surprised 'cos it's [region] and we don't have good services when it comes to that."**

We heard from another mokopuna who was trying to get support through their doctor, especially in regard to medication. She told us, **"He [my doctor] hasn't rebooked an appointment or anything and I keep trying to call him and they say he's like busy. So I'm like, what do I do?"**

Mokopuna told us about kaimahi who were unhelpful when they reached out for help. One mokopuna described their experience:

> **"When I told her about how bad I wanted to kill myself she basically said I wasn't getting enough sleep and to try breathing exercises, and like 'have you gone for a walk?', yes I've gone for a walk but I still wanna kill myself while I'm doing the walk and after it. At the end of it, she said that we'll keep an eye on me... so she said for like two weeks every night someone was gonna call me and check on me and see how I'm going. I got one call, and it was like 8 o'clock at night, which is a real weird time and then I never heard from them again."**

Mokopuna were clear that their mental health often suffered as a result of the violence and abuse they had been subject to. For some, accessing mental health services was the first support they had sought after experiencing violence, highlighting the importance of the system responding in a timely, appropriate way.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Oranga Tamariki practice needs to change

Mokopuna were clear that fundamental changes were needed in Oranga Tamariki, from how they were uplifted and spoken to by social workers, to the care they received from those they were placed with. Mokopuna had ideas for change at every stage of the process.

When asked what changes she would make if she was in charge of Oranga Tamariki, a mokopuna told us **"you're not allowed to start sh** between their family, and you're not supposed to lie and make up stories..."**

Another mokopuna thought it was essential that Oranga Tamariki ensure mokopuna are able to remain in contact with their siblings and cousins after they were removed from their family.

We heard from mokopuna who wanted Oranga Tamariki to do enough work early on in order to ensure placements were the right fit for them. She stressed that the support she would have liked to receive included:

> **"Probably not doing all these FGCs and not getting anywhere and maybe like if I were to go to a home, a home that actually is stable, that matches and stuff, like is a match for me, you know, not homes that they knew I wouldn't last in. And lead me out to staying out in the streets, 'cos I was too scared to like go back home from running away from a house from OT because I knew that they will come back to the house and take me back and I didn't want to go back. So it led me out to being out in the street."**

One mokopuna thought it would be helpful for caregivers to understand trauma. They suggested:

> **"If I had to, I would, I'd probably put courses in places for caregivers just to teach them how to be, I don't know, good caregivers and how to deal with trauma and like what trauma responses look like and just how to support someone through their trauma."**

Mokopuna also wanted their social workers to have lower caseloads so that they were able to receive the support they wanted and needed. One mokopuna told us, **"I've heard of case workers in OT and they've got like 39 kids on their case or something... And it's like, these kids, some of these kids have been extremely traumatised. For me, I'd say I would have needed at least four hours a week with a social worker or social worker attention, minimum."**

Mokopuna called for clear change within Oranga Tamariki. The ideas they had were based on the poor support they had experienced from the agency and wanting to see more practical, tangible support. They did not want other mokopuna to have to go through what they had been through.

Police practices

Several mokopuna had suggestions to make dealing with police better for mokopuna. We heard from one mokopuna about the importance of police ensuring that female officers are always available to support young women and girls – both for family violence, and sexual violence. They explained:

> **"Have a woman police officer at every callout that is violence-orientated or sexual, you know, like just in the home so that kids feel a bit more safer, a woman police officer approaching you instead of a male approaching you."**

Another mokopuna who was questioned by male officers about sexual abuse spoke about how there were no females in the room with her, which made her even more uncomfortable.

They thought that a female officer should always be present for callouts, and that this would make mokopuna feel more comfortable. They went on to say:

> **"Because yeah, as a kid, you know, scary policeman in a suit and stuff after, you know, sexual violence is not the best thing. So to have a female just, you know, 'cos she'll get down on your level and not 'hey hurry up', you know."**

These mokopuna were clear that having female officers present would make them feel safer and more comfortable, especially in sensitive situations. Another mokopuna also made it clear that police need to do more than just show up. As she put it, **"Yeah, so that's what needs to really be changed and when the police get called to your house, they shouldn't just have a chat and leave."**

This mokopuna is urging for police to follow through and take action during callouts to ensure mokopuna safety.

The mental health system needs significantly more resourcing

Many mokopuna expressed a strong need for improvements in the mental health system, especially for young people. One mokopuna said that if she were Prime Minister, she'd, **"make sure that there is way better mental health system available for teenagers."**

Several mokopuna were clear that there is an urgent need for increased funding to address gaps in services. Another mokopuna emphasised this point by stating, **"Well I mean, I'd probably like, you know, put more funding into mental health and just like, 'cos it's just a really low funded thing and I feel like it's just we need more."**

These insights underscore the urgent need for systemic changes in the mental health system, including increased funding and resources, to ensure that all mokopuna can access the support they need in a timely manner.

More accountability for perpetrators of violence

Some mokopuna expressed a desire for more accountability for those who commit acts of violence.

One mokopuna told us that if he had the ability to make Aotearoa safer, he would **“make like this spot for [...] people that’s been abusing people,”** where they would have **“time to think about what they [have] done.”** He stressed that this space should be **“healthy”** and **“peaceful,”** envisioning it more as a rehabilitative service than a prison.

There was also a call for immediate consequences in situations where whānau members are abusive, with one mokopuna suggesting that instead of removing mokopuna from the home, the perpetrator of violence should be removed to protect the tamariki:

> **“[...] if you’re being bad, like say if I was a pāpā, a dad and I was being bad to my children or bad to my whānau, I would have to leave this house, so that I don’t put the mamae or the badness onto my tamariki.”**

These reflections highlight mokopuna desire for greater accountability for those who commit acts of violence, to better protect victims and prevent future harm.

Solutions: Mokopuna ideas for safe and supportive services

When we asked mokopuna what they would do to make Aotearoa safer if they were the Prime Minister, some shared their detailed visions for safe, supportive, and warm services and supports to help mokopuna heal from family violence and/or sexual violence. We felt it was important to end with these visionary solutions, because they show that mokopuna know what they want and what truly helps them heal. Their solutions highlight it is crucial to listen to their voices when shaping effective supports and services. Please note that the names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

Rongo’s Service:

> **“So what I would do if I was the Prime Minister, I would make houses that children can go to anytime to talk peacefully, to talk from their heart to their parents that have been traumatising him or her. So, I’d make like these little buildings in all the rōhe, everywhere in Aotearoa and the rules are - if the parents don’t agree to what the children have to say, and they’re like about to get angry at them, just leave straight away, the children will leave straight away. That’s a safe place for children to speak from their hearts and to speak the truth, so they don’t hold their mamae, their hurt, their anger, their sadness inside of them. So they let it out and the adults have to listen. Those are the rules for if I am the Prime Minister, I would make those little houses, not house I think it’s buildings.”**

More ideas from Rongo

“So, they would be a room twice the size as this, there would be toys, there would be books if they want to read while they’re listening, there’ll be fidgety stuff, there’ll be food, there’ll be water – it will basically be like a house but a little house, like a cabin. Everything though is in there, bean bags, a table, chairs but there’s this one little area in the room that’s probably half of the room, where it’s the place where they meet, where they have the kōrero. Where they speak like this, from the heart. So, they would probably have I think, however they like, however they like to speak, however long. Doesn’t have to be, it can take a whole day if they want to, just depends on the wairua and they don’t have to pay, they can go for free ’cos this isn’t a paying stuff. This is for help, so they all come here for free, there’ll be toys, there’ll be books, there’ll be teddy bears if they want to squeeze one while they’re talking, there’ll be pictures up on the walls.”

Emily’s Care Home

“Okay. You’d walk in, there’d be a front door, you’d go in. There’d be a kitchen and a lounge. The lounge would probably have a pool table, some games because, you know, these are high risk kids. These are people that have been traumatised – just a good getaway. A place where they can actually all come out and socialise, and then you’d have the kitchen and, you know, food that you can actually help yourself to.”

Jack's Service:

"I would obviously have a barber shop in there, like that would be my main thing, would be a barber shop. That's the first thing I'm doing with a boat load of money is opening a barber shop, but I would also have like, maybe like a little coffee spot, sit down [...] Like it's all free. [...] I would make it real youth focussed. I would have all the support there, or even learn to help out on my own like properly, like give kids the right advice and stuff like that."

Awhina's Service:

"I don't know. I've got this like plan. Like my family have a bit of land and I, what I want to do is I want to build like little, you know, those housing containers. I want to make a little, like kind of – 'cos a lot of people that are going through all the stuff is like the women in the gangs and their kids. I want that to be like a safe place, say if the woman has had enough of all that gang life or whatever, is being able to like, have somewhere safe to run away. ...they should be able to get all these, I don't know, go on little spa dates and stuff, make yourself feel better, you know, stuff like that. But yeah being able to have like fun activities for the kids, you know, 'cos all of the chicks are going to come with their children, you know, they're not just going to leave them behind... like fun and colourful, not dark and depressing, sitting with your thoughts, like nah."

Final reflections

Listening to mokopuna is vital, even when the topics are challenging. They have important insights and experiences to share, making it crucial for us to create safe spaces for these conversations. Discussing difficult subjects, such as family violence and sexual violence, can be uncomfortable, but when approached with care, it becomes not only possible but necessary.

Mokopuna want to be heard; they need opportunities to express their experiences and concerns. Therefore, establishing ongoing mechanisms for mokopuna engagement in the development and implementation of strategies that affect them is essential. This dialogue should not be a one-off event or a checkbox exercise. Instead, this requires a commitment to consistently listening and responding to their voices over time. It means encouraging and supporting their participation in matters that affect them, while genuinely working to develop and implement solutions that reflect their calls for action.

Mokopuna experience support primarily through trusting relationships and a collective approach to care. Effective support often comes from key figures in their lives – youth workers, counsellors, teachers, or friends. Trust is central to these relationships, allowing mokopuna to feel safe, open up, build confidence, develop a sense of self-worth and hope, and begin their healing journey. These connections foster a sense of belonging within a broader community of support - whānau, friends, teachers, and other adults – all working together. This collective approach reinforces that caring for mokopuna is everyone's responsibility.

Practical support, such as assistance with securing housing or obtaining identification, is critical in supporting mokopuna healing and wider wellbeing. Mokopuna value services that address their immediate needs alongside counselling and clinical support. Wraparound support from whānau is essential, with many mokopuna benefiting from involving their whole family in the healing process. Cultural support plays a crucial role as well; services that are responsive to cultural identity and tikanga help mokopuna feel understood. Consistent and clear communication from support workers is vital, as broken promises and poor follow-up can erode trust, especially recognising that trust has already been broken.

Reliable, culturally responsive, and transparent support ensures mokopuna feel genuinely cared for and safe. Peer support also plays a vital role, providing comfort and connection for many mokopuna. Overall, mokopuna thrive when surrounded by emotional, practical, and culturally grounded support, creating a nurturing environment for their healing and wellbeing.

Calls to action: Grounded in mokopuna voices

The mokopuna who spoke with us have been clear about what works, what doesn't, and what needs to change. Their stories of navigating support after experiencing family violence and sexual violence are a powerful reminder of the gaps in support and the urgent need for improvement in services and at the systemic level across Aotearoa.

Recognise the interconnection between violence and mental health for mokopuna

One key theme in the experiences of the mokopuna we spoke with is the interconnection between violence and mental health. Mokopuna repeatedly mentioned how the trauma they endured had significant impacts on their mental health, and how the mental health system often didn't meet their needs. Our findings highlight an urgent need to recognise the interconnection between family violence, sexual violence, and mental health. Many mokopuna we spoke to sought support from mental health services and youth organisations as their first point of contact. It is vital for the family violence and sexual violence sectors to collaborate with the mental health and youth sectors to acknowledge these links and create effective pathways, systems, and responses that lead to well-informed, timely, and responsive interventions.

Address funding models

The current funding models for services supporting mokopuna and whānau require a major overhaul. Mokopuna want services that are accessible, youth-friendly, and well-advertised. Yet, many of them reported how much trouble they had accessing services due to strict criteria and not knowing where to find help. Flexible, sustainable funding would allow services to prioritise outcomes centred on the wellbeing of mokopuna, rather than being constrained by narrow requirements or eligibility criteria. Additionally, adequately funding services to promote their availability will improve accessibility. This will help reach mokopuna where they are, making support options more visible and reducing uncertainty about where to find help.

Develop youth housing initiatives

Many mokopuna also struggled with housing instability. Secure and youth-focused housing is crucial for mokopuna safety and wellbeing, especially for those escaping violent environments. Their calls for more youth housing initiatives reflect the need for spaces where mokopuna can live without fear and focus on healing. We need more accessible, safe, and youth-focused housing options, along with the development of more child and youth-friendly community spaces. These environments can enhance wellbeing and create opportunities for mokopuna to thrive. Importantly, these spaces must be free, centrally located, and sustainably funded.

Strengthen service practices

Mokopuna have shared how crucial it is to receive consistent, compassionate care from support services. Yet, many also described poor experiences with support services, citing lack of communication, inadequate follow-up, and unhelpful practices. Mokopuna were clear about the need for skilled and empathetic staff who are not only trained but can also relate to their experiences. As mentioned, several mokopuna highlighted the importance of hiring people with lived experience of violence and trauma. This aligns with our call to strengthen support service practices by ensuring that staff have the skills, cultural awareness, and empathy needed to respond effectively.

Many mokopuna also expressed the desire for peer support networks, and for services to provide clear, respectful communication. It is essential that services foster an environment where mokopuna feel safe to open up. By improving practices and ensuring that kaimahi are equipped to manage sensitive situations, services can play a critical role in a mokopuna's healing journey.

Enhance cultural responsiveness and ensure equitable investment

Mokopuna and whānau emphasised the essential role of cultural responsiveness in effective support, noting that connections to culture, whakapapa, and kaupapa Māori services are vital for healing. Enhancing cultural sensitivity across all services is crucial, requiring prioritised funding for kaupapa Māori and Pasifika models, improved cultural competency among staff, and a diverse workforce that reflects the communities served.

Therefore, funders should invest equitably in culturally appropriate models, incorporating indigenous health frameworks and mātauranga Māori, as well as Pacific health approaches. By aligning resource distribution with these needs, services can adopt localised, iwi, hapū, and whānau-led solutions, ensuring that mokopuna and whānau feel seen, heard, and supported in an inclusive and equitable environment.

Address issues in 'the system'

Addressing the systemic issues that affect mokopuna is essential for creating meaningful change. Whether through Oranga Tamariki, the police, or the mental health system, many felt unseen and unsupported. These negative experiences can perpetuate cycles of harm and trauma, highlighting the need for reform within these systems. Specifically, Oranga Tamariki must ensure accountability in social worker interactions and quality of practice with mokopuna. The justice system should also prioritise the safety and comfort of young people during Police encounters, particularly in sensitive situations. Furthermore, the mental health system must be adequately resourced to ensure timely access to the support that mokopuna need. It is vital that all sectors collaborate and actively listen to mokopuna to incorporate their perspectives into decision-making processes, fostering an environment that prioritises mokopuna wellbeing and puts them at the centre.

CONCLUSION

The impact of family violence and sexual violence on mokopuna and whānau is significant, affecting both individual and community wellbeing short and long term. To facilitate healing, it is essential that services and supports work effectively together, providing a coordinated response that is trauma-informed and culturally responsive. This approach ensures that mokopuna feel safe and supported throughout their recovery. Breaking intergenerational cycles of violence requires systemic change and collaboration across sectors, empowering whānau to heal collectively. By prioritising the wellbeing of mokopuna and addressing the root causes of violence to prevent it from occurring in the first place, we can create a safer Aotearoa for everyone.

In conclusion, our findings highlight the urgent need for a holistic and integrated approach to supporting mokopuna. Effective, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive services are essential to supporting mokopuna and their families in their healing journeys. It is imperative that government agencies, community organisations, and individuals work together to implement these changes. Establishing ongoing engagement mechanisms is crucial; as mokopuna grow and their needs evolve, their perspectives must continually shape strategies like Te Aorerekura and the systems that impact their futures.

Methodology

The focus of this report was on mokopuna and whānau experience of seeking and receiving help and support after experiencing family violence and/or sexual violence. Our goal was to understand ‘what works’ or ‘what good looks like’ when mokopuna and whānau access services and support to heal from family violence and/or sexual violence.

We also spoke with kaimahi working with mokopuna to ensure we understood the broader landscape of working in the sector. While this report is informed by what we heard from kaimahi, we have decided to keep kaimahi voice and views separate. This allows us to ensure we are able to do justice to all voices and explore the issues and whakaaro separately. We intend to publish a report on kaimahi views shortly.

We explored four key areas of inquiry:

- What works
- What doesn’t work
- What gets in the way
- What needs to change

For the purposes of this report, we have combined insights from the ‘what doesn’t work’ and ‘what gets in the way’ areas of inquiry, as they were often highly interrelated and reflected the same underlying issues.

Project design

We utilised semi-structured interviews, which allowed for flexibility in exploring the areas of inquiry. Open-ended questions were designed to guide the interviews, enabling participants to discuss topics of importance to them.

To ensure ethical rigour, we engaged an Ethics Committee composed of experts from the family violence, sexual violence, and youth sectors across Aotearoa. Our proposed approach was submitted to this Committee, which convened three times to review and approve our methodology and help ensure we were undertaking the project in a safe and ethical way for mokopuna.

During the interviews, standardised templates were used to record demographic information, key quotes, and any observational insights. Each mokopuna interview was also audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed in full. Confidentiality was guaranteed to all participants to protect their privacy and encourage candid responses. Mokopuna were offered to have a support person of their choosing with them during the interview.

Finding participants

Our aim was to interview a range of mokopuna, whānau and kaimahi to provide diverse experiences from across Aotearoa. All mokopuna were required to be at a point in their journey where they were able to speak of their experiences without risk of further harm. Informed consent is a cornerstone of our mahi at Mana Mokopuna. Each participant was guided through our ongoing consent process, which covered the use of their information for reporting (including Mana Mokopuna reports), confidentiality and the right to withdraw their consent at any time before publication. Mokopuna also understood their right to have a support person present during the interviews or at any stage thereof.

We recruited mokopuna, whānau, and kaimahi using a village/community connector approach. These engagements nurture and sustain meaningful relationships with trusted community organisations, adults and whānau who hold authentic and existing relationships with mokopuna. This ensures that the mokopuna engaged, remain connected to their existing support networks and that Mana Mokopuna is guided and supervised by these trusted adults.

The community connectors we engaged with approached relevant services, organisations, and mokopuna in their communities, focusing on those interested in participating and meeting our criteria for experiences and age range of 10 – 18 years[3] and to 25 years of age for care-experienced mokopuna.

In one region we visited, it was deemed by the community connector that it may be more appropriate for a specific organisation to conduct their own interviews. This was due to the organisation already having the trust of the whānau and mokopuna they work with. The Mana Mokopuna team worked with the organisation to ensure they had all information they needed to safely conduct the interviews. Voice recordings of the interviews were securely sent to Mana Mokopuna for transcription.

In total, we conducted interviews with:

- **41** mokopuna
- **24** whānau members, including 2 whānau-led initiatives[4]
- **46** kaimahi from 14 organisations

We interviewed thirteen whānau whose mokopuna were also part of this project, while eleven did not have mokopuna involved in the interviews. Additionally, all but three of the organisations where we spoke with kaimahi were connected to the mokopuna and/or whānau we engaged with.

The participants were located in a mix of urban and rural settings across six regions in Aotearoa, with four regions in the North Island and two in the South Island. We will not disclose the regions in this report in order to maintain the confidentiality of those we spoke to.

3 Originally we had agreed we would interview those aged 10-25, however during one of our engagements with a whānau there were two nine year olds present. It was agreed with the mokopuna, their whānau and the interviewing team that it was appropriate for these two mokopuna to be included.
4 In the context of this report, a whānau-led initiative refers to a whānau taking the lead in their own healing journey following experiences of family violence and/or sexual violence. These initiatives are guided by the unique values, knowledge, and cultural practices of a particular whānau, focusing on the wellbeing of both mokopuna and the wider whānau.

The reported ethnicities of mokopuna we interviewed:

Reported ethnicities	Number
Māori	30
Pasifika	9
New Zealand European/Pākehā	9
Other	5
Did not specify	2
Total	**53**

The mokopuna we interviewed identified as:

Reported demographic group	Number
Care-experienced	11
Rainbow	9
Whaikaha	3
Refugee/migrant/resettled	1
Young parent	7
Total	**31**

The age range of mokopuna interviewed:

Age	Number
9	2
10	1
11	1
12	2
13	2
14	2
15	2
16	9
17	6
18	3
19	2
20	1
21	2
22	3
23	2
24	0
25	1

Analysis process

The data from the interviews, comprising written notes and audio recordings, underwent a thorough analysis process. We held four full-day analysis hui at the conclusion of the field work to identify key themes and relationships within the data.

Once key themes were established, we used the coding software NVivo to code the transcripts according to these themes. A small team of coders analysed the data and presented their findings, which were distilled into the thematic structure of this report.

All data was securely stored on Mana Mokopuna-issued laptops and cell phones, with hard copies of documents kept in secure storage to maintain confidentiality and data integrity.

Limitations

There were some limitations in the way the project was completed:

- Information sheets and consent forms for mokopuna and adults were only produced in English. In future these should be made more accessible by having them translated into different languages.

- While the village/community connector model was chosen to ensure mokopuna who engaged had adequate support, it limited the Project Team's ability to engage with mokopuna who were not connected to supports. Many of the groups and services we engaged with had existing relationships with our organisation.

- Because we did not ask mokopuna to tell us 'their stories' of experiencing violence, we are unable to conclusively say how many mokopuna experienced either family violence or sexual violence. All mokopuna who participated in the project had experienced either family violence, sexual violence, or both.

- This project did not involve a representative sample of mokopuna in Aotearoa New Zealand. The voices and themes presented in this report represent those who participated. These insights come from authentic, powerful, and profound real-life stories which illustrate the experiences of a diverse range of mokopuna across the country.

- The analysis process was only completed by adults. If there was additional time in our project, we would find ways to safely include mokopuna in the analysis process.

Glossary and key terms

Aroha Affection, sympathy, charity, compassion, love, empathy

Care-experienced Those who have been – or are – in out-of-home care. That means living away from home in the care or custody of the government, an iwi social service, a cultural social service, or a child and family support service.

Family violence A pattern of behaviour that coerces, controls or harms within the context of a close personal relationship (FVDRC 2016).

Family violence includes intimate partner violence, elder abuse, child abuse, dating violence, stalking, and violence towards another family or whānau member including child-to-parent violence. It can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, or involve economic abuse or exploitation.

Family violence often involves fear, intimidation, isolation, and loss of freedoms for people impacted by family violence. It includes children being exposed to violence between adults or subject to abuse or neglect themselves. For older people, disabled people, children, or people dependent on others, family violence can also include not providing care, or preventing access to medicines or other care required. There are also distinctive cultural forms of abuse directed at women, such as dowry-related violence, forced and under-age marriage, and female genital mutilation.

Generational trauma A cycle of psychological and social issues that affect descendants of those who experienced the original trauma

Haerenga Journey

Helpline Free counselling services that mokopuna can access through phone call and text messaging

Hinengaro Mind

Islander Refers to Pacific Islanders (including all of Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia)

Ka pai Very good

Kai Food

Kaimahi Staff/employees, support workers

Ka'uvalea Being or creating a bad image of your family

Kapa Haka Group that performs Māori performing arts

Karakia Chants, poetry, and prayers

Kaupapa Māori Māori approach, Māori ideologies and philosophies, Māori skills, attitudes, and values of Māori society

Kōrero Discussion, conversation or statement

Lived experience Firsthand knowledge and insights gained from personal encounters with specific issues, particularly in the context of family violence, sexual violence, mental health, and addiction

Mahuru te ata wairoa Settle the reflection in the long river (A reflective practice)

Mamae Seen and unseen hurts

Mātauranga Māori Māori knowledge - the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices

Marae Māori traditional meeting house and land that is significant to each tribe

Mean Really good

OD Overdose

Pākehā Non-Māori New Zealander

Pakeke Adult

Pasifika A term used to represent a collective of populations from different countries: Cook Islands Māori, Fijian, Kiribati, Niuean, Samoan, Tokelauan, Tongan and Tuvaluan. This includes people born in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Respite home A setting where care-experienced mokopuna can go to for a short period of time

Sexual violence Also known as mahi tūkino, sexual abuse, sexual assault, or sexual harm) is any sexual behaviour towards another person without that person's freely given consent.

Child sexual abuse includes any exposure of a child under 16 to sexual acts or sexual material. Child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour can also occur within families, at school, and online.

Sexual violence includes sexual violation, incest, rape, assault, exploitation, trafficking, grooming, sexual harassment, and any unwanted kissing or touching. Sexual violence also includes behaviour such as forcing someone to watch pornography or taking or sharing images of children for sexual purposes, non-consensual sharing of sexual images, and other forms of digital and online sexual harm through social media. It can involve force, coercion and power used by one person (or people) over another.

Tamariki Children and young people

Te Ao Māori Māori worldview

Te Reo Māori Māori language

Tiaki To guard, keep or protect

Tikanga Māori methodology or rules, the first law of Aotearoa

Tinana Body

Tohunga An expert practitioner in any skill or craft, either religious or otherwise

Trauma A person's experience of emotional distress resulting from an event that overwhelms the capacity to emotionally digest it

Tupuna Ancestors

Uplift(ed) When custody of a child is granted to Oranga Tamariki, the child is taken from the care of their whānau and placed with approved caregivers

Waiata Song, chant

Wairua Spirit, soul

Whakaaro Thoughts, opinions, ideas

Whakamā Shame (a feeling of isolation and embarrassment due to self-doubt and self-preservation)

Whakawhanaungatanga Process of establishing relationships, relating well to others

Whakapapa The family lines of whānau that connect to ancestors and the natural world

Whānau Whānau is often translated as ‘family’, but its meaning is more complex. It includes physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions and is based on whakapapa. Whānau can be multi-layered, flexible, and dynamic. Whānau relationships include those with whāngai (foster children) and those who have passed on. There are roles and responsibilities for individuals and for the collective. The structure of whānau can vary from immediate family to much broader collectives. The most important features of whānau that distinguish it from family and other social groupings are whakapapa, spirituality, and the responsibility to marae and hapū.

Whānau is also used as a metaphor for close friends or associates, intended to be inclusive and build a sense of group unity. Whānau begins with the individual. The relationship between the individual and the whānau is subtle and complex. Individuals have rights of their own, but they exist because of the whānau and have responsibilities to the whānau.

Whaikaha To have strength, to have ability, otherly abled, enabled

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“A place to talk peacefully” what helps and what gets in the way

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