Aroturuki Independent Tamariki Children's Monitor

Outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau in the oranga tamariki system

A report on the performance of the oranga tamariki system

REPORTING PERIOD 1 JULY 2023 - 30 JUNE 2024



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government Me he tākapu matakana He tākapu ruku hōhonu He tākapu tohatoha hua

Like a sharp eyed tākapu A deep diving tākapu A tākapu who shares

Crown copyright © 2025. Copyright material in this report is protected by copyright owned by the Independent Children's Monitor on behalf of the Crown. Unless indicated otherwise for specific items or collections of content (either below or within specific items or collections), this copyright material is licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 New Zealand licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0. In essence, you are free to copy, distribute and adapt the material, as long as you attribute it to Aroturuki Tamariki, the Independent Children's Monitor, and abide by the other licence terms. Please note that this licence does not apply to any logos, emblems, trademarks, photography or imagery on the website or to the website's design elements. Those specific items may not be reused without express permission.

Published June 2025

Aroturuki Tamariki - Independent Children's Monitor PO Box 202 Wellington 6140 New Zealand Email: info@aroturuki.govt.nz Web: aroturuki.govt.nz

ISSN 3021-3991 (Print) ISSN 3021-4009 (Online)

He Whakamihi Acknowledgements

Ka nui te mihi ki ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me ō rātou whānau i kōrero mai mō ō rātou wheako mō tēnei pūrongo.

Ka mihi hoki ki ngā tautoko me ngā whakaaro o ngā māngai o ngā hapū, ngā iwi, ngā hoa pātui rautaki, ngā whakahaere Māori, ngā whakahaere kāwanatanga-kore (ngā NGO) me ngā tari kāwanatanga.

E mihi ana ki te hunga nā rātou ngā raraunga me ngā mōhiohio i whakamahia i tēnei pūrongo. Tae atu ki te hunga kua huri ki tua o te ārai - he mihi aroha ki a rātou kua wehe atu.

Hei kōrero whakamutunga, e mihi ana ki ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori katoa kei roto i tēnei, i whai wāhi mai rānei, ki te pūnaha oranga tamariki. We are grateful to the tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau who shared their experiences with us for this report.

We acknowledge the contributions and input of representatives from hapū, iwi, strategic partners, Māori organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs) and government agencies.

We acknowledge all those whose data and information have been used in this report. This includes those who have passed on he mihi aroha ki a rātou kua wehe atu.

We also acknowledge all tamariki and rangatahi Māori who are currently involved, or have been involved, in the oranga tamariki system.

Kupu Whakataki

l te tau 2023, i whakawhānuitia tā mātou mahi kia whānui atu i te hunga e tiakina ana ki te pūnaha whānui o oranga tamariki. Kāore anō kia rerekē tā mātou aronga, me ngā reo o ngā tamariki, ngā rangatahi me ō rātou whānau i te wāhi. Ko te mea kua rerekē ko te whānuitanga o te hunga e toro ana mātou me ngā ā rātou kōrero ki a mātou me rātou e mahi puta ana i te pūnaha a oranga tamariki. Ko tēnei pūrongo tā mātou pūrongo pūnaha whānui tuatahi. E āta aro ana ki te whānui o te whakatutukitanga o te pūnaha ki te tuku hua ki ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori - ka tuku pūrongo mātou mō tēnei i ia tau.

Ko te awhe o te pūnaha oranga tamariki mai i te hāpaiora tōmua tae noa ki te manaaki me te whakamaru me te ture taiohi. Ko ngā tau tuatahi e rua te tuatahi o tā mātou kōrerorero tahi ki Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa hei tari e tuku ratonga ana i raro i a Oranga Tamariki 1989. E hari ana ki te kaha o te whai wāhi mai, me te rikarika ki te mōhio ki ngā mea kua kohia e mātou.

Ko tētahi tino take e kitea ana i tēnei pūrongo ko te maumahara kāore te nuinga o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i Aotearoa i roto i te pūnaha a oranga tamariki. He mea nui tēnei.

Ko tētahi atu take hira he ōrite ngā tūmanako me ngā wawata o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori kei te pūnaha oranga tamariki ki aua tamariki kāore i roto. He aha ngā mahi e mahi ana, kāore i te mahia, e aukati ana i aua tūmanako me aua wawata kia kore ai e tutuki?

Ko te tino nui rawa o te Māori i ia taumata – mai i ngā pūrongo māharahara ki te noho i raro i te kāwanatanga, i roto i te ture taiohi rānei – e tohu ana tēnei kāore he take o te pūnaha. Ina puta tuatahi mai te rongo mō ngā tamariki, rangatahi rānei ki te pūnaha, ā, me whiwhi āwhina, he arawātea tēnei mō te kāwanatanga ki te tuku i ngā āwhina tika i te wā tika. Ahakoa kāore i whaitake ngā whai wāhitanga, ka mahi taihara ngā rangatahi, tērā anō tētahi whai wāhitanga ki te tuku i ngā āwhina tika – te āwhina ki te whakarite i ngā pānga o te tūkino me te whētuki i pā ki te maha o rātou i a rātou e tamariki ana, ngā āwhina ki te whakarite i ō rātou hiahia mātauranga, hauora rānei me ngā āwhina ki te hono atu ki ō rātou whānau whānui me te ahurea e ngaro nei i ō rātou ao.

Ahakoa kei te āhua anga whakamua, kei reira tonu ngā tauārai, ā, he tino nui rawa te Māori e kitea ana e tiakina ana, e whakamarutia ana e te kāwanatanga, ka mutu kei roto i ngā hāpaiora ture taiohi. E pai ai ngā hua wā poto me te wā roa me tuku i ngā whakatau uaua ki hea tuku ai i ngā ratonga. Me ōrite te whai mana mā te tuku mana me te tuari pūtea ki te hunga e tika ana mā rātou e whakatutuki ngā hiahia o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me ō rātou whānau.

Ko te utu o te heke o ngā whakatipuranga i roto i te pūnaha he nui aua tāngata me aua whānau otirā mō te kāwanatanga hoki. Ko te mahi kia rerekē tētahi wāhanga nui o te otinga. Ko ētahi kaupapa kua kite nei tātou e whakaatu ana he painga ki ngā tari kāwanatanga o te noho ki te tēpu ka tuku i ētahi atu hei ārahi.

I āta tirotiro te Kōmihana Uiui a te Karauna ki Kōmihana Uiui a Te Karauna mō te Tūkinotanga i te Wā Tiaki e te Kāwanatanga me ngā Whakanōhanga ā-Whakapono ki ngā rā o mua ki ngā mutunga iho pūmau o ngā tūkinotanga i raro i te maru karauna. I tētahi atu taumata, tata i te ia marama ka puta he pūrongo e whakaatu ana i te whētuki, i te whakahapa tuku iho rānei a ngā tari kāwanatanga kāore i kakama te tuku i ngā āwhina e hiahiatia ana ki te tangata. I puta i tētahi whakatau o nā tata nei e toru ngā whakatipuranga i raro i te maru karauna i te whakahapa tonutia. Ko te ngoikore o te pūnaha whānui tēnei kaua ki te tamaiti kotahi noa iho engari ki ngā whakatipuranga o te whānau. Ko te tuku i ngā tautoko tika i te wā tika te tīmatanga o te takahuri i tēnei āhuatanga.

Arran Jones Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive

NhBaraghen

Nova Banaghan Tumu Aroturuki | Chief Monitor

Foreword

In 2023, our monitoring scope widened beyond those in care to the entire oranga tamariki system. Our approach, with the voices of tamariki (children), rangatahi (young people) and their whānau (families) at the centre, has not changed. What has changed is the breadth of who we engage with, and what we hear from them and those working across the oranga tamariki system. This report is our first system-wide report focused on the extent to which system performance is delivering outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori – something we will be reporting on annually.

The oranga tamariki system ranges from early intervention through care and protection and youth justice. It includes the delivery of services and supports from a range of government agencies and iwi, Māori and community providers. The past two years have been our first engaging with New Zealand Police as an agency delivering services under the *Oranga Tamariki Act 1989*. We have been impressed with the level of engagement we have received, and the eagerness to learn from what we gather.

A recurring point throughout this report is a reminder that most tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Aotearoa are not involved in the oranga tamariki system. This is important.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system have similar hopes and aspirations to those who are not. What is happening, or not happening, to prevent those hopes and aspirations from being achieved?

The over-representation of Māori at every level – from reports of concern to being in care or involved with youth justice – is a clear indicator the system is not performing. When tamariki or rangatahi first become known to the system and help is needed, this is an opportunity for the state to provide the right help at the right time. Even after these opportunities have been missed and rangatahi have offended, there is yet another window of opportunity to provide the right help – help to address the effects of abuse and trauma many went through as a child, help to address unmet education or health needs and help to connect with wider whānau and a culture that has been missing from their lives.

While some progress is being made, barriers remain and Māori remain over-represented in care and protection and youth justice interventions. Improving short-term and long-term outcomes will require tough decisions about where to prioritise services across government agencies. It will require sharing power through delegation and sharing funding with those that are best placed to meet the needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

The cost of intergenerational involvement in the system is high for individuals and whānau experiencing it and also for the state. Working differently is a significant part of the solution. Some of the initiatives we have seen show there is benefit in government agencies staying at the table while allowing others to lead.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care was a look into the past at the lifelong consequences of abuse in care. At another level, not a month goes by without another report citing intergenerational trauma or neglect by state agencies to provide the help needed earlier in a person's life. A recent judgment cited three generations of involvement in state care, and tamariki were still being neglected. This is a system-wide failure not just of one child but of generations of whānau. Getting the right support in place at the right time will be the beginning of reversing this trend.

& NhBaragher

Arran Jones Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive

Nova Banaghan Tumu Aroturuki | Chief Monitor

Tauākī a Te Kāhui

Ka tukuna atu e mātou tēnei pūrongo tuatahi i runga i te wairua haepapa me te paiherenga mai i Aroturuki Tamariki mō ngā hua mō ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori, me ō rātou whānau, i roto i te pūnaha tamariki. E whakaatu ana tēnei pūrongo i ngā āhuatanga e pēhi ana i ngā whānau kei roto i tēnei pūnaha, e kōrero ana mō ngā wheako o mua me ngā uauatanga onāianei. E kore e wareware i a mātou te kino kua pā ki ō tātou whānau, ā, ka whakapau kaha mātou kia tautokona rā anō ia mokopuna i roto i ngā wāhi e poipoi ana i tō rātou whakapapa, mauri me te pitomata o te tiketiketanga.

E hiahia ana mātou kia noho haumaru, kia arohatia ā tātou mokopuna, te hāpai i ngā hononga ki ō rātou whānau me ō rātou hapori. Me noho koinei te tikanga mō ngā whānau katoa i Aotearoa. He mea waiwai te whakapapa ki te oranga, te tuitui hononga me te whakaū i te tuakiri ahakoa nō hea. Mō te Māori, hei taupori iwi taketake he tino hira tēnei hononga mōna anō, otirā ā-whānau, ā-hapori hoki. Me ōrite te manaaki i ngā whānau i runga i te tōkeke, te manaaki me te pūmau ki ngā tikanga haumaru. Me mātua waihanga a Oranga Tamariki i tētahi wāhi e taea ai ngā hua pai rawa mō te katoa.

Kāore te pūnaha oranga tamariki i te whakarato putanga ōrite mō te Māori. He maha ngā pūrongo me ngā arotakenga e whakaatu kāore i te tika te tiaki a te pūnaha i te Māori, ā, e whakaū ana ngā raraunga o tēnei pūrongo i tērā. Kāore i tino whakaritea ngā āhuatanga oha-pori whānui pērā i te kaikiri, te rawakore, me te koretake o te āhei ki te ture, te hauora, te mātauranga, te whare noho me te whai mahi e ngā kaupapahere Kawanatanga. Kei te pēhi ngā manarite-kore i ngā whānau i ia rā. Kei te ngoikore te kāwanatanga. Mai i te putanga o te pūrongo o Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū i te tau 1988 me te whakatūtanga o Oranga Tamariki i te tau 2017, kāore i tino anga whakamua. He roa rawa te wā e tatari ana tātou kia whaikiko ai.

Kāore i tika te kitea nuitia o te Māori i roto i te pūranga paru, e ai ki ngā raraunga o tēnei pūrongo. He nui ake te tūponotanga ka uru ā tātou mokopuna ki te pūnaha, ka nui ake te pa ki ngā hātepe kino ake, ā, ka roa ake te noho ki raro i te maru karauna tēnā i ētahi atu rōpū. Mēnā me mātua uru ki raro maru karauna, he mea hira kia kaha ake, kia haumaru ake rātou i te putanga mai – kāore i te pēnei mō te maha o ā tātou mokopuna.na.

I ākina e mātou a Aroturuki Tamariki kia mau tonu ki ngā whakaritenga putanga hira i roto i te tekau tau e whai ake hei whakawhānui i ngā raraunga me ngā tātari ia kei roto i tēnei pūrongo me te whakawhanake haere tonu i te tikanga aroturuki. Ka whai ēnei pou i ngā ia me ngā pānga ki ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i roto i te pūnaha oranga tamariki.

I mārama mātou ko te hiahia ka arotake a Aroturuki Tamariki i ngā raraunga e pā ana ki a rātou i uru ki a Oranga Tamariki, tōna āhuatanga o mua rānei, ā, kua mate ināianei. He pīkaunga taumaha tēnei, engari he mea hira kia mārama ki tēnei ngaronga mai i te tirohanga tuku iho kia whaitake ai ngā kōkiri huringa i a mātou e whakaaroaro ana ki ngā kitenga a te Kōmihana Uiui a Te Karauna mō te Tūkinotanga i te Wā Tiaki. Ko te whāinga kia whakaitia te whai wāhi atu ki te pūnaha me te aro atu ki te oranga tuku iho. Ka taea te haukoti te uru haere o ngā whānau ki Oranga Tamariki mā ngā kaha o ngā hapū, ngā iwi me ngā whakahaere Māori. Puta noa i tēnei pūrongo, e whakaatu ana ngā toronga aroturuki kei ēnei hinonga ētahi o ngā rongoā e hiahiatia ana hei hāpai ake i te pūnaha oranga tamariki, me ngā tauira o ngā iwi me ngā whakahaere e whakatinana ana i ngā kaupapa takahuritanga e whakarato ana i ngā tautoko torowhānui i te wā tika hei tautoko i ngā whānau. He ōrite te whakaatu a ngā rangahau me ngā arotakenga he whaikiko tēnei aronga.

E tino māharahara tonu ana mātou mō ngā whakarerekētanga ki te pūmau e whakararu ana i ngā tikanga whaitake me te tōtika mā ā tātou mokopuna. Nā ētahi o ēnei rerekētanga tērā pea ka haere tonu ngā raru i roto i te hapori. Nā ngā tango pūtea, tae atu ki ngā poronga pūtea o nā tata nei me ngā huringa ki ngā kirimana, kua tino hē kē atu ngā whakaraeraetanga, e ngaro haere ai te haumaru me ngā ratonga waiwai. Ki te kore ngā tautoko rawaka ka noho whakaraerae ā tātou mokopuna. He mea nui te whakarite i ēnei uauatanga hei whakarite i ngā tautoko tautika ake, aroha hoki mā ā tātou mokopuna. Mā ngā huringa anake ki te pūnaha whānui me te tuku pūtea e hāngai ana ki te ao Māori kātahi ka puta tētahi taiao puāwai.

E whakaatu ana tēnei pūnaha i ngā take whakatau hira mā ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori, ā, e para ana ētahi i te huarahi mō ngā putanga pai, kino rānei. He tino hira te hāpaiora tōmua, ā, me mātua noho tēnei hei kaupapahere Kāwanatanga. He nui atu ngā mahi ka taea hei tautoko i ngā whānau i mua i te urunga mai o Oranga Tamariki, kia iti noa te tūponotanga o te uru mai ki te pūnaha. Tē taea te whakahē te hono i waenga i te manaaki me te whakamaru me te ture taiohi. Ahakoa he tokoiti noa te hunga Māori kei roto i te ture taiohi, engari he nui rawa tērā mō tō rātou tokoiti, nō reira he nui ngā mahi hei takahuri i ngā putanga kino. E mōhio ana mātou ka taea e ngā āhuatanga tōrangapū te whakapōturi, te aukati hoki i ngā rerekētanga e hiahiatia ana, tae atu ki ngā huringa ā-ture tino hira pērā i te pīra i te wāhanga 7AA o te Ture Oranga Tamariki. Ka noho tonu Te Tiriti o Waitangi hei mātāpono ārahi taketake i a mātou e arotake ana i ngā herenga o te Karauna me te whakatutukitanga o te pūnaha.

Mō te anga whakamua, ko ngā kaupapa hou mō ngā tautoko pāpori me mātua whakatairanga i ngā reo me ngā hiahia o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me ō rātou whānau ki te iho o ngā whakatau tikanga..

Ki ō mātou whakaaro ko tēnei pūrongo ānō he matapihi ki te ao āwhiowhio. Me pūmau tō tātou paiherenga hei kaitaunaki mō ngā whānau me te aroturuki i te pūnaha pakaru. Kua eke ki te wā e whai wāhi ai ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori katoa kia puāwai me te whakatutuki i tō rātou pitomata, i runga i te aroha, te haumaru me te hono ki tō rātou whānau. E whirinaki ana te anamata o ō tātou hapori ki ngā mahi ka whāia e tātou i tēnei rā. Koinei te wā, ināia tonu nei!

Te Kāhui, Te Rōpū Tohutohu Māori ki Aroturuki Tamariki

Tā Mark Solomon Katie Murray Eugene Ryder Enid Ratahi-Pryor Wayne Blissett Dee-Ann Wolferstan

Statement from Te Kāhui

It is with a profound sense of responsibility and commitment that we present this inaugural report from Aroturuki Tamariki on outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau in the oranga tamariki system. This report is a reflection of the realities faced by whānau involved in this system, drawing from past experiences and current challenges. We will not forget the harm caused to our whānau, and we will not rest until every mokopuna (grandchild, descendant) is supported in environments that nurture their whakapapa, mauri (life force) and potential for greatness.

We all want our mokopuna to feel safe and loved, fostering connections to their whānau and hapori (community). This should be the norm for all families in Aotearoa New Zealand. Recognising whakapapa is essential to wellbeing, creating connection and affirming identity regardless of origin. For Māori, as an indigenous population it has even more emphasis in the sense of self, whānau and hapori. All whānau deserve to be treated with fairness, care, and a commitment to safe practices. Oranga Tamariki must create an environment conducive to achieving the best possible outcomes for all.

The oranga tamariki system is failing to deliver equal outcomes for Māori. Numerous reports and evaluations affirm that Māori experience systemic inequalities, and the data presented in this report reinforces this. Broader socioeconomic factors such as racism, poverty, and lack of access to adequate justice, health, education, housing and employment have not been sufficiently addressed by Government policies. The disparities impact whānau daily. The state is falling short. Since the release of the Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū report in 1988 and the establishment of Oranga Tamariki in 2017, meaningful progress has been insufficient. We have waited too long for change.

The over-representation of Māori, as shown in the data in this report, is unacceptable. Our mokopuna are more likely to become involved in the system, face escalated proceedings and remain longer in care than other groups. If they must enter care, it is critical that they emerge stronger and safer – an outcome not being realised for too many of our mokopuna.

We urged Aroturuki Tamariki to maintain key outcome measures over the next decade to build upon the data and trend analysis presented in this report and continuously develop its monitoring practice. These pou will track trends and impacts on tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system.

We were clear that we wanted Aroturuki Tamariki to analyse data concerning those who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki or its predecessors and have passed away. This is a heavy burden to bear, but understanding this loss from an intergenerational perspective is vital for driving change as we reflect on the findings of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care. We aspire to reduce involvement in the system while focusing on intergenerational wellbeing. The cycle of whānau involvement with Oranga Tamariki can be disrupted through the strengths of hapū, iwi and Māori organisations. Throughout this report, the monitoring visits show that these entities hold some of the solutions needed to enhance the oranga tamariki system, with examples of iwi and Māori organisations implementing transformative initiatives providing holistic and timely support to whānau. Research and evaluations consistently demonstrate this approach works.

We remain deeply concerned about ongoing changes to the system that undermine effective and fair practices for our mokopuna. Some of these changes threaten to perpetuate years of disadvantage within hapori. Divestment, including recent funding cuts and changes to contracts, exacerbates vulnerabilities, eroding safety and essential services. Without adequate support our mokopuna are left exposed. Addressing these challenges is imperative to ensure equitable and compassionate support for our mokopuna. Only through systemic change and funding aligned with te ao Māori can we create a flourishing environment.

This report highlights critical decision points for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and some pave the way for either positive or adverse outcomes. Early intervention is crucial and must be prioritised by Government policy. More can be done to support whānau before involvement with Oranga Tamariki, reducing the likelihood of interaction with the system. The link between care and protection and youth justice cannot be denied. While the number of Māori involved in youth justice is small, they represent a disproportionate number, and there is significant room for improvement to avert negative outcomes. We recognise that the political environment affects the pace and likelihood of necessary change, including critical legislation change such as the repeal of section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act. Te Tiriti o Waitangi will remain a fundamental guiding principle as we evaluate the Crown's obligations and the system's performance.

Moving forward, any new approaches to social investment must prioritise the voices and needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau at the centre of decision making.

Our reflection is that this report is somewhat like he matapihi ki te ao āwhiowhio (a window into the whirlwind). Together, let us remain steadfast in our commitment to advocating for whānau and monitoring a broken system. It is time to ensure that all tamariki and rangatahi Māori have the opportunity to thrive and achieve their full potential, grounded in love, safety and connection to their whānau. The future of our communities depends on the actions we take today. It's make or break time – ināia tonu nei (right now) – make the time now for change!

Te Kāhui, Māori Advisory Group to Aroturuki Tamariki

Tā Mark Solomon Katie Murray Eugene Ryder Enid Ratahi-Pryor Wayne Blissett Dee-Ann Wolferstan

Contents

He whakamihi Acknowledgements	3
Kupu Whakataki	4
Foreword	5
Tauākī a Te Kāhui	6
Statement from Te Kāhui	8
Contents	10
Ngā kitenga nui	12
Key findings	17
Our approach to this report	21
Our approach to assessing outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau Agency data	22
The voices of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau	25
The oranga tamariki system	
About tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system	
Outcome indicators for tomorily and remustabilities in the	
Outcome indicators for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system	33
What tamariki and rangatahi Māori say about their lives and future	
Despite their hopes and aspirations these are not always realised	
Māori who were involved in the oranga tamariki system as children often	4 5
have worse outcomes than those who were not	
Our pou for future reports	53
How Oranga Tamariki works with tamariki and rangatahi	
Māori and their whānau	55
How strategic partners make a difference	58
How strategic partners make a difference Te Rūnanga-Ā-Iwi-O-Ngāpuhi	
	60
Te Rūnanga-Ā-Iwi-O-Ngāpuhi	60
Te Rūnanga-Ā-Iwi-O-Ngāpuhi Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated	60 63 65
Te Rūnanga-Ā-Iwi-O-Ngāpuhi Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira	

	nding and contracts delivering services for tamariki and ngatahi Māori and their whānau	73
	Oranga Tamariki funds services for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau	74
	How tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau move through the oranga tamariki system	82
Re	ports of concern and early intervention	83
	Receiving a report of concern is a key decision point for Oranga Tamariki and an opportunity to respond	84
	Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are disproportionately represented in reports of concern to Oranga Tamariki	86
	Reports of concern are not always addressed in the way people expect	87
Fai	mily group conferences	92
	The FGC is a legislated hui for whānau and professionals to come together and make decisions in the best interests of tamariki and rangatahi	92
	Māori are more likely to have reports of concern that progress to FGCs than non-Māori	94
	Oranga Tamariki kaimahi have mixed views on the use of care and protection FGCs	95
	Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori had a range of experiences of being included in FGCs	
	It is even harder for the voice of disabled tamariki and rangatahi to be heard	
	We heard about challenges in agreeing to plans, and professionals not feeling heard	
	Following up and delivering FGC plans is difficult due to a lack of funding and available supports	
	Subsequent youth justice FGCs may have decreased impact	
Yo	uth justice intervention	
	Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are over-represented	
	Tamariki and rangatahi who offend are likely to have unmet care and protection needs	
	There are opportunities to better support tamariki and rangatahi early on and before they offend Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are over-represented in police proceedings	
	Holistic support for tamariki and rangatahi can make a difference and prevent escalation through the youth justice system.	
	The youth justice delegation with Rangitāne o Manawatū shows what can be achieved through a partnered approach	
	Kotahi te Whakaaro shows how organisations can successfully work together to address youth offending	127
	Improving the response to care and protection needs can prevent escalation into youth justice	128
Glo	ossary	130
Ар	pendix One: Regional data	134
Ар	pendix Two: Using data from the IDI and What About Me? survey	137
Ар	pendix Three: NZ Police data used in this report	147
Ар	pendix Four: Resources and getting help	150

Ngā kitenga nui

He nui rawa te kitea o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori, me ō rātou whānau i roto i te pūnaha oranga tamariki, ka mutu kei te raru rātou i te pūnaha

Tata ki te hautoru o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi i Aotearoa he Māori, ā, ko te nuinga kāore e whai atu ki te pūnaha oranga tamariki. Engari, tata ki te 50 ōrau o ngā pūrongo māharahara ka tukuna ki Oranga Tamariki mō ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori, ka mutu tata ki te rua hautoru o rātou te rahinga kei raro i te maru karauna.

Ina uru mai ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori ki a Oranga Tamariki, i te nuinga o te wā he tino whānui ngā hiahia o ngā whānau, pērā i ngā pānga rawakore, te kore kāinga noho pūmau, te whakarekereke whānau me te hauora hinengaro. I tēnei wā kei reira tētahi arawātea hei āwhina me te ārai kia kaua e uru mai anō ki te pūnaha.

E whakaatu ana ngā raraunga ka nui ake te uru mai o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi, ka kino kē atu ngā putanga wā roa. Hei tauira:

 92 örau o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i tonoa atu ki te Hui ā-Whānau a te ture taiohi i te tau 2023/24 i roto anō rātou i tētahi pūrongo māharahara o te manaaki me te whakamaru¹ Ko ngā pakeke Māori (27–30 tau) i uru ki raro i te maru karauna i mua he rima whakarea ake te tūponotanga ka toro rātou i ngā ratonga mātanga hauora hinengaro me te waranga, he iwa whakarea te tūponotanga ka noho i ngā whare noho ohotata, he ono whakarea ake te tūponotanga ka uru ki te hōhipera mō te whakamamae i a rātou rā anō, ā, he nui ake te tūponotanga ka noho hei pārurenga taihara tēnā i ngā Māori kāore i uru atu ki te pūnaha oranga tamariki.

Ka kite hoki mātou i te whai wāhitanga tuku iho. Mō ngā mātua Māori2 i uru ki raro i te maru karauna i mua, tata ki te 70 ōrau he tamariki ā rātou i whai wāhi ki tētahi wāhanga o Oranga Tamariki, ā, kotahi i roto i te tokowaru he tamaiti, he tamariki rānei ā rātou i uru ki raro i te maru karauna i tētahi wā.

Mēnā i angitu te pūnaha oranga tamariki, ina uru ngā whānau ki roto i a rātou, kua noho haumaru ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me te whakauru wawe atu i ngā tautoko kia kore ai e tino ū haere atu ki roto i te pūnaha ināianei, ā muri ake rānei. Mā ngā tautoko tika i te wā tika, he iti ake ngā tamariki Māori ka uru ki raro i te maru karauna, ka mutu ki te uru atu, ka noho haumaru rātou.

¹ Te Tāhū o Te Ture (2024). Pūrongo whakarāpopoto i ngā tūtohu o te ture taiohi: Tīhema 2024 (w. 8). <u>https://www.justice.govt.nz/</u> assets/Documents/Publications/Youth-Justice-Indicators-Summary-Report-December-2024_v1.0.pdf

² Māori 27- 30 tau

He rautaki ā Oranga Tamariki me ngā Pirihimana hei whakarite i te manarite-kore me te nui rawa o te kitea i te pūranga paru, engari i kitea e mātou ngā tauārai o te anga whakamua

Kua whakaurua atu e Oranga Tamariki me ngā Pirihimana ngā rautaki hei whakarite i ngā manarite-kore pūmau me te nui rawa o te Māori i te raruraru. Kei roto i tēnei ko te huri i ngā tikanga mahi a Oranga Tamariki, te haumi ki ngā whakangungu hei āwhina kia pai ake te mahi a ngā kaimahi me te Māori me te whakanui ake i ngā pūtea mā ngā iwi me ngā kaiwhakarato Māori, tae atu ki te haumi ki ngā pātuitanga rautaki me ngā kaupapa Whakamana Hapori. Waihoki, kua haumi ngā Pirihimana ki ngā whakangungu me te whai i tētahi rautahi hou, Te Huringa o Te Tai, he whakapai ake i te oranga me ngā ao o te Māori.

Engari, kua kitea e te pūrongo ngā tauārai ki te anga whakamua.

I roto o Oranga Tamariki, nā ngā kaupapahere tukituki, he wairua iti te pono, ngā paparanga whakatau tikanga me te ngoikore ki te tino whakamahi i ngā utauta onāianei, pērā i ngā family group conference (FGC) kāore e tino taea e ngā tauwhiro hapori te mahi kia rite ai ngā hiahia o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me ō rātou whānau. Ko te hiahia [o Oranga Tamariki] kia mahia e mātou [ngā mahi me te hui] i te marae, engari i te whiwhitanga i te nama, kei te hiahia rātou ki te mōhio he aha e utua ana e rātou te marae. Kāore rātou i te hiahia utu i ngā kai. Kāore rātou i te hiahia utu penehīni. I hui mātou i tētahi Rāhoroi i te marae, ā, he \$50 te pūtea. He \$10 ngā pūtea penehīni ka whiwhi mātou. Kāore i te tika." KAIRARANGA A-WHĀNAU (ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI)

Kāore e kakama a Oranga Tamariki i ngā wā katoa ki te urupare ki ngā pūrongo māharahara

Ina puta ngā pūrongo māharahara mō ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi, i rongo mātou mō ngā paerewa teitei mō te tūhura me te whaiwhai ake. Mō te tata ki te haurua o ngā pūrongo māharahara kāore e kōkiritia he take.

Ehara i te mea iti noa te tuku i tētahi ROC [pūrongo māharahara], kāore koe e kī anei taku mahi... [He] patu wairua, ā, ka whakamārōrō i a koe ki te mahi. "Ki a mātou ehara tēnei [pūrongo māharahara] i te take hei waiho noa, koinei ngā mea kei te kite i mua tonu i a mātou ... Me pēhea taku whakamārama kia mana ai, [ka whakaaro ake ahau] he aha ahau? Kei te kite mōrearea ahau engari kāore pea he raruraru? [Kei reira] ngā whakamāramatanga rerekē pea o te mōrea, mēnā e whakaritea ana e koe i ia rā."

KAIMAHI CANTERBURY FAMILY VIOLENCE COLLABORATION

Ina hiahia āwhina, he mea nui kia tukuna ngā āwhina tika. Tērā pea mai i te iwi, te Māori, ngā kaiwhakarato hapori rānei, te kāwanatanga rānei. Ki te kore e kōkiritia i te wā tuatahi rawa ka noho mōrea pea ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi, ā, kua kore te whānau e whiwhi i ngā tautoko e hiahiatia ana, me te aha ko te mutunga atu pea ka nui ake te uru mai ki te pūnaha oranga tamariki pērā i te ture taiohi. Tata ki te katoa o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori (92 ōrau) i tonoa ki Ngā Hui ā-Whanau a te ture taiohi i te tau 2023/24 i puta ngā māharahara mō tō rātou haumaru me te oranga i a rātou e tamariki ake. Ko ngā tamariki ka hara i waenga i ngā tau 10 me te 13 i Aotearoa i te tau 2019/20 he nui ake te tūkinotanga, ngā pūrongo māharahara, te whakanoho i waho o te kāinga, te aukatinga me te whakatārewa mai i te kura, me ngā tohu o te kore whanaungatanga, ahurea hoki tēnā i te hunga hara-kore³.

I te ture taiohi ko te nuinga o ngā tamariki he Māori. Ka pā te whētuki ki a rātou i te pūnaha maru, kāore i āwhina i a rātou i tō rātou kuhunga mai ki te pūnaha maru. 90 ōrau o rātou kāore i te mōhio ko wai rātou. Ka ngana ahau ki whakauru i te wairua whakahī mō tō rātou tuakiritanga. He tōmuri rawa tō mātou whai wāhi atu ki te whakatika i te raru kātahi ka tukuna atu ki te pūnaha pakeke." Kāore hoki e eke i Ngā Hui ā-Whanau tērā i manakohia ana, ā, kua kore e whiwhi ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi e whiwhi i ngā ratonga e hiahia ana rātou

E tautoko ana ngā FGC i ngā whakatau tikanga a te whānau whai muri i ngā māharahara whakamaru engari kāore e tutuki ki tērā i whakaritea ai. Ko te utu o te pūtea, te iti o te wā, te iti o te whānau ka whai wāhi atu me te whakahaere ki ngā tari a Oranga Tamariki ngā tauārai e pēhi ana i te hātepe FGC. I ētahi wā ko te whakaaro o ngā whānau me te hunga ngaio kāore rātou i te arohia atu. I ētahi wā kāore e whakaae tahi ngā tari ki tētahi mahere anga whakamua, ahakoa te whai wāhi atu o te whānau, ka mutu kāore he ratonga, he tautoko hoki mā ngā tamariki, ngā rangatahi me ngā whānau. No reira kua kore e whāia ā rātou mahere i ngā wā katoa, kāore hoki e whakaratoa ngā ratonga i ngā wā katoa.

Ahakoa ehara i tēnei i te kaupapa o tēnei pūrongo, i kitea i tā tātou pūrongo o nā tata nei, Ngā Wheako Manaaki i Aotearoa he maha ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i raro i te maru karauna kāore i te whiwhi i ngā mea e hiahia ana rātou. Mō te tau 2023/24, i āta tirotirohia e Oranga Tamariki a ia anō, 37 ōrau anake te paerewa i taea e ia mō te tiaki i ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi. Ko te nuinga o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i raro maru karauna he Māori.

Reil, J., Lambie, I., Becroft, A., & Allen, R. (2022). Te raru o ngā tamariki i tō tātou ngoikoretanga, ā, me pēhea te whakatika: 'Kua hē katoa te pūnaha whānui'. Ngā rangahau me ngā tūtohutanga. Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, New Zealand Law Foundation & Waipapa Taumata Rau. https://www.borrinfoundation.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Children-Who-Offend-Final-research-report-March2022.pdf

E hiahiatia ana kia tōmua ake ngā hāpaiora manaaki me te whakamaru me ngā kaupapa ture taiohi torowhānui hei whakaiti i ngā mahi hara

I te ture taiohi, he nui rawa ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i roto i ngā whakahaere pirihimana tēnā i ētahi atu rōpū. He nui atu ngā mahi ka taea hei tautoko i ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi i te tuatahi me te whakaiti i ngā mahi taihara me te aukati i te puta haere i te pūnaha. I te tau 2024, i kitea e tētahi rangahau i whakahautia e ngā Pirihimana he pānga tō te whakatoihara me te kaikiri whānui ki ngā whakatau tikanga.⁴ Otirā e whakaatu ana ngā raraunga a ngā Pirihimana mō te tau 2023/24 i te rerekētanga o te taumaha ki ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me tauiwi:

- He iti ake te tūponotanga ka tonoa ngā tamariki Māori 10- 13 tau ki huarahi kē, ka whakatūpatohia rānei, ā, ka nui ake te tūponotanga ka whiua, ka tonoa rānei ki tētahi FGC ture taiohi tēnā i ētahi atu.
- He nui ake te tūponotanga ka whiua ngā rangatahi Māori 14-17 tau, ā, he iti ake te tūponotanga ka whakatūpatohia, ka tonoa rānei ki huarahi kē tētahi i ētahi atu.

Ka whai take kia nui ake ngā kaupapa ture taiohi torowhānui mā ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori me ō rātou whānau, engari ko te mea nui ko te aukati i te mahi hara i te tuatahi. He mea hira kia whaitake ake te mahi tahi a ngā tari ina whakaarahia ngā māharahara mō te haumaru me te oranga o ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi hei whakapai ake i ngā putanga me te whakarite i ngā whanonga e ahu atu ana ki te mahi hara.

Nā ngā whakatau tikanga a Oranga Tamariki me te kore whakaraupapa kaupapa puta noa i ngā tari kāwanatanga kei te aukati i te toro a ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori i ngā mea e hiahia ana rātou

Nā ngā whakatau pūtea o nā tata nei a Oranga Tamariki me te āhua i tutuki ai tēnei kua ngaro te pono me te whakaiti i ngā ratonga whakaheke i te whai wāhi atu ki te pūnaha oranga tamariki. I pā tēnei ki ngā ratonga e tukuna ana e ngā iwi me ngā kaiwhakarato Māori, i te taha o ētahi atu ratonga e whakawhirinaki ana ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori, me ō rātou whānau.

- Kāore i ahau te wairua tika me te pono i tēnei wā. I mahi tahi mātou me ngā iwi me te tuitui whanaungatanga pai, he uaua, engari ka nekeneke te kaupapa, ā, ka mate mātou ki te hoki atu ki te whakamōhio atu ki a rātou. He wāwāhi i te pono ... ko ngā uauatanga i roto i ngā kirimana koinā te raru, ā, kei te kore haere tō rātou pono ki a mātou, engari e nui haere ake kē atu ā mātou inoi i runga i te iti rawa [pūtea]." KAIĀRAHI ORANGA TAMARIKI
- Kei te rongo ā mātou tamariki i ngā rongo korero mo te tapahitanga o ngā pūtea, ā, kua korero rātou mo te oma kia kore ai e rātou e panaia mai i konei. Me pēhea to whakahaere i aua korerorero ina māharahara rātou mo te kati o te wāhi?" KAIMAHI WHAKAHAERE KAUPAPA MĀORI

⁴ Understanding Policing Delivery Independent Panel (2022). Pūrongo a te rōpū motuhake 1. Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa (w.41) <u>https://</u> www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/upd-independent-panel-report-one.pdf

Ina tirotiro ana ki ngā ratonga e tukuna ana e ētahi atu tari kāwanatanga pērā i te Mātauranga me te Hauora, i rongo mātou mō ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi kei te pūnaha oranga tamariki kāore i te ōrite te whakaraupapa. He ōrite tēnei ki ā mātou kitenga mō ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi kei te maru karauna, i roto i tā mātou pūrongo Ngā Wheako o te Maru Karauna o nā tata nei.

Nā te kore whakaraupapa puta noa i ngā tari kāwanatanga, te aro ki ngā kaupapa matua ka whakarērea ngā whakaritenga mahi tahi me te whakaiti i ngā whakapaunga i roto o Oranga Tamariki kua nui ake ngā pēhitanga ki te toro a ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi i ngā mea e hiahia ana rātou.

Ka mimiti ana ngā rawa ko te mutunga he whawhai mana. He nui rawa ngā mahi, ā, he iti te pūtea ... ka whakararu tēnei i te mahi tahi."

KAIMAHI A TE TĀHŪ O TE TURE

I raro i ēnei uauatanga, i ia hapori i haere mātou, i rongo mātou mō ngā kaupapa whakarite i ngā raru whānui maha e pā nei ki ngā whānau. Ko ngā āhuatanga e kitea whānuitia ana i ēnei kaupapa i arahina e ngā kaiwhakarato, i whaikiko me ngā tamariki me ngā tamariki Māori i te taha o ō rātou whānau ka mutu he tauira pono nui te mahi tahi me ngā tari kāwanatanga. He pūmau ngā whanaungatanga o ngā iwi me ngā kaiwhakarato ki ngā whānau e mahi ana rātou, ā, e mārama ana te kite he whānui atu ā rātou mahi ki tua atu i ā rātou kirimana me te kāwanatanga.

Ahakoa ngā mahi, kāore i te iti haere ngā āhuatanga manaritekore, ā, ka haere tonu te whai wāhi tuku iho i roto i te pūnaha

Heoi, ahakoa ngā mahi a ngā tamariki ki roto i te pūnaha oranga tamariki e ū tonu ana ngā āhuatanga manarite-kore i ngā tamariki me ngā rangatahi Māori, ā, kāore i te iti haere. E kōrero ana tēnei pūrongo mō te whai wāhitanga tuku iho. Mēnā i whiwhi te hunga kei roto i te pūnaha i ngā tautoko e hiahiatia ana kia puta ai ngā hua, kāore e kore ka iti haere te whai wāhi tuku iho ki te pūnaha oranga tamariki. Koinei tā mātou pou, ka aroturuki haere i roto i te wā.

Ko tōku hiahia kia tika te pakeke mai, ā, mēnā ka kitea e au he hoa tōtika, kia whiwhi ai aku tamariki i ngā mea kāore au i whiwhi." RANGATAHI

Koinei tā mātou pūrongo tuatahi mō ngā hua mō te Māori, ā, he paerewa tēnei. E whakaatu ana ia ine arā atu anō ngā mea e hiahiatia ana. Me mahi tahi ngā tari i te pūnaha oranga tamariki, me whakaraupapa i ngā ratonga me te whakaiti i te mahi taratahi kia taea ai ngā hua pai ake.

Key findings

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau are over-represented in the oranga tamariki system and the system is letting them down

Almost one third of tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa are Māori, and most have no involvement in the oranga tamariki system. However, almost 50 percent of reports of concern made to Oranga Tamariki are about tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and they also make up two-thirds of those in care.

When tamariki and rangatahi come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki, whānau often have wider-ranging needs, which can include the impacts of poverty, housing insecurity, family violence and poor mental health. At this point there is an opportunity to help and prevent further involvement in the system.

The data tells us that the more involved tamariki and rangatahi become, the worse their long-term outcomes. For example:

 92 percent of tamariki and rangatahi Māori referred for a youth justice family group conference in 2023/24 had a previous care and protection report of concern¹ Māori adults (aged 27–30) who had previously been in care are five times more likely to be accessing public secondary mental health and addiction services, nine times more likely to have been in emergency housing, six times more likely to have been hospitalised for self-harm and much more likely to be victims of crime than Māori who have no involvement with the oranga tamariki system.

We also see intergenerational involvement. For Māori parents² who had previously been in care, almost 70 percent have children involved with Oranga Tamariki in some way and one in eight have had one or more children in care at some point in their lives.

If the oranga tamariki system was successful, when whānau come to its attention, it would keep tamariki and rangatahi Māori safe and put supports in place, across government agencies, early to avoid escalation through the system now or in the future. With the right support at the right time, fewer tamariki Māori would come into care, and if they do, they would be safe.

¹ Ministry of Justice (2024). Youth justice indicators summary report: December 2024 (p. 8). https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/ Documents/Publications/Youth-Justice-Indicators-Summary-Report-December-2024_v1.0.pdf

² Māori aged 27-30

Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police have strategies in place to address inequality and overrepresentation, but we found barriers to making progress

Both Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police have put strategies in place to address long standing inequalities and over-representation. This includes the Oranga Tamariki practice shift, investing in training to help its kaimahi better engage with Māori and increased funding for iwi and Māori providers, including investing in strategic partnerships and Enabling Communities initiatives. Likewise, NZ Police has also invested in training and has a new strategy, Te Huringa o Te Tai, aimed at improving the wellbeing and lives of Māori.

However, this report highlights barriers to progress.

Within Oranga Tamariki, competing policies, a low trust culture, layers of decision making and the inability to make the best use of existing tools, such as family group conferences (FGCs) means that social workers are not always able to work in a way that meets the needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

[Oranga Tamariki] want us to do [mahi and hui] on the marae, but when they get the bill, they want to know why they are paying for the marae. They don't want to pay for food. They don't want to pay for petrol. We did a hui on a Saturday at a marae, and we had a \$50 budget. We get \$10 petrol budgets. It is not realistic."

KAIRARANGA A-WHĀNAU (ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI)

Oranga Tamariki is not always taking action to respond to reports of concern at the earliest opportunity

When reports of concern are made about tamariki and rangatahi, we heard about high thresholds for investigation and further action. Almost half of reports of concern result in a decision to take no further action.

[It is] no small thing to make a ROC [report of concern], you don't go I am going to do that ... [it is] discouraging, you steel yourself to do it. We don't treat this [report of concern] as a dumping ground, it's as a result of what we are observing in front of us ... How am I going to sell this to validate it, [I start thinking] am I an idiot? Am I seeing risk when it isn't there? [There are] different interpretations of risk, I guess, when you deal with it every day." CANTERBURY FAMILY VIOLENCE COLLABORATION KAIMAHI

When help is needed, it is important that the right help is provided. This could be from iwi, Māori or community providers or other government agencies. Failing to take any action at the earliest opportunity can leave tamariki and rangatahi at risk and whānau without the support they need and potentially lead to greater involvement in the oranga tamariki system such as youth justice. Tamariki who offended between the ages of 10 and 13 in Aotearoa in 2019/20 had high levels of abuse, reports of concern, out of home placements, school stand-downs and suspensions, and indicators of social and cultural deprivation compared to their non-offending peers³.

³ Reil, J., Lambie, I., Becroft, A., & Allen, R. (2022). How we fail children who offend and what to do about it: 'A breakdown across the whole system'. Research and recommendations. Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, New Zealand Law Foundation & University of Auckland. https://www.borrinfoundation.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Children-Who-Offend-Final-research-report-March2022.pdf

In youth justice the majority of our kids are Māori. They come through with trauma in the care system, there were missed opportunities where they have interacted with the care systems. A good 90 percent of them don't know who they are. I try to get them back to be proud of who they are. We are mopping up at the end, flicking them through to the adult system." KAIRARANGA Ā-WHĀNAU

Family group conferences are not always carried out as intended which can mean tamariki and rangatahi Māori don't always get the services they need

FGCs support whānau decision making but are not always carried out as intended. Financial restrictions, time pressures, limited whānau involvement and FGCs being held in Oranga Tamariki offices were described as barriers that limit the FGC process. Sometimes whānau and professionals feel their voices are not heard. Sometimes agencies can't agree on a plan going forward, despite whānau involvement, and there can be a lack of services and supports to refer tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to. This means their plans are not always followed through and services not always delivered.

Although not a focus of this report, our recent Experiences of Care in Aotearoa report highlighted that many tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care are not getting what they need. For 2023/24, Oranga Tamariki assessed itself as meeting its own performance measures for 37 percent of tamariki and rangatahi in its care. The majority of tamariki and rangatahi in care are Māori.

Earlier intervention and more holistic youth justice initiatives are needed to reduce offending

In youth justice, tamariki and rangatahi Māori remain over-represented in police proceedings. More can be done to support tamariki and rangatahi at early stages and to reduce offending and prevent escalation through the system. In 2024, a study commissioned by NZ Police found that bias and structural racism influence decision making.⁴ NZ Police data for 2023/24, similarly shows a difference in the severity of proceedings against tamariki and rangatahi Māori and non-Māori:

- Tamariki Māori aged 10-13 are less likely to be referred to alternative action or given a warning and more likely to be prosecuted or referred to a youth justice FGC than others.
- Rangatahi Māori aged 14-17 were more likely to be prosecuted and less likely to get a warning or be referred to alternative action than others.

More holistic youth justice initiatives for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau would be helpful, but it is important to prevent offending in the first place. It is vital that agencies work together more effectively when concerns are raised about the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi to improve outcomes and address behaviours that could lead to offending.

Oranga Tamariki funding decisions and lack of prioritisation across government agencies prevent tamariki and rangatahi Māori accessing the things they need

Recent funding decisions made by Oranga Tamariki have reduced services aimed at decreasing involvement in the oranga tamariki

⁴ Understanding Policing Delivery Independent Panel (2022). *Independent panel report 1*. NZ Police (p.41) <u>https://www.police.govt.nz/</u> sites/default/files/publications/upd-independent-panel-report-one.pdf

system, and the way this was done has eroded trust. This has impacted services delivered by iwi and Māori providers, along with other services that tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau, rely on.

- I don't feel tika or pono at the moment. We've worked closely with iwi and forged good relationships, it's been hard, but the goal-post changes then we have to go back and tell them. It breaks trust ... it's the difficulties in contracts that's the issue and their trust in us is dwindling, yet we are asking for more and more with less [funding]." ORANGA TAMARIKI LEADER
- 66 Our kids are hearing on the news about funding cuts and have mentioned running away so they won't be kicked out of here. How do you manage those conversations when they are worried about the place closing?"

KAUPAPA MĀORI ORGANISATION KAIMAHI

When looking at services provided by other government agencies such as Education and Health, we heard about tamariki and rangatahi in the oranga tamariki system not being consistently prioritised. This is similar to our findings about tamariki and rangatahi in care, in our recent Experiences of Care in Aotearoa report.

A lack of prioritisation across government agencies, a retreat to core services that is often at the cost of collaborative working arrangements and increased controls on spending within Oranga Tamariki has reduced the ability of tamariki and rangatahi Māori to get access to the things they need.

In a world of diminishing resources there is a power struggle. It is about workloads and funding ... and it gets in the way of good collaboration." MINISTRY OF JUSTICE KAIMAHI In the face of these challenges, in every community we visited, we heard about initiatives that were addressing many of the broader issues that whānau face. The consistent factors across these initiatives were that they were provider led, worked with tamariki and rangatahi Māori alongside their whānau and had high trust models working collaboratively with government agencies. Iwi and Māori providers have enduring connections with the whānau they work with, and it is clear that their commitment extends beyond any contract they may have with government.

Despite efforts, disparities are not reducing and the cycle of intergenerational involvement in the system continues

Ultimately, despite the efforts of agencies in the oranga tamariki system, disparities for tamariki and rangatahi Māori persist and are not reducing. This report speaks to a cycle of intergenerational involvement. If government agencies provided the support needed to have positive outcomes, there would also likely be a reduction in intergenerational involvement with the oranga tamariki system. This is one of our pou – our stakes in the ground – that we will continue to monitor over time.

Just like to grow up successful and if I find the right person, to give my kids what I couldn't have." RANGATAHI

This is our first report on outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau and serves as a baseline. Every measure demonstrates that more is needed. Agencies in the oranga tamariki system will need to work together, prioritise services and reduce silos to achieve better outcomes.

Our approach to this report

This report focuses on specific parts of the oranga tamariki system

On 1 May 2023, our role was expanded to monitor the whole of the oranga tamariki system.

We report on care and custody annually in our *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* reports.⁵ This new annual report series is focused on outcomes being achieved for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

There are legislative requirements for this report

The Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022 (the Oversight Act) requires us to report annually on the performance of the oranga tamariki system in respect of outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

This first report primarily focuses on compliance with the Oranga Tamariki Act, in particular early intervention to prevent escalation through the care and protection system,⁶ youth justice intervention to prevent escalation through the justice system, and the role of FGCs. It also highlights examples of iwi and community initiatives that are working well for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. We plan to focus on other parts of the system, including the role of other government agencies, in future reports. At the time of drafting this report, section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 was yet to be repealed.⁷ Therefore, we have written this report in the context of our regulations requiring the inclusion of Oranga Tamariki | Ministry for Children performance in relation to section 7AA.

The regulations accompanying the Oversight Act set out what this report must cover. At a minimum, we must include:

- a report on the performance of Oranga Tamariki under section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act
- a report on the measures taken by Oranga Tamariki to carry out section 7AA duties, and the impact of those measures on improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau, who have come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki
- an assessment of outcomes being achieved for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau, under section 7AA
- an assessment of how well practices within the oranga tamariki system have regard to mana tamaiti and the whakapapa of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their whānau, hapū and iwi
- the strategic partnerships that Oranga Tamariki has with iwi and Māori organisations.

⁵ https://aroturuki.govt.nz/reports#experiences-of-care-reports

⁶ This includes preventing entry into care.

⁷ The Government repealed Section 7AA on 7 April 2025.

Our approach to assessing outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

Both our legislation and our monitoring approach require us to assess how outcomes are being achieved for tamariki and rangatahi Māori who are known to Oranga Tamariki and therefore in the oranga tamariki system.

In this report we have looked at both tamariki and rangatahi currently involved in the system and those adults who have been through the system to see how well they are doing. Tamariki and rangatahi need the agencies in the system to provide the services required for them to go on to have happy and productive lives and enjoy a standard of living similar to those who have not needed formal state intervention.

Our monitoring approach is guided by our Outcomes Framework.⁸ This is a holistic framework with six areas of wellbeing defined according to the context of our mahi, for all tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.⁹

- Aroha: Tamariki and rangatahi feel loved, supported, safe and cared for and are capable of receiving kindness through love and giving love to others.
- Manaakitanga: Tamariki and rangatahi have reciprocal relationships based on genuine care, generosity and respect, which enable their needs to be met. Parents, caregivers and whānau have what they need to meet these needs.

- Whanaungatanga: Tamariki and rangatahi have strong, healthy and positive relationships and connections with their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and people around them.
- Rangatiratanga: Tamariki and rangatahi, alongside their whānau, are involved, empowered and supported to become selfdetermining, and leaders in their own lives.
- Kaitiakitanga: Tamariki and rangatahi have all aspects of their holistic wellbeing acknowledged, nurtured and supported in line with the cornerstones of Te Whare Tapa Whā.
- Mātauranga: Tamariki and rangatahi are learning and developing their skills and knowledge about themselves, their culture, their potential, their future and their role/ place in this world.

We developed indicators to measure how life is going for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system

To measure outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, we worked with the Social Investment Agency (SIA) to develop a set of indicators to use alongside the information gathered from our monitoring in communities.

The indicators draw on information from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), a large database managed by Stats NZ, which enables us to track outcomes over time and compare outcomes for groups of tamariki and rangatahi involved in different parts of the oranga

9 https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Documents/Core-documents/Our-Outcomes-Framework-with-indicators.pdf

⁸ Our Outcomes Framework was developed using a holistic te ao Māori lens. It draws upon the Government's six wellbeing outcomes from the Child and Youth Strategy and incorporates key dimensions from the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework and the Oranga Tamariki Outcomes Framework.

tamariki system. There is more detail on the IDI in Appendix Two.¹⁰

We have developed indicators that show how life is going for:

- tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 who are currently involved in the oranga tamariki system
- rangatahi aged 18–25 who are eligible for transition support services¹¹
- adults aged 27–30 who were involved in the oranga tamariki system as children.

For example, we use level of qualifications attained as indicators of educational outcomes for adults and school attendance levels for tamariki and rangatahi. The full set of indicators, their definitions and data sources can be found in Appendix Two. The tables in the appendix show how we define different levels of involvement in the system from low levels of involvement to the state being the parent and guardian and what proportion of each group have been involved at each point.

We also use these indicators to compare how life is going for disabled Māori compared to those with no identified disability. It is well reported that life outcomes for disabled people are often worse than for those who are not disabled. In this report, we focus on the areas where those differences are most relevant to our understanding of the performance of the oranga tamariki system. As this set of indicators was developed, we consulted Oranga Tamariki strategic partners, iwi and Māori organisations, as well as Te Kāhui – our Māori Advisory Group. We heard that, wherever possible, outcomes and indicators should be aspirational and reflect what is important to whānau Māori. They should also highlight inequities in access to services and supports.

There are areas where we would have liked to have indicators that better reflect te ao Māori such as involvement and affiliation of tamariki and rangatahi with iwi and hapū, but currently there is no comprehensive data available at a national level. The data available in the IDI is mainly based on government administrative data – data about interactions with government departments.

To help address this, we have supplemented the indicators developed in the IDI with measures from the *What About Me*? survey of rangatahi aged 13–18 conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development in 2021. It includes questions about their health, wellbeing, whānau and community. Further details on this survey are available in Appendix Two.

¹⁰ The IDI holds de-identified data about people and households in Aotearoa. Results from IDI analysis are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the IDI, which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For the full disclaimer see Appendix Two. For more information about the IDI, visit https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/

¹¹ There are three broad types of transition support services: maintaining contact; advice and assistance; and support to remain living with a caregiver. A person is included in this group if they are eligible of any of these. Note that a person who is eligible may refuse some or all the support to which they are entitled.

Agency data

Under the Oversight Act, we request data and information from government agencies and some NGOs. For this report, we made substantial requests for operational data from Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police and a more limited request for information from the Independent Police Conduct Authority (IPCA).¹²

We use agency operational data to understand:

- the number of tamariki and rangatahi Māori within different parts of the oranga tamariki system
- any disparities, including ethnic disparity and disparity for disabled tamariki and rangatahi at various points within the oranga tamariki system
- the performance of the oranga tamariki system.

Oranga Tamariki was unable to provide all the information we requested. This was partly due to a digital infrastructure upgrade (as part of its Enterprise Data and Analytics programme), which temporarily interrupted its ability to provide data. We have been advised this data will be available for our future reports.

Data that is currently unavailable from Oranga Tamariki includes:

- detail about reports of concern, assessments and investigations, hui-āwhānau, timeliness, participation and outcomes of FGCs
- data showing the effectiveness of prior intervention in preventing re-entry and/or escalation through the oranga tamariki system.¹³

The inability of Oranga Tamariki to provide this data for this report has limited our ability to look closer at performance for Māori and disparities. This also impacts its own understanding and ability to use those insights to support delivery of services.

Ethnicity data for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

This report focuses on tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau who are involved in the oranga tamariki system. Oranga Tamariki data records all ethnicities that an individual identifies with.¹⁴ NZ Police has provided ethnicity data, but only one ethnicity is recorded per individual. Ethnicity is not known for almost a third of the tamariki and rangatahi involved with NZ Police in 2023/24, which makes data analysis for this report difficult.

The lack of reliable data from government agencies means that the full extent of disparity is not known.

¹² We also sent information requests for our 2023/24 reports to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, Office of the Ombudsman, Open Home Foundation, Barnardos and Kökiri Marae Keriana Olsen Trust. Information from these organisations features in our report *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2023/24*.

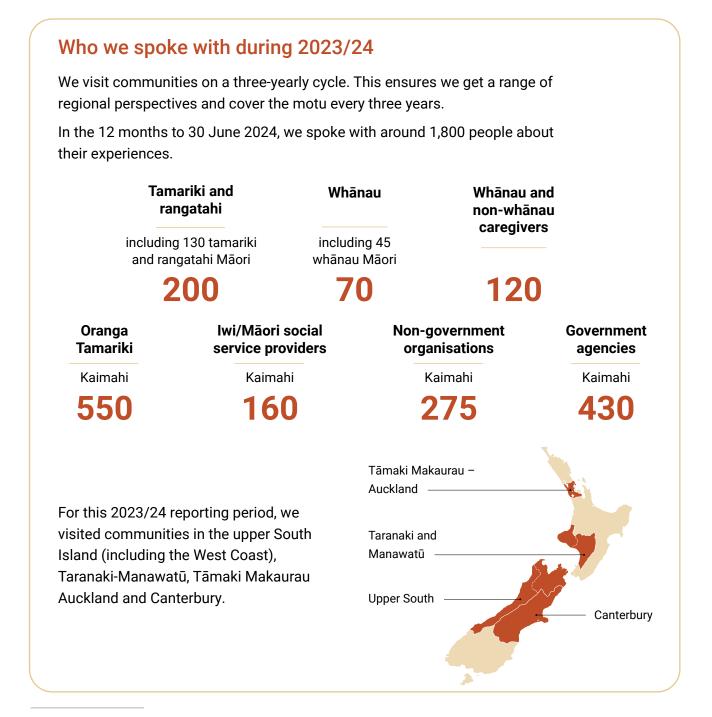
¹³ For example, absence of care entry/re-entry or further reports of concern for tamariki and rangatahi who received various forms of intervention from Oranga Tamariki (following reports of concern).

¹⁴ In the case of younger tamariki, ethnicity is usually identified by a parent or guardian on their behalf.

The voices of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

The way in which Oranga Tamariki, its partners and NZ Police work directly impacts the experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. For this reason, their voices are central to our report and are highlighted in the use of quotes throughout the text. Sometimes we use a quote to highlight a theme, and we also use quotes to highlight good practice where we have heard experience is primarily negative. Learning from these areas of good practice helps drive improvement.

Further information about how we collect and analyse data is available on our website.¹⁵



The oranga tamariki system

The Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act defines the system as responsible for providing services and support to tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau under, or in connection with, the Oranga Tamariki Act. The system includes (without limitation) the delivery of health, education, disability, and other services by those agencies or contracted partners within the system. It also includes services and supports provided by iwi, hapu, and Māori social services as well as community non-government organisations, such as early intervention. This also includes work to support whānau wellbeing and reduce risks to tamariki.

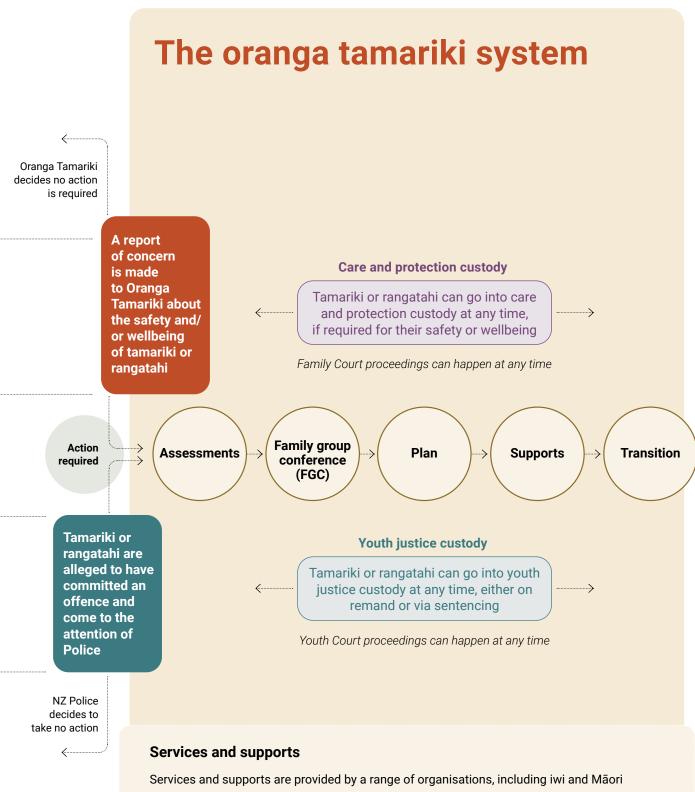
The following is a simplified view of how tamariki and rangatahi enter, and move through, the oranga tamariki system. Processes within it are not necessarily linear.

The role of Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki receives reports of concern and assesses whether action is required. If action is required, it decides what that should be – such as early intervention, a family group conference, or if the child needs to go in to state care.

The role of NZ Police and Oranga Tamariki

NZ Police decides whether tamariki and rangatahi are arrested, charged an offence or receive diversion. Some tamariki and rangatahi may be subject to alternative action. Oranga Tamariki facilitates family group conferences, provides youth justice social work services, and manages youth justice residences.



organisations and non-government organisations. These are often under contract to Oranga Tamariki or other government agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development. Services and supports are also provided by other government agencies such as Health and Education.

About tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system

This report focuses on tamariki and rangatahi Māori. We define this group as anyone who identifies as Māori, including where they also identify as other ethnicities.¹⁶ Sometimes we compare this group to the non-Māori population, which we define as anyone who does not identify as Māori. Some data sources we use record each individual ethnicity that tamariki and rangatahi identify as, whereas others identify only a single ethnicity – for example, NZ Police data. In these cases, we are unable to identify if tamariki and rangatahi identify with more than one ethnicity.

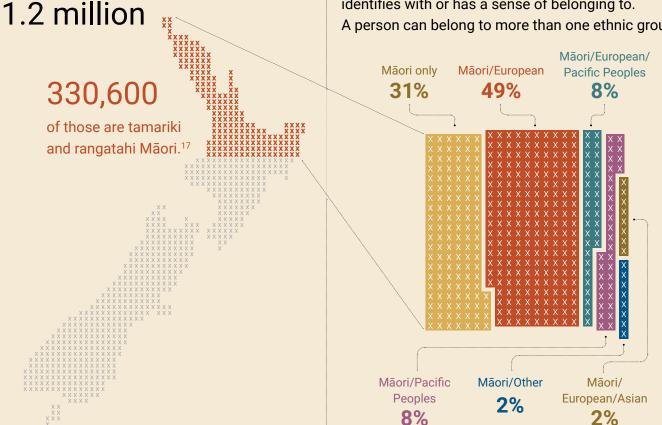
When ethnicity is recorded as 'unknown' in the data sources we use, we have excluded these records from both Māori and non-Māori groups. When there is a large number of unknowns, we have reported these as a separate group.

Almost a third of tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa are Māori

The population of Aotearoa New Zealand aged 0–18 is

Most tamariki and rangatahi Māori belong to more than one ethnic group

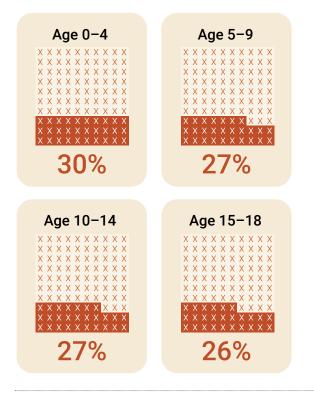
Ethnicity is the ethnic group or groups a person identifies with or has a sense of belonging to. A person can belong to more than one ethnic group.¹⁸



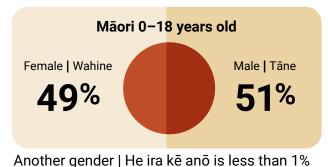
- ¹⁶ In the case of younger tamariki, ethnicity is usually identified by a parent or guardian on their behalf.
- 17 Māori population is calculated based on the number of people who identify as Māori.
- 18 Stats NZ ethnicity (detailed single / combination), age, and gender for the census usually resident population count, (RC, TALB, SA2, Health), 2013, 2018, and 2023 Censuses.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori will make up more of the youth population in the future¹⁹

Māori as proportion of the total youth population in each age group



The gender split across the youth population is about the same for Māori and non-Māori



Speaking te reo Māori 66 66 66 66 66

One in five tamariki and rangatahi Māori who have had an interaction with the oranga tamariki system can speak te reo Māori – this is about the same as the total Māori youth population.

The majority of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Aotearoa have not had any interaction with the oranga tamariki system²⁰

In the 2023/24 reporting year:



8 in 100 have had a report of concern made to Oranga Tamariki about their safety or wellbeing

1 in 100 have spent time in the custody of Oranga Tamariki

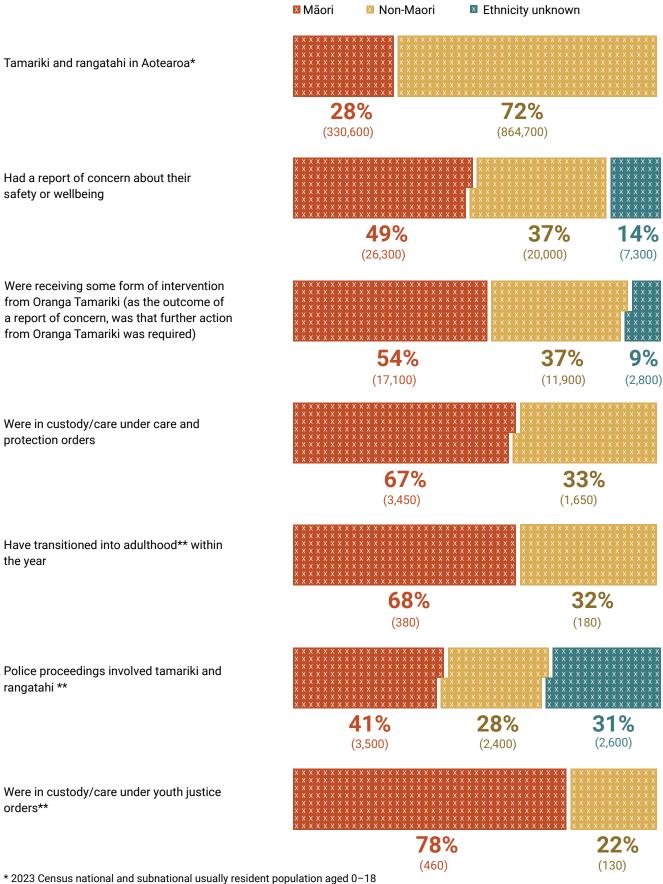
2 in 100 rangatahi Māori aged 10–18 have been subject to a police proceeding in the last year, which can result in no further action, warnings, youth referrals, alternative action plans, FGCs, community justice or iwi community panels, custody admission or prosecution

1 in 330 rangatahi Māori aged 10–18 have been in custody under youth justice orders.

19 https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/one-in-three-children-projected-to-be-maori/

²⁰ During the year 1 July 2023–30 June 2024

However, tamariki and rangatahi Māori are more likely to be involved in the oranga tamariki system

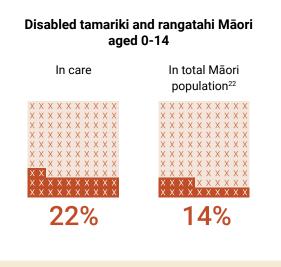


** Tamariki and rangatahi aged 10–18

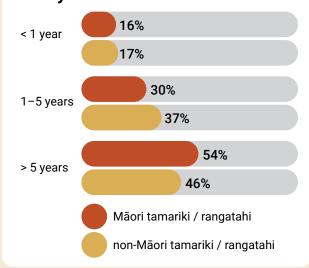
For tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care, many are living with whānau but this has declined



Tamariki and rangatahi Māori who are in care are more likely to be disabled than those not in care



More than half of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care have been in care for longer than five years



21 Other placements include boarding schools, bespoke placements, and where rangatahi remained living with caregivers beyond the age of 18 years old.

22 Stats NZ (2025). Household Disability Survey 2023 - findings, definitions, and design summary. https://www.stats.govt.nz/assets/ Reports/Household-Disability-Survey-2023-findings-definitions-and-design-summary/Download-data/household-disability-survey-2023-findings-definitions-and-design-summary.pdf This main part of the report begins with data on outcome indicators for tamariki and rangatahi Māori currently involved in the oranga tamariki system and Māori adults aged 27–30 who were involved in the system as children.

We then look at the way in which Oranga Tamariki works with whānau Māori, including through its strategic partnerships under section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act.²³ We finish with a closer look at three parts of the oranga tamariki system – reports of concern, FGCs and youth justice intervention.

23 Although section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act is now repealed, we are required to report on it for 2023/24. We will continue to report annually on outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau.

Outcome indicators for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system

There are many factors that contribute to tamariki and rangatahi involvement in the oranga tamariki system. Outcomes are not necessarily caused by involvement in the oranga tamariki system, and it is not the intention to attribute outcomes to any one factor or the actions of any one agency.

However, when the state does become involved, it has an obligation to improve the lives of tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau while they are involved in the system. Investing early in tamariki and rangatahi Māori with the services and supports that work best for them can reduce future costs but most importantly lead to better outcomes and lives.

This section of the report includes data and analysis about suicide and mortality that may be challenging for some readers. A support page is included in Appendix Four.

What tamariki and rangatahi Māori say about their lives and future

To understand how life is going for tamariki and rangatahi Māori who are or have been involved in the oranga tamariki system, we first looked at things from their own perspective.

In some of our engagements, we heard from tamariki and rangatahi Māori about their aspirations for the future. Regardless of what part of the oranga tamariki system they were involved in, the majority of these tamariki and rangatahi Māori were positive about their futures.

"I feel I'm going to be successful for myself. It's a feeling I've got. When I leave school, I'll become a waiter, save money, travel the world, make some more money and then start a business. To become a businesswoman, be a rich mum. I feel like my dreams will come true even if takes a while."

"I would be happy to actually start my clothing brand in the future, like a side hustle."

"A technician cos I'm great with technology, just doing whatever people need. I would probably help rather than just delete everything they have."



"Go to uni. Get a scholarship there and then start a business. Maybe entrepreneurship. Scholarship [at tertiary institute] – business management and then tourism."

66

"I want to be a tattoo artist."

"It's going good. I am getting a mechanics hardtech medal soon, in a couple terms. I am in [name] class at the moment as well, which is sports studies. It's already going good for me."

66

"I want to do youth work and level 4 construction, but I want to work as a youth worker. I know what it is like to be in it [the oranga tamariki system]. I could show [rangatahi] someone with life experience. Even when you do something, you can give back and do something about it."

"I wanna go in the army."

66

"Be a professional basketball player."

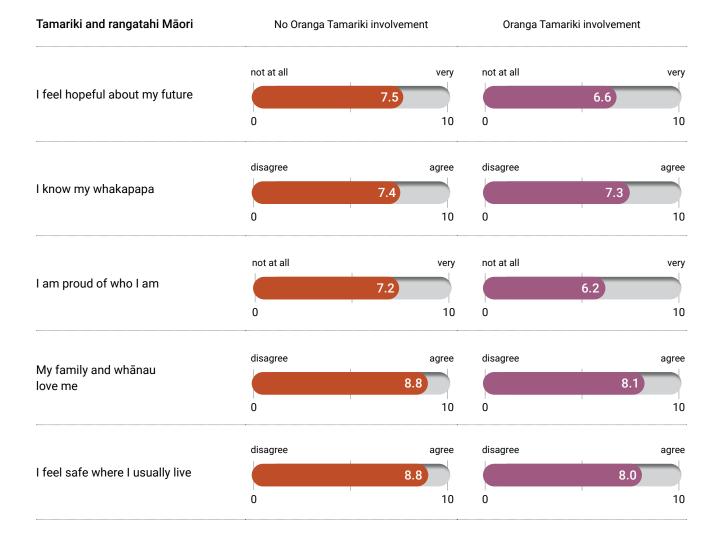
"My Papa, he told me to be a mechanic before he passed away and he taught me how to fix cars. I listened to his words about doing good things for other good people. My Dad's words were 'son make me proud', which pushed me to want to do good things and change my life."

> "My parents are supporting me well. I should be getting NCEA endorsement next year for uni. I'm Ngāi Tahu so could go through there."

The *What About Me*? survey provides further views from tamariki and rangatahi Māori, including those who self-identified as disabled

Responses to the *What About Me?* survey from tamariki and rangatahi Māori who have been involved with Oranga Tamariki²⁴ give a sense of hope and aspiration for their futures but are less positive than those with no involvement. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori involved with Oranga Tamariki who self-identified as disabled²⁵ are less hopeful than their nondisabled peers.

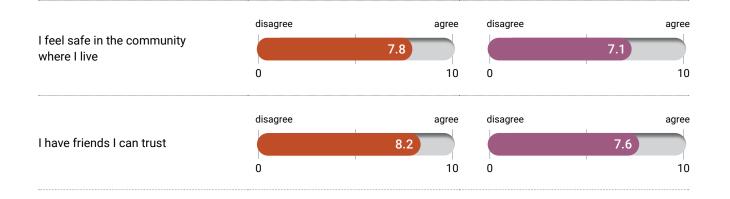
The following graphs compare responses to specific *What About Me?* survey questions about feeling loved, safe, connected, and having a sense of identity.²⁶

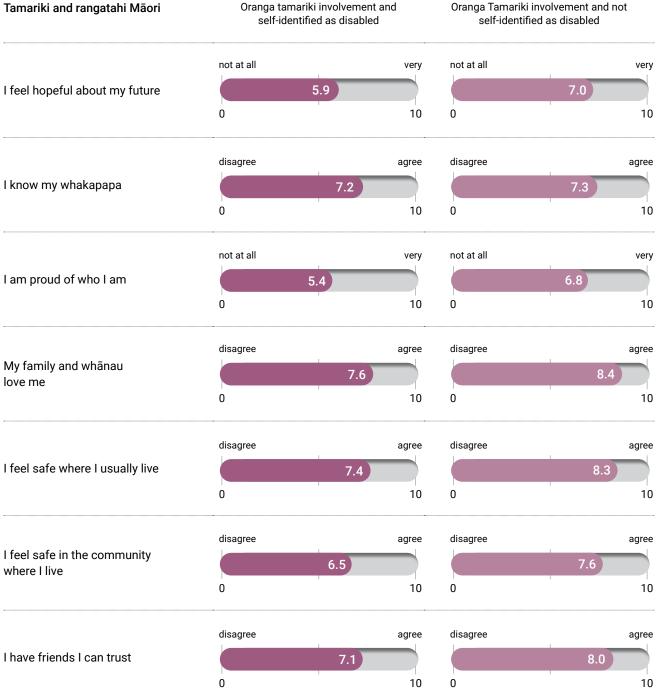


²⁴ The group of What About Me? survey respondents 'involved with Oranga Tamariki' includes any tamariki and rangatahi who answered 'yes' to 'have you or anyone in your family every been involved with Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS) or Oranga Tamariki?' This includes those who have had a social worker visit them or their family, had an FGC, or been in care.

²⁵ As described in the full survey report, disabled tamariki and rangatahi were identified based on their responses to the Washington Group Short Set. These are questions that address six areas of functioning that, if restricted, are most often found to result in limitations in social participation. The Washington Group Short Set was recommended by Stats NZ and the Office for Disability Issues for use in the What About Me? survey, but the questions do not cover all aspects of disability. They are intended to allow analysis of wellbeing for disabled tamariki and rangatahi. The survey sample included responses from 252 Māori who self-identified as having a disability. Malatest International (2022). whataboutme.nz: Overview report – October 2022. <u>https://www.msd.govt.nz/ documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/consultations/youth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-results/the-nationalyouth-health-and-wellbeing-survey-2021-overview-report-september-2022.pdf</u>

²⁶ Further survey responses and results are available in Appendix Two.





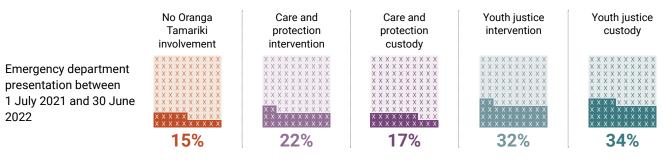
Despite their hopes and aspirations these are not always realised

To help understand how life is going for tamariki and rangatahi Māori involved in the oranga tamariki system we looked at a range of outcome indicators, including having a recognised disability.²⁷ The indicators below are for tamariki and rangatahi Māori aged 0-17 (except where otherwise stated) who were involved in the oranga tamariki system during 2022. For the groupings below, a care and protection intervention is anything from a report of concern through to services and support provided via an FGC plan, and a youth justice intervention is anything from a referral to NZ Police through to services and support provided via a youth justice FGC. For comparison, we also looked at those who were not involved. These include outcome indicators for health, wider wellbeing and education.

Health indicators

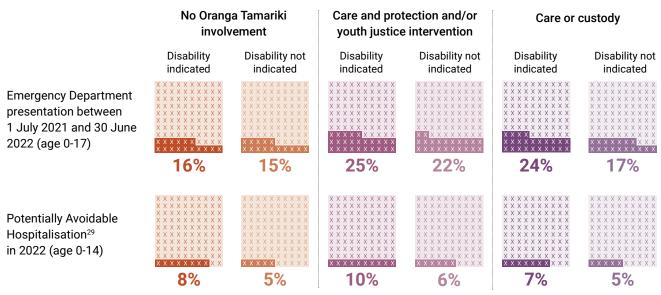
Some health indicators are better for those in state care than those with lower levels of Oranga Tamariki involvement. This may suggest that being in care is a protective factor against negative health outcomes – for example, tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care were more likely to visit a general practitioner (GP) and less likely to use an emergency department within the year.

Māori in youth justice were twice as likely to use an emergency department as those with no involvement

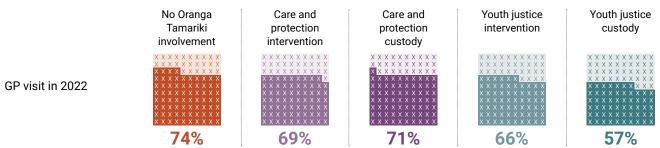


²⁷ It is widely accepted that disability is under-diagnosed among tamariki and rangatahi involved in the oranga tamariki system. "However, it is acknowledged that research has reported vastly different estimates of disability amongst the population of tamariki and rangatahi engaged with Oranga Tamariki." Oranga Tamariki (2023). Evidence Brief: Primary Healthcare Needs of Disabled Children in Care and Protection (p. 14). https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/ Primary-healthcare-needs-of-disabled-children-in-care/Evidence-Brief-Primary-care-needs-of-disabled-children-in-care.pdf

Disabled Māori in the oranga tamariki system have slightly higher rates of emergency department use and potentially avoidable hospitalisation than those who are not disabled²⁸



Māori in the oranga tamariki system visited a GP³⁰ at lower rates than those with no involvement



Māori in care visited a GP at a similar rate to Māori with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system in 2022, which may suggest that being in care is helping them to have their health needs met through the primary healthcare system and specialist care.³¹ Rangatahi Māori in youth justice custody were much less likely to have visited a GP in 2022.³²

²⁸ Indication of disability includes being in receipt of specific disability-related benefits and supports, and/or having identified as disabled in the 2018 Census or a social survey. For a full description on how disability was functionally defined for these measures, see Appendix Two.

Potentially avoidable hospitalisations include hospitalisations that can be potentially avoided by: the provision of appropriate healthcare interventions and early disease management, usually delivered in primary care and community-based care settings; public health interventions such as injury prevention, health promotion and immunisation; or social policy interventions such as income support and housing policy.

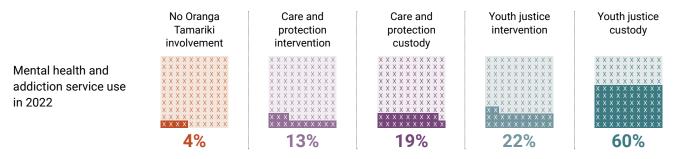
³⁰ Note this only includes when tamariki and rangatahi see a doctor at their registered medical practice and not when they see a doctor as a casual patient. Enrolment with primary healthcare organisations was highest among tamariki and rangatahi in care. As discussed on page 47 of our report *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2023/24*, primary healthcare in secure residences is delivered under contract. Rangatahi in secure residences while in youth justice custody may have their primary healthcare needs met without visiting their own GP.

³¹ For example, as discussed on page 47 of our report *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2023/24*, in 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki spent \$58.5 million on costs related to health, including \$19.8 million for tamariki in care. However, as also noted in that report, Oranga Tamariki is not meeting the minimum standards of primary healthcare for all tamariki and rangatahi in its care and/or custody as set out in the National Care Standards Regulations.

Note this only includes when tamariki and rangatahi see a doctor at their registered medical practice and not when they see a doctor as a casual patient. Enrolment with primary healthcare organisations was highest among tamariki and rangatahi in care. As discussed on page 47 of our report *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2023/24*, primary healthcare in secure residences is delivered under contract. Rangatahi in secure residences while in youth justice custody may have their primary healthcare needs met without visiting their own GP.

A further insight to this is that the *What About Me*? survey found 38 percent of rangatahi Māori who had been involved with Oranga Tamariki said they had not been able to see a doctor or nurse when they wanted or needed to. This was almost twice as many as those who had no Oranga Tamariki involvement (21 percent).³³

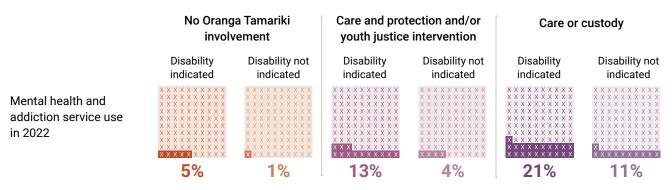
Māori aged 14–17 in the oranga tamariki system used public secondary mental health and addiction services at a higher rate than those with no involvement



Usage of public secondary mental health and addiction services³⁴ in 2022 was particularly high for those rangatahi Māori in youth justice custody at 60 percent. Almost one in five of those in care used secondary public mental health and addiction services in 2022.

What this data does not tell us is whether all those who needed mental health support were able to get it.³⁵

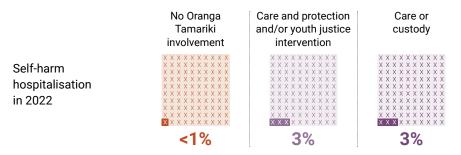
Disabled Māori aged 0–17 used secondary public mental health and addiction services³⁶ at a higher rate than their non-disabled peers³⁷



Disabled Māori in care or custody used secondary public mental health and addiction services³⁸ at the highest rates in 2022. The difference between those with and without a recognised disability was greater for those with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system.

- 33 This difference is statistically significant. A 95 percent confidence interval was calculated to be [0.11, 0.22].
- 34 Secondary mental health and addiction services include in-patient or community-based services. Examples include Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (ICAMHS), maternal and infant mental health services (including home-based supports), community-based crisis services, drug-checking services and regional eating disorder services.
- A June 2024 snapshot from Te Hiringa Mahara |Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission reports that "young people are less likely to be able to get professional help for their mental health needs compared to other age groups" and that "children and adolescents aged 0–18 wait longer for specialist mental health services than older people". <u>https://www.mhwc.govt.nz/our-work/wellbeing/</u> youth-rangatahi-wellbeing-assessment/infographic/
- ³⁶ Note this measure does not include primary healthcare settings, for example GP consults, which may also be used to address mental health or addiction issues.
- 37 Indication of disability includes being in receipt of specific disability-related benefits and supports, and/or having identified as disabled in the 2018 Census or a social survey. For a full description on how disability was functionally defined for these measures, see Appendix Two.
- ³⁸ Note this measure does not include primary healthcare settings, for example GP consults, which may also be used to address mental health or addiction issues.

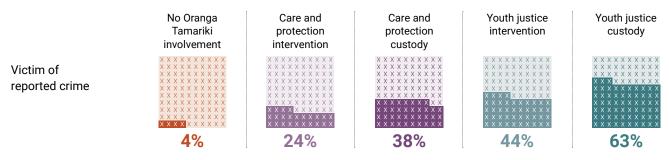
Māori aged 15–17 in the oranga tamariki system had more than seven times the rate of self-harm hospitalisation than those with no involvement



A further insight to this is that the *What About Me*? survey found 34 percent of tamariki and rangatahi Māori who had been involved with Oranga Tamariki said they had attempted suicide (in the last 12 months). This was more than twice the rate of those who had no Oranga Tamariki involvement (14 percent).³⁹

Wider wellbeing indicators – victimisation

Māori with youth justice involvement and those in care are a victim of a reported crime⁴⁰ at much higher rates than those with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system



Over half of disabled Māori in care or custody have been a victim of reported crime⁴¹

	•	a Tamariki vement	Care and prot youth justice	ection and/or intervention	Care or custody		
	Disability indicated	Disability not indicated	Disability indicated	Disability not indicated	Disability indicated	Disability not indicated	
Victim of reported crime	8%	4%	33%	23%	53%	37%	

³⁹ This difference is statistically significant. A 95 percent confidence interval was calculated to be [0.15, 0.24].

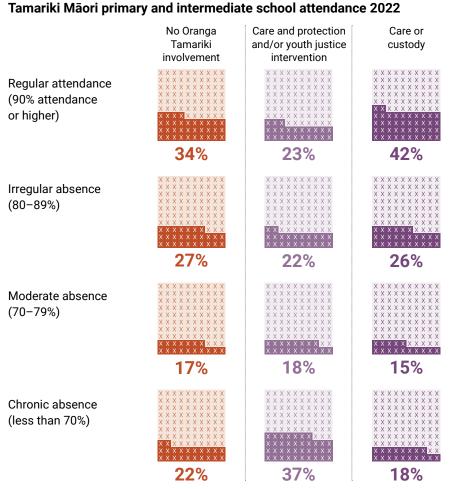
⁴⁰ Victim of reported crime between 2016 and 2022. Victim of recorded crime data is available in the IDI from mid-2014 onwards.

⁴¹ Victim of reported crime between 2016 and 2022.

Education indicators

Regular school attendance⁴² is linked with higher levels of educational achievement and better long-term health outcomes, job stability and participation in the community.⁴³

Tamariki Māori in care or custody regularly attended primary or intermediate school at a higher rate than those with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system

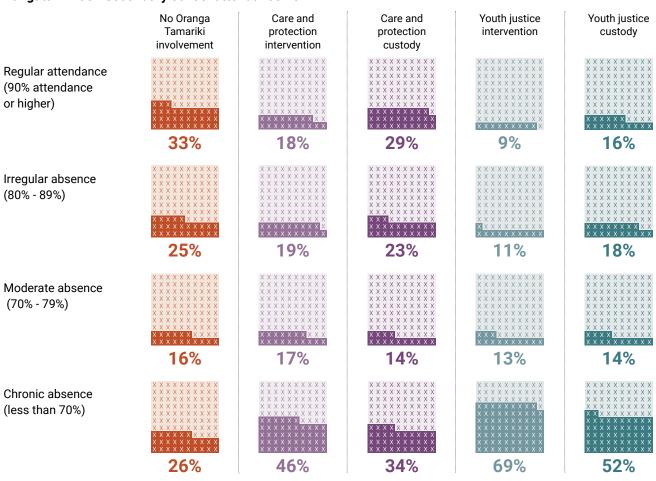


Tamariki Māori with lower levels of oranga tamariki system involvement had the lowest rates of primary and intermediate school attendance in 2022.

⁴² In this report, in line with the definition used by the Ministry of Education, attendance is defined based on attendance during term 1 2022. Regular attendance: 90% or more attendance. Irregular absence: 80% up to 90% attendance. Moderate absence: 70% up to 80% attendance. Chronic absence: less than 70% attendance.

^{43 &}lt;u>https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/strategies-policies-and-programmes/attendance-and-achievement/increasing-school-attendance</u>

Rangatahi Māori in care regularly attended secondary school at a similar rate than those with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system, but attendance of those receiving youth justice intervention was significantly lower

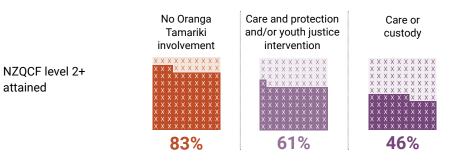


Rangatahi Māori secondary school attendance 2022

Rangatahi Māori in youth justice custody or intervention had the lowest levels of secondary school attendance in 2022. Those in youth justice custody had better attendance than those who remained in the community (youth justice intervention). Rangatahi Māori in youth justice intervention only attended school at about a third of the rate of those with no Oranga Tamariki involvement and were also chronically absent at more than twice the rate.

Overall, we found that disabled Māori aged 0-17 had similar attendance levels to those who are not disabled.

Māori in care or custody attain NZQCF⁴⁴ level 2 and above at a much lower rate than those with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system



Overall, these education outcome indicators suggest that care or custody may support regular school attendance for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, although the effect is less for regular attendance at secondary school. However regular attendance rates do not translate into higher educational achievement.⁴⁵ To achieve better outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system, a greater focus is needed on delivering targeted support to achieve their potential in the right educational setting for them.

attained

The New Zealand Qualification and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) includes secondary school qualifications, such as NCEA as 44 well as qualifications from tertiary providers and universities. For many, a level 2 and above qualification means NCEA level 2 or 3 attained at secondary school. For others, it may be a certificate or diploma from another education provider.

As discussed on page 50 of our report Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2023/24, tamariki and rangatahi in care are not always 45 getting the support they need for education. This includes where there are disputes between government agencies about paying for educational support.

Māori who were involved in the oranga tamariki system as children often have worse outcomes than those who were not

To understand long-term outcomes, we looked at a range of indicators for Māori adults, including those with a recognised disability,⁴⁶ who were aged 27–30 (except where indicated otherwise) in 2022. This group had no or some level of involvement in the oranga tamariki system⁴⁷ when they were children themselves (aged 0–18). The outcome indicators in this section include for health, wider wellbeing, education and mortality.

For almost every outcome indicator, we found the higher the level of involvement they had with the oranga tamariki system as children, the worse their outcomes at age 27–30.

Māori aged 27-30 who had been in care or custody as children have no qualification at a rate almost three times higher than Māori with no oranga tamariki system involvement



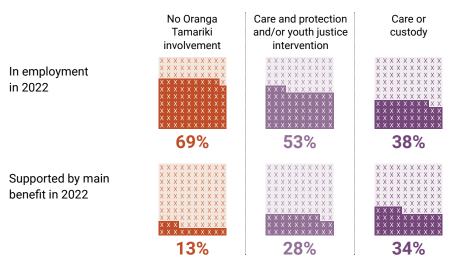
Māori who were in care or custody achieved a university or other tertiary qualification at a rate much lower than those with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system.

⁴⁶ It is widely accepted that disability is under-diagnosed among tamariki and rangatahi involved in the oranga tamariki system.

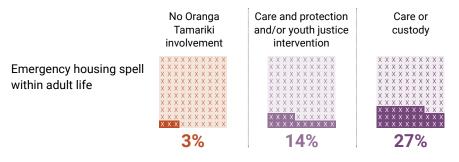
⁴⁷ Involved with the Department of Child Youth and Family Services.

⁴⁸ Including where it could not be ascertained whether an individual holds a qualification, for example, an overseas qualification that was not declared in Census 2013 or 2018.

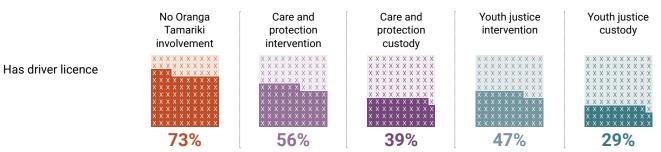
Māori aged 27-30 who had been in care or custody as children were in employment at almost half the rate as Māori with no oranga tamariki system involvement



Māori aged 27-30 who had been in care or custody as children have spent some time in emergency housing as adults at a rate nine times higher than Māori with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system



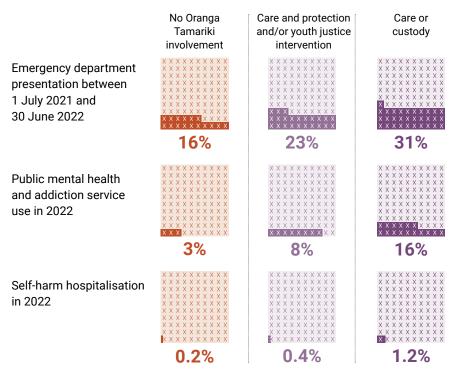
The more involvement of Māori aged 27–30 in the oranga tamariki system as children, the less likely they are to hold a driver licence



Since 2019, the National Care Standards Regulations have required that rangatahi are supported into adulthood, which includes support to obtain a driver licence. Our latest *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa*⁴⁹ report shows this is an area that still needs attention. Driver licences can open doors to employment and education opportunities and help prevent driving-related offences that introduce rangatahi to the justice system.

⁴⁹ Aroturuki Tamariki (2025). Experiences of Care in Aotearoa: Agency compliance with the National Care Standards and Related Matters Regulations. Reporting period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024. <u>https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Reports/EOCR2324/Experiences-of-Care-2023-24.pdf</u>

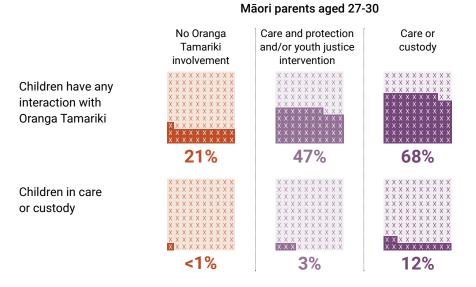
Māori aged 27-30 who had been in care or custody as children are more likely to turn up at an emergency department, use secondary public mental health and addiction services or be hospitalised for self-harm



Māori aged 27–30 years who had been in care or custody as children were twice as likely to have used an emergency department⁵⁰ as Māori with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system. They were also hospitalised for self-harm at a rate six times higher and used secondary public mental health and addiction services at a rate five times higher than Māori with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system.

⁵⁰ Between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2022.

Intergenerational involvement in the oranga tamariki system is high

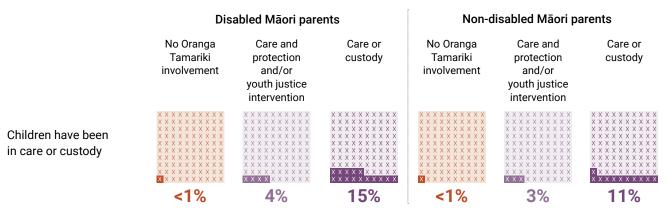


Where Māori aged 27–30 had been involved in the oranga tamariki system as children and become parents themselves, half of the time, their tamariki have no involvement in the oranga tamariki system.

However, for Māori who had been in care as children, the proportion of their children having involvement in the oranga tamariki system is high at 68 percent (compared to 21 percent for Māori parents with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system). One in eight Māori aged 27–30 who had been involved in the oranga tamariki system as children and are now a parent have had one or more children placed in care at some point in their lives. These rates are similar for non-Māori aged 27–30 who had been involved in the oranga tamariki system.

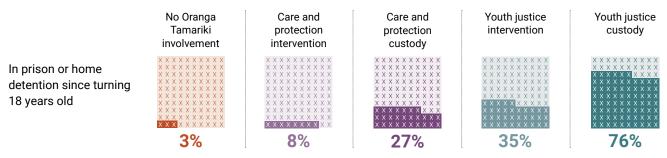
Further, as shown below, Oranga Tamariki is more likely to have custody of children of disabled Māori parents who were in care or custody as children than children of non-disabled Māori parents who were in care or custody.

Intergenerational involvement in the oranga tamariki system is higher for disabled Māori parents



This higher level of involvement in the oranga tamariki system for disabled Māori parents suggests more research needs to be done to understand the supports provided by the wider system. This includes understanding any bias regarding bringing tamariki of disabled parents in to care. There is also an opportunity to provide more health and education support to disabled rangatahi Māori when in care and during their transition to adulthood.

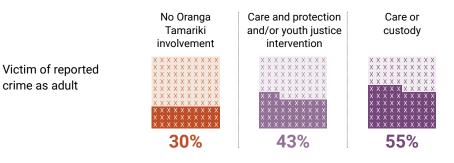
Māori aged 27–30 who were involved in youth justice have much higher rates of prison or home detention



By age 27–30, most Māori who had been involved in the oranga tamariki system do not end up in prison or under home detention. However, the system is not keeping those who have been in youth justice custody out of the adult criminal justice system. Three-quarters of Māori aged 27–30 who had previously been in youth justice custody had spent time in prison or on home detention since turning 18.

The likelihood of Māori having contact with the adult criminal justice system increases for those who have been in the oranga tamariki system, including those who came in to care for care and protection reasons. This is the same for non-Māori, although the proportion of Māori who have been in prison or under home detention is higher.

Māori aged 27-30 who had been in care or custody as children have been a victim of reported crime at nearly twice the rate as Māori with no involvement in the oranga tamariki system



Caution: The next two pages include information about people who have passed away in recent years, including some causes of death – including suicide. Please carefully consider your needs when reading the following information about suicide. If this material raises concerns for you, free call or text 1737 any time for support from a trained counsellor, or see other ways you can seek help in Appendix Four of this report.

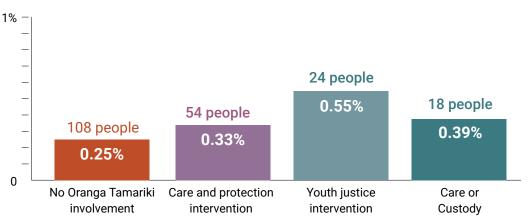
The information included here places an emphasis on data, and as such, can appear to depersonalise the pain and loss behind the statistics. We acknowledge the individuals, families and communities affected by suicide each year in Aotearoa.

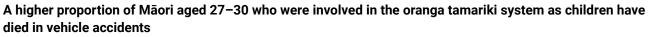
Māori aged 27–30 involved in the oranga tamariki system as children have higher mortality rates than those with no involvement

This report looks at outcomes for Māori involved in the oranga tamariki system. It is important to acknowledge that not all are still alive at age 30, and opportunities to support them have been missed. We heard from our Māori Advisory Group Te Kāhui and others that this should not be forgotten.

For mortality rates, we looked at the people born in the four years from 1992 to 1995. This time period was selected based on data availability and usability. Around 98 percent of Māori born from 1992 to 1995 and involved in the oranga tamariki system as children are still alive. For the 2 percent who are not, Māori who were in the oranga tamariki system as children died at a higher rate from self-harm (including suicide) or vehicle accidents than those with no Oranga Tamariki involvement.

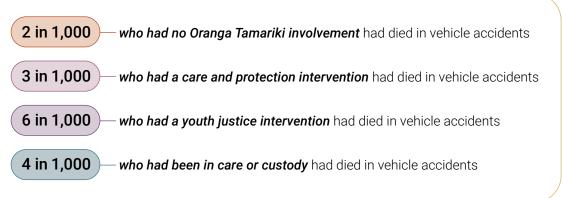
The number of people shown in the following graphs represents each individual who is suspected to have died by suicide or has died by vehicle accident in the group Māori aged 27-30. This number sits alongside the mortality rate. We also show this mortality rate as the number who have died from every thousand, to help readers understand differences in mortality between groups in the oranga tamariki system, and those with no Oranga Tamariki involvement. The information included places an emphasis on numbers and, as such, can appear to depersonalise the pain and loss. Each one of these people was important and deserves to be acknowledged.



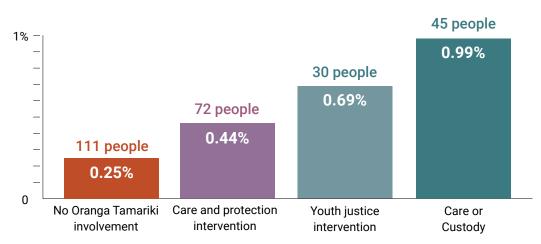


Rates of mortality from vehicle accidents are higher for those who were involved in the oranga tamariki system. Of the 4,359 Māori adults born between 1992 and 1995 with youth justice intervention as young people, 24 had died in vehicle accidents by 2020.

Of Māori adults born between 1992 and 1995, by 2020 around:

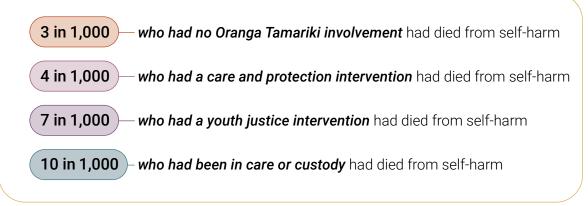


A higher proportion of Māori aged 27-30 who were involved in the oranga tamariki system as children have died from self-harm



Rates of death from self-harm (including suicide) increase with greater levels of involvement in the oranga tamariki system as children. Of the 4,557 Māori adults born between 1992 and 1995 who were in care or custody as children, 45 had died from self-harm by 2020. That is 1 percent of all Māori who had been in care or custody.

Of Maori adults born between 1992 and 1995, by 2020 around:



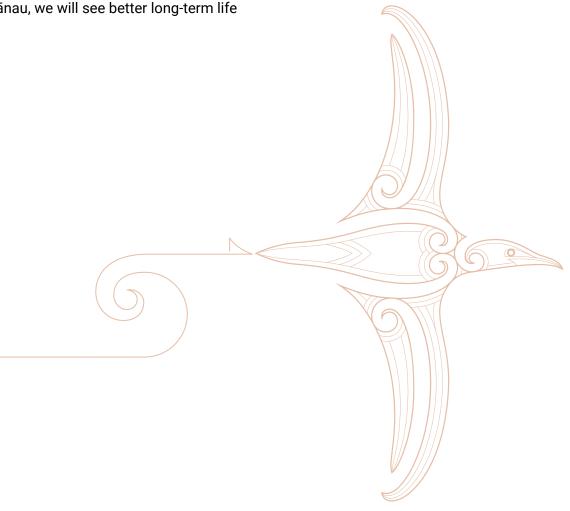
Every suicide death is a tragedy and the impacts are wide reaching and devastating for family and whānau, friends and communities. There are multiple and complex reasons for suicide, but suicide can be prevented. We acknowledge those who have died or have been affected by suicide. We recognise that individuals, families, and communities are impacted from each and every one of these deaths.

Further data on mortality by cause of death and further explanation about our methodology can be found in Appendix Two.

These outcomes for Māori aged 27–30 are an indication of future outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori currently in the oranga tamariki system if more is not done

These outcome indicators highlight the opportunities for government agencies to better support tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau at the earliest opportunity so they can achieve their aspirations for both them and their tamariki.

When the system is successful in meeting the needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau, we will see better long-term life outcomes, a reduction in the proportion of Māori involved in the system and a break in the cycle of intergenerational involvement. At the same time, we will see tamariki and rangatahi Māori kept safe from harm and their hopes and aspirations are more likely to be realised.



Our pou for future reports

In developing this first annual report on outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau, we have identified two pou.

These two pou are outcome indicators

we are using to measure the performance of the oranga tamariki system. We may develop more pou and measures over time, as we gain access to more data and develop greater insight.

A reduction in intergenerational involvement in the oranga tamariki system

Baseline measures for the reduction in intergenerational involvement in the oranga tamariki system:

% of Māori parents aged 27–30 in 2022 who were in care or custody as children and have a child known to Oranga Tamariki

				Х	

We may not see any significant shift in this pou for a number of years because of the time it takes for any changes implemented now to take effect as well as the time it will take for today's tamariki and rangatahi to become young adults. In the meantime, we will look at other measures that indicate more immediate % of Māori parents aged 27–30 in 2022 who were in care or custody as children and have a child who has been in state care or custody

Y				х		х			
								Х	
								Х	
Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	
Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	
								Х	
Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	
Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Ì
Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х)
~	х	х	х	х	Х	Х	Х	х	2

progress. For example, we may look at re-entry into care after leaving care and the number and proportion of tamariki and rangatahi Māori with renotifications after Oranga Tamariki has been involved following a report of concern. We will also look at progress for disabled tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori remain hopeful about their futures

Through our cycle of monitoring, we will continue to speak with tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau and caregivers. If the system is working well, we will see tamariki and rangatahi Māori kept safe from harm and realising their hopes and aspirations. Baseline measure from What About Me? survey for tamariki and rangatahi Māori (including those who self-identify as disabled) involved with Oranga Tamariki being hopeful about their futures:



"My dream job is to be a marine biologist. Family and I have been going to the same beach for years. We go to the marae in [location]. We used to do some spiritual thing, don't really know what it is, then have a hāngī. We rented a bach by the beach every Christmas.

At [location] I fell in love with the ocean. I went to the aquariums in Wellington, Auckland ... I've done so much research. I'll go to Auckland uni. Problem is credits. Next term, I have math, geography and English, then Te Kura, then Horizons for math and science for year 11 credits ... [whānau] are always 'just go for it'.

All my family support [the sibling group]. As siblings, we did everything together at school and supported each other."

"Just like to grow up

successful and, if I find the right person, to give my kids what I couldn't have."

"[I want to be a] NBA man – if I can't do that, I can do construction and youth work. I want to drive my dream car by 32, a 1965 Chevy. I want to get a house and start a family. Don't want to be behind a desk at a job, want to be outdoors. That's why youth work would be good to be with the kids and only 10% of the time behind a desk."

How Oranga Tamariki works with tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

55

In 1988, the report Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū⁵¹ outlined the need and reasons for significant cultural change in government departments that deliver social services. Subsequent reports have re-emphasised the need for a change in the way government works with Māori and that, unless this change occurs, improved outcomes will be limited.

At the heart of the issue is a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Māori society and its relationship with whānau, hapū, iwi structures."⁵²

Since Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū, many programmes across agencies have aimed at changing this. For the purposes of this report, we have focused on Oranga Tamariki efforts to build cultural capability and the way it works with Māori.

The Oranga Tamariki Act promotes the wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau and requires that services are established, promoted and coordinated to affirm mana tamaiti, centre on tamariki and rangatahi rights, advance their wellbeing, address their needs and provide for their participation in decision making. These services are required to be culturally appropriate and competently provided. Each year since the introduction of section 7AA in 2019, Oranga Tamariki has published a report. The most recent is for the reporting period of 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.⁵³

Oranga Tamariki has an Outcomes Framework,⁵⁴ Mana Tamaiti Objectives and Measures,⁵⁵ Quality Assurance Standards,⁵⁶ and the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan⁵⁷ to support section 7AA requirements. It has also developed measures for reducing disparities that are being tracked over time.

Oranga Tamariki has established and grown strategic partnerships with iwi and Māori organisations and providers. It has also progressed several Enabling Communities initiatives aimed at increased iwi participation and ownership in the delivery of services to tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. This report features three of these partnerships, and we will report on the others in future.

Oranga Tamariki has also had a focus on building kaimahi cultural capability and connections with te ao Māori. This includes implementing training and a practice shift aimed at working in a more culturally responsive way. While improving

⁵¹ https://msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/archive/1988-puaoteatatu.pdf

⁵² Maori Perspective Advisory Committee (1988). *Puao-te-ata-tu (daybreak)*. Department of Social Welfare (p. 7). Note the original quote did not include macrons as they were not used at that time. <u>https://msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/archive/1988-puaoteatatu.pdf</u>

⁵³ Oranga Tamariki (2025). Section 7AA report 2024: Te whaneke i ngā hua mō ngā tamariki, ō rātou whānau, hapū, iwi anō hoki | Improving outcomes for tamariki Māori, and their whānau, hapū and iwi.

⁵⁴ https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/our-work/outcomes-framework/

⁵⁵ https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/performance-and-monitoring/section-7aa/

⁵⁶ https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/performance-and-monitoring/section-7aa/section-7aa-quality-assurance-standards/

⁵⁷ https://www.orangatamarikiactionplan.govt.nz/

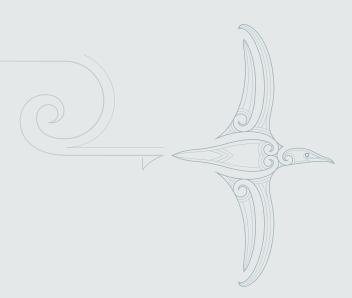
cultural capability is a step in the right direction, it will only take outcomes so far. In our monitoring and consistent with our latest Experiences of Care report,⁵⁸ we heard how barriers within Oranga Tamariki are preventing full implementation of its intent – for example, social workers not having resources and time to carry out careful and comprehensive social work practice, facilitating and resourcing FGCs appropriately and partnering with iwi, Māori and community providers to help put supports for whānau in place.

Recent changes to funding and contracts are impacting on relationships between some iwi and Māori providers and Oranga Tamariki. We have also heard about the impact this is having on tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau accessing services they need. These changes also risk undermining progress Oranga Tamariki has made with its strategic partnerships and Enabling Communities initiatives. Ultimately, the success of the Oranga Tamariki strategies and frameworks (outlined in this section) will be measured in positive shifts in the data over time – for example, a reduction in tamariki and rangatahi Māori being renotified to Oranga Tamariki and, for those that are, an improved response and outcomes. This is yet to happen, and most concerning is that disparities for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the system persist.

There is a saying – more hands make light work. Getting the right people from the whānau and iwi – makes it easier to get a plan together." KAIRARANGA-A-WHĀNAU

How strategic partners make a difference

Our legislation requires us to report on the strategic partnerships that Oranga Tamariki has with iwi and Māori organisations. Strategic partnerships are one of the ways Oranga Tamariki works to improve outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.



As part of a wider approach to working with whānau Māori, Oranga Tamariki has 10 strategic partnerships in place with iwi authorities and Māori organisations and providers.

As with other iwi and Māori organisations and providers, strategic partners can be better placed to support whanau Maori. Reasons for this include the ability to build lasting and trusting relationships with whanau, particularly where whanau have the same iwi affiliation and iwi involvement is lifelong.⁵⁹ Iwi and Māori organisations and providers can also provide more flexible, holistic and culturally appropriate support than government agencies. They can often work alongside whānau, responding to their circumstances (whatever they are), and can also focus on long-term, intergenerational needs. They have a vested interest in seeing whānau thrive.⁶⁰ In contrast, government services and supports tend to be short term and bound by rigid criteria and service specifications.61

Each strategic partnership agreement is shaped by the values and objectives of the strategic partner, however they share the same focus on supporting tamariki, rangatahi Maōri and their whānau, and support tamariki and rangatahi Māori remaining in the community.⁶² Oranga Tamariki views these partnerships as a key mechanism that enables it to meet its Tiriti commitments and obligations under the Oranga Tamariki Act.⁶³

Information from Oranga Tamariki states that "as a result of the restructure [in 2024], there is now dedicated capacity and capability within the organisation to support strategic partnerships. This includes developing a longterm strategy, progressing work programmes and measuring and evidencing the success of each partnership."⁶⁴

For this report, we focused on three strategic partners to look at the impact of the partnerships at a strategic level rather than focus on services being delivered.

We are grateful to Te Rūnanga-Ā-lwi O Ngāpuhi, Te Rūnanga O Toa Rangatira⁶⁵ and Ngāti Kahungunu lwi Incorporated, who volunteered to be featured in this report,⁶⁶ for sharing their experiences and perspectives so freely with us. E kore e mutu ngā mihi ki a koutou i āwhina i tēnei mahi.

We will feature different strategic partners in next year's report, ensuring all 10 are included over three years in line with our monitoring schedule.

⁵⁹ We recognise that some whānau are not in contact with their iwi and do not wish to be and that a choice of service provider should be available wherever possible.

⁶⁰ Independent Children's Monitor (2020). Engagement hui with Māori on the independent oversight of the oranga tamariki system. https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Documents/What-the-Monitors-doing/report-engagement-hui-2019.pdf

^{61 &}quot;That's the difference between programmes and iwi. They're short-term, iwi is for life." Reil, J., Lambie, I., Becroft, A., & Allen, R. (2022). How we fail children who offend and what to do about it: 'A breakdown across the whole system'. Research and recommendations. Michael and Suzanne Borrin Foundation, New Zealand Law Foundation & University of Auckland (p.19). https://www.borrinfoundation.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Children-Who-Offend-Final-research-report-March2022.pdf

⁶² The Oranga Tamariki Act states that strategic partnerships are intended to: provide opportunities for iwi and Māori organisations to improve outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori; set expectations and targets to improve outcomes; enable information sharing; allow for Oranga Tamariki to delegate some functions; support the cultural competency of Oranga Tamariki and its workforce; and agree on actions that both parties consider appropriate.

⁶³ See footnote 53.

⁶⁴ Oranga Tamariki, Response for information on the performance of the oranga tamariki system for the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024.

⁶⁵ Oranga Tamariki has a joint strategic partnership with Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira and Te Runanganui o Te Āti Awa ki te Upoko o te Ika a Māui Inc. We will include insights from Te Āti Awa when we report on our monitoring of Greater Wellington in our 2024/25 reports.

⁶⁶ This followed two hui with strategic partners, hosted by Aroturuki Tamariki, in November 2023 and February 2024 to discuss our approach to this report.

Te Rūnanga-Ā-Iwi-O-Ngāpuhi

Ngāpuhi is the largest iwi in Aotearoa and its tamariki and rangatahi make up onethird of the care population

Ngāpuhi is the largest iwi in Aotearoa with 165,000 individuals who have registered their affiliation. Of those, 35,000 are based in Te Tai Tokerau, and 17,000 are aged under 25. Its whenua stretches from Hokianga Harbour to Bay of Islands and to Whangārei in the south. Ngāpuhi is pre-settlement.

Te Rūnanga-Ā-lwi-O-Ngāpuhi (Ngāpuhi leadership) signed its strategic partnership agreement with Oranga Tamariki in December 2018, becoming the first iwi/Māori organisation to do so. The strategic partnership followed a memorandum of understanding established with Child, Youth and Family in 2014. The vision of the partnership is "Kia tū tika ai te whare tapu o Ngāpuhi – where the sacred house of Ngāpuhi stands strong". For Ngāpuhi, this means working together with Oranga Tamariki to be more involved in decision making that affects Ngāpuhi tamariki and whānau, and to bring an end to Ngāpuhi tamariki and rangatahi entering state care.

Following early discussion with Te Rūnanga-Ā-iwi-O-Ngāpuhi, our engagement for the purposes of this report has been primarily with Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services (NISS), which works with the rūnanga to operationalise the strategic partnership vision. NISS has been serving Ngāpuhi whānau for more than 30 years and is an accredited service provider for Oranga Tamariki. We met several representatives from NISS, including its chief executive and others from the leadership team, during two visits to the NISS office in Kaikohe.

Ngāpuhi has good relationships with Oranga Tamariki at a regional and local level

As reported in the Oranga Tamariki section 7AA report 2020,⁶⁷ Mahuru and the whānau care service are two key areas of work that support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori who are involved with Oranga Tamariki.

Mahuru is an award-winning remand programme for Ngāpuhi rangatahi who have offended and are in the custody of Oranga Tamariki under section 238(1)(d) of the Oranga Tamariki Act,⁶⁸ ordered by the youth court. Mahuru includes a placement with Ngāpuhi volunteer caregivers for up to six weeks and a programme of activities that reconnects rangatahi with their iwi and develops skills based on individual goals and plans.

The whānau care service aims to ensure that tamariki and rangatahi needing care are living safely with caregivers who have whakapapa connections through Ngāpuhi.

We heard about the work that NISS does to support Ngāpuhi whānau and how it has good relationships with Oranga Tamariki at a regional and local level.

As part of the *Enabling Communities* prototype, Oranga Tamariki had seconded two business analysts to Ngāpuhi. This had been an opportunity for capacity building within NISS, given the skillsets and experience brought in by the secondees. NISS kaimahi described the secondees as "a breath of fresh air" because of their frontline experience and familiarity with the complexities of Oranga Tamariki.

⁶⁷ Oranga Tamariki (2020). Improving outcomes for tamariki Māori, their whānau, hapū and iwi | Te whanake i ngā hua mo ngā tamariki Māori, o rātou whānau, hapū, iwi ano hoki. Section 7AA report. https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/ Performance-and-monitoring/Section-7AA/S7AA-Improving-outcomes-for-tamariki-Maori.pdf

⁶⁸ This provides for rangatahi who have offended to be held on remand in a range of settings and with a range of providers.

NISS kaimahi, including Oranga Tamariki secondees, also spoke highly of the local working relationships that exist between the two organisations.

The ongoing work that Ngāpuhi does to support whānau will be captured in more detail in our monitoring of Te Tai Tokerau in early 2025. This will be reported on in our next annual Experiences of Care in Aotearoa report on compliance with the National Care Standards Regulations, and in our subsequent reports on outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

However, the strategic partnership had not been used to full effect when we met Ngāpuhi leadership

Despite the purpose and intent of Oranga Tamariki strategic partnerships, we heard from NISS that Ngāpuhi was not routinely at the table when strategic decisions were being made for its whānau in Te Tai Tokerau. We heard that, at a national and strategic level, Oranga Tamariki sometimes neglected to engage with NISS on matters directly affecting tamariki, rangatahi and whānau from Ngāpuhi in the rohe. Despite having a strategic partnership, Oranga Tamariki spoke with other iwi, hapū and provider collectives ahead of Ngāpuhi.

Examples of this included Oranga Tamariki consultation on the national care strategy in early 2024. NISS leadership told us that they were not included in discussions despite Ngāpuhi having more of its tamariki and rangatahi in care than any other iwi (or other collective of any ethnicity). Another example given was the earlier Oranga Tamariki consultation on Taurikura, a Fast Track initiative for tamariki aged 10–13 engaging in offending behaviour. As both a strategic partner and a provider of a successful youth justice initiative, NISS leadership felt they would have been ideally placed to be around the table. We heard from NISS kaimahi that they felt they were often treated by Oranga Tamariki as a provider and not as a strategic partner. Involvement in strategic discussions with Oranga Tamariki had not been automatic and had required NISS leadership to actively leverage its strategic partnership.

- We activate the involvement. And agitate." NGĀPUHI
- In my time ... both of those [agreements with Oranga Tamariki] have not supported the mana whenua. The mana whakahaere (authority) of Ngāpuhi is not taken into consideration by the Crown for the good of Ngāpuhi." NGĀPUHI

With Ngāpuhi tamariki and rangatahi being disproportionately represented in both the care population and those involved more widely with Oranga Tamariki, NISS leadership told us they would like to see Oranga Tamariki take a strategic approach to reduce Ngāpuhi tamariki and rangatahi involvement with Oranga Tamariki.

When asked about its relationship with Oranga Tamariki national office, NISS leadership identified that the provision of data from Oranga Tamariki was very positive. However, we also heard that Ngāpuhi iwi had been trying to progress a review of its strategic partnership agreement with Oranga Tamariki for a number of years but that this had been delayed.

The strategic partnership between Ngāpuhi and Oranga Tamariki has since been strengthened

We spoke with national Oranga Tamariki leadership about our engagements with strategic partners for this report. Senior representatives told us that what we'd heard from NISS was fair. They acknowledged that Ngāpuhi leadership had been trying to engage Oranga Tamariki in strategic discussions for some time.

However, they also told us that the relationship had improved markedly in the few months following our discussions with NISS. This was attributed to changes in the way Te Rūnanga-A-Iwi-O-Ngāpuhi organised itself, resulting in greater clarity for government agencies engaging with the iwi. This had, in turn, enabled better communication and a stronger partnership.

We also heard that Oranga Tamariki had since apologised to strategic partners for not having involved them in discussions and decisions on changes to Oranga Tamariki funding. This apology had enabled Oranga Tamariki to start rebuilding some of its relationships. Oranga Tamariki was, at the time of writing, making efforts to take a future-focused approach to its partnership with Ngāpuhi. This included Oranga Tamariki working with Ngāpuhi on Enabling Communities, social sector commissioning initiatives and the future of the Mahuru programme and connecting Ngāpuhi to relevant Government Ministers.

Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated

Ngāti Kahungunu is the third largest iwi group in Aotearoa

In the 2023 Census, 95,751 individuals identified an affiliation with Ngāti Kahungunu. Its whenua stretches from Māhia Peninsula to Cape Palliser and is divided into six districts: Wairoa, Whanganui ā Orotu, Heretaunga, Tamaki nui-ā-Rua and Wairarapa. Ngāti Kahungunu is a grouping of iwi and hapū, all of whom descend from the leader Kahungunu.

Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Incorporated (Ngāti Kahungunu leadership) signed its strategic partnership agreement, *Te Ara Mātua*, with Oranga Tamariki in April 2021. This followed a 2014 memorandum of understanding between Ngāti Kahungunu and Child, Youth and Family⁶⁹ and work that had been led before that by Mereana Pitman (former National Māori chairperson of Women's Refuge) to develop the Ngāti Kahungunu Violence Free Iwi Strategy.

Through Te Ara Toiora Strategy and Kahungunu 2026 Strategy, Ngāti Kahungunu envisions a future where whānau and hapū thrive and flourish in vibrant, resilient and self-determining communities. This vision is supported through the establishment of Te Tumu Whakahaere o Te Wero, an iwi construct made up of kaupapa Māori providers (referred to as partners) and Crown agents to provide advice to the iwi across the social sector.

Following an early discussion with the chief executive of Ngāti Kahungunu about this report, we met jointly with leaders from Ngāti Kahungunu and Oranga Tamariki in October 2024 to hear about how well the strategic partnership is working.

Considerable investment has gone into the strategic partnership at a national level

Both Ngāti Kahungunu leadership and Oranga Tamariki reported that the strategic partner relationship is strong, open and frank. We heard that the relationship had been affected by the 2019 attempted uplift of a newborn in Hastings by Oranga Tamariki, which had resulted in an investigation by the Chief Ombudsman and an urgent inquiry by the Waitangi Tribunal. Ngāti Kahungunu and Oranga Tamariki recognised that considerable efforts have been made to rebuild the relationship and ensure the partnership is working well at a national strategic level.

A joint governance group has been established, providing a platform for both parties to ensure the success of the partnership.

Ngāti Kahungunu leadership told us that Te Ara Mātua, an Enabling Communities initiative for whānau involved with Oranga Tamariki, is an example of the partnership yielding a transformative and responsive communitydriven initiative. Ngāti Kahungunu and Oranga Tamariki described how they have worked together to respond to changes in timing and Government priorities and to commit resources to support the community. They said the partnership has resulted in a commitment to devolve decision-making and support iwi-led development.

We also heard from Ngāti Kahungunu that, while significant progress has been made, there had been hurdles. One of the biggest challenges had been managing change and misinformation within the wider community.

⁶⁹ The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services was New Zealand's statutory child protection agency before the establishment of Oranga Tamariki in 2018.

Some service providers in the rohe had expressed concerns about the partnership's potential impact on their services, leading to misconceptions and misunderstandings. However, open and purposeful dialogue with both Ngāti Kahungunu and Oranga Tamariki had addressed these concerns and led to greater collaboration.

Te Ara Mātua is at early stages of implementation

To bring the strategic partnership to life, Ngāti Kahungunu has done extensive work to capture and honour the voices of its whānau. This has been incorporated into Te Ara Mātua. Oranga Tamariki has supported work on data and design, and Ngāti Kahungunu has been working with community partners to support the initiative.

Te Ara Mātua was launched in July 2024, just after our reporting period ended. When we met in October 2024, the hub for Te Ara Mātua was just about to be launched. The hub ensures that whānau can meet services in an independent space that works for them.

- Our strategic partnership with Oranga Tamariki has been a game-changer, achieving some fantastic outcomes for whānau in Hawke's Bay. By co-creating Te Ara Mātua, we've ensured that the voices and needs of our tamariki and whānau are at the forefront. This partnership has demonstrated a commitment to devolving decision-making, supporting iwi-led development, and changing practices at a regional level to better align with the partnership's intent." NGĀTI KAHUNGUNU
- Our journey is ongoing, and we're mindful that progress may be incremental. However, with sustained effort and collective commitment, we're hopeful that our aspirations for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau Māori will be realised." NGĀTI KAHUNGUNU

We look forward to monitoring the early operations of Te Ara Mātua when we monitor the Hawke's Bay region in early 2026.

Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira

Ngāti Toa Rangatira (Ngāti Toa) has a population of approximately 9,000

Ngāti Toa iwi descends from Toarangatira and currently has a population of about 9,000. Its operational rohe extends across Te Upoko o Te Ika and crosses Raukawa Moana (Cook Strait) to Te Tauihu.

Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira (Te Rūnanga) was established in 1990 as a mandated iwi authority for Ngāti Toa and the administrative body for iwi estates and assets. It signed its strategic partnership agreement, *Developing Te Rangapū Ahi Kā Roa*, with Oranga Tamariki in December 2020 as a joint agreement with Te Rūnanganui o Te Āti Awa ki te Upoko o Te Ika a Māui (Te Āti Awa).

Te Rūnanga is well placed to deliver on its vision

The partnership agreement states that the "agreement will only be successful if Ngāti Toa and Te Āti Awa – as mana whenua – are actively engaged from the outset, in the design, delivery and evaluation of services for tamariki, rangatahi, mokopuna and whānau, and that the practices developed embed the tikanga of the respective mana whenua iwi, Mana Kohi, Mātauranga Māori and Kaupapa Māori values".⁷⁰

We met several representatives from Te Rūnanga, including its chief executive and others from the leadership team, during visits to its office in Porirua. Our discussions were focused on Ngāti Toa activities and leadership in the Wellington region and in Te Tauihu. It was made clear to us that Te Rūnanga has capacity to deliver on its visions for its people and that it would be supporting tamariki, rangatahi and whānau regardless of the status of its relationship with government.

Te Rūnanga views the strategic partnership with Oranga Tamariki as a tool to change the way the public sector works

Although Te Rūnanga is already well placed to provide services and supports for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau in the rohe, we heard the strategic partnership has made a positive difference. We particularly heard that the strategic partnership is a tool to change the way the public sector works with iwi. Government priorities can change, but the existence of a strategic partnership agreement ensures that the Crown's obligations continue to be recognised and acted upon by Oranga Tamariki.

One of the direct impacts of the strategic partnership is that Te Rūnanga has been managing the Oranga Tamariki site in Porirua. This arrangement was initiated by a joint strategy between Ngāti Toa and Te Āti Awa, which was intended to drive tangible actions from the strategic partnership with Oranga Tamariki, and had identified a priority to keep tamariki safe and out of state care. Oranga Tamariki national and regional leadership recognised the opportunity to try different approaches to support the iwi.

70 Strategic Partnership Agreement – Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Oranga Tamariki, 3 December 2020.

When we met Te Rūnanga in October 2024, one of its leaders had been seconded to manage the Oranga Tamariki site for approximately 18 months. He told us how management of the site has brokered strong relationships at the local level between Oranga Tamariki and the iwi and provided opportunities to support whānau in ways that Oranga Tamariki ordinarily can't. Through its Whānau Hononga team, Te Rūnanga can make contact and offer early wraparound supports to whānau who have come to the attention of Oranga Tamariki through the Porirua site.

The opportunity to provide early support is also a feature of the Porirua Hapori pilot, which involves Oranga Tamariki, Te Rūnanga, Taeaomanino Trust, Porirua Whānau Centre and Wesley Community Action. Initially running between April and December 2023 and extended from December 2023, the pilot was an expansion of joint work already under way by providers in the community.

A key feature of the pilot is the Hapori referral pathway, where reports of concern are triaged jointly by Te Rūnanga and Oranga Tamariki. Based on the presenting early risk factors, all whānau who are the subject of a report of concern are referred to one of the partner social service providers. This ensures early and purposeful support from an appropriate provider. Oranga Tamariki has evaluated the pilot and found positive results.⁷¹ Whānau involved with the evaluation spoke positively about the way they were approached by partner providers and the support they received. They spoke about feeling more comfortable and open with iwi and community providers rather than having to talk to Oranga Tamariki about the reports of concern, and this meant they were more open to accept offers of support. Kaimahi involved in the pilot were also positive, with some noting that the pilot also gave effect to the Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy 2021–2024.

Importantly, the impacts of the pilot were equally positive. Over eight months, 346 tamariki were referred to the pilot, 203 of whom were identified as Māori and 91 as Pacific peoples. Compared to data from the previous year, the pilot showed a 7 percent difference and an overall 21 percent reduction in renotifications. This was the lowest renotification rate for the Porirua site for at least the previous four years and was also the lowest for the region.

When we spoke with Te Rūnanga about the success of the pilot, it was pointed out that support from iwi and community providers is enduring. Oranga Tamariki must step away at some point, but iwi and community providers can stay with whānau long term. Iwi are also motivated by shared whakapapa and belonging to provide ongoing support.

Iwi are here for their people. It isn't a job." NGĀTI TOA

71 Roguski, M. (2023). Enabling Communities: Learnings from partnering case study #1. Oranga Tamariki.

Ngāti Toa is taking a leadership role within the rohe to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau

One of the striking features of Ngāti Toa is its leadership role within the rohe. Te Rūnanga spoke about welcoming all whānau to the rohe and being willing to work with other providers for the wellbeing of all whānau regardless of ethnicity or iwi affiliation. This can be seen in the ethnicity of Ngāti Toa care whare residents, which include Pacific peoples, as well as some of the projects that Ngāti Toa is leading. These include a social supermarket providing halal meat and home improvements for Pacific whānau.

It doesn't matter who comes into our house
 – Ngāti Toa is willing to engage."
 NGĀTI TOA

The strategic partner's role as a leader in the community is most evident in discussions with Oranga Tamariki at the end of the reporting period about proposed funding cuts. Te Rūnanga told us it was determined to work as a collective rather than submitting to a position of rivalry among providers. Using its position as strategic partner with Oranga Tamariki, Ngāti Toa was able to facilitate collective discussions with Oranga Tamariki and a wide range of community providers. Te Rūnanga took the view that the whole community would be impacted by changes to funding and that it would therefore be more constructive for providers to talk to Oranga Tamariki as a group. This meant that the focus would be on community need rather than on individual providers. It also changed the perception that providers were in competition with one another for funding.

We heard that this was a positive start, although some funding decisions had already been made at the time of these discussions. Te Rūnanga has since requested that any future proposals by Oranga Tamariki to cut funding in the rohe be put to the collective. This is so that they can work out between them how best to ensure continuity of service provision for all whānau within the rohe.

When we spoke with Oranga Tamariki national leadership, they confirmed that they will engage with providers in the rohe as a collective when future changes to funding are being considered. They also spoke positively about the mana of Ngāti Toa as a leader in its community and the ability of the iwi to focus on collective wellbeing for whānau. They also understood that Ngāti Toa has a strong vision, which the iwi will work to achieve with or without support from government agencies.

We look forward to reporting on Ngāti Toa and its work to support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau in more detail in next year's report, which will include insights from our 2024/25 community monitoring, including the Greater Wellington region.

Oranga Tamariki is building cultural capability

Since its establishment in 2017, Oranga Tamariki has focused on building kaimahi cultural capability, knowledge and connections with te ao Māori. Building cultural capability is linked to Oranga Tamariki upholding mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga.

Oranga Tamariki told us previously it is making a "fundamental shift in its approach to practice" and that "at the heart of this shift is the relationships [it] builds with the tamariki, whānau, communities and partners they work with". We were told that "practice will draw from te ao Māori knowledge, methods, and principles, which are by their nature relational, restorative and inclusive. This shift in practice will benefit all young people including tamariki and whānau Māori."⁷²

- We are transforming over a three-year cycle. I acknowledge some in the organisation are not culturally competent, but we are pretty good here [at site location]." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE SOCIAL WORKER
- It [the culture] has improved in the last three years ... They have been doing te reo. Some of the social workers who we had issues with are gone."
 MĀORI WOMEN'S WELFARE LEAGUE

Te Hāpai Ō has been introduced as the wholeof-organisation approach to build Māori cultural capability of all kaimahi at Oranga Tamariki. Oranga Tamariki also has a practice approach⁷³ that is intended to change social work practice within the organisation to better meet the needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori. From our engagements with Oranga Tamariki kaimahi, we learned that the practice approach is supported by a bicultural practice framework (Te Toka Tūmoana)⁷⁴ a needs assessment framework (Te Puna Oranga)⁷⁵ and a needs assessment tool (Te Ake Oranga).

In 2022 and 2023, in online survey Te Pihinga, Oranga Tamariki asked how its kaimahi rated their own capability across six domains of Whāinga Amorangi, the Māori Crown relations capability framework for the public sector.⁷⁶ The results show increases from 2022 to 2023 across five of the six domains – te ao Māori, tikanga and kawa, te reo Māori, engagement with Māori and te Tiriti.

The findings of Te Pihinga 2023 indicate that Oranga Tamariki is improving, where there are small but positive shifts in our cultural capability compared to 2022. However, Oranga Tamariki is yet to reach a state of maturity where culture is inherent."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ In 2023, the survey had a response rate of 51 percent (2,195 out of 4,297) of Oranga Tamariki kaimahi.

⁷² Aroturuki Tamariki (2023). Experiences of Care in Aotearoa: Agency Compliance with the National Care Standards and Related Matters Regulations. Reporting period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022 (p. 47) https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Documents/Reports/ Report-5/Experiences-of-Care-2021-22-web-version.pdf

⁷³ https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/practice-approach/

⁷⁴ https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/research/our-research/mana-enhancing-papers/

⁷⁵ https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Practice-approach/te-puna-oranga-worksheet.pdf

⁷⁷ Oranga Tamariki. (2024). Pūrongo ā tau: Annual report 2023/24 (p. 77). https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Aboutus/Corporate-reports/Annual-Report-2023-2024.pdf

There were strong regional variations in how much cultural competency was discussed (if at all) during our engagements. This appears to be partly due to differences in regional culture and structures, and influenced by policy changes, cost saving requirements and the Oranga Tamariki restructure.

We heard that building cultural capability is starting to make a difference for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

In our engagements, we heard a few examples from Oranga Tamariki kaimahi of training and learning that they thought was making a difference.

Tū Māia⁷⁸ is designed to lift the Māori cultural capability of all kaimahi through online, faceto-face and self-directed learning delivered to Oranga Tamariki kaimahi. In our engagements, the content of Tū Māia was mostly viewed positively by Oranga Tamariki kaimahi.

66 There's a few who have been doing Tū Māia. Just listening to the social workers at the Nelson site and how their thinking has changed over time and how they value the Māori staff at the Nelson site and the support they receive from them." KAIRARANGA A-WHĀNAU TEAM LEADER

Training delivered by iwi or Māori social service providers about the history of the iwi and (geographical) area was a highlight. This was spoken about positively by those that delivered the training and by Oranga Tamariki kaimahi.

We facilitated that training for them here as mana whenua. We had a kaumātua (elder) explain the Treaty settlement and the place and space of Rangitāne in the rohe. Last week, we looked at Module 5 of the new approach. It's not one-off token stuff, it's an ongoing commitment to each other." RANGITĀNE O MANAWATŪ IWI SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDER KAIMAHI

Rangitāne led out training on the first phase. Beautifully done, great resources. We then understood what the iwi looked like, their history and what they suffered 200–300 years from then to today so we understand the place we live in. Hearing it from the kaumātua from Rangitāne gave us a different lens and so we can now understand why they want us to do things the way they want us to do them. If they say stop then we do because I now understand that perspective." YOUTH JUSTICE SOCIAL WORKER

From what we heard, the focus on cultural capability and collaboration with iwi and Māori providers has helped strengthen relationships between Oranga Tamariki kaimahi and tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau as well as relationships with hapū, iwi, Māori providers and community organisations. In one example, we heard about the facilitation of tikanga, whānau voice being heard and legislative requirements being met in FGCs.

⁷⁸ Tū Māia is a Māori-focused cultural capability training programme for staff of Oranga Tamariki. <u>https://www.wananga.ac.nz/study/</u> te-kete-tuangahuru-cultural-development-service/tu-maia/

Manaakitanga and whanaungatanga make a difference for whānau

We heard from some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi about how they demonstrated manaakitanga and the tikanga they applied in their practice.

Manaakitanga is so important. Kai is so important. Kai is a really good connect. The whole thing around kanohi ki te kanohi is so important." KAIRARANGA A-WHĀNAU TEAM LEADER

It was clear from what whānau told us they appreciated relational practice and the demonstration of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga by Oranga Tamariki kaimahi when it occurred – even when they were not happy with their overall experience with Oranga Tamariki.

[Oranga Tamariki social worker] has a good wairua (spirit, nature), has a good heart under all her mahi and that. She's got a humorous side to her. She always brings kai for the kids, sometimes she will say take kai home for the kids if we're at the office. Always does nice gestures. She's great with the boys, straight up with them. She doesn't mind if they don't reply, they're teenagers. There's been times she has gone out of her way, even out of her own pocket. Paid for a taxi about \$120."

66 The [Oranga Tamariki kaimahi] was great, she felt like family. I'm half Māori and I can't speak te reo and she would speak te reo to me and I was like wow. She would bring kai. She felt like we know each other and feel like family. I felt closer to them, and so I wanted their help." WHĀNAU

Kaimahi support the practice approach, but implementation is variable

Oranga Tamariki kaimahi we spoke with were all positive about the intended outcomes of the practice approach – for example, the focus on relational practice, working better with whānau and achieving better outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori. However, we heard that the ability of kaimahi to put theory into practice is impacted by caseloads. Some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi said their sites were behind other sites in completing learning cycles because high caseloads made it difficult to find the time to do training.

We heard about variable understanding of the practice approach resulting in misunderstanding at some sites. Engagements at two different sites contrasted in how well frontline social workers felt supported by their supervisors and site leadership.

- [It] undermines the entire cultural practice framework ... we bandy these words [around], but [with] no substance." ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKER
- 66 [Former] site manager developed a caring and supportive culture." ORANGA TAMARIKI SOCIAL WORKER

Oranga Tamariki specialist roles make a difference, but it is not a smooth road

Oranga Tamariki kaimahi often talked positively about the knowledge, language skills and connections of other Oranga Tamariki kaimahi⁷⁹ and the advice provided about tikanga or for consultation on specific cases. Individuals in leadership roles were sometimes mentioned as supporting tikanga or relationships with iwi or Māori providers at their sites. During one engagement, the loss of Māori advisor roles due to the restructure was raised as a concern and the negative impact it would have.

Oranga Tamariki roles known as kairaranga ā-whānau were talked about by Oranga Tamariki kaimahi as bringing cultural expertise and connections. Oranga Tamariki introduced kairaranga ā-whānau roles to provide specialist functions within the regions and to support local sites with connection and relationships with hapū, iwi and Māori in communities. These roles are viewed by Oranga Tamariki as "critical to our engagements with tamariki and whānau Māori".⁸⁰ Some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi spoke positively about these roles, and their influence on culture and supporting cultural growth, especially at sites.

I'm very supported in this office around tikanga. It's been embraced. You would have seen that this morning. Karakia (incantation, prayer), waiata (song) are building blocks for our staff to feel comfortable, as always there is work to be done" KAIRARANGA A-WHĀNAU However, there were capacity issues and kairaranga ā-whānau were less available than previously. Not all sites had kairaranga ā-whānau roles, sometimes because of unfilled vacancies.

We are understaffed by four kairaranga ā-whānau. Recruitment for those positions have been put on hold, so their [existing kairaranga ā-whānau] caseloads are high, and they are stretched." SENIOR ADVISOR MĀORI

The role's scope and function were contentious or unclear for some kaimahi. A couple of kairaranga a-whānau and Māori advisors spoke about being locked out of certain sites or cases.

The job description needs updating especially for Tāmaki with such a diverse layout of the motu, it's not fit for purpose. The matua (senior) alongside kairaranga ā-whānau are looking at improving the job description to include how they work better with iwi and to get the right kairaranga ā-whānau to work with those iwi in respect of cases, to help streamline the communication ... Practice leaders ask them for support, [kairaranga ā-whānau] will do it, even though it's not their role, and they get snowed under."

⁷⁹ Most Oranga Tamariki staff made it explicit that these were Māori staff but it was not always explicitly stated or checked in our engagement.

⁸⁰ See footnote 53 (p. 5)

Some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi thought progress was at risk

Some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi we heard from told us that the progress was at risk of being lost due to recent budget restrictions and adaptations to policies.

Much of our budget has been chopped, even funds for kai. For example, we need to buy kai for the whānau, that has been chopped ... Before, it was easy to take some grocery from the supermarket and bring to whānau, that is culturally appropriate. We can't do that anymore; we don't have money ... For us to bring whānau together this time around is to use technology, which is not culturally appropriate."

CARE AND PROTECTION SUPERVISOR

It will take more than improving cultural capability and a practice shift to improve outcomes

Building cultural capability at Oranga Tamariki is part of the picture of change for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. Largescale cultural change takes time, resources and commitment. Sustained positive change is yet to be seen in the data.

In its section 7AA reports, OrangaTamariki uses measures⁸¹ for disparity and disproportionality in the care and protection system. The 2024 report shows that in 2022, the number of reports of concern received for all tamariki and rangatahi dropped to its lowest level in years. Consequently, so did the number of tamariki and rangatahi referred for further assessment or FGC. However, the proportion of reports of concern that were for tamariki and rangatahi Māori remained the same. The number of reports of concern received by Oranga Tamariki started tracking upwards again between 2023 and 2024. At the same time, there had been an increase in both the number and proportion of tamariki and rangatahi Māori entering care. This shows that disparities between Maori and non-Maori have persisted and are not reducing.

Partnering with iwi and Māori providers and implementing enabling policies so kaimahi can work in a relational way, demonstrating the values of manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, are essential to addressing disparities and unequal outcomes.

⁸¹ See footnote 53 (Appendix 4).

Funding and contracts delivering services for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

Tamariki and rangatahi involved in the oranga tamariki system often need support to recover from the abuse and neglect they may have suffered, along with services to address complex behaviours. Oranga Tamariki funds, delivers and directly purchases services and supports to meet these needs. These are provided alongside what other government agencies deliver and fund.

Through our monitoring visits, we heard about the positive impact of initiatives, including those delivered by iwi and Māori providers. Since 2019, Oranga Tamariki has progressed a strategy to increase investment in strategic partnerships and in hapū, iwi and Māori providers across the country. Where flexible funding models are used, they enable holistic, wraparound and enduring support for tamariki and their whānau, and services can be more effective and responsive.

Despite this, we have recently heard about the impact of funding cuts and changes to services delivered by iwi and Māori providers, along with other services that tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau rely on. These services include early intervention that, when done well, can prevent further involvement in the oranga tamariki system. The uncertainty caused by the cuts and changes was felt among providers, including Māori providers, and kaimahi from agencies. I don't feel tika or pono at the moment. We've worked closely with iwi and forged good relationships, it's been hard, but the goal-post changes, then we have to go back and tell them. It breaks trust ... it's the difficulties in contracts that's the issue and their trust in us is dwindling, yet we are asking for more and more with less [funding]." ORANGA TAMARIKI LEADER

When looking at services provided by other government agencies such as Education and Health, we heard about tamariki and rangatahi in the oranga tamariki system not being consistently prioritised, similar to our findings in our latest Experiences of Care report.⁸²

A lack of prioritisation across government agencies, a retreat to core services that is often at the cost of collaborative working arrangements and increased controls on spending within Oranga Tamariki has reduced the ability of tamariki and rangatahi Māori to access the things they need.

In a world of diminishing resources, there is a power struggle. It is about workloads and funding ... and it gets in the way of good collaboration." MINISTRY OF JUSTICE KAIMAHI

Oranga Tamariki funds services for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau

The government invests in services to ensure tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau involved in the oranga tamariki system receive the support they need and have positive outcomes. These are delivered through a range of government agencies including the Ministries of Education, Health, Justice and Social Development, NZ Police and Oranga Tamariki.

Oranga Tamariki is funded⁸³ to invest in and deliver services. This is to ensure that tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau receive certain supports while they are involved with Oranga Tamariki. Some of the services that Oranga Tamariki must deliver are required by legislation such as the Oranga Tamariki Act and the National Care Standards Regulations.

In 2023/24, Oranga Tamariki contracted \$286 million for prevention and early support services, and nearly \$14 million for intensive response services. In addition, Oranga Tamariki also directly purchases services and supports for individual tamariki, rangatahi and whānau – for example, to purchase things that a child in care may need (such as clothing) or specialist health services (such as therapy or treatment). The 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki Annual Report states that it provides and co-ordinates services to children and families to address early signs of need and the factors that may lead to a child going into care.⁸⁴ It also works closely with families so children can remain safely at home where possible, with their family, within their culture and connected to their communities.

The services Oranga Tamariki contracts and funds cover a broad range of services and initiatives and are provided through a range of funding models, approaches and contracts – for example, the Enabling Communities prototypes are examples of a decentralised model. Oranga Tamariki invests in and contracts iwi, strategic partners and Māori providers alongside community organisations to deliver services. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau require this full range of services and supports.

Supporting locally led innovation by enabling communities is important to ... change the way we work with and shift decision making and resources to Māori and communities, to mobilise supports in a timely way and reduce risk of children coming to our attention or needing a statutory response, and to improve care responses."⁸⁵

⁸³ Through appropriations within Vote Oranga Tamariki. Appropriations are parliamentary authorisation for the Crown or an Office of Parliament to incur expenses or capital expenditure that are administered by Ministers of the Crown or the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

⁸⁴ See footnote 77.

⁸⁵ Oranga Tamariki. (2024). Strategic intentions 2024/25–2029/30 (p. 29). https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Aboutus/Corporate-reports/Strategic-intentions/Strategic-Intentions-2024-2029.pdf

Investment in iwi and Māori providers benefits tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau

During our engagements, rangatahi Māori and their whānau were positive about the services and support they received from iwi and Māori providers and reflected on their holistic approach, which works with the whānau rather than just working with tamariki and rangatahi alone. Their positive views were shared by kaimahi from providers and government agencies. An Oranga Tamariki kaimahi in the Taranaki-Manawatū region said their relationship with the local iwi has enabled them to build relationships with whānau as most whānau "do not have a good impression" of Oranga Tamariki.

Some whānau spoke about the services at Papakura Marae (based in Auckland). These covered wraparound services helping tamariki and rangatahi to find courses or schools and to access health services, including organising doctor's appointments and providing immunisations at their home. They also spoke of being provided with food parcels and support from Family Start⁸⁶ kaimahi at the marae. A couple of rangatahi also spoke positively about Papakura Marae, telling us they were supported to learn te reo Māori and gain employment. One rangatahi said they were supported to get their driver licence and to build their confidence.

[Kaimahi from Papakura Marae] actually there for the kids. They're actually wanting and keen for them to do something, whether it be courses or education, helping them out with the baby and that, proper schools that she can actually go to. No other services have done that." Some whānau in Canterbury talked about Māori providers helping them address their mental health needs, being accompanied or taken to appointments and being supported in mediation and court. One parent said that, after engaging with NGO Te Ora Hou, they no longer felt alone and instead "felt powerful".

I'm so thankful we found Te Ora Hou, I feel safe and feel like somebody is actually on my side. When this happened, I felt like I was alone and had no understanding ... When I got the help from Te Ora Hou, I felt powerful, I felt like someone was on my side, whereas [government agency], all they care about is just the child. It seems like they don't care about you or the rest of your whānau, but with Te Ora Hou, I feel like I have a friend, I feel important." WHĀNAU MĀORI

In Nelson, rangatahi, whānau and kaimahi from Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police spoke positively about the support received at Whakatū Marae.

We have a good relationship with Whakatū Marae. They run the bail house contract. They've designed it to what's best for them, they have a te ao Māori approach. The outcomes, young people are more prone to be calmer in that space. I think they're consistent to maintaining their kaupapa. Being cut off or severed from whānau. The marae does great work in keeping contact with whānau." ORANGA TAMARIKI REGIONAL LEADER

⁸⁶ https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/support-for-families/support-programmes/family-start/

A more detailed example of a collaborative intensive intervention approach is Kāhu Matarau started in Christchurch East in 2021. Kāhu Matarau was co-designed in 2019 with iwi, the local community and whanau with lived experience of the oranga tamariki system. Five community agencies chosen by whanau are involved (Aranui Community Trust, Ngā Maata Waka, Christchurch Methodist Mission, Barnardos and He Waka Tapu) as well as kaimahi from Oranga Tamariki Christchurch East and mana whenua, who provide input at a governance level. Together, these agencies work to improve the support provided to whānau whose tamariki and rangatahi are at most risk.

Kāhu Matarau works intensively with whānau whose needs cannot be met by another service. With whanau agreement, Oranga Tamariki refers whānau whose tamariki are at risk of coming into care or are already in care with a return home goal to Kāhu Matarau. Once the referral is made, the Oranga Tamariki social worker and their supervisor and the Kāhu Matarau kaimahi and practice leader together use the Mirimiri ā-kōrero consult tool to identify whānau needs. Kāhu Matarau allocates a kaimahi whose skills match the needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau and provides intensive, intentional and practical support - for example, developing safety plans and helping whanau to understand the effects of trauma and violence on themselves and their tamariki.

Kāhu Matarau kaimahi told us that allocating a worker with the right skills to support each whānau is an essential part of the process. For example, we were told about a social worker who had a disability background whose specialist knowledge was making a difference in supporting a whānau who had neurodivergent tamariki. The social worker has "shown the whānau that things can be different".

We also heard about the benefit to whānau of Kāhu Matarau kaimahi providing support long term and without a change of worker.

It's about consistency with the same person, that's the magic. While Oranga Tamariki change social workers heaps, we don't move on." KAHU MATARAU KAIMAHI

Oranga Tamariki found similar outcomes in its evaluation of Kāhu Matarau in 2023. "A key finding is that a trusted, non-judgemental relationship, that is well-resourced, is an important lever for positive change."⁸⁷

Other results included increased safety and wellbeing for tamariki, several tamariki were supported to remain in education and attend more regularly and a number of whānau reported improved relationships with Oranga Tamariki kaimahi.

⁸⁷ Goodwin, D., Atkinson, M., & McKegg, K. (2023). Kāhu Matarau – Learning and insights in a collaborative initiative to provide intensive response – first year of implementation. Oranga Tamariki (p. 2). https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/ Research/Latest-research/Intensive-Response-Developmental-Evaluation/Intensive-Response-Kahu-Matarau-implementation-Sept23.pdf

Oranga Tamariki had increased funding for iwi and Māori providers, but we recently heard about the impact of funding cuts

Hipokingia ki te Kahu Aroha, Hipokingia ki te Katoa,⁸⁸ the report of the Minister for Children's Ministerial Advisory Board, sets expectations for changes to the way Oranga Tamariki works with Māori and communities to deliver better outcomes for tamariki and whānau. The Government accepted all the recommendations of the report and Cabinet agreed to the future direction of Oranga Tamariki for the next two to five years. Recommendation 19 outlines "[t]hat, in alignment with our first recommendation,⁸⁹ adequate and equitable investment in Māori collectives and communities is committed to enable Māori and communities to lead and deliver prevention of harm".

The 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki Annual Report outlines the progress made against its appropriation measure standard A4.10 that the percentage of all service contract funding contracted with iwi and Māori organisations will be greater than 23 percent. It goes on to state that "the majority of children in care, and young people in custody, are Māori. This measurement shows our commitment to procuring iwi and Māori organisations that can play a unique role in supporting, strengthening and culturally connecting tamariki Māori, supplemented by specialist tauiwi services."⁹⁰ Outlined in section 7AA reports,⁹¹ Oranga Tamariki has made progress in this standard since 2020 by increasing its investment in contracted iwi and Māori providers. For the 2023/24 year, 33 percent of all service contract funding was with iwi and Māori organisations – an increase from 30 percent in the previous year. This spend has consistently increased since 2019 to \$190.2 million in 2023/24. The number of contracts with iwi and Māori organisations has also increased since 2019 to 155 contracts in 2023/24.

Some iwi and Māori providers told us they deliver more than what they are contracted for, and Oranga Tamariki kaimahi agreed

In Taranaki-Manawatū and Canterbury, we heard examples of some iwi and Māori providers delivering additional services that were not funded as part of their contracts. This included working beyond their contracts, providing more bed placements than funded for and making cultural connections for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

Funding models did not reflect the full extent of what iwi and Māori providers deliver such as nurturing and upholding whakapapa, tikanga and mātauranga. We heard that some current funding models undermined service provision sustainability. In one example, an iwi social service provider in Auckland said the processes they need to go through to access funding create barriers in helping tamariki and rangatahi, especially where things are needed immediately. They gave examples of the "many levels" to get funding approved for activities such as tamariki going on camp.

⁸⁸ Ministerial Advisory Board. (2021). *Hipokingia ki te kahu aroha, hipokingia ki te katoa*. Oranga Tamariki. <u>https://www.beehive.govt.nz/</u> sites/default/files/2021-09/SWRB082-OT-Report-FA-ENG-WEB.PDF

⁸⁹ That the Minister for Children and the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki, supported by the Board, undertake a programme of community engagement to facilitate planning as to how Māori collectives and communities will lead prevention of harm to tamariki and their whānau

⁹⁰ See footnote 77 (p. 66).

⁹¹ See footnote 55.

Flexible funding models enabled services to be more responsive

We heard some positive reports from a few NGOs about their contracts. These contracts had full-time equivalent (FTE) staff funding models,⁹² which they described as being flexible and enabling them to better meet needs. We heard that flexible contracts are more "youth focused and youth friendly" and enable the support whānau actually need. This flexibility gave providers the ability to manage caseloads, and flexible timeframes enabled them to build relationships. One NGO said they felt empowered by the flexibility Oranga Tamariki provided through their contract.

An Oranga Tamariki site leader from Canterbury said the FTE funding model gives flexibility to meet the "ebbs and flows" of youth justice. It enables them to respond immediately to court orders, and when providers do not have a full-time caseload, the person (funded from the FTE model) was picking up care and protection cases.

Kaimahi and leadership working as part of the Kotahi te Whakaaro initiative in Auckland spoke positively about being funded from multiple agencies and having some flexibility over how to use the funding. Because of this, the initiative can develop tailored services and provide wraparound support to whānau. Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Education leadership spoke positively about how agencies shared financial responsibility for services and supports. Across two regions (Canterbury and Taranaki-Manawatū), we also had positive reports about the Children's Flexi Fund. This fund is available through NZ Police to provide services and support for tamariki and rangatahi wellbeing following family harm. We heard funding was being used for things like eye tests, glasses, mobile phones, equine therapy, and boxing lessons. It also sometimes funds assessments and support for FGCs.

I want to put in a plug for the Children's Flexi Fund ... that funding option is making a big difference for the officers who are then available to look at the underlying causes and avenues that won't be funded through the plan. At the moment, it's good we have access to the Children's Flexi Fund." POLICE YOUTH SERVICES KAIMAHI

We asked Oranga Tamariki about its 2024/25 contract approach and whether flexible funding models are likely to continue. It advised that the intention was to move to an outcome-based contract approach. If done, this will provide flexibility for providers to decide how they work.

Tamariki and rangatahi are impacted by gaps in services and long waitlists

Across all four regions,⁹³ we heard about barriers to accessing support from both Oranga Tamariki contracted services as well as from other government agencies. Some barriers were consistent across regions such as long waitlists. Some were more prevalent in certain regions such as the lack of availability and variety of services, especially in rural locations and for disabled tamariki and rangatahi.

⁹² This funding model pays a provider a consistent rate for an agreed number of full-time equivalent staff (FTE). This model can provide more flexibility than a volume-based funding model, so that providers can tailor their services to meet the complex and diverse needs of whānau.

⁹³ Auckland, Canterbury, Taranaki-Manawatū and Upper South.

One of the main barriers we heard about was a "lack of" service provision in a region. There were some regional differences about how people described what a lack of service provision meant.

Some kaimahi and leaders from Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police (Taranaki-Manawatū and Upper South regions) spoke of waitlists and insufficient services for rangatahi in youth justice. In the Upper South region, we also heard that there are not enough services available in the area, including mentors and crisis services for whānau. In the Taranaki-Manawatū and Canterbury regions, we heard that capacity was an issue, and in Taranaki-Manawatū, this had been ongoing since 2020 due to Covid-19.

There isn't much [support] for mental [health]. They turned me down. Not many options, I have been through them all." RANGATAHI

One example we heard from NZ Police was that there was a six-month waitlist for driver licence tests in Nelson. The delays to accessing driver licensing services can put rangatahi on a "treadmill to court". In some cases, rangatahi had to travel to Westport or Blenheim to get tested. This was seen as a lack of provision, not explicitly funding, as it was mentioned that funding is available from the Ministry of Social Development.

A regional leader from one NGO said that the provision of services for disabled tamariki can be more limited and sometimes there is additional cost to access them. They also mentioned additional barriers are faced by disabled tamariki and rangatahi, requiring advocacy. There is always gaps in service and things that are barriers for people. Some of it is in our control and some of it isn't. There's always going to be problems with transportation and money for example. There are societal attitudes against people with disabilities, those are the things we do a lot for advocacy and work towards. Oranga Tamariki are great in this space. The funds they provide us for children in care and transport needs for the caregiver, that goes a long way to supporting families, in my experience."

Tamariki and rangatahi in rural areas also face additional barriers. Kaimahi and leaders from Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police from places such as Ōamaru, Ashburton, Greymouth, Levin and Pukekohe discussed similar difficulties accessing support. An Oranga Tamariki regional leader said that services can be "100km down the road" because of the size of the region.

A couple of kaimahi in Greymouth said they look for services outside of their local area when whānau have exhausted the options available locally but added there is a large financial cost associated with accessing services out of the region.

I have a young person in Auckland who is due to come home. If my young person comes home, he will struggle. The support is high where he is but will be much lower when he comes back here. The services [in Auckland] won't want him to come back here without support, but if the service doesn't exist, what other option to get him home is there?"

It is sometimes difficult for Oranga Tamariki kaimahi to directly purchase services and other things tamariki and rangatahi need

In three regions, we heard about difficulties accessing funding, requests being declined and requests for small amounts going up to regional, national and sometimes to deputy chief executive level of Oranga Tamariki.

Kaimahi expressed frustration at the delays that prevented them from meeting the needs of tamariki and rangatahi, especially to reduce the risk of reoffending. A couple of site leaders said that their regional office does the best they can, but they are under a "huge amount of pressure" and are in a "lose-lose situation" with additional pressure added by the restructure at Oranga Tamariki.

In one region, we heard that a site leader funded things from their own budget because of the lack of national funding. In this example, Oranga Tamariki kaimahi spoke positively about how this site leader "was proactive, which we have never seen before" and the impact that it had on the rangatahi.

If [the manager] had said no to any support, then this young person would have ended up back in residence or [later] jail." ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI

Oranga Tamariki kaimahi from one region gave examples of financial restraints being put in place, including for things like providing food and activities for whānau connection. We heard that approval processes and thresholds have changed, meaning that access to funding is now more difficult, there are more layers of approval and everything took longer. The manager can't sign anything off any more. Anything over \$500, it's now limited. Used to be able to get sign-off on activities that were \$2,000-\$3,000. These children should be able to experience activities that families have, but that's not happening much any more. Yet, when money was drying out, there was other money going out during the Covid time. Oranga Tamariki turned the tap off, things are getting a bit tight." NGO LEADER

A couple of Oranga Tamariki kaimahi said their risk assessments for children that come into care with challenging behaviours get "questioned at every turn" by upper management.

They don't want to fund the level of funding these children need. They want us to change the risk assessment. So we have to balance doing a risk assessment for this child but be mindful of funding. Actually, this is not my job to manage the funding, it's my job to manage the risk for these children. We are lucky more doesn't go wrong."

Funding changes and cuts are starting to impact on services

Across all four regions monitored in this period, we heard about the impact of funding cuts and changes. This was more prevalent in the regions we visited in early 2024 (Canterbury and Tāmaki).

We heard examples of contracts being ended early, not renewed (when providers thought they would be) and funding that had been "promised" not eventuating. In one example, an NGO reported a delay of eight months for a contract renewal and another NGO said that funding was cut by 33 percent with only a few days' notice. An Oranga Tamariki kaimahi recently said that providers are facing uncertainty with contract renewals, and this creates difficulties for their planning and future proofing.

Our kids are hearing on the news about funding cuts and have mentioned running away so they won't be kicked out of here. How do you manage those conversations when they are worried about the place closing?" KAUPAPA MĀORI ORGANISATION KAIMAHI

Several Oranga Tamariki regional and site leaders told us about "being creative" with their budgets as there "isn't enough money to spread between everyone". In one recent example, funding was shifted and repurposed to support tamariki and rangatahi.

Oranga Tamariki are funding about 30 percent of the work that we do – we're actually using our MSD [Ministry of Social Development] crisis funding for adults to do [the sex health programme]. We recently have been doing some work for Oranga Tamariki with kids who have problematic sexual behaviour, but that's not funded by Oranga Tamariki. We know that those who have experienced sexual abuse have higher rate of causing sexual harm."

At the end of 2024, we heard more examples of the impact of funding cuts in our monitoring in Bay of Plenty and Central Plateau, especially impacts felt by tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. Many community organisations told us that, due to cuts to their contracts, they are having to be "creative" to fund their work, with some organisations working without funding, some working above and beyond their funding and others facing cuts and scaling back their services. They spoke about the "sizeable" impact of continued contract uncertainty, with some still unclear on proposed changes and timeframes and working without funding months into the 2024/25 financial year.

The contract changes are also impacting on local relationships, with some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi telling us about the negative impact on their relationships with iwi and Māori providers. Also during engagements, several strategic partners told us about the impact that funding cuts were having across their communities and their own service delivery. Additionally, some providers spoke about funding cuts more broadly across the oranga tamariki system and agencies withdrawing to core business, often at the expense of collaborative work. At a time when Oranga Tamariki is wanting to progress the devolution of services to iwi and Māori. progress is likely to be hampered if services that are relied on by tamariki and rangatahi Māori (from all providers) are being impacted.

In October 2024, the Auditor-General announced an inquiry into the procurement and contract management practices of Oranga Tamariki. The focus of the inquiry is on the processes, decisions and actions of Oranga Tamariki between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024.⁹⁴ A report will be published once the inquiry is complete and tabled in Parliament.

⁹⁴ https://oag.parliament.nz/media/2024/oranga-tamariki

How tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau move through the oranga tamariki system

A report of concern or a police referral for a youth justice FGC can be the first time that tamariki, rangatahi and whānau come to the attention of the state. The right response can mean that tamariki and rangatahi are kept safe and prevent further involvement.

A report of concern can be made by any person who believes that tamariki and rangatahi have been or are likely to be harmed or abused or who has concerns about the wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi.⁹⁵

Oranga Tamariki social workers determine the response, and the decisions about whether an

assessment or investigation is required must be managed appropriately and professionally. As outlined in our 2024 report *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children*,⁹⁶ the decision to progress to an assessment or investigation can be unduly influenced by Oranga Tamariki resourcing rather than solely the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi.

For this part of the report, we focus on early intervention for care and protection as well as FGCs and youth justice intervention.

⁹⁵ Oranga Tamariki Act, sections 14 and 15. There are other circumstances where tamariki and rangatahi become known to Oranga Tamariki, all of which are covered in the Oranga Tamariki Act.

⁹⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki (2024). Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children: A review of the implementation of the recommendations of Dame Karen Poutasi following the death of Malachi Subecz. https://aroturuki.govt.nz/assets/Reports/poutasi/ Review-of-implementation-of-Poutasi-recommendations.pdf

Reports of concern and early intervention

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are overrepresented in the number of reports of concern being made to Oranga Tamariki. Although tamariki and rangatahi Māori make up 28 percent of the total youth population, more than half of the 2023/24 reports of concern were about them. Reports of concern are the starting point for ongoing disparity through the oranga tamariki system.

During our 2023/24 engagements, we heard about high thresholds for investigation and further action from Oranga Tamariki following a report of concern. This is consistent with what we heard when completing our in-depth review *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children.*⁹⁷ We heard then that Oranga Tamariki decisions on whether to take further action were unduly influenced by social worker availability at sites rather than solely on a risk assessment. Community organisations and government agencies were concerned about insufficient action being taken to keep tamariki and rangatahi safe.

[It is] no small thing to make a ROC [report of concern], you don't go I am going to do that ... [it is] discouraging, you steel yourself to do it. We don't treat this [report of concern] as a dumping ground, it's as a result of what we are observing in front of us ... How am I going to sell this to validate it, [I start thinking] am I an idiot? Am I seeing risk when it isn't there? [There are] different interpretations of risk, I guess, when you deal with it every day."
 CANTERBURY FAMILY VIOLENCE COLLABORATION KAIMAHI

Where help is needed, failing to take action at the earliest opportunity can leave tamariki and rangatahi at risk and whānau without the support they need and potentially lead to greater involvement in the oranga tamariki system, such as youth justice.

However, we also heard about local initiatives focused on improving the rate of response to reports of concern. These include Ngā Maata Waka in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) and Te Pūkāea in Whakatāne. Both are partnered approaches with iwi and Māori organisations focused on providing a Māori-centred approach for tamariki and their whānau. Despite the challenges in responding to reports of concern, these initiatives represent an opportunity for Oranga Tamariki and its partner agencies to firstly ensure tamariki and rangatahi are safe and then provide early intervention, including support for whānau to prevent further involvement in the system.

Receiving a report of concern is a key decision point for Oranga Tamariki and an opportunity to respond

The 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki Annual Report⁹⁸ states that 54,000 individual tamariki and rangatahi had a report of concern (about 75,000 reports of concern were made during this period) and about 5 percent of all tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa had either a report of concern or a youth justice referral.

If a report of concern is not considered by Oranga Tamariki to be serious enough to require its involvement, it may be recorded as a report of concern with no further action as the outcome, or it may instead be recorded as a contact record. Oranga Tamariki carries out an initial assessment to determine what response is required. An initial assessment can include contacting the person making the report of concern, as well as others, to develop an understanding of the needs and vulnerability of the child and to develop a chronology. Decisions on initial assessments may be:

- no further action is required
- a referral of the child to a community agency⁹⁹
- either a child and family assessment or an investigation is required.

Referring tamariki and rangatahi to a community or other government agency is an opportunity for early intervention, with the services and supports offered intended to strengthen whānau and keep tamariki and rangatahi safely in the community. 66 Here at He Waka Tapu, I have done a report of concern and ended up helping the family. It was hard and [the mother] found out I did a report of concern. Trust was able to be rebuilt as I walked alongside her. It resulted in a change in parenting styles. We have created a safe space." HE WAKA TAPU KAIMAHI

Early intervention aims to prevent problems from occurring in the first place or to address them early on before they get worse. For Oranga Tamariki, early intervention also "helps to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for adult life".¹⁰⁰ It can take many different forms, including homebased and school-based programmes and mentoring schemes, and can be focused on tamariki or whānau or both. Investment in the right support at the earliest stages can reduce further involvement in the oranga tamariki system and improve long-term outcomes.

As we reported in Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children,101 Oranga Tamariki accepts that referrals to community agencies are underreported in its data. Some kaimahi we engaged with stated it is not standard practice for Oranga Tamariki to record referrals to community agencies. As a result, most referrals to community agencies appear as no further action decisions and there is no tracking of how many reports of concern are being addressed by the community and how many result in no action at all. Without knowing this, it is unclear whether the service was delivered, and it is therefore also difficult to assess the effectiveness of the service, including whether it is preventing further reports of concern.

⁹⁸ See footnote 77.

⁹⁹ Oranga Tamariki Act, section 17(2A).

¹⁰⁰ Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre (2020). Oranga Tamariki early intervention: A synthesis of recent research and evaluations. Oranga Tamariki (p. 11). https://ot.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/El-synthesis/Early-Intervention-A-synthesisof-recent-research-and-evaluations/Early-Intervention-A-synthesis-of-recent-research-and-evaluations.pdf

¹⁰¹ See footnote 96.

The 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki Annual Report states that 43 percent of Oranga Tamariki funding went to early and intensive intervention and prevention. This represented a decrease from 48 percent in the previous year and was explained "in part due to the increasing cost of care as a proportion of overall spend – with the reduced number of children coming into care having higher and more complex support needs".¹⁰²

In Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children,¹⁰³ we discuss the response to reports of concern in detail. When reports of concern are made, the response from Oranga Tamariki is not always sufficiently focused on the safety of the child. Most initial reports of concern are assessed by the Oranga Tamariki National Contact Centre, which sends those requiring further action to local sites. Of the cases where the National Contact Centre (NCC) decision is that further action is required, around half are overturned when the case is sent to the site, with no further action taken by Oranga Tamariki. There are several reasons why a site may overturn the NCC decision, but we heard staff capacity was having an undue impact on decision making. We also observed time was being spent reworking NCC assessments when this time could have been used to see tamariki.

For this report, Oranga Tamariki was able to provide more information on cases where

no further action was taken. From case file analysis of 100 initial assessments¹⁰⁴ where the outcome was changed to no further action by site, 46 percent involved cases where the NCC had initially identified further action was needed. In nearly half of these cases, the change was supported by additional information that was available, either from a partner agency or already known by the Oranga Tamariki site. In the remaining cases, the change reflected a differing opinion by the site staff on the concerns, although Oranga Tamariki concedes that some of these lacked a sufficiently robust rationale to support the change.

Overall, the decision for no further action made by the site was:

- sufficiently supported by the assessment and the written rationale in 60 percent of cases
- insufficiently supported in 30 percent of cases
- not at all supported in 10 percent of cases.

In a quarter of cases, subsequent new information relating to the reported concerns was received after the report of concern was closed. In 68 percent of those cases, the new subsequent information led to a new report of concern.

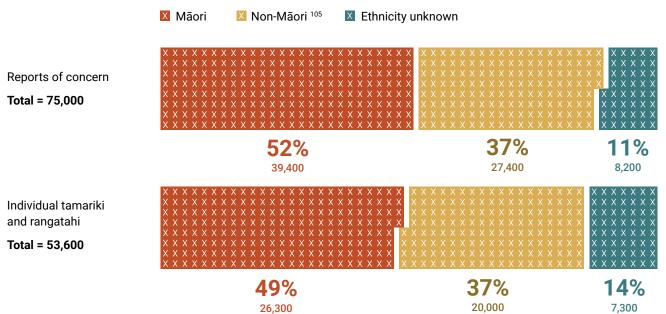
¹⁰² See footnote 77 (p. 43).

¹⁰³ See footnote 96.

¹⁰⁴ These initial assessments were undertaken between July and September 2024.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are disproportionately represented in reports of concern to Oranga Tamariki

2023/24 reports of concern



Oranga Tamariki data shows that approximately 40,000 of the 75,000 reports of concern made to Oranga Tamariki in 2023/24 were for tamariki and rangatahi who were identified as Māori. This is more than half (53 percent) of all reports of concern. When looking at individual tamariki and rangatahi who were the subjects of these reports of concern, just under half (49 percent) were Māori.

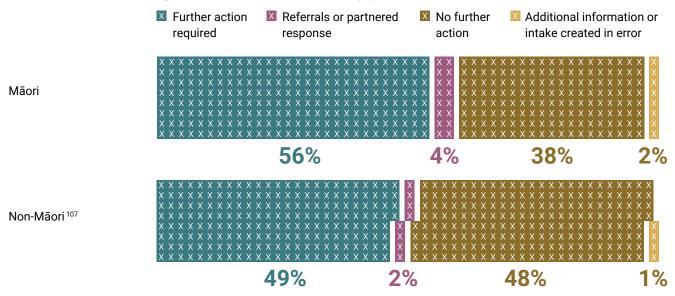
Oranga Tamariki states that this disparity contributes significantly to the disparity that can be seen at almost all points of the oranga tamariki system (in this case, once tamariki and rangatahi become known to Oranga Tamariki). Data from Oranga Tamariki, for the 12 months to September 2024 shows that there were 25,266 reports of concern that Oranga Tamariki determined would require a child and family assessment or investigation as further action. Of those, 59 percent involved tamariki Māori, which suggests that the disparity – while beginning with reports of concern – carries further through the system.

This may suggest bias in those making reports of concern. However, research undertaken by Oranga Tamariki shows that at least one reason for this over-representation is the impact of socio-economic disadvantage.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Oranga Tamariki data for "non-Māori" includes instances where ethnicity is not specified.

¹⁰⁶ Data analysis shows that the ethnic disparity in reports of concern is much less when controlling for socio-economic disadvantage. The latest section 7AA report (see footnote 48) states that Māori aged 0–4 are 3.90 times more likely than non-Māori to have a first report of concern before adjusting for socio-economic factors but 1.11 times more likely after adjusting for this.

When a report of concern is made, it is more likely to be referred to assessment/investigation for tamariki and rangatahi Māori



2023/24 outcome of Oranga Tamariki initial assessments (%)

In its Section 7AA Report 2024,¹⁰⁸ Oranga Tamariki also shows that the overrepresentation of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system has remained constant for many years. Over the last five years, the number of reports of concern made to Oranga Tamariki has been decreasing but the proportion of reports received for Māori has remained at approximately 50 percent.

Reports of concern are not always addressed in the way people expect

During our 2023/24 engagements, many government and community kaimahi told us they did not hear back after making a report of concern and/or they felt the threshold for Oranga Tamariki action in response to reports of concern has increased and was too high. In one region, we heard this particularly from health kaimahi who had made reports of concern for neglect of tamariki and rangatahi and in cases where methamphetamine use was a factor. Government and community kaimahi also told us Oranga Tamariki is not always taking action following their reports of concern in cases they consider high risk and requiring statutory intervention. This aligns with data from Oranga Tamariki showing that, in 2023/24, 45 percent of reports of concern made by kaimahi in the health sector¹⁰⁹ resulted in no further action, 35 percent made by education kaimahi resulted in no further action and 44 percent made by NGOs resulted in no further action. NGO kaimahi told us they have

¹⁰⁷ Oranga Tamariki data for non-Māori includes instances where ethnicity is not specified.

¹⁰⁸ See footnote 53.

¹⁰⁹ This includes reports of concern made by GPs, specialists in private practice, dental therapists, hospital public health nurses, midwives and Wellchild Tamariki Ora kaimahi.

often exhausted all early intervention options before making the decision to make a report of concern and that their professional judgement is that statutory intervention is required. This is supported by recent research.¹¹⁰

Many professionals we spoke with, including iwi and Māori providers, also shared concern about a lack of communication and responsiveness from Oranga Tamariki to reports of concern, which they felt was driven by capacity constraints and an increased risk threshold. Some Oranga Tamariki site managers noted they do not have capacity to respond to non-critical reports of concern.

We see that they are overworked and don't have the capacity. It's not that they don't have the experience. They just don't have the capacity. Some social workers are being told not to take any children into care, which means that some kids are being left in unsafe situations." NGO LEADER

In some regions, police spoke of the large volume of reports of concern and need for greater investment in proactive early support in the community. Kaimahi from an NGO cited delays of up to three months for local Oranga Tamariki sites to provide information about reports of concern, during which time information can be lost and new concerns arise. They also felt that Oranga Tamariki communication with whānau following reports of concern needs to improve – something we also heard from whānau.¹¹¹

- Whānau keep asking about updates on ROCs [reports of concern]. Communication needs to be better. Whānau are never being told about the reasoning as to why reports of concern are being closed or they don't get an update." NGO LEADER
- 66 Both teachers and the school principal [also] did a report [of concern]. I didn't hear anything back [from Oranga Tamariki]. I did this about six months ago." PARENT

Some NGOs described it as "disheartening" when they have put in the work for a report of concern only for it to be closed by Oranga Tamariki. They emphasised the thought and consideration that goes into their reports of concern and the difficulty and risk they hold to support whanau and tamariki when their reports are not actioned by Oranga Tamariki. A few kaimahi spoke of inconsistency in responses from Oranga Tamariki, wondering why some cases are actioned and not others. In the Upper South region, we heard from many NGOs and education kaimahi that, due to this lack of response from Oranga Tamariki, they changed their reporting behaviour. Some kaimahi told us they are making fewer reports of concern, while others are not calling the National Contact Centre to raise concerns but instead contacting local police or Oranga Tamariki sites directly. A Ministry of Justice kaimahi and a few other professionals also believed three reports were needed before Oranga Tamariki would take action.

¹¹⁰ Keddell, E., Colhoun, S., Norris, P., & Willing, E. (2024). The heuristic divergence between community reporters and child protection agencies: Negotiating risk amidst shifting sands. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 159, 107532. <u>https://doi.org/10.1016/j.</u> childyouth.2024.107532

¹¹¹ Published case notes of investigations undertaken by the Ombudsman in relation to complaints about Oranga Tamariki also often identify poor communication with whānau as an area for improvement. For example, see www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/news/chief-ombudsman-issues-another-stinging-criticism-oranga-tamariki-over-failure-investigate

- We are told to submit more ROCs [reports of concern], but they get closed too. What's the point of just submitting more ROCs that get closed? It is often the same information so it's a waste of time."
 POLICE KAIMAHI
- We get into a nightmare of abuse. We need to get there before the violence gets so bad ... I would go so far as to say their [Oranga Tamariki] risk at the moment is probably the highest for fatality. They live in hope that nothing will happen." NGO LEADER

Multiple reports of concern about the same tamariki and rangatahi are sometimes filed as case notes on the individual's file. In October 2024, the Chief Ombudsman published a case note about Oranga Tamariki recording of multiple reports of concern for the same child.¹¹² The case note recommends Oranga Tamariki change its practice, to avoid masking the true level of concern being raised about safety and wellbeing. We understand Oranga Tamariki has implemented the decision. However, it is still considering additional changes in the way it records reports of concern.

If a report of concern is not responded to in the right way, it can leave tamariki and rangatahi at risk both in terms of their immediate safety and missing out on services and supports. Crucially, when trying to prevent further escalation through the system, it could also mean that tamariki and rangatahi end up having prolonged involvement with Oranga Tamariki.

As outlined in this report, we will continue to monitor the number and proportion of tamariki and rangatahi Māori having reports of concern and being referred to services as key measures that can support a reduction in intergenerational involvement in the oranga tamariki system.

Community-led initiatives can help respond to reports of concern

66 Early intervention is key for these whānau." NGĀ MAATA WAKA KAIMAHI

During our monitoring in Canterbury, we heard about an initiative to help Oranga Tamariki respond to reports of concern.

Ngā Maata Waka is a community service provider based at Ngā Hau E Whā National Marae in Christchurch East. Ngā Maata Waka provides programmes and services for its community, including health, education, justice, housing and social services. Ngā Maata Waka kaimahi have a wide range of skills and are trusted within the community to work with tamariki and their whānau. In 2023, Oranga Tamariki Canterbury regional leadership were concerned about the increasing number of reports of concern awaiting an initial assessment. Staff vacancies were increasing pressure on some sites, and the delayed response was illustrating inconsistencies in practice between sites.

Oranga Tamariki and Ngā Maata Waka worked together to trial an approach to respond to the high backlog of reports of concern. The trial involved both Oranga Tamariki and Ngā Maata Waka kaimahi completing initial assessments for reports of concern.

¹¹² https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/failure-oranga-tamariki-investigate-reports-concern-and-complaints

In our recent engagements, Oranga Tamariki kaimahi were positive about the collaboration with Ngā Maata Waka. They spoke about it reducing a backlog of reports of concern and building a more consistent response. Oranga Tamariki kaimahi told us that their community partners, including NZ Police, saw more consistency in the assessment response during the pilot.

Ngā Maata Waka kaimahi told us the approach enabled them to engage with whānau early and that they took into account not only the information in the report of concern but also the wider needs of the whānau. In some cases, they told us, this avoided the need for any further intervention or escalation into the oranga tamariki system.

We could be more proactive than reactive." NGĀ MAATA WAKA KAIMAHI

Ngā Maata Waka and Oranga Tamariki told us the backlog was reduced during the trial.

We used data [to evaluate the initial assessment initiative with Ngā Maata Waka] and yes there were better outcomes. 80 whānau over a year were supported through this pathway and there was a really low renotification rate."

ORANGA TAMARIKI REGIONAL MANAGER

We heard that the initiative had "amazing" feedback from whānau.

Amazing feedback from whānau. They commented on the impact that this minimal amount of interaction with Oranga Tamariki had. Oranga Tamariki were happy to take any lead from Ngā Maata Waka." ORANGA TAMARIKI REGIONAL LEADER Despite what appears to be a successful local initiative, it is no longer operating. However, it remains an example of how collaboration can create better outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau. We understand it stopped due to the roll-out of a new National Contact Centre localised response, lack of funding and concerns from the Public Service Association that carrying out assessments was the role and function of Oranga Tamariki statutory social workers.

Outside of this 2023/24 reporting period, we recently visited Bay of Plenty and specifically Te Pūkāea, a Ngāti Awa-led initiative under the Enabling Communities pilots. Te Pūkāea o te Waiora is an Iwi Alliance contract led by Te Tohu o Te Ora o Ngāti Awa.¹¹³ It triages calls redirected from the National Contact Centre and helps whānau to access community information and services.

We heard Te Pūkāea o te Waiora is working well to triage reports of concern and support tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau in Eastern Bay of Plenty (Whakatāne). A couple of agencies spoke positively about Te Pūkāea, noting that reports of concern are responded to quickly and tamariki, rangatahi and whānau can access a range of services in the community to support their needs. All reports of concern that come through Te Pūkāea are either referred to Oranga Tamariki or allocated to whānau navigators, who can refer to other providers. This allows tamariki, rangatahi and whānau who meet a lower threshold to access support and have their needs addressed holistically.

113 This is underpinned by the strategic partnership between Oranga Tamariki and Eastern Bay of Plenty Iwi Alliance.

Data from Oranga Tamariki shows that the Whakatāne Oranga Tamariki site has a greater proportion of reports of concern that result in a referral/partnered response (25 percent) compared to nationally (3 percent) and crucially has the lowest proportion of reports of concern where no further action is taken in the region at only 18 percent. This is significantly lower than the national average of 42 percent, though some sites record decisions to refer or provide a partnered response to a report of concern as no further action. A local Oranga Tamariki leader told us that Te Pūkāea has been working well to triage reports of concern from ICAMHS that do not meet the statutory threshold, and an understanding has developed that "Oranga Tamariki don't need to be the ones to do something first".

We will report further on progress with Te Pūkāea in our next report and in our follow-up of *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children*.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ See footnote 96.

Family group conferences

FGCs are an opportunity to support whānau decision making following care and protection concerns, including disengagement from education and/or youth offending, and to put a plan in place that addresses those concerns.

When introduced in 1989, FGCs were a fundamental shift in the approach to child protection and youth justice and were a direct response to concerns of institutional racism raised in the 1988 report $P\bar{u}ao$ -Te-Ata- $T\bar{u}$.¹¹⁵ The FGC is not a kaupapa Māori practice but is grounded in whānau decision making and incorporates aspects of te ao Māori. At the time FGCs were introduced, they were described as "unprecedented".¹¹⁶

In our 2023/24 community engagements, we heard that FGCs are not always carried out as intended. We heard from some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi that FGCs are not always valued despite the benefits they can bring, including access to resources that can address care and protection concerns and offending.

Financial restrictions, time pressures, limited whānau involvement and FGCs being held in Oranga Tamariki offices were described as barriers that limit the purpose and intent of the FGC process. Sometimes whānau and professionals feel their voices aren't heard. Sometimes agencies can't agree on a plan going forward, despite whānau involvement, and there can be a lack of services and supports to refer tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to. This means their plans are not always followed through and actioned.

Considering the value that FGCs can deliver, supporting these appropriately offers a way of working that is likely to be beneficial for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

The FGC is a legislated hui for whānau and professionals to come together and make decisions in the best interests of tamariki and rangatahi

FGCs are for care and protection concerns, including disengagement from education and/or youth offending.¹¹⁷ Depending on the pathway of the FGC, they are usually attended by tamariki and rangatahi, their whānau and a range of professionals, including social workers and police. For youth justice FGCs, involving the victim of the offending enables the FGC to be a restorative process where rangatahi take accountability for their offending.

The FGC is intended to give whānau a key role in decision making to support the best interests of tamariki and rangatahi. First identified in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989 (the precursor to the Oranga Tamariki Act), FGCs originate from a number of reports

¹¹⁵ See footnote 51.

¹¹⁶ Introducing a 2012 review, the Ministry of Social Development states: "When Family Group Conferences (FGCs) were implemented in New Zealand 25 years ago, this approach to helping vulnerable children and young people, as well as victims of young offending, was unprecedented." https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/evaluation/review-family-groupconferences/index.html

¹¹⁷ The Oranga Tamariki Act sets out circumstances where FGCs should be convened. This includes section 19, which refers to FGCs being convened as a result of concerns raised by government agencies, agents of the Crown and local authorities.

and inquiries that found Māori were being disadvantaged and marginalised by the social welfare system. This growing awareness culminated in Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū, a 1988 report that described institutional racism as the norm, and outlined "a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Māori society and its relationship with whānau, hapū, iwi".¹¹⁸

The outcome of an FGC is a plan to address the needs of tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau and to secure services and supports from other government agencies such as learning support and mental health. As outlined in our *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* reports, it is often through the FGC process that services and supports are identified to meet these needs for both care and protection and youth justice.

As well as being mandated in legislation, FGCs are the subject of several practice standards within Oranga Tamariki. As a minimum, FGCs must:

- be convened in a timely manner (youth justice FGCs have legislated time frames)
- have provision to share all required information and advice with the people attending FGCs
- include (or have taken reasonable steps to include) the views of anyone entitled but unable to attend an FGC
- be convened and facilitated in a way that enables the whānau to consider the concerns of anyone unable to attend and/or (for youth justice) the offending behaviour of tamariki and rangatahi

- be convened and facilitated in a way that enables participants to develop a plan to address the concerns, rights of the victim (for youth justice) and any accountability and public interest or safety
- have all decisions and recommendations documented and copies of the plan provided to anyone entitled to receive them
- have funding to support the delivery of the agreed plan.

A youth justice FGC is a restorative process that supports rangatahi to reduce or stop their offending. Youth justice FGCs can be more successful when victims attend.

66 I've been going to FGC for 20 years. It's much more powerful when victims are there, it's raw and real. To hear from the victim themselves, it's powerful and emotional. I can [read their statements], but it's not the same. It's good, it gives the victim some closure. It's good for the young person to hear. It's more effective and has more impact."

 $^{^{118}}$ See footnote 51 (p. 7). Macrons were omitted in the original quote.

Māori are more likely to have reports of concern that progress to FGCs than non-Māori

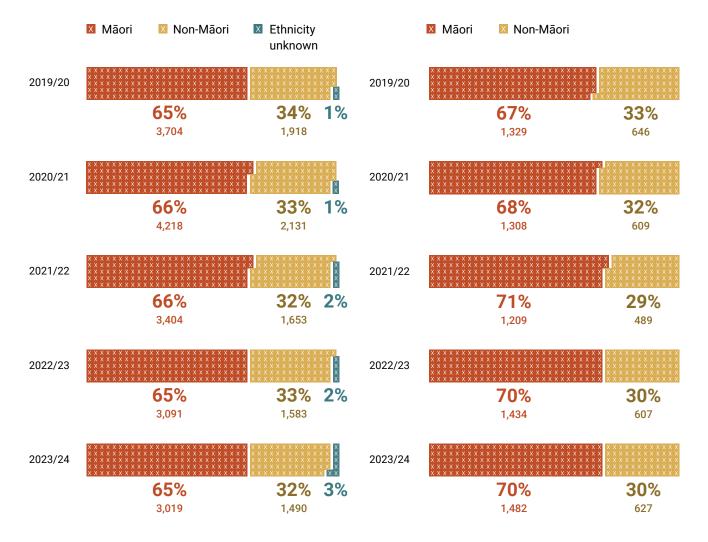
Oranga Tamariki data shows around 4,500 tamariki and rangatahi had a care and protection FGC in 2023/24, and more than 2,000 tamariki and rangatahi had a youth justice FGC.

Two-thirds of care and protection FGCs are for tamariki and rangatahi Māori

Seventy percent of youth justice FGCs are for tamariki and rangatahi Māori

Care and protection FGCs for individual tamariki and rangatahi

Youth justice FGCs for individual tamariki and rangatahi



The proportion of FGCs for tamariki and rangatahi Māori has remained stable for the past few years.

Oranga Tamariki has reported on the drivers of disparity as part of its most recent section 7AA report.¹¹⁹ When socio-economic disadvantage is taken into account, the disparity reduces.

Oranga Tamariki states that Māori aged 0–4 are 1.19 times more likely than NZ European and other ethnicities aged 0–4 to be referred to an FGC or family/whānau agreement before adjusting for socio-economic disadvantage, and just as likely after adjusting for socioeconomic disadvantage. Among tamariki aged 5–9, Māori are 1.34 times more likely before adjusting for socio-economic disadvantage, and 1.04 times more likely after adjusting for socio-economic disadvantage.

Among tamariki and rangatahi aged 10–17, Māori are 1.2 times more likely before adjusting for socio-economic disadvantage, and less likely than non-Māori (0.93 times) to be referred to an FGC or family/whānau agreement after adjusting for socio-economic disadvantage.

Oranga Tamariki kaimahi have mixed views on the use of care and protection FGCs

We heard mixed views among Oranga Tamariki kaimahi about the use of FGCs. There was recognition that FGCs are important for formalising and resourcing support for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. It was also recognised that, through this formal commitment to provide support, FGCs can prevent tamariki and rangatahi escalating further through the system.

We also heard that some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi had misinterpreted the practice shift as a move away from taking custody orders. This had resulted in some social workers viewing not proceeding to FGC as a "win". However, FGCs are more than simply an entry point to care. They can be used to ensure that services are in place irrespective of whether tamariki or rangatahi come into care.

In contrast, some kairaranga ā-whānau in the Upper South region spoke positively about the hui ā-whānau process at their site, with one saying their "aim is to not go to FGC" but rather to bring wider whānau together in the hui ā-whānau space so that plans can be made and support addressed there. A hui ā-whānau is a less formal whānau meeting, which can be used in multiple instances, including as a precursor to the FGC. However, it is not a substitute for an FGC. While hui ā-whānau are facilitated using a te ao Māori approach, they lack the statutory responsibilities of the FGC that make the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki accountable.

We heard from some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi that a reliance on hui ā-whānau as an alternative to FGCs raises concerns about how effectively care and protection needs can be addressed and supports resourced.

- [The difference is] that Oranga Tamariki chief executive must give effect to the reasonable decisions of their plan [from an FGC] ... I have noticed that there are some social workers [who are] trying to get things done in a hui ā-whānau." ORANGA TAMARIKI FGC CO-ORDINATOR
- [However], at the hui ā-whānau, [the whānau] don't have the finances to support ... If that [budget] was there [for hui ā-whānau], you won't come to FGC." ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI

¹¹⁹ See footnote 53.

Not holding an FGC can lead to a reactive response later on. A practice leader from Oranga Tamariki said that, in some cases, urgent and reactive care entries could have been avoided if social workers hadn't felt deterred from making decisions or "scared to go to family group conference".¹²⁰ This implies that an earlier FGC could have prevented entry into care or, in some cases, at least prevented the sudden (without notice) placement of tamariki and rangatahi out of their homes.

However, Oranga Tamariki has advised from case file analysis of 161 cases of tamariki who came into care¹²¹ that, in 58 percent of cases, there was evidence of either a prior FGC or a hui a-whānau. They also advised that, in 79 percent of cases, support services were provided or offered to whānau prior to coming into care.

Without knowing the nature of support offered or the quality of the FGC, including the resourcing of the plan, it is difficult to fully understand what this Oranga Tamariki analysis tells us. However, from our monitoring, it is clear there is a lack of clarity about the place of FGCs and hui ā-whānau, the purpose of both and how they work together, and how they are preventing escalation in the oranga tamariki system.

Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori had a range of experiences of being included in FGCs

Tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori told us about a range of experiences when it came to being involved in, listened to and supported to attend and understand FGCs. This was the same for both care and protection and for youth justice. As noted in our latest *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* report,¹²² some whānau of tamariki and rangatahi in care or custody spoke of positive FGC experiences. This included examples of being financially supported to attend FGCs and being able to build relationships with key kaimahi in advance of the hui.

When we asked tamariki and rangatahi Māori about their FGCs, some felt they had a say in what went into their FGC plan and spoke of being supported by mentors, NGO kaimahi and Oranga Tamariki social workers to have a say and understand the process.

- I got to write down what my hobbies were, what I liked doing to find some of the stuff available to me. I chose something to do with boxing. They put it down as an option so I can choose it." RANGATAHI
- The main plan was to get me into boxing through Genesis. What helped me understand was [Oranga Tamariki social worker] explaining to me what the process was. What I want to do and how I want to do it and what's going to work best for me. They made it easy for me to understand." RANGATAHI

¹²⁰ The Oranga Tamariki Act requires FGCs to be convened prior to a custody order. In cases where this happens without notice, or where temporary care arrangements are made, the FGC must be convened once tamariki and rangatahi have been brought into care.
121 Under a section 78 interim custody order between 1 July and 31 December 2023.

¹²² See footnote 49.

However, some tamariki and rangatahi Māori felt they lacked involvement in their FGC plans and were not supported to have their views heard.

I don't really get the chance to talk much [in big meetings], they don't let me talk really." RANGATAHI

Some said they were not supported to understand the process. One rangatahi in youth justice said they felt like they were "just expected to know things".

For whānau Māori, there were also mixed experiences. Some whānau Māori felt they were not listened to in FGCs and not able to be involved in making decisions about FGC plans. For example, one whānau member felt they were only listened to in the FGC when they became visibly frustrated and things would get heated between themselves and professionals.

When I'm frustrated and grumpy, that's when they listen, and I feel my voice is heard. I don't want to yell. To have to yell, it's not nice ... It's frustrating to get to that point."

In contrast, some whānau who attended youth justice FGCs spoke more positively, and said they were supported by professionals, mainly NGO and marae kaimahi, to have a voice and have their views reflected in FGC plans.

- For [rangatahi], it was his choice [what went into his plan]. We would give him the ideas and he would make the choice, and because it was his choice, he would do it. Like school – we asked what he wanted to do. We looked at courses. He didn't like many of them. He picked a course to do this year, I said I would help him do that. He said he wanted to work, so he found himself a job and did it himself. He did his CV and got a job straight away, so I was really proud." WHĀNAU
- [Someone] from Oranga Tamariki reached out to me and came to see me a day or two after. Really lovely woman. I was quite scared to meet her because you hear Oranga Tamariki, and you get scared they are going to come take [tamariki]. But she said she was there to offer help to get him on track and we made a really good plan." WHĀNAU

I did [get a say in the decisions being made] ... It was talked through to us step by step and anything I didn't understand I did ask ... Nothing couldn't go past me if I had a concern or not. Without me agreeing or understanding." WHĀNAU

Youth justice kaimahi told us about their strong commitment to upholding child and whānau voice in the FGC process. However, we heard from some professionals that there is a lack of funding to support attendance at FGCs. This includes funding for whānau and victims (in the case of youth justice) to attend FGCs, as well as basic hospitality for those who do attend. I have an FGC coming up that will run from 10am until 3pm ... I need to get approval [for expenditure that is over \$30]. The process to get approval is bigger than Ben Hur. The FGC will run for a long time, hence kai is needed and it is a bad look if we can't provide."
ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI

Having victims attend youth justice FGCs is a critical part of the restorative process. Oranga Tamariki data indicates that, in most cases, victims of crime are being contacted about FGCs.¹²³ However, published data from 2023/24 doesn't show whether victims attended. This would be good to know in future given their attendance is a known success factor.¹²⁴

What did make a positive difference was the support of NGOs, Māori providers and iwi

professionals. We heard numerous examples of these kaimahi playing a key role in advocating and walking alongside rangatahi and whānau Māori in the FGC.

[Papakura Marae kaimahi] make it all about you and not them. They help you with ideas and what to say but it is all about you not them. That's your say."

When Oranga Tamariki professionals prepare tamariki, rangatahi and whānau for an FGC either for care and protection or for youth justice, it ensures that their voices are heard and they understand the process. However, a lack of information sharing and communication during the FGC process impacts on the engagement of whānau and the support community agencies can provide them.

It is even harder for the voice of disabled tamariki and rangatahi to be heard

In many of our engagements with professionals involved in the oranga tamariki system, we heard about the increasing levels of complex need tamariki and rangatahi have. When we asked professionals about FGCs, we heard about the need for disability-related supports to help them engage in the FGC.

We particularly heard about organisations such as Talking Trouble, which provides support for speech, language and communication needs to ensure tamariki and rangatahi can have a say in the FGC and understand the process. We heard that, when rangatahi understand the youth justice FGC process, it can be a "beautiful ... and restorative process".

However, we also heard that it can be difficult to get approval within Oranga Tamariki for funding to access the Talking Trouble service.

Some Oranga Tamariki social workers told us about the help they have received from their regional disability advisor, who were seen as crucial in ensuring disabled tamariki and rangatahi are supported in the FGC process although they are not always available to attend FGCs due to capacity constraints on the one role.

¹²³ The 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki Annual Report shows that 7,754 victims of youth offending where legally required to be consulted during the reporting period. Of those, 356 were unable to be consulted (for unknown reasons) and a further 1,014 were not recorded as being consulted. This leaves 6,384 victims of youth offending recorded as being consulted. The data doesn't show whether victims attended youth justice FGCs, but Oranga Tamariki also records that four complaints were made in 2023/24 by victims related to youth FGCs and that these complaints were about communication, support and privacy. See footnote 72 (pp. 30–31).

¹²⁴ Research suggests that justice and recidivism outcomes are better when victims participate in justice processes, particularly restorative justice processes. For example, Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre. (2020). *Maximising victim participation and engagement: Evidence brief.* Oranga Tamariki. <u>https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/Maximising-victim-participation-and-engagement/Maximising-victim-participation-and-engagement.pdf</u>

We heard about challenges in agreeing to plans, and professionals not feeling heard

The 2022 report, *How we fail children who* offend and what to do about it: A breakdown across the whole system,¹²⁵ refers to a lack of cross-agency collaboration around the FGC process in youth justice. The report also refers to a reliance on the dedication of individual professionals rather than a system that is working well and youth justice FGC plans that are of variable quality and overly focused on offending rather than welfare. The high proportion of rangatahi who offend who have unmet care and protection needs is discussed later in this report.

Many professionals told us it is not always easy to agree to a plan made at an FGC, or to deliver on the plan. We heard from some social workers who felt that their voices were not heard at youth justice FGCs and who said there are sometimes disagreements between agencies about the content of youth justice FGC plans.¹²⁶ We heard examples of police kaimahi taking a more punitive approach than other agencies, resulting in plans not being agreed. We also heard examples of police prosecutors advocating in court for decisions that did not reflect the agreements made, including by police kaimahi, in the FGC.

Most kaimahi across NGOs and Māori providers and NZ Police, felt their professional opinions and expertise were not listened to in FGCs. Some said they were not invited to the FGC in a timely manner, and others told us they were not given an opportunity to contribute to plans.

- 66 [Oranga Tamariki] just don't hear us. They turn their back on you like we're nothing. In FGCs, they will talk to other professionals about their contributions but do not include us in the FGC space. There are very few Māori social workers in [Oranga Tamariki]." KAUPAPA MĀORI ORGANISATION KAIMAHI
- Sometimes we are invited to FGC straight off the bat, sometimes we don't hear about things until after. It's a really mixed relationship with [Oranga Tamariki]." NGO KAIMAHI

Some kaimahi felt they could contribute to FGC plans due to the strong relationships they had with individual Oranga Tamariki kaimahi, and some said that they provide written advice in advance of the FGC to make sure they have their opinions heard. For instance, an NGO kaimahi said they submit reports to the FGC coordinator and Oranga Tamariki social workers.

We do submit reports, and the report is fed into the FGC and then the decision is made. That's how we contribute to the decisionmaking process. Our support is recognised through the reports."

Some Oranga Tamariki youth justice kaimahi spoke of working alongside police to get FGC plans over the line and agree on what needs to be in plans. They said consultation with agencies prior to the FGC allows opportunities to consider police perspectives.

We have robust discussion with police, and it is a respectful relationship where we can disagree. Purely professional and nobody takes it personally." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE KAIMAHI

¹²⁵ See footnote 61.

¹²⁶ As noted later in this report, there has never been a non-agreement in youth justice FGCs convened by Whakapai Hauora as part of its delegation by Oranga Tamariki.

We don't have a lot of kids whose FGC plans aren't agreed to, which is really cool, so that's good and we'll try in that space, but we are coming from different views and sometimes the police want to be really punitive and we don't and that's all right. It's okay to do that, but we talk and there may be times we feel like we're not in the same spot but that's very rare because we get on quite well."

ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE KAIMAHI

A police leader in Auckland said the positive relationships between Youth Aid kaimahi and Oranga Tamariki FGC co-ordinators ensures information is shared and professional views are listened to, enabling a successful FGC.

Overall, what we heard was that those attending – whether whānau, tamariki, rangatahi or professionals – felt they were not always heard. This could indicate that FGCs are not always facilitated well, limiting their effectiveness and ultimately negatively impacting on tamariki and rangatahi.

lwi and Māori providers can make a positive difference for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori attending FGCs.

During our community engagements, we heard about the devolution and/or delegation of FGC roles to iwi social service providers as part of the Oranga Tamariki Future Direction Action Plan.

We support whānau during FGC. We guide them, deliberating the best move forward for their rangatahi. We help them to make decisions and be heard ... it's vital that they are part of the decision." KAUPAPA MĀORI ORGANISATION KAIMAHI We started to educate the whānau that FGC is a kind of thing in government language. But we make sure the whānau are the centre. We say get your plan and bring the right people into the FGC to support your situation."
IWI SOCIAL SERVICE LEADER

We also heard about barriers to increasing delegation to iwi social service providers, including a lack of funding to support the change and the time it takes to develop "trust and confidence in partners". Kaimahi from a Māori organisation told us they receive requests to attend FGCs without sufficient information or being given a chance to meet with whānau prior. We were told this means they have to determine what support they can provide to whānau on the spot. We also heard this poses challenges in building relationships and consulting with whānau during the FGC process.

When FGCs are run in more neutral environments such as those hosted by Māori providers or iwi, including in whare and marae, rangatahi and whānau Māori are more likely to feel comfortable and safe in engaging with the FGC process.

We've done three FGCs over [at Raukawa]. Also some at Muaūpoko at their whare as it is where the kids feel safe. That's their comfort zone."

ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE KAIMAHI

It's a nicer environment [at Muaūpoko] in terms of the building – across many offices. Their office is much more homely, more welcoming than [the Oranga Tamariki site]." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE KAIMAHI

Following up and delivering FGC plans is difficult due to a lack of funding and available supports

We heard there is lack of funding to resource FGC plans, by both Oranga Tamariki and other government agencies. This limits support for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau and risks escalation through the system. Compounding this is a lack of services and capacity, which also creates barriers to implementing FGC plans.

Some kaimahi in Oranga Tamariki and in other agencies spoke about the lack of funding, and some attributed this to the financial constraints introduced in late 2023. Examples given were a young person declined funding for trauma counselling despite it having been recommended by a professional and absences of funding for intervention services (including mentoring) and drug testing.

A care and protection FGC co-ordinator said the tension over funding between agencies results in gaps in support for tamariki and rangatahi, with Oranga Tamariki often having to foot the bill for things they feel would be better managed by other agencies.

There are tensions between the government organisations, so there's always scraps over funding ... Those battles mean that there sometimes end up being gaps that we, Oranga Tamariki, can't fill. There are things that are too specialised for us to fill in, so we fill in gaps for education all the time. We will fund things for disability or for trauma that aren't our specialist area and can be better managed by other agencies but aren't."

ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI

A police Youth Aid leader from Auckland also noticed that funding had recently reduced, which had impacted access to support and the quality of support put in place for rangatahi in youth justice. They gave an example of funding being removed for a programme that was set up for a group of rangatahi.

66 There are new barriers because of the Government. Politics should not get in the way of what we do, but it does. Because of the new Government coming in, they have turned the tap off for the funding. The social workers from youth justice cannot physically work with the kids, they need to get the community involved and get their support ... With this new programme and the 10 boys on it, we put them in the gym and had staff there for this programme at the gym. Oranga Tamariki said they would fund these kids for the duration of the family group conference plan. That is getting cut. There is no money for that now." POLICE LEADER

Some police leaders also said they are using their Children's Flexi Fund to fund assessments and support for FGCs that cannot be funded through Oranga Tamariki. Some police kaimahi in Canterbury, for example, spoke about the "battle" to get resources through Oranga Tamariki because it can't pay for services. 66 I've got an FGC coming up and I'm looking at getting a literacy assessment funded through Flexi Fund. I don't think it should sit there but Oranga Tamariki don't have the money and we need to get them back in education so the Flexi Fund is a lifesaver for us."

POLICE LEADER

We also heard that, if whānau can be adequately resourced, there is potential to prevent tamariki and rangatahi from entering care. However, there is currently inadequate funding to resource plans.

We love FGCs. If families can be resourced, we have potential to stop kids going into care, but we cannot resource a plan. As an organisation, that needs to change." ORANGA TAMARIKI KAIMAHI

In every region we visited, we heard from kaimahi about a lack of services and capacity in existing services as barriers to implementing support for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. We heard about long waitlists for counselling services, with the wait times not aligning with FGC timeframes, and some services not provided to tamariki and rangatahi due to catchment areas.

- We're just expected to come up with FGC plans and have some good robust stuff in them and you just can't. We got a prime example in Masterton with a really high-risk rangatahi and there's no mentoring services available." ORANGA TAMARIKI SITE LEADER
- I think when we don't have the right and enough services, it results in reoffending. The biggest impact is that rangatahi are in custody [in a secure facility] for longer than they need to be. They will be back into the community. We are retraumatising them [by keeping rangatahi in secure residence longer]. It has a huge and negative impact." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE KAIMAHI

66 Being really short on services and not having the quality of services prolongs [time rangatahi spend in the youth justice system]." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE KAIMAHI

As well as a shortage of services and supports, we also heard about issues between NZ Police and Oranga Tamariki around the completion of community hours stipulated in youth justice FGC plans.

While NZ Police was described as inflexible in one region we visited, in another region, Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police had found a way to manage shortages. Oranga Tamariki kaimahi told us they can negotiate with police and be creative about how rangatahi will complete community hours. Examples included:

- rangatahi creating artwork for a community group
- rangatahi making bird feeders to donate to the community
- rangatahi being able to make a financial donation to a community organisation in lieu of community hours if there are conflicts with their employment hours and responsibilities.

A group of Youth Aid officers and a police leader in Auckland said they are flexible with how community hours are completed and try to ensure that youth justice FGC plans are achievable. One police leader said they have moved away from rigid plans, and that it is important they "look at the big picture and be very flexible around that" to inspire change in rangatahi.

Subsequent youth justice FGCs may have decreased impact

One of the measures highlighted in the 2023/24 Oranga Tamariki annual report is the proportion of rangatahi aged 14–17 (all ethnicities) who have no further engagement with youth justice following their first youth justice FGC.¹²⁷

This measure indicates an improvement. For rangatahi with one prior FGC, the proportion who had no further engagement with youth justice increased from 32 percent in June 2019 to 40 percent in June 2022.¹²⁸ Oranga Tamariki states this means the support provided in their first FGC is helping to prevent reoffending. This proportion dropped to 37 percent in 2023/24.

However, for rangatahi with multiple prior FGCs, the data shows an increase in the rate of reoffending. The proportion who had no further engagement with youth justice (no evidence of further offending) has continued to decrease proportionally from 28 percent in June 2019 to 23 percent in 2023/24.

Another measure used by Oranga Tamariki is the percentage of rangatahi Māori referred for another youth justice FGC in the six months following completion of a youth justice custodial sentence. This has remained stable over the last few years at 63 percent in 2020 and 62 percent in 2023.¹²⁹

These measures are important tools for Oranga Tamariki to measure the success of FGCs. However, until agencies work more effectively together and with whānau to agree plans that are in the best interests of tamariki and rangatahi and have appropriate services and supports available to refer them and their whānau to, the effectiveness of FGCs remains at risk.

¹²⁷ See footnote 77 (p. 47).

¹²⁸ ibid

¹²⁹ See footnote 53 (Measure 5A). The measure has a six-month reporting lag.

Youth justice intervention

It is well known that Māori are over-represented in the criminal justice system, and the same is true for tamariki and rangatahi Māori. Decades of research on offending in Aotearoa have shown that this over-representation is due to socio-economic disadvantage and other environmental factors, including treatment by NZ Police and government agencies. In recent years, the link between youth justice and unmet care and protection needs has become more evident. Data published by the Ministry of Justice shows that the majority of rangatahi who offended in 2023/24 had been known to government agencies for many years prior due to concerns about abuse, neglect and other adverse childhood experiences.130

Not all tamariki and rangatahi who have been abused or involved with Oranga Tamariki go on to offend, and most tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa have no involvement with NZ Police. When tamariki and rangatahi Māori do offend, it is critical the response is holistic, culturally responsive and inclusive of whānau. Responses to offending should address the issues that led to the offences and prevent recidivism. Not addressing these issues is likely to result in tamariki and rangatahi being escalated through the youth justice system, which can be almost impossible to reverse.

In our engagements in 2023/24, we heard positive accounts of police working to support tamariki and rangatahi Māori and prevent escalation through the youth justice system. We heard about Te Pae Oranga, Māori liaison roles at NZ Police, and initiatives that partner with iwi. Two of these are featured in this report. We also heard about the value of Youth Aid kaimahi and the support they offer both to frontline police as well as directly to rangatahi and whānau. Specialist training makes a difference.

However, NZ Police data for 2023/24 shows tamariki and rangatahi Māori remain overrepresented in police proceedings. This indicates that the oranga tamariki system could do more to support tamariki and rangatahi at early stages and to reduce offending and prevent escalation through the system. Independent research on aspects of NZ Police delivery, including potential bias behind individual police decisions, has been recently published by NZ Police. A 2024 study found that Māori are 11 percent more likely to be prosecuted than NZ Europeans/Pākehā,131 and reports in this series also show that bias and structural racism are some of the reasons why Māori men are more likely to be stopped, prosecuted and tasered.

More holistic youth justice initiatives for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori would be helpful, but it is important to prevent offending in the first place. It is vital that agencies work together more effectively when concerns are raised about the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi to improve outcomes and prevent offending from occurring in the first instance.

¹³⁰ Ministry of Justice (2024). Youth justice indicators summary report: December 2024. <u>https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/</u> Documents/Publications/Youth-Justice-Indicators-Summary-Report-December-2024_v1.0.pdf

 $^{131\} https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/upd-phase-one-research-summary-factsheets.pdf$

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are over-represented

The youth justice system is distinct from the adult criminal justice system. It is administered by NZ Police and Oranga Tamariki under the Oranga Tamariki Act. It deals with serious offending by tamariki aged 10–13 and all offending for rangatahi aged 14–17.

The vast majority of tamariki and rangatahi in New Zealand have no contact with the youth justice system. In 2023/24, 98 percent of tamariki Māori and 95 percent of rangatahi Māori had no police proceedings¹³² against them.¹³³

However, when they do have contact, Māori are over-represented in the youth justice population. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori represent 28 percent of the total New Zealand youth population but 41 percent of tamariki and rangatahi proceeded against by police.¹³⁴

In 2023/24 tamariki and rangatahi Māori comprised



of the youth population



of tamariki and rangatahi proceeded against by Police Of the 2023/24 police proceedings taken against tamariki and rangatahi in response to instances of offending, 50 percent were against tamariki and rangatahi Māori.¹³⁵

Over-representation has been the cause of significant concern for many years, including from international human rights bodies.¹³⁶ It has also been the focus of decades of research that found Maori are over-represented in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. In 2007, the Department of Corrections noted that this does not imply that ethnicity in and of itself is a key factor in offending but that it "implies that the access of Māori to the key services of health, social support and education, and the effectiveness of those services for Māori, is of crucial importance in reducing disadvantage and the problems it confers, including heightened risk of criminality".¹³⁷ Most indicators of socio-economic disadvantage show that little has changed since then.

NZ Police is working to address the overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system through its strategy *Te Huringa o Te Tai*. This follows an earlier strategy document, *The turning of the tide* launched in 2012, with the primary focus "to address the longstanding overrepresentation of Māori in the criminal justice system through a whānau ora approach to crime prevention".¹³⁸ With "strategic pou" (on people and mindset, effective initiatives

¹³² Police data records proceedings taken against people who have offended or are suspected of having offended. A proceeding is essentially a police decision. It can have a wide range of outcomes, including no further action, a warning, a referral to specific services, prosecution and custody admission. We use the term 'proceeding' in this report when we refer to NZ Police data.

¹³³ "Over 98% of tamariki Māori and 95% of rangatahi Māori had no police proceedings compared with 99% and 98% for the total population." See footnote 130 (p. 8).

¹³⁴ Police data shows that 41 percent (3,454) of tamariki and rangatahi involved in proceedings in 2023/24 were Māori. The proportion of tamariki and rangatahi Māori involved in proceedings has gradually decreased from 44 percent in 2022/23 and from 47 percent in 2021/22.

¹³⁵ The proportion of proceedings against tamariki and rangatahi Māori has gradually decreased from 54 percent in 2022/23 and from 57 percent in 2021/22.

¹³⁶ For example, the February 2023 concluding observations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child drew attention to the over-representation of Māori in state care and in youth justice.

¹³⁷ Department of Corrections (2007). Over-representation of Māori in the criminal justice system: An exploratory report (p. 39). <u>https://</u> www.corrections.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/10715/Over-representation-of-Maori-in-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf_

¹³⁸ New Zealand Police (2022). Te Huringa o Te Tai: A Whānau Ora crime and crash prevention strategy (p. 2). <u>https://www.police.govt.</u> nz/sites/default/files/publications/te-huringa-o-te-tai.pdf

and practice, and effective partnerships), the strategy aims to improve the wellbeing and lives of Māori.

Independent research on aspects of police delivery, including potential bias behind individual police decisions, has been published by NZ Police. A 2024 study, for example, found that sex and ethnicity affect the prosecution decision for certain offences or types of crime and that "the odds of prosecution for Māori were greater than for Europeans for some, but not all offence types measured".¹³⁹ All other things being equal, Māori are 11 percent more likely to be prosecuted than NZ Europeans/ Pākehā.¹⁴⁰ Reports in this series also show that bias and structural racism are some of the reasons why Māori men are more likely to be stopped, prosecuted and tasered.¹⁴¹

NZ Police has also worked to increase the ethnic diversity of its kaimahi, with the most recent annual report showing an increase in the proportion of kaimahi Māori from 11.9 percent in 2019 to 13.7 percent in 2024.¹⁴² In this report, we focus on tamariki and rangatahi Māori who offended but were not given a custodial sentence and on agency efforts to prevent these tamariki and rangatahi escalating through the system. Escalation through the youth justice system is, for some, a pathway to adult criminal offending. This is reflected in the Oranga Tamariki Act, which includes principles stating that youth offending should be treated in a way that promotes the best interests of tamariki and rangatahi (section 4A), with criminal proceedings being avoided and remaining in the community wherever possible. Efforts should also be made to strengthen family and whānau (section 208).

As well as these legal principles, Oranga Tamariki has a mana tamaiti objective to prevent children being taken into care or youth justice custody by strengthening whānau Māori to care for their tamariki and rangatahi. Oranga Tamariki uses its five mana tamaiti principles to measure the impacts of its activities on tamariki and rangatahi Māori.¹⁴³

Brown, P. (2024). The assessment of factors influencing police prosecution decision-making. New Zealand Police (p. 16). <u>https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/upd-assessment-factors-influencing-police-prosecution-decision-making.pdf</u>
 See footnote 130

¹⁴⁰ See footnote 130.

¹⁴¹ New Zealand Police (2024). Understanding policing delivery: Executive summary. https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/ publications/upd-independent-panel-report-one-executive-summary.pdf

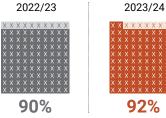
¹⁴² New Zealand Police (2024). Annual report 2023/24 (p. 54). https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/annualreport-2023-2024.pdf

Tamariki and rangatahi who offend are likely to have unmet care and protection needs

Tamariki and rangatahi proceeded against often have complex needs, which can be among the underlying causes of their offending. Ministry of Justice youth justice indicators show that 92 percent of tamariki and rangatahi Māori referred for a youth justice family group conference in 2023/24 had a previous care and protection report of concern.¹⁴⁴

Nearly all rangatahi Māori referred for a youth justice FGC had a previous care and protection report of concern





The link between unmet care and protection need and offending is well known.¹⁴⁵ A 2022 study using data from the IDI and Oranga Tamariki case file analysis looked in detail at tamariki who offended between the ages of 10 and 13 in Aotearoa in 2019/20 and found significant care and protection concerns. These tamariki experienced high levels of abuse, reports of concern, out-of-home placements, school stand-downs and suspensions, and indicators of social and cultural deprivation compared to their non-offending peers.¹⁴⁶ In particular, the study found that:

- tamariki who were abused under the age of 5 were six times more likely to offend as tamariki or rangatahi than those who had not been abused
- neglect before the age of 5 is associated with offending as tamariki or rangatahi
- rangatahi who had offended had an average of 2.18 reports of concern before the age of 5, an average of 3.82 between the ages of 5 and 10, and an average of 3.77 between the ages of 10 and 14¹⁴⁷
- tamariki who had a report of concern before the age of 5 and who offended as tamariki were more likely to reoffend as rangatahi (73%)
- most tamariki who offended had had at least one care and protection FGC – some had as many as four care and protection FGCs before the age 14.

The study also showed offending is more likely in tamariki who have had justice-involved parents¹⁴⁸ and/or who have been stood down or suspended from school before the age of 10.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ See footnote 130 (p. 8).

¹⁴⁵ For example, the Department of Corrections points to several decades of research on early risk factors. See footnote 137 (p. 28). 146 See footnote 61.

¹⁴⁷ As outlined in our in-depth review *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children* (see footnote 96), there are some limitations in using reports of concern as a proxy for child welfare concerns due to the way in which Oranga Tamariki records notifications. The true level of concerns raised around child welfare may in fact be higher than recorded reports of concern.

¹⁴⁸ "A charge laid against one parent before the child was born was significantly associated with a child's repeat offending: 68% of those children went on to offend as both a child and a youth, relative to 53% of others who reoffended." See footnote 61 (p. 7).

¹⁴⁹ Tamariki who had been stood down or suspended under the age of 10 were significantly more like to offend across all age groups.

Other New Zealand research has found a link between criminal offending and disabilities such as foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). A 2020 study, for example, referred to "extremely high ratios of justice system contact for young people with FASD when compared to the general population".¹⁵⁰ This is largely due to FASD being associated with poor impulse control and emotional lability. It raises questions about appropriate services and supports for tamariki and rangatahi with FASD and similar conditions.

Taken together, these studies provide evidence that rangatahi and tamariki involved in offending face significant challenges. During our 2023/24 engagements, we heard from police kaimahi and some rangatahi who reflected on their childhoods and their future aspirations. When I first transferred to Youth Prosecutions, two things stood out. The first was the number of times I looked down the back of the Court and there were no family members supporting the young person. The second was how often there was a [child protection] file where the young person had reported assaults by a parent and caregiver as a child." POLICE KAIMAHI, CANTERBURY

[In future, I want a] family. Rich family. [I do not want them to] have to deal with what I've dealt with. Being brought up in a shit environment. My one brother and little cousin – he's in [a youth justice residence], another little cousin in [a youth justice residence]. My brother is in [a care and protection residence], he's only 13." RANGATAHI

There are opportunities to better support tamariki and rangatahi early on and before they offend

Data shows there are opportunities to provide early support because almost all tamariki and rangatahi who offend were known to government agencies many years earlier.

Both Oranga Tamariki and NZ Police recognise that tamariki and rangatahi who offend have unmet care and protection needs. NZ Police states that it is "acutely aware children who offend have other underlying care and protection needs" and that "the primary goal in addressing accountability for children is not punitive but to help them understand the consequences and impact of their actions, support their personal growth and oranga within the context of whānau and family, as well as reduce the likelihood of further offending".¹⁵¹

Oranga Tamariki states that "when offending behaviours start in childhood, early interventions need to focus on the underlying care and protection concerns" and that "all young offenders must have a needs assessment undertaken to understand the risks, needs, challenges and strengths of the rangatahi, their parents/caregivers, and their whānau or family".¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Oatley, V. & Gibbs, A. (2020). Improving treatment and outcomes for young people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in the youth justice system: A social work led response and practice. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 32(2), 5–16. <u>https://doi.org/10.11157/</u> anzswj-vol32iss2id737

¹⁵¹ Information provided by NZ Police to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024.

¹⁵² Information provided by Oranga Tamariki to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024.

What is missing – and what the information from Oranga Tamariki does not provide – is an assurance that early care and protection needs are being met. As discussed earlier in relation to FGCs, for many tamariki and rangatahi, it is their offending behaviours that trigger access to services and supports rather than care and protection needs that were known many years earlier. Our report *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children*,¹⁵³ raises issues about the way in which reports of concern are responded to by Oranga Tamariki and whether early warning signs are adequately addressed.

When we talked with kaimahi working in youth justice at Oranga Tamariki and in other organisations, we heard that a lack of resources, limited staff capacity at Oranga Tamariki and high thresholds for supports mean it is difficult for care and protection needs to be fully met.

I feel it goes right back to the initial care and protection plans. Most of the kids we have have had care and protection several times, had they been more resourced in that space – because most of [the cases] close at the intake and assessment stage, so [whānau, tamariki and rangatahi] miss out on the comprehensive support. Then [tamariki and rangatahi] get to youth justice ..."

ORANGA TAMARIKI LEADER

I do lots of work in the YJ [youth justice] sector. What really gets me are all of these [care and protection] issues that end up being YJ cases. We are trying to prevent this occurring. If we get in early, we don't need as much YJ." HEALTH KAIMAHI

- Kids are being criminalised because they are not getting the support they need.
 We are trying to do our job to keep our community safe."
 POLICE LEADER
- Care and protection problems. ROCs [reports of concern] are put through and Oranga Tamariki simply ... don't have the resources to follow these up and our staff are left to carry the can and ensure there is protection for those youth." POLICE REGIONAL LEADER

This aligns with our *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* reports, where we have often heard from care and protection kaimahi about the challenges of resourcing to meet the needs of tamariki and rangatahi involved in care and protection.

Some youth justice kaimahi told us that Oranga Tamariki care and protection teams were not taking responsibility to provide early, comprehensive or ongoing care and protection support.

66 Thinking about one of my kids who just turned 13, he has both youth justice and care and protection orders. When I think about how I've made decisions for him, it's based on a care and protection scope as well. Now, youth justice has to take the lead because their [care and protection] resources are too strained. While a 13-yearold should be [approached] with care and protection first and foremost but [the care team] can't because of [lack of] resources ... It's like Family Court is not okay because we are so sensitive about it, which I understand. It's like [Oranga Tamariki] can criminalise [rangatahi] and put them in the youth justice residence." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE SOCIAL WORKER We also heard from some kaimahi that Oranga Tamariki does not communicate about cases externally with police kaimahi or internally between youth justice and care and protection teams. This hinders timely support.

- 66 [Care and protection and youth justice] do not talk to each other – we are the [conduit] between the two of them and this should not be the case."
 POLICE LEADER
- There is a huge disconnect, no interaction between care and protection and youth justice, they are on a different floor ... Youth justice is frustrated. Often, they look at [cases] and wonder why what happened wasn't dealt with before. And then care and protection almost have a sigh of relief when the youth offends as they can hand it over." POLICE KAIMAHI

During our engagements, social workers from Oranga Tamariki generally reported good relationships between youth justice and care and protection teams, with a small number of exceptions at site level. Where we heard that Oranga Tamariki teams were not working together, these were due to perceived competition for resources to support tamariki and rangatahi. Addressing care and protection needs often requires a cross-agency response, but the strained capacity of social workers at Oranga Tamariki and on wider service provision in areas such as mental health and wider whānau support is one of the issues raised in our latest *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* report¹⁵⁴ as well as our in-depth review, *Towards a stronger safety net to prevent abuse of children*.¹⁵⁵

A 2021 report from Oranga Tamariki on youth justice pathways examining data on tamariki and rangatahi born between 1993 and 2002 found that "[y]oung people involved in youth justice deal with a range of complex factors and often have contact with many government agencies years before entering youth justice. This suggests there is an opportunity for early cross-agency support which could prevent involvement with youth justice".¹⁵⁶

As noted in the 2022 study of tamariki aged 10–13 who offended, there had "often been years of reports of concern and notifications from infancy, incidents of offending by older siblings, justice-involved parents, many failed placements, and issues with school suspension and disengagement. Yet, despite their needs being known to services, the children had proceeded to offending before age 14."¹⁵⁷

It should not take offending to get the help and support that was needed much sooner.

154 See footnote 49.

¹⁵⁵ Our in-depth review refers to the threshold for intervention being too high and inconsistent across Oranga Tamariki sites (because thresholds are driven by site capacity). Strained social work capacity means that some tamariki are not getting the supports they need at the early intervention stage. See footnote 96.

¹⁵⁶ Richardson, S. & McCann, D. (2021). Youth justice pathways: An examination of wellbeing indicators and outcomes for young people involved in youth justice. Oranga Tamariki (p. 2). https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latestresearch/Youth-justice-pathways-wellbeing-indicators-and-outcomes-for-young-people-involved-with-youth-justice/Part-1-Youthjustice-pathways-wellbeing-indicators-and-outcomes-for-young-people-with-youth-justice.pdf

¹⁵⁷ See footnote 61 (p. 4).

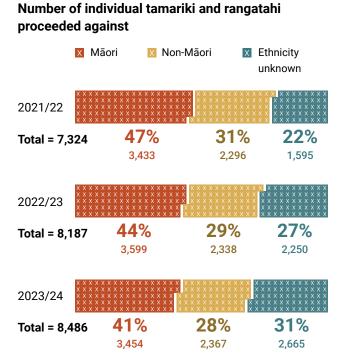
Tamariki and rangatahi Māori are over-represented in police proceedings

Police data records "proceedings" taken against people who have offended or are suspected of having offended. A proceeding is essentially a police decision. It can have a wide range of outcomes, including no further action, a warning, a referral to specific services, prosecution and custody admission. We use the term 'proceeding' in this report when we refer to NZ Police data.

NZ Police data for 2023/24¹⁵⁸ shows that tamariki and rangatahi Māori are more likely to be proceeded against compared to the total youth population.¹⁵⁹ For example, the youth *justice indicators summary report* published in December 2024 states that "rangatahi Māori are more likely to have court action" (33 percent of rangatahi Māori proceeded against compared to 25 percent of the total youth population).¹⁶⁰

This disparity has persisted for more than a decade despite the emphasis NZ Police places on its decisions being made impartially and in line with legislation and a range of policies, checklists, tools and checks with senior colleagues. Our analysis of NZ Police data shows that the number of tamariki and rangatahi proceeded against has increased by 16 percent over the past three years to a total of almost 8,500 in 2023/24. Over the same period, the number of tamariki and rangatahi with unknown ethnicity increased by two-thirds to make up 31 percent of the total. This high incidence of tamariki and rangatahi with unknown ethnicity makes it difficult to see the full picture and to understand how disparity is changing with the increase in the number of tamariki and rangatahi.¹⁶¹

An increasing number of tamariki and rangatahi are subject to police proceedings, but the ethnicity is unknown for a considerable number



The data also shows that around one in five proceeded against in 2023/24 were aged 10-13. It is critical that offending in this age group is responded to well in order to reverse a pathway towards more serious offending.

¹⁵⁸ NZ Police provided data on proceedings for all tamariki and rangatahi under the age of 18. We note that there are differences in the age of criminal responsibility and appropriate police response for tamariki aged 10–13 and rangatahi aged 14–17. NZ Police publishes aggregated information about proceedings at policedata.nz. This is drawn from the same data analysed here at a more detailed level.

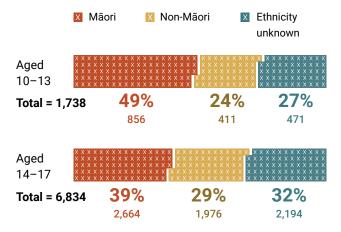
¹⁵⁹ Evidenced in our analysis of NZ Police data as well as in the Ministry of Justice's Youth justice indicators summary report published in December 2024 (see footnote 130). This also follows similar findings in many other reports, including from NZ Police, which shows that Māori (of all ages) were 11 percent more likely to be prosecuted for a particular offence than the general New Zealand population, given all other variables remain constant. See footnote 141 (p. 15).

¹⁶⁰ See footnote 130 (p. 8).

¹⁶¹ NZ Police records one ethnicity for each individual despite guidance from Stats NZ that individuals should be able to identify with multiple ethnicities. Information about NZ Police's approach to ethnicity data collection can be found in *Ethnicity data collection by justice sector agencies: Prepared for Te Rau o te Tika – the Justice System Kaupapa Inquiry (WAI 3060) – June 2024*.

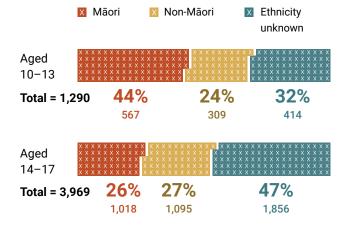
Young Māori are more than twice as likely as young non-Māori to be proceeded against, but the ethnicity is unknown for a considerable number

2023/24 individual tamariki and rangatahi proceeded against



In addition, when we look at both age and ethnicity, we can see that half of tamariki aged 10–13 proceeded against in 2023/24 were Māori. This disparity is higher than in other age groups.

The age of Māori when first proceeded against is younger than for non-Māori, but ethnicity is unknown for a considerable number



2023/24 first proceedings

Overall, the average age is 15 for all rangatahi at their first proceeding but 14 for rangatahi Māori.

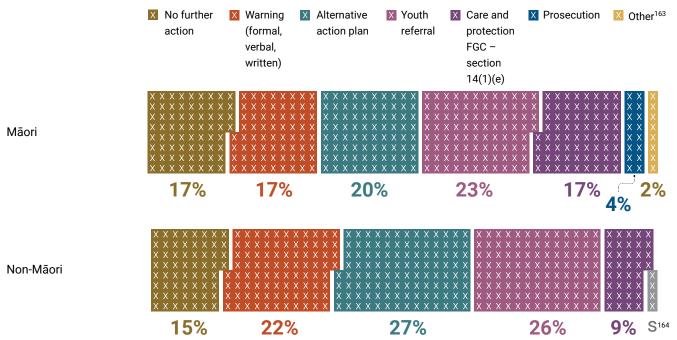
Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the 14,704 proceedings in 2023/24 were against those tamariki and rangatahi who repeatedly offended. This includes repeated offences from previous years as well as those who were first proceeded against in 2023/24 and who went on to reoffend within the same period. Disparity gets worse if first offending is not successfully addressed - 61 percent of subsequent proceedings in 2023/24 were against tamariki and rangatahi Māori. Repeat offending may occur because responses to initial offending have not been sufficient to meet tamariki and rangatahi needs and ensure accountability for offending. Across their lifetime, for tamariki and rangatahi Māori who had proceedings against them in 2023/24:

- almost one-third (31 percent) had one proceeding by the end of the reporting period compared to 44 percent of non-Māori and 74 percent where ethnicity is unknown
- just over half (52 percent) had between two and nine proceeding occasions by the end of the reporting period compared to 46 percent of non-Māori, and 25 percent where ethnicity is unknown
- 17 percent had 10 or more proceeding
 occasions by the end of the reporting period
 compared to 10 percent of non-Māori.¹⁶²

162 The ethnicity unknown sample size was small and incomparable for this group.

Police data on proceedings for tamariki aged 10–13 shows disparities in police responses to address offending

2023/24



Tamariki aged 10–13 can only be charged with certain serious offences. For this reason, some police proceedings do not apply to these tamariki.

In general, there is variation in the way police respond to Māori and non-Māori. Where

disparities are most evident is at the more serious end. Tamariki Māori are less likely to be referred to alternative action or given a warning, and more likely to be prosecuted or referred to a youth justice FGC.¹⁶⁵

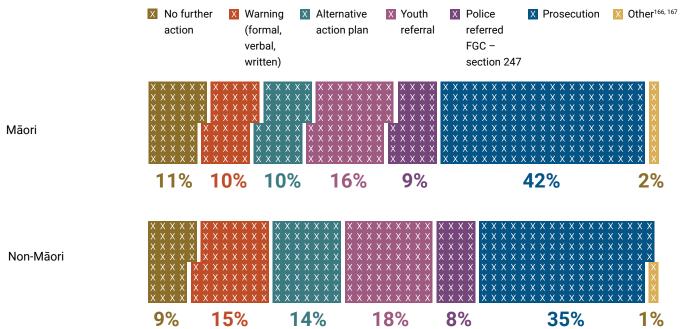
¹⁶³ See Appendix Three for additional breakdown of method of proceedings.

¹⁶⁴ Where the number of individuals in a category is fewer than six, the figure is suppressed in line with Stats NZ guidelines to protect privacy.

¹⁶⁵ The sample sizes are small for non-Māori and unknown ethnicity for these intervention types.

Police data on proceedings for rangatahi aged 14–17 also suggests some disparities in police responses to address offending





NZ Police data shows rangatahi Māori aged 14–17 were more likely to be prosecuted in 2023/24, and less likely to get a warning or referred to alternative action than others.

We also looked at the severity of offences measured by NZ Police National Offence Index (NOI) rankings, which we grouped together to enable this analysis,¹⁶⁸ and repeat offences as these are factors that can reasonably be expected to impact on the method of proceedings. For this analysis, we excluded tamariki and rangatahi whose ethnicity is unknown and compared proceedings taken against tamariki and rangatahi who were known to be Māori and known to be non-Māori. Even after accounting for severity of offences and repeat offending,¹⁶⁹ across most NOI ranking groups and numbers of proceedings, NZ Police data still shows tamariki and rangatahi Māori were less likely to be given a warning or referred to alternative action than non-Māori.

It also showed tamariki and rangatahi Māori were more likely to be given no further action.¹⁷⁰ NZ Police told us this is because it receives more reports and/or complaints about tamariki and rangatahi Māori that, after investigation, are closed with no further action by youth services kaimahi.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ Where the number of individuals in a category is fewer than six, the figure is suppressed in line with Stats NZ guidelines to protect privacy.

¹⁶⁷ See Appendix Three for additional breakdown of method of proceedings.

¹⁶⁸ NOI rankings indicate the severity of offending, with a lower NOI ranking indicating a more severe offence. For example, offences with an NOI ranking of 0–20 include homicide, manufacturing illicit drugs and sexual assault. Offences with an NOI ranking of 21–40 include abduction, assault, drug use and robbery. Offences with an NOI ranking of 41–60 include harassment, fraud, property damage and unlawful entry with intent to burgle.

¹⁶⁹ Just over half (52 percent) had between two and nine proceeding occasions by the end of the reporting period compared to 46 percent of non-Māori and 25 percent where ethnicity is unknown.

¹⁷⁰ In some cases, the difference in proportion was small.

¹⁷¹ NZ Police's initial involvement is as a result of a report from a third party. Once a report is received, police must respond to it and close it in accordance with the National Recording Standard.

We heard from kaimahi that police responses differ from region to region

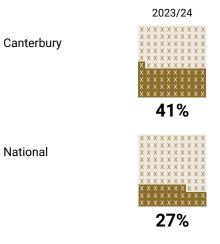
We heard about regional differences in the way police respond to crime. For example, Oranga Tamariki kaimahi told us car crime is dealt with more punitively by police in Canterbury compared to other districts.

- First 15 years I was here, half of our caseload was informal, which didn't go anywhere near the courts and maybe 40 percent was in the court. For us to now have 90 percent of our caseload in the court all this work that needs to happen. [That increase is related to] police behaviour and how they charge car crime. You get arrested for it. [Even just for] sitting in the car [regardless of whether] you took it." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE LEADER
- You are held on remand for this [car offending] rather than if you assault or rape someone." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE LEADER

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Canterbury make up 18 percent of the total regional population of young people (similar to Auckland at 19 percent). Regional NZ Police data shows that, in Canterbury in 2023/24, the proportion of police proceedings against tamariki and rangatahi Māori (at 34 percent of total proceedings) was one of the lowest regional proportions.

Prosecutions against tamariki and rangatahi (of all ethnicities) in Canterbury were higher than any other NZ Police district in 2023/24

Prosecutions against tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 (all ethnicities)



When we spoke with regional police leaders in the areas we visited, some told us they were concerned about the "public expectation to crack the whip" and pressure to focus on youth crime, including retail crime ("ram raids"). For example, in one region we heard that public expectations for more punitive measures against rangatahi were seen to be influencing the mindset of police kaimahi in their regions. They also noted this expectation goes against the principles of the Oranga Tamariki Act.

NZ Police National Headquarters also acknowledged that there might be some regional variation, stating that there "is an expectation Districts lead the youth space as they see fit",¹⁷² which is in terms of there being no one-size-fits-all approach for rangatahi, and that the manner in which legislation, policy and practice are applied "depends on the circumstances of the individual and their whānau".¹⁷³

¹⁷² Information provided by NZ Police to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024.

¹⁷³ Information provided by NZ Police to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024.

Police kaimahi also acknowledge that police districts are independent of NZ Police National Headquarters and under the control of the respective area commander. This may account for some regional differences in police responses to tamariki and rangatahi offending.

We also heard from police kaimahi that, as agents of the court, they are guided by court decisions. Regional variations in court rulings may influence local police decisions on whether to prosecute. Conversely, we heard from some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi that police views may hold more weight in court.

I also think the increase is around police and judiciary being risk adverse. We see a lot more young people for lower-level offending being remanded in custody, and we are dealing with a younger age group too. It used to be 16 and 17-year-olds featuring in that space but now it's 12 and 13-year-olds. The police view is opposition to bail as the rule rather than the exception and judges tend to go with police view. It used to be that a social worker could advocate but not any more." ORANGA TAMARIKI REGIONAL LEADER

At all levels of the organisation, NZ Police believe its decisions are consistent and impartial

Despite the disparities and regional differences in police proceedings, we consistently heard from NZ Police that decisions are guided by practices and tools that enforce standardisation, consistency and impartiality. NZ Police National Headquarters kaimahi said its youth services team provides training and guidance on the policing of young people who offend, typically to district youth services teams, which oversee most police matters relating to rangatahi. The national youth services team also completes a quality assurance and improvement framework on the NZ Police youth database to ensure consistency and that the "application of responses is in line with legislation and policy".¹⁷⁴ We also heard that the recruitment training at the Royal New Zealand Police College provides a foundational set of skills and knowledge to support kaimahi when they are on the frontline. Initial training includes modules on bias, ethics, neuroscience, adverse childhood experiences, diversity and ethnicity and specific modules on dealing with population groups including Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities and youth.

At an individual level, police officers use the Youth Offending Risk Screening Tool (YORST) as an indicator of the likelihood that tamariki and rangatahi will reoffend. The YORST is used "to collect standardised information, identify the appropriate response to offending and to enable information sharing" with other agencies.¹⁷⁵

In our engagements in the regions visited during 2023/24, police officers described a number of tools and processes that help them make standardised, impartial decisions. For example, police officers in the Auckland region told us about the NZ Police youth database, which allows the sharing of up-to-date information about rangatahi who have or may

¹⁷⁴ Information provided by NZ Police to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024.

¹⁷⁵ Information provided by NZ Police to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024. "One of the key pieces of information to aid Police is the Youth Offending Risk Screening Tool (YORST). YORST provides an indicator of the likelihood that a child or young person will offend. This indication is given as a percentage score based on 14 questions that directly relate to recognised risk factors often associated to offending including offending history, engagement in education, whether peers and/or family are engaged in offending, dependence on drugs or alcohol, care and protection history and family harm history. The scoring is based on two results, static and dynamic risk. The static score cannot be changed and is based on the tamariki and rangatahi historical factors. The dynamic risk can be changed and it is these risk factors that are responded to with the appropriate intervention measures."

have offended and that can help guide frontline staff, particularly if Youth Aid colleagues are not available at night. We also heard from police in Auckland about specific tools to help assess situations and identify an appropriate response around pursuits, arrests and the use of force.¹⁷⁶ A regional leader in Auckland discussed a "toolbox" available on police phones that contains Youth Aid training videos, QR code links to legislation and contact details of senior colleagues who can be accessed for quick support on the frontline.

We heard from police about the success of specific initiatives such as Blue Light and Blue Reel,¹⁷⁷ both of which support rangatahi to stop offending.

- 66 These are programmes we do to help show a better way to live. It can be taught and demonstrated."
 - POLICE YOUTH AID KAIMAHI

In our recent visit to Bay of Plenty, we heard the Blue Light programme could not accept further referrals as funding has been cut.

In Canterbury we heard about a guided process when working with rangatahi in relation to arresting and charging for an offence. Canterbury police kaimahi also mentioned a youth justice checklist that "lays everything out" and guides what steps police kaimahi must take to ensure the rights of rangatahi are upheld. Other supports mentioned were the Investigation Management Tool, which enables decisions to be informed by senior and detective sergeants, and the WEEP¹⁷⁸ guidelines related to rangatahi and section 214 of the Oranga Tamariki Act. In Taranaki-Manawatū we also heard about app-based support for frontline decision making, and, in the Upper South region, a police leader shared that the custody process has moved from paper-based to electronic, enabling better recording of information and ensuring that "policy and law is followed".

NZ Police, as an organisation, has put considerable efforts into supporting frontline kaimahi to make consistent, impartial decisions in response to tamariki and rangatahi coming to their attention. However, there may be other factors affecting the way in which police kaimahi deal with tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

Police kaimahi identified barriers in dealing with tamariki and rangatahi Māori

We heard mixed views from police kaimahi about ethnicity being a consideration when decisions are made about individual responses. Some said that ethnicity is not a consideration, and should not be, because everyone should be treated equally. However, other police kaimahi recognise the value of a culturally appropriate response and expressed concern about their colleagues' lack of cultural responsiveness. We saw this particularly in the Canterbury region.

- Everybody is treated with respect, and equally." POLICE KAIMAHI
- Cultural consideration, it's a nice buzzword." POLICE KAIMAHI

¹⁷⁶ For example, Perceived Cumulative Assessment and TEN-R, a decision-making tool that helps assess information directly relevant to the safety of police and others.

¹⁷⁷ Blue Light is an NGO providing youth programmes including a supported bail programme, and Blue Reel is a voluntary Police initiative to support rangatahi who offend.

¹⁷⁸ WEEP stands for interference with Witness, destruction of Evidence, Ensure appearance in court and Prevention of further offending.

So, this place is a bit vanilla right, teasing the Māori here. [Police kaimahi say things like] 'you're the honkiest Māori I've ever met' ... it concerns me about government rhetoric. Saying everyone is equal, but not everyone is on the same start line ... playing it out in the frontline, I don't think they treat a Māori youth offender different to a Pākehā or Pasifika or Asian offender. The difference is to try harder for Māori. [Another Police district] has got that. You felt and saw it ... acknowledging that [Māori youth offenders] are disconnected from their tūrangawaewae (home base) and get them back in and give them change."

REGIONAL POLICE LEADER

Both police and Oranga Tamariki kaimahi spoke of a need for more in-depth cultural competency training for police kaimahi. They pointed out that further training, outside of the initial training provided at the Royal New Zealand Police College, is mostly voluntary and external.

We also heard that frontline police kaimahi are not always confident in working with rangatahi or in implementing the Oranga Tamariki Act. This lack of confidence was attributed to a lack of youth-focused training for frontline kaimahi as well as the police practice of rotating staff. These rotations mean that kaimahi with youth experience and community relationships are rotated out into other roles. It inevitably takes time for kaimahi coming into a new role to build up community relationships with both providers and whānau, and frequent changes in police kaimahi can damage relationships and trust.

66 [The impact of staff rotating out] is a challenge for [the Youth Aid team], and when you lose that experience, it is tricky to bring new Youth Aid staff up to date quickly." REGIONAL POLICE LEADER Fart of the process [for a Youth Aid officer being able to go on that course] is he had to go to a different unit once he finished, so we have a new person and they have to start fresh."
POLICE KAIMAHI

Some regions do not have strong youth experience in their leadership positions, and this can influence how police teams respond to and are supported to work with tamariki and rangatahi.

We have Criminal Investigation Branch experience, for example, but not youthspecific experience. Without that expertise, we are against it. As a result, the leadership group suffers. I had no youth experience in the leadership space when I first started two years ago, and it took me a while to gain it. If there was one thing I could suggest, it would be encouraging Youth sergeants to move to the higher leadership levels to bring their passion and expertise." REGIONAL POLICE LEADER

The value of youth-specific training and knowledge was recognised by some police leaders.

I don't know what training they get at Police College to work with kids. [Tamariki and rangatahi] know the difference if we do not have the skills. Kids pick it in a minute if you are not working alongside them." REGIONAL POLICE LEADER

Unsurprisingly, we heard from other professionals that when police kaimahi know their communities, better outcomes can be achieved for tamariki and rangatahi.

I do notice a difference with the more rural police ... and that's another thing because mostly they are well entrenched in the communities. I'm not saying our cops here aren't but, you know, [in a] small community, everybody knows each other, so they're part of that." ORANGA TAMARIKI LEADER

Youth Aid is a strength for police working with tamariki and rangatahi

Youth Aid kaimahi are trained over two years, on top of the initial training required to become police kaimahi, to work proactively with tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. Youth Aid kaimahi share information with frontline kaimahi to help determine the best intervention for tamariki and rangatahi who have offended or are suspected of having offended.

In all the regions we visited, we heard that support from Youth Aid assists police kaimahi in making informed decisions about arresting and charging tamariki and rangatahi. Youth Aid is seen as a crucial resource for frontline officers.

We heard numerous examples from police kaimahi about the value of Youth Aid. For instance, Youth Aid and frontline officers in Auckland have good working relationships that mean "robust conversations" will occur to determine whether rangatahi will progress to alternative action, FGC or court. In Taranaki-Manawatū, we heard that consultation with Youth Aid supports frontline kaimahi in understanding the Oranga Tamariki Act and that Youth Aid kaimahi are seen as experts and sources of trusted advice. In the Upper South region, we heard that Youth Aid kaimahi offer support when new police kaimahi do not have the confidence to engage with tamariki and rangatahi.

If [frontline police officers] are not sure, we talk with Youth Aid. We try and talk to [Youth Aid] to consider their thoughts and opinions on the kids. We have a really good working relationship with that team."
POLICE OFFICER

- 66 Other cops will come to Youth Aid to ask about things. We can always refer back to the legislation, the first half care and protection and second youth justice. It's really clear and practical." POLICE YOUTH AID OFFICER
- [Police] staff trust Youth Aid's decision. [The] frontline sergeant will seek advice from Youth Aid for that." POLICE LEADER
- I will always discuss with supervisors or the Youth Aid officer – to get that second opinion – I will never just charge off. It's that different perspective on whatever you are dealing with [because] every case is different too."
 POLICE OFFICER
- In my experience, Youth Aid officers become really good at building relationships. You will find a lot of kids have real respect for their Youth Aid officers because they are always there for them. Kids see them as a person in their camp. I am trying to spread the influence that my Youth Aid team has to a broader group, so we can stop them needing to go to court later down the track." POLICE LEADER

Some rangatahi and whānau also spoke positively about the work their Youth Aid officer does to ensure their FGC plan will meet their needs.

- (Youth Aid officer] makes sure that the [FGC] plan works with me, making sure I don't get any trouble with certain people, make sure I don't risk my chances of getting into trouble in Youth Court."
- (Youth Aid officer] helped me by giving me a curfew and gave me the letters to write out for the people I stole from ... He keeps me in place pretty much and keeps me where I should be on the right path and not doing bad stuff."

66 The [Oranga Tamariki social worker and Youth Aid officer] came together and said, 'let's make a plan together, something that works and something that we want'." WHĀNAU

Across all regions, having experienced and confident Youth Aid officers who understand their communities, rangatahi and the legislation ensures they can think creatively about how best to support rangatahi who have offended. This includes the use of regional initiatives, alternative action, FGCs and other non-punitive pathways to support.

However, we heard from some frontline police kaimahi in Auckland that Youth Aid kaimahi aren't available at night, which is a barrier to decision making with fewer available options for services.

Māori liaison roles are also seen as an enabler for police working with tamariki and rangatahi Māori

In our regional engagements, we also heard about the value police kaimahi place on Māori liaison roles (although these are not in place across the country) and on relationships with Māori providers and community organisations to provide services and supports for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

We heard one example from the Upper South region where the regional Māori Liaison Team will look through records weekly to identify missed opportunities for alternative action. We also heard an example of a whānau who had pushed for a discharge without conviction for their rangatahi, and on review of the case, this was granted as police found the rangatahi had been the "victim of some over exuberant policing". We were told that cases such as this one are added to the NZ Police "Lessons Learned" database to ensure police kaimahi learn from previous cases.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori told us that police sometimes use force that is excessive

When we spoke with tamariki and rangatahi Māori who'd been involved with youth justice intervention in the regions we visited, several voiced concerns about the use of force and physical restraints.

- Another time, we were all just there and lined up, and the dog was let on one of my friends and he was on his knees and they let the dog at him and it bit his hand." RANGATAHI
- The police got to do what they got to do, but there was one time when I wasn't resisting, and they were putting their knee on my head when I was on the ground, They said 'get on the ground' and they kept putting their knee on my body and hurting me and getting smart to me."
- One night, [the police] came and done a search warrant and put mum through handcuffs while she was in her undies and stuff ... and [mum] didn't deserve it. I got upset cos it wasn't for her." RANGATAHI

We asked the IPCA for information about complaints made in 2023/24 about police dealings with tamariki and rangatahi. Although the IPCA was unable to provide data on the ethnicity or age of complainants,¹⁷⁹ its data showed that 69 complaints were made during the reporting period about police actions in relation to care and protection or youth justice matters. Of those, 27 were about police's use of force, five were about police attitudes, and one

¹⁷⁹ Although complainants rarely specify their ethnicity or age, the IPCA told us that it "is almost always a parent or caregiver making the complaint on behalf of the young person". Information provided by the IPCA to Aroturuki Tamariki, August 2024.

was about police harassment of a rangatahi.¹⁸⁰ However, the IPCA also provided the context that it receives around 4,500 complaints about police every year.

Some tamariki and rangatahi Māori also spoke with us about being laughed at by police kaimahi and feeling that they don't take the time to understand what's going on for tamariki and rangatahi when they offend or are thought to have offended. In Taranaki-Manawatū, some rangatahi told us police kaimahi don't try to understand why people "play up" or fail to see that some rangatahi are at their lowest when they do. One rangatahi Māori felt targeted by police kaimahi and another felt they "gave up" on them.

Some whānau Māori spoke positively about police

We spoke with a small number of whānau Māori whose tamariki and rangatahi were involved in youth justice intervention. They were generally positive about the way in which police had interacted and felt that their tamariki and rangatahi had been supported by police in these interactions even if the outcome had not been a good one.

- I was impressed with the police in Blenheim. At the FGC, the police person was kind and understood the reasons that [rangatahi] was offending. They called me when his mum was coming to their attention. Maybe it's because it's a small town and [the police] try and work with whānau rather than against them."
- Yeah, so it's quite extreme, police keep coming over all the time. But in saying that, there was this one police officer. She was very supportive. I've been working with her for about a year and bit now, but I think she's being deferred? I think she's the family police or constable, she was the one who got all these support services in place to help support us." WHĀNAU

Holistic support for tamariki and rangatahi can make a difference and prevent escalation through the youth justice system

As discussed earlier in this report, successful initiatives are often those that bring government and community agencies together and offer holistic services and supports to tamariki, rangatahi and whānau. This is more important in youth justice intervention because of the connection between youth offending and unmet care and protection needs.

There is also evidence to suggest that connecting rangatahi Māori who have offended to te ao Māori and to their own iwi and/or hapū can be transformative.¹⁸¹ For example,

¹⁸⁰ Other complaints included care and protection issues (such as uplifts of tamariki) and complaints about rangatahi being questioned. The IPCA also told us that, of the 69 complaints involving tamariki and rangatahi during the reporting period, five required an independent investigation by the IPCA, six resulted in the IPCA overseeing a police investigation and 15 resulted in an agreed resolution by police.

¹⁸¹ The importance of cultural identity is well reported, and studies have shown an association between cultural identity and positive outcomes in health (particularly mental health) and education. For example, the Ministry of Social Development states: "Cultural identity is an important contributor to people's wellbeing. Identifying with a particular culture helps people feel they belong and gives them a sense of security. An established cultural identity has also been linked with positive outcomes in areas such as health and education. It provides access to social networks, which provide support and shared values and aspirations." Ministry of Social Development. (2016). The social report 2016: Te pūrongo oranga tangata (p. 175). https://socialreport.0016/msd-the-social-report-2016.pdf

Paiheretia te Muka Tāngata uses a Whānau Ora approach to support tāne Māori (including younger tāne) in prison and has been shown to be effective.

As noted in research by Oranga Tamariki, using kaupapa Māori models that make sense to Māori is vital to the development and delivery of responses that support reducing disparities between Māori and non-Māori in the youth justice system.¹⁸² This echoes decades of advocacy, including from Tā (Sir) Mason Durie, for service delivery to consider Māori approaches and worldviews as critical.

We heard about initiatives that offer tamariki and rangatahi these holistic supports, in particular from Māori providers.

In Taranaki-Manawatū, we heard that police had engaged with several iwi across the region, and as a result had benefited from working closely with the local Whānua Ora alliance. Working in partnership with the iwi and Māori organisations had resulted in crossagency initiatives aimed at reducing harm and supporting rangatahi across the region.

We have a number of iwi across the Manawatū. Most of the iwi have responsibilities with [Te Tihi o Ruahine Whānau Ora Alliance]. Under the alliance, all the Māori service providers across the Manawatū district – Rangitāne, Te Kauwhata, home iwi providers – all the practitioners, all use the same model of engagement. The alliance was formed to bring all the services together. The alliance takes the contracts and that's worked well for us. It means we are a member of the Whānau Ora group." REGIONAL POLICE LEADER We have collaboration across agencies, communities and iwi – we are working with the Māori Wardens to come up with models to reduce the harm and secondly to support the young people." REGIONAL POLICE LEADER

In the Canterbury region, police kaimahi noted the positive relationship they have with local iwi, which allows them to provide for whānau Māori families and their needs more effectively.

- I've found the iwi here are great. A family here wanted the cultural input but the [non-Māori] mother did not want contact with her ex so the iwi has helped to create the bridge for the child with the child's father [who is Māori]."
- [Cultural roles] have been here for a year and he's making a big difference. Most sergeants have their numbers and can make contact at any time." POLICE KAIMAHI

In the Upper South region, police kaimahi told us about a local initiative with family harm teams where kai boxes help to remove negative feelings people may experience with being visited by police.

We had an offender, we dropped him off, we gave him some kai, and the guy almost cried, as it was the first person to do that from the police. Normally it's us locking him up. So, it is really great at connecting with the community. We keep sowing the seed to take the kai." POLICE KAIMAHI

¹⁸² Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre. (2019). Kaupapa Māori approaches in contexts related to youth offending: Environmental scan. Oranga Tamariki. https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/Kaupapa-Maoriapproaches-in-contexts-related-to-youth-offending/Kaupapa-Maori-approaches-in-contexts-related-to-youth-offending-final.pdf

Some tamariki, rangatahi and whānau Māori also spoke positively about the youth justice intervention support they receive. Rangatahi Māori told us about mentoring services in particular. A couple of rangatahi Māori said their mentors were important in helping them "keep out of trouble", and some spoke about their mentors helping them with activities, jobs and education support. One rangatahi said the support from Whakatū Marae helps "keep me busy not offending".

Whakatū Marae is good. They keep me busy not offending. We shelled kina, they take me out, get me haircuts and stuff like that, bowling, golf. Keeps me out of trouble." RANGATAHI

One whānau member said they could access a range of services and support through Whakapai Hauora,¹⁸³ including getting a driver licence for their rangatahi, access to doctors and counselling support, support for rangatahi to do community service hours and connecting them to other services and organisations in the community.

A couple of rangatahi Māori spoke of the positive impact of getting a licence, and said it helped them stop offending.

I got my licence through [Te Ora Hou]. If I didn't [get a licence], I wouldn't have stopped." RANGATAHI

We also heard from rangatahi about the importance of education.

I hated school before I came here. I used to wag, fight with teachers. Here I knuckled down, got [NCEA] level 1 and level 2 yesterday. I am going for level 3 by the end of the year. I want to get it by the end of the year. Get it done when I can." RANGATAHI I have to dedicate myself to stuff to be successful ... like what 15-year-old wants to be locked up? Been in since 12 [at name of residence] now. I'm cracking it, I'm in [polytechnic], I got a job, I'm getting [NCEA] level 2 and 3."

A couple of rangatahi Māori involved in youth justice also spoke about getting support to meet their mental health and wellbeing needs and being able to manage their emotions.

Te Pae Oranga is an effective intervention pathway for rangatahi that prevents escalation through to court

In all the regions we visited in 2023/24, we heard about Te Pae Oranga, a marae-based police initiative supporting rangatahi who have offended.

In Canterbury, frontline kaimahi described Te Pae Oranga as a good concept that results in "better resolution" but sometimes doesn't move fast enough and the process is "drawn out". It was also noted that the threshold for offending for Te Pae Oranga is high.

In the Upper South region, police leadership told us how Te Pae Oranga iwi community panels can be used as a "back door" non-punitive support for rangatahi. Leadership from the Māori Women's Welfare League also told us that Te Pae Oranga can help stop offending and provide a pathway other than court.

An Auckland police leader said that availability of Te Pae Oranga is one enabler to ensuring police kaimahi "don't try to jump to 10 but start at one and then we'll work through it" when thinking about the pathway for rangatahi.

¹⁸³ As described below, Oranga Tamariki has delegated specific powers and functions to Best Care (Whakapai Hauora) Charitable Trust. Whakapai Hauora is a subsidiary of Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Incorporated, the mandated iwi authority for Rangitāne o Manawatū.

Some whānau Māori were also positive about their experience of Te Pae Oranga, with one person telling us they had advocated for it to be more widely available.

66 Thanks to the support of the Pae Oranga model, iwi liaison officers and other support workers coming alongside him from a Māori lens, [this] has been a huge help for my son whilst going through his plan... This initiative and model is now part of the Oranga Tamariki kete (basket). I couldn't believe there was nothing available culturally for my son and I was determined to do what I could, which is why I was demanding to get this Pae Oranga model up and running. Now, if someone comes to Oranga Tamariki and asks if there is any cultural supports for their son, they can now say yes, we have a model available." WHĀNAU

We also heard several accounts from police and other professionals involved in youth justice about a more generalised, holistic approach towards working with rangatahi who have offended.

- With our alternative actions and diversions, we do things like take them for hunting, take them deer stalking, uplift their mana because we know that when a young person is arrested and they go before the court, that just squashes their mana. They're worthless to themselves. But we like to boost them up."
- We are lucky in the youth justice space. We run a youth court in the community, and this is for Pasifika and Māori. So, for example in our area, we support Manurewa Marae to participate in the court process. Our tikanga for Māori whānau is to make them feel supported and connected to their whakapapa, especially those that are disconnected. We listen to their stories to enable us to support them." ORANGA TAMARIKI YOUTH JUSTICE SUPERVISOR

The youth justice delegation with Rangitāne o Manawatū shows what can be achieved through a partnered approach

Since 2020, Oranga Tamariki has delegated specific powers and functions to Best Care (Whakapai Hauora) Charitable Trust. Whakapai Hauora is a subsidiary of Tanenuiarangi Manawatū Incorporated, the mandated iwi authority for Rangitāne o Manawatū. The youth justice social worker in this delegated role must be registered under the Social Workers Registration Act 2023 and be approved for appointment by the youth justice manager at Oranga Tamariki in Palmerston North.

We spoke with the Whakapai Hauora social worker and the Oranga Tamariki youth justice manager to understand how the delegation is working. During our 2023/24 community engagements, we also met several rangatahi, whānau and kaimahi involved with Rangitāne. This included four rangatahi Māori receiving youth justice supports from Whakapai Hauora and six whānau members.

The delegation from Oranga Tamariki is due to individual effort and a belief in devolving to iwi

We heard that the delegation had been many years in the making, with a youth justice social worker from Oranga Tamariki visiting Rangitāne every week for several years. This arrangement had broken down barriers between whānau and government while also solving practical problems such as the cost and availability of transport for rangatahi and whānau who would otherwise have been required to travel to the Oranga Tamariki site.

Following an increase in offending in the area in 2019, Oranga Tamariki sought to formalise the arrangement through delegation under the Oranga Tamariki Act. We heard this was due to the efforts of a few key individuals at both Oranga Tamariki (at the site) and Rangitāne who believed in devolving statutory services to iwi. We heard they encountered resistance from Oranga Tamariki at national and local levels, with colleagues saying "it couldn't be done", but were able to engage with a few key individuals at national office who were willing to take the idea forward for ministerial approval.

The iwi provides wraparound, holistic supports for rangatahi Māori who have offended

Whakapai Hauora works to prevent rangatahi from reoffending. As well as statutory functions such as FGCs, rangatahi involved in Whakapai Hauora youth justice can participate in a range of initiatives such as Mana Wahine (life skills for female rangatahi who have offended), Mana Taiohi (restorative FGC plans) and Whakapai te Waka (where rangatahi work to pay for their reparations). They can also access other wraparound services and supports, some of which are set out in individual FGC plans, including gym visits and community-based clinical support for mental health issues, and alcohol and drug use.

Other agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development are also on site supporting whānau to access a wide range of services and supports to meet their needs.

Many of the programmes run by Whakapai Hauora are run in groups, with whānau included, which we heard is more successful than conventional approaches and can lead to better outcomes for the whole whānau. We heard from kaimahi involved in youth justice that Whakapai Hauora is intentional about its work to reduce youth offending and has a strong values-based approach to this.

- Not forgetting what we're actually here for – to minimise youth offending. We create whānau ora. [We] look at it in a holistic way ... The value of whānau is real here." WHAKAPAI HAUORA KAIMAHI
- The answer is to help whānau achieve positive outcomes. All other services that we are doing are geared towards that." WHAKAPAI HAUORA KAIMAHI

In addition to the youth justice social worker, Whakapai Hauora employs a number of other kaimahi to support youth justice.

Relationships with Oranga Tamariki, NZ Police and other providers make the difference

We heard from both Whakapai Hauora and Oranga Tamariki that an open, respectful and trusting relationship is at the heart of the delegation working well. The two entities share training, and Whakapai Hauora kaimahi can access CYRAS¹⁸⁴ and work at the Oranga Tamariki site if they wish.

(Whakapai Hauora kaimahi] started doing youth justice social work from a Māori lens, based here [with Rangitāne] every day. We would like them in the [Oranga Tamariki] office a bit more so that their magic could spread a bit more."

ORANGA TAMARIKI LEADERSHIP

We heard that, because relationships were built on trust and respect with regular communication, any issues that arise are quickly addressed. We also heard from Whakapai Hauora about its relationships with local police and other providers in supporting rangatahi who have offended. An example of this is that police kaimahi don't always wear unforms when they attend hui on Rangitāne premises ("they do that for us").

An example of the delegation working well is that there has never been a non-agreement in a youth justice FGC. This contrasts with what we heard in our other 2023/24 community engagements about FGCs, where agencies often fail to reach agreement and/or find that the agreement is later contested in court.

There are many signs of success for the rangatahi

Although it can be difficult to measure the impact of different approaches, we heard from Oranga Tamariki that one marker of success for the youth justice delegation is that, for many years, only one rangatahi referred to Whakapai Hauora had been proceeded to a court order.¹⁸⁵ Another is that some rangatahi who have completed youth justice programmes with Whakapai Hauora have returned as mentors.

Kaimahi at Whakapai Hauora gave us other examples. They told us about a tāne who had been proceeded against as a result of retail crime and is now employed by the company he had stolen from. This transformation is the result of the Whakapai Hauora whakaoranga process, where all parties met to hold the tāne accountable for his offending. We heard that this was made possible by "the aunties" who build and maintain strong community relationships and work in a te ao Māori way that meets the requirements of the Oranga Tamariki Act and Oranga Tamariki practice standards. This is the value of having a team of aunties. We split ourselves to get our work done, to do what is needed." WHAKAPAI HAUORA KAIMAHI

While much more difficult to measure, we also heard from several kaimahi about "the glow" that is visible among rangatahi who have completed some of the Whakapai Hauora youth justice programmes. This is similar to what we have heard from other iwi and Māori providers. It raises questions about how improvements in rangatahi self-confidence, self-esteem, mindset and sense of community (including with iwi and hapū) can be captured in monitoring and evaluation. These things can positively influence offending behaviour but the impacts may not be seen for many years and are in themselves not easy to articulate.

It's about us becoming w\u00e4hine. We did lots here."
RANGATAHI

What we heard from Whakapai Hauora is that kaupapa Māori approaches to youth offending offer a much more holistic set of services and supports than most government programmes, which are often bound by rigid service specifications. This shows what can be done to better support tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau who have been caught up in the youth justice system.

¹⁸⁵ This has changed recently with a small number of rangatahi being referred back to Oranga Tamariki following involvement with Whakapai Hauora. Both Oranga Tamariki and Whakapai Hauora put this down to the intent and scope of the delegation, whereby rangatahi requiring a more serious statutory response are overseen by Oranga Tamariki.

Kotahi te Whakaaro shows how organisations can successfully work together to address youth offending

66 I think stealing is just an idiot move now." RANGATAHI

The Kotahi te Whakaaro approach was created by the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board to bring together government agencies, NGOs and Te Iwi o Ngāti Kahu in early 2022.

Following the early success of Kotahi te Whakaaro, the government provided funding to Oranga Tamariki in late 2022 to establish Fast Track models in Hamilton, Christchurch and Auckland Central. Fast Track refers to the extension and roll-out of the Kotahi te Whakaaro model. The funding also led to the expansion to include rangatahi aged 14–17 in some locations.¹⁸⁶

As at 28 February 2025, there have been 981 referrals to Fast Track for tamariki aged 10–13, which involved 497 individuals, and 67 percent have not been referred a second time. There have been 250 referrals to Fast Track for rangatahi aged 14–17, which involved 201 individuals, and 82 percent have not been referred a second time.¹⁸⁷

NZ Police refers all tamariki and rangatahi aged 10–17 suspected or apprehended to Kotahi te Whakaaro. Within 24 hours, a cross-agency team¹⁸⁸ reviews each referral and decides which tamariki and rangatahi are best suited to the programme. To do this, the team considers prior offending, whether supports are already in place and the wider needs of the whānau. Once tamariki and rangatahi are selected, the cross-agency team aims to understand the individual's situation – their housing, schooling, health and financial situations and any other challenges.

The team develops a plan for the tamariki or rangatahi and their whānau within 48 hours. This outlines actions for agencies to take to address the needs of the whānau such as advocating for stable housing, reconnecting tamariki and rangatahi with education, providing mental health support or linking whānau to financial assistance. In some cases, a mentor is assigned as part of the plan.

Evaluation of the five Fast Track sites, including Kotahi te Whakaaro, shows that overall, the initiatives achieved a reduction in offending and re-referral. A ministerial press release in 2023 reported that 82 percent of tamariki and rangatahi referred to Kotahi te Whakaaro had not reoffended at that time.¹⁸⁹

We spoke with tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and kaimahi involved with the initiative.

The support [from Kotahi te Whakaaro] that has been offered and given has been a lot like with housing needs, education and everything. It's all in place and I'm really grateful. At the moment, we are in the process of being housed by social housing for a little bit now. This has been helped through Kotahi te Whakaaro. Supporting

¹⁸⁶ Fast Track has been extended to rangatahi aged 14–17 in West Auckland, Central Auckland, South Auckland, Hamilton, Rotorua and Christchurch. This is all sites that were funded by the government for expansion. It also continues to operate in Whangārei, Lower Hutt and Dunedin for tamariki aged 10–13.

¹⁸⁷ Data provided by Oranga Tamariki in email correspondence, 24 March 2025. Separate information has not been provided for Kotahi te Whakaaro.

¹⁸⁸ Government agencies include NZ Police, Oranga Tamariki, Kāinga Ora, Health New Zealand and the Ministries of Education and Social Development.

¹⁸⁹ https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-action-youth-crime-making-difference

my son to get him active and take him to the gym in Manukau. My son loves boxing, which they help him with. Mentor picks him up pretty much every day and keeps in contact with him. If there is anything that he needs, and they support me and him for that. I feel that since he has been in Kotahi Te Whakaaro, a lot has changed in a good way."

One rangatahi highlighted the positive impact of the mentor provided by Kotahi te Whakaaro and how the support was making a difference in their life.

66 [The mentor is] giving me options of sports and different things while taking my mind off the things I used to do. It's working now as I think stealing is just an idiot move now." RANGATAHI

Professionals working for Kotahi te Whakaaro shared examples of how this approach gets results.

- We had a whānau with 11 grandchildren. Two kids got into a stolen car. We went to the family and found out that the grandfather was having difficulty enrolling his kids in education. We helped him with this. The grandkid getting into the car helped the grandfather in the end – he said. He got the help he needed." KOTAHI TE WHAKAARO PROFESSIONAL (ORANGA TAMARIKI)
- Immediate needs are so important. We focus on hungry kids first. Once we have addressed this, then we can address the other issues. Youth justice plans are focused on the young person and to stop them reoffending. At the end of the day, these kids belong to the whānau." KOTAHI TE WHAKAARO PROFESSIONAL (ORANGA TAMARIKI)

Improving the response to care and protection needs can prevent escalation into youth justice

Across our monitoring, we found areas of good practice from police and iwi and community providers working holistically with tamariki and rangatahi Māori who have offended. Kaimahi working with these tamariki and rangatahi understand the complex needs of these individuals and that of their whanau. We heard about several strengths in youth justice policing. There are opportunities to build on this by strengthening the ability of Youth Aid kaimahi to support frontline police kaimahi as well as directly support tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. There is opportunity to work with iwi to provide holistic, culturally responsive and relational services and supports to tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

There are also challenges. It is critical that more is done to address the unmet care and protection needs of the majority of tamariki and rangatahi Māori who offend. As has been shown, they are usually well known to government agencies many years prior to offending, and it should not take criminal activity for the state to intervene and provide effective services and supports.

Agencies working together when concerns about the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi Māori are first raised can improve outcomes and prevent offending from occurring. "Stopped doing those ram raids, switching those things up ... I want to go to school/ course, I know they won't let me go to course, but I want to go to course. Mechanic or building houses, it's one of my hobbies, it's all right, I always told my mum and nan that I want to build."

"[The mentor is] giving me options of sports and different things while taking my mind off the things I used to do. It's working now as I think stealing is just an idiot move now."



"What helped me understand was [Oranga Tamariki social worker] explaining to me what the process was. What I want to do and how I want to do it and what's going to work best for me. They made it easy for me to understand."

Glossary

Care or custody	In relation to tamariki and rangatahi, being subject to an order for custody or sole guardianship or to a care agreement, in favour of the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki, an iwi social service, a cultural social service or the director of a child and family support service.
Caregivers	People who care for tamariki and rangatahi in custody of Oranga Tamariki, Open Home Foundation or Barnardos. Caregivers can be whānau or non-whānau. They provide a range of care options, including respite, short-term or permanent care. Caregivers are sometimes referred to as foster parents or carers.
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)/Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (ICAMHS)	CAMHS and ICAMHS provide specialist mental health services for tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau.
Community organisations	lwi and Māori organisations, care partners and organisations providing services to the community.
CYRAS	Oranga Tamariki administrative database.
Family group conference (FGC)	A legislated process under the Oranga Tamariki Act. Its purpose is to support and enable informed whānau or family-led decision making following a report of concern or youth offending or in relation to other concerns raised by government agencies.
FTE	Full-time equivalent.
GP	General practitioner.
Hapori	Community.
Нарū	Subtribe.
Hui ā-whānau	An informal meeting with tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and professionals, often in relation to a report of concern. A hui ā-whānau happens before an FGC.
Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)	A large research database, maintained by Stats NZ that holds de- identified data about people and households in Aotearoa. Results from IDI analysis are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the IDI https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/

IPCA	Independent Police Conduct Authority Mana Whanonga Pirihimana Motuhake.
lwi	Tribe.
Kai	Food.
Kaimahi	Staff.
Kairaranga ā-whānau	A specialist role at Oranga Tamariki that is designed to help weave connections between tamariki and rangatahi and their whānau and support tamariki and rangatahi Māori affiliation with their iwi.
Kanohi ki te kanohi	Face to face.
Kaupapa Māori	An approach underpinned by Māori values.
Kōrero	Conversation or discussion.
Legal guardian	An adult who is responsible for making decisions about important decisions in a child's life, for example, religion and education.
Mana	Authority, control, power, influence, status.
Manaakitanga	The process of showing respect, generosity and care for others.
Mana motuhake	Autonomy and independence.
Mana tamaiti (tamariki)	The intrinsic value and inherent dignity derived from a child or young person's whakapapa (genealogy) and their belonging to whānau, hapū, iwi or family group, in accordance with tikanga Māori or its equivalent in the culture of the child or young person.*
Mana whenua	Authority and jurisdiction over land or territory.
Marae	The land and buildings associated with a marae ātea (an area where formal greetings and discussions take place).
Mātauranga	Knowledge, wisdom, education.
Mauri	Life force.
Mokopuna	Grandchild, grandchildren, descendant.
Motu	Country.
National Care Standards (NCS) Regulations	The Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018, which came into effect on 1 July 2019, set out the standard of care tamariki and rangatahi can expect to receive when they are in the care of one of the agencies.

 $^{* \} Source: \ \underline{https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Performance-and-monitoring/Section-7AA/7AA-Web_V5.pdf$

NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement.
NGO	Non-government organisation.
NISS	Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services.
NZQCF	New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework.
Outcomes Framework	A tool we use to measure how well agencies are supporting the wellbeing and life outcomes of tamariki and rangatahi in care.
Pākehā	A New Zealander of European descent.
Permanency	Full-time care for tamariki and rangatahi when returning to their family/ whānau is no longer an option and an alternative permanent home is needed.
Police proceeding	A decision made by police in relation to offending behaviour. Police proceedings can have a wide range of outcomes, including no further action, a warning, a referral to specific services, prosecution and custody admission.
Pou	The use of pou in this report is a metaphoric post or pillar that strongly supports a cause.
Rangatahi	Defined by the Oranga Tamariki Act as a young person or young people aged 14 or older.
Rangatahi Māori	Young people of Māori descent aged 14 or older.
Receiving intervention	Services and supports designed to strengthen whānau in order to keep tamariki and rangatahi safe and in the community.
Report of concern	Contact with Oranga Tamariki to raise a concern about the safety and/ or wellbeing of a child. Anyone can make a report of concern about a child.
Residence/secure residence	A locked facility that can be either for care and protection or youth justice and must adhere to the Oranga Tamariki (Residential Care) Regulations 1996. Residences are established by the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki (with the approval of the Minister for Children) under section 364 of the Oranga Tamariki Act.
Strategic partnersh ip	A formal partnership between Oranga Tamariki and an iwi or Māori organisation under section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act.
Tamaiti	Oranga Tamariki uses 'tamaiti' to refer to a singular child.
Tamariki	Defined by the Oranga Tamariki Act as children aged under 14.
Tamariki Māori	Children of Māori descent aged under 14.

Tāne	Man.
Taonga	Treasures.
Te ao Māori	The Māori worldview.
Tikanga	Correct procedures, practices, protocols. The customary system of values.
Tūrangawaewae	Place of belonging, location of identity through kinship and whakapapa.
Wāhine	Women.
Whakapapa	Genealogy that connects a person to their identity and tūrangawaewae. In the context of this report, we also refer to the Oranga Tamariki Act definition: whakapapa, in relation to a person, means the multi- generational kinship relationships that help to describe who the person is in terms of their mātua (parents), and tūpuna (ancestors), from whom they descend.
Whanaungatanga	Process of establishing relationships. In the context of this report, we also refer to the Oranga Tamariki Act definition: whanaungatanga, in relation to a person, means the purposeful carrying out of responsibilities based on obligations to whakapapa; the kinship that provides the foundations for reciprocal obligations and responsibilities to be met; and the wider kinship ties that need to be protected and maintained to ensure the maintenance and protection of their sense of belonging, identity, and connection.
Whānau	People who are biologically linked or share whakapapa. For our monitoring purposes, whānau includes parents, whānau members living with tamariki at the point they have come into care (this does not include whānau caregivers) or whānau who are close to and/or involved with tamariki on a day-to-day basis (this does not include whānau caregivers) and who have been involved in decision making about their care.
Whānau Ora	In the context of this report, an approach to improving the wellbeing of whānau as a whole used by certain groups (partners or agencies) delivering services to whānau Māori.
Whare	House, dwelling.
Whenua	Land, country.
Youth justice intervention	Services and supports to prevent further offending for rangatahi who are not in custody (for example, a youth justice FGC).

Appendix One: Regional data

Monitoring region	Number of tamariki and rangatahi Māori aged 0-18 ¹⁹⁰	Proportion of tamariki and rangatahi Māori	Proportion of national population Māori youth
Auckland	75,400	19%	23%
Taranaki-Manawatū	35,000	37%	11%
Upper South	8,900	22%	3%
Canterbury	26,200	18%	8%

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori population in the regions we monitored this year

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system: Auckland¹⁹¹

75,400 (19%) tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–18 in Auckland are Māori. Of those:

- 6,300 (8.3%) have had a report of concern about their safety or wellbeing
- 5,000 (6.6%) were receiving some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki (as the outcome of a report of concern, further action from Oranga Tamariki was required)
- 900 (2.3% of the Māori population aged 10–18) were subject to a police proceeding within the year
- 950 (1.3%) were under Oranga Tamariki custody and/or care
 - 800 (1%) were under care and protection orders
 - 150 (0.3% of the Māori population aged 10–18) were under youth justice orders.

Key facts

- 98% of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Auckland have never been involved in a police proceeding.
- 1 in 12 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Auckland have had a report of concern.
- 1 in 15 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Auckland have received some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 80 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Auckland have spent some time in the custody of Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 330 tamariki and rangatahi Māori aged 10–18 in Auckland have been under youth justice custody orders.

¹⁹⁰ Stats NZ, 2023 Census, ethnicity, age, and gender for the census usually resident population count.

¹⁹¹ During the year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024. It covers Oranga Tamariki Auckland regions and Auckland, Counties Manukau, and Waitemata Police Areas.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system: Taranaki-Manawatū¹⁹²

35,000 (37%) tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–18 in Taranaki-Manawatū are Māori. Of those:

- 2,100 (6.1%) have had a report of concern about their safety or wellbeing
- 1,600 (4.5%) were receiving some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki (as the outcome of a report of concern, a further action from Oranga Tamariki was required)
- 410 (2.4% of the Māori population aged 10-18) were subject to a police proceeding within the year
- 350 (1%) were under Oranga Tamariki custody and/or care
 - 340 (1%) were under care and protection orders
 - 10 (0.1% of the Māori population aged 10-18) were under youth justice orders.

Key facts

- Around 98% of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Taranaki-Manawatū have never been involved in a police proceeding.
- 1 in 16 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Taranaki-Manawatū have had a report of concern.
- 1 in 22 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Taranaki-Manawatū have received some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 100 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Taranaki-Manawatū have spent some time in the custody of Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 1,000 tamariki and rangatahi Māori aged 10–18 in Taranaki-Manawatū have been under youth justice custody orders.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the system: Upper South¹⁹³

8,900 (22%) tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–18 in Upper South are Māori. Of those:

- 850 (10%) have had a report of concern about their safety or wellbeing
- 440 (5.2%) were receiving some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki (as the outcome of a report of concern, a further action from Oranga Tamariki was required)
- 100 (2.3% of the Māori population aged 10-18) were subject to a police proceeding within the year
- 90 (1%) were under Oranga Tamariki custody and/or care.

Key facts

- Around 98% of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Upper South have never been involved in a police proceeding.
- 1 in 10 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Upper South have had a report of concern.
- 1 in 19 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Upper South have received some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 100 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Upper South have spent some time in the custody of Oranga Tamariki.

¹⁹² During the year 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024. It covers Taranaki-Manawatū Oranga Tamariki region and Manawatū, Taranaki and Whanganui police areas.

¹⁹³ During the year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024. It covers Upper South Oranga Tamariki region and Marlborough, Nelson Bays and West Coast police areas.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the oranga tamariki system: Canterbury¹⁹⁴

26,200 (18%) tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–18 in Canterbury are Māori. Of those:

- 2,400 (9%) have had a report of concern about their safety or wellbeing
- 1,500 (5.7%) were receiving some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki (as the outcome of a report of concern, a further action from Oranga Tamariki was required)
- 230 (1.8% of the Māori population aged 10–18) were subject to a police proceeding within the year
- 350 (1.4%) were under Oranga Tamariki custody and/or care
 - 300 (1.2%) were under care and protection orders
 - 50 (0.4%) of the Māori population aged
 10-18 were under youth justice orders.

Key facts

- Around 98% of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Canterbury have never been involved in a police proceeding.
- 1 in 11 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Canterbury have had a report of concern.
- 1 in 18 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Canterbury have received some form of intervention from Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 71 tamariki and rangatahi Māori in Canterbury have spent some time in the custody of Oranga Tamariki.
- 1 in 250 tamariki and rangatahi Māori aged 10–18 in Canterbury have been under youth justice custody orders.

¹⁹⁴ During the year 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024. It covers Canterbury Oranga Tamariki Region and Canterbury Metro, Canterbury Rural, and Mid/South Canterbury Police Areas

Appendix Two: Using data from the IDI and What About Me? survey

The Integrated Data Infrastructure

The IDI is a large research database that holds de-identified data about people and households. This includes data that government agencies and NGOs organisations use to administer the services they provide to the public (administrative data) and data from surveys run by Stats NZ.

We used IDI data because:

- it links de-identified data from different sources about individuals and households so we can see the range of services that individuals and whānau receive
- it means we can follow a range of outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi both while they are involved in the oranga tamariki system and later after they have left the system and into adulthood.

Stats NZ has strict criteria around usage of the IDI to ensure people's information is protected. More detail about how Stats NZ keeps data safe, including descriptions of Ngā Tikanga Paihere and Five Safes frameworks, can be found on its website.¹⁹⁵

We are also required to make the following disclaimers about data from the IDI.

Access to the data used in this study was provided by Stats NZ under conditions designed to give effect to the security and confidentiality provisions of the Data and Statistics Act 2022. The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Stats NZ or individual data suppliers.

These results are not official statistics. They have been created for research purposes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which is carefully managed by Stats NZ. For more information about the IDI please visit: <u>https://</u> www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/

The results are based in part on tax data supplied by Inland Revenue to Stats NZ under the Tax Administration Act 1994 for statistical purposes. Any discussion of data limitations or weaknesses is in the context of using the IDI for statistical purposes and is not related to the data's ability to support Inland Revenue's core operational requirements.

¹⁹⁵ https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/how-we-keep-integrated-data-safe/

Technical definitions of IDI indicators

Our analysis considered people who were resident in New Zealand during 2022. This population was grouped based on their age at the end of 2022 and interaction with Oranga Tamariki:

- during 2022 tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17
- during their childhood for rangatahi aged 18-25 and adults aged 27-30.¹⁹⁶

Grouping the population for this report

We used these groupings¹⁹⁷ on the basis that:

- tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 may be currently involved in the oranga tamariki system
- rangatahi aged 18–25 who were in care or custody may be eligible for transition support services during the year
- we wanted to understand later life outcomes for adults aged 27–30 who were involved in the oranga tamariki system as children.

The framework for classifying by oranga tamariki system interaction is illustrated below.

No Oranga Tamariki involvement	Involved with O	ranga Tamariki			
No Oranga Tamariki involvement	· · · · · ·	Care and protection and/or youth justice intervention		Care or custody	
No Oranga Tamariki involvement	Care and protection	Youth justice intervention	Care	Youth justice custody	

¹⁹⁶ The intention was to observe life outcomes at age 30. However, this was increased to a range of ages in order to increase the size of the group.

¹⁹⁷ In some cases, different age groups were used because of eligibility criteria. These are listed in individual measure descriptions below.

Definition of population groups

	No Oranga Tamariki involvement	Care and protection intervention	Youth justice intervention	Care	Youth justice custody
Aged 27-30		Had report of concern (this includes having concerns raised with no further action taken), child and family assessment, or an FGC in their lifetime but did not come into care or custody or receive youth justice intervention	Received youth justice intervention (FGC, supervision order) in their lifetime but no care or custody placement	Spent time in a care and protection custody placement in their lifetime, but not in youth justice custody	Spent time in youth justice custody in their lifetime
Aged 0-17		Had report of concern (this includes having concerns raised with no further action taken), child and family assessment, or an FGC in 2022 but did not come into care or custody or receive youth justice intervention	Received youth justice intervention in 2022 but no care or custody placement	Spent time in a care and protection custody placement in 2022 but not in youth justice custody	Spent time in youth justice custody in 2022

For the purpose of this work, a person was defined as experiencing a disability if they did any of the following:

- Responded to questions¹⁹⁸ in Census 2018 (or a social survey) as experiencing disability.
- Received a disability allowance or was a child whose parent received a child disability allowance on their behalf.
- Received an invalid's benefit or supporting living payment (excluding carers).
- Received Ongoing Resourcing Scheme support or School High Health Needs funding.

The table below contains a summary of measure definitions.¹⁹⁹

Measures marked with an asterisk* used a code module. The Code Modules Initiative is an all-of-data system effort to make New Zealand's integrated data assets easier to use and understandable for everyone, including non-technical people. Code modules contain high-quality code and documentation for foundational measures needed by researchers.²⁰⁰

• Was a Whaikaha client.

Measure	Definition	
Emergency department presentation	For tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 and adults aged 27–30. An individual attended an emergency department one or more times in the period 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022.	
Potentially avoidable hospitalisation	 For tamariki aged 0-14. An individual experienced one or more potentially avoidable hospitalisations in 2022. Potentially avoidable hospitalisations²⁰¹ include hospitalisations that could have been potentially avoided by: the provision of appropriate healthcare interventions and early disease management (usually delivered in primary care and community-based settings) public health interventions, such as injury prevention, health promotion, and immunisation social policy interventions (such as income support and housing policy). 	
Primary Healthcare Organisation (PHO) enrolment	For tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 and adults aged 27–30. An individual is enrolled with a Primary Healthcare Organisation (PHO). A PHO manages a group of contracted general medical practices. If an individual chooses to register as a patient of a medical practice, they will be enrolled in the corresponding PHO and receive subsidised healthcare.	
GP visit	For tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 and adults aged 27–30. An individual has consulted a GP at their registered practice one or more times in the period 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022. This measure is limited to those enrolled with a PHO as it does not include consultations with GPs made as a casual patient.	

¹⁹⁸ Washington Group Short Set questions on functional disability.

¹⁹⁹ https://github.com/nz-social-investment-agency

²⁰⁰ For more detail about code modules, see https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/code-modules-initiative/

²⁰¹ For more information on the definition of potentially avoidable hospitalisations (PAH) for children see Indicator of potentially avoidable hospitalisations for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: A brief report on methodology. Note that the methodology implemented in the PAH code module differs from those shown in the methodology paper, <u>https://www.health.govt.nz/publications/</u> indicator-of-potentially-avoidable-hospitalisations-for-the-child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy-a

Measure	Definition
Mental health and addiction service use	For rangatahi aged 14–17 and adults aged 27–30. An individual accessed secondary public inpatient or community mental health and addiction services one or more times in the period 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022. Note this measure does not include primary healthcare settings, such as GP consults, which may also be used to address mental health or addiction issues.
Victim of reported crime	 For tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17 and adults aged 27–30. An individual was recorded as a victim of one or more crimes in the Police Recorded Crime Victims dataset. This data is only available for mid-2014 onwards It includes crimes that are not solved, or where nobody was prosecuted or convicted. For tamariki and rangatahi aged 0–17, the criminal incident could be at any point in the previous seven years. For adults aged 27–30, we looked only at criminal incidents that occurred when they were aged 18 or over and, because of data limitations, only within the previous seven years.
School attendance*	 For tamariki and rangatahi aged 0-17. Grouped into primary/intermediate and secondary school attendance. For students enrolled at state or state-integrated schools, their attendance in term 1 of 2022. For each student, attendance is recorded for each half-day as attending, justified absence, or unjustified absence. The half-days a student was recorded as attending were divided by the total of half-days, and ranked into bands: regular attendance (present for 90% or more of the term) irregular absence (present for 80% or more, but less than 90% of the term) moderate absence (present for 70% or more, but less than 80% of the term) chronic absence (present for less than 70% of the term). Days when a region was in lockdown were excluded.
NZQCF level 2+ attainment*	For rangatahi aged 18. An individual has attained a level 2 qualification or above from the NZQCF by the end of the year in which they turn 18. This is limited to rangatahi who were enrolled in school at some point after turning 15. For many, this will be NCEA level 2 or 3 attained at secondary school. For others, it may be a certificate or diploma from other education providers.
Highest qualification*	For adults aged 27–30. The highest level of qualification attained by an individual to the end of 2022. Grouped by NZQCF levels as secondary (levels 1–3), tertiary (levels 4–6) or university (levels 7–10). Note qualifications attained outside of New Zealand may not be included in this measure unless they have been recorded through Census 2013 or 2018.
In employment	For adults aged 27–30. An individual was recorded as receiving income from wages, salary or paid parental leave during a month. This is presented as the average across all months in 2022 for the proportion employed within each group. This was done for simplicity, as the figure for each group was relatively constant throughout the year.

Measure	Definition	
Supported by main benefit*	For adults aged 27–30. An individual received a main benefit for all of 2022. Main benefits include Sole Parent Support, Jobseeker Support, Supported Living Payment, Young Parent Payment and Youth Payment. ²⁰²	
Emergency housing spell	For adults aged 27−30. An individual was the principal applicant for an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant one or more times in their adult lifetime.	
Driver licence*	An individual held a current New Zealand restricted licence or class 1 full licence (car licence) or class 6 full licence (motorcycle licence) at the end of 2022. This excludes licences that are not current, for example because of expiry or suspension, and excludes people who only hold overseas licences.	
Intergenerational Oranga Tamariki involvement	 For adults aged 27–30. This is limited to individuals who are recorded as parents for registered births. This includes children born in New Zealand or born overseas but legally adopted in New Zealand. One or more of their tamariki are recorded as having involvement with Oranga Tamariki at some point within their lifetimes until the end of 2022. Involvement is grouped into the following categories: Any interaction with Oranga Tamariki, including where a child and family assessment and/or a report of concern was conducted/received but there was no further involvement from Oranga Tamariki. Care or custody, where one or more tamariki have had one or more spells in the care or custody of Oranga Tamariki. 	
Prison/home detention	For adults aged 27–30. An individual experienced a prison spell (including remand) or home detention one or more times since they turned 18. Note this only includes incarceration or home detention in New Zealand.	
Mortality	For those born between 1992 and 1995. Mortality and cause of death (for deaths that occurred within New Zealand) recorded until the end of 2022. IC9 or ICD10 codes were mapped to intentional self-harm, motor- vehicle accidents or other causes of death. Individuals without recorded mortality were classified as alive.	

²⁰² Our measure used the Ministry for Social Development Income Support Payments code module and all benefits included in the main benefit portion.

Proportion of population group (Māori) with each level of interaction with the oranga tamariki system

Number of Māori aged 0–17 in each group in 2022	:
No involvement with Oranga Tamariki in last year	285,861
Report of concern in last year but no further involvement	8,790
Received care and protection intervention in last 12 months but never came into care or custody (and never received youth justice intervention)	15,477
Received youth justice intervention in last year but no care or custody placement	672
Spent time in a care and protection custody placement in last year, but not in youth justice custody	3,048
Spent time in youth justice custody in last year	156
Spent time in both care and protection and youth justice custody in last year	120
Number of Māori aged 18–25 in each group in 2022	
Never had any involvement in categories below (not eligible for transition support services)	68,919
Received care and protection or youth justice intervention (child and family assessment, FGC, youth justice supervision order) but has not been in care or custody (not eligible for transition support services)	47,217
Spent time in care and protection and or youth justice custody (not eligible for transition support services)	6,156
Spent time in care and protection or youth justice custody (eligible for transition support services)	2,353
Number of Māori aged 27–30 in each group in 2022	
Never had any involvement with Oranga Tamariki	34,893
Had report of concern in their lifetime but no further involvement with Oranga Tamariki	2,646
Received care and protection intervention in their lifetime (child and family assessment, FGC) but never received youth justice intervention or came into care or custody	11,505
Received youth justice intervention (FGC, supervision order) in their lifetime but no care or custody placement	3,909
Spent time in a care and protection custody placement in their lifetime, but not in youth justice custody	3,273
Spent time in youth justice custody in their lifetime	342
Spent time in both care and protection and youth justice custody in their lifetime	582

		Māori		
Interaction group	Mortality by cause of death	Proportion	Number	
	Alive	97.87%	42,876	
No Oranga Tamariki involvement	Other cause ²⁰³	1.63%	714	
Involvement	Self-harm	0.25%	111	
	Vehicle	0.25%	108	
	Alive	98.46%	16,284	
Care and protection intervention	Other cause	0.78%	129	
Intervention	Self-harm	0.43%	72	
	Vehicle	0.33%	54	
	Alive	97.94%	4,269	
Youth justice intervention	Other cause	0.82%	36	
	Self-harm	0.69%	30	
	Vehicle	0.55%	24	
	Alive	97.63%	4,449	
Care or Custody	Other cause	0.99%	45	
	Self-harm	0.99%	45	
	Vehicle	0.39%	18	

Mortality by cause of death for Māori born 1992 to 1995

What About Me? survey

What About Me? is a nationwide survey of rangatahi aged 13–18. It was conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Social Development in 2021.

Just under 8,000 rangatahi responded to questions about their health, wellbeing, whānau and community. This included just over 7,000 rangatahi in years 9–13 at school and a further 500 rangatahi of the same age in the community. We were only able to access the dataset from Stats NZ for those rangatahi who completed the survey in schools. This means the measures are not representative of rangatahi who do not regularly attend school. This is an unfortunate limitation because IDI measures show that some groups of rangatahi in the oranga tamariki system are less likely to regularly attend school and are therefore less likely to have their views represented in the school sample.

²⁰³ The other cause of mortality group for Māori with no contact with the oranga tamariki system likely includes more of those who died at birth or in infancy than other interaction groups.

The survey included questions about ethnicity and involvement with Oranga Tamariki. This enabled us to understand how tamariki and rangatahi Māori who had been involved with Oranga Tamariki²⁰⁴ felt about many aspects of their life and how this compared to those who had never been involved with Oranga Tamariki.²⁰⁵ Subjective wellbeing measures are particularly important because most administrative data comes from people's interactions with government agencies and services – they don't tell us anything about people's perspectives on their own lives.

The survey is planned to be repeated in 2025 and every three years after that and will be called the Youth Health and Wellbeing survey in the future.

		Tamariki and rangatahi Māori with no Oranga Tamariki involvement	Tamariki and rangatahi Māori with Oranga Tamariki involvement
Future outlook	I feel hopeful about my future (0 = not at all, 10 = very)	7.5	6.6
	l know my whakapapa (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	7.4	7.3
Identity	l am proud of who I am (0 = not at all, 10 = very)	7.2	6.2
	My family and whānau love me (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	8.8	8.1
Relationships and connections	l have friends I can trust (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	8.2	7.6
connections	I'm in a group, club or team	66%	61%
	I have someone to turn to for help	84%	77%
	I feel safe where I usually live (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	8.8	8.0
Safety	l feel safe in the community where I live (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	7.8	7.1
Achieving and	I have aspirations for a university degree	48%	44%
contributing	I have a regular part time job	29%	27%
	I help others in the community	53%	51%

²⁰⁴ The group of *What About Me*? survey respondents involved with Oranga Tamariki includes any tamariki and rangatahi who answered 'yes' to 'have you or anyone in your family every been involved with Child Youth and Family Services (CYFS) or Oranga Tamariki?' This includes those who have had a social worker visit them or their family, had an FGC or been in care.

²⁰⁵ The survey sample included responses from 1,395 Māori with no involvement with Oranga Tamariki and 606 Māori with had been involved with Oranga Tamariki.

			gatahi Māori with iki involvement
		Disability indicated	Disability not indicated
Future outlook	l feel hopeful about my future (0 = not at all, 10 = very)	5.9	7.0
L L Maria	l know my whakapapa (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	7.2	7.3
Identity	l am proud of who I am (0 = not at all, 10 = very)	5.4	6.8
Relationships and connections	My family and whānau love me (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	7.6	8.4
	l have friends I can trust (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	7.1	8.0
	I'm in a group, club or team	58%	63%
	I have someone to turn to for help	Disability indicated Disability not indicated 5.9 7.0 7.2 7.3 7.4 8.3 2 7.4 2 7.6	
	I feel safe where I usually live (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	7.4	8.3
Safety	I feel safe in the community where I live (0 = disagree, 10 = agree)	6.5	7.6
A chiaving and	I have aspirations for a university degree	42%	47%
Achieving and contributing	l have a regular part time job	28%	27%
	I help others in the community	51%	51%

Appendix Three: NZ Police data used in this report

Police provided data on proceedings for all tamariki and rangatahi under the age of 18. We note that there are differences in the age of criminal responsibility, and appropriate police response, for tamariki aged 10–13 and rangatahi aged 14–17. NZ Police publishes aggregated information about proceedings at policedata.nz. This is drawn from the same data analysed here at a more detailed level.

2023/24 Police proceedings – proceeding occasions

Age	Total number of proceedings	% ²⁰⁶	Māori (count)	%	Non- Māori (count)	%	Unknown ethnicity (count)	%
	14,704		7,357	50%	4,241	29 %	3,106	21%
under 10	58	<1%	21	<1%	16	<1%	21	1%
10-13	2,743	19%	1,571	21%	626	15%	546	18%
14–17	11,903	81%	5,765	78%	3,599	85%	2,539	82%

2023/24 Police proceedings - individual tamariki and rangatahi

Age	Individual number of tamariki and rangatahi	%	Māori (count)	%	Non- Māori (count)	%	Unknown ethnicity (count)	%
	8,486		3,454	41%	2,367	28 %	2,665	31%
under 10	53	1%	19	1%	15	1%	19	1%
10-13	1,738	20%	856	25%	411	17%	471	18%
14-17	6,834	81%	2,664	77%	1,976	83%	2,194	82%

²⁰⁶ Because individual tamariki and rangatahi can be counted in more than one age band during the year, percentages in these tables can total more than 100%.

2023/24 Police proceedings – first proceedings

Age	Count of first proceedings	%	Māori (count)	%	Non- Māori (count)	%	Unknown ethnicity (count)	%
	5,308		1,602	30%	1,418	27%	2,288	43%
under 10	49	1%	17	1%	14	1%	18	1%
10-13	1,290	24%	567	35%	309	22%	414	18%
14-17	3,969	75%	1,018	64%	1,095	77%	1,856	81%

2023/24 Method of proceedings for tamariki aged 10-13

	Count (overall)	%	Māori (count)	%	Non- Māori (count)	%	Unknown ethnicity (count)	%
Alternative Action Plan	611	22%	312	20%	167	27%	132	24%
Community Justice Panel	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Te Pae Oranga	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	s
Custody Admission	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
FGC 14(1e) Child Offending	341	13%	270	17%	59	9%	S	S
FGC 247(b) Police Referred	S	S	S	S	S	S	s	S
No Further Action (and No Public Interest)	447	16%	273	17%	91	15%	83	15%
Prosecution	74	3%	60	4%	S	S	S	S
Warning (Formal, Verbal, Written)	574	21%	271	17%	135	22%	168	31%
Youth Referral	669	24%	363	23%	160	26%	146	27%

	Count (overall)	%	Māori (count)	%	Non- Māori (count)	%	Unknown ethnicity (count)	%
Alternative Action Plan	1,555	13%	560	10%	499	14%	496	20%
Community Justice Panel	102	1%	60	1%	15	<1%	S	S
Te Pae Oranga	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Custody Admission	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
FGC 14(1e) Child Offending	51	<1%	S	S	S	S	S	S
FGC 247(b) Police Referred	934	8%	511	9%	305	8%	118	5%
No Further Action (and No Public Interest)	1,199	10%	644	11%	313	9%	242	9%
Prosecution	3,868	32%	2,458	42%	1,244	35%	166	7%
Warning (Formal, Verbal, Written)	1,874	16%	558	10%	558	15%	758	30%
Youth Referral	2,302	19%	928	16%	647	18%	727	29%

2023/24 Method of proceedings for rangatahi aged 14–17

Appendix Four: Resources and getting help

This report includes data and information that may be distressing. Some options and resources for help are outlined below.

Talking to someone, like a family member or friend, can make a real difference if you are having a hard time or you are worried about someone else. If you need to talk about how you're feeling right now, trained counsellors are available free of charge at anytime of the day or night – call or text **1737**.

You can also talk to a doctor, nurse, counsellor or other health professional. They are used to talking about personal things and not just about illnesses. School counsellors and school nurses are there to help too.

Helplines are free and private and can help with problems whether they are big or small. If a helpline you try is not the right one for you, they will often try to direct you to the right one.

Need to talk? Free call or text anytime on 1737 or go to 1737.org.nz

WhatsUp: call 0800 942 8787 or web chat whatsup.co.nz/contact-us

Youthline: call 0800 376 633, free text 234 or web chat youthline.co.nz/web-chat-counselling

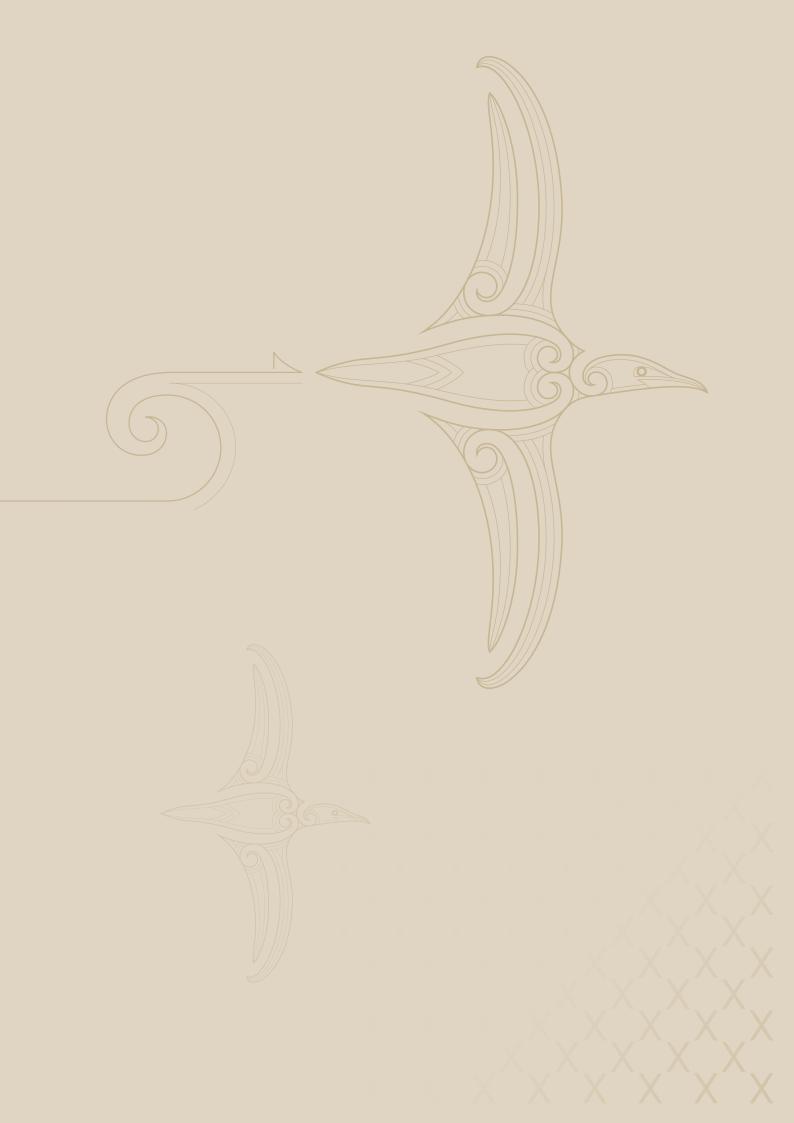
Healthline: call 0800 611 116 for advice and information from a registered nurse.

Child Rights Line: call 0800 224 453 for information and advice about your rights and how you should be treated.

VOYCE Whakarongo Mai: call 0800 4 VOYCE / 0800 486 923 or email: contactus@voyce.org.nz for support for care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi. You can also look at what services are available in your area at **familyservices.govt.nz/directory**

Youth Law Aotearoa helps child and young people with legal issues. You can get free legal advice on lots of different issues from bullying at school or feeling safe at home, to police and youth justice: 0800 884 529 or email: nzyouthlaw@gmail.com.

Transition support services help rangatahi who are leaving care or youth justice. Call 0800 55 89 89.





aroturuki.govt.nz

