

# Our visit to Lower South 2026



**69,700** tamariki and rangatahi in the region\*

3,270 had a report of concern about their safety or wellbeing

1,580 had a report of concern that progressed to a core assessment\*\*

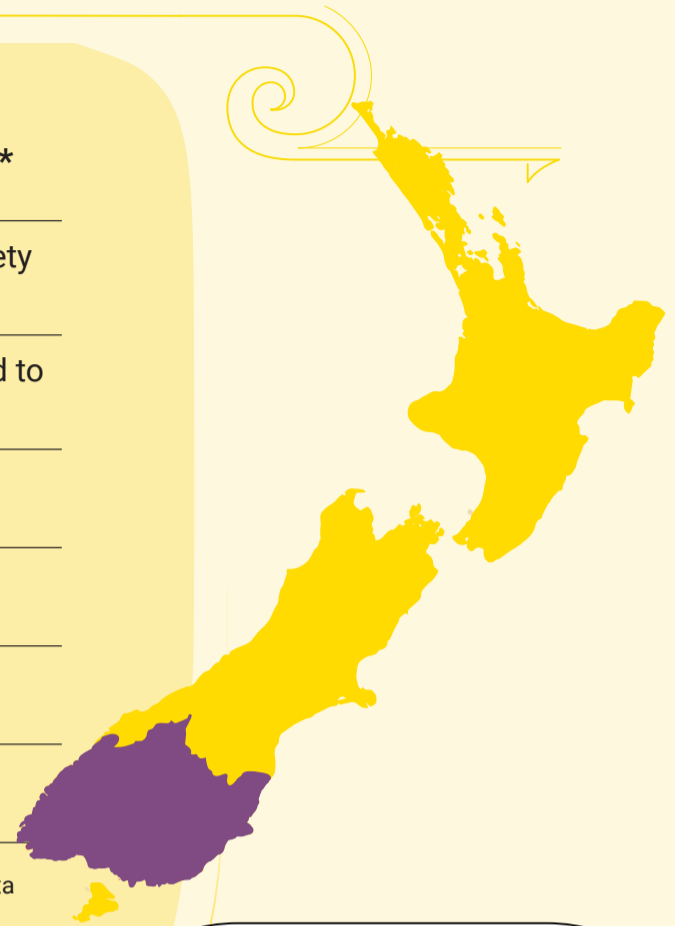
500 had a police proceeding\*\*\*

350 were in care and custody

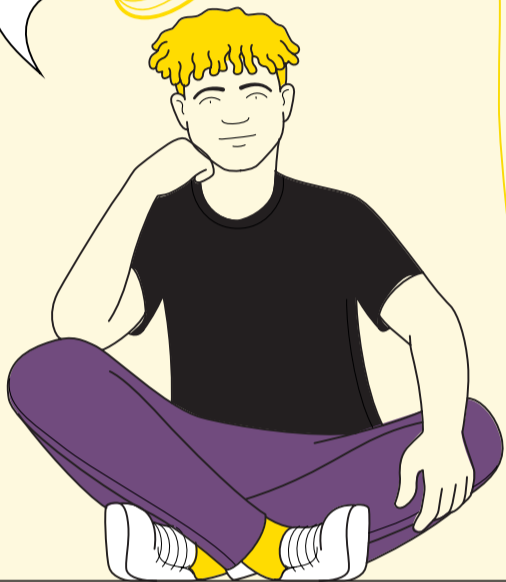
310 were in care and protection

40 were in youth justice custody

\* Total population from Stats NZ 2023 Census, ages 0–18. All other data provided by Oranga Tamariki for January–December 2025.  
 \*\* As the outcome of a report of concern was that further action was required.  
 \*\*\* NZ Police data January–December 2025.



"[I] was in a motel for two weeks. I wasn't feeding myself. I was an hour and half walk from anywhere, police station was near me. Constantly on alert." – rangatahi



"[ROCs] don't even make it through to the local [Oranga Tamariki] team. Like [this] is not a big region we know who our local families are, but [ROCs] don't make it to the local team to put that context in place. That's the huge risk." – health kaimahi



## Key insights from Lower South

There is a high threshold for action on reports of concern in the region. Professionals often don't hear back from Oranga Tamariki, leading to ongoing concern about the safety of tamariki and rangatahi.

There is a shortage of services across the region, particularly for tamariki and rangatahi requiring mental health or disability support. Long waitlists for assessments and diagnosis can delay tamariki and rangatahi accessing appropriate support. Having to travel to access services can be a further barrier for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau who live rurally.

There are limited youth justice placements, only one bail home and no secure youth justice residence in the region. This often results in rangatahi being placed out of region, away from whānau and support.

Police are seeing an increasing number of tamariki and rangatahi appearing in the youth justice system, who they earlier and repeatedly made known to Oranga Tamariki for care and protection concerns.

Care placements are in short supply throughout the region due to difficulties recruiting caregivers, a shortage of specialised group homes and funding constraints at Oranga Tamariki resulting in a resistance to using fee for service placements. This can result in tamariki and rangatahi being placed in motels, or far away from whānau.

The lack of services extends to youth justice, with challenges accessing support to help reduce reoffending and meet court ordered conditions, including supervision with activity and mentoring.



"None of the placement options are available here. There is an absolute loss for tamariki who have to move away. When you talk about return home, how do you do that when kids are three hours this way or two hours that way. That's the context of rural social work when your resources are not available in your community." – Oranga Tamariki leader





## Health and education outcomes<sup>1</sup> for tamariki and rangatahi in the region<sup>2</sup>

This data is the most recent available in the IDI and covers the 2023 calendar year

	Involved with OT Regional	Involved with OT National	No OT involvement Regional
GP visit in last year (aged 0–17)	77%	71%	76%
Emergency department visit in the last year	28%	25%	17%
Used secondary <sup>3</sup> public mental health and addiction services in the last year (aged 14–17)	33%	30%	7%
Attended primary/intermediate school regularly (90%+ attendance)	47%	42%	67%
Attended secondary school regularly (90%+ attendance)	32%	28%	54%
Attained NZQCF <sup>4</sup> Level 2 or higher by age 18	67%	66%	92%

## Outcomes for young adults aged 18–25 who recently exited care or custody<sup>5</sup>

This data is the most recent available in the IDI and covers the 2023 calendar year

	Recently exited care Regional	Recently exited care National	No involvement Regional
Hold a driver licence	31%	25%	74%
On main benefit in the last year	30%	29%	2%
Used emergency housing in the last year	3%	7%	<1%

## Regional data insights

- 65%** of reports of concern were found to require a very urgent<sup>6</sup> response timeframe. **The national average is 59%.**
- 34%** of reports of concern referred to sites with an outcome of further action required by the National Contact Centre had further action taken. **The national average is 37%.**
- 24%** of tamariki and rangatahi in Oranga Tamariki custody in the region are in a whānau placement. **The national average is more than one and a half times higher at 38%.**
- 24%** of police proceedings against rangatahi who have offended resulted in a warning. **The national average is 17%.**
- 60%** of rangatahi arrested by police were bailed to the district or youth court. **The national average is 48%.**
- 46%** of rangatahi in youth justice custody are in a residence placement. **The national average is 56%.**

1 These 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 <https://www.stats.govt.nz/integrated-data/>. Statistics are taken from the most recent (2023) dataset.

2 Outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi who had been involved with Oranga Tamariki in some way in the past year and those who had not. Involvement includes a report of concern, receiving a care and protection or youth justice intervention, or being in care or youth justice custody.

3 This measure does not include primary healthcare settings, such as GP consults, which may also address mental health or addiction issues.

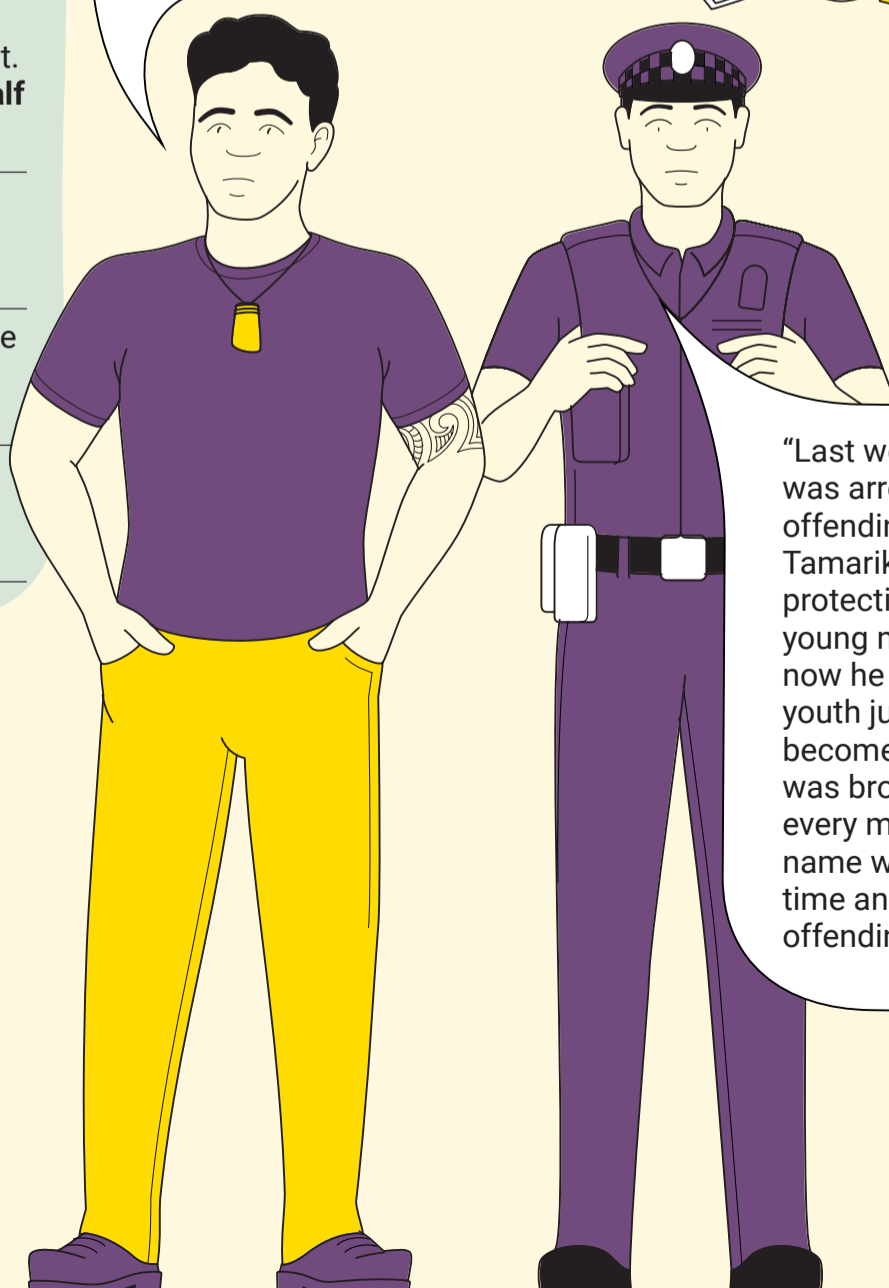
4 For many this will be NCEA level 2 or 3 attained at secondary school. For others, it may be a certificate or diploma from other education providers.

5 Outcomes for rangatahi aged 18-25 who recently exited care or custody and were eligible for Transition Support Services (recently exited care) and those who have never been involved with Oranga Tamariki (no involvement).

6 When Oranga Tamariki determine a report of concern requires a statutory response, it must decide the timeframe to complete an assessment. A very urgent response timeframe requires a follow-up within 48 hours. [practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/report-of-concern-response-timeframe](https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/core-practice/practice-tools/intake-decision-response-tool/report-of-concern-response-timeframe)

"The services, there is nothing here ... we had one [service] where he would go one hour a week, we got funded and he really engaged in that, and we got really close with the team [there]. We got funding from Ministry so he could go there for one hour a day which isn't enough education for [a child of that age], at that time he needed to be in full time education. Being out of school for so long, he lost all his social skills and behaviour got worse." – whānau member

"[The family] couldn't get the services. It's not an even playing field. A child in town gets counselling and mentoring and the rural child can't get that." – NGO leader



"Last week a young boy ... was arrested for a series of offending. We told Oranga Tamariki there was care and protection worries for this young man, they said that now he is arrested it is a youth justice concern and will become a court issue. This boy was brought up at this meeting every month for a year, his name was on that list every time and now he's in YJ for offending." – police officer