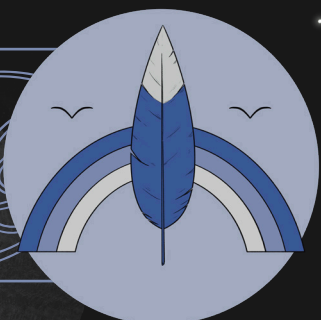
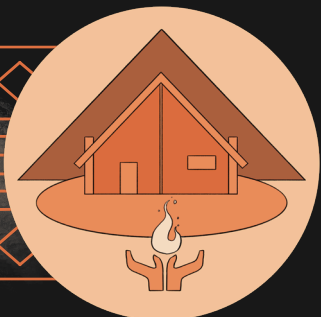
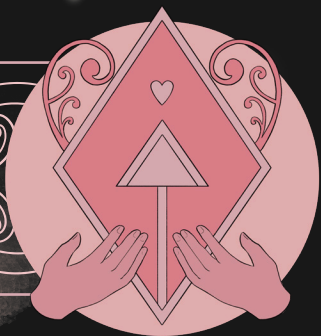




Kei te rongo koe? *Are you listening?*

Our Voices on the State of Care

VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai

July 2025

Distressing content warning

We honour the voices of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi by sharing their words throughout this report. The report contains descriptions of abuse, harm and trauma, including physical and sexual abuse, suicide attempts and self-harm. These are real experiences, powerful and important, but they are hard to read. If you need support, talk to someone you trust, or reach out for help:

VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai Youthline 1737 – Need to talk? Free call 0800 4 VOYCE / 0800 486 923 Free call 0800 376 633 or free text 234 Free call or text 1737

All quotes in this report are from care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi unless otherwise stated.

Recommended citation

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This report was named Kei te rongō koe? by Pātariki Caffell, a Kaiwhakamana/ Advocate from VOYCE who is also care-experienced. In naming the report, Pātariki said: “This is not just a question, it’s a challenge, a direct call. Not a polite request, but a firm demand saying, ‘we’re speaking up, sharing our truths, and we expect you to hear us and act.’”

He Mihi

Tihei mauri ora ki te whei ao ki te ao mārama!
Whakarongo mai!
Areare mai ngā taringa
Kia rangona ai te tangi a ngākau matapopore
Whakarongo mai
Whakamau ōu kānohi
Kia kite ai i te aue o kupu, o whakaaro
Whakarongo mai
Ki te reo e kōkiri nei
Kia tika, kia pono te whakatau e!

Hei timatanga kōrero
Kia tau iho rā ngā tauwhirotanga o te wāhi ngaro ki runga ki te mata o Papatuānuku
Ka tau ki runga, ka tau ki raro
Ka tau ki a tātou katoa.

Kāti, ka tangi ko ngākau iti, ki nunui mā, ki roroa mā ki a rātou kua karapinepine atu ki te kāpunipunitanga o te wairua
Ko rātou kua takahia ki tua o te Pae o Mahara
Moe mai, moe mai, moe mai rā
Kāti waihotia rātou ki a rātou
Ko tātou ngā waihotanga ake
Tihei Mauri Ora!

Kua ara ake ēnei kohinga kōrero, kohinga pūrongo hei tirohanga mō tātou katoa. Nā VOYCE Whakarongo Mai i kōhi ai.

Ko ōna whakatau e hangai pū ana ki ngā kī taurangi e ono i hangaia e te hunga rangatahi. He kohinga pūrongo e toko ake ai te patai: Kua tutuki katoa ngā ki taurangi e ono? Kua kore rānei?

Ehara i te mea ka tukuna te patai ki te pūnaha atawhai anake heoi ki ngā pūnaha kawanatanga katoa.

Nō reira mā te titiro whakamuri ka koke whakamua

Ko te ihi, te wehi, te mana, te tapu, me te oranga o ā tātou mokopuna te take

Tēna mātika mai rā, maranga mai kia tika, kia pono

Kia tina

Tina

Haumi e! Hui e!

Taiki e!

Through the breath of life transitioning into the world of light we begin!

Listen!

Be receptive

For the lament of a caring heart to be heard

Listen

Be watchful

For the sorrow of words and thoughts to be seen

Listen

To be challenged by the voices

Honouring truths is the way forward!

To bring all into this space

May the compassion of the divine be present over Papatuānuku

Above and below

To be with all.

Respectfully we lament the many who have gone to gather in the realm of spirits

Those who have gone beyond the horizon of memory

Rest in the eternal sleep

We acknowledge them

We who are left to uphold their memory

Behold the breath of life!

The following collection of information and reports was collated by VOYCE Whakarongo Mai for all to view.

The themes from this report align to the six promises created by young people, and pose the question: Have the six promises been upheld? Or not?

This question is not only for the care system to reflect upon, but for all areas of Government.

And so as we look at what has taken place, we must now focus on what lies ahead

Because the ihi, the wehi, the mana, the tapu and the wellbeing of future generations is at stake

So stand up, rise up by honouring the truth

Keep improving

Make it so

Unite and bring all together

It is done!

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the great efforts of many before us who have worked to improve the care system in Aotearoa New Zealand. With this report, we stand on the shoulders of giants, able to see further and understand more because of the work that has come before.

We drew on more than 140 other works to compile this report. We thank all those who have contributed to our collective knowledge, and in particular want to recognise:

- The Youth 2000 Survey Series, Identify Survey, What About Me? and Te Tohu o te Ora surveys. These surveys with information about Oranga Tamariki ‘cohorts’ are taonga.
- Aroturuki Tamariki and Mana Mokopuna for their critical contributions to keeping the Oranga Tamariki system accountable through monitoring, reviews, and insightful commentary.
- The Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People Team and Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre for creating spaces for rangatahi to speak into, and for building evidence about what is needed to do better for and with tamariki and rangatahi. We acknowledge all the people at Oranga Tamariki working towards improving care for tamariki and rangatahi.

Ngā mihi nui to the VOYCE Te Waipounamu Regional Youth Council who helped with our scorecard, helped focus our attention on what matters most, and who contributed critical questions and comments included in the report.

Our care-experienced co-writers, Ihorangi Reweti Peters (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Tahu – Ngāti Whaoa, Ngāti Kahungunu) and Lisa McLaren brought this report to life, supported by project manager and lead writer, Kirsten Smith. Ihorangi and Lisa have ensured a strong and authentic rangatahi voice throughout this project. Their goal was to provide a window into the state of care, viewed through the lens of lived experience. They wanted readers to understand what the stats we share really feel like for tamariki and rangatahi, and what tamariki and rangatahi hope for the future. To do that, they’ve drawn on their own experiences, and with great empathy, have uplifted the voices of hundreds of other tamariki and rangatahi who have previously shared their stories.

To those tamariki and rangatahi whose words and experiences are shared throughout these pages – you are the beating heart of this report. Thank you for answering the calls to raise your voice. We chose not to ask you to repeat yourself for this report because we have heard you say what it takes to tell your stories. Instead, we amplify the words you have already given, starting here with the words of a group of rangatahi who bravely submitted to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care:

“To our teina in this space, our rangatahi, tamariki, pēpē: we do this mahi with you in our hearts. Any time a young person in our community is actively harmed by the system, the mamae is felt by all of us across the motu who have been touched by care, we all grieve with you. We take the baton from our tuākana, to continue to ensure that this space is safer than it is today. Wherever you are reading this from, we are sending our love to you. Know that we hear you, we see you, we celebrate you. We do this mahi in the hopes that one day there will no longer be a need for mahi like this.”¹

¹ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki mō ngā teina e haere ake nei, *Korowai Aroha: Position Statement and Key Asks*, 2024, p.2.

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A summary of what’s in this report

This is a state of care report for Aotearoa New Zealand. It’s about what’s going well, what’s not, and what needs to change for tamariki and rangatahi in care in 2025.

It’s a long report. But it’s important. Even though there are already many other reports about what’s going on in the care system, this one is different. For starters, it’s not really about the care system.

It’s about whether tamariki and rangatahi feel cared for.

Most reports about care focus on problems to be solved, standards to be monitored, risks to be managed, improvements to be made. Often in other reports, tamariki and rangatahi in care are reduced to small parts of a very big picture – parts of a system.

But that system is their childhood. These are their lives.

So this is the state of care according to the tamariki and rangatahi who live it. This report is theirs.

VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai (VOYCE) is dedicated to amplifying the voices of those tamariki and rangatahi. Co-written with care-experienced rangatahi, and drawing on the experiences of hundreds of others, this report is about what matters to them. It’s filled with their words, their experiences, their questions and demands for accountability, their solutions, and hopes for the future.

6 Promises for tamariki and rangatahi in care

In 2020 the VOYCE National Youth Council asked Aotearoa to make six promises to tamariki and rangatahi in care. These promises, if kept, would ensure tamariki and rangatahi in care receive the love, support and opportunities every child has a right to and deserves.

- 1. I promise to take care of you and make sure you have the things you need.
- 2. I promise to make sure you have safety and stability in your life.
- 3. I promise to help you with your education goals and dreams.
- 4. I promise to support you with healthcare when you need it.
- 5. I promise to listen and include you when decisions are made about you.
- 6. I promise to help you feel confident in who you are, and learn about your whakapapa, culture and language.

Three years later, with little evidence of change, care-experienced rangatahi took a petition about honouring the promises to Parliament. Political leaders stood beside care-experienced rangatahi on the steps of Parliament and promised to do better. Now, in 2025, it’s time to check: **How well are the 6 Promises being kept?**

What we did (and what we didn’t do)

We read more than 50 recent submissions, statements and reports where care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi shared their voices. Care-experienced rangatahi then used this information to describe what it would look like and feel like if the promises are being kept.

Next, **we analysed more than 140 reports** to find out what is happening for tamariki and rangatahi in care. We also gathered information about the things tamariki and rangatahi have asked VOYCE Kaiwhakamana for help with over the past two years.²

We found so many reports where tamariki and rangatahi have already told us what’s happening in care, we realised we didn’t need to ask them to tell their stories again. In fact, we shouldn’t, because re-telling those stories is hard, it hurts, and many **rangatahi are tired and angry from saying the same things over and over.**

To present what we found, we developed a scorecard that rates each promise. The scorecard answers the question, “Are the 6 Promises being kept?” (Spoiler alert: the answer is no). The scorecard will be updated in 2027 to see what has changed.

² VOYCE Kaiwhakamana are advocates who support care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi to be heard.

Kei te rongo koe? Are you listening?

We want to be very clear: This report is about tamariki and rangatahi in the care of Oranga Tamariki, but it is not just about Oranga Tamariki. **Every agency whose actions (or lack of action) impact tamariki and rangatahi in care must be accountable for acting on this report.** This is your responsibility as our State ‘parents’. If you remove a child from their parents because they need better care, you need to provide better care.

We deserve better. Do better.

We called this report *Kei te rongo koe? Are you listening?* In it, we share what being cared for looks like and feels like for tamariki and rangatahi in care. **We show where your focus needs to be in 2025 and 2026** to do better. And we give you an opportunity to show, through your actions, that you’re listening. That you care.

Through this report we make three key calls:

1. Put us ahead of politics

We call on current and future governments to work together across parties to take politics out of the care system.

Put our lives ahead of party policies and election strategies. We need your decisions to be based on evidence and sound advice, not public opinion or what you think voters want to hear. When progress is being made, we need you to continue on that track. Stop wasting time and money undoing things that weren’t your idea or re-doing work because it doesn’t say what you want it to. We need you to be bigger than that because if we continue to change direction every three years, this very broken care system will never be fixed.

2. Make us a priority

We call on the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Development, and Housing and Urban Development, as well as Health New Zealand and Kainga Ora to add children in care to your policy, planning and funding priorities.

All evidence clearly shows we need extra help, so we have a fair chance to do as well as our peers who are not in care. We ask you to do everything in your power to help us succeed in life. We need you to do this work together with Oranga Tamariki so we don’t keep falling through the cracks while you argue over whose responsibility we are. By taking us into State care, you all became responsible.

3. Tell us how you’re going to do better

We call on Oranga Tamariki to coordinate a response to this report from across the agencies we have named.

We call on the Minister for Children to ensure we get a response from agencies.

Throughout the report, care-experienced rangatahi have highlighted key areas where we think greater accountability is needed. We’ve asked questions, pointed to urgent need for action, and provided direction. We want you to answer our questions, respond to our findings, and tell us what you are doing to improve your scores before the next scorecard in 2027. We’d also like to hear the Minister’s own response.

We also have a call for all of Aotearoa: We are all part of ‘the system’. We all have a part to play. Our actions need to make it clear to tamariki and rangatahi in care that they belong, we believe in them, we care for them, they are loved.

What we found – 6 broken promises

Our scorecard is a wake-up call. Every one of the 6 Promises is being broken. None scored even five out of ten, and the lowest scoring promise, to make sure tamariki and rangatahi have safety and stability, did not even make two out of ten. While there are a few areas of good progress, a few is not enough. Every child must have the opportunity to thrive, but some are barely surviving.

Promise 1

You promised to take care of me and make sure I have the things I need.

4.5 / 10



- Most tamariki and rangatahi in care say they have people in their life who love them and that they feel looked after most of the time.
- Many tamariki and rangatahi in care worry about having enough money for food and other essentials, and caregivers don't always get help to buy what they need for tamariki and rangatahi.
- Many tamariki and rangatahi receive great support from social workers, but some social workers don't visit tamariki and rangatahi often enough, especially in residences. Some tamariki and rangatahi feel like they can't talk to their social worker and can't rely on them. More than 1,000 don't even have a social worker.
- Most rangatahi are worried about what will happen to them when they leave care, and with good reason, because too many do not have a safe, stable place to live after leaving care.

Promise 2

You promised to make sure I have safety and stability in my life.

1.9 / 10



- Tamariki and rangatahi are still being abused in care in 2025, and the number reported is increasing every year. Oranga Tamariki reported 507 children were harmed in care last year, some more than once. One in five rangatahi said they did not feel safe in one study reviewed.
- Tamariki and rangatahi living in residences are not safe – at least a quarter of them were harmed last year. Some are being bullied to keep quiet about it and Oranga Tamariki has been slow to remove known bullies from staff and address other problems. Tamariki and rangatahi are also staying in locked residences longer than they should and/or returning home without proper support.
- Tamariki and rangatahi in care are much less likely than others to have a proper place to live. Some are staying in cars, garages and motels instead of living in homes. They have no stability, and these places are often unsafe.
- Many tamariki and rangatahi can't feel settled because their caregivers and homes change so often. On average, they have four caregivers over the time they are in care, but some will have many more than this.

Promise 3

You promised to help me with my education goals and dreams.

3.6 / 10



- School is disrupted for many tamariki and rangatahi in care because they are moved around so often.
- Some tamariki and rangatahi in care are being turned away from school because schools say they can't meet their needs. This is discrimination, and the Government is not working together well enough to make sure tamariki and rangatahi in care have access to education and learning support. Instead, they argue over who will pay for what.
- Education in residences is inconsistent. Some tamariki and rangatahi do very well, but in other residences, school classes are not happening. This is a violation of child rights.
- Care-experienced rangatahi are less hopeful about their futures than other rangatahi, and do not hear often enough that we believe in them.

Promise 4

You promised to support me with healthcare when I need it.

2.6 / 10



- Care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi have poor wellbeing compared with those who have never been in care.
- Very high numbers of care-experienced rangatahi are distressed. Many have thoughts of suicide and have attempted suicide. They are asking for help with their mental health and not receiving it.
- Tamariki and rangatahi in care are less likely than others to receive healthcare when they need it. Consent is sometimes a barrier, and the Government is not working together well enough to make sure tamariki and rangatahi are getting health and disability services.
- Oranga Tamariki does not have good information about whether tamariki and rangatahi in care have a disability and whether they are getting the support they need.

Promise 5

You promised to listen and include me when decisions are made about me.

4.2 / 10



- Tamariki and rangatahi in care have access to independent advocacy, but not all of them know this or know their rights. Access to advocacy in residences is mixed.
- Some tamariki and rangatahi do not know how to make a complaint and others don't feel safe enough to make a complaint. Oranga Tamariki is not doing a good enough job of managing complaints and grievances.
- Tamariki and rangatahi are not always given a say in important decisions in their lives and are not being kept informed, especially around being moved.
- Oranga Tamariki provides some opportunities for tamariki and rangatahi to be heard collectively and opportunities for collective advocacy are increasing, but rangatahi feel like the Government is not really listening to them.

Promise 6

You promised to help me feel confident in who I am, and learn about my whakapapa, culture and language.

3.6 / 10



- Tamariki and rangatahi who want more support to learn about their ancestry and culture are not always getting it. Care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi are less likely than others to know their whakapapa, and Oranga Tamariki support for tamariki and rangatahi Māori to connect with their whakapapa seems to be decreasing.
- Many tamariki and rangatahi in care now have good contact with their whānau and families, including in most residences.
- Some tamariki and rangatahi in care do not feel accepted and like they belong. Some are not culturally safe with their caregivers, social workers or residence workers.
- Takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care are often not safe and free to express their identity, but Oranga Tamariki is working on making care safer for them.

Why this report matters

We need to understand the state of care in order to improve it.

VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai (VOYCE) stands for Voices of the Young and Care-Experienced – Listen to Me. When VOYCE started in 2017, tamariki and rangatahi asked us to help them understand and tell their care stories and share their stories to influence others.

In 2024 we started looking at information to see what care looks like today. We wanted to know what’s going well and what’s not – the current state of care in Aotearoa – to provide a focus for any future change.

Between 2015 and 2020 the Office of the Children’s Commissioner (OCC) released a series of *State of Care* reports that looked at how well Child, Youth and Family (and later Oranga Tamariki) was looking after tamariki and rangatahi. They also regularly monitored secure residences.

In 2019, changes to monitoring of the Oranga Tamariki system were introduced, along with a new set of standards for care.³ OCC, which later became Mana Mokopuna, would still check on secure residences, while a new organisation, the Independent Children’s Monitor, would make sure the new Care Standards were followed. Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor and Mana Mokopuna publish regular reports about what they find in their monitoring and residence checks.

As we looked further, we found hundreds of reports that help us understand what’s going on in the care system. **We looked at more than 140 reports published from 2020 onwards. Some things have improved, but the big picture is still deeply confronting.** So many tamariki, rangatahi and whānau feel disconnected, sad, scared and let down. Over and over, reports highlight the same things that need urgent attention and make many of the same recommendations for change.

So why have we written another one?

Better care needs more than oversight and monitoring.

We acknowledge and appreciate all the people and organisations that keep an eye on the care system, including the Ombudsman, Mana Mokopuna and Aroturuki Tamariki. The important work they do helps us understand the state of care in Aotearoa and helps keep the Oranga Tamariki system accountable.

Agencies are required to provide the information Aroturuki Tamariki asks for. Oranga Tamariki was unable to provide a lot of the information requested at first, and although there are still many gaps, they have improved over the past few years. We recognise the progress Oranga Tamariki has made and appreciate the work they have done so far to be more open and accountable. **We hope to see continued improvements.**

However, after five years of monitoring, many tamariki and rangatahi are still not getting even the most basic care they are promised by the National Care Standards.⁴ Checking up on the system is not enough to make sure tamariki and rangatahi receive good care.

A recent report about oversight of Oranga Tamariki tells us some people think there is a conflict between monitoring and advocacy.⁵ They think that monitors can’t be advocates and advocates can’t be monitors. We don’t agree. We think there is an overlap between advocacy and monitoring. But if those responsible for oversight are limited in what they can speak up on, then care-experienced rangatahi and their advocates must help hold the system accountable.

Boxed sections like this throughout the report have been added by, or in discussion with, care-experienced rangatahi to highlight some key areas where we think greater accountability is needed. We reflect on what we found, ask readers to really think about what statistics mean, share some of our questions and concerns, provide direction on what needs to change, and highlight where good things are happening that we want to see more of.

We look at what’s important to tamariki and rangatahi, not what’s important to the care system.

In their 2025 *Experiences of Care* report, Aroturuki Tamariki closely follows the structure of the *National Care Standards Regulations* to make it clear to agencies what they need to do to improve. We understand this move because it’s their job to monitor the Regulations, but it moves the focus onto what the care system needs so it can perform better, rather than what tamariki and rangatahi say they need or care about most. Sometimes these are the same things, but other times they are not. Most other reports are also about what the care system needs or wants to know, rather than what care-experienced rangatahi want to know or share.

Tamariki and rangatahi say being and feeling cared for is more than following government rules and regulations.

Using words like ‘monitoring’, ‘standards’, ‘performance’, ‘casefile analysis’ ‘targets’, and ‘compliance’ treats tamariki and rangatahi like parts of a system and problems to be managed to make the system work better. But this is not just a system – it is their daily reality.

“Politicians say ‘this is a system’. This is not a system. This is how I lived. The state becomes our parents, and the system becomes our childhood.”⁶

“It’s not monitoring the experiences of young people, it’s monitoring the compliance of the system.”⁷

Kia tika, kia pono – we honour the stories already told.

When we started this project, we planned to do a large survey and ask as many tamariki and rangatahi as possible to share their experiences. But as we read through all the reports and stories already available, we realised something:

They have already told us.

“They’ve told VOYCE, Aroturuki Tamariki, Mana Mokopuna, Oranga Tamariki, the Education Review Office, and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. They’ve told the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, the Waitangi Tribunal and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. They’ve told Children’s Commissioners, the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, lawyers, caregivers, social workers, youth workers, expert panels, advisory groups, and researchers. They’ve told politicians, made submissions, made podcasts, spoken at conferences, talked to the media and even marched to Parliament.

And they’re tired.

“When I give you my words, I give you myself.”⁸

“People do not understand how powerful my words are – they come from experience – often trauma... this is real life we are sharing or contributing. It is the most emotionally expensive thing we have to offer... I am entrusting someone to do something meaningful with my words.”⁹

They’re tired and angry from saying the same things over and over and seeing hardly any change. They want to remind us how much it takes, what it costs them, and that it hurts.

“Today, we will not be silenced. YOU WILL SIT DOWN AND LISTEN. Angry and disappointed, we are not waiting around until we are too old... We stand together as a rōpū, eyes towards the past, in acknowledgement to the whakapapa of mamae this community holds, and the kaha of our tuākana in this space, those that have come before us, pushing for our community to be heard. To be acknowledged.”¹⁰

It is long past time to sit down and listen.

So instead of asking tamariki and rangatahi to repeat themselves again for this report, we are honouring the stories already shared, the gifts we have already been given. **These stories matter. We do not get to read them once and move on.**

And by honouring these stories again, we are taking up the challenge laid down by care-experienced rangatahi in *Kia Tika, Kia Pono*.¹¹ We remind everyone working in the care sector – including ourselves – to do better if we want to hear from care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi. Don’t just ask questions. Listen. Really listen. What are tamariki and rangatahi saying? What are they not saying? What do they want us to know? And what will you do about it?

³ The Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018 set out the minimum standards required when a child comes into care.

⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

⁵ MartinJenkins, *Independent Statutory Review of the Oranga Tamariki Oversight System*, 2025.

⁶ VOYCE, *Submission: Formally Recognise UNCRC Petition*, 2023, p.6.

⁷ VOYCE, *Submission: Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Bill*, 2022, p.8.

⁸ Te Rōpū Arotahi, *Kia Tika, Kia Pono – Honouring Truths: An ethical framework for engaging with children and young people in care*, 2022, 2022, p.23.

⁹ Te Rōpū Arotahi, *Kia Tika, Kia Pono*, 2022, p.29.

¹⁰ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki mō ngā teina e haere ake nei, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.7.

¹¹ Te Rōpū Arotahi, *Kia Tika, Kia Pono – Honouring Truths: An ethical framework for engaging with children and young people in care*, 2022.

Six promises for tamariki and rangatahi in care

Promise 1	I promise to take care of you and make sure you have the things you need. E kī taurangi ana au kia whakahōnore ā mātua nei, kia whakarato ki a koe.
Promise 2	I promise to make sure you have safety and stability in your life. E kī taurangi ana au kia noho mātāmua te pūmautanga i roto i tō oranga.
Promise 3	I promise to help you with your education goals and dreams. E kī taurangi ana au kia whakarato i te tautoko ki a koe e whai ai koe, e whai wāhi ai hoki koe ki ō whāinga me ō wawata mātauranga.
Promise 4	I promise to support you with healthcare when you need it. E kī taurangi ana au kia whai wāhi koe ki ngā ratonga hauora e tika ana mōu i te wā e tika ana.
Promise 5	I promise to listen and include you when decisions are made about you. E kī taurangi ana au kia mātua whai wāhi atu koe ki ngā whakatau e pā ana ki a koe kei noho ana koe ki ngā pūnaha tiaki.
Promise 6	I promise to help you feel confident in who you are, and learn about your whakapapa, culture and language. E kī taurangi ana au kia whanake i tō tuakiri, kia mōhio ki tō whakapapa, kia whakatipu hoki i tō mana motuhake.

Care-experienced rangatahi have called Aotearoa to action.

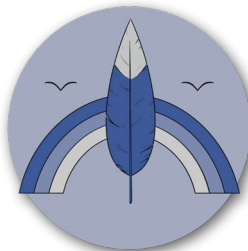
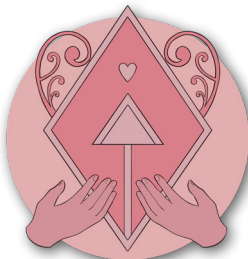
In 2020 the VOYCE National Youth Council created 6 *Promises for 6,000* as a call to action. They asked political leaders to stand behind these promises to make sure all tamariki and rangatahi in care get what they need and deserve.

The promises are based on children's rights included in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.¹² They also fit with the commitments Oranga Tamariki makes in their *My Rights, My Voice*¹³ booklet for tamariki and rangatahi, the *National Care Standards Regulations*, and *New Zealand's Child and Youth Strategy*.¹⁴

Three years later it was clear the Government had failed to meet these basic rights, so before the 2023 General Election, care-experienced rangatahi re-launched the 6 Promises. They hosted a summit focused on the promises, what they mean to rangatahi, and what it would be like for tamariki and rangatahi if the promises were being kept. The summit ended with a hīkoi to Parliament with care-experienced tamariki, rangatahi and supporters handing over a petition with more than 4,500 signatures, calling on the Government to deliver on the promises. Rangatahi were met on the steps of Parliament by political party representatives, who all promised they would do better. Since the hīkoi, care-experienced rangatahi have presented the 6 Promises petition and recommendations at Select Committee, led submissions, presentations, events and a podcast series on the 6 Promises.

This report is the next step in holding the Government accountable for giving tamariki and rangatahi in care a fair chance. At its heart, this report asks one simple question:

? *Are these promises being kept in 2025?*



¹² The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)* is an international human rights treaty. It sets out the rights of all children under the age of 18 and has been signed by 196 countries including New Zealand.
¹³ <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Children-in-our-care/Care-Standards/My-rights-my-voice-booklet.pdf>
¹⁴ The *Child and Youth Strategy 2024-2027* is the Government's vision for what it wants to achieve for children and young people in Aotearoa. It aims to make New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people.

What we did (Methodology)

We developed descriptions of what good care looks and feels like for tamariki and rangatahi.

We read more than 50 recent submissions, statements and reports where care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi shared what they need and want from care. Our care-experienced co-writers used this information to develop descriptions of what it would look like and feel like for tamariki and rangatahi if the promises are being kept.

We reviewed more than 140 reports to find out what is happening for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

We reviewed information sources from 2020 or later, up until May 2025.¹⁵ These included:

- Interviews and focus groups with care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi, and reports they have written or contributed to
- Surveys of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi
- Reports from organisations like VOYCE about what tamariki and rangatahi say they are experiencing
- Reports from Oranga Tamariki and other agencies about what they say is happening for tamariki and rangatahi in care
- Reports from the organisations whose job it is to check if the care system is working (like Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor, Mana Mokopuna, and the Ombudsman)
- Other inquiries, reviews and evaluations of parts of the care system

We also looked at the things tamariki and rangatahi have asked VOYCE Kaiwhakamana for help with over the past two years.¹⁶ We looked at examples of what tamariki and rangatahi experienced as well as themes and patterns about what support they asked for, and where they were having trouble being heard.

We organised the information we found under our rangatahi descriptions of what it would look and feel like if each promise was being kept. **We collected enough information to fill hundreds of pages!** We summarised this down to the key findings we share in this report, by focusing on the areas that care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi have said are most important to them.

We developed a scorecard to show how well each of the 6 Promises is being kept.

We gave each of our key findings a performance score. Our scores were based on the statistical information we found as well as:

- Whether things had improved over time
- Whether tamariki and rangatahi in care had different experiences from those not in care
- Whether some groups of tamariki and rangatahi in care had different experiences from others in care e.g. tamariki and rangatahi who are Māori, Pasifika, takatāpui and rainbow, disabled and/or in secure residences
- Whether tamariki and rangatahi were having their rights upheld
- How serious the impact was on tamariki and rangatahi e.g. if they were being hurt or hurting themselves
- If government agencies were working together and taking responsibility for problems they already knew about

Care-experienced rangatahi helped us understand which of our key findings were most important to focus on. We used this information to assign a percentage weight to each of the key findings. We then used the weightings and the performance scores to calculate a mark out of 10 for each promise description, and an overall score for each of the 6 Promises.¹⁷

¹⁵ A Bibliography of all the reports we reviewed is available at <https://www.voyce.org.nz/StateOfCareReport2025>

¹⁶ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana are advocates who support care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi to have their voices heard. We looked at anonymised advocacy case data from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025.

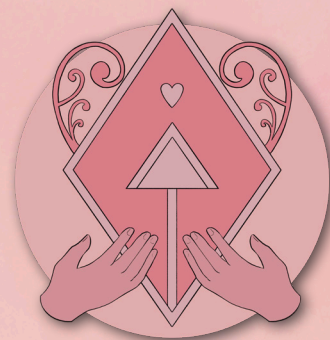
¹⁷ Sometimes called a weighted rating or weighted score.

6 Broken Promises

The State of Care 2025 Scorecard

Promise 1	You promised to take care of me and make sure I have the things I need	4.5 / 10
We feel loved and cared for 6.8 / 10		
We have the things we need, when we need them 3.5 / 10		
We have trusting relationships with kaimahi and get the support we need from them ¹⁸ 4.3 / 10		
When we leave care, we feel well supported and have what we need 3.6 / 10		
Promise 2	You promised to make sure I have safety and stability in my life	1.9 / 10
We are safe 0.8 / 10		
We have a safe and stable place to live 1.6 / 10		
We have the chance to develop trusting connections; we feel settled 3.3 / 10		
Promise 3	You promised to help me with my education goals and dreams	3.6 / 10
We attend school 3.5 / 10		
We have the support we need and want to do well in school and study 3.7 / 10		
We feel hopeful about the future; we get to have hopes and dreams 3.5 / 10		
Promise 4	You promised to support me with healthcare when I need it	2.6 / 10
We have good mental health and wellbeing 1.3 / 10		
We have access to the health and wellbeing services we need and want 3.9 / 10		
Promise 5	You promised to listen and include me when decisions are made about me	4.2 / 10
We understand our rights, and we’re supported to speak up 4.6 / 10		
We are kept informed and can have a say in the things that matter to us 4.0 / 10		
We feel heard 4.0 / 10		
Promise 6	You promised to help me feel confident in who I am, and learn about my whakapapa, culture and language	3.6 / 10
We know who we are and where we come from 3.0 / 10		
We are connected with our whānau and families 5.5 / 10		
We feel accepted and supported to grow and express our identity 2.4 / 10		

¹⁸ We use the word 'kaimahi' in this report to talk about social workers, residence workers and other workers who have a role in looking after tamariki and rangatahi in care.



Promise 1

You promised to take care of me and make sure I have the things I need

E kī taurangi ana au kia whakahōnore ā mātua nei,
kia whakarato ki a koe

This promise looks like:

A responsive care system that shows love. Having my basic needs met. My own bed to sleep in. Having the things I need, when I need them, not having to wait for a manager to sign it off. It looks like my social worker spending time with me and getting to know me so they can give the support I need. And that they have enough time to see me. They know my name, my face. It's my social worker coming to see me, not making me go to the office. But they know not to come to my school, and they take their tags off when we're in public. It's having the tools to 'adult' and becoming independent while still having a safety net.

This promise feels like:

Being loved, valued and cared for. Being part of a family. Knowing that I am worth somebody making a commitment to me. It feels like my caregiver is a safe person who knows what they are doing. It feels like my caregivers genuinely care for me and want the best for me. Being able to talk to my social worker and trusting them to be there for me. Feeling like staff actually care. Compassion and a hug. It feels fair, it doesn't matter who your social worker is, or where you are, you still get everything you need. Every time. On time. It feels like support to leave Oranga Tamariki, not just being abandoned when I turn 18. Knowing what's going to happen when I'm no longer in care and still feeling safe and supported. Knowing I have somewhere safe to live before I leave care. It feels like being set up to succeed. It feels like still having support to turn to when things get rough. Knowing I have a village who will celebrate my successes with me. It's knowing I can live a successful, full life despite what happened to me. It feels like hope for the future.

Keeping this promise means:

We feel loved and cared for

We have the things we need when we need them

We have trusting relationships with kaimahi and get the support we need from them

When we leave care, we feel well supported and have what we need

We feel loved and cared for

Most tamariki and rangatahi in care say they have people in their life who love them.

"Love. That was a big thing. I have never felt as much love as I did in that moment [photo with all the foster family]...it's nice to have a family and it has been so long since I have felt like that."¹⁹

"What I love about my house is the love and support...from my nan and my siblings and my poppa."²⁰



Oranga Tamariki found **77% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they 'definitely' had people in their life who loved them** no matter what. Another 20% said 'yes, I think so'. There was no improvement between 2020 and 2022.²¹

Oranga Tamariki says most tamariki and rangatahi in care feel well looked after.

"I feel supported now, because of my new social worker, new care parents and how they help me a lot. They make me feel very supported by helping me see my siblings, my parents, my friends."²²



Oranga Tamariki found **82% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said the adults they lived with looked after them well 'all of the time'**. Another 16% said they were well looked after 'most of the time'. This didn't really change between 2020 and 2022.²³

Oranga Tamariki said **97% of tamariki and rangatahi in care have people in their life who love them no matter what ('yes, definitely' plus 'yes, I think so'). 97% sounds good. But 3% of the 1,514 tamariki and rangatahi who answered this question in 2020 felt like they had no one who loves them unconditionally - that's 45 tamariki and rangatahi who felt unloved. That's a small percentage, but we think even one child who feels unloved and uncared for is not okay.**

Some caregivers are still not being approved.

Oranga Tamariki said **80% of caregivers had been fully or provisionally assessed before tamariki and rangatahi were placed with them**. This means Oranga Tamariki thinks the caregiver can provide a safe, stable and loving home. Oranga Tamariki said this is improving, but Aroturuki Tamariki says more improvements are needed.²⁴

Access to training and support for caregivers needs to improve.

Many caregivers say training helps them better understand and care for tamariki in their care, especially trauma-informed training. Aroturuki Tamariki found that Oranga Tamariki often arranges this training, but not all caregivers are offered it, and some struggle to attend because of timing or lack of support. They also heard that funding cuts have made it harder for social workers to get training approved.²⁵

We need caregivers who know how to care for us. They need to have training and know how to meet our needs. They need to understand trauma, neurodiversity, mental health challenges, exploring our cultural identity, gender and sexuality... We want those who care for us to have the supports and resources they need so they can provide us all with the love and care we deserve.

¹⁹ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible: The Experiences of Takatāpui and Rainbow Rangatahi in Care*, 2023, p.41.

²⁰ Oranga Tamariki, *Talanoa Mai Tamariki: The Voices of Pacific Children and Young People*, 2022, p.29.

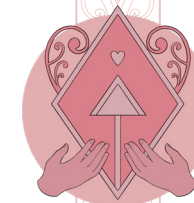
²¹ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

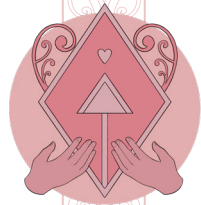
²² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.9.

²³ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

²⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.





We have the things we need, when we need them

Many tamariki and rangatahi in care, and their caregivers, worry about having enough money for food and other essentials.

“I have worked since I was 13 to buy the basic necessities I needed to live.”²⁶



In one survey of high school students, **41% of rangatahi in care said they or their family worried about having enough money to buy food** ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ or ‘all of the time’.²⁷ In another study, 58% of rangatahi in care said the same.²⁸

Rangatahi in care said they or their families also worried about having enough money for power, rent and transport. In all these areas, rangatahi in care were more likely to be worried than those who had never been in care.²⁹

Oranga Tamariki asked caregivers if the money they received to help them care for tamariki and rangatahi was enough. Nearly half of them said they needed more or received just enough. Seven out of ten caregivers who said they needed more money said it would help with food costs.³⁰

Caregivers are not always getting help to buy the things they need for tamariki and rangatahi.

“[Social worker name] she’s cool, she does heaps for me. She sorts out my clothes – like when I first came here, I didn’t have time to pack my bag or get my clothes cos they had to fly me straight up. I just had what I was wearing. She sorted out clothes and stuff. I wish I could have filled my drawers you know. She asked if I needed blankets, but we’ve got heaps here so that was fine.”³¹

“[Social worker] got us some stuff for school when we needed it. She got us uniforms because they were very expensive.”³²

Many social workers help caregivers get the things they need for tamariki and rangatahi, but this does not always happen the way it should:

- After a complaint, the Ombudsman found that Oranga Tamariki took too long to provide a bed, blankets and clothes for a rangatahi.³³
- Caregivers said they needed help getting things like cots and bedding. They said tamariki came into their care with just a bag of clothes.³⁴
- Many Pacific carers said they had trouble getting financial help to care for tamariki. For example, a young couple looking after a baby were told they could buy things they needed for the baby and Oranga Tamariki would pay them back. After they bought things for the baby they were told they would not be paid back.³⁵

The way Oranga Tamariki works makes it harder for some caregivers and tamariki to get what they need.

“It frustrated me, sometimes I needed something, [but] by the time they answered, I didn’t need it anymore.”³⁶

Some whānau and caregivers are missing out on financial support because Oranga Tamariki has placed tamariki and rangatahi with them before the caregiver is approved. **Oranga Tamariki policies prevent unapproved caregivers from getting some support**, so they miss out on things like board payments, training and respite care.³⁷

Other times, support takes too long to arrive because payments are slow to be approved, so tamariki and rangatahi miss out:

- A caregiver said they had to constantly chase up payments to their early childhood centre. They said the late payments were embarrassing and meant their child might be treated differently.³⁸
- Caregivers were frustrated by delays in payments for things the child in their care needed, like food or medicine.³⁹
- A caregiver said Oranga Tamariki did not pay fees for soccer on time so the kids couldn’t play soccer anymore.⁴⁰

We want to see financial supports, not financial burdens. Financial support needs to be easily and quickly available to caregivers and the tamariki and rangatahi they care for. This is about having the funds and ability to afford the things we need to live, to go to school, to be part of our communities. We shouldn’t have to be working at 13 for our basic needs. We want to know what Oranga Tamariki is doing to make sure we don’t miss out because of poor processes or lack of funding.

We have trusting relationships with kaimahi and get the support we need from them⁴¹

Many tamariki and rangatahi receive great support from social workers.

We found lots of examples of tamariki and rangatahi feeling supported by social workers, and how important these good relationships are to tamariki and rangatahi:

“She’s really nice and helpful. I can talk to her about anything. I can tell her my feelings. She’s comforting.”⁴²

“[Social worker] is very approachable and always listens to what I have to say. He always wants the best for me.”⁴³

“If something wasn’t right, I’d probably call [previous Oranga Tamariki social worker] and talk to her.”⁴⁴

“My social worker can understand what I’m struggling with and tries to help as much as she can.”⁴⁵

“I love her so much... I see her more than usual, we are quite close, she might have to see me every six or three months, but we see each other more than that.”⁴⁶

While many tamariki and rangatahi are well supported by social workers, this is not consistent:

“One kid gets more and one kid gets less based on social worker. That’s not fair!”⁴⁷

“OT is alright other than the fact it does depend who you get as a social worker to how your experience will go. Most of them are supportive, some aren’t doing their jobs.”⁴⁸

²⁶ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.2.

²⁷ Malatest, What About Me? 2021 Oranga Tamariki Cohort, 2023.

²⁸ Fleming, T. et al., Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Home and Housing, 2021.

²⁹ Fleming, T. et al., Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Home and Housing, 2021; Malatest, What About Me? 2021 Oranga Tamariki Cohort, 2023.

³⁰ Oranga Tamariki, 2023 Caregiver Survey, 2024.

³¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, Returning Home from Care, 2023, p.35.

³² Boshier, P., Children in Care: Complaints to the Ombudsman 2019-23, 2024.

³³ Oranga Tamariki, 2023 Caregiver Survey, 2024.

³⁴ Oranga Tamariki, Ola Manuia Moa Io ma Fanau Pasefika: A blessed wellbeing for our Pacific children, young people and families, 2022.

³⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024, p.41.

³⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025.

³⁷ Oranga Tamariki, Ola Manuia Moa Io ma Fanau Pasefika, 2022.

³⁸ Oranga Tamariki, 2022 Caregiver Survey, 2023.

³⁹ Aroturuki Tamariki, Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025.

⁴⁰ We use the word ‘kaimahi’ in this report to talk about social workers, residence workers and other workers who have a role in looking after tamariki and rangatahi in care.

⁴¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, Returning Home from Care, 2023, p.13.

⁴² Malatest, Just Sayin’ 2021, 2021, p.6.

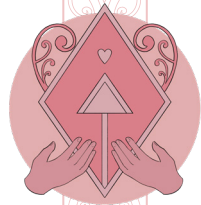
⁴³ Aroturuki Tamariki, Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025, p.84.

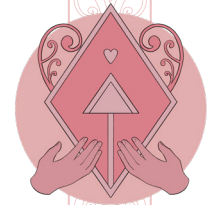
⁴⁴ Malatest, Just Sayin’ 2021, 2021, p.6.

⁴⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, Experiences of Care 2021-22, 2023, p.39.

⁴⁶ Malatest, Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki Transition Support Service (TSS), 2023, p.20.

⁴⁷ Malatest, Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS, 2023, p.20.





Large numbers of tamariki and rangatahi do not have a social worker.

In response to an Official Information Act Request made available on their website, Oranga Tamariki said **there were 1,231 children overdue to be allocated to a social worker** at the end of September 2023, and 1,228 a year later at the end of August 2024.⁴⁹

Tamariki and rangatahi or caregivers of younger children regularly contact VOYCE for advocacy support because they don't have a social worker or don't know who their social worker is.

We acknowledge the great job of many social workers at Oranga Tamariki. However, consistency is key for tamariki and rangatahi in the care of Oranga Tamariki. It shouldn't be a lottery or luck of the draw depending on who your social worker is, or which office they are from. Why do some tamariki get things that others don't? All tamariki and rangatahi should experience the same high level of support from their social workers. As for those who don't even have a social worker, this is shocking! Who do we go to when we need something if we don't have a social worker? Why didn't this number change over a year? Has it improved yet?

Some social workers are not visiting tamariki and rangatahi often enough to get to know them.

“Visit more and spend time with me so I feel comfortable.”⁵⁰

“I wish they would hang out with me more.”⁵¹

“I want whanaungatanga with my social worker.”⁵²



Oranga Tamariki said **66% of tamariki and rangatahi received regular visits from their social worker**. They said this went backwards from 70% in 2022.⁵³

Social workers are not visiting tamariki and rangatahi as often as required and this has not improved.⁵⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki also found that tamariki and rangatahi Māori were less likely to be visited regularly by their social workers than non-Māori.⁵⁵

While most tamariki and rangatahi Aroturuki Tamariki spoke with said they felt their social workers visited them as often as needed, not being visited has a big impact on some tamariki and rangatahi:

“My social worker doesn't come and see me, I have to go see her, I hate that office.”⁵⁶

“My social worker never visited me, and [they] just cut me off out of the blue and never came back... I felt like I was not safe but couldn't say it out loud because of what would happen to me.”⁵⁷

“[Social worker] doesn't do things straight away. He is busy. My caregiver tries [to contact him] but he doesn't come around. We have to go to him – he never comes to us. I am annoyed he is absent.”⁵⁸

The Abuse in Care Inquiry highlighted systemic racism against Māori in the care system, so we're very concerned to read that tamariki and rangatahi Māori were being visited less often than non-Māori. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori in the care system need greater protections – the Inquiry showed us that. The repeal of section 7AA from the Oranga Tamariki Act, has removed one of those protections, so it is now more important than ever that tamariki and rangatahi Māori are visited regularly.

⁴⁹ Oranga Tamariki, OIA-CE-2024-02491 3 October 2024, 2024.

⁵⁰ VOYCE, *Manaaki Kōrero: A journey where mana can prevail when raising needs and concerns with Oranga Tamariki*, 2023, p.44.

⁵¹ VOYCE, *Manaaki Kōrero*, 2023, p.44.

⁵² VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-25.

⁵³ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.

⁵⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025. The NCS Regulations require tamariki to be visited at the frequency set out in the assessment or plan, or at least every eight weeks.

⁵⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

⁵⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2021-22, 2023*, p.39.

⁵⁷ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023, p.24.

⁵⁸ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.9.

Some tamariki and rangatahi feel like they can't rely on their social worker or Oranga Tamariki.



89% of tamariki and rangatahi said their social worker does what they say they will do 'all of the time' (43%) or 'most of the time' (46%). There was no improvement between 2020 and 2022.⁵⁹

Tamariki and rangatahi have talked about what it feels like when they are let down by their social worker:

“[Social worker] never answers her phone, or she only contacts us if she needs something...”⁶⁰

“I don't know her name... I don't know what site she is from, my last social worker just disappeared on me.”⁶¹

“Last year I was in a hostel, and I needed her [social worker] because of that, but I couldn't really reach her. She never replied back. Like I know how to reach her, but she just didn't get back to me.”⁶²

“They suck at contacting - get in contact with us more. We'll plan something or they say they'll do something, and it will take six months. If they say they're going to do something, do it within a reasonable time instead of making us wait.”⁶³

“That's what everyone does in my life, everyone listens but then they don't follow through with it. They tell me that they're going to, but I don't see it. I don't see any changes.”⁶⁴

We looked at two years' worth of VOYCE advocacy requests through to March 2025. Tamariki and rangatahi wanting more from their social workers was a very common theme. They wanted support to talk to their social worker, change their social worker, make a complaint about them, contact them, and get them to listen.

Most tamariki and rangatahi surveyed by Oranga Tamariki said their social worker does what they say they will do all or most of the time. However, these surveys were offered to tamariki and rangatahi by their social workers and usually filled out while their social worker was there. Sometimes social workers helped them fill out the surveys, and sometimes they gave them privacy. We think some tamariki and rangatahi might not have wanted to offend their social worker or might have worried about what the social worker would say if they gave another answer. If the social worker wasn't there, the results might have been different. Offering the survey this way also means some social workers might have chosen which tamariki and rangatahi got to do the survey and this might have affected the results.

Too many tamariki and rangatahi in care feel like they can't talk to their social worker.

“I didn't feel comfortable talking to her [social worker]. I didn't trust her. I don't want to talk to anyone.”⁶⁵

“I wasn't open to my social worker [about being trans/queer] because I had changed my social worker a few times. I think I have had three or four now.”⁶⁶

“If the social worker had time to build a relationship, I would have had the safety to tell her about the experiences I was going through at the time which would have helped me to leave.”⁶⁷

⁵⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

⁶⁰ Malatest, *Just Sayin' 2021*, 2021, p.6.

⁶¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*, p.40.

⁶² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2021-22, 2023*, p.39.

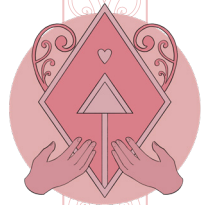
⁶³ Malatest, *Just Sayin' 2021*, 2021, p.6.

⁶⁴ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People in Care*, 2020, p.16.

⁶⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Returning Home from Care*, 2023, p.28.

⁶⁶ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023, p.25.

⁶⁷ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023, p.24.





41% of tamariki and rangatahi said they can ‘definitely’ talk to their social worker about their worries. Another 35% said ‘yes, I think so’.⁶⁸ This appears to have gone backwards between 2020 and 2022, however the possible answers to this question changed from ‘all of the time/most of the time’ in 2020 to ‘yes definitely/yes I think so’ in 2022.

If social workers don’t know their young person, how are they supposed to help them? Your social worker is supposed to be your support person, your protector. If we can’t talk to our social workers, or can’t really rely on them, how can we ask them for help? This is important if you really want to make sure we are safe. Results must improve in the 2025 survey, and the question must stay the same as 2022 so we can clearly see if there has been any change.

Oranga Tamariki is not giving kaimahi enough support to help them do a great job.

Most social workers are very committed to supporting tamariki and rangatahi, and many are doing a great job. But there are many challenges and obstacles preventing social workers from doing their jobs properly. Almost every report we looked at mentioned this in some way including:

- Heavy workloads – too much work to do in the time available
- Pressure and confusion from constant changes
- Too much unnecessary administration and paperwork
- Policies and processes that get in the way and create delays and barriers
- Lack of funding to pay for things tamariki and rangatahi need and have a right to receive

We read about **critical staffing shortages, unfilled vacancies, delays in recruitment, and mixed messages about hiring freezes**.⁶⁹ Oranga Tamariki told Aroturuki Tamariki there were 110 field social worker vacancies across the country in June 2024.⁷⁰

We are not all getting the support we need from social workers. Social workers are under pressure and there are not enough of them. In 2025, we are concerned that these problems will continue to grow because of cost-cutting within Oranga Tamariki. We read a lot about hiring freezes and funding pressures. We think some roles might not be filled to save money including ‘back-office’ roles that mean social workers must do more admin. If that’s right, it’s completely unacceptable. Spending time with tamariki and rangatahi must be the highest priority for social workers so they have plenty of time to build strong and trusting relationships with us. This means much more than ‘engaging’ and counting visit numbers. We need to be able to talk to social workers so they can make sure we’re safe.

⁶⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

⁶⁹ Oranga Tamariki Office of the Chief Social Worker, *Review of Practice in relation to Malachi Subecz and his Whānau*, 2022; Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023; Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024; Aroturuki Tamariki, *Towards a Stronger Safety Net: Review of the Implementation of Recommendations of Dame Karen Poutasi following the Death of Malachi Subecz*, 2024; Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

⁷⁰ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

SOCIAL WORK SUPPORT IN RESIDENCES

Tamariki and rangatahi in residences are not getting what they need from social workers.

“My social worker is s***, is always on leave, never visits me.”⁷¹

“I’ll try and call her [social worker] but sometimes she don’t pick up. Like yesterday I tried to call her ‘cos she told me to call her at this time, so I called her at that time and then she doesn’t even pick up.”⁷²

Around one third of all advocacy requests VOYCE received from rangatahi in residences between 2023 and 2025 related to needing information from their social workers:

“I want my social worker to be in contact with me more often to update me on [family member].”

“I need to see my social worker about how long I will be staying here.”

“I want to see my social worker. I haven’t seen her since I got here.”

“Can you follow up with my social worker around my 333 report?”

“I want a new social worker. This one is not helpful and takes too long to do things.”⁷³

Oranga Tamariki could not say how often social workers were visiting tamariki and rangatahi in residences, but tamariki and rangatahi Aroturuki Tamariki spoke to said they were not seeing them often enough to get the support they need.⁷⁴

Mana Mokopuna monitoring of residences and remand homes also showed that **social workers were not visiting enough, leaving rangatahi feeling frustrated, forgotten and unsure about their futures**:

- At Puketai Care and Protection Residence (Puketai), a rangatahi had not been visited by their social worker in over ten months.⁷⁵
- At Kaitiaki Remand Home (Kaitiaki), a rangatahi did not know their social worker was coming to visit. The social worker did not enter the whare. They stood in the doorway and asked questions then left.⁷⁶
- At Te Maioha ō Parekarangi Youth Justice Residence (Te Maioha), rangatahi were frustrated by lack of communication from their social workers and unclear transition plans. Mana Mokopuna heard social workers usually only got in contact to tell rangatahi about Family Group Conference (FGC) and Court dates.⁷⁷
- At Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence (Korowai Manaaki), some rangatahi had not been visited by their social worker for several months. Kaimahi said some social workers only provide updates when asked and do not visit often, even when they are based in the local area.⁷⁸
- At Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence (Whakatakapōkai), kaimahi were deeply frustrated with poor communication and engagement from social workers.⁷⁹

⁷¹ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakapōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024, p.20.

⁷² Mana Mokopuna, *Toe Afua Le Taeao OPCAT Monitoring September 2023*, 2023, p.20.

⁷³ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.

⁷⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

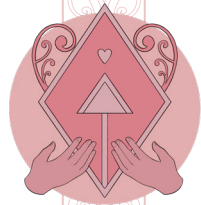
⁷⁵ Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023*, 2024.

⁷⁶ Mana Mokopuna, *Kaitiaki OPCAT Monitoring October 2023*, 2023.

⁷⁷ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Maioha ō Parekarangi OPCAT Monitoring July 2023*, 2023.

⁷⁸ Mana Mokopuna, *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

⁷⁹ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakapōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.



Lack of action from social workers means some tamariki and rangatahi are staying in secure residences longer than they should.

“If your FGC plan is declined by the judge or a plan isn’t presented to the judge then you go back on remand until a plan is approved. Often it’s between three and four weeks you get put back on remand.”⁸⁰

“... 2-3 months of being put back on remand due to a plan not being presented or not being approved.”⁸¹

Some rangatahi are being held on remand longer than their actual sentence because time on remand isn’t counted as time served. Mana Mokopuna found reviews meant to happen every 14 days weren’t always being done properly. Some social workers just changed the date without explaining why the young person still needed to be there, and poor transition planning and lack of involvement from some social workers was part of the problem.⁸²

Sometimes tamariki and rangatahi are held in secure residences because of a lack of other care options or other reasons social workers can’t control like delays in court processes. No matter what part of the system is failing them, social workers need to clearly explain what’s happening and make sure tamariki and rangatahi understand. On the issue of time served on remand, we want to know what the New Zealand Government is doing about this. This has been raised by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for a long time, and still not been addressed. When will the Government finally respond to the rights of rangatahi being held on remand? We’d like to see this sorted out before our 2027 scorecard.

Some residence kaimahi are providing caring and supportive environments.

“Staff actually care about us.”⁸³

“[Residence] staff care, they advocate for me. Whaea tells me what I am entitled to and always makes sure things are advocated and pushed for.”⁸⁴

While many tamariki and rangatahi in residences are not getting the support they need from social workers, we found examples of some residence kaimahi working to create safe, family-like, caring environments in some residences. For example, at Puketai, Mana Mokopuna said kaimahi made a real effort to make tamariki and rangatahi feel loved, wanted and connected at Christmas time by buying gifts for them to open on Christmas morning and having a big kai together.⁸⁵

Mana Mokopuna also said that the small, close-knit environment of [some] community-based remand homes helped create “an environment where mokopuna are treated like whānau and supported to thrive”. They found that the kindness shown by kaimahi was returned by tamariki and rangatahi, both to kaimahi, and other rangatahi.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ VOYCE, *Submission: Oranga Tamariki Amendment Bill*, 2022, p.4.

⁸¹ VOYCE, *Children in Care: Report to the UNCRC*, 2022, p.10.

⁸² Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024.

⁸³ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024, p.42.

⁸⁴ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024, p.42.

⁸⁵ Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023*, 2024.

⁸⁶ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024.

When we leave care, we feel well supported and have what we need

Most rangatahi are worried about what will happen to them after they leave care.

“I’ve grown up since I was six with Oranga Tamariki in my life and they’re all I’ve got. Now, I’m turning 18 and they’re booting me to the kerb. That not only makes you feel small and sets you up to fail, but all of that trauma and neglect and rejection that you felt as a kid has now all been brought up because Oranga Tamariki bounce you when you’re 18.”⁸⁷

[Sharing worries ahead of leaving care] “All the supports I have will drop off, like counselling and stuff like that.”⁸⁸



63% of 17-year-olds in care said they were ‘moderately’ or ‘seriously’ worried about what might happen after they turned 18.⁸⁹

Another study that followed a group of rangatahi over three years as they transitioned to independent living found that a large proportion of rangatahi felt unstable, insecure, a sense of abandonment, anxious and scared, before leaving care.⁹⁰

Rangatahi who have left care also shared feeling abandoned and alone:

“Life’s pretty bleak after care - you don’t have trusting relationships you can lean on when you need to.”⁹¹

“They discharged me and that was it. I never seen or heard anything from them again. Coming up to the discharge, I didn’t see social workers. I didn’t know what was happening, and then my mum told me there was a court date, so we went to court and I got discharged and I was like, wow... It was a very rushed discharge. They fully just left me.”⁹²

“The minute I turned 18, I was left alone to fend for myself.”⁹³

“You leave care on the backfoot feeling like you have to start again. Takes a lot to just try to build your life and move on.”⁹⁴

“General population of young people, their parents can help them, and it gives them space to fuck up. You don’t have that space when you are a care kid because there isn’t a lot of people there for you.”⁹⁵

“You’ve been moved around so much and then all of a sudden you get to an age where it’s like, oh no, now you’re just... you feel like a bird that’s finally been let out of its cage. Well, where do I go from here?”⁹⁶

⁸⁷ VOYCE, *Whakamānawatia Toku Taiao - Honour My World: Rangatahi Experiences of Leaving Care*, 2022, p.53.

⁸⁸ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, 2021, p.12.

⁸⁹ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, 2021.

⁹⁰ Ngā Haerenga Research Rōpū, *Ngā Haerenga / Transition Journeys Phase One*, 2021.

⁹¹ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.19.

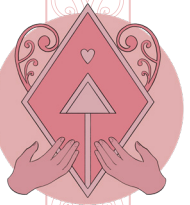
⁹² VOYCE, *Honour My World*, 2022, p.53.

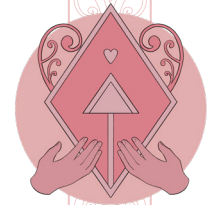
⁹³ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2023*, 2023, p.61.

⁹⁴ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.19.

⁹⁵ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.19.

⁹⁶ VOYCE, *Children in Care: Report to the UNCRC*, 2022, p.9.





Oranga Tamariki is not making sure rangatahi have the tools to ‘adult’ before they leave care.

“My transition FGC, it was only a week before my [18th] birthday... It wasn’t enough time, because I already had all this chaos going around in my brain, I didn’t really have the tools at that time to think, okay, what do I need to do? I didn’t really have the tools to adult.”⁹⁷

“You have to suddenly learn to do things you haven’t been equipped to do - make decisions, trust, have autonomy.”⁹⁸

“I didn’t really have much opportunity to transition into adulthood within that group home, because it was very restrictive... I wasn’t allowed my phone at night. I was not allowed to manage my own medication. I wasn’t allowed my money. I wasn’t allowed my bus card.”⁹⁹

“I went out and got my licence and birth certificate by myself.”¹⁰⁰



16% of rangatahi transitioning to adulthood had a life skills assessment according to data estimates by Oranga Tamariki. This went backwards between 2023 and 2024.¹⁰¹



38% of rangatahi transitioning to adulthood received support to get identification or a bank account according to estimates by Oranga Tamariki. This went backwards between 2023 and 2024.¹⁰²



Oranga Tamariki said they found **evidence of planning to support a successful transition for 68% of rangatahi**.¹⁰³

Transition Support Services are working well for most rangatahi who use them.

“She’s [transition worker] amazing. She’s like the mum you didn’t have, you know... Growing up I didn’t really have any parental guidance, and she showed me a lot of that guidance.”¹⁰⁴

“Every time I’ve called them, I’ve never come back disappointed. I’ve always been very, very happy and grateful for the conversation, and I feel like I’m really supported by the [transition] line.”¹⁰⁵

“She’s helped with my trip to [city],... my licence,... helped me find a job... takes me to counselling... There’s so much, I actually can’t name it.”¹⁰⁶

“My transition worker... wow she’s an angel... she got my glasses done... Absolutely amazing.”¹⁰⁷

“She has encouraged and helped me to look for mental health care [and develop] job seeking and career goals.”¹⁰⁸

“We went and did job agencies together. I asked if my transition worker could come in and sit with me in an interview, as I couldn’t do it by myself.”¹⁰⁹

“[My transition worker] helped with everything that I needed. Needed to go to the doctor, got that sorted... Just made things so smooth compared to [Oranga Tamariki] and the lots of paperwork and lots of processes that they have to do.”¹¹⁰

⁹⁷ VOYCE, *Honour My World*, 2022, p.51.

⁹⁸ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.19.

⁹⁹ VOYCE, *Honour My World*, 2022, p.49.

¹⁰⁰ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, p.95.

¹⁰¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹⁰² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹⁰³ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2025.

¹⁰⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Insights for Community: Bay of Plenty and Central Plateau Visit 2024*, 2025, p.24.

¹⁰⁵ Malatest, *Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS*, 2023, p.50.

¹⁰⁶ VOYCE, *Honour My World*, 2022, p.65.

¹⁰⁷ VOYCE, *Honour My World*, 2022, p.69.

¹⁰⁸ Malatest, *Just Sayin’* 2021, 2021, p.11.

¹⁰⁹ Malatest, *Just Sayin’* 2023, 2023, p.36.

¹¹⁰ Malatest, *Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS*, 2023, p.41.



80% of rangatahi preparing to leave care who had a transition worker said they thought their transition worker understood the kinds of support they needed and 82% said their transition worker was there when they need them.¹¹¹



86% of rangatahi said they were helped when they called the transition line. This improved between 2020 and 2023.¹¹²

The four-year evaluation of the Oranga Tamariki Transition Support Service (TSS) suggests the service helps many rangatahi receive the support they need as they transition from care. They found rangatahi with a transition worker were more likely to feel supported and get what they need than those who do not have a transition worker.¹¹³

Not all rangatahi are being offered a transition worker, or they are being offered too late.



74% of eligible rangatahi were offered a referral to a transition worker. This improved between 2020 and 2024.¹¹⁴

The proportion of eligible rangatahi being referred to a transition worker has increased each year since 2020. However, all the reports we reviewed were clear that rangatahi are not consistently being referred or are being referred too late. Aroturuki Tamariki also found that there are higher rates of referral in some areas than others.¹¹⁵

Why are we not seeing all rangatahi connected with transition support well before they leave care? And why are referral rates different across different areas? Oranga Tamariki aims to have at least 60% of eligible rangatahi referred for support from a transition worker. Currently they’re doing well against that target but we say this bar is way too low considering how scary and stressful transitioning from care is. We’d like to see this target raised (and met) before our 2027 scorecard.

Too many rangatahi do not have a safe, stable place to live after leaving care and Government services are not doing enough to help.

“I don’t even know at this point [where home is]. For a while, I was staying in my mate’s house in a spare room and then going back and forth from there to Mum’s. Now I’m back and forth from my girlfriend’s house to Mum’s. I don’t actually have a proper place yet.” [18-24 months after leaving care]¹¹⁶

“[I was left on the street] ...The accommodation I was in wasn’t good. They wouldn’t listen when I said [where I was staying] wasn’t good. They would say its fine, I got to stay there.”¹¹⁷

“I feel like the emergency housing is kind of like foster care for adults, but it’s a very vulnerable place for an 18-year-old to be in because there’s a lot of odd people.”¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Malatest, *Just Sayin’* 2023, 2023.

¹¹² Malatest, *Just Sayin’* 2023, 2023.

¹¹³ Malatest, *Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS*, 2023.

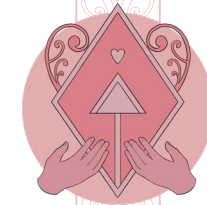
¹¹⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

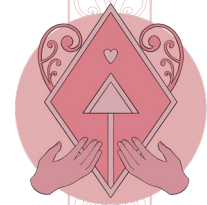
¹¹⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹¹⁶ Ngā Haerenga Research Rōpū, *Ngā Haerenga / Transition Journeys Phase Three*, 2023, p.29.

¹¹⁷ Malatest, *Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS*, 2023, p.41.

¹¹⁸ Ngā Haerenga, *Ngā Haerenga Phase Three*, 2023, p.28.





In 2021 at least one in ten rangatahi who had transitioned from care or youth justice placements were living in unstable places like a car or garage.¹¹⁹ Oranga Tamariki said this is likely a significant under-estimate.¹²⁰

In another study of 24 rangatahi about two years after leaving care, most were in safe, stable and welcoming homes. A few rangatahi were in, or had been in, emergency housing or motels. A few rangatahi were homeless, couch surfing with nowhere stable to go.¹²¹

“Government’s existing housing services and supports are not meeting the needs of this population group.” – Oranga Tamariki¹²²

The reports we read were clear that it is difficult for many rangatahi to find a safe and stable place to live when they leave care. They often have trouble finding somewhere to live because landlords think they will not be good tenants, they don’t have references, and/or they have low incomes.¹²³ Oranga Tamariki said rangatahi leaving care often have high support needs and may not have good support systems. As a result, **care-experienced rangatahi have higher rates of homelessness than other rangatahi.**¹²⁴

Aroturuki Tamariki also heard there is a shortage of suitable housing options, however in Canterbury they found an example of Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Social Development (MSD) working together to support rangatahi leaving care. They heard that Oranga Tamariki contacts MSD six months before discharge of ‘high risk’ rangatahi so MSD has time to find them somewhere to live and can avoid using emergency accommodation.¹²⁵

If Oranga Tamariki and Ministry of Social Development can work together to support rangatahi leaving care in Canterbury, why is this not happening nationally for every rangatahi who needs this? We want to see this happening everywhere. Having a safe place to stay after leaving care is not just an Oranga Tamariki problem. The Government’s housing supports are not working for this group of rangatahi. Oranga Tamariki can’t fix that alone. What are the other agencies doing to address this? We’d like to hear a response from Ministry of Social Development and Kainga Ora.

Supported accommodation works for many rangatahi leaving care, but there is not enough of it, and it looks like this is getting worse.

“I’ve never had this kind of stability in my life before [supported accommodation]. And this was definitely the place to be.”¹²⁶

“You go from not having a parent and you feel like you’re supporting yourself, and there’s no one to guide you. But when you’re in this house, you feel safe... there’s people around you guiding and helping you to guide your own path that you need.”¹²⁷

Oranga Tamariki works with community partners to provide supported accommodation for some rangatahi leaving care. **An Oranga Tamariki review of the Supported Accommodation service in 2023 found that it creates safety, stability and better outcomes for care-experienced rangatahi who live there.** Many are able to develop life skills, have support to recover from trauma, are engaged with whānau, and involved with education, training or employment. The review also found that with the cost of rent and stigma many rangatahi face from landlords, supported accommodation provided by Oranga Tamariki is often the only housing option available for some rangatahi transitioning from care.¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ Malatest, *Just Sayin’* 2021, 2021.

¹²⁰ Oranga Tamariki, *Prioritising Housing Services for Young People Moving to Independence from Care and Youth Justice Settings*, 2022.

¹²¹ Ngā Haerenga Research Rōpū, *Ngā Haerenga / Transition Journeys Phase Three*, 2023.

¹²² Oranga Tamariki, *Prioritising Housing Services*, 2022, p19.

¹²³ Oranga Tamariki, *Supported Accommodation Review*, 2023.

¹²⁴ Oranga Tamariki, *Prioritising Housing Services*, 2022.

¹²⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹²⁶ Oranga Tamariki, *Supported Accommodation Review*, 2023, p.10.

¹²⁷ Malatest, *Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS*, 2023, p.47.

¹²⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Supported Accommodation Review*, 2023.

In 2023 Oranga Tamariki reported they had 154 supported accommodation places available for rangatahi in different parts of Aotearoa. However supported accommodation was not available for many rangatahi when and where they need it. In Bay of Plenty, for example, there were 161 rangatahi eligible for support, with no supported accommodation places available.¹²⁹

Over the last year, the number of supported accommodation spaces has decreased. In September 2024, Oranga Tamariki reported they had 136 places available.¹³⁰

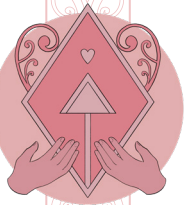
In April 2025, Oranga Tamariki said [another] “review of supported accommodation provision is underway to better understand what is driving utilisation issues and ensure we have the right models of support and accommodation types on offer.” They said they are “working through a more sustainable plan” and “considering developing a plan for the most effective and sustainable way to fund supported accommodation into the future.”¹³¹

Supported accommodation works and needs to be increased. The 2023 review recommended each region should have places available for 20% of eligible rangatahi but the number of placements has reduced instead of increasing as the review recommended, and instead another review has been started. Why is the Government not using the information they already have to provide what we already know is needed? Another review is a waste of money, and a waste of time. Meanwhile more rangatahi are leaving care without somewhere to go.

¹²⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *Supported Accommodation Review*, 2023.

¹³⁰ Oranga Tamariki, *Performance Report Quarter Two 2024-25 as at 31 December 2024*, 2025.

¹³¹ Oranga Tamariki, *Performance Report Quarter Two 2024-25 as at 31 December 2024*, 2025, p.5.





Promise 2

You promised to make sure I have safety and stability in my life

E kī taurangi ana au kia noho mātāmua te pūmautanga i roto i tō oranga

This promise looks like:

One stable placement, the same caregiver throughout childhood. Not being moved from pillar to post. It's staying at the same school, having the same friends. It looks like knowing what you're doing before moving me. Having help there when I need it. It's having somewhere safe and stable to live, not staying in motels and emergency accommodation. Seeing the same doctor, the same dentist, the same social workers, and the same kaimahi. Not having to change these things more often than anyone else does.

This promise feels like:

Deep connections and warm, dependable relationships, people I can trust and rely on. It's knowing how to value friendships because I know how to trust people. It feels like resilience and confidence. It's that secure feeling knowing someone is committed to taking care of me and looking after me for the long term. Knowing where I will be next month, finding comfort in a home environment. It feels safe. It feels safe no matter what kind of placement you are in, not needing to be scared if you're going to residence. Being able to speak up without being called a snitch. It feels safe for queer and trans kids. Being allowed to express my feelings. Knowing how to get help when I need it and trusting Oranga Tamariki to look after me. It's never worrying that my placement will fall through. It feels like certainty of where my safe space is and knowing that it always will be safe. It feels like I have a stable home life and a family, just like the other children I know.

Keeping this promise means:

- We are safe
- We have a safe and stable place to live
- We have the chance to develop trusting connections; we feel settled

Content warning: We talk about experiences of physical and sexual abuse under this Promise.

still not
We are safe

Tamariki and rangatahi are still being abused in care in 2025.

- "My foster 'parents' were abusive, did drugs and locked me out of the house."¹³²
- "You left me in unsafe situations with my own mother while she was suffering, feeding her addiction."¹³³
- "When living at one house it was really unsafe. Social worker didn't listen."¹³⁴
- "I felt like I was not safe but couldn't say it out loud because of what would happen to me."¹³⁵
- "I was sexually abused in my foster homes, even though that's why I was removed from my home originally."¹³⁶

507 tamariki and rangatahi were found to have been abused or neglected while Oranga Tamariki was meant to be taking care of them between April 2023 and March 2024.

For those 507, there were **858 findings of harm**.¹³⁷ That means some tamariki and rangatahi were **hurt more than once** in the same year.

We say 507 were 'found to have been' abused or neglected, because this is the number Oranga Tamariki has recorded and reported. We think the actual number of tamariki and rangatahi who are hurt while they are in care is much higher than this. Sometimes tamariki and rangatahi don't feel like they can tell someone what is happening. At other times, they do tell someone, and they are not believed. Sometimes Oranga Tamariki makes the wrong decision when they investigate¹³⁸ and sometimes they do not properly record abuse that has happened.¹³⁹ We also think there is not nearly enough understanding or acknowledgement of emotional harm, so it does not get reported or recorded much.

Rangatahi surveys also suggest higher numbers of tamariki and rangatahi are being hurt in care than Oranga Tamariki reports:



9% of all children in care had findings of harm reported by Oranga Tamariki in 2024.¹⁴⁰



31% of rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki at the time said they **had been hit or physically hurt** in the last 12 months by adults in the places where they usually lived.¹⁴¹



21% of rangatahi in care in another study said they **had been hit or physically hurt** in the last 12 months by adults in the places where they usually lived.¹⁴²

¹³² VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.3.

¹³³ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.3.

¹³⁴ Malatest, Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS, 2023, p. 20.

¹³⁵ Clunie, M. et al., Making Ourselves Visible, 2023, p.24.

¹³⁶ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.3.

¹³⁷ A 'finding' of harm occurs when an allegation of harm has been made, a report of concern is entered in the Oranga Tamariki database, a social worker assesses or investigates and determines harm has occurred (emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or neglect), and records this finding. Oranga Tamariki, Annual Report 2023-24, 2024.

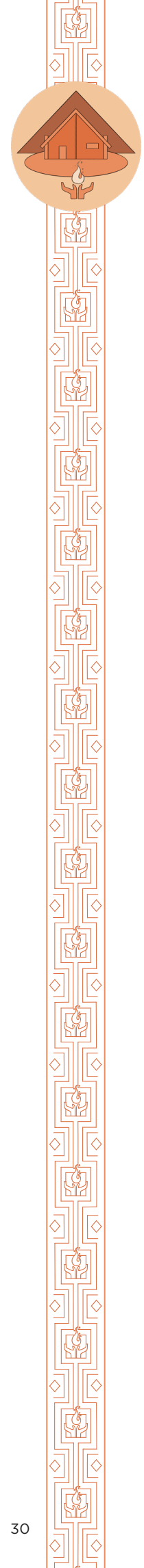
¹³⁸ Aroturuki Tamariki reported that 18% of allegations of abuse and neglect in care last year were found to have been incorrectly assessed by Oranga Tamariki as not needing any further action. Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025.

¹³⁹ E.g. Ombudsman New Zealand, Chief Ombudsman issues another stinging criticism of Oranga Tamariki failing to investigate child assault and violence claims, 24 October 2024.

¹⁴⁰ Oranga Tamariki, Annual Report 2023-24, 2024.

¹⁴¹ Archer, D. et al., Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Community and Contexts, 2022.

¹⁴² Malatest, What About Me? 2021 Oranga Tamariki Cohort, 2023.



These studies asked questions in different ways so we can't directly compare them with each other or with the Oranga Tamariki report of 9%, but they help us to see that there are a lot of rangatahi who are being hurt when Oranga Tamariki is meant to be keeping them safe. They also both showed that rangatahi in care were more likely to be physically hurt or hit by the people they live with than rangatahi who had never been in care.

Unwanted sexual contact is shockingly high for rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki. Two different surveys found that almost half (42% to 49%) of rangatahi in care had been touched in a sexual way or made to do sexual things they didn't want to, including sexual abuse and rape. This was much higher than for those not involved with Oranga Tamariki (16% to 19%).¹⁴³ It is important to note that this abuse may have happened before rangatahi came into care.

The number of tamariki and rangatahi found to have been abused in care is increasing every year.

Even though the total number of tamariki and rangatahi in care is decreasing, the number found to have been harmed in care is increasing:

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of tamariki harmed in care ¹⁴⁴	442	456 +14	459 +3	497 +38	507 +10

Oranga Tamariki said they received 2,597 reports of concern for children in care in 2024, and that this is the highest number ever. They think part of the reason for this increase is that people are becoming more aware of the need to report any harm.¹⁴⁵

Too many tamariki and rangatahi in care do not feel safe.



20% of rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki said they **did not feel safe where they usually lived.**¹⁴⁶

Other studies also show that some rangatahi in care do not feel safe, and that rangatahi in care are more likely to feel unsafe than others:

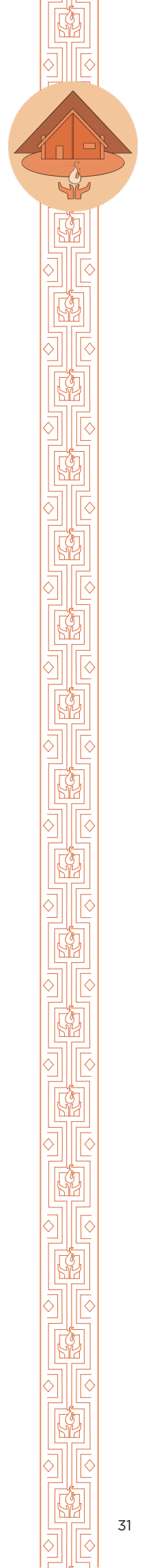
- Rangatahi were asked to rate if they disagreed (0) or agreed (10) they feel safe where they usually live. The average rating for everyone was 8.8, while for rangatahi in care it was 8.0.¹⁴⁷
- A survey of rangatahi eligible for support from a transition worker found that 18% of rangatahi (nearly two in ten) rated safety where they lived at 6 out of 10 or below.¹⁴⁸
- Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi had some of the highest rates of feeling unsafe.¹⁴⁹

In the two years to 31 March 2025, VOYCE received more than 50 advocacy requests related to safety concerns. Tamariki and rangatahi said:

- “Help me be safe.”
- “I feel unsafe.”
- “I want to know how I can stop [person] having contact with me.”
- “I don't like all the fighting and shouting at home.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Archer, D. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Community and Contexts*, 2022; Malatest, *What About Me? 2021 Oranga Tamariki Cohort*, 2023.
¹⁴⁴ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.
¹⁴⁵ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.
¹⁴⁶ Fleming, T. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Home and Housing*, 2021.
¹⁴⁷ Malatest, *What About Me? 2021 Oranga Tamariki Cohort*, 2023.

¹⁴⁸ Malatest, *Just Sayin' 2023*, 2023.
¹⁴⁹ King-Finau, T. et al., *Health and Wellbeing of Takatāpui and Rainbow Rangatahi Involved with Oranga Tamariki*, 2022; Fenaughty, J. et al., *Identify Survey Young People with Oranga Tamariki Involvement: Whānau, Family, Housing and Home*, 2024.
¹⁵⁰ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.



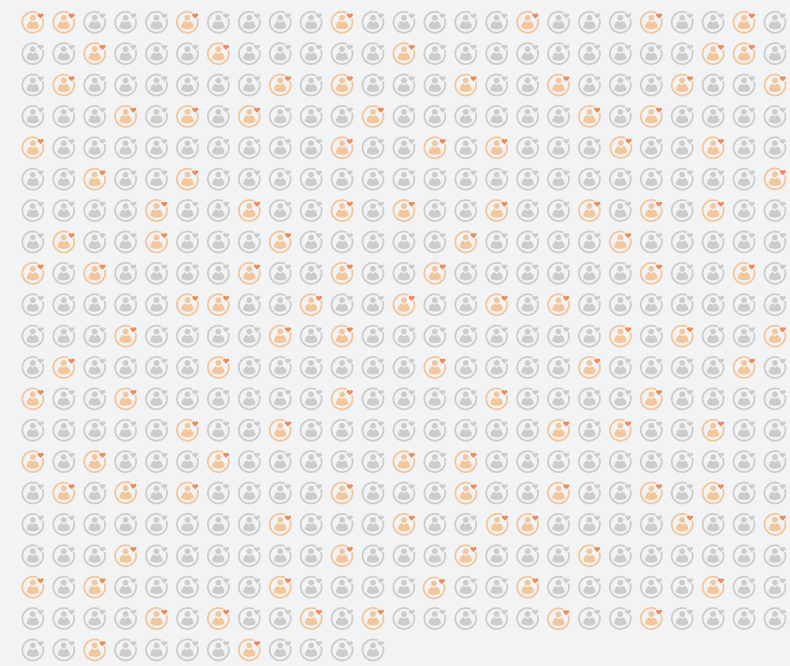
The Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry (the Inquiry) was set up to investigate what happened to children, young people and adults in the care of State and faith-based institutions in Aotearoa between 1950 and 1999. The Inquiry found that 200,000 children, young people and vulnerable adults, more than one in three in care, were abused in State and faith-based institutions. They made 138 recommendations. On November 12, 2024, the Government delivered a formal public apology in Parliament, acknowledging the State's failures.

Te Rōpū Kaitiaki mō ngā teina, e haere ake nei, a diverse group of care-experienced rangatahi, came together in 2023 to provide young people with an option to share their experiences with the Inquiry “because abuse in care did not just magically stop in 1999”.¹⁵¹ Our submission to the Inquiry, *Korowai Aroha*, outlined 25 key asks which fundamentally would change the care system to improve the lives of young people currently in care and with care experience in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our submission highlights the profound sense of hopelessness, fear, and isolation faced by those abused in Oranga Tamariki care.

Yet in 2025, tamariki and rangatahi are still being abused in care. With *Korowai Aroha* we've provided Oranga Tamariki with a blueprint to address this. If you haven't read it yet, we'd suggest you take a look.

SAFETY IN RESIDENCES

A lot of tamariki and rangatahi living in secure residences are not safe.

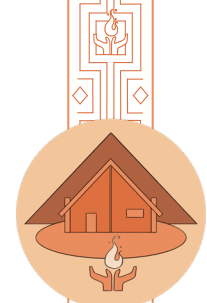


In 2024, there were 512 tamariki and rangatahi who spent time in residential care.

Oranga Tamariki reported that **118 tamariki and rangatahi (23%, or nearly a quarter) were harmed in residential care.** For those 118 tamariki and rangatahi, there were **228 findings of harm.**¹⁵²

“...some young people were subjected to multiple assaults on several occasions during their time in residences.” – Oranga Tamariki¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.6.
¹⁵² Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.
¹⁵³ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024, p.166.



Reporting of harm in residences seems to be improving, but we think it is still not reported well.

“If we have a fight in here [YJ residence] or the staff hurt us, it is what it is. We can’t do nothing about it, no one’s even listening to us anyway.”¹⁵⁴

The number of rangatahi reported to have been harmed in residence has gone up very fast over the past four years. In 2021, Oranga Tamariki recorded 23 findings of harm in residences. Four years later in 2024 that number had jumped to 228. Oranga Tamariki says there have been changes in reporting practices and reports of concern are now being made more often in residences.¹⁵⁵

We believe harm in residences has been under-reported for years and is still not being reported well. Our evidence for this comes from advocacy requests received by VOYCE, Kaiwhakamana visits to residences, and Mana Mokopuna monitoring reports. We are pleased to see harm seems to be being reported more and want to see a continued focus on accurate reporting of harm within residences. This is about accountability, and it is long overdue.

Most of the reported harm in residences is from tamariki and rangatahi hurting each other.

“When I was in residence I had a radio cord wrapped around my neck, pillows over my face and my head slammed into the wall by other young people.”¹⁵⁶

“This [YJ residence] is supposed to be a safe place but you never know, someone could come up behind you and punch you, stab you.”¹⁵⁷

Oranga Tamariki reported that in 2024, **79% of harm in residences was from tamariki and rangatahi hurting each other**.¹⁵⁸

Monitoring reports show a high level of violence from tamariki and rangatahi, including regular assaults, weapons being made from things like vapes, and older rangatahi making younger ones fight each other.¹⁵⁹ At Te Maioha in 2023 for example, there were about 100 threats to kill or harm in just six months, and on average five assaults per month that had reported injuries.¹⁶⁰

Reported harm caused by residence staff is increasing.

The number of findings of harm caused by residence staff nearly doubled from 24 findings in 2023 to 41 findings in 2024.¹⁶¹

Mana Mokopuna monitoring reports provide many examples of unsafe behaviour from kaimahi including:

- Physically assaulting tamariki and rangatahi
- Inappropriate relationships with tamariki and rangatahi
- Kaimahi supplying rangatahi with contraband including items which can be used as weapons
- Verbal abuse and swearing at tamariki and rangatahi
- Kaimahi encouraging bullying, violence and unsafe behaviour, not challenging inappropriate behaviour, and doing nothing to calm things down.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁴ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024, p.47.

¹⁵⁵ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.

¹⁵⁶ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.3.

¹⁵⁷ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024, p.47.

¹⁵⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.

¹⁵⁹ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Maioha OPCAT Monitoring July 2023*, 2023.

¹⁶¹ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.

¹⁶² Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakāpōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024; *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024; *Te Maioha OPCAT Monitoring July 2023*, 2023; *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.

Some tamariki, rangatahi and kaimahi are being bullied into keeping quiet.

Almost every report about residences we read talked about fear and intimidation that tamariki, rangatahi and some kaimahi experience in residences – both from other rangatahi, and from kaimahi. Mana Mokopuna reports from 2024 have many examples of tamariki and rangatahi being warned not to ‘snitch’, or of tamariki, rangatahi and some kaimahi being too scared to speak up including:

- Residence kaimahi standing over tamariki and rangatahi who were talking to Mana Mokopuna saying things like ‘you better not be snitching’
- Tamariki and rangatahi warning others not to snitch to Mana Mokopuna
- Kaimahi saying tamariki and rangatahi were being bribed by other kaimahi to keep quiet
- Kaimahi saying they feel unsafe to report issues with other kaimahi because of bullying
- Kaimahi saying they felt targeted by other kaimahi when they spoke up, with the example of waiting for certain kaimahi to leave at the end of shift before going to the carpark because of safety concerns.¹⁶³

VOYCE Kaiwhakamana who regularly visit residences have also heard many examples of tamariki and rangatahi feeling scared to talk in residences. For example, a rangatahi wanted VOYCE support to make a complaint about a residence staff member, but only after they had left the residence. They did not feel safe raising a grievance while they were still staying there.¹⁶⁴

Oranga Tamariki has been slow to remove bullies from residences.

In 2023, following allegations of residence kaimahi abusing tamariki and rangatahi, Oranga Tamariki asked for an independent review of residences (the Rapid Review). The Rapid Review suggested many changes and improvements and Oranga Tamariki fully accepted the findings of the report.¹⁶⁵

The Rapid Review found that team leaders in residences often did not have the training they need to manage people well. The review said Oranga Tamariki was not doing enough to provide them with training and that performance management was weak. In some cases, this had allowed bullies to stay on or even be promoted. The review found that **most leaders did a good job, but there were “known poor performers or ‘bad apples,’” and senior managers had not done enough about this**. The review heard many allegations about managers at a range of levels who were bullies, acted in harmful ways and did not meet their professional responsibilities.¹⁶⁶

Residence kaimahi need better training and leadership to help improve safety in residences.

The Rapid Review also found that residence kaimahi did not have the training needed to support tamariki and rangatahi in residences. We found many comments on the need for better kaimahi training:

- At Whakatakāpōkai, kaimahi said they felt “set up to fail” because they had not been given the guidance and tools they need to work with tamariki and rangatahi who have high needs and complex behaviours. Some kaimahi described the training they received as “shockingly inadequate”¹⁶⁷
- At Korowai Manaaki, training for new kaimahi was not good enough and many kaimahi did not have experience working with vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi. Many kaimahi did not understand trauma and did not show any care for tamariki and rangatahi.¹⁶⁸
- At Epuni Care and Protection Residence (Epuni), kaimahi did not have specialist training needed to care for tamariki and rangatahi with very high and complex needs. Kaimahi wanted training in how to work with neurodiversity and mental health challenges.¹⁶⁹
- At Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo Youth Justice Residence (Te Puna Wai), kaimahi were not trained in how to work with very vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ Mana Mokopuna, *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024; Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakāpōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

¹⁶⁴ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-25.

¹⁶⁵ Te Kani, C. *Media Statement – Rapid Residence Review*, 21 September 2023.

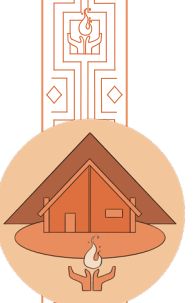
¹⁶⁶ Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023.

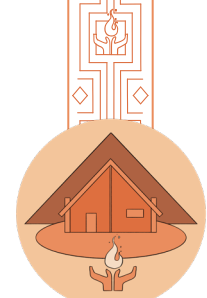
¹⁶⁷ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakāpōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

¹⁶⁸ Mana Mokopuna, *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

¹⁶⁹ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring September 2024*, 2025.

¹⁷⁰ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Puna Wai OPCAT Monitoring May 2024*, 2024.





Safety is also affected because there are not enough kaimahi, and Oranga Tamariki processes are not helping.

A Human Rights Commission report said secure residences around the whole country did not have enough staff and this affected safety:

- When residences couldn't find people with the right skills, they employed people who did not have the right skills and experience.
- Other kaimahi had to work long hours and extra shifts and couldn't take holidays which meant they were tired and burnt out.
- Kaimahi could not get time away to attend training or supervision.¹⁷¹

The **serious staff shortages in residences have been a known problem for Oranga Tamariki for a long time**, and Oranga Tamariki recruitment processes are not helping. For example, at Epuni, Mana Mokopuna heard that background checks meant to be done at National Office took too long. Job applicants with good skills got other jobs before the Oranga Tamariki process was finished, so the residence missed out on experienced workers.¹⁷²

Tamariki and rangatahi are locked in secure care because kaimahi do not have enough experience or residences are short-staffed.

Mana Mokopuna monitoring reports provide many examples of kaimahi relying on the use of secure care¹⁷³ to manage other problems within residences:

- At Epuni, some kaimahi defaulted to punitive practices like secure care to manage behaviour, with no legal grounds for admission to secure care in the notes.¹⁷⁴
- At Te Puna Wai, the secure care unit was being used as a space for tamariki and rangatahi to try and regulate because kaimahi did not have therapeutic knowledge and resources. Kaimahi called these “voluntary admissions” to secure care, however there were no sensory resources, and the environment was described by some kaimahi as “dire” and “horrendous”.¹⁷⁵
- At Whakatakāpōkai, kaimahi spoke about not being trained properly or having a clear understanding of the legal grounds for secure admissions which resulted in unlawful secure admissions.¹⁷⁶
- At Te Maioha, regular requests were being filed in Youth Court to hold tamariki and rangatahi in secure care for longer than 72 hours.¹⁷⁷

Concerns about the rights of tamariki and rangatahi to be safe have been raised internationally.

Following their visit to Whakatakāpōkai in February 2024, Mana Mokopuna made five reports of concern.

They said the treatment of tamariki and rangatahi at Whakatakāpōkai was ill-treatment under international human rights standards to prevent torture.¹⁷⁸

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has raised concerns that **tamariki and rangatahi in secure residences face harm from kaimahi using restraints, bullying and unsanitary living conditions**.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024.

¹⁷² Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring September 2024*, 2025.

¹⁷³ Secure care is defined in s2 of the Oranga Tamariki Act as containment in a residence established under s364 “within a locked room or enclosure with visible physical barriers”. *Oranga Tamariki Act 1989*.

¹⁷⁴ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.

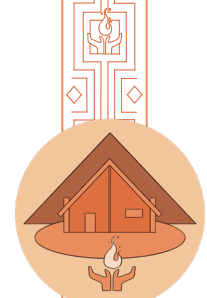
¹⁷⁵ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Puna Wai OPCAT Monitoring May 2024*, 2024.

¹⁷⁶ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakāpōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

¹⁷⁷ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Maioha OPCAT Monitoring July 2023*, 2023.

¹⁷⁸ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakāpōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

¹⁷⁹ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of New Zealand*, 2023.



It is clear secure residences are failing many, if not most of the tamariki and rangatahi who are locked in them. This part of the care system is seriously broken and tamariki and rangatahi are paying the price for that. The Government knows this. We have more than 30 reports about residences in our Bibliography. It's time to stop reviewing and start acting. We'd like to hear a progress update on actions resulting from the Rapid Review.

As we read through Mana Mokopuna reports, the Ministerial Advisory Board report on residences and the Rapid Review, it was clear that not all residences are the same though. For example, Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi (run by Barnardos) is seen as rights-based and therapeutic, and Puketai Care and Protection Residence has a reputation for providing consistently good care. We also found small pockets of good practice in some of the other residences. Why isn't Oranga Tamariki learning from the places that are doing better, sharing what works for tamariki and rangatahi, and applying those lessons to all the residences?

As we completed this report, the Government announced millions of dollars in funding to address 'serious youth offenders' and further develop bootcamps or 'military-style academies'. After reading so many reviews of what's happening in residences this makes no sense to us! With limited funds available, how is that the priority instead of addressing the many real problems known within our existing residences? Where is the funding for making sure residence kaimahi are well-trained, well supported and providing what tamariki and rangatahi need? What about ensuring tamariki and rangatahi have access to education and healthcare in residences, and safe, therapeutic spaces? Now that would be good social investment!

We have a safe and stable place to live

Tamariki and rangatahi in care are much less likely than others to have a proper place to stay.

“I need a fixed place to live with me and my baby.”¹⁸⁰

“You put me into a motel for emergency housing, among drug-abusing, violent adults.”¹⁸¹

“I lived in a motel for a year and a half and you didn't try get me into a stable home which gave me PTSD and made me lose myself.”¹⁸²



61% of rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki said they **had to share a bed, sleep on a couch, on the floor, in a garage or sleepout** in the past 12 months because there wasn't enough space for everyone. For rangatahi with no Oranga Tamariki involvement this was 26%.¹⁸³



10% stayed in motels or emergency accommodation, slept in a car or couch surfed because they had nowhere else to go. This was ten times higher than for those with no involvement with Oranga Tamariki.¹⁸⁴

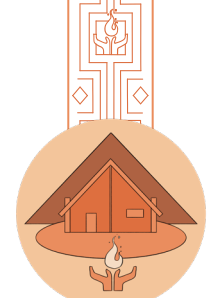
¹⁸⁰ Fleming, T. et al., *What Should Be Changed to Support Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki?* 2022, p.3.

¹⁸¹ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.2.

¹⁸² VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.3.

¹⁸³ Fleming, T. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Home and Housing*, 2021.

¹⁸⁴ Fleming, T. *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Home and Housing*, 2021.



Aroturuki Tamariki reported that **176 tamariki and rangatahi spent a total of 2,648 nights in motel accommodation** over the 2023-24 year. The median length of stay was 3 nights. **The longest stay was 278 nights.** All these numbers increased (got worse) from the year before.¹⁸⁵

After decreasing in 2022-23, Aroturuki Tamariki reported that motel use is increasing again. However, they also heard from kaimahi that motel use was discouraged because of lack of funding. A social worker said they drove around with a three-year-old, knocking on doors to find someone to take them.¹⁸⁶

We're gutted to hear that motel accommodation is getting harder to get because of funding restrictions. Emergency accommodation must be easily available for one or two nights when needed.

A motel placement for 278 nights, on the other hand, is completely unacceptable. Care-experienced rangatahi have been raising concerns about this since at least 2023 when we questioned the then Minister for Children at the 6 Promises Summit. Following the Summit, VOYCE's Te Waipounamu Regional Youth Council launched an advocacy campaign, printing stickers to spread our messages:

No more Oranga Tamariki placements in motels!

Motels are NOT homes

You can't spell MOTEL without OT

In the lead-up to the General Election, we questioned political candidates about motels at VOYCE's Political Hotseat event, asking them to explain what they would do to end the use of motels as placements for tamariki and rangatahi in care. Online, rangatahi commented that they had tuned into the livestreamed event from motel rooms. While politicians acknowledged motel placements weren't good enough, they offered no real solutions.

Two years later, our message remains the same. Tamariki and rangatahi deserve to be in a home with real caregivers, not in a motel room with rostered staff or child-minders. We'd like to hear why motel accommodation is up again, and what the Government is doing about it? We *don't* want to hear that this problem is being managed by making it harder for people to get emergency accommodation for short periods. We're talking about why tamariki and rangatahi are living in motels. We also want to be clear – this is not just an Oranga Tamariki problem. Other parts of government like Kainga Ora and MSD have a responsibility here too. We'd like to hear a combined response.

Tamariki and rangatahi are staying in secure residences longer than they should because another placement has not been found for them.

"At first I thought I would be here for three months, then it was six and now it's been over a year. I want to know when I can be back with my Mum."¹⁸⁷

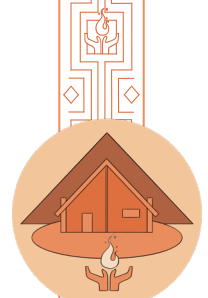
When Mana Mokopuna visited Puketai Care and Protection Residence in 2023, four of the eight rangatahi there had spent 200 or more days in the residence. Mana Mokopuna said some have stayed at Puketai for more than a year. This was due to no suitable placement in the community or long periods of time waiting for plans to be approved by Oranga Tamariki National Office. **Some rangatahi said they felt like they had been forgotten.**¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹⁸⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹⁸⁷ Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023, p.45.

¹⁸⁸ Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023*, 2024.



The Ombudsman highlighted this issue following a complaint from a rangatahi in a Care and Protection Residence who had been there for about seven months. They had previously been in the residence for 18 months. They were told the second stay would be for a short time. The rangatahi said the environment was bad for their mental health and it felt like they were losing their teenage years. The Ombudsman said the harmful effects of secure care residences are well known and people should be there for the shortest amount of time possible. He said Oranga Tamariki may have been leaving the rangatahi at residence because this was the easiest place to look out for their safety, but they did not think enough about the effects of spending so long in residence for the rangatahi. He said that Oranga Tamariki had acted unreasonably and had not acted as quickly as they could have.¹⁸⁹

Some tamariki and rangatahi are returning home without proper planning and support.

Like Aroturuki Tamariki and many Oranga Tamariki kaimahi, we are concerned about tamariki and rangatahi returning home in a rush after a placement breakdown because Oranga Tamariki says there is nowhere else for them to go. Some Oranga Tamariki kaimahi told Aroturuki Tamariki they believed unplanned transitions home because of a lack of care options were happening more often.¹⁹⁰ We read about what can happen when tamariki and rangatahi return home in an unplanned way:

- A rangatahi was meant to be going from one placement to other caregivers. Ten days later the placement had broken down. Oranga Tamariki kaimahi said they had nowhere else so the rangatahi was sent home without any support wrapped around mum, "screwing over [rangatahi] again".¹⁹¹
- A parent told Aroturuki Tamariki they had two days' notice of their tamariki returning home and received no support from the social worker.¹⁹²
- Kaimahi at Epuni told Mana Mokopuna about community placements falling through because of lack of funding, and extensions to remain at Epuni were declined, so rangatahi were returned home with little support for them or their whānau.¹⁹³
- The Rapid Review of residences heard about there not being enough space in residences so tamariki were returned to whānau who had not been given the right support, sometimes leading to more trauma for tamariki and their whānau.¹⁹⁴

Aroturuki Tamariki wrote about the risks of tamariki and rangatahi returning home without good planning in their report *Returning Home from Care* and again in *Experiences of Care 2023-24*. But despite Oranga Tamariki knowing about these increased risks, very few tamariki and rangatahi returning home are being visited as often as they should be to provide support and help make sure they don't have to move again.



29% of tamariki and rangatahi were visited by a social worker as often as they should have been after returning home from care. When tamariki and rangatahi returned home in an unplanned way, this was even worse, with only 15% being visited by a social worker as often as they should have been.¹⁹⁵

We have the chance to develop trusting connections; we feel settled

It is difficult for some care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi to feel settled.

"Sometimes I would get like an hour's notice that I was going to a new place – no warning, just got told 'pack your bags' and go."¹⁹⁶

"The current youth system is like pass the parcel, but the music never stops, you just get passed around until you reach 18, then you are on your own."¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹ Boshier, P., *Children in Care: Complaints to the Ombudsman 2019-2023*, 2024.

¹⁹⁰ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Returning Home from Care*, 2023.

¹⁹¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Returning Home from Care*, 2023, p.25.

¹⁹² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

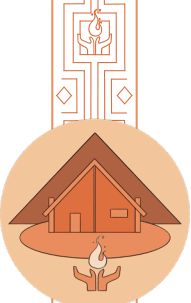
¹⁹³ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.

¹⁹⁴ Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023.

¹⁹⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

¹⁹⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.93.

¹⁹⁷ VOYCE, *Submission: Formally Recognise UNCRC Petition*, 2023, p.7.



“Right now, we so often move from place to place, from family to family, from school to school, without getting a chance to develop deep relationships. Children and youth cannot easily build resilience, or a real sense of confidence, when we cannot even predict for sure where we will be next month, but when we have people we can trust and rely on, we can.”¹⁹⁸



72% of tamariki and rangatahi said they ‘definitely’ felt settled where they lived, and 20% said ‘yes, I think so’. More tamariki and rangatahi said they ‘definitely’ felt settled in 2022 than in 2020. About 8% to 9% of tamariki and rangatahi said they didn’t really feel settled, and a small number of those did not feel settled at all.¹⁹⁹

Where they live is one of the top reasons why tamariki and rangatahi seek advocacy support from VOYCE. In the two-year period to 31 March 2025, 13% of VOYCE advocacy requests were about living arrangements – tamariki and rangatahi wanting to be heard on where and who they do or don’t live with. Many are about not wanting to be moved again:

“I want to stay at my current placement.”

“I want a stable place to live.”

“Can we stay here with our aunty?”

“I just want to stay long term in one space, I’m always moving. I don’t want to anymore.”²⁰⁰

Caregivers change often for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

“Make sure you know what you’re doing before bringing a kid to your care, before a kid is brought into so many houses. Make sure you know that. We are kids, we hate to be moved to different people. It’s hard and not fair.”²⁰¹

“On my 12th birthday, I was moved across the country to live with someone I’d only met once, and that placement only lasted a month before I was moved back across the country.”²⁰²

“I was moved to about 15 different care homes before I was 16. I was put in boarding school because no carer wanted to look after me.”²⁰³

On average, tamariki and rangatahi had four caregivers during their time in care. This did not change between 2020 and 2024. While four is the average, 37% of rangatahi (nearly 4 in 10) had more than six caregivers.²⁰⁴ And some have a lot more. In 2022, Aroturuki Tamariki reported that **the highest number of caregivers for one young person was 38.**²⁰⁵

Tamariki and rangatahi in care get a new social worker very often.

“[I] don’t like a new social worker every month, very very frustrating, very annoying, gotta tell them same things every time, I dunno how they’ll fix that but it’s very annoying, they visit and then say there’s a new social worker for you. Why I get a new one every month?”²⁰⁶

“The number of times I have to explain myself to a different social worker, they just stand there not knowing what to do.”²⁰⁷

On average, tamariki and rangatahi had ten social workers during their time in care. This did not change between 2020 and 2024. For older rangatahi this gets worse (usually they have been in care longer). Almost half of rangatahi over 15 had between 11 and 20 social workers, and 12% had more than 20 social workers.²⁰⁸

¹⁹⁸ VOYCE, *Children in Care: Report to the UNCRC*, 2022, p.11.

¹⁹⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

²⁰⁰ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.

²⁰¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024, p.11.

²⁰² VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.3.

²⁰³ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.3.

²⁰⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²⁰⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2021-22*, 2023.

²⁰⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024, p.87.

²⁰⁷ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, p.6.

²⁰⁸ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2021-22*, 2023.

In 2022 the highest number of social workers was 39.²⁰⁹ That’s 39 times at least one young person had a new social worker. We couldn’t find this information for 2024, but the other numbers haven’t changed much over time, so this one may not have either.

More than half (55%) of caregivers in an Oranga Tamariki survey said their child’s social worker had changed in the past year. Caregivers said changing social workers so often affected the child’s trust and the relationship. They said children felt a sense of loss and abandonment and this was retraumatising: “Child does not trust social workers. Does not let his guard down to allow any sort of relationship for fear of social worker leaving - which they all eventually do.”²¹⁰

Tamariki and rangatahi in care move house often, and move much more often than those not in care.



32% of rangatahi in care had moved four or more times in the past 12 months, compared with 3% of the overall school group surveyed.²¹¹

When tamariki and rangatahi move between many different placements, their personal belongings get lost – even important things that tamariki feel safe with get lost or are not given to the child when they move placement. We read about personal belongings being dropped off by a social worker in black rubbish bags.²¹² We think the message this sends to tamariki and rangatahi is awful. Aroturuki Tamariki said Oranga Tamariki could not say whether tamariki had their personal belongings with them while in care.²¹³ We want Oranga Tamariki to take more care with our precious things. Sometimes they are all we have.

All the changes make it hard for some tamariki and rangatahi to have healthy, trusting relationships. Poor planning makes it worse.

“You don’t know how to value friendships, because you haven’t learned how to build trust or stability in relationships. There can be lots of people you love and respect but you’re trained not to get comfortable in any setting.”²¹⁴

“To feel safe and secure we need to know there is someone committed to our long-term wellbeing, and to feel valued we need to know that we are worth somebody making this commitment to us.”²¹⁵

We read many accounts of tamariki and rangatahi having to move placements, often at short notice, that meant they had to break connections with whānau, caregivers, friends, teachers, social workers and other people who were important in their lives. Sometimes tamariki did not know a change was going to happen. For example, a child was dropped off to school by the carer they were placed with, and that afternoon they were picked up from school by new carers they didn’t know and went to a new ‘home’.²¹⁶

There is not enough consideration being given to the emotional wellbeing and the impacts of moving young people from pillar to post. Stop moving us! If we really have to move, tell us what is happening so that we can be prepared, let us be involved. These care transitions need to be handled better – do everything to prepare tamariki and rangatahi for moving so they can maintain important connections. When they are unplanned (which is too often!) what support is the child receiving during and after?

²⁰⁹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²¹⁰ Oranga Tamariki, *2023 Caregiver Survey*, 2024, p.36.

²¹¹ Malatest, *What About Me? 2021*, 2023.

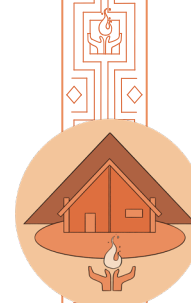
²¹² Mana Mokopuna, *Hillcrest Home OPCAT Monitoring October 2023*, 2023.

²¹³ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2020-21*, 2022.

²¹⁴ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.16.

²¹⁵ VOYCE, *Children in Care: Report to the UNCRC*, 2022, p.8.

²¹⁶ Oranga Tamariki, *Ola Manuia moa Io Fanau Pasefika*, 2022.





Promise 3

You promised to help me with my education goals and dreams

E kī taurangi ana au kia whakarato i te tautoko ki a koe
e whai ai koe, e whai wāhi ai hoki koe ki ō whāinga me ō
wawata mātauranga

This promise looks like:

Staying in the same school even if I have to move homes so that I can get the credits I need. Being treated the same as other students. Support when learning is hard. Help to decide what I am working towards. Subjects that make sense in my world. Being treated fairly. It's chances to learn new things outside of school. It's my social workers and caregivers who take an interest in how I am doing in school. It's my caregivers and kaimahi celebrating all my achievements with me. Teachers and staff understanding my situation and giving me grace. It's caregivers, social workers, and my teachers maintaining regular contact about my progress. Allowing me to take on new opportunities. It's making sure my caregivers can provide me with all the things I need to attend school.

This promise feels like:

Being understood. Hope. Dreams. Teachers who care, take time, help me learn, help me work towards my dreams. Knowing where I am going. Being prepared for the environment I am going into. Knowing I get to stay at the same school with my friends. Fun, interesting activities, new experiences. It feels like school is a safe place. A place where I can be a normal kid, not just a foster kid. Lots of people I trust that I can go to when things feel hard. Being welcome, being accepted, being seen. Reaching my goals. It feels like being able to set goals in the first place. My strengths are recognised and celebrated, and I get help with things I am struggling with. It feels like having freedom to learn an instrument, learn to swim, and play sport if I want to. Without worrying about the cost to my caregivers. It feels like even small wins are celebrated and there are so many people who want me to do well and will help me to do well. It feels like having a safe adult at school to talk to. It feels like not having to worry about having enough money to go on school trips. It's having the proper uniform, not feeling like the odd one out. It's getting extra tutoring or help if I need it. It feels like adults at school understand how being in care may impact my ability to learn and not blaming or shaming me for it.

Keeping this promise means:

- We attend school
- We have the support we need and want to do well in school and study
- We feel hopeful about the future; we get to have hopes and dreams

We attend school

School is disrupted for many tamariki and rangatahi in care because they are moved around so much.

- "You put me in 14 schools, making me unable to get a proper education."²¹⁷
- "Do EVERYTHING to keep kids at same school when they have to move."²¹⁸

Under Promise 2 we showed how often tamariki and rangatahi move around – three out of ten rangatahi in care said they had moved four or more times in the past 12 months.²¹⁹ Often this means moving schools too, affecting relationships, learning support and their ability to do well in school and future study.²²⁰

Data from the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) showed that rangatahi in care had lower NCEA Level 2 achievement than rangatahi who were not in care.²²¹ For some rangatahi, we think this could be partly due to their schooling being interrupted so often.

Some tamariki and rangatahi in care are being turned away from school – this is discrimination.

Oranga Tamariki told Aroturuki Tamariki that they can't confirm whether tamariki and rangatahi are attending school, but their **records showed 8% of school-aged tamariki and rangatahi were not enrolled or had no record of enrolment.**²²²

We read many reports of barriers that tamariki and rangatahi in care face when trying to enrol in school:

- Social workers said some schools refused to enrol tamariki and rangatahi in care because schools thought they might be disruptive, have extra needs and require more support.²²³
- Community home kaimahi said they often struggled to find a school that would take tamariki. They said, "once they know they're Oranga Tamariki, they don't want anything to do with them".²²⁴
- Aroturuki Tamariki said some tamariki were spending every weekday at Oranga Tamariki offices because no education placement had been made available to them.²²⁵
- The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child said they were deeply concerned about discrimination against children in care that restricted their access to education.²²⁶

Data from the IDI also showed tamariki and rangatahi in care were more likely than others to be stood down or suspended from school.²²⁷

In the two years to March 2025, VOYCE received 319 advocacy requests around education and employment. Changing schools (or staying at their current school) was one of the most common reasons tamariki and rangatahi asked for help. There were also several requests for help to 'get back into school':

"Can I go to school more?"

"I want to go back to school."

"I want to know when I can start school."

"I need help enrolling in school."

"What's happening with school?"²²⁸

²¹⁷ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²¹⁸ VOYCE, *Summit 2023: 6 Promises Kōrero*, 2023, p.5.

²¹⁹ Malatest, *What About Me? 2021*, 2023.

²²⁰ Matheson, I., *A Guide for Tertiary Education Organisations on Supporting Care Experienced Learners*, 2023; Aroturuki Tamariki, *Returning Home from Care*, 2023.

²²¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²²² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²²³ Valdivia, L. et al., *Gateway Assessment Review*, 2024; Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²²⁴ Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023, p.47.

²²⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024.

²²⁶ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of New Zealand*, 2023.

²²⁷ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²²⁸ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.



Aroturuki Tamariki said the Ministry of Education seems reluctant to direct schools to enrol tamariki and rangatahi.²²⁹ In response, the Ministry of Education said they have identified changes they can make to improve this process.²³⁰

Firstly, stop moving us around! If we absolutely have to move placement, prioritise keeping us in the same area, and same school.

Secondly, as our State ‘parents’ you have a responsibility to make sure we are enrolled and attending school. The Government is currently focused on making parents and guardians more accountable for sending their children to school. We want to know what they are doing to hold themselves accountable for the tamariki and rangatahi they have taken into the care of Oranga Tamariki? Will the Ministry of Education be holding Oranga Tamariki accountable for enrolling tamariki and rangatahi in care in school? Will they hold school Boards accountable for the tamariki and rangatahi that schools are refusing to enrol? You need to make sure there is always a school placement for us. You could start by making sure schools have what they need to be able to support us well. Then, if they are discriminating against us, you need to be our protectors to ensure they do the right thing.

We have the support we need and want to do well in school and study

Tamariki and rangatahi in care, and their caregivers, need better support for school.

“I am dyslexic as well and that has not been diagnosed until quite recently so I could not read. I wasn’t very good at my studies, so a lot of people were like you are so stupid.”²³¹

Oranga Tamariki told Aroturuki Tamariki that one in three tamariki and rangatahi in care had “an educational issue”, and that this had increased from one in four the previous year. They said most of the time, social workers took steps to address the issue, however Aroturuki Tamariki said this does not necessarily mean tamariki received the support they need.²³²

Seven out of ten caregivers (70%) who needed more support, said they needed support around education and school for tamariki they were caring for.²³³

Government is not working together well enough to make sure tamariki and rangatahi have access to education and learning support.

Aroturuki Tamariki heard that some tamariki and rangatahi were excluded from school or not getting the support they need to learn because agencies disagreed who should fund that support. For example, a caregiver said, “One of the [tamariki] needs speech therapy, [child] hasn’t got it yet because no one can figure out who has responsibility for it. They’re all sitting around the table figuring out how to make it someone else’s problem.”²³⁴

When Aroturuki Tamariki asked the Ministry of Education in 2023 what actions they had taken to prioritise tamariki and rangatahi in care, they were told:

“[The Ministry of Education] does not collect data on children in care or use care status to prioritise learners for individual services.” – Ministry of Education²³⁵

The *Oranga Tamariki Action Plan* (OTAP) is a commitment from the Ministers and Chief Executives of six government agencies to work together better to meet the needs of tamariki and rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki in areas like health, education and housing. OTAP was expected to make many improvements to support for tamariki and rangatahi in care, however Aroturuki Tamariki said we are yet to see evidence of progress on the ground. Agencies also reported to Aroturuki Tamariki that OTAP work has been reduced because the Government has different priorities now and there is less funding.²³⁶

We read about an information-sharing agreement that is now in place between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Education. We want to know how information-sharing will be used to make sure tamariki and rangatahi in care are prioritised for learning support because frankly, we think the Ministry of Education is not doing enough for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry of Education and other agencies must ensure there is enough funding, and other learning supports to meet the specific needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care. This must not vary from school to school or if we have to change school. The Ministry of Education needs to recognise their unique responsibility to tamariki and rangatahi in care and prioritise support to us. We’d like to hear from them, how they are doing this.

EDUCATION IN RESIDENCES

Some tamariki and rangatahi do very well, while others have no access to education in residences.

In 2021, the Education Review Office (ERO) looked at the quality of education in residences. They found mixed results. Most tamariki and rangatahi believed their learning had improved in residence, and said their teachers helped them learn. Many were proud of their learning and felt good about their abilities to learn:

“A lot of certificates and a lot of achievement. [I’m] very proud of them... Before I came here [residence], I didn’t know what credits were.”²³⁷

“[Learning in residence] showed me there are lots of things I’m interested in such as music. It confirmed that I’m good at reading, writing and mathematics.”²³⁸

“[I’m] proudest of my maths learning – I have learnt different skills and equations and problem-solving. I enjoy the challenge...”²³⁹

The ERO review showed very high pass rates for the NZQA credits rangatahi in residences attempted, however they had limited subjects to choose from. The review found the transition back to school after leaving residence was often not managed well and that education was inconsistent across the eight residences they reviewed.²⁴⁰

Mana Mokopuna also reported mixed results:

- At Puketai and Te Puna Wai, tamariki and rangatahi were doing very well with Kingslea School where teachers used trauma-informed practice and were set up to meet individual needs.²⁴¹

²²⁹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*.

²³⁰ Ministry of Education response to *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2 February 2025.

²³¹ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023, p.35.

²³² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*.

²³³ Oranga Tamariki, *2023 Caregiver Survey, 2024*.

²³⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.11.

²³⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*, p.118.

²³⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*.

²³⁷ Education Review Office (ERO), *Learning in Residential Care, 2023*, p.21.

²³⁸ ERO, *Learning in Residential Care, 2023*, p.18.

²³⁹ ERO, *Learning in Residential Care, 2023*, p.19.

²⁴⁰ ERO, *Learning in Residential Care, 2023*.

²⁴¹ Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023, 2024*; Mana Mokopuna, *Te Puna Wai OPCAT Monitoring May 2024, 2024*.



- At Whakatakapōkai, tamariki and rangatahi were settled and engaged in their learning, with strong encouragement from their teachers.²⁴²
- At Epuni, tamariki and rangatahi had not had a full school day for some time because teachers had safety concerns, and the relationship between Central Regional Health School and Oranga Tamariki had broken down.²⁴³

The Rapid Review of residences said it was common to find locked classrooms and cupboards full of unused equipment. They heard this was because of lack of staff and increased risk of violence with older rangatahi.²⁴⁴

We feel hopeful about the future; we get to have hopes and dreams

Care-experienced rangatahi are less hopeful about their future than other rangatahi.

[Asked where they see themselves in five years] “Either in jail or a single mum on the benefit, either moving around with emergency housing or living in a Housing NZ house. That’s just the reality.”²⁴⁵

“Yeah. I just don’t really have any long-term goals. I don’t know. I just don’t really have any big dreams or hopes.”²⁴⁶



37% of tamariki and rangatahi said they ‘definitely’ thought they would have a good life when they got older, and 31% said ‘yes, I think so’. The proportion who felt sure went backwards from 42% in 2020.²⁴⁷

On average, rangatahi in care rated the statement ‘I feel hopeful about my future’ 6.3 out of 10, compared with 7.4 out of 10 for the overall school group surveyed (0 = not at all and 10 = very hopeful).²⁴⁸

A research project that interviewed 44 rangatahi preparing to leave care found many struggled to talk about goals for the future. They found rangatahi had not had many opportunities or encouragement to talk about goals and were very unsure what the future would be like. Some rangatahi found it hard to set goals because they had been let down in the past. Many were so focused on the basics of living and surviving today, they couldn’t think about tomorrow. When rangatahi did set goals, they found it hard to have big dreams.²⁴⁹

Aroturuki Tamariki heard from tamariki and rangatahi that they felt powerless to change their circumstances.²⁵⁰

More than a quarter (26%) of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they did not know if they thought they would have a good life when they got older, 5% said ‘no, not really’ and around 1-2% said ‘no, not at all’.²⁵¹ We are very concerned about tamariki and rangatahi not feeling hopeful about their futures, not feeling able to dream, and feeling powerless. We want to hear how Oranga Tamariki is working with community partners to help lift these numbers. What does social investment look like here?

²⁴² Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakapōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

²⁴³ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.

²⁴⁴ Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023.

²⁴⁵ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, 2021, p.26.

²⁴⁶ Ngā Haerenga Research Rōpū, *Ngā Haerenga / Transition Journeys Phase One*, 2021, p.26.

²⁴⁷ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

²⁴⁸ Malatest, *What About Me? 2021*, 2023.

²⁴⁹ Ngā Haerenga Research Rōpū, *Ngā Haerenga / Transition Journeys Phase One*, 2021.

²⁵⁰ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2020-21*, 2022.

²⁵¹ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

Care-experienced rangatahi do not hear often enough that we believe in them.

“You told me I’d amount to nothing.”²⁵²

“I was told I would never succeed.”²⁵³

“I was told that I’d be fifteen and pregnant like my mum multiple times by social workers at OT.”²⁵⁴

International research suggests that the greatest challenge for care-experienced learners is that social workers, teachers and caregivers often assume that children in care will not do well educationally. It is likely the same in Aotearoa.²⁵⁵

When asked about their future, some rangatahi aimed to go on to further study:

[In five years] “hopefully to get university entrance, finishing off my last year of study and getting into midwifery training.”²⁵⁶

“[I want to be] at university studying early childhood education.”²⁵⁷

“At university studying either performing arts, or in the health industry.”²⁵⁸

However, rangatahi in care were much less likely than other rangatahi to aim for a university degree. Only one in four (39%) said they wanted a university degree compared with 62% of the overall school group surveyed.²⁵⁹

For some care-experienced rangatahi, further study feels out of reach because they do not have the money or support:

“I have dreams of being a lawyer, but I have a transition worker who doesn’t help me. I have no family support, so how am I supposed to know how to apply to uni?”²⁶⁰

“I wanted to be a social worker but I’m not financially supported to do this. My education was not taken seriously in high school and now I’m having to start fresh.”²⁶¹

“The only person who supported me to study after high school was one teacher. Oranga Tamariki didn’t help me at all.”²⁶²

“No one supported me with learning what I needed to better my future. I wasn’t a ‘bad kid’.”²⁶³

²⁵² VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²⁵³ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²⁵⁴ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²⁵⁵ Matheson, I., *A Guide for Tertiary Education Organisations on Supporting Care Experienced Learners*, 2023.

²⁵⁶ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, 2021, p.26.

²⁵⁷ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, 2021, p.26.

²⁵⁸ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2021*, 2021, p.26.

²⁵⁹ Malatest, *What About Me? 2021*, 2023.

²⁶⁰ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²⁶¹ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²⁶² VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.

²⁶³ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.4.





Promise 4

You promised to support me with healthcare when I need it

E kī taurangi ana au kia whai wāhi koe ki ngā ratonga hauora e tika ana mōu i te wā e tika ana

This promise looks like:

Going to the doctor, dentist and optometrist. Regularly. Seeing the same practitioners every time. Allowing me privacy in medical care if that's what I want. Ensuring I receive specialist care when I need it. It's my social worker checking that I am enrolled with a GP in my area. It's my caregivers being able to take me to appointments without worrying about the cost. Allowing me to make choices about my own body. It's social workers doing their best to find out if I have any family history of health problems and giving my caregivers the tools to deal with any health issues. It's being proactive with accessing counselling and other types of mental health supports if there is a history of abuse, violence or other trauma. Regular check-ins with me about my mental health. Ensuring I have access to my medical records. Allowing me to access sexual health services such as contraception without judgement. It's taking good notes on my health for my records. Being able to get new glasses when they break, braces if I need them, and specialist mental health services if needed. It's doing more than the bare minimum. It's my doctors being made aware of my care status so they can understand more about my health. It's focusing on all aspects of my wellbeing.

This promise feels like:

I can trust the adults around me to take care of me. Knowing that my caregivers can take me to the doctors or hospital when I'm unwell. Knowing that they will. I feel informed on my family medical history, and my own medical history. I don't have to worry about telling my caregivers that I'm unwell. I don't have to face difficult health issues on my own. I don't have to keep explaining myself, or what has happened to me, because the health workers I see are ones I've met before and see regularly. Knowing that the adults around me will listen and believe me when it comes to any concerns about my wellbeing. Knowing that I'm trusted to make decisions about my own body. It feels like life is worth living and when things are hard, I'm not alone.

Keeping this promise means:

- We have good mental health and wellbeing
- We have access to the health and wellbeing services we need and want

Content warning: We talk about experiences of suicide and self-harm under this Promise.

We have good mental health and wellbeing

Many care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi have very poor mental health and wellbeing.



Two rangatahi surveys found only **around half of rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki had good wellbeing scores** (48% and 56%), and their scores were lower than for other rangatahi.²⁶⁴



Three quarters (74%) of rangatahi in care surveyed in 2021 had felt that life was not worth living in the last 12 months before the survey. This was much higher than for other rangatahi.²⁶⁵



66% of rangatahi in care had hurt themselves on purpose in the last 12 months before the survey. This was much higher than for other rangatahi.²⁶⁶

Very high numbers of care-experienced rangatahi have thoughts of suicide and attempt suicide.

"After lockdown, I lost the connection with my counsellor, which led to four suicide attempts – I felt like I didn't have any support. After the fourth attempt, I was placed under the Mental Health Act and taken to Inpatient Services."²⁶⁷



A 2019 survey found **44% of rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki had seriously thought about suicide in the last 12 months**. A different survey in 2021 found **68% of rangatahi in care had thought about suicide in the last 12 months**. In both studies, these numbers were much higher for rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki than for other rangatahi.²⁶⁸ These results can't be compared, but they clearly show that rangatahi in care are very distressed.



The same surveys found **21% and 44% of rangatahi** involved with Oranga Tamariki had **attempted suicide in the last 12 months** before the survey. Again, this was much higher than for rangatahi not involved with Oranga Tamariki.²⁶⁹

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki have particularly high levels of distress. In the last 12 months before being surveyed, 77% had hurt themselves on purpose, and 83% - more than eight out of ten – had seriously thought about killing themselves. Two out of ten (22%) had attempted suicide. All these numbers were higher than for takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi not involved with Oranga Tamariki.²⁷⁰ Takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi in care are often not emotionally safe and are often not safe or free to express their identity in care. We discuss this further under Promise 6.

²⁶⁴ Wellbeing scores based on the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index. Malatest, *What About Me?* 2021, 2023; Fleming, T. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Mental and Physical Health*, 2022.

²⁶⁵ Malatest, *What About Me?* 2021, 2023.

²⁶⁶ Malatest, *What About Me?* 2021, 2023.

²⁶⁷ Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, *Whanaketia: Through Pain and Trauma, From Darkness to Light, Survivor Experiences: For Survivors*, By Survivors, 2024, p.116.

²⁶⁸ Fleming, T. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Mental and Physical Health*, 2022; Malatest, *What About Me?* 2021, 2023.

²⁶⁹ Fleming, T. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Mental and Physical Health*, 2022; Malatest, *What About Me?* 2021, 2023.

²⁷⁰ Fenaughty, J. et al., *Identify Survey Young People with Oranga Tamariki Involvement: Health and Wellbeing*, 2024.





In 2025, Aroturuki Tamariki reported that Oranga Tamariki said there were suspected suicides of tamariki and rangatahi in care the previous year.²⁷¹ We have chosen not to report how many.

This is a serious failure of the core purpose of Oranga Tamariki to keep children safe. At least two out of ten care-experienced rangatahi have attempted suicide, and around half have thought seriously about it. What is Oranga Tamariki doing about this? What is the Ministry of Health doing? Where is the suicide prevention strategy for tamariki and rangatahi in care? These are not rhetorical questions. We would like to hear your responses.

We think Oranga Tamariki is not doing enough to understand who is at risk of hurting themselves and getting them the support they need. We found practice guidance on the Oranga Tamariki website for screening and assessment of suicide risk, but the guidance says screening happens “when we have concerns”, “when we recognise signals”, or “when we’re worried” [about suicide risk].²⁷² This is not good enough. The numbers of rangatahi in care who are hurting themselves and seriously thinking about killing themselves, mean a much more coordinated and preventative approach is needed than “when we’re worried”. These statistics show you need to be worried now. Before it’s too late.

We have access to the health and wellbeing services we need and want

Oranga Tamariki does not know if tamariki and rangatahi in care are getting healthcare.

“I only got taken to the doctors three times in ten years.”²⁷³

“I wasn’t getting checked up at the doctor or dentist regularly.”²⁷⁴

While Oranga Tamariki data showed just over half (56%) of tamariki and rangatahi in care were registered with a medical practice²⁷⁵ IDI data showed 94% were registered.²⁷⁶

Oranga Tamariki could not say whether tamariki and rangatahi in care had had annual health checks and dental checks. When they looked at information from other agencies, it showed that approximately 70% of tamariki and rangatahi in care had been seen by a doctor at least once in 2021.²⁷⁷

The Auditor General said that Oranga Tamariki does not know whether it meets the mental health needs of young people in its care.²⁷⁸

Tamariki and rangatahi in care are less likely than others to receive healthcare when they need it.



42% of rangatahi in care said there had been a time in the 12 months before the survey when they **needed or wanted to see a doctor, nurse or other healthcare worker but hadn’t been able to**. This was much higher than for other rangatahi.²⁷⁹ Another study found similar results.²⁸⁰

²⁷¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²⁷² <https://practice.orangatamariki.govt.nz/our-work/assessment-and-planning/assessments/specialist-topics/preventing-suicide-and-self-harm>

²⁷³ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.5.

²⁷⁴ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.5.

²⁷⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Access to Primary Health Services and Dental Care*, 2024.

²⁷⁶ Ministry of Health & Oranga Tamariki, *PHO Enrolments for Children in Contact with the Care System*, 2023.

²⁷⁷ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

²⁷⁸ Auditor General, *Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Young New Zealanders*, 2024.

²⁷⁹ Malatest, *What About Me?* 2021, 2023.

²⁸⁰ Fleming, T. et al., *Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Mental and Physical Health*, 2022.



In the two-year period to 31 March 2025, 13% of all VOYCE advocacy requests were about health and wellbeing. Needing access to healthcare was a common reason they sought support:

“I want to know when my next doctor’s appointment is.”

“I need glasses.”

“I need a dentist appointment.”

“I want to see a Māori healer.”²⁸¹

We want to know what Oranga Tamariki and health agencies are doing to understand what the barriers are to tamariki and rangatahi receiving healthcare, and what they are doing about it. One of the barriers VOYCE advocates have seen is that tamariki and rangatahi are not able to get doctor’s appointments at medical centres when they are not enrolled. Often they are still enrolled with a doctor in a town they don’t live in anymore because they are moved around so much. When they move somewhere new, medical centres say there is no space for new patients. We want to see the Ministry of Health stepping up here, directing practices to make space for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Consent is sometimes a barrier to tamariki and rangatahi in care getting healthcare.

“I think the interest of the young person should take priority. My parents were very against us receiving psychological support. This could have been why I never received any therapy while in care.”²⁸²

Aroturuki Tamariki said consent is a barrier stopping some tamariki and rangatahi in care from getting health services. They said policies and guidance from Oranga Tamariki are not clear enough about when parental consent is and isn’t required, and what to do if there is disagreement from parents and guardians.²⁸³ VOYCE is also aware of tamariki and rangatahi who have not received healthcare, or their care has been delayed because of consent issues.

Consent is also an issue for some rangatahi who are not being listened to about their own bodies and health decisions:

“OT pressured me into going on contraception when I was 11, and when I didn’t want to, they told me I’d end up being a teen parent.”²⁸⁴

Oranga Tamariki needs to provide better information to social workers, caregivers and health professionals to clear up any confusion about consent, and make sure tamariki and rangatahi are not missing out on healthcare because of unclear policies. We want to see social workers advocating for the rights of tamariki and rangatahi and working with health professionals to help tamariki and rangatahi make informed decisions about their own bodies and healthcare, especially as rangatahi get older. They also need to be able to see a health professional without a social worker or caregiver in the room if they choose to.

²⁸¹ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.

²⁸² Valdivia, L. et al., *Gateway Assessment Review*, 2024, p.23.

²⁸³ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Access to Primary Health Services and Dental Care*, 2024.

²⁸⁴ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.5.



Care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi are asking for help with their mental health and not receiving it.

“I’ve been asking for a while now to get a psychologist cos I’ve been struggling cos I feel like I could be a better person if I got rid of some of my trauma... I’ve been asking every time I see them... if they could get support for me to get a psychologist or a private counsellor.”²⁸⁵

“Last month I had an attempt, and nothing was really put in place to help me get past it like no therapy or anything really.”²⁸⁶

“My previous [social worker] turned up while I was [in hospital], stood over me and yelled at me. He dismissed my mental health and said I was ‘attention seeking’ and ‘just trying to get what I want’. It was so loud and abusive that a charge nurse came in and told him to leave and not return.”²⁸⁷

VOYCE receives many advocacy requests from tamariki and rangatahi who want support for their mental health:

“I’m afraid that they want to stop my counselling. Can you ask them not to?”

“I want my therapy sessions to start up again.”

“I want more support for my mental health.”

“I need more CAFS [mental health] sessions approved.”

“I need a counsellor.”

“I used to see a counsellor but I don’t know what happened, can I still go and see him?”²⁸⁸

Caregivers also said tamariki and rangatahi were not receiving the help they needed, and that caregivers needed more support themselves to be able to help tamariki and rangatahi in their care:

- A caregiver said they were having a “battle” to get mental health behavioural support for a child.²⁸⁹
- A caregiver said they repeatedly asked for urgent trauma support, but nothing was put in place. They said the social worker didn’t seem to fully understand their child’s history of trauma.²⁹⁰

How is it that tamariki and rangatahi are asking for help with their mental health and not getting it? Oranga Tamariki and mental health services know how serious the mental health risks are for tamariki and rangatahi in care. This is their responsibility when they take tamariki and rangatahi into care, and after they leave care too. Kaimahi and caregivers need training on how to identify and respond to mental health risks, and when we ask for help, it must be there. Early mental health assessments, therapy and ongoing support need to be properly funded, and we need free, life-long access to mental health services.

²⁸⁵ VOYCE, *Honour my World*, 2022, p.57.

²⁸⁶ Malatest, *What About Me? 2021 Oranga Tamariki Cohort*, 2023, p.20.

²⁸⁷ Abuse in Care Inquiry, *Whanaketia: Survivor Experiences*, 2024, p.116.

²⁸⁸ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.

²⁸⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *2023 Caregiver Survey*, 2024, p.16

²⁹⁰ Oranga Tamariki, *2022 Caregiver Survey*, 2023



HEALTHCARE IN RESIDENCES

Healthcare in residences is inconsistent, and mental health support is seriously lacking.

Mana Mokopuna monitoring of residences shows access to healthcare in residences is mixed:

- At Epuni, tamariki and rangatahi were not always receiving medical attention when they were hurt, including not receiving head injury checks, not going to hospital when needed, and only getting medical attention following a restraint after a nurse arrived. Rangatahi were also not receiving their medication on time.²⁹¹
- At remand homes like Kaitiaki and Toe Afua Le Taeao, social workers were responsible for taking rangatahi to medical appointments, but social workers were not always doing this. A rangatahi needed wounds re-dressing but the social worker said they did not have time to take them to the doctor.²⁹²
- At Te Puna Wai and Puketai, Mana Mokopuna said tamariki and rangatahi had good access to medical care.²⁹³

Mana Mokopuna has repeatedly raised serious concerns about the lack of mental health support for tamariki and rangatahi in residences. For example, several rangatahi at Korowai Manaaki required a high level of mental health support and kaimahi did not have the training and knowledge to help them. Mana Mokopuna said the lack of specialist support at Korowai Manaaki means rangatahi were at risk of their mental health getting worse while they are in residence.²⁹⁴

The Auditor General heard that Oranga Tamariki care and protection residences in some areas house tamariki and rangatahi with severe mental health needs. The Auditor General said they were likely to need specialist support that kaimahi do not have the training or experience to provide.²⁹⁵

Oranga Tamariki does not have good information about whether tamariki and rangatahi in care have a disability and whether they are getting support.

In 2023 the Oranga Tamariki database showed that 14% of tamariki and rangatahi in care had a disability. However Oranga Tamariki acknowledged that this is a significant undercount. When they looked at a sample of casefiles, they found that 28% had a diagnosed disability.²⁹⁶ There will be many more with undiagnosed disabilities. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child said they were concerned about the lack of data on the needs and experiences of children with disabilities in the care system.²⁹⁷

Oranga Tamariki said for 88% of tamariki with an identified disability, their disability-related needs were identified and appropriate services and supports put in place. However, if only a fraction of those with a disability are recorded, this is not a helpful measure of whether Oranga Tamariki is providing tamariki and rangatahi with disabilities the support they need.

In 2022 Aroturuki Tamariki said: “Neither Oranga Tamariki nor the Monitor are able to adequately see what the quality of care looks like for tamariki with disabilities.”²⁹⁸

²⁹¹ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.

²⁹² Mana Mokopuna, *Toe Afua Le Taeao OPCAT Monitoring September 2023*, 2023; Mana Mokopuna, *Kaitiaki OPCAT Monitoring October 2023*, 2023.

²⁹³ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Puna Wai OPCAT Monitoring May 2024*, 2024; Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023*, 2024.

²⁹⁴ Mana Mokopuna, *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

²⁹⁵ Auditor General, *Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Young New Zealanders*, 2024.

²⁹⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024.

²⁹⁷ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations on the Sixth Periodic Report of New Zealand*, 2023.

²⁹⁸ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2020-21*, 2022, p.12.

Government is not working together well enough to make sure tamariki and rangatahi in care get mental health and disability services.

“The Oranga Tamariki system (Oranga Tamariki and other agencies responsible for providing services under the Oranga Tamariki Act) is not fulfilling its legislative obligations to assess and meet the mental health needs of children and young people involved with Oranga Tamariki.”

– Oranga Tamariki²⁹⁹

The *Oranga Tamariki Action Plan* (OTAP) was expected to improve the way agencies work together to support the health needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care. However, Aroturuki Tamariki heard from kaimahi at Health New Zealand and Oranga Tamariki that it was difficult for them to work well together. For example, they do not agree who will pay for tamariki and rangatahi to have health and disability services.³⁰⁰

The Auditor General found that **Oranga Tamariki kaimahi struggle to get mental health referrals accepted by Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (ICAMHS)**. For example, ICAMHS regularly refuse to provide therapy to tamariki and rangatahi if they are not in a stable placement, because they say therapy is less likely to work.³⁰¹ However, placements often break down because tamariki and rangatahi have serious mental health needs. ICAMHS also refuse to provide services if they think issues are ‘behavioural’, rather than mental health related, despite knowing that tamariki and rangatahi in care are likely to have experienced trauma.³⁰²

There are also serious issues with disability assessments and support. The Oranga Tamariki Ministerial Advisory Board repeatedly heard from kaimahi that **getting assessments through the Ministry of Health for tamariki and rangatahi who have not had a disability diagnosed was difficult**.³⁰³ Aroturuki Tamariki heard that tamariki and rangatahi are sometimes not supported because Oranga Tamariki, health agencies, and Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People, are arguing about which agency should be paying for what.³⁰⁴

VOYCE gave examples of rangatahi with disabilities not being provided the support they need because of funding issues. In 2024 a rangatahi who requires one to one support 24 hours a day had been living with a foster family in [city]. As their 18th birthday approached, the plan was to move to residential care in [city 2] to be nearer to family. Although the placement had not been confirmed, they were moved to city 2 to stay with a family member while funding discussions took place. However, changes to disability funding were made by the Government around this time. Needs Assessment and Service Coordination (NASC) advised Oranga Tamariki that there was no funding available for a residential placement. The family member who was caring for the rangatahi temporarily, said they were struggling with the level of support needed.

Another rangatahi with a disability wanted to move to [place] after they turned 18 but this was not an option due to needing 24/7 care. A transition worker contacted VOYCE four months before the rangatahi turned 18, concerned that there had been no post-care placement discussions – the rangatahi believed they would be moving to [place]. NASC advised the Kaiwhakamana they were looking at options, but disability funding changes might mean an interim placement was required. Although the rangatahi met the criteria, funding was not available for this rangatahi who had been assessed as having high/very high needs with no whānau support. By their 18th birthday, when they were no longer able to stay in their current placement, no suitable new placement had been found. They moved into a private rental agreement with funding from MSD which lasted a month, before moving between Airbnb places and motels supported by CCS Disability Action. Six months later, as we went to print on this report, MSD, CCS, NASC and Oranga Tamariki were still trying to access funding.

When Oranga Tamariki identifies young people who need support, then government agencies have an obligation to support. If they need government services they should be a priority. Agencies need to remember they are talking about tamariki and rangatahi in need. It is not their fault they are in care. Don't make them suffer more because you can't agree on who or how to support them.

Stop fighting amongst yourselves and put care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi first. Stop playing pass the parcel with young people's lives. Oranga Tamariki, health and disability agencies must urgently address this for tamariki and rangatahi in care. It's not enough to say there are services available. This group needs prioritised services. We want to see real progress on this when we run our scorecard again in 2027.

²⁹⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki*, 2023, p.4.

³⁰⁰ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2023.

³⁰¹ Oranga Tamariki, *Mental Health and Wellbeing Needs of Children and Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki*, 2023; Auditor General, *Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Young New Zealanders*, 2024.

³⁰² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024; Francis, D. & Vlaanderen, P., *Oranga Tamariki Secure Residences Rapid Review*, 2023.

³⁰³ Oranga Tamariki Ministerial Advisory Board, *Te Kahu Aroha Report: Tamariki and Rangatahi Whaikaha*, 2022.

³⁰⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.



Promise 5

You promised to listen and include me when decisions are made about me

E kī taurangi ana au kia mātua whai wāhi atu koe ki ngā whakatau e pā ana ki a koe kei noho ana koe ki ngā pūnaha tiaki

This promise looks like:

Asking me how I feel! Asking me what I want to do next! Including me in Family Group Conferences, not just as an observer, but as an active participant. Explaining what's happening before it happens. Taking the time to understand my trauma, personality, triggers, history, and interests before any decisions are made about me. Social workers and other kaimahi answering my phone calls and making time to talk to me without my caregivers present, openly and without judgement. Telling me where I'm going and being clear with timelines and future plans. Allowing me to be active and present in family court if I am in the position to attend. Asking for my opinion when it comes to visitation. Listening to what I say, and what I don't say. Asking me who my safe adults are and if my caregivers are included in that list. Asking me if I have any accessibility needs or concerns. Asking me what makes me feel safe.

This promise feels like:

I can call my social worker and they will listen to my concerns. It feels like being able to trust the adults around me and knowing that they're genuinely taking my best interests into account. It's feeling informed about my care status. It's being able to represent myself in any meeting, conference or court hearing without fear of consequences for speaking up. Feeling like the adults in charge of my care trust me and my word. It's knowing when my next visit with my social worker is. It feels like being fully informed of why I am in care (in an age-appropriate way). It feels like people care what I think and feel! It feels like the adults around me take every part of my wellbeing into account when they make decisions about me – because they've asked me and believed me. It feels like I can make plans for my future, because I'm clear about what is happening to me now, and what will happen next. It's feeling like the adults around me are not keeping secrets or doing things behind my back. It's not being moved or having parts of my care plan changed or removed with no warning. It feels like never getting caught by surprise by a decision that is made about me. It feels like my words have power. It feels like I have power in my life.

Keeping this promise means:

We understand our rights and we're supported to speak up

We are kept informed and can have a say in the things that matter to us

We feel heard

We understand our rights and we're supported to speak up

Not all tamariki and rangatahi in care know their rights.

Aroturuki Tamariki has repeatedly reported that some tamariki and rangatahi understand their rights, but others do not.³⁰⁵

All tamariki and rangatahi in care should receive a My Rights, My Voice booklet from Oranga Tamariki that explains their rights while in care. VOYCE helps check if tamariki and rangatahi have a booklet and provides them with one if they don't. We couldn't find any information from Oranga Tamariki about how many tamariki and rangatahi have received a booklet and have had it explained to them, but VOYCE said they regularly come across people without one.

Tamariki and rangatahi in care have access to independent advocacy but they don't all know this.

Oranga Tamariki provides VOYCE with contact information for all tamariki and rangatahi in care so VOYCE can contact them to make sure they know about their rights, and the independent advocacy and other support VOYCE offers. This arrangement helps Oranga Tamariki meet their requirements under the *National Care Standards*. However, VOYCE has consistently raised issues with Oranga Tamariki about the contact details Oranga Tamariki provides not being up to date. Incorrect contact details, names, birthdates, addresses, caregivers and whānau have all been transferred by Oranga Tamariki to VOYCE. This is beginning to improve, but VOYCE still receives incorrect information from Oranga Tamariki which prevents Kaiwhakamana from contacting tamariki and rangatahi to let them know about their rights and the support available to them.

Despite this, many tamariki and rangatahi do know about VOYCE and Aroturuki Tamariki reports that advocacy services such as VOYCE are being used.³⁰⁶

An independent evaluation of VOYCE in 2025 found that VOYCE has had some kind of engagement with more than 4,000 care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi since 2019. **More than 1,600 care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi had been supported by VOYCE through at least one individual advocacy case since 2019.** Many had been supported through more than one advocacy case.³⁰⁷

Tamariki and rangatahi in care must be informed of their rights, entitlements and allowances. This should be done when we enter care and throughout our time in care. Just having this information available is not enough – it needs to reach us in the right way at the right time. Contact information Oranga Tamariki passes on to VOYCE must continue to improve, so they can support with this.

The Oranga Tamariki complaints process does not work for tamariki and rangatahi.

"There was that understanding that if we were to say something we would be worse off. Often a complaint won't change care, and we would get a crack or be sent somewhere much worse and get even more of a crack."³⁰⁸

"Are you really going to stand up with your perpetrators or whoever else is in the room and explain honestly how you feel? There's not been enough thought into making the child feel safe to honestly express themselves."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2021-22, 2023; 2022-23, 2024; 2023-24, 2025*.

³⁰⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*.

³⁰⁷ MartinJenkins, *Baseline Evaluation of VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai*, 2025.

³⁰⁸ Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, *Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.13.

³⁰⁹ VOYCE, *Submission: Oranga Tamariki Amendment Bill*, 2022, p.2.





Some tamariki and rangatahi don't feel safe to complain or are concerned that complaining will affect how they are treated by kaimahi.³¹⁰

Oranga Tamariki recorded 1,251 complaints in 2024, but only 9 of those were from tamariki and rangatahi. Some tamariki and rangatahi Aroturuki Tamariki spoke to in 2024 said they did not know how to make a complaint.³¹¹

On average it took Oranga Tamariki 56 working days to close complaints. This was worse in 2024 than in 2023.³¹²

As well as taking too long, we found evidence that Oranga Tamariki is not explaining the outcome of some complaints well.

In one example, VOYCE Kaiwhakamana supported a rangatahi to make a complaint to Oranga Tamariki. When the rangatahi received the outcome of the complaint, Oranga Tamariki did not arrange for the Kaiwhakamana to be present to provide support. The rangatahi said the outcome meeting was "awkward and confusing" and did not make sense to them. They were not happy with the process or the outcome, so the Kaiwhakamana supported them to escalate to both Oranga Tamariki and the Ombudsman.³¹³

Oranga Tamariki asked VOYCE to work with them to answer the question: What do tamariki, rangatahi and whānau need to feel safe, comfortable and confident raising their needs and concerns and providing feedback to Oranga Tamariki? VOYCE spoke to tamariki, rangatahi, caregivers and whānau from across Aotearoa to hear their views. Their report, *Manaaki Kōrero*, was provided to Oranga Tamariki in 2023.³¹⁴ Until 2024, VOYCE, Oranga Tamariki and others worked closely together on an action plan to make improvements to the complaints system, however this work was put on hold while Oranga Tamariki went through a restructure. Without discussion with VOYCE, the project changed.

We think nine complaints from tamariki and rangatahi is a clear sign that the complaints system is not working for them. Tamariki and rangatahi must know how to make a complaint and must feel safe enough to do so. The Royal Commission of Inquiry showed how important it is for people in care to be able to raise complaints and have these investigated properly. We need to be encouraged to speak freely, away from caregivers and kaimahi if needed, with no fear of what might happen.

Complaints are also taking much too long to be resolved - 56 working days is close to three months. That's a long time if the complaint is about something that is affecting you every day, and especially if it's about safety. We understand that it takes time to investigate properly, but we want to see more urgency.

We also think Oranga Tamariki is not recording enough of the complaints they receive. Over the same time Oranga Tamariki recorded 9 complaints, VOYCE supported 21 complaints and Aroturuki Tamariki heard about seven complaints from 170 tamariki and rangatahi they talked to. We agree with Aroturuki Tamariki who said this could be because complaints were dealt with informally.³¹⁵

If complaints are dealt with informally, no one knows if they are being dealt with properly. Oranga Tamariki says it is important for all allegations of harm to be entered as a formal report of concern so there can be a focused response. We think the same needs to happen with all complaints from tamariki and rangatahi. We need a true picture of how many complaints tamariki and rangatahi make, and there needs to be better accountability for the way all complaints are dealt with.

³¹⁰ VOYCE, *Manaaki Kōrero*, 2023.

³¹¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

³¹² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.

³¹³ VOYCE, *Annual Report 2022-23*, 2023.

³¹⁴ VOYCE, *Manaaki Kōrero*, 2023.

³¹⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.



ADVOCACY AND COMPLAINTS IN RESIDENCES

Access to advocacy in residences is mixed.

VOYCE has a group of specially trained Kaiwhakamana visiting eight secure residences and some remand homes. Most residences are visited weekly or fortnightly. Kaiwhakamana help tamariki and rangatahi share their views and raise any concerns. VOYCE said that while some residences are welcoming and make sure tamariki and rangatahi have access to independent advocates, others are not. Mana Mokopuna said the same:

- At Puketai, tamariki and rangatahi had access to a range of advocates including VOYCE.³¹⁶
- At Epuni, tamariki and rangatahi had good access to independent advocates.³¹⁷
- At Te Puna Wai, how to contact VOYCE was clearly displayed in all units.³¹⁸
- At Korowai Manaaki, independent advocates did not always have access to units and some tamariki and rangatahi did not have access to independent advocates for long periods of time.³¹⁹
- Community-based remand homes were often not linked with independent advocates like VOYCE, and kaimahi, tamariki and rangatahi were all mostly unaware of advocacy support. However, kaimahi often advocated for tamariki and rangatahi in their care.³²⁰

Most tamariki and rangatahi in residences know how to raise a grievance but many don't feel safe enough to do this.³²¹

"The staff have to get the form to you before the end of their shift. You fill out a grievance form. If you need to, you can ask someone to help you fill it out. After you hand it in, you should have an answer within two, three days. After that if you are not happy you can take it higher if you need to."³²²

396 grievances from tamariki and rangatahi in residences were recorded by Oranga Tamariki in the last year.³²³

While tamariki and rangatahi in residences usually knew how to make a complaint (grievance), as we showed in Promise 2, some tamariki and rangatahi in residences are being bullied into keeping quiet. Mana Mokopuna has repeatedly raised the lack of an independent complaints process in residences with Oranga Tamariki. Tamariki and rangatahi have to ask kaimahi for a complaints form which is referred to by some kaimahi and other rangatahi as a 'snitch form'.³²⁴

An independent complaints system in residences is long overdue. Some progress was made through the Manaaki Kōrero project, which Oranga Tamariki worked on with VOYCE, including increasing access to advocacy in residences and increasing tamariki and rangatahi understanding of their rights while in residence. However, our spotlights on residences through this report clearly show that this work needs to be actively supported to continue, not left to limp along and eventually fade away. Manaaki Kōrero needs to be properly funded and completed.

³¹⁶ Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023, 2024*.

³¹⁷ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024, 2024*.

³¹⁸ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Puna Wai OPCAT Monitoring May 2024, 2024*.

³¹⁹ Mana Mokopuna, *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024, 2024*.

³²⁰ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23, 2024*.

³²¹ In residences, complaints are called grievances and handled under a different process from other complaints.

³²² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.86.

³²³ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*.

³²⁴ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23, 2024*.



We are kept informed and can have a say in the things that matter to us

Tamariki and rangatahi are not always given a say in important decisions about their lives.

- “I’ve been in some [FGCs] that I wasn’t allowed to make decisions... I ended up leaving cos they were saying ‘oh no you can’t speak here sorry, no you can’t speak here.’”³²⁵
- “I think I’ll be here [group home] till I’m 15 years old. Don’t have any plan, no one has spoken to me about my plan.”³²⁶
- “Oranga Tamariki didn’t let me participate, they didn’t ask me what I wanted to do. My social worker just decided whatever. My social worker shared something so personal without asking me.”³²⁷
- “I am clueless about the plan. I want to go to the gym, and I want to go to boxing. I have a lot of plans, but they are not listening to my ideas.”³²⁸



80% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they get to have a say in important decisions in their life ‘all the time’ (31%) or ‘most of the time’ (49%). This improved between 2020 and 2022.³²⁹



Oranga Tamariki said there was **evidence that tamariki views had been identified and considered for 84% of tamariki and rangatahi** in care. This did not improve between 2023 and 2024.³³⁰

Oranga Tamariki reports provide a more positive picture than other sources. Aroturuki Tamariki said they heard from most tamariki and rangatahi that they do not feel listened to in the planning process. Most tamariki and rangatahi they spoke to knew about plans, but some did not have a copy of their plan or know what was in it.³³¹

In one example from VOYCE, a Kaiwhakamana worked with siblings who were confused about plans the social worker had filed for their Family Court reviews. The tamariki had not seen or understood the purpose of the plans and had not been given the opportunity to discuss them with the social worker. The Kaiwhakamana helped them understand and update the plans using te reo Māori. They corrected dates of birth, pronouns, and spelling of names, and used words that were more familiar to the tamariki (e.g. changing dwelling to whare).³³²

When tamariki and rangatahi do get to contribute to plans, or the time is taken to make sure they understand, this means a lot:

- “I have a voice in the plan! You can see it and hear it – I just received the first plan and it was great – I broke down, like is this really happening? I actually have a plan that recognises me. I have built a relationship with her and she is the only one in Oranga Tamariki that has earned my trust.”³³³
- “I feel supported now... My social worker now has done more than any of my other social workers. I feel happy. I am now surrounded by many people who actually listen to what I have to say, and my feelings.”³³⁴

Tamariki and rangatahi are not being kept informed, especially around moves and in residences.

We found many examples of tamariki and rangatahi not knowing what was happening. This creates uncertainty and anxiety for tamariki and rangatahi, and makes them mad:

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We found many examples of tamariki and rangatahi not knowing what was happening. This creates uncertainty and anxiety for tamariki and rangatahi, and makes them mad:

- “I want to be planning months in advance. You never hear from them, they never know. It’s very stressful because you do need to know where you are going, and you don’t.”³³⁵
- “When I first came here they’re like oh you’re going to be here for six weeks, but it’s been seven months.”³³⁶
- “I wasn’t told I was coming here [to residence], I thought I was going to a placement. Then when we got here I was annoyed, as they never told me I was coming here.”³³⁷
- “If they could have at least explained it to me first. They didn’t tell me until like the start of this year why I moved.”³³⁸
- “Communication with OT is the worst... The worst part was when they moved me to another social worker, but I didn’t know anything about it.”³³⁹

While tamariki and rangatahi in all placement types are not kept well informed, this is especially bad when they are moved to care and protection residences:

- At Puketai, Mana Mokopuna heard examples of tamariki and rangatahi being woken up early in the morning by their social worker and told to pack their bags as they were leaving their placement. Sometimes they did not know they were going to residence.³⁴⁰
- At Epuni, Mana Mokopuna heard that tamariki and rangatahi did not always know they were going to Epuni or that it was a secure facility (they would be locked in). One rangatahi was flown to Wellington without knowing where they were going.³⁴¹

When we looked at advocacy requests about being kept informed, we saw a clear picture of tamariki and rangatahi at Epuni not knowing why they were there, how long they would be there, and where they would be going next:

- “I want to know why I am in Epuni and how long I’m here for.”
- “Can you find out when I’m leaving Epuni?”
- “I would like to know my plans post-Epuni.”
- “I’d like to know how long I’m going to be in Epuni.”
- “Can you find out why I am at Epuni and what is happening next?”³⁴²

Not only are tamariki and rangatahi not being informed, but some are being lied to. Oranga Tamariki interviewed tamariki and rangatahi with disabilities and all but one they spoke to in a care and protection residence said they had been lied to about going to stay there:

- “My social worker was driving me down here and she was like ‘oh it’s only going to be a holiday, it’s like you’re going to family’. Just say ‘you’re going to residence’, I’d rather the truth than lies.”³⁴³
- “I didn’t know [I was coming to residence]. I got told I was going to stay with my sister in Christchurch.”³⁴⁴
- “Oranga Tamariki shouldn’t lie, they should tell the truth. They shouldn’t go saying, oh, you’re going to go to your family, you’re going to go to this person, but really you’re actually going to a residence... when OT lie to you it gets kids even more pissed off at other people and they get angry.”³⁴⁵

³²⁵ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People in Care*, 2020, p.20.
³²⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.28.
³²⁷ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.28.
³²⁸ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.28.
³²⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

³³⁰ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.
³³¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025.
³³² VOYCE, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.
³³³ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024, p.10.
³³⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2025, p.9.

³³⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24*, 2025, p.93.
³³⁶ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People in Care*, 2020, p.19.
³³⁷ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakpōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024, p.21.
³³⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People in Care*, 2020, p.17.
³³⁹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23*, 2024, p.88.

³⁴⁰ Mana Mokopuna, *Puketai OPCAT Monitoring December 2023*, 2024.
³⁴¹ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.
³⁴² VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-2025.
³⁴³ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People*, 2020, p.19.
³⁴⁴ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People*, 2020, p.19.
³⁴⁵ Oranga Tamariki, *Voices of Disabled Children and Young People*, 2020, p.19.





We feel heard

Many tamariki and rangatahi in care do not feel listened to or heard.

“We have to do extreme shit to get any kind of attention from anybody. Yeah it is the wrong kind of attention but it’s so much better than none at all... because that’s the only time you ever get seen and that’s the only time you ever get listened to.”³⁴⁶

“It got to the point where I’d be running away so often just to try and prove a point or get my voice heard. Even the police would tell Oranga Tamariki to listen to me and no one did so I’d run away again.”³⁴⁷

“Not listening to me when I need help – not listening when I wanted to move group homes. Listen to me. Listen to me about my mental health. Listen to me when I ran away. Listen to me when I wanted one on one at my group home.”³⁴⁸

“Listen to the kids. Listen to where they are coming from. Don’t always just listen to social workers. They haven’t been in care, they don’t understand.”³⁴⁹

“Listen to the young person and their emotions - sometimes they won’t tell the whole story.”³⁵⁰

“OT be twisting words like a pretzel. You tell them one thing and they twist shit so much or they change it.”³⁵¹

“When I said what I wanted, no one listened to me.”³⁵²

Oranga Tamariki provides some opportunities for tamariki and rangatahi to be heard collectively.

While many individual tamariki and rangatahi are still struggling to be heard, **Oranga Tamariki has done a lot in the past few years to raise the voices of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi as a group.**

The Voices of Children and Young People Team in Oranga Tamariki National Office aims to include the voices of care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi within the organisation, for example via *Te Tohu o te Ora*, their national surveys of tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Oranga Tamariki also runs a Youth Advisory Group, a small group of care-experienced rangatahi aged 18 to 24, who share their thoughts and advice on Oranga Tamariki policies, practices and services to inform the work of Oranga Tamariki.

Within residences, VOYCE and Oranga Tamariki worked together in 2024 to develop guidelines for creating rangatahi councils in each residence. The councils bring together rangatahi representatives and kaimahi, including the Residence Manager. They allow rangatahi to have a say on how the residence operates to create a more positive environment and experience based on what is important to them. VOYCE says there is still work to do to make sure rangatahi councils are consistent and meaningful, but this is positive start.

We acknowledge the good work Oranga Tamariki is doing to help some tamariki and rangatahi in care be heard. We want all tamariki and rangatahi in the care or custody³⁵³ of Oranga Tamariki to have these opportunities. Tamariki and rangatahi in residences were excluded from the last *Te Tohu o te Ora* surveys. We say they need an opportunity to be heard to help improve Oranga Tamariki accountability around what tamariki and rangatahi in residences are experiencing. We’d like to see tamariki and rangatahi in all residences included in the 2025 survey.

³⁴⁶ VOYCE, *Submission: Ram Raid Offending*, 2023, p.7.

³⁴⁷ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.6.

³⁴⁸ Malatest, *Evaluation of Oranga Tamariki TSS*, 2024, p.20.

³⁴⁹ Malatest, *Just Sayin’ 2023*, 2023, p.60.

³⁵⁰ *Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.15.

³⁵¹ *Te Rōpū Kaitiaki, Korowai Aroha*, 2024, p.11.

³⁵² VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.6.

³⁵³ We don’t usually make the distinction between care and custody, because it doesn’t matter what their care status is, the New Zealand Government has a duty of care to all tamariki and rangatahi involved in the Oranga Tamariki system. We include ‘custody’ here, for the avoidance of any doubt that we mean ALL tamariki and rangatahi.



We also want a commitment from Oranga Tamariki to run these surveys more regularly, and to share the results sooner. The first one was completed by tamariki and rangatahi over 2019-20 and published in 2021. The second was completed over 2021-2022 and published 2023. We understand from Oranga Tamariki that the next survey was due to run from March 31st, 2025, with results published sometime in 2026. We are concerned that the time between surveys is getting longer. We’re also worried that this survey and other important research that Oranga Tamariki needs may not be being prioritised because of cost-cutting. That would not be okay.

Opportunities for collective advocacy are increasing for care-experienced rangatahi.

VOYCE supports care-experienced rangatahi to speak up and advocate for change on big issues that affect tamariki and rangatahi in care. The 6 Promises campaign is an example of this. Increasingly VOYCE is also supporting care-experienced rangatahi to make submissions, presentations, and speak to the media about issues rangatahi care about.

This collective advocacy is making a difference in some areas. For example, in 2024, following feedback from care-experienced rangatahi supported by VOYCE and Oranga Tamariki, Westpac NZ updated their processes to make it easier for 15- to 17-year-old rangatahi in care to access bank accounts.³⁵⁴

Care-experienced rangatahi say being involved with these system advocacy campaigns can be rewarding and empowering:

“The experience boosted my confidence – it made me believe I could speak to anyone... I loved everything about it – it was life-changing.”³⁵⁵

Rangatahi feel like the Government is not really listening when they speak.

“It’s just another example of the system saying it’s here to improve things for young people but not taking young peoples’ views into account.”³⁵⁶

In the past year VOYCE supported care-experienced rangatahi to make written and oral submissions to Parliament on the repeal of Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act, Oversight of Oranga Tamariki Bill, Treaty Principles Bill, Responding to Serious Youth Offending Bill, and others, but their expert advice is being ignored. Processes have also made it difficult for rangatahi to participate by giving very short notice for rangatahi to speak and reducing their speaking time.

One example of this is the Repeal of Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act. Section 7AA was created to help reduce the unfair treatment of tamariki Māori in the care system. It made the Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive responsible for working with iwi and accountable for better outcomes. When the Government said it planned to remove 7AA, care-experienced rangatahi spoke out strongly:

“This would be a huge step backwards for our tamariki. Section 7AA is crucial to protect tamariki Māori. Removing it would harm already vulnerable children.”³⁵⁷

“If section 7AA is repealed, it’s a green light for this Government to continue to sever our ties to whakapapa and culture, the most important connections to have throughout life. We are going to see more isolated, disconnected young people emerge from the care system struggling to move forward.”³⁵⁸

“I transitioned out of the care system before section 7AA saw the light of day. And let me tell you, throughout my time in state care, my culture, my heritage – my very essence – was systematically denied to me. I grew up without any connection to my whakapapa, lost in a sea of ignorance and silence.”³⁵⁹

“The repeal of section 7AA is simply another issue among a lengthy list of issues we have been vocal on with no assurance from this Government that our recommendations will be taken in good faith. Listen and hear us, for we are TIRED of repeating ourselves.”³⁶⁰

With thousands of others, they said removing 7AA would cause more harm to tamariki and rangatahi in care. They were ignored, and removal of 7AA has gone ahead.

³⁵⁴ Bevin, A., *A small win for youth in care just the start for bank account access*, Newsroom, 21 June 2024.

³⁵⁵ MartinJenkins, *Baseline Evaluation of VOYCE*, 2025, p.52.

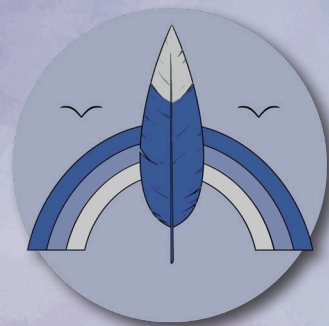
³⁵⁶ VOYCE, *Submission: Oranga Tamariki Oversight Bill*, 2020, p.5.

³⁵⁷ VOYCE, *Submission: Repeal of Section 7AA*, 2024, p.5.

³⁵⁸ VOYCE, *7AA Oral Submission*, 2025.

³⁵⁹ VOYCE, *Media Release: Why Haven’t They Heard Us? 7AA Repeal*, 9 April 2025.

³⁶⁰ VOYCE, *Media Release: Why Haven’t They Heard Us? 7AA Repeal*, 9 April 2025.



Promise 6

You promised to help me feel confident in who I am, and learn about my whakapapa, culture and language

E kī taurangi ana au kia whanake i tō tuakiri, kia mōhio ki tō whakapapa, kia whakatipu hoki i tō mana motuhake

This promise looks like:

Social workers doing their best to track down my family. Finding out my hapū and iwi. Giving me the opportunity to ask questions about where I'm from. My caregivers taking an interest in my whakapapa. It looks like helping us to construct our family tree. It looks like social workers learning more about how we came into care and trying their best to find safe adults I can speak to that are related to me. It's giving my caregivers the tools and encouragement to send me to kura kaupapa. It looks like being able to learn the language my ancestors spoke, and engaging in cultural traditions. It looks like no more care experienced rangatahi only finding out that they're Māori in their adulthood and having to make up for lost time. It's knowing my pepeha and my mihimihi because I have all that information available to me. It's social workers and caregivers taking an interest in what I value the most, and what I want to achieve. Being safe to express my gender identity and sexuality. It looks like following tikanga in hui and FGCs. It's placing me somewhere I will be safe to explore my identity without judgement or discrimination from my caregivers. It's being able to ask for information at any time and receiving it. It looks like proactively asking me what I know, and what I don't know about my background. It's knowing that I am in a crucial stage of development when it comes to my identity.

This promise feels like:

Knowing who I am and where I'm from. Being able to visit my marae. Feeling safe and supported to do so. Knowing that my caregivers won't judge me for wanting to reconnect with my roots and are interested and motivated to come on this journey with me. It feels like being able to say my pepeha proudly. It feels like my social workers and caregivers care about who I am and where I have come from. It feels like finding my own tūrangawaewae. It feels like I am known and seen. It feels like my identity is no longer a mystery. It's not feeling ashamed or anxious about my identity. It's constantly learning more about myself and being given the space to do so. It's being proud of my identity, and proud of the journey I've undertaken. It's feeling like I can go on to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma in my whānau. Feeling like I belong in my community, even if my caregivers are not a part of that community. It's not needing permission to be my whole self. It's tūhono and connection with other tamariki and rangatahi on the same journey as me. It's not being ashamed of being in care. It feels like liberation.

Keeping this promise means:

- We know who we are and where we come from
- We are connected with our whānau and families
- We feel accepted and supported to grow and express our identity

We know who we are and where we come from

Care-experienced tamariki and rangatahi are less likely than others to know their whakapapa.

“Before I went into care, I went to kura and knew my whakapapa. Then when I went into care I was sent to English speaking schools and disconnected from my whakapapa.”³⁶¹

“I still don't know my iwi.”³⁶²

“Even now, I couldn't tell you where my family comes from.”³⁶³

“Um, oh, I don't know about my Samoan side, but my dad told me that I was Samoan, you know.”³⁶⁴

“I am trying to build my knowledge of my whakapapa (genealogy), but it's challenging as Oranga Tamariki don't want to give it to me because they say it is confidential.”³⁶⁵



46% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they knew their ancestry or whakapapa. This decreased (got worse) from 53% two years before.³⁶⁶



In a survey of a slightly older age group, **69% of rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki said they knew their iwi.** They were less likely to know their iwi than rangatahi not involved with Oranga Tamariki.³⁶⁷

VOYCE receives many advocacy requests from tamariki and rangatahi wanting support to learn more about who they are and where they're from:

“Can you please reach out to OT about my father's whakapapa?”

“I want to register myself with my iwi.”

“I want to connect with my iwi, and see my marae.”

“I would like to know who my biological dad is.”

“I wanted my baby photos.”

“I want to know how old I really am.”³⁶⁸

Tamariki and rangatahi in care want more support to learn about their ancestry and culture.

“I wanted to know my pepeha but no one wants to help me out.”³⁶⁹

“I asked OT if I could learn te reo, they'd just say 'we'll see what we can do' and then they never followed up.”³⁷⁰

“My family tree, when I moved I didn't know about cousins or family and she [social worker] spent some of the time searching for stuff and showing me.”³⁷¹

“When I was removed from my family, I was in a very unfamiliar world... I didn't go down the path that I wanted to. I lost my language...”³⁷²

³⁶¹ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.7.

³⁶² VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.7.

³⁶³ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.7.

³⁶⁴ Oranga Tamariki, Talanoa Mai Tamariki, 2022, p.30.

³⁶⁵ Abuse in Care Inquiry, Whanaketia: Survivor Experiences, 2024, p.116.

³⁶⁶ Oranga Tamariki, Te Mātātaki 2021-22, 2023.

³⁶⁷ Fleming, T., Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki: Identity and Culture, 2021.

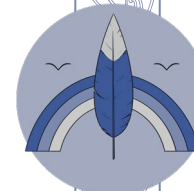
³⁶⁸ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-25.

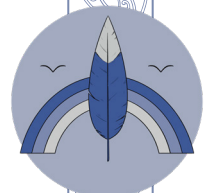
³⁶⁹ Human Rights Commission, Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23, 2024, p.47.

³⁷⁰ VOYCE, 6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024, p.7.

³⁷¹ Aroturuki Tamariki, Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025, p.44.

³⁷² VOYCE, Submission: Formally Recognise UNCRC Petition, 2023, p.15.





“I was ripped away from my whakapapa. No matter how much support I begged for, I was not reunited and taken to my marae or family.”³⁷³

“A regular child would be entitled to having a mum and dad, a nan and grandad, a brother or sister, but when Oranga Tamariki separates you from that and takes you away from your tūpuna, your family history, where you belong, your whenua, it’s like, ‘Fuck, who do I ring? Who do I go to? I feel so alone.’”³⁷⁴



Nearly half (49%) of rangatahi in care said they wanted to know more about their ancestry. Of those who wanted to know more, about half (49%) were being supported to find out more, but 64% of Pasifika rangatahi who wanted to know more said they were not being supported.³⁷⁵



47% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they ‘definitely’ had opportunities to learn about their culture, and another 29% said ‘yes, I think so’. This didn’t really change between 2020 and 2022.³⁷⁶

Some caregivers also want more support and information so they can help children in their care better understand their culture and where they come from.³⁷⁷ In the 2023 Oranga Tamariki Caregiver Survey, caregivers were less satisfied with the information Oranga Tamariki provided about the child’s cultural identity than the previous year.³⁷⁸

TE AO MĀORI IN RESIDENCES

Tamariki and rangatahi in residences and group homes have mixed opportunities to learn about te ao Māori.

“Being Māori here [in residence] – feel proud. Got to learn more about my culture. Knew a little bit before but now know 100x more about my culture.”³⁷⁹

“We learn about our whakapapa – learn about that with [teachers in residence]. I knew it from my mum – I am [iwi] and [iwi]. Sometimes I get asked to lead the karakia kai and mihi whakatau – and to teach the teachers.”³⁸⁰

While some rangatahi feel well supported to learn about their culture in residences, Mana Mokopuna said there is a general lack of vision and direction to address cultural needs in residences. They said upholding tikanga often fell to kaimahi Māori working in residences instead of being led by Oranga Tamariki.³⁸¹

- At Korowai Manaaki, Mana Mokopuna said there was no support for tamariki and rangatahi to engage in their culture, learn their whakapapa and kōrero te reo Māori. They made a recommendation about this in 2022 and found no progress in 2024.³⁸²
- At Epuni, tamariki and rangatahi were engaged in an activity run by kaimahi using tukutuku panels and taonga Māori to connect tamariki and rangatahi to their identity and teach new skills.³⁸³
- At Kaitiaki Remand Home, a rangatahi had completed a 12-week course on identity and belonging that their social worker arranged, but it was hard to keep this up because there were no ongoing programmes in the whare to support rangatahi Māori.³⁸⁴
- At Te Maioha, te ao and mātauranga Māori were recognised as important across the whole residence. Some kaimahi spoke te reo Māori with rangatahi and encouraged sharing their whakapapa.³⁸⁵

Support for tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care to connect with their whakapapa seems to be decreasing.



Oranga Tamariki said **91% of tamariki and rangatahi Māori had an iwi affiliation recorded.** There was no real change between 2022 and 2024.³⁸⁶



Although iwi are recorded for a high number of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care, Oranga Tamariki said there was **evidence of support to establish, maintain or strengthen connections with their marae, hapū or iwi for only 42% of tamariki and rangatahi Māori.** This dropped from 52% the previous year.³⁸⁷ By December 2024 it had dropped even further to 39%.³⁸⁸

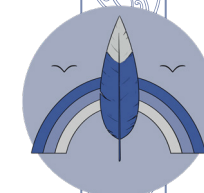
Oranga Tamariki employs Kairaranga ā-whānau Māori specialist roles to help connect tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care with their culture. Their role is to identify and engage whānau, hapū and iwi members in decision-making for their tamariki and help Oranga Tamariki staff include cultural knowledge in their practice. However, in 2024 Oranga Tamariki reported that the number of Māori specialists had decreased and said, “this is likely to be due to our recruitment freeze as organisational structures were being finalised”.³⁸⁹

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care exposed the deep cultural harm that the removal of tamariki and rangatahi Māori from their whānau has caused. The Waitangi Tribunal also highlighted how the loss of whakapapa, reo, tikanga, and removal from Māori environments has left generations of tamariki and rangatahi Māori feeling lost and disconnected.³⁹⁰ We can’t understand how and why this is still happening.

We want to know why more than half of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they did not know their whakapapa or ancestry in 2022, and why this went backwards. Why were only half of the tamariki and rangatahi who wanted to know more about their whakapapa or ancestry supported to learn this? And why was there so little support for Pacific tamariki and rangatahi in particular? Why were less than half of tamariki and rangatahi Māori supported to connect with their marae, hapū and iwi, and why did this go backwards? And how many Kairaranga ā-whānau Māori specialist roles are there now to try and help improve these results?

We call on the Government to reinstate section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act. These results clearly show that this protection is needed to hold our institutions accountable against the systemic racism that was proven by the Abuse in Care Inquiry.

“Alienating us from our culture and language is another form of abuse... We should not grow up on our whenua feeling as though we don’t belong. We should not have to suffer through our childhoods and teenage years struggling to find our place of belonging - because our connection has always been there.”³⁹¹



³⁷³ VOYCE, *Submission: Repeal of Section 7AA*, 2024, p.7.

³⁷⁴ VOYCE, *Honour my World*, 2022, p.35.

³⁷⁵ Malatest, *Just Sayin’* 2021, 2021.

³⁷⁶ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki* 2021-22, 2023.

³⁷⁷ Oranga Tamariki, *Talanoa Mai Tamariki*, 2022.

³⁷⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *2023 Caregiver Survey*, 2024.

³⁷⁹ ERO, *Learning in Residential Care*, 2021, p.26.

³⁸⁰ ERO, *Learning in Residential Care*, 2021, p.26.

³⁸¹ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23*, 2024.

³⁸² Mana Mokopuna, *Korowai Manaaki OPCAT Monitoring February 2024*, 2024.

³⁸³ Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024*, 2024.

³⁸⁴ Mana Mokopuna, *Kaitiaki OPCAT Monitoring October 2023*, 2023.

³⁸⁵ Mana Mokopuna, *Te Maioha OPCAT Monitoring July 2023*, 2023.

³⁸⁶ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024; Oranga Tamariki, *Section 7AA Report*, 2023.

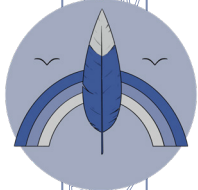
³⁸⁷ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.

³⁸⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Performance Report Quarter Two 2024-25 as at December 2024*, 2025.

³⁸⁹ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024, p.40.

³⁹⁰ Waitangi Tribunal, *He Pāharakeke, He Rito Whakakīkīngā, Whāruarua: Oranga Tamariki Urgent Inquiry (Wai 2195)*, 2021.

³⁹¹ VOYCE, *Submission: Formally Recognise UNCRC Petition*, 2023, p.15.



We are connected with our whānau and families

Many tamariki and rangatahi in care now have good contact with their whānau and families, including in residences.

- “When I go... to see caregivers I get to go see mum too because she lives nearby... The staff here drive us where we need to go. I video call my dad... he is coming over to see me soon.”³⁹²
- “Yeah, we have phones and that, so we choose when we see them [our whānau]. We can go out on weekends and stuff with them.”³⁹³
- “I call them [mum and brother]... I go up... and they come down every three weeks...”³⁹⁴
- “[Talking to family] helps me get through being here [in the group home].”³⁹⁵
- “She [social worker] is our favourite because she helps us see our mum and dad.”³⁹⁶



About three-quarters of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they got to keep in touch with their birth family/whānau as much as they would like (52% ‘yes, definitely’ and 23% ‘yes, I think so’). This improved slightly between 2020 and 2022.³⁹⁷



Oranga Tamariki said there was evidence that **87% of tamariki and rangatahi in care were supported to have contact with their immediate family, whānau or family group.**³⁹⁸

In 2023 Aroturuki Tamariki found that Oranga Tamariki supported most tamariki and rangatahi to maintain and build connections to whānau, and in 2024 they said this was still an area of good practice. When they talked to tamariki and rangatahi, they heard about the importance of having access to a phone so tamariki and rangatahi could call or text their whānau when they wanted to.³⁹⁹ However, more recently they heard from kaimahi that funding cuts might affect their ability to support whānau connections. Kaimahi said it was hard to get travel costs approved.⁴⁰⁰

In residences, Mana Mokopuna found most tamariki and rangatahi had good contact with whānau.⁴⁰¹

At Epuni they found whānau contact and connection to be “outstanding” with regular phone calls, video calls and visits. This was a significant improvement on earlier times when VOYCE raised a number of advocacy cases about problems with phone calls to and from Epuni. Mana Mokopuna said Epuni helped pay for whānau from out of town to visit and has a place where they can stay overnight.⁴⁰² They also said whānau contact was very well supported at Whakatakapōkai and Puketāi.⁴⁰³ However this was not the case at all residences and remand homes:

- “I haven’t seen my mum since I’ve been here. I keep asking, they say yes, but then they said to me that my mum doesn’t want to see me – but then I ask my mum, and she says she misses me and wants to see me – but she doesn’t know who to speak to, to see me.”⁴⁰⁴
- “... Our whānau isn’t allowed to come here to visit. Not sure why. Wish they could come here to visit.”⁴⁰⁵

³⁹² Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*, p.52.

³⁹³ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*, p.52.

³⁹⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.43.

³⁹⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.43.

³⁹⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.44.

³⁹⁷ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22, 2023*.

³⁹⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24, 2024*.

³⁹⁹ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*; Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*.

⁴⁰⁰ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*.

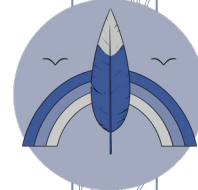
⁴⁰¹ Human Rights Commission, *Monitoring Places of Detention 2022-23, 2024*.

⁴⁰² Mana Mokopuna, *Epuni OPCAT Monitoring April 2024, 2024*.

⁴⁰³ Mana Mokopuna, *Whakatakapōkai OPCAT Monitoring February 2024, 2024*; Mana Mokopuna, *Puketāi OPCAT Monitoring December 2023, 2024*.

⁴⁰⁴ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2022-23, 2024*, p.52.

⁴⁰⁵ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.44.



Oranga Tamariki sets an appropriately high standard for themselves here. They aim for at least 95% of children in care for more than three months to have a plan for establishing, maintaining or strengthening connections with members of their family or whānau. Although this is not quite being reached, we acknowledge the high bar set and the progress in this area. We hope continued good progress will not be affected by cost-cutting measures.

When Oranga Tamariki asked tamariki and rangatahi in care if they got to keep in touch with their whānau as much as they wanted, a small number (3%) said they did not want contact with their whānau. This is probably because they have been hurt in some way by their families. Sometimes it will not be appropriate to have contact and this must always be their choice, but when rangatahi want it, we think Oranga Tamariki has a responsibility to help them heal and reconnect with their families in a healthy way. We would like to see more of this.

“My social worker has kept the relationship with my dad going, by setting up visits, and asking me how things are going. We did little steps from the start. We [dad and I] started seeing each other monthly to begin with, then fortnightly, and then overnight stays. It makes me feel so good, ‘cos I hadn’t seen dad in a really long time, and I actually missed him.”⁴⁰⁶

“That [connection with whānau] has already happened since I’ve been here [supported accommodation], because I’m getting a break from [mother and boyfriend], instead of them being in my face all the time. I’ve actually built a better relationship with my family being away from them than if I had been around them all the time.”⁴⁰⁷

Being with siblings is very important for many tamariki and rangatahi in care, but some are kept apart.

- “I wasn’t even allowed to stay with my siblings once a month.”⁴⁰⁸
- “I was only allowed to see my sister six times a year.”⁴⁰⁹
- “I want... me and my sisters to be together and not be separated from each other.”⁴¹⁰



Oranga Tamariki said **75% of siblings in out of home placements were placed with at least one sibling** at the end of December 2024. This was slightly over their goal of at least 73%.⁴¹¹ This means at least a quarter of siblings were separated.

Over a two-year period to March 2025, VOYCE received 63 advocacy requests from tamariki and rangatahi who wanted contact with their siblings. They said:

- “I want to see my brother/sister more.”
- “I want to live with my brother.”
- “Can you let my social worker know that I want to see my parents and brother more often?”
- “I want to know who my brother is.”
- “I don’t want to leave my brother.”
- “I miss my siblings being together.”
- “My siblings at my birthday.”
- “I want to go back home to help look after my siblings.”⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁶ Aroturuki Tamariki, *Experiences of Care 2023-24, 2025*, p.44.

⁴⁰⁷ Oranga Tamariki, *Supported Accommodation Review, 2023*, p.10.

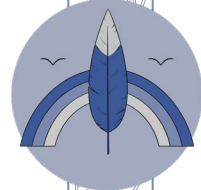
⁴⁰⁸ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024*, p.2.

⁴⁰⁹ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission, 2024*, p.2.

⁴¹⁰ Fleming, T. et al., *The Voices of Young People Involved with Oranga Tamariki, 2022*, p.3.

⁴¹¹ Oranga Tamariki, *Performance Report Quarter Two 2024/25 as at 31 December 2024, 2025*.

⁴¹² VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes 2023-25.



The Ombudsman also highlighted the importance of being with siblings. With the help of a VOYCE Kaiwhakamana, two siblings living with a relative wrote to the Ombudsman for help bringing them together with their other siblings. Under Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act, the tamariki had the right to access their whānau. Oranga Tamariki agreed to more visits and video calls, buying birthday and Christmas presents for siblings and family therapy for the whānau.⁴¹³

We feel accepted and supported to grow and express our identity

Some tamariki and rangatahi in care do not feel acceptance and belonging.



71% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said the adults they lived with ‘definitely’ accepted them for who they are, and another 26% said ‘yes, I think so’. This increased slightly between 2020 and 2022.⁴¹⁴



62% of tamariki and rangatahi in care said they ‘definitely’ had somewhere they felt they belong, and another 27% said ‘yes, I think so’. This increased slightly between 2020 and 2022. However, more than one in ten said they did not have somewhere they felt like they belong (9% ‘no, not really’ and 3% ‘no, not at all’).⁴¹⁵

This is important. We want to see a significant improvement in the number of tamariki and rangatahi who ‘definitely’ feel like they are accepted and belong. Tamariki and rangatahi in care need extra care to make sure they feel acceptance and belonging. It is very important that we are placed with safe and loving caregivers. We want to see a strong focus on recruiting open-minded and non-judgemental caregivers who respect and accept us for who we are. We need caregivers who understand the importance of nurturing belonging and connection, who will make sure we feel secure no matter what our identity.

Some tamariki and rangatahi are not culturally safe with the caregivers and workers they are placed with.

“I have never been with a Māori foster family and it caused me to hate that Māori side of me to the point where I tried buying online soap that had bleach in it so I could bleach my skin to be whiter so I could fit into the families I was living with.”⁴¹⁶

“I was told that I couldn’t learn my language because apparently the lord doesn’t like the haka.”⁴¹⁷

“I don’t want my social worker to stop me from learning Māori.”⁴¹⁸

The Abuse in Care Inquiry found that the State almost always failed to consider or recognise te ao Māori, tikanga, te reo and mātauranga Māori when removing and placing tamariki and rangatahi Māori. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori placed in Pākehā value-based institutions often experienced severe abuse and neglect. Māori survivors of abuse in care often experienced disconnection and isolation from their whānau, hapū, iwi and whenua, and their ability to access and participate in te ao Māori. These impacts were felt intergenerationally, particularly by survivors’ whānau, mokopuna and collectively by hapū and iwi.⁴¹⁹

The Waitangi Tribunal also highlighted that the State has consistently failed to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi through actions like placing tamariki and rangatahi Māori with non-Māori caregivers, and removal of pēpi, tamariki and rangatahi Māori from the whānau.⁴²⁰

⁴¹³ Boshier, P. *Children in Care: Complaints to the Ombudsman 2019-23*, 2024.

⁴¹⁴ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

⁴¹⁵ Oranga Tamariki, *Te Mātātaki 2021-22*, 2023.

⁴¹⁶ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023, p.23.

⁴¹⁷ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.7.

⁴¹⁸ VOYCE Kaiwhakamana Notes, 2023-25.

⁴¹⁹ Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, *Whanaketia: Through Pain and Trauma, From Darkness to Light*, 2024.

⁴²⁰ Waitangi Tribunal, *He Pāharakeke, He Rito Whakakikīnga, Whāruarua: Oranga Tamariki Urgent Inquiry (Wai 2195)*, 2021.

Placement of tamariki and rangatahi with whānau must continue to be prioritised. If, however, there is no option but to place tamariki and rangatahi Māori with non-Māori caregivers, it is essential that caregivers receive strong cultural safety training and support. This includes understanding of te ao Māori, tikanga and the importance of whakapapa. Caregivers must have easy access to people who can help ensure the cultural needs of tamariki and rangatahi are met. Oranga Tamariki has a responsibility to uphold the rights of tamariki and rangatahi Māori to grow up in an environment that nurtures who they are and where they are from. Without the protection of 7AA, how are you ensuring this happens?

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are often not safe or free to express their identity in care.

“When I came out, it was your workers who “beat the gay” out of me.”⁴²¹

“When I came out as queer, I was told that it was because I’d been abused, not because I was genuinely queer.”⁴²²

“Anytime I tried to tell them [residence staff] hey you are using the wrong pronouns, or you are using the wrong name they would get really angry and say you weren’t born with those pronouns, or you weren’t born with that name.”⁴²³

“I was never able to access clothing I felt comfortable in.”⁴²⁴

“My first transition worker, we made the plan of getting my hair cut and getting the support, because my other caregiver was all like, ‘You can’t be trans; I don’t support.’”⁴²⁵

Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi have high rates of involvement with Oranga Tamariki and often face greater challenges than cisgender and heterosexual rangatahi involved with Oranga Tamariki. Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi often have extra low rates of feeling physically and emotionally safe and cared for and have extra high mental health and healthcare needs.⁴²⁶

The *Identify Survey* found that rangatahi with Oranga Tamariki involvement were more likely to have experienced sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts (sometimes called conversion practices). One in twenty rangatahi with Oranga Tamariki involvement (5.1%) said they had experienced this, which was a much higher rate than those who had never been involved with Oranga Tamariki (2.9%).⁴²⁷

Oranga Tamariki is working towards making care safer for takatāpui and rainbow tamariki and rangatahi.

The *Making Ourselves Visible* report, published in 2023, made 46 recommendations to improve the experiences of takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care. Oranga Tamariki publicly accepted all the recommendations and established a Senior Advisor Rainbow Voices role to form an external takatāpui and rainbow advisory group.⁴²⁸ The group is expected to be in place in the second half of 2025.

We echo takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi from the *Making Ourselves Visible* report when we say we want every takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi in care to feel secure, loved, and not just accepted, but celebrated in their identity. Does the caregiver approval process allow for this? We want to see real change because of *Making Ourselves Visible*. We acknowledge the work Oranga Tamariki is doing in this area and look forward to seeing results that are taken seriously at the highest levels of the organisation.

⁴²¹ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.7.

⁴²² VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.7.

⁴²³ Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023, p.26.

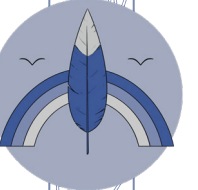
⁴²⁴ VOYCE, *6 Promises Petition Oral Submission*, 2024, p.2.

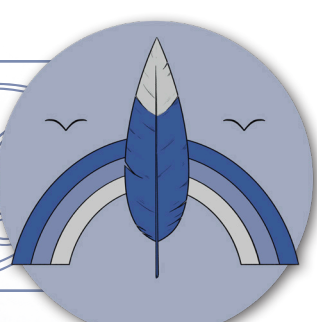
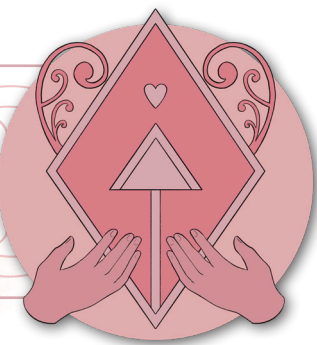
⁴²⁵ VOYCE, *Honour my World*, 2022, p.39.

⁴²⁶ King-Finau, T. et al., *The Health and Wellbeing of Takatāpui and Rainbow Rangatahi Involved with Oranga Tamariki*, 2022; Fenaughty, J. et al., *Identify Survey: Community and Advocacy Report*, 2022; Clunie, M. et al., *Making Ourselves Visible*, 2023.

⁴²⁷ Fenaughty, J. et al., *Identity and Culture among Young People with Oranga Tamariki Involvement in the Identify Survey*, 2024.

⁴²⁸ Oranga Tamariki, *Annual Report 2023-24*, 2024.





Kei te rongo koe? Are you listening?

“As an organisation with such an important role for tamariki safety and wellbeing, it is important that we are scrutinised, challenged, and held to account by Crown monitoring agencies, but also by communities, the public, the media, and ourselves.” – Oranga Tamariki¹⁴²⁹

Kia ora Oranga Tamariki, we agree. But you missed us off your list. We should probably have been at the top, don't you think?

Because most important of all, you must be accountable to tamariki and rangatahi who are, and have been, in your care.

However, we want to be very clear: This report is about tamariki and rangatahi in the care of Oranga Tamariki, but it is not just about Oranga Tamariki. Every agency whose actions (or lack of action) impact tamariki and rangatahi in care must be accountable for acting on this report. This is your responsibility as our State 'parents'. If you remove a child from their parents because they need better care, you need to provide better care.

We deserve better. Do better.

Your indifference so far means we are still waiting for basic rights. To call it indifference might sound like harsh judgement, but we were told the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan would make a difference. That agencies would finally work together to make sure we have what we need. Yet we're still waiting.

And while we wait, we're living in motels or locked in secure residences. We're shut out of schools, not welcome. We're hurting ourselves and begging for mental health support. We're losing our identity, our connections, our hope. And we are trailing far behind our peers who are not in care.

All we see are broken promises.

We called this report *Kei te rongo koe? Are you listening?* In it, we share what being cared for looks like and feels like for tamariki and rangatahi in care. In 2027, when we issue our next scorecard, we expect to see evidence that you have listened. We expect real movement on the things tamariki and rangatahi have told you through this report are important them.

In this report, we've shown **where your focus needs to be in 2025 and 2026** to do better. We've handed you an opportunity to show, through your next actions, that you're listening. That you care.

Through this report we make three key calls:

1. Put us ahead of politics

We call on current and future governments to work together across parties to take politics out of the care system.

Put our lives ahead of party policies and election strategies. We need your decisions to be based on evidence and sound advice, not public opinion or what you think voters want to hear. When progress is being made, we need you to continue on that track. Stop wasting time and money undoing things that weren't your idea or re-doing work because it doesn't say what you want it to. We need you to be bigger than that because if we continue to change direction every three years, this very broken care system will never be fixed.

2. Make us a priority

We call on the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Development, and Housing and Urban Development, as well as Health New Zealand and Kainga Ora to add children in care to your policy, planning and funding priorities.

All evidence clearly shows we need extra help, so we have a fair chance to do as well as our peers who are not in care. We ask you to do everything in your power to help us succeed in life. We need you to do this work together with Oranga Tamariki so we don't keep falling through the cracks while you argue over whose responsibility we are. By taking us into State care, you all became responsible.

3. Tell us how you're going to do better

We call on Oranga Tamariki to coordinate a response to this report from across the agencies we have named.

We call on the Minister for Children to ensure we get a response from agencies.

Throughout the report, care-experienced rangatahi have highlighted key areas where we think greater accountability is needed. We've asked questions, pointed to urgent need for action, and provided direction. We want you to answer our questions, respond to our findings, and tell us what you are doing to improve your scores before the next scorecard in 2027. We'd also like to hear the Minister's own response.

We also have a call for all of Aotearoa: We are all part of 'the system'. We all have a part to play. Our actions need to make it clear to tamariki and rangatahi in care that they belong, we believe in them, we care for them, they are loved.



Nō reira, hei whakatau i tēnei pūrongo, mā te titiro whakamuri ka koke whakamua

Ko te ihi, te wehi, te mana, te tapu, me te oranga o ā tātou mokopuna te take

Tēna mātika mai rā, maranga mai kia tika, kia pono

Kia tina –

Tina

Haumi e! Hui e!

Taiki e!

In conclusion to this report, we have reminded ourselves of what has taken place and now focus on what lies ahead

Because the ihi, the wehi, the mana, the tapu and the wellbeing of future generations is at stake

So stand up, rise up by honouring the truth

Keep improving –

Make it so

Unite and bring all together

It is done!

Abbreviations, kupu Māori and other words used in this report

Aroha: Love, compassion, empathy

Cisgender: A person whose gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth

ERO: The Education Review Office – Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

FGC: Family Group Conference

Hapū: Kinship group, sub-tribe

Hīkoi: March or walk

ICAMHS: Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

IDI: Integrated Data Infrastructure, a large database in Aotearoa that links information from different government agencies

Ihi: Force, energy or power

Iwi: Extended kinship group, tribe

Kai: Food, meal

Kaimahi: Staff

Kaitiaki: Guardian

Kaiwhakamana: Person who empowers or supports others, in this context – VOYCE advocate

Kupu: Word or words

Kura kaupapa: State schools that operate within a whānau-based Māori philosophy and deliver the curriculum in te reo Māori

Mahi: Work

Mahi Toi: Artwork

Mamae: Pain and sadness

Mana: Spiritually sanctioned or endorsed influence, power and authority

Mana Mokopuna - Children and Young People's Commission, formerly the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC)

Mātauranga Māori: Māori knowledge, wisdom

Mihi/Mihimihi: An introduction at the beginning of a gathering used to establish links with other people present and let people know who you are, and where you come from

Motu: Island, or country in this context

MSD: Ministry of Social Development

NASC: Needs Assessment and Service Coordination – NASC services are contracted to provide disability assessment and coordinate disability services

OTAP: Oranga Tamariki Action Plan, a commitment from government agencies to collaborate and deliver better outcomes for children and young people in Aotearoa with the greatest needs.

OT: Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children

OPCAT: Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, an international agreement that helps protect people from being mistreated in places they are held like secure residences

Pepeha: A way of introducing yourself in Māori, telling a story of the places and people you are connected to

Pēpi: Baby or babies

Pono: To be absolutely true, unfeigned, genuine

Rainbow: An umbrella term describing people of diverse sexualities, genders, and variations of sex characteristics

Rangatahi: Young person or young people

Rangatahi Māori: Young people of Māori descent

Residence/Secure residence: A locked facility which can be either for care and protection or youth justice and which must adhere to the Oranga Tamariki (Residential Care) Regulations 1996

Royal Commission of Inquiry or the Inquiry: The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions

Taonga: Treasure, anything prized

Takatāpui: A Māori word that traditionally means 'intimate friend of the same sex'. It has since been embraced to encompass tāngata Māori who identify with diverse genders, sexualities or variations of sex characteristics

Tamariki: Children

Tamariki Māori: Children of Māori descent

Tapu: Sacredness

Te ao Māori: A Māori holistic worldview that focuses on interconnections and is grounded in customary values and knowledge

Te reo Māori: Māori language

The Rapid Review: A rapid review of Oranga Tamariki Youth Justice and Care and Protection residences released in September 2023

Teina: A younger sibling, or mentee

Tika: What is right/good for any particular situation

TSS: Transition Support Service

Tuakana: An older sibling, or mentor

Tūrangawaewae: Place of belonging, location of identity through kinship and ancestry

VOYCE: VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai, the independent advocacy organisation for tamariki and rangatahi who are, or have been in care

Wānanga: To meet, discuss, deliberate, consider

Wehi: Respect

Wero: Challenge

Whaikaha: Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People

Whakapapa: Ancestry, familial relationships

Whakarongo: Listen or listening

Whakarongo mai: Listen to me

Whakawhanaungatanga: Process of establishing relationships

Whānau: People who are biologically linked or share whakapapa

Whare: House

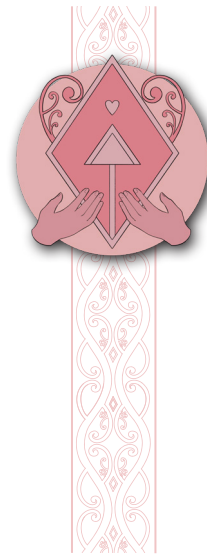
Mahi Toi (Artwork) used in this report

Promise 1: You promised to take care of me and make sure I have the things I need: *Pātiki*

In toi Māori, the diamond shape and the kowhaiwhai design, both called pātiki, symbolise the flounder. These designs represent manaakitanga - care, support, and respect - and the abundance of kai (food), which reflect the essential needs of young people in care.

By incorporating these symbols, the promise of being cared for and having our needs met is honoured. Manaakitanga embodies the ideal of love, care, and support, while the abundance of kai highlights the importance of meeting basic needs for those in care. Together, they express the nurturing and security every young person deserves.

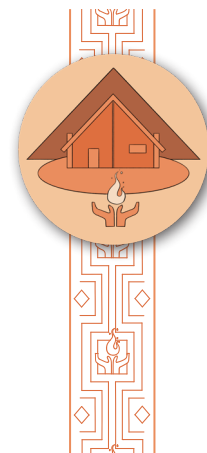
The main icon features hands holding the pātiki design, with a pātaka (food storehouse) and a manawa (heart) at its core. These elements symbolise love, shelter and the nurturing care young people deserve. Together, the icon and the kowhaiwhai embody the promise to provide for and support young people in care, making sure their needs are met with respect and care.



Promise 2: You promised to make sure I have safety and stability in my life: *Ahikā*

The ahikā design draws inspiration from the geometric tukutuku patterns (latticework panels) found in the walls of a wharenuī, symbolising strong, supportive structures. In the tāniko, the hands and fire from the main icon are placed within a sturdy box, representing the warmth and security of a community gathered around the fire, symbolising continuous care and manaakitanga.

Ahikā refers to those who tend to their people's home fires. These fires are rarely, if ever, left to burn out. The fire's steady presence emphasises the right of young people in care to feel safe and stable. This design not only honours their right to safety but also reflects the determination to provide unwavering support for their wellbeing.



Promise 3: You promised to help me with my education goals and dreams: *Ngaru*

The ngaru (wave) design is a traditional pattern, inspired by the flowing patterns of water that are made around a waka (boat) as it moves through the waves. The movement represents the pursuit of education, progress and the pursuit of our aspirations.

The inclusion of a pukapuka (book), whetū (stars), and rau (fern) in the main icon represents both indigenous and Western approaches to knowledge and education. A star placed within the swirling tāniko ties the two themes together, reminding us that young people in care should be encouraged to have high aspirations for their lives, and the tools to achieve them. This design emphasises the importance of nurturing both their educational journey and personal dreams.



Promise 4: You promised to support me with healthcare when I need it: *Koru*

In this kowhaiwhai and icon, you see the use of the koru, one of the most iconic designs in kowhaiwhai. This represents hauora - holistic health and wellbeing - as well as balance and the continuous cycle of life.

In this artwork, the koru curves gently to mirror the shapes of a heart and kawakawa leaves, symbolising healing through both traditional and Western practices. The integration of these two systems of knowledge highlights the importance of providing comprehensive healthcare for young people in care, ensuring their physical and emotional wellbeing is nurtured.



Promise 5: You promised to listen and include me when decisions are made about me: *Ngutu Kākā*

This tāniko is an adaptation of the ngutu kākā design, which translates as the “beak of the kākā parrot,” which represents the power of using one's voice. In our version, the traditional beak shapes are replaced with interlocking koru, emphasising the idea of weaving stories together and fostering real conversations.

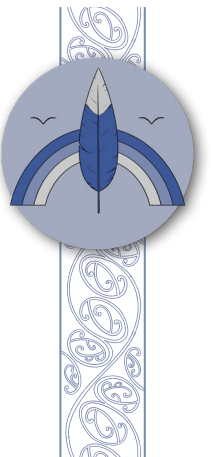
On the main icon, the central motif of a mouth, along with the phrase “Whakarongo mai” (Listen to me), reinforces the importance of not just hearing, but truly listening to young people in care. This design celebrates the promise to involve them in decisions that affect their lives and ensure their voices are always heard and valued.



Promise 6: You promised to help me feel confident in who I am, and learn about my whakapapa, culture and language: *Koiri*

The koiri design used in this kowhaiwhai symbolises the flourishing of nature and the interconnectedness of all things. In the context of this, it reflects the significance of understanding one's identity, whakapapa (heritage), and culture. Knowing where you come from strengthens your sense of self, fostering confidence and wellbeing.

The main icon features a huia feather, which symbolises leadership, mana, and the sacredness of one's identity, while the rainbow represents new beginnings, and the beauty of diversity. This design honours the promise to support young people in discovering and embracing their culture and identity, fostering pride and belonging.



To create the imagery seen in this report, VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai collaborated with Story Studio. Directed by award-winning illustrator Story Hemi-Morehouse (Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Koata, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāi Tahu, Te Ātiawa); a leading creative within Aotearoa/New Zealand's media and publishing industries. We knew that the kaupapa of this report would be in safe hands with her.

We want to mihi to Story for the time and aroha that she put into turning our dreams for the 6 Promises into a visual reality.

www.storystudio.co.nz



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