

Improving wellbeing outcomes for young people in youth justice

The findings of the Youth Pathways report support our experience that there are young people and whānau involved in youth justice whose lives and needs are extremely complex. Many have had contact with several government agencies years before entering youth justice, including experience of the Care and Protection system.

The most recent set of Youth Justice Indicators show offending rates, seriousness of offending and appearances in the Youth Court have all declined over the last 10 years. Even with raising of the youth justice age to include 17-year-olds since July 2019, numbers going through the Court are as low as they have been since 2000.

Stopping young people reoffending entirely is unlikely due to the serious nature of cases and offending history dealt with. However, Oranga Tamariki interventions coincide with a reduction in the frequency and seriousness of reoffending, and we have a big part to play in prevention.

The future the youth justice team is working towards is to develop into a fully preventative, restorative and rehabilitative service with strong whānau and victim-centred practice, equity for all, and the trust and confidence of communities and the public.

That means fewer young people coming into the system and getting to know those that do better so that we can provide bespoke, wraparound care that meets their needs. It also means more support for whānau and victims.

What we are doing differently, compared to 2016 (pre Oranga Tamariki):

- We have increased our focus on the prevention of offending and reoffending and are engaging with mana whenua, whānau and community stakeholders across New Zealand to design and implement up to 12 prevention-based programmes (Youth Inclusion Programmes) that are regionally led but designed and delivered locally. These follow in the footsteps of locally-initiated programmes like Oranga Rangatahi.
- The Success on Bail Work Programme currently underway in Youth Justice includes several initiatives to ensure that bail for rangatahi is successful, safe, and sustainable.
- We now have a much broader range of residential services available for young people, including 16 homes based in the community that provide safe places for rangatahi on bail and remand, we have made significant changes in our secure residences, and we are opening a residence in South Auckland that will support vulnerable teenage boys.
- We are working more closely with other agencies, especially Police to ensure that young people don't enter that system or aren't escalated unnecessarily. That includes introducing the Remand Options Investigations Tool, MOUs for community homes, and a dedicated team member sitting within the Police National Command Centre.
- Developing innovative new programmes and interventions with community organisations that blend traditional Māori approaches with tauwiwi and Western approaches. These include Pae Whakatapuranga/Functional Family Therapy - Cross Generations and The Whiti ki te Ora/Kaupapa Māori Programme and the pūrākau-based Behaviour Change Programme in our secure residences.