

Kāhu Matarau – **Learning and insights in a** **collaborative initiative to provide** **Intensive Response**

First year of implementation – September 2023

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people and their whānau.

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Executive summary

‘Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari, he toa takitini.’

‘My strength is not that of mine alone, but of the many.’

Intensive Response¹ was a new approach Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children initiated in 2019 and involved active partnerships with Iwi, Māori, and Pacific organisations and the wider community sector to improve support to whānau whose tamariki are at most risk.

Kāhu Matarau is a collaborative initiative that was implemented in the Christchurch East Oranga Tamariki site service area, in the the Ngāi Tūāhuriri rohe. Five community agencies, the Oranga Tamariki Christchurch East site, and mana whenua (providing input at governance level) form the collaborative model.

The service provides intensive, intentional, and practical support to whānau at risk who are involved with Oranga Tamariki for care and protection concerns and have agreed to a referral to Kāhu Matarau. Guided by the Kāhu Matarau Practice Framework to ‘uphold mana tamaiti and whānau voice every step of the journey’, the work is implemented using a strengths-based approach with whānau, whānau-led goals and plans, and intensive wrap-around supports.

A developmental evaluation sat alongside the establishment of Kāhu Matarau to support ongoing reflection, learning, and adaptation of the initiative as it was being designed and implemented. The final phase of the evaluation is this report which aims to provide insights into the implementation of the initiative after its first year and, in particular, incorporates whānau feedback.

There are many emerging and positive outcomes for some whānau who have participated in Kāhu Matarau. A key finding is that a trusted, non-judgemental relationship, that is well-resourced, is an important lever for positive change.

Whānau feedback indicates that kaimahi have been critical to these outcomes. For the whānau interviewed, the Kāhu Matarau service is the kaimahi. Kaimahi are perceived as separate from Oranga Tamariki and more neutral in their approach, and in response, whānau have become more open and accepting of help and support.

Whānau engage and participate in the service because they can connect and establish a trusted relationship with kaimahi. Kaimahi are also firm, patient, persistent, and non-judgemental.

So it follows that recruiting the right people as kaimahi, with the skills to engage, and providing them with resources to work intensively with whānau, is key to enabling whānau to overcome significant challenges and move toward leading their own change.

¹ Initially called Intensive Intervention

Comparing the original intent of the co-design with what is occurring now shows there are differences between what was envisioned, designed, and hoped for and what has been implemented so far. For example elements such as peer supports and kāhui kaumātua roles have not so far been developed, but should be revisited as whānau may benefit from developing similarly trusted relationships in the community to those they have with kaimahi.

Significant investment of time, commitment, and the right mix of skills across both kaimahi and leadership/management is required to make a multi-layered collaboration like Kāhu Matarau work. Despite a number of challenges, both managers and kaimahi have worked hard and invested a lot of time and commitment into the first year.

The backbone of administrative support was noted as important to ensuring the collaboration was well supported – however, this support no longer exists. The current commitment and effort by the six organisations, their managers, and kaimahi is commendable. Continuing to nurture these relationships should be prioritised, as this will support the collaboration. A focus on maintaining these good relationships, as well as regular review of the relationships and processes within the collaboration, is needed going forward.

Whānau voice has been a key element in this co-design project from the outset. A continued focus on ensuring whānau voice is at the centre of any future development of the initiative will ensure that Kāhu Matarau continues to meet whānau where they are.

Collaboration is an ongoing exercise in relationship building, commitment, transparency, and communication. The intensive model of support delivered in Kāhu Matarau is supported by these relational elements and appears to be growing into a good example of a whānau-focused collaborative initiative that is enabling whānau to overcome challenges and move toward leading their own change.

Two important lessons for other collaborations such as this are the importance of acknowledging the extensive effort required to develop and implement a new collaborative model and that good relationships are what hold an initiative together, through the inevitable ups and downs.

Background

Intensive Response² was a new approach Oranga Tamariki initiated in 2019 and involved active partnership with Iwi, Māori, and Pacific organisations and the wider community sector to improve support to whānau whose tamariki are at most risk.

This evaluation was commissioned by the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre and undertaken by an external provider, The Knowledge Institute – Debbie Goodwin, Melanie Atkinson, along with Kate McKegg (Director). The Knowledge Institute provided evaluation support during Phase 1 of the initiative (that is co-design with whānau, mana whenua, and the community in Christchurch East from 2019 to August 2021). This continued into Phase 2 – the implementation phase of the Intensive Response initiative.

The initiative is called Kāhu Matarau and covers the Christchurch East Oranga Tamariki site service area, which is a part of the Ngāi Tūāhuriri rohe. Kāhu Matarau was given its name by mana whenua. It is a collaborative initiative between five community agencies, the Oranga Tamariki Christchurch East site and mana whenua (the latter providing input at a governance level). The five agencies making up the partnership were chosen because of their existing involvement with and feedback from whānau in the area. The initiative was developed through a lengthy collaborative design process. The process included collecting whānau voice through in-depth kōrero with whānau, input from community agencies and community people, and collaborative design workshops which involved 40–50 people representing Oranga Tamariki staff, mana whenua, community groups, and rangatahi with lived experience.

Kāhu Matarau Christchurch East Whānau Response Service is one part of the co-designed initiative. There are other service aspects that were designed which include community involvement and these are yet to be implemented. The Kāhu Matarau service has been in the implementation phase since August 2021. Ten kaimahi were employed (two employed by each of the five community agencies – ACTIS³, Maata Waka, Methodist Mission, Barnardos, He Waka Tapu) and supported by a Practice Leader (employed by one of the community agencies).

The service provides intensive, intentional, and practical support to whānau at risk who are involved with Oranga Tamariki for care and protection concerns, and have agreed to a referral to Kāhu Matarau. Guided by the Kāhu Matarau Practice Framework to ‘**uphold mana tamaiti and whānau voice every step of the journey**’ the work is implemented using a strengths-based approach with whānau, whānau-led goals and plans, and intensive wrap-around supports. In the first year the team of kaimahi worked alongside two seconded Oranga Tamariki social workers and their supervisor, who facilitate the referrals from the Christchurch East Oranga Tamariki site to the Kāhu Matarau team and also maintain a role with whānau. The Kāhu Matarau service began receiving their first whānau referrals in August 2021. Recent adaptations to the service include a greater number of Oranga Tamariki social

² Initially called Intensive Intervention

³ Aranui Community Trust Incorporated Society

workers involved with the whānau in the service to spread the load for Oranga Tamariki social workers.

The kaimahi team worked as one team from one location (Te Rūnanga o Ngā Maata Waka) but this has changed over time, with several now working, in the most part, from their home organisation base and out in the community, but still maintaining their links with the other kaimahi.

At the time of the interviews, the team had worked with 41 whānau since inception, with six of these completing their involvement. Only one staff replacement had occurred during the first 12 months.

Evaluation purpose and methodology

Purpose

The project team and the Evidence Centre discussed and agreed upon the evaluation objectives, which are:

1. To gain an understanding from mana whenua regarding their experiences as partners in participating in the Kāhu Matarau initiative.
2. To provide a developmental evaluation approach by operationalising three 'learn and grow' phases, establish regular reflection and review with managers and kaimahi, and provide feedback which can be used for testing, developing, and improving the Kāhu Matarau model.
3. To gather 'whānau voice' and capture changes and any early outcomes for whānau that feed into the refinement of the model.
4. To provide a brief Insights report to share more widely across the motu.

Developmental evaluation methodology

A developmental evaluation (DE) methodology was chosen because it supports the ongoing reflection, learning, and adaption of complex initiatives as they are being designed and implemented. The purpose of DE is to provide real-time feedback so that designed models, practices, processes, and implementation can be adapted and refined. A key role for evaluators is to walk alongside the initiative, supporting reflection and learning, rather than in a more traditional process or outcome evaluation which provides a summative analysis of the initiative.

All the reporting focuses on providing insights for Kāhu Matarau providers, whānau, and the wider community (including other similar type initiatives) to help refine and improve the implementation process and begin to establish what is working well and how this is impacting whānau. Therefore, this evaluation is not focused on providing an overall judgement of how well the initiative is working. This is because collaborative initiatives like this require a significant amount of time to set up, refine, adapt, and embed themselves into the fabric of community service delivery and community development, and at the time of the evaluation this initiative was only in its first year of delivery.

A reflective practice model called the '3R model'⁴ is been used to provide a reflective, strength-based framework and process for kaimahi and managers. The 3R

⁴ A model shared by Professor Angus Macfarlane, Canterbury University

model - Ki mua ki muri - uses the actions Reflect, Reaffirm, and Reposition as a framework for learning and growing.



Summary of methods used

The evaluation has used a mixed-method approach, combining a range of processes and methods. A brief summary of the methods used is below:

Method used	Brief explanation
Interviews	<p>Interviews with six whānau members (adult) were undertaken in November 2022.</p> <p>Individual or small group interviews and discussions with key leaders, including project managers, the Practice Leader, and mana whenua representative.</p>
Reflective sessions and focus groups	<p>Learn and Grow reflective sessions with Kāhu Matarau kaimahi.</p> <p>Reflective sessions and feedback with community providers (managers or their representatives from the five community providers and Oranga Tamariki Site Manager).</p>
Case study journaling	<p>Kaimahi were asked to write up a case study of whānau they had been involved in. The purpose of the case studies was to gather stories of the whānau journey and the emerging outcomes being observed by kaimahi. Seven case studies were completed by eight kaimahi.</p> <p>Kaimahi were provided with a template⁵ to record key phases of Tūhono – whānau engagement, Te Haerenga – whānau journey, and Te Taunga – where whānau are currently 'landing'. Key elements of the Kāhu Matarau co-designed theory of change (see Appendix 1) were used to report against, including elements of trust, wellbeing, safety, rangatiratanga, change for whānau, system barriers, and greatest achievements.</p>

⁵ The template is based on two concepts: Te Haerenga – a model used by Debbie Goodwin in her PhD research, and the Kāhu Matarau theory of change.

This report

This report combines all findings to date, including reflection and insights for a 16-month (Implementation) period from August 2021 to December 2022.

Three reflection cycles took place between July and December 2022 and included reflections from throughout the implementation period. The cycles of reflection and kōrero (interviews and discussions) were with kaimahi and managers from all five community providers, practice leader, mana whenua, and whānau. Insights reports were written based on these reflections and shared back with the kaimahi and managers group.

The Theory of Change, which was developed collaboratively with the Kāhu Matarau managers group and project management in 2022, was used in the design of all reflective processes and interviews (see Appendix 1).

Report structure

Section one: Whānau voice, outcomes, and insights

Earlier insights reports noted the importance of whānau voice. The first phase of designing and establishing the Kāhu Matarau service had focused on gathering whānau voice – which involved in-depth interviews conducted with 51 people (from 15 whānau) who were currently or previously involved with Oranga Tamariki. Whānau voice research was a key element in the ‘birthing’ of the Kāhu Matarau service and maintaining a whānau-centred approach. Ensuring ongoing whānau voice contributes to the operation and development of the service needs to be prioritised. The importance of whānau voice was reiterated by many we spoke with.

One of the main strengths of this that I would like to reaffirm and hold on to, in terms of Kāhu Matarau, is whānau voice... to ensure that the whānau voice is always captured, which I believe is a strength. That's what will underpin and hold the whole service together in my view. (Manager).

For this reason, we begin this report with the voices of whānau.⁶

Section two: Service perspectives – Learnings and insights for future implementation

The second section provides an analysis and summary of the key learning and insights from kaimahi, managers, and governance/mana whenua.⁷ It includes feedback on whānau journeys from a kaimahi perspective, as well as feedback from

⁶ All quotes in this Section 1 are from whānau unless noted otherwise

⁷ Quotes in Section 2 are attributed to kaimahi, managers or governance.

mana whenua, partner organisation managers, and Oranga Tamariki collected through the reflective sessions, focus groups, and interviews.

Section one: Whānau voice, outcomes, and insights

Whānau interviews were undertaken on 28–29th November 2022. Five interviews were undertaken with six whānau members. This is a non-representative sample of whānau who were chosen by kaimahi for the interviews. These six whānau members were willing to talk to an independent person who they did not know.⁸

The key purpose of the interviews was to identify and understand changes that are occurring for whānau.⁹ It was not about judging the effectiveness of the service and is limited in that it does not look at the experiences of whānau who have not engaged.

Factors contributing to the lower-than-anticipated number of whānau interviews included whānau who were asked but did not wish to be interviewed, whānau situations that were more important for whānau arising on the week of the interviews, and COVID-related situations for staff and whānau. Most whānau that were willing to be interviewed were also rescheduled on the day due to situations arising. The flexibility of whānau, kaimahi, and the evaluators was key to ensuring these interviews happened.

The evaluators are grateful to kaimahi and whānau for their time in participating in interviews and the kōrero with them.

The following section describes emerging and early outcomes outlined by whānau who were interviewed. Their voice is prioritised throughout. It also summarises whānau feedback about the Kāhu Matarau service and their experience of kaimahi.

Increased safety and wellbeing for tamariki

Safety was explicitly discussed with whānau. Safety plans were worked through and agreed to with whānau and kaimahi. Some whānau had their safety plans on their wall and were able to share how they had used the strategies discussed in the plans.

Other elements that contributed to tamariki wellbeing included parents having help with 'behaviour things with the children' and support with difficult behaviours as well as trauma, practical support, funding to keep children in education, and improved communication with school personnel that resulted in feeling less discriminated against.

⁸ An ethics application was submitted and reviewed by the Evidence Centre, Oranga Tamariki.

⁹ The three key objectives for whānau outcomes noted in the Theory of Change document include 1) Rangatiratanga: Whānau lead their own change and provide safe, stable, and loving homes, 2) Increased safety for tamariki and whānau, and 3) Improved wellbeing across multiple domains.

Several children were supported to remain in education, attend more regularly, and join new after-school activities that they would not have had a chance to do without Kāhu Matarau support. In particular, whānau have been supported to better communicate with school personnel, which has helped with school personnel checking with mum about what the child is saying, such as not having food in the house. Without this communication, there may have been a Report of Concern to Oranga Tamariki, but this has been averted.

Having support with early childhood education fees has also helped keep children in preschool, and as a result, mum feels less discriminated against when dealing with the preschool. Support with transport initially resulted in children starting to get to school more often and excelling at school subjects.

A number of whānau also discussed how, as parents, they had learnt about trauma and were more aware of what their children were going through. One parent said that putting boundaries in place to keep the kids safe has reduced their anxiety and trauma.

I didn't really realise they had anxiety and trauma about things. They don't have that now when it comes to the door.

Another parent experienced closer bonds with her children, describing previously not feeling present and connected to them due to mental health difficulties.

Keeping tamariki with whānau

Several whānau were able to have their children remain living at home by being supported to work through key safety, health and wellbeing concerns, rather than the children being placed into Oranga Tamariki care.

There have been 'heaps' of positive impacts on my family. I think I would have lost the kids if I hadn't pulled my head in a bit.

Yeah, my daughter got 'star of the week' last week. The children are in a much better place. We have a way better quality of life to what we had this time last year.

Another mum said,

Just telling me this is what you need to work on, not taking them away was so good.

Stopping drug use

A number of whānau agreed to be tested randomly for drug use and proved that they were not using. This was viewed positively by whānau as it affirmed the changes they were making to others and made them less vulnerable to false accusations. Some whānau had been to rehabilitation.

Improved relationships with Oranga Tamariki

I can't tell you how anti-CYFS¹⁰ I was, like you wouldn't have ever met anyone so anti-CYFS as me, and they've (kaimahi) turned me around.

A number of whānau reported better relationships with Oranga Tamariki social workers in comparison to their fear and anxiety of past experiences. They talked about how in the past, this negative experience would lead to them feeling overpowered and afraid to ask for help.

CYFS have tainted this brush on everyone, you know, you don't dare ask.

One mum said she doesn't feel like the Family Group Conference is 'daunting' and trusts her kaimahi when Oranga Tamariki is involved.

With a new, more trusting relationship with Kāhu Matarau kaimahi, whānau now felt supported to talk through things with Oranga Tamariki. Kaimahi appear to have played a significant advocacy role in this respect. Whānau are now thinking differently about Oranga Tamariki.

Personal progress and knowledge for adult whānau members

Whānau reported some significant personal changes for themselves. These ranged from learning about their own mental health needs and baby's needs, a better understanding of parenting and 'family values,' and the effects of trauma and violence on themselves and their children.

Better explanation than I'm just failing – there's actually more to this.

Lifting my standards, my bar a bit higher.

Really impressed with the progress that I've had this year – I feel like I've excelled above other years, if that makes sense.

Participating in counselling for themselves has also helped them to be more in control of anger issues.

A key reason given for the personal growth experienced by whānau was the trusting relationship whānau reported having with kaimahi, particularly their non-judgemental attitude, and the kind and subtle ways kaimahi support whānau to learn new things.

And knowledge the kaimahi has given about the effects of violence, but given in a subtle way, teaching me along the way, without saying, being like, 'you don't have this knowledge, you dumb arse, now you've got to

¹⁰ CYFS is referring to Child, Youth and Family which was the government agency responsible for the care and protection of children and young people until 2017. On April 1 2017, CYF was replaced by a new agency, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children.

go and study for it over here next month,' you know what I mean? But actually coming at me like... 'Oh, did you not know...?' Just being kind.

Other whānau talked about how putting their children first was also influencing their own personal changes.

Having (baby) and thinking that our actions have to be about (baby), you know, we have to put him first. Bugger everything else.

There have been heaps of positive impacts on my family. I think I would have lost the kids if I hadn't pulled my head in a bit.

It was because of their help that the baby's dad actually came back because he could see the change work through this. Still a work in a progress.

Interviewer: And what's been the biggest change for you?

Participant: My anger, really.

Interviewer: Like, more control of it?

Participant: Yeah, I'm not flipping out as much anymore.

I was a depressed... not there... sort of person. But now I'm present and a lot more connected to the kids and able to talk to them about things.

Whānau leading their own change

Some whānau felt they were more in control of their own decisions now and reported the trusting relationship with the kaimahi was a major reason. They felt kaimahi had 'influence because I'm not judged... we have a respect for each other, and so we believe each other, yeah, that trust thing is crucial.'

Their hope was to stay on track and ultimately manage without kaimahi help, 'but at the moment, it's still pretty good to have them on board.'

One whānau felt they were able to reach the goal of getting 'CYFS out of my life' and that this was achievable with the support of kaimahi.

However, another whānau felt they were sometimes 'shut down' and didn't feel heard for example, about the custody arrangements and the plans that had been made and agreed upon together. Therefore, they reported not yet, feeling in control of their decision-making.

Access to more support services

Being part of Kāhu Matarau meant access to more support and services, including current agencies they had been working with.

Even though we had He Waka Tapu on our side, they're even more on our side too now.

Kaimahi are connecting whānau to a range of services, some of which are already provided within their own organisations, for example, drug and alcohol support, parenting programmes, and others are community groups such as sports and after-school activities for the children. One parent was assisted to access funding for a vehicle.

Whānau feedback on Kāhu Matarau and kaimahi

Overall, the six whānau we talked to were very happy with the support they received from Kāhu Matarau and kaimahi. One whānau noted they wished they had the support from kaimahi much earlier when they were caring for other children.

It might have made a difference... they might have done better if they (Kāhu Matarau) were there.

Key factors influencing whānau satisfaction with the Kāhu Matarau service included whānau feeling comfortable and trusting kaimahi, and kaimahi providing intensive support (daily visits at first, regular contact via messaging and phone calls), particularly at the early stages of engagement, and providing important advocacy roles.

It's intense at first, when you need it, and then it eases off when things start to get better. It was a lot of contact at the beginning. They would come round every day, every morning just to help establish those routines.

For the whānau interviewed, the Kāhu Matarau service is the kaimahi. The rapport, relationship, and trust built were valued and seen as critical for progress. Trusted kaimahi provided the links to other services, advocacy and mediation with others including school personnel, Oranga Tamariki social workers, and practical and emotional support. They were regularly accessible, 'firm' but 'kind'. The whānau that were interviewed had a clear view that it was the kaimahi that had helped whānau make the critical changes. The following describes some of the key characteristics of kaimahi that whānau identified as enablers for change .

Kaimahi are someone whānau feel comfortable talking to and came to trust

I can talk to them like a counsellor. They just come and go and drop in. Back in the day, I wouldn't have wanted people like that in my life.

So, I was very sceptical and being very careful but have come to really love and trust and respect these people.

It took a while to get the trust thing because I didn't have any trust in OT after what had happened, but they (kaimahi) have gone above and

beyond and really been my lifesaver in all of this to get to where I am right now.

Kaimahi came without judgment, with understanding and ‘talked to me properly’

Kaimahi connected with parents, often through sharing their past experiences. They were described as being human and relatable, showing empathy. They shared their own stories appropriately, which whānau could connect with in some way, ‘...shows they aren't from a perfect life. It's more welcoming in a way.’ This helped whānau to be more honest and share their concerns.

But they listened to me, actually, and have helped me and helped us as a family to stay together... We wouldn't be here now... It was because of their help...

One whānau said the approach by kaimahi is ‘completely different’ to other services and Oranga Tamariki’s approach.

‘What can we do to help your family be together better?’ That in itself, as opposed to – ‘we’re going to come and take the child, and we’re not going to tell you anything else,’ so you don’t know. Just a completely different approach.

They’ve (Kāhu Matarau) been absolutely, above and beyond. If you’d seen my record and then heard me saying this, you’d maybe even appreciate it even more. I’m feeling really glad that I have put that behind me as well and have a good relationship with them now. They’ve been so helpful – I wouldn’t change it for the world.

The non-judgemental attitude and being there when needed were reported a number of times by a range of whānau.

They’re not judgemental like I’ve said from the start.

Anyway, I’d like to say that Kāhu Matarau is one of the people that haven’t come in and really judged us... You know, we have a lot of organisations involved in our life and [kaimahi] and her team from Kāhu Matarau, they are not here to judge us, they’re all here to support and help us through our journey that we do have at the moment. We feel like, me myself, I feel like that if Kāhu Matarau wasn’t involved, we may not have had this opportunity to be able to do the course.

Kaimahi demonstrated and shared knowledge about working with trauma, anxiety, and other mental health issues

What has helped whānau is kaimahi not rushing things or putting pressure on whānau, acknowledging whānau anxiety and trauma, and working with that. They were described as being able to communicate:

in a simple way and do things slowly... I like how its little bits, not like boom boom boom, everything has to be done. Due to anxiety, they put that into consideration and know how to approach us.

[kaimahi] understands this mental health shit that I'm going through and understands, like, don't put me in a hospital, help me please, you know.

Kaimahi persistence was noted:

They follow up, they keep on their phone calls, and if we don't answer, they ring again because they know about our mental health. I can't actually say anything negative.

Kaimahi provide intensive and practical support when needed by whānau

Providing transport to programmes, services, appointments, access visits, and schools was reported as very helpful by whānau. Importantly, a key goal of kaimahi is to ensure that whānau can do things for themselves over time. Kaimahi focus on providing advocacy 'but let [whānau members] do it.'

Kaimahi provided support with many other things, including education and knowledge around behaviours, mental health, addiction, providing reassurance, positive affirmation to whānau, help with accommodation, communication with education providers, advocacy with other agencies, help with safety plans, budgeting and connecting to counselling, accessing funding for children's activities and early childhood education fees, and cellphones, so they can be contacted.

Positive words – that's the key. That's really helped the most, and it's helped me be more positive myself.

They took out that money equation, that barrier, and let that be possible, and wow!... that's 100 and something odd dollars that I couldn't have afforded, and man, that little amount that they've put in, what we've gained from that is priceless – the bond and the behaviour changes.

Whānau reported kaimahi supporting them to find essential accommodation to meet Oranga Tamariki directives, and providing them with random testing for drugs following accusations from others. Kaimahi also supported motivating mum not to 'get high because all this shit was going down.'

A key element was the timeliness of kaimahi support, they came when whānau needed them. This increased trust and provided emotional support in times of need.

And just being a message away when I'm having a cry or whatever.

Kaimahi were also described as being prepared to engage with children and other whānau members, including partners. One parent reported that their kaimahi listened, understood, and checked in with both parents, which they saw as important – focusing on both partners. Often whānau did not have anyone else to support them.

I thought it was really beautiful – they've never given up on me and him.

[Kaimahi] get in there and does things (with the children).

There were clearly many flow-on effects for the often practical things that kaimahi helped with. For example, in one instance kaimahi helped set up supervised access for children, reducing the blame of 'keeping the other parent from the kids.'

Kaimahi provide advocacy for whānau

Whānau reported a range of advocacy roles that kaimahi played, for example, negotiating relationships with schools and early childhood centres, finding funding for necessary items, and mediating plans and relationships with Oranga Tamariki social workers.

Helping me to do the things that OT needed me to do so that I didn't have to work with OT. It's been better because I didn't really want CYFS in my house.

Past experiences between whānau and Oranga Tamariki have resulted in a lack of trust in Oranga Tamariki by whānau. Several whānau talked about their experiences of the advocacy kaimahi provided them in mediating their relationship with Oranga Tamariki. Whānau feedback indicates that an important aspect of the Kāhu Matarau service is that the kaimahi play a more neutral role with whānau than Oranga Tamariki staff do – they are seen as separate from Oranga Tamariki. This separation appears to make whānau more open to accepting help. Once the trust has been built kaimahi are able to provide the support and advocacy needed, that is acceptable and well received by whānau. They attend and support meetings like Family Group Conferences and help whānau with working towards the requirements that Oranga Tamariki has placed on them.

Kāhu Matarau has helped me more than OT. I wouldn't have really let OT help.

It's really hard being in that situation when you're going through OT. I just asked her, is my kids going to be taken off me? And she said no, but there are some steps we are going to have to go through to keep the kids safe and to keep you safe. To make sure this doesn't happen again. Cos it's scary. My anxiety is losing my children... Just telling me, 'this is what you need to work on' not taking them away was so good.

The (OT) office is not family-friendly, and you automatically feel like you are going to get your kids taken off you.

We're two steps ahead, she's coming to me saying... okay, so next OT are looking at...

Whānau describe feeling supported by someone they trusted (see earlier comments).

Interviewer: Summarising a previous point by whānau. 'Yeah. So, they're kind of an intermediary between you guys and Oranga Tamariki?'

P1: 'Yeah.'

P2: 'And [kaimahi] is the best advocate for that.'

P1: 'Like, let's just say that Kāhu Matarau is our voice for OT.'

Other examples included kaimahi being available as a trusted person when neighbours called Oranga Tamariki because the kids were screaming, or there was a notification to the school with possible Reports of Concern, or when mum called the police because a violent partner had turned up.

Whānau value having the reassurance that their kaimahi will be there to support and advocate for them when allegations are being made, or they need to call the police themselves.

While a mum found it hard to call the police when she needed to, she had done so a couple of times,

...which is hard because you get notifications when you call the police, but I guess it's better if they know.

Several whānau noted that they saw Kāhu Matarau and Oranga Tamariki working well together because of the advocacy kaimahi provided for them with Oranga Tamariki.

Their team-ship they have is awesome...

Whānau suggestions for improvements

There were a few suggestions from whānau about how Kāhu Matarau could improve or do things differently. These included:

- A more family-friendly office that was privately accessed – there were police cars often around the Hub that made some whānau feel uncomfortable, and the Hub location was where they had accessed other services and programmes. They knew people at the Hub complex who they didn't want to bump into.
- Several whānau talked about some inconsistencies in communication, particularly around safety plans and safety concerns, that were occurring between whānau, kaimahi, other services, and Oranga Tamariki. These were causing frustration, and whānau felt they needed to be worked out.
- Another suggestion was to share more knowledge resources such as 'handouts', wall posters, and Māori prayers that whānau can use.

because their voices aren't always there, but I feel like they had some really key things, like that could have been... (provided to us to use) in the home.

- Kaimahi making connections and use of other community groups and community resources, such as Māori wardens and vans, were also noted as a possible improvement.

Section two: Key learning and insights

This section provides an analysis and summary of the key learning and insights from kaimahi, managers, and governance/mana whenua. It begins with a summary of the feedback on whānau journeys from a kaimahi perspective and much of this reflects what whānau have also stated in interviews. This is followed by feedback from mana whenua, partner organisation managers, and Oranga Tamariki. Collected through the reflective sessions, focus groups, and interviews these perspectives provide important governance, management, and organisational insights.

Kaimahi feedback on the whānau journey

In this part of section two, we focus on kaimahi feedback about the whānau journey and outcomes, finishing with a brief discussion of system-level outcomes that kaimahi are noticing or influencing with their approach.

Whānau engagement

The majority of whānau who have engaged early on in Kāhu Matarau are still engaged in the service (at one year). Most whānau engaged well early on, although one or two whānau have taken a lot longer to engage, for example, five months. There was some hesitancy from these whānau due to past experiences with Oranga Tamariki. Indicators of good levels of engagement included whānau owning their own plans, whānau sharing their stories, and feeling comfortable to do so.

Kaimahi have suggested that early engagement is supported by the following:

- attendance at the initial Oranga Tamariki hui with whānau (although there was some concern that whānau would see Kāhu Matarau kaimahi as Oranga Tamariki kaimahi)
- having a good handover from a social worker
- having/making connections with whānau through existing relationships, whanaungatanga, relevant lived experiences
- having good listening and empathy skills
- allowing whānau to tell their story
- demonstrating how they can support and advocate for whānau

- being persistent. Lots of follow-up with texts, calls and 'cold calls' is needed to effectively engage, especially for the harder to reach whānau.

Trust building

Establishing a trusted relationship between kaimahi and whānau is the key to success. Kaimahi talked about the need to have kind eyes, be 'aroha-based,' and non-judgmental. Also important is having daily contact and recognising that time is needed to establish relationships of trust.

Trust is built and maintained between kaimahi and whānau by consistency, regular contact, and negotiation, demonstrating listening skills, non-judgemental attitudes, and talking through situations. Going at the pace of whānau, providing reassurance, and helping whānau to think about what has happened, were also practices that kaimahi said built trust. Providing practical support such as a small amount of pūtea, being there, and 'having her back' was also key. Letting whānau lead the change, being mindful of their histories, and recognising that changing the norm for whānau will take a lot from them was important.

A huge buy-in that helps with engagement is the level of time that we have to support whānau – daily contact if needed. (Kaimahi)

What makes a difference – consistency is an enabler – “oh you're back again, it's you again” it's a good thing. We are showing that we are here for the long haul. We do what we say we are going to do. (Kaimahi)

Having some pūtea – a little money for each whānau has helped – e.g. birth certificate. Breaks down barriers pretty quickly. We underestimate how much these little things help. (Kaimahi)

Regular communication back and forth from whānau demonstrates a good relationship with kaimahi.

Communication greatly improved in terms of whānau responding back, they are leading that now, texting and calling me – big improvement, you know you are engaging okay when they open the door and respond to your calls. (Kaimahi)

Many whānau need to overcome barriers to begin trusting kaimahi. They have previous negative experiences with Oranga Tamariki and other authorities like the police, including feelings of being judged, being seen as a 'bad mother', being discriminated against, and feeling like they are just part of a process and not valued. Some would only engage with those they already had trusted relationships with.

The whānau journey – ups and downs

Whānau working with Kāhu Matarau are dealing with complex lives and issues, including drug addiction, family violence, emergency housing, mental health issues, pregnancies and physical health, and a history of involvement with Oranga Tamariki.

A good foundation of trust is necessary, but this is just the start, and the journey needs to be built upon this foundation.

We need to continue to build the foundation – showing we are here for the long term, we care is really important. We want to see things get better. Then when they see it, they build on that. (Kaimahi)

Kaimahi talked about the ups and downs of the whānau journey, including the intergenerational nature of these experiences. One kaimahi noted there has to be a recognition that the journey can be really hard, and whānau can lose their momentum through relapses with alcohol, and so on. and need encouragement to keep going.

Sometimes frustrating – two steps forward, one back. But overall, there has been a movement. A purpose for our team to be involved. (Kaimahi)

The journey and experiences of whānau are not always positive. Some whānau removed themselves or had a significant crisis and disengaged from the service. Demonstrating the reality that the whānau journey is often rocky and a hard and long one for many.

Rangatiratanga

Supporting whānau to lead their own journeys and change is a key goal of Kāhu Matarau. Whānau who feel they are in control and making decisions for themselves are more likely to succeed.

Several whānau felt they were more in control of their own lives, and this was also supported by kaimahi. Examples provided by kaimahi of whānau leading their own change includes such things as whānau being proactive and utilising support from whānau, friends, and professionals when needed. Whānau handling parenting situations better due to changes they have made personally is another example of whānau leading their own journey. Kaimahi also talked of whānau feeling much stronger in themselves, keeping tight boundaries, and their tamariki at the forefront of decisions.

For kaimahi, finding the balance between whānau-led and having a responsibility to the child can be a difficult part of the journey at times.

It's hard because it doesn't look whānau-led because it's about the child being safe. Sometimes for whānau, it's not actually what they (whānau) want, but is what is actually best for the child. (Kaimahi)

Whānau change and outcomes

Early successes are often intangible. One example is the 'spark' that kaimahi see in children.

See the spark in the children – wow, things are good. That's a big shift there. (Kaimahi)

As whānau have journeyed over the first few months and up to one year with kaimahi, there are noticeable changes kaimahi have observed in whānau, in particular:

- reduction or becoming drug/alcohol-free
- gaining better housing
- reduced or zero violence in the whānau
- self-managing mental health needs
- providing care and love for the children and meeting their needs
- better access for parents not living with children
- engagement in courses
- gaining confidence in parenting
- gaining support from other whānau
- communication improving within whānau
- establishing better routines and children attending school/preschool more regularly
- parents working better together, using behavioural approaches with children
- parents setting goals and having hopes for their children and participating in a number of other programmes such as Early Start and Home and Family.

Other examples shared by kaimahi of positive whānau change and outcomes include improvements in wider whānau connections with whānau relocating to improve whānau connections and some whānau starting to talk about significant trauma. Overall, there has been resilience shown in whānau who have picked themselves up again and kept moving forward.

When asked about the greatest achievements they had seen, kaimahi talked about:

- a wahine's own hard work and commitment
- whānau were able to see that they could safely parent their children long term
- whānau living a life free from family violence
- whānau realising their own capability/potential and believing in themselves.

System level change

Kaimahi noted several changes in wider systems that were making a difference for whānau, including:

- Providing or accessing food when necessary helped whānau to have their basic needs met. Kaimahi noted that kai is more easily accessed these days through MSD call centres or other food donation services.
- Advocating to MSD to assist with the payment of bills meant that tamariki were able to stay in their pre-school and not be de-enrolled. This occurred at

a quick and timely pace due to the kaimahi's role with MSD to discuss and action payment.

- Kaimahi also helped whānau access counsellors through their own connections, with a quicker response than normal.
- Kaimahi talked about 'knowing the right people' in the community or service to ensure referrals to programmes were actioned for whānau in a timely manner. Otherwise, there would be a long wait as there was high demand for such services.
- A good collaborative approach from a number of services meant that wraparound supports were provided for some whānau.

Other system-level changes were described as more difficult, for example, accessing appropriate housing for whānau. This was seen as one of the hardest barriers to overcome and took the longest timeframe. Advocating and accessing health services (both physical and mental health) were also sometimes difficult.

Governance, management, and organisational insights

This section provides key governance, management, and organisational insights based on feedback of the reflective sessions, focus groups and interviews with Managers and the mana whenua representative.

Governance – mana whenua feedback

The governance group for Kāhu Matarau is a multi-sector group of government agency representatives and mana whenua and was still in an establishment phase at of November 2022. Mana whenua sits on this group. Others (managers and kaimahi) note there is some confusion around the 'governance group' role and title. The governance group had met twice at the time of the interview. The role is seen more as an advisory and expert reference group that brings key agencies' perspectives, information, and influence.

Mana whenua, as a partner in the service with Oranga Tamariki, see themselves as having a role in connecting Kāhu Matarau with key sectors and people that can help address barriers for whānau. This type of connecting across was seen as a possible 'glue... connecting the different pieces up.'

Feedback from mana whenua noted that:

- Maintaining a connection to what's happening on the ground is important to governance members, so presentations to the group from kaimahi are valuable.
- More and richer reporting on whānau engagement and outcomes in the service is desired.

- The value of whānau voice was reiterated, as was the need to better understand the cultural responsiveness of the service, that is its ability to integrate Te Ao Māori.

The importance of ensuring the other elements in the co-design process (for example, community aspects and involvement) are implemented was emphasised by the mana whenua representative (as well as one of the managers). With the changes in governance and also the stopping of project management roles it is unclear who now has oversight of the implementation of these aspects.

Management feedback

The management group consists of five managers or their representatives from the community partner organisations and the Oranga Tamariki Christchurch East Site Manager. They meet regularly and were supported until recently by a backbone function (project manager). This support function has now been stopped and was seen as a significant loss to the effective functioning of the collaboration. The managers discuss and oversee matters pertaining to the implementation of Kāhu Matarau and are directly responsible for the staff employed under them.

The first year of the service has been challenging and testing.

...while we have survived and maintained and grown our relationships, this is an incredibly challenging piece of work at every level. (Manager)

The complexity involved in collaboration and partnering is really hard, but there's a real willingness to learn, stay together, and be as unified as possible.

So, it's about all of us learning along the way and then upskilling about how we do it better... we're doing a lot of learning on this journey. (Manager)

The diversity of connections and relationships is acknowledged as key to strong collaboration, and these are perceived as a strength of the process to date. However, these connections and relationships take time to make and need to be maintained.

...the flexibility and the strength of our relationships that have developed over time, I think, has been really positive. (Manager)

Management acknowledges the enormous amount of work kaimahi are doing to contribute to the collaboration.

Kaimahi are working extremely hard and doing some really awesome, amazing things, and I get the opportunity and am lucky enough that I'm seeing more of people, to see that collaboration happening live in front of me. (Manager)

Organisational insights and challenges

Collaboration is challenging for kaimahi and managers, especially as they are working across six organisations, which all have their own ways of working and approaches. The loss of backbone support was seen as something that needed addressing as this plays a pivotal role in supporting the collaboration.

Operationalising a shared practice model is very challenging, with responsibilities and roles appearing 'diffused' and unclear, one example being management and practice lead roles resulting in confusion about reporting lines in particular situations. Furthermore, it was noted that roles that were established initially, including the project manager, provided significant support to the collaborative management group and the gap left by the disestablishment of this role may need reviewing.

There is need for clarity of roles, particularly around who makes decisions about a range of important aspects. Communication is key – and with people more dispersed than previously, there's a real need for those in the hub to come together – to maintain the links and connections with each other and to ensure differences in opinions are aired and shared. This also includes communications between the managers who oversee the service.

We need managers to be on the same page.

While there has been strong commitment to the collaboration by managers, there appears to be a significant gap in the time that the collaborative management group is able to spend together versus the amount of time needed for collaborative planning, discussion, and decision making. Significant effort has been needed to set up the necessary operating systems and processes. Progress on shared policies, procedures, and even basic practical matters has been slow, with months of discussion, though more recently there has been some improvement.

The speed of development is slow – which is a challenge.

Power dynamics are ever-present – and the Oranga Tamariki role is sometimes felt as overbearing. There is an ongoing need to unpack and address the power each holds in the collaboration.

Future thoughts...

This review has identified many emerging and positive outcomes for a number of whānau who participated in Kāhu Matarau. Feedback from whānau and kaimahi is clear that many whānau are benefiting significantly from the support they receive.

Kaimahi who have the right skills and the ability to engage with whānau in a positive and non-judgemental way are critical to supporting these outcomes. The whānau who participate in Kāhu Matarau experience many challenges, including one noted in this review, which is the trauma they experience due to involvement with Oranga Tamariki. Having kaimahi from Kāhu Matarau act as a type of mediator and support when whānau are in this situation is an important, if not critical, element enabling whānau to progress toward change.

Having a shared practice framework has helped ensure the work kaimahi do is consistently good for whānau. Furthermore, having a backbone of administrative and project management support is also important for collaboration to work well. The collaborative management group of six managers and the practice lead plays a critical role in the effective implementation of Kāhu Matarau. This group can be more effective when they are supported with a backbone function.

The Kāhu Matarau model emphasises whānau support being provided through effective and collaborative teamwork by kaimahi, with support from managers and leaders. Good teamwork was evident, however, making sure there is clarity of roles and responsibilities, leadership and communication across organisations at all levels can be challenging. With ongoing effort from the whole Kāhu Matarau team, daily oversight, and time for decision making, these challenges can be worked through.

To make a collaboration like Kāhu Matarau work, the experiences of kaimahi and managers reveal that a significant investment of time, commitment, and a specific and appropriate mix of skills are needed. The extensive effort and focus required to date will still be ongoing need as implementation progresses. Collaborative meetings, line management responsibilities, open communication channels, navigating a range of organisational approaches and shared decision making on processes and issues that arise will continue to require significant commitment and time to ensure a team approach across the six participating organisations.

Two things were identified through the evaluation and insight reports that are noteworthy for future consideration.

Improved mechanisms for including whānau voice

Whānau voice remains a top priority and requires mechanisms to be developed to ensure that whānau still have an ongoing voice. Development and implementation of mechanisms to support continued feedback from whānau would be beneficial to the future of Kāhu Matarau. This could be undertaken in several ways including (but not limited to):

- Having a more structured role for whānau input that is ongoing, such as an advisory group, will help keep the focus on whānau needs.
- Implementing a process for regular whānau feedback, for example, interviews or surveys independent of kaimahi.
- Holding exit interviews with whānau.
- Ensuring the original whānau voice report findings continue to support ongoing development.

Maintain a focus on, and improve the collaborative approach

Collaboration remains a key premise and principle of Kāhu Matarau and given the successes, there is support for it to continue. Some ways the collaboration could be further enhanced and supported include:

- Establishing greater clarity around responsibilities, accountabilities and decision making at the governance, practice, and management levels.
- Regularly reviewing the delivery and practice models to track and reflect on:
 - how they are functioning at governance, management, and kaimahi levels
 - their responsiveness to Te Ao Māori
 - what is being achieved for whānau.
- Reviewing the original co-design model and elements (community aspects such as kāhui kaumātua, te whare o te whānau) to make decisions about whether these original aspects are relevant and still fit what is needed.
- Re-establishing a backbone support role to support future collaborative effort.

Appendix 1

ch East Whānau Response Service Theory of Change

VISION:

To be completed...

