

NGĀ TINI WHETŪ PROTOTYPE EVALUATION

Synthesis report

July 2023



Executive summary

This report is a synthesis from multiple monitoring and evaluation activities relating to the Ngā Tini Whetū prototype. Ngā Tini Whetū is a cross-agency, early intervention support model for whānau Māori and their tamariki. The original concept was based on whānau being empowered to pursue their self-identified aspirations, acknowledging the holistic benefits that come with achieving mana motuhake. The prototype was jointly funded by Oranga Tamariki, ACC and Te Puni Kōkiri through a devolved commissioning model with Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (WOCA) and its partner network.

This prototype was driven by the consistently high and disproportionate rate of tamariki Māori in state care and protection as well as youth justice. Oranga Tamariki was motivated to explore early intervention opportunities while ACC – with a mandate around maintaining health and preventing injury – was similarly motivated by inequities for Māori in their portfolio. Te Puni Kōkiri and WOCA work to support whānau to be together, in control of their own lives and thriving, achieving whānau ora.

Whānau Ora is a culturally grounded approach to improving the wellbeing of whānau as a group while addressing individual needs. Expressed in many different ways by Māori, it puts whānau at the centre of decision-making about their wellbeing and supports them to identify and achieve their goals. A whānau centred focus is proven to lead to better outcomes for whānau, Māori and Aotearoa, culturally socially and economically.

Evolution of the prototype

An early, small-scale pilot of Ngā Tini Whetū in Tāmaki Makaurau in 2016-17 showed positive results for participating whānau. This subsequent and larger-scale prototype across Te Ika-a-Maui in 2021-22 has shown – through both quantitative and qualitative findings – that it is a successful model and approach for whānau Māori. This programme ultimately worked for participating whānau because it was Māori-led, based on a strengths-focused framework and delivered by local people with tikanga and/or lived experience.

The prototype was based on the earlier trial and *Te Hinatore* framework developed by Tā Mason Durie, which helped chart whānau shifts across the year. Aligning with the programme's design to support whānau in planning ahead to achieve their moemoeā, the four dimensions revolve around stages of celestial brightness and the ability to navigate by the stars.

The prototype was co-designed with funders to an extent and then implemented via WOCA's network across Te Ika-a-Maui of over 50 local Whānau Ora providers during 2021-22. Eighty kaiārahi were appointed to work with 800 whānau at a ratio of 1:10 whānau over a year. Within those whānau were a total of 2,056 individuals, around half of which were under 18 years of age, including 28 percent under nine years of age. Almost all identified as Māori (97 percent) and just over half (55 percent) were female.

Key Findings

Participating whānau identified, planned and achieved thousands (3,300) of outcomes relating to education/knowledge, health, their standard of living, relationships, te ao Māori and community participation. Across *Te Hinatore* – a four-dimension scale from languishing to flourishing – there were significant shifts including 289 more whānau identifying themselves as flourishing by the end of the year. Similarly, in relation to Oranga Tamariki priorities, there was a shift from 25 percent of whānau at the start of the year up to 67 percent by year-end identifying as independent and not in need of support. Further, almost all whānau during the course of the year chose to take an active role in their whānau/community on health-related kaupapa, aligned with ACC priorities.

An impact evaluation conducted during 2022 interviewed those involved in the prototype at all stages including whānau and kaiārahi. This concluded that whānau involved in Ngā Tini Whetū advanced their goals, gained numerous skills as part of the process (e.g., budgeting), increased self-agency and optimism. Whānau were more aware of steps to improve health and prevent injuries and whānau actively made changes to improve family life and outcomes for tamariki.

The programme was effective because whānau developed a plan to achieve their aspirations and then worked towards it with a local, tikanga-based, personalised support person (Kaiārahi) to guide and connect only as needed over a year. The approach was strengths-based and holistic, removing barriers and enabling goals to be achieved with discretionary funding allocated for each whānau and complete flexibility.

WOCA's network of partner organisations and the systems it has in place for funding and reporting was comprehensive. Despite the large number of partner organisations and participants involved, the Ngā Tini Whetū prototype was rolled out, kaiārahi were trained and supported, measures were comprehensively reported against and te Kete Oranga distribution was well managed. This all occurred in the context of COVID-19 in which Whānau Ora organisations had essential service roles and significant (personal and professional) pressure to protect and support Māori in their communities.

Crown agencies successfully co-funded the prototype but their efforts to be innovative and work better for Māori were not well supported by inflexible funding mechanisms. Once a workaround was established, the prototype got underway but personnel changes and different priorities meant that inter-agency oversight varied over the two years. Whānau were protected from this by the Crown's distance from implementation, though there could have been benefits if regional agency offices were better informed about the aims of the programme and could consistently provide support to kaiārahi.

In sum, the prototype over-delivered on its intended outcomes and deliverables for whānau. Whānau spoke openly about how this programme supported transformation and a positive shift in mindset, with many saying it was a "game changer". As a result, whānau felt better equipped to meet and overcome future challenges, seize opportunities and exercise rangatiratanga in their lives.

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Introduction

Ngā Tini Whetū is a government-funded initiative that resources whānau Māori to create their own solutions to best meet their aspirations. Grounded in te ao Māori, delivered through the Whānau Ora approach and focused on whānau centred outcomes, it extended early support to 800 whānau Māori across Te Ika-a-Māui. Delivered between 2020-2022 as a prototype, the priority was tamariki and whānau wellbeing.

The Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (WOCA), two government agencies (Oranga Tamariki and Te Puni Kōkiri, hereafter referred to as the Agencies) and a Crown entity (the Accident Compensation Corporation or ACC) developed the inter-agency support model. A combined government investment of \$42.2 million was committed over the two years to commission the prototype and its services from WOCA.

The prototype was a testing ground for government on a number of levels: several public entities pooled resources into a Whānau Ora model of delivery; the model proactively worked with whānau and their goals, rather than resource crisis response; and mainstream agencies purchased services from WOCA and worked together to co-design the model. The main design features of the prototype were the recruitment of kaiārahi who worked intensively with a small group of whānau and the provision of Te Kete Oranga - discretionary financial support to help action goals and aspirations.

Evaluation of the prototype

This report is a synthesis from multiple monitoring and evaluation activities relating to the prototype.

Delivery of the prototype was closely monitored by WOCA with quarterly reports on activities provided to Crown funding agencies. WOCA also produced a combined Insights Report documenting whānau journeys, drivers of success, activities and outcomes across the prototype during 2021-2022.¹

In addition to WOCA's reporting and insights, the Crown agencies commissioned Aiko Ltd to provide independent evaluations of Ngā Tini Whetū. First, in 2020, Aiko produced a Lessons Learnt report based around the process and challenges of this multi-entity collaboration. This involved interviews with 22 participants from the four participating organisations.

Second, Aiko undertook interviews with WOCA, its network of providers and whānau participating in Ngā Tini Whetū during 2021-22 and produced impact evaluation findings. This evaluation was intended to help inform how whānau-centred approaches can operate in the field of early support, how improvements can be made to the wider system, the impact of decentralising resources to Māori and understanding the dynamics involved when agencies collaborate and pool funding for outcomes.

The impact evaluation was a Kaupapa Māori evaluation. Perspective and insight was gained from 75 evaluation participants: whānau, kaiārahi, programme managers, regional coordinators, WOCA and agency officials.

Cross-entity collaboration to pilot Ngā Tini Whetū in Te Ika-a-Maui

WOCA, the Agencies and ACC came together to help develop and launch the Ngā Tini Whetū prototype.

In November 2019, the then Minister for Children began discussions with the Associate Minister for Māori Development and ACC and Te Whānau o Waipareira Trust as a result of several contentious cases of how tamariki were being managed by Oranga Tamariki. The Minister for Children engaged DPMC to help build the relationship between Oranga Tamariki and WOCA and explore how the two agencies might collaborate

¹ Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (November 2022). Ngā Tini Whetū: A blueprint for system change, 2022.

to support whānau in the early intervention and prevention space. By this time, WOCA had already developed a Ngā Tini Whetū framework and programme and trialled it locally within their organisation.

Led by DPMC, Oranga Tamariki and WOCA engaged in a co-design process to shape and scale the Ngā Tini Whetū prototype and develop the business case to secure funding. Te Puni Kōkiri and ACC joined the process and in May/June 2020, Ngā Tini Whetū governance and leadership groups were established.

The governance group comprised the senior leaders responsible from the Agencies and ACC. In October 2020, the Chief Operating Officer from WOCA joined the group. The leadership group comprised representatives from each of the Agencies and ACC and was responsible for managing the partnership between all parties and overseeing the prototype.

A combined government investment of \$42.2 million was secured over two years to commission the prototype and its services from WOCA.² In December 2020, TPK commissioned WOCA to deliver Ngā Tini Whetū on behalf of the two Agencies and ACC. The funding was intended to support 800 whānau facilitated by new kaiārahi and programme manager roles through WOCA's network of providers across te Ika-a-Maui, and other dedicated resourcing.

The Ngā Tini Whetū model

Ngā Tini Whetū is fundamentally about whānau living with mana and leading achievement of their own aspirations. It is not for any one type of whānau, which is supported by a flexible framework and personalised support. WOCA identify five outcome domains that align with that expression of mana and underpin the programme: Rangatiratanga, Mātauranga, Oranga, Ōhanga, Tikanga.

A framework was developed by Tā Mason Durie and Ngā Tini Whetū was initially piloted in Auckland in 2016-17. The framework is known as Te Hinātore, meaning 'illuminated beams that bring light to the journey'. Aligning with the programme's design to support whānau in planning ahead to achieve their moemoeā, the four dimensions revolve around stages of celestial brightness and the ability to navigate by the stars.

The intent was that 800 whānau participating across Te Ika a Maui would work with kaiārahi to determine which of the four dimensions they were in at the beginning of the journey, in terms of how fully they were currently able to express their mana. The four dimensions of the framework are:³

- *Ngā Whetū o te Mangōroa – faint stars in the distant milky way*
Some pre-conditions for whānau with mana potentially around resolving crisis, developing stability, planning for whānau futures
- *Ngā Kāpehu Whetū – navigating by the stars*
Some pathways towards whānau with mana potentially around relationships, intergenerational bonds, networks, knowledge and learning, Te Ao Māori, facing new challenges, mentoring, a future focus.
- *Ngā Whetū Tiramarama – glimmers of light from the stars*
Some qualities of whānau with mana including passion, resilience, aspirational planning, adaptability, innovation
- *Ngā Tini Whetū – stars that light up the sky*

² Te Puni Kōkiri and Oranga Tamariki each invested \$16 million and ACC invested \$10.4 million over the two years.

³ Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency (August 2021). *Kia Mataara te Whānau*, Report Two, Quarter Four, 1 April – 30 June 2021, p.7.

The outward expression of whānau with mana including leadership, knowledge, health and wellness, economic security, tikanga Māori.

In order to monitor and assess whānau progression in this programme, WOCA established a spectrum of milestone indicators alongside six priority outcome areas (aligned with Whānau Ora Outcomes), as shown below.

WOCA Ngā Tini Whetū – Milestone indicator framework

| Priority Outcome Area | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| Whānau are knowledgeable and well informed | Whānau have completed a whanaungatanga process, have built a relationship and trust with a Whānau Ora partner, and have engaged their services. <i># Whānau enrolled</i> | Whānau have identified their strengths, needs and aspirations, and have clearly defined their priority outcomes they want to achieve. <i># Whānau assessed</i> | Whānau have a plan and goals to enable achievement of their priority outcomes. They have identified a milestone goal to reflect major progress towards these outcomes. <i># Whānau with a plan and goals</i> | Whānau have completed their goal to progress towards their priority outcome. <i># Whānau that have completed their goal</i> | Whānau have achieved their priority outcome. <i># Whānau achieving priority outcome as evidenced by whānau outcome indicator</i> |
| Whānau are healthy | | | | | |
| Whānau relationships are empowering | | | | | |
| Whānau actively participate in communities | | | | | |
| Whānau are engaged in te ao Māori | | | | | |
| Whānau enjoy high standards of living | | | | | |

Implementation

Ngā Tini Whetū was delivered through WOCA’s existing network of Whānau Ora service partners (58), across six regions, to hundreds of whānau located across Te Ika a Maui. The first year of funding was allocated for establishment and training. Kaiārahi and Programme Manager recruitment started in December 2020 through to February 2021. Workforce development was delivered from March 2021. Kaiārahi were to begin working with whānau from June 2021 onwards although there was some variability depending on how impacted an area or region was by COVID-19.

The primary role of the 14 Programme Managers was to strengthen relationships with ACC and Oranga Tamariki at the local level and work through a local level co-design process to look at how to deliver Ngā Tini Whetū in a cohesive and effective way.

The 80 Kaiārahi were commissioned to work closely with ten whānau each, engaging directly with whānau to support them on their journey. At the start and at several points along the way, whānau would reflect on where they sit on the Te Hinātore Framework in terms of a range of factors aligned with the programme’s (and Whānau Ora) outcomes. These included knowing and achieving goals and aspirations, feeling or understanding a sense of mana, knowledge and understanding of wellbeing for their whānau, and engaging in positive relationships and activities. Depending on the approach being taken by the host provider, kaiārahi could access Te Kete Oranga – capped discretionary funding to enable whānau to shift positively along the transformation of change spectrum.

Participation

In its reporting on Ngā Tini Whetū, WOCA confirmed that 800 whānau, which included 2,056 individuals, had participated in the prototype. The majority identified as Māori, ten percent more females participated than males and almost half of all participants were under 18 years of age.

| Ethnicity | Gender | Age |
|------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| ○ 97% Māori | ○ 56% female | ○ 28% aged 0-9 years |
| ○ 2% Pasifika | ○ 44% male | ○ 19% aged 10-17 years |
| ○ 1% NZ European | | ○ 12% aged 18-24 years |
| | | ○ 40% aged 25-64 years |
| | | ○ 1% aged 65+ |

Source: WOCA Ngā Tini Whetū baseline data summary

Findings on whānau outcomes

This section presents the findings from an independent qualitative evaluation of the prototype that engaged participating whānau and providers as well as summarised outcome data derived from WOCA's measurement frameworks.

Qualitative evaluation findings

In 2022, Aiko Ltd interviewed 28 whānau who participated in the prototype from across Te Ika-a-Maui and six months later revisited five of those whānau (refer Appendix A for a sample journey map). Aiko also interviewed 21 kaiārahi (of 80 total) who could speak to the experience of around 200 whānau engaged in Ngā Tini Whetū.

The overarching question in relation to whānau outcomes was the extent to which Ngā Tini Whetū enabled whānau potential. The scope included the prototype's service and management processes and the impact on whānau, in terms of wellbeing and progress towards achieving their own goals. There was particular interest in how the form of commissioning worked to support whānau in achieving 'stepping stones' towards positive outcomes and potential for future impact, and resourcing.

Overwhelmingly, the programme was considered transformational for whānau both in practical steps taken during the year and changes in mindset, outlook and overall resilience.

The key findings related to *whānau experience and outcomes* were::

- Whānau experience of Ngā Tini Whetū was consistently positive, and many found it life-changing due to the impact it had on many elements of their lives
- Key aspects that supported success were the personal, sustained guidance from the kaiārahi, a focus on whānau strengths and aspirations, supported planning and access to services, and Te Kete Oranga
- Intentional and supported dreaming and planning for the future set whānau up well and helped avoid what could be costly alternative routes
- Positive benefits for tamariki and the whole whānau were seen when barriers like debt and addiction were addressed in the house, leading to reduced family stress and hopefulness
- Greater resilience was evident among whānau because they had gained (self) agency, learned new skills and gained knowledge about where to get other forms of help if needed, as well as the confidence to access them
- Whānau strengthened their cultural connection to te ao Māori and were learning te reo Māori – building more protective factors for the future for adults and their tamariki
- Increased social and community connections via whānau workshops and other kaiārahi-led activities.

During the evaluation, we found that *whānau needed certain things at different stages*:

- Initial scepticism had to be overcome in order for them to join the programme, based on mistrust of government and low expectations of effective public service support
- Whānau needed to be in a state of readiness to acknowledge and action moemoeā
- Kaiārahi had to invest time in whakawhanaungatanga and manaaki – at the pace and on the terms set by whānau. Once trusted, everything was possible.
- Barriers to dreaming needed to be identified and addressed
- Te Kete Oranga was critical to actualising aspirations but dependent on planning and essential skill-development (e.g., budgeting) first
- A level of resilience helped participating whānau cope with change (kaiārahi turnover, COVID-19).

In terms of the specific *Ngā Tini Whetū approach and its settings*, we found:

- A Kaupapa Māori approach is trusted by whānau Māori, enabling recruitment and commitment to Ngā Tini Whetū which led to positive outcomes
- Delivery by local Whānau Ora partners contributed to how well whānau were engaged and connected them to other services they needed
- Not having mainstream services/agencies (Oranga Tamariki and ACC) lead this programme out was advantageous to build trust, but there were benefits to their involvement (aside from funding) for whānau
- The personal care and experience of kaiārahi was the most critical component of Ngā Tini Whetū for supporting whānau outcomes
- A challenge for a few partners and kaiārahi was changing practice to support whānau aspirations rather than crisis response
- The 1:10 kaiārahi to whānau ratio and the amount of Te Kete Oranga pūtea are set at the right level to achieve positive outcomes for whānau
- A one-year duration worked well for some but there is a case for flexibility.

We interviewed over a quarter of all kaiārahi working on this prototype and they were a mix of experienced social sector practitioners through to people completely new to this type of work but with local knowledge and connection. Regardless of background, kaiārahi strongly endorsed the Ngā Tini Whetū approach because it is grounded in te ao Māori, is strengths-based and is led by whānau and their aspirations. Refer to Appendix B for a kaiārahi’s perspective on the programme.

WOCA measurement framework and outcomes

Change through Ngā Tini Whetū was monitored and measured by WOCA in four ways: progress by whānau engaging in the process and planning their next steps; progress by whānau against their self-identified goals and outcomes; progress by whānau in self-identified terms on a spectrum between languishing and flourishing (Te Hinatore), and whānau progress by agency priorities (ACC and Oranga Tamariki).

Whānau outcomes

Across six domains, participating whānau had identified goals and how they planned to achieve them. By the end of the prototype, 3,300 separate outcomes had been recorded as achieved across those domains, as follows:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| ▪ Knowledge | 825 outcomes achieved including education and job training, leadership, confidence and life skills, financial literacy and budgeting skills |
| ▪ Health | 594 outcomes achieved relating to physical and mental health, physical activity and exercise |
| ▪ Living standards | 594 outcomes achieved relating to business and enterprise development, housing and employment |
| ▪ Relationships | 462 outcomes achieved relating to positive household and wider whānau relationships, safety and legal matters |
| ▪ Te Ao Māori | 627 outcomes achieved relating to te reo me ngā tikanga Māori, whakapapa and whānau connections, and whenua tupuna |
| ▪ Community participation | 198 outcomes achieved relating to connecting to community networks, accessing resources, personal and legal documentation. |

Te Hintore

The Te Hinātore Framework helped create a self-identified baseline position for each whānau from languishing to flourishing. As shown below, there were positive, cumulative shifts across each of the four stages, with the most substantial increase (255 percent) at the end of the year being whānau identifying themselves as in a flourishing state. The second most significant outcome is a 75 percent reduction among whānau identifying themselves as in a languishing state. These figures tell us that the prototype had a fast and effective impact for around half of participating whānau. In addition, almost 50 percent of participating whānau have experienced some positive shift but are still on their journey and may need further support to reach a flourishing state.

| Te Hinātore | No. of whānau (baseline) | No. of whānau (end of Q2) | No. of whānau (end of Q3) | No. of whānau (end of Q4) | Total Cumulative Effect |
|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Ngā Whetū o te Mangōroa</i> Languishing | 208 | 92 | 60 | 50 | Total reduction of 75% or 158 whānau |
| <i>Ngā Kāpehu Whetū</i> | 208 | 257 | 234 | 171 | Total reduction of 17% or 37 whānau |
| <i>Ngā Whetū Tiramarama</i> | 271 | 215 | 207 | 177 | Total reduction of 34% or 94 whānau |
| <i>Ngā Tini Whetū</i> Flourishing | 113 | 236 | 299 | 402 | Total increase of 255% or 289 whānau |

Source: Te Puni Kōkiri memo on Ngā Tini Whetū performance (November 2022)

Over 50,000 individual activities were recorded by the participating collectives as being undertaken during Ngā Tini Whetū. These were a mix of whānau-led or kaiārahi-led activities that related to the aspirations held by the whānau as well as reflecting the collective's focus Kaupapa (eg. business development). Activities were aligned to nine aspirational areas known as 'Tini Whetū ki te Rangī': ta ara mātauranga, mauri ora, whaneke motuhake, whakapakari whānau, tuhono tangata, whakaruruhau, te reo/tikanga/toi, whakapapa/whenua.⁴ While not recorded as outcomes, these activities are likely to have strongly contributed to whānau experiences and how they felt in relation to a languishing to flourishing state.

Outcomes in relation to ACC and Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki and ACC had ideas of the impact they hoped could be understood and achieved through this prototype. The co-design process was somewhat disrupted by COVID-19 and we understand that ultimately the agency measures for the programme were set by WOCA. This resulted in *Whāia Te Ara Whetū* being developed - with two conditions identified for ACC and four relating to Oranga Tamariki.

ACC's two priorities focused on whānau identifying as health and injury prevention champions for their whānau or whānau and communities. At the beginning of this prototype, 459 whānau (57 percent) had elected to pursue goals around injury prevention and healthy lifestyles. Reporting by WOCA showed positive shifts each quarter in terms of more whānau becoming aware of the issues and choosing for

⁴ Source: Te Puni Kōkiri memo (30 November 2022)

health and injury prevention to be a focus area for the whānau. As the prototype was implementing during the COVID-19 pandemic there was a sense that whānau health and resilience was an even greater priority.

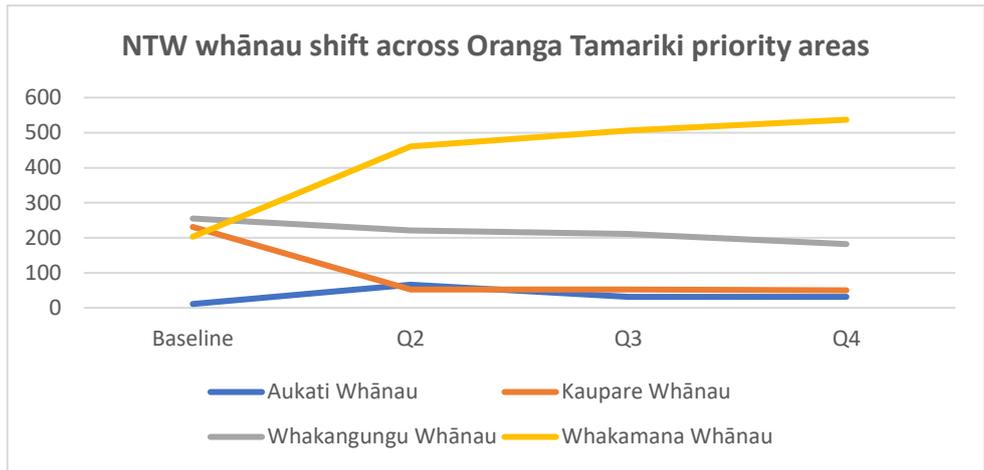
Ultimately, 783 whānau (almost 98 percent) chose to take an active role in their whānau/community on health-related kaupapa, with the majority (637 or 80 percent) being ‘supported to be kaiārahi for promoting and leading injury prevention and healthy lifestyles within their whānau’ (Kaitārai Hapori). A larger group of whānau (271) at the start of the prototype had identified a desire to be a leader in this area for their whānau and community, known as Kaiurungi Whānau. Over the year, the size of this group declined to 146 whānau with the assumption that many moved to focus more on their own whānau, in the isolating context of COVID-19, rather than wider community.

Oranga Tamariki priority areas and outcomes

Four priority areas were identified in relation to Oranga Tamariki and revolved around the level of support whānau needed to avoid engagement with the agency. The table below shows the four areas, their descriptions and where the 800 whānau identified at the start (baseline) and end of the year.

| Priority area | Description | Baseline | EOY |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|------------|
| Aukati Whānau | Whānau who need intensive and immediate support as they are at risk of being referred to Oranga Tamariki | 11 | 31 |
| Kaupare Whānau | Whānau who need immediate support to manage their daily life so not to be in a potential position of risk of being referred to Oranga Tamariki | 231 | 50 |
| Whakangungu Whānau | Whānau who need support, so they can proactively plan immediate and short-term goals for their whānau towards ensuring they are not referred to Oranga Tamariki | 255 | 182 |
| Whakamana Whānau | Whānau who need support so that they can proactively manage their generational whānau goals and aspirations which ensure an enduring generational model for whānau to not be able to be referred to Oranga Tamariki | 203 | 537 |

All whānau were positioned on the framework at the start of the prototype and ‘progress’ or movement between stages was monitored. Very few whānau (11) were initially identified for intensive support in this area but this number almost tripled over the year, indicating that close engagement by kaiārahi was helping identify high needs. Around a third of whānau (231 or 29 percent) needed some immediate support to manage issues in the home that could have seen them engage with Oranga Tamariki and this figure reduced to just 50 by the year’s end. This can be assessed as a significant achievement for multiple whānau who were close to needing state intervention. Ultimately 67 percent of whānau (up from 25 percent at the start) were in the ‘light touch’ bracket of support which meant the whānau was not in need and were instead focused on their long-term independence. The graph below shows the shifts over one year for the participating whānau.



Data source: Te Puni Kōkiri memo on Ngā Tini performance (November 2022); author interpretation.

The Ngā Tini Whetū prototype mostly worked with whānau vulnerable to a state agency referral, with a particular focus on care of tamariki. However, part of its success was its flexibility (by provider) in identifying whānau to participate and working with a range of needs, plus the whānau networks that developed to support each other on their journeys. In a future iteration, we would propose strengths-based priority areas aligned with Oranga Tamariki’s overarching goals, including a category where whānau have the option to self-identify along the lines of ‘tamariki Māori are thriving under the protection of whānau, hapū and iwi’.

Findings on system settings

The prototype was evaluated in two phases to examine cross-agency collaboration and identify what aids and challenges different types of organisations working together.

The first phase was a Lessons Learnt report based on interviews with key stakeholders from all four organisations (Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri, ACC and WOCA) in early 2021. The second was the qualitative impact evaluation in 2022 which, in addition to whānau outcomes, sought to determine what conditions, settings and practices can support an effective interagency initiative.

Lessons Learnt from the planning and funding phase

This report from 2021 concluded Ngā Tini Whetū was a landmark prototype and contained lessons for how government agencies and Crown entities collaborate and partner with kaupapa Māori organisations. The model was underpinned by kaupapa Māori principles including whānau centred co-design, pooling of funding and resources, and devolution of Crown power and control. The collective work to that point was considered unique, innovative and courageous. The research evidenced high levels of trust, collaboration, a permissive approach and goodwill among agency senior leaders to do whatever was needed to help get Ngā Tini Whetū up and running.

Interviews for this study were carried out as agency and Crown entity relationships were still evolving and, while positive at that stage, signalled that “more work was needed” to build the partnership and ensure a shared understanding of the prototype purpose and what is expected of them during implementation. There was some impact from COVID-19 including on co-design workshops and key staff being diverted to pandemic-related mahi, which slowed momentum. The 2021 study also highlighted how those within government who were less directly involved in the early development of the prototype (eg. broader

agency staff) did not receive the same degree of direction about the intention and importance of working in this different and collaborative way.

Overall, in terms of system settings and levers, this study found that:

- Ministerial leadership had been critical to getting the prototype underway
- Agencies shared a common goal and collective aspirations for tamariki and whānau
- WOCA leadership and political advocacy challenged agencies to better understand how to partner with a Māori commissioning agency
- Senior leaders on the Governance Group championed collaboration between agencies but more work was needed to embed this approach
- Short timeframes to establish a large-scale prototype led to a rushed whakawhanaungatanga process and different agency expectations at Leadership Group.

In terms of funding mechanisms, it found that strong policy capability had been led by Oranga Tamariki and supported by DPMC, WOCA and Te Puni Kōkiri (ACC joined later). Collective will ultimately drove funding solutions despite systemic barriers failing to enable resources to be pooled across entities. Despite the introduction of public sector reforms intending to support cross agency work in 2020, there was no straightforward process for entities combining funding for a shared initiative. The group worked through three options before settling on the only practical, albeit clunky, solution which was a Vote transfer between the two agencies, a Funding Agreement with ACC and all funds placed with Te Puni Kōkiri to then commission directly to WOCA. While this arrangement did ensure Ngā Tini Whetū could be funded and activated, much of the focus had gone into addressing this financial conundrum rather than fully understanding how devolved commissioning to Māori would work.

When we understood the implications for us once we released our vote dollar, that we actually lost our ability to ask for return. I'm not sure that we understood that. We still thought even though that had happened that we could still work with the Whānau Ora partners around what cohorts we'd like to be working with and how. We lost all ability to do that unless they wanted us to have that relationship with them.

(Oranga Tamariki official)

The study found some maturing in terms of how government supports and embeds Whānau Ora across the public service. It also found slow shifting to/demonstration of outcomes-focused, strengths-based ways of working, understanding Whānau Ora in practice and what it means to commission.

Evaluation findings post-implementation

The 2022 impact evaluation by Aiko included considering the role of devolved commissioning in this prototype, if and how funding mechanisms were enabling for whānau to support their own solutions, and to what extent system settings and levers aided or inhibited prototype objectives.

A powerful inhibitor is a public service system made up of individualised portfolios and operational cultures of risk. This initiative was made possible because some senior leaders had the experience to trust devolved commissioning but many others lacked confidence in letting go of implementation control.

The letting go was critical in achieving positive outcomes for whānau who thrived through the kanohi ki te kanohi care of a kaiārahi who lived locally and often shared whakapapa. Trust was built quickly and the flexible discretionary funding, known as Kete Oranga, enabled personalised needs and goals to be met. Often small debts were a significant barrier and source of stress in the whānau and removing these or introducing budgeting techniques lifted a heavy burden. The kaiārahi support was possible because of

their innate, holistic approach that reflects Whānau Ora including physical and mental wellbeing for the whole whānau, connection to culture and identity, economic security and resilience.

The result of backing this initiative for whānau was strikingly positive. By having local, Māori providers providing strengths-based support for their own aspirations, whānau were willing to engage and move forward. There was a prevailing impression from whānau (directly and via kaiārahi) that government agencies are led by Pākehā, are generally biased against Māori, and do not care. The main success of Ngā Tini Whetū was having a kaiārahi who listened, got to know the whānau and could support their growth journey. In some cases Kaiārahi represented whānau or negotiated with local government agencies about taking over responsibility for interventions they had in place.

She had fourteen different organisations up her driveway when I first started working with her so we were able to scale that right back to [local Māori provider] and then as the other organisations, specifically Oranga Tamariki, if they wanted to contact her they would go through me and I would organise a meet with mum and OT and she's, yeah she's just amazing.

(Kaiārahi)

Ngā Tini Whetū was seen by whānau as a Māori programme delivered by a local Māori service provider, with some aware of a relationship to Whānau Ora or the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency. As a result, there is little positive impact on how whānau view the agencies due to them being a funder of the programme, but there were direct benefits to whānau (and therefore to the aims of the agencies) by virtue of the involvement of ACC and Oranga Tamariki.

Due to ACC's involvement, kaiārahi and programme managers spoke about having become more personally conscious of injury prevention and passing these learnings on to whānau. Spending time in homes with whānau made it easy and practical to begin conversations about making the whare safer for adults and tamariki. One team brought first aid kits for all of their Ngā Tini Whetū whānau to help start the discussion about keeping safe and avoiding injuries. Another team, sited near the ocean, made it a focus to speak with whānau about swimming lessons for tamariki and in at least another two places Te Kete Oranga was drawn on to pay for tamariki swimming lessons. In Te Tai Tokerau, kaumātua were supported with new sliding doors, ramps and windows to improve wheelchair access, airflow and warmth to prevent ongoing respiratory illnesses.

Partners also knew upfront if whānau had any engagement with Oranga Tamariki and worked proactively with them around any parenting and issues involving their children. Te Hinatore was used to guide these discussions at the start of the process and any shifts checked along the way. The focus for whānau was to keep on the path towards Mauri oho, flourishing whānau with mana, as described by Tā Mason Durie's framework for Ngā Tini Whetū.

The results of these engagements as they relate to the health and children objectives held respectively by ACC and Oranga Tamariki can be seen in the growth of whānau wanting to be health and injury prevention champions during this prototype and the shift away from intensive support needed by whānau in relation to the Oranga Tamariki priority areas.

Devolved commissioning and a whānau ora approach work well for Māori

Working through a Whānau Ora commissioning approach since 2014 has resulted in a large and robust body of evidence for government about the effectiveness of this approach in working with whānau. WOCA does extensive monitoring and reporting to account for any public funding it receives. The Whānau Ora model has been independently reviewed and affirmed as an approach that works.⁵ The recent pandemic

⁵ Whānau Ora Review – Tipu Matoro ki te Ao. Final Report to the Minister for Whānau Ora (November 2018). Refer: <https://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/nga-putea-me-nga-ratonga/whanau-ora/whanau-ora-review>

response by WOCA and others in this commissioning space to reach whānau Māori and vaccinate the community further evidenced their reach and effectiveness.

Te Puni Kōkiri applies the Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework in its work but there is variable use of it in other agencies. Agencies managing public services where there are negative, inequitable outcomes for Māori, including Oranga Tamariki and ACC but also many others, can use this resource to guide how they view issues and design solutions. Central to the framework's application is having the cultural capability to understand what it means to be whānau-centred, taking a strengths-based position, and recognising the connectedness of things by taking a holistic approach.

At the beginning of the Ngā Tini Whetū process a number of senior leaders and officials saw its potential: identifying whānau that could be at risk of needing state intervention and providing Māori-led, wrap-around support and guidance towards greater independence instead. For others, though, it was challenging to give up operational control and understand how commissioning via WOCA would work. As one official noted:

This is forcing government agencies and Crown entities to think differently about how we commission, there is a whole bunch of learning for each of us about how hard it is to do this kind of work when we aren't the sole controller⁶

While the agencies, ACC and WOCA established a comprehensive structure to govern and lead the prototype, it took time for some officials to be clear about their limited role in implementation. There was concern about risk: funding and commissioning at arm's length, lack of control over delivery and return on investment - so the process to get the prototype under way was dependent on good relationships and trust between senior leaders across the organisations. ACC joined the group later than Oranga Tamariki but came in with an understanding about Whānau Ora which helped their transition.

Making Ngā Tini Whetū happen was dependent on a group of people in government committed to working differently and thinking outside of the box. It needed senior leaders thinking this way to activate levers, convince other senior leaders and encourage officials. Without them it may not have been launched.

Missed opportunity to celebrate the bold steps being taken with this prototype and help grow local and regional relationships

Collaboration or even communication between agencies about Ngā Tini Whetū appeared low in the regions. There were some examples of localized inter-agency cooperation, including at least two cohorts that focused specifically on whānau engaged with Oranga Tamariki, but these were isolated and driven by kaiārahi or their provider based on local need. Overall, there was generally low awareness of the prototype among participating agencies at a regional level, based on our interviews with kaiārahi.

We kind of sourced other areas which is quite sad because when I asked them about Ngā Tini Whetū they didn't even know and yet they're one of the biggest sponsors you know. They hadn't, they're like, 'what's Ngā Tini Whetū?' so you had to go and tell them. So yeah like even, not even TPK knew ...So none of them knew what it meant, and then a guy from ACC rang up ...and he goes, 'oh yes I just googled Ngā Tini Whetū and we're like one of the funders for it'. I'm like, yeah, I know.

(Regional Coordinator)

Our impression was that the Whānau Ora partners delivering Ngā Tini Whetū generally had low local engagement with participating government agencies on this programme. They often knew their agency counterparts due to other mahi, such as seeking emergency accommodation placements as Whānau Ora

⁶ Aiko (May 2021). *Ngā Tini Whetū: Lessons Learnt*, p.18.

navigators previously. However, if they were in contact in relation to Ngā Tini Whetū, kaiārahi found that many of their local ACC, TPK and Oranga Tamariki staff were unaware of the programme.

In a few cases, providers were engaged with local, participating agencies and saw the benefits of information- and resource-sharing for whānau. In one rōpū, the programme manager had given a presentation to agency staff about both their organisation and Ngā Tini Whetū which led to them working better together.

Definitely in the Oranga Tamariki process ... we're starting to work a lot more alongside ACC. Yes and that's around kaupapa Māori health services and being able to support whānau...Because our funding is the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency we don't have direct conversations with TPK or Oranga Tamariki or ACC but ... we've started working alongside them a lot more.

(Programme Manager)

Conclusions

Whānau were engaged on to this prototype due to some form of challenge or barrier in their lives that was preventing them from thriving. With support from a kaiārahi, each whānau had the opportunity to step back from what was blocking them and identify what they wanted out of life. With goals and aspirations to focus on as a whānau, barriers could then be worked through on the way to achieving their moemoeā.

Whānau were well-supported to move from states of languishing or struggle through to flourishing, hopefulness and greater resilience. With kaiārahi support they experienced brainstorming, developing plans and setting mini goals so that they quickly began to feel their own sense of achievement. Whānau spoke about feeling motivated, having greater financial literacy and stability, feeling more connected to their culture and having increased agency (control over their own resources and knowing where to get help when needed). Beyond these gains, whānau achieved educational goals, set up businesses, improved their housing situation – numerous things that were central to whānau health, safety and ability to thrive. These shifts in whānau state also indicate an overall increase in autonomy and self-reliance, and therefore a reduced likelihood of relying on or being referred to public services.

Kaiārahi and their managers involved in this evaluation think this is the best programme they have experienced, and they want it to continue and influence other government-funded services. It was based on tikanga, strengths-based and flexible in recognising people's needs and aspirations vary – there is no single answer or pathway for a diverse group of people. Kaiārahi endorse the trust placed in them to work with whānau at the pace and approach that worked best for them over a year.

Many Māori continue to be wary of public agencies, often expecting they will not receive the service that all citizens deserve. The impact evaluation recorded whānau gratitude in the personal, collectivised support they received in this prototype which made anything possible. This contrasted with experiences of being let down before by public agencies, (perception) of not being understood and therefore feeling as if seeking help is not worth the bother. Kaiārahi who have worked in those agencies before also spoke about the pressure in those roles to 'tick people off and get them off the books', a data and reporting-driven approach that doesn't solve the real needs whānau may have. Ngā Tini Whetū was the opposite in their view and there was a strong desire for the programme to continue 'because it works'.

Overall success factors were:

- Local people employed in kaiārahi roles, mostly Māori with whakapapa or at least familiar with the area and its facilities and services
- Whakawhanaungatanga, time and care taken to build trusted relationships with whānau
- A capped number of whānau for each kaiārahi to work with (ten), enabling greater focus and resourcefulness (note time needed for travel, often met in whānau homes)
- Strengths-focused, no judgement, and whānau-led goal-setting

- Flexible fund, available to each whānau to support their aspirations (te Kete Oranga)
- A year of support, there when needed, consistent, helpful and motivating.

Lessons for the Crown

Government investment in Ngā Tini Whetū supported the achievement of transformational whānau outcomes. Through a devolved model, WOCA reached whānau who might otherwise not have voluntarily worked with government agencies, unless forced to by a critical need.

The lessons learnt from several public service entities collaborating on this initiative included technical challenges to align resources, championing the programme internally and sustaining support and oversight. COVID-19 had an impact on the ability to participate in co-design workshops with WOCA and, due to the pandemic occurring as the prototype was rolled out, this may have also derailed some greater intent by agencies to champion Ngā Tini Whetū more actively within their own agencies.

The government actors appeared to struggle to maintain momentum for the prototype: governance and leadership groups were established but no MOU was agreed, meetings were inconsistent and over time there would appear to be a waning interest without an active role in implementation.

WOCA's network of partner organisations and the systems it has in place for funding and reporting was comprehensive. The implementation happened only slightly behind schedule in the context of COVID-19 in which Whānau Ora organisations had essential service roles.

It was practical for Te Puni Kōkiri to be the conduit between government organisations and WOCA, having the Whānau Ora commissioning and reporting system in place. However, going forward, this does little to help build capability and support the growth of the Māori-Crown relationship if all the settings and connections are confined to Te Puni Kōkiri.

In similar undertakings, more time should be taken to ensure participating agency staff understand that better outcomes are being sought through devolved commissioning. Until agencies and Crown entities can be confident about their levels of Māori cultural capability, their funding and support at a distance may help achieve better outcomes for Māori, which reflects the purpose of public service.

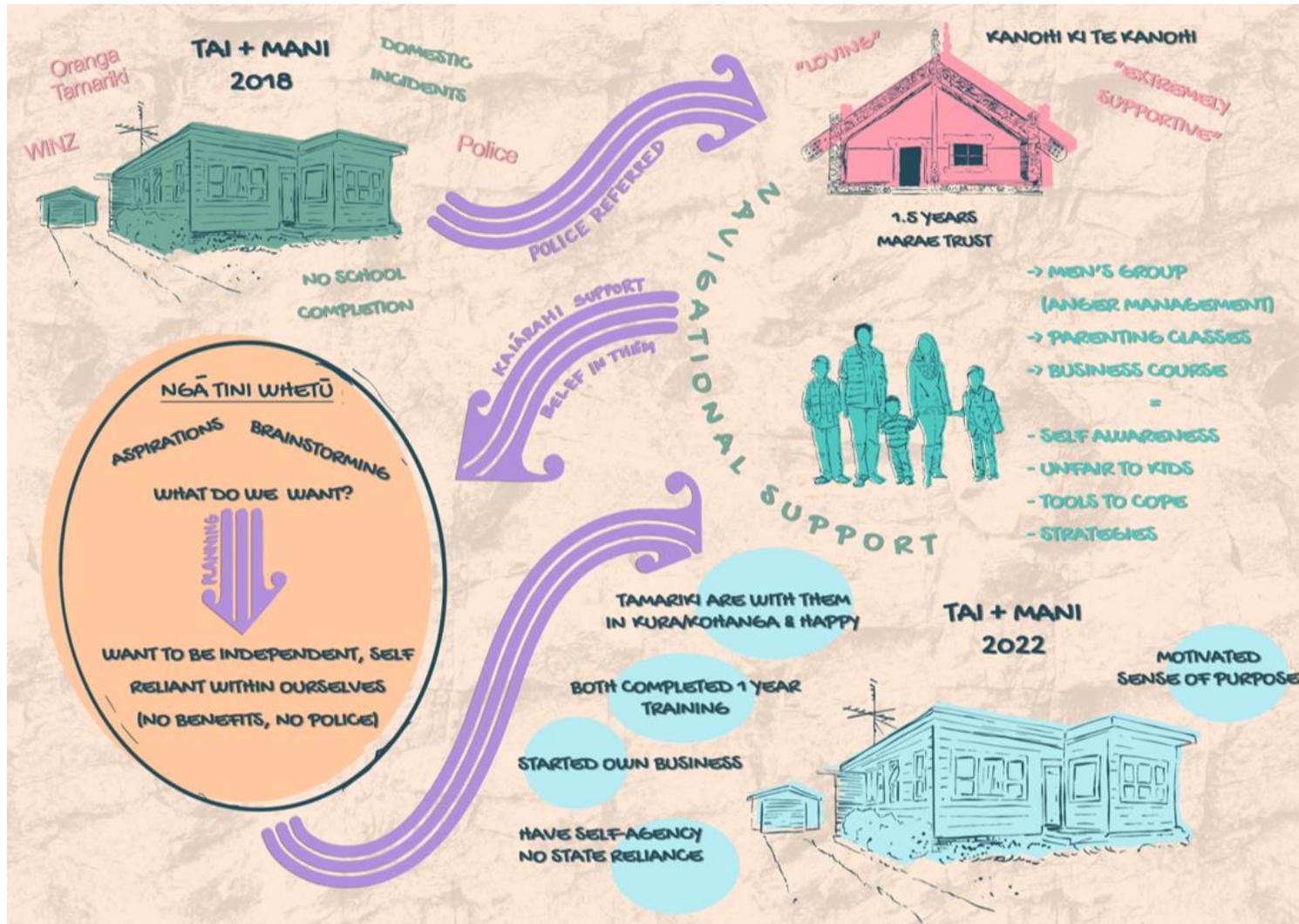
Learning from this prototype, agencies could look to adopt Whānau Ora outcomes more widely, to design for whānau to flourish rather than privilege risk and deficit thinking. While required to build internal cultural capability, agencies should look to their broader social impact taking care not to poach the local Māori workforce and potentially drain staff from more effective settings. Regional agency staff also need a good understanding of the aims of new programmes and leadership guiding them to work with local providers and networks to support whānau success more broadly.

The outcomes from the Ngā Tini Whetū prototype yielded immediate financial savings for the Crown including through whānau coming off benefits (into work or starting businesses) and out of emergency accommodation (supported into own whare), and tamariki remaining with whānau. The more sustainable impact though lies in the more widespread and profound change that occurred within whānau through this programme. Whānau gained confidence and tools leading to changes in behaviour, improved communication between adults and with tamariki, greater self-awareness enabling good choices, greater resilience and positive outlooks for the future.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Ngā Tini Whetū whānau journey map



APPENDIX B

Whānau case study: Dawn

Dawn has three children between the ages of three and six and is parenting by herself in a small settlement. She was isolated, drinking and smoking drugs – all of which had contributed to her having no motivation and social anxiety.

In this region, the focus for Ngā Tini Whetū was whānau who have intergenerational involvement with care and protection and youth justice. For the partner organisation, that was what needed direct resourcing into whānau to try and disrupt the pattern and “*even though people have a lot of challenges in their lives...it doesn't mean that they don't have dreams*” [Programme manager].

They were well connected to the local Oranga Tamariki office, sought referrals for Ngā Tini Whetū and worked with a Māori staffer there who had been through the system herself. Oranga Tamariki were engaged with Dawn around concerns for the children's welfare and they were placed with whānau members for a few months while Dawn focused on herself through the programme. Dawn appreciated that these services worked together to support her.

I needed to sort myself out and just couldn't do it with the kids with me. As hard as it was, you know, we all needed that. Them being with whānau was good, I mean, still bloody hard, but thinking back was best for everyone. The OT social worker was Māori and she was good. You know, didn't judge me, sort of worked with [Kaiārahi] and made it about the kids first and tautoko me to get help at same time. Heaps get their kids taken off them and looked after by people they don't even know, I'm lucky really. I know that.

We met Dawn in July 2022 when she was just about to finish up with her kaiārahi. She said that the experience had changed her life. She previously had no self-confidence, had not known what services were available to her and never thought she could achieve her moemoeā.

My moemoeā was to make rongoā but I needed help myself. I was isolated, I would not leave my home, I was on drugs and alcohol, they brought me out of that, to stop drinking, to stop smoking drugs, to be financially stable, to help me believe I can do it on my own, to help me get out of toxic relationships, more how I feel about being on my own.

She realised how stuck she was and that it was negatively impacting her children. She credited her kaiārahi and the chance to meet other mothers like her through Ngā Tini Whetū for helping her believe in herself, improve how she communicates with her children, interacting socially again and broadening her world through new experiences. She achieved her license and with Te Kete Oranga bought a car which gives her and her children more opportunities to go places. Te Kete also helped pay off some bills which was a burden and stress for her. She began growing vegetables and learning te reo Māori because her children do at kohanga and kura and she wants to communicate with them while they're learning too.

From the whanau hui I realised I didn't have social anxiety, it was awesome, same things we had in common. Women who want to grow, it was mean. Most of them are your whānau too in [her town] and they don't want to grow.

She still struggled a bit, it was not perfect, but she was seeing an addictions counsellor and was proud of herself for resisting alcohol and knew she was feeling clearer and doing a lot more with her tamariki. She remains at risk because of the environment she lives in and a lack of a positive support network.

I keep needing to focus on the positives, it's still a struggle. I don't have many friends to talk with that's good, supportive. A lot of people in this town are tainted with drugs and alcohol, you're kind of lonely all of the time.

At the end of 2022, around five months after completing Ngā Tini Whetū, s

She still had a challenging relationship with alcohol but had increased her resilience, she was learning strategies with her counsellor and had been sober for three months. Dawn was still keeping in contact with her kaiārahi and feeling motivated towards achieving her goals.

Still working on my rongoā – and want to practice one day to help other whānau. I think the reo class is helping me heaps, too you know? Work on me, then I can help others. Me and [kaiārahi] have a kōrero about this, having my goals and dreams and don't stop.

...I thank NTW and big ups to (Kaiārahi) because it's taken her to come into my life to spark motivation, her understanding and openness of her life has made a difference in my world.

| NTW Hinatore Framework outcomes | Dawn's outcomes after 1 yr on NTW |
|--|---|
| Knowledgeable and well-informed | Much better informed about supports available to her and her children; increased confidence to access services herself. |
| Healthy | Sober for several months, feeling clearer and knows it is having a good impact on her tamariki; they get out and do things together more as a whānau |
| Actively participate in communities | Was very isolated and now has met other māmās, realises she is not as socially anxious as she thought; aspires to help people like her kaiārahi |
| Engaged in te ao Māori | Whole whānau is learning te reo Māori and Dawn is learning about rongoā |
| Enjoy high standards of living | Has changed where which is an improvement but not yet enjoying high standard of living |
| Relationships are rewarding and empowering | Has drawn a lot from engaging with her kaiārahi and Ngā Tini Whetū cohort; other relationships in her settlement and some whānau are challenging, disempowering. |
| Oranga Tamariki goals | Tamariki are not in care and are safer in where without alcohol/drugs; are going to kohanga/kura, engaging in te ao Māori; see māmā doing better. |
| ACC interests | Whānau is a lot safer without alcohol and drug use; licensed driver; in better where; growing vegetables and high interest/learning about Māori healing practice. |

APPENDIX C

A kaiārahi perspective on the merits of Ngā Tini Whetū

An experienced social sector practitioner, now working as Ngā Tini Whetū kaiārahi, described the approach compared to previous government roles:

Like we're going out there with the prescribed ... the forms, the system, the assessments were all about what the services and the audit requirements ... and somewhere in there, there was a whānau, you know that was suffering.

She was now working with three whānau in Ngā Tini Whetū that she knew from previous roles where they had been categorised as “high-risk”:

Everything that I did with them under the other system was about reporting back what I've done in terms of compliance, their compliance, everything. So have you got this, have you done this, how many times have you visited them, you know that's what it was about and then we inevitably got to the point - are you ready to be signed off now.

Under Ngā Tini Whetū, she was prioritising whānau that had been engaged with various mainstream services, had had no positive progress and then disappeared from the system because she knew how damaging the experience had been for them.

She was still amazed (as were other kaiārahi) that this prototype was actually happening and she got to work in this better way, recalling her reaction on reading the kaiārahi job description:

I went back to him and said 'that's not for real, eh?'. And he goes, 'what do you mean?'. I said, 'if that's for real then I'm in' because I read something that for the first time actually looked like it was to do with whānau. You know, I don't call them clients or victims, they're whānau. And it was about them and what they needed rather than the years that I've worked the different policies and that's what the focus was.

There was consistent relief and gratitude among kaiārahi that – even if just for a trial period - this approach was being taken because they know a whānau-centred, strengths-based approach works, as shared by another couple of kaiārahi:

In all the years I've worked with people in trouble, with the people in the prisons, the victims I've worked with never have I come across a system that I am able to work like I am now with them. I'm sold. We should not be doing it any other way but through this system.

I come from a social workers background but it's always been deficit. So, ... I actually laughed when I was starting to do some of the training, I laughed because I couldn't believe that I was able to be in a space where ... it was a space of strength, wellness. It was hauora, it was all of that, it was strengths based and whānau got to determine that, they determined what they had, rangatiratanga.

Source: Aiko Ltd (December 2022). *Ngā Tini Whetū Prototype Evaluation Final Report*, p.31.