

Evidence brief background

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre completed an evidence brief into Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC) in early 2020. The evidence brief helped inform our understanding of TRC for children and young people with high and complex needs. The evidence brief findings indicate TRC can be an important part of the care continuum. They should be tailored to the communities, cultures, and social relationships of the children, young people, and families/whānau they serve. TRC outcomes for children should fall within the broad categories of safety, happiness, stability, and development. The involvement of families/whānau in TRC placements improves overall care outcomes.

The findings

There are several key findings from the TRC evidence brief that note the importance of the therapeutic setting, the model of care and interventions used, and effective agency and professional collaboration. They also note the negative impact of seclusion on children.

Key findings include:



Research and practice experience shows that TRC can be an important part of the care continuum. Residential care is necessary for a small number of the most vulnerable children with complex needs, for whom a family/whānau placement is not currently appropriate.



Indigenous models of TRC emphasise cultural safety, promoting connection with culture, participation in local communities, and meaningful connection with families/whānau.



Living environments in residences have a large impact on TRC effectiveness and safety. They should be developmentally enriching, responsive, and therapeutic for the children and young people in care. For example, being:

- relationship based (modelling positive relationships between adults and children)
- trauma-informed (acknowledging trauma histories and their impact on clients)
- developmentally focussed (providing opportunities for developmental experiences)
- family/whānau involved (adapting to their cultural norms and beliefs)
- competence centred (providing opportunities to practice problem solving, coping skills etc)
- ecologically oriented (adapting the physical and social environment to support growth)



TRC trauma-informed environments and effective models of care can also help reduce absconding rates and prevent violent behaviour.

What is TRC?

The literature refers to out-of-home care for children involving specialist support as Therapeutic Residential Care (TRC).

Therapeutic residential care' involves the purposeful use of a purposefully constructed, multi-dimensional living environment designed to enhance or provide treatment, education, socialization, support, and protection to children and youth with identified mental health or behavioural needs in partnership with their families and in collaboration with a full spectrum of community based formal and informal helping resources

- International Working Group for Therapeutic Residential Care (2016 Consensus Statement)



Seclusion has a negative impact on children and young people. It can result in feelings of abandonment, anger, confusion, fear, and punishment. It can also be retraumatizing for those who have experienced trauma. Seclusion can make therapeutic goals more difficult to achieve.



Seclusion is viewed negatively by staff. They experience stress, psychological trauma, and for Māori practitioners especially, spiritual trauma. The use of seclusion can be reduced or halted through staff management programmes that includes training on alternative behavioural management methods.



TRC that has a positive impact requires effective agency and professional collaboration. These multi-disciplinary team environments also require successful communication and mutual respect.

Five TRC key principles noted in the evidence brief:

- "Safety first" is the guiding principle in the design and implementation of all TRC programmes.
- TRC programmes should strive constantly to forge and maintain strong and vital family linkages.
- Services should be fully anchored in the communities, cultures, and web of social relationships that define and inform the children and families they serve.
- TRC should, at its core, be informed by a culture that stresses learning through living, and where the heart of teaching occurs in a series of deeply personal, human relationships.
- The goal for TRC is the identification of a group of evidence-based models or strategies for practice that are effective in achieving desired outcomes for youth and families/whānau,



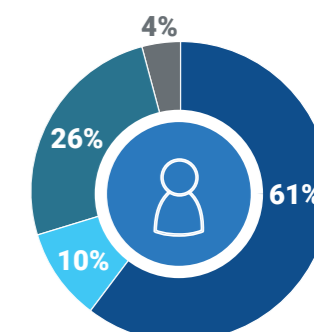
What does our data show?

Two hundred children and young people stayed at care and protection residences over the past three years

Ethnicity of children in care and protection residences

1 July 2018 – 30 June 2021

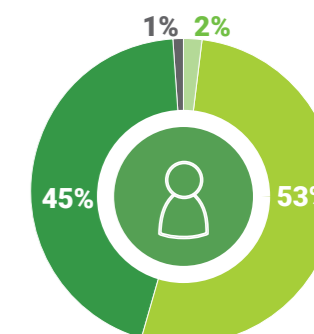
- Māori
- Māori & Pacific
- NZ Euro & Other
- Pacific



Age of children in care and protection residences

1 July 2018 – 30 June 2021

- 6 - 9
- 10 - 13
- 14 - 16
- 17+



Gender of children in care and protection residences

1 July 2018 – 30 June 2021

- Female
- Gender Diverse
- Male

