

Evaluation of Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence: Whakamana Tangata in Practice

Email: research@ot.govt.nz

Authors: Dr Pounamu Jade Aikman (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre)

Published: December 2023

ISBN: 978-1-7386001-7-5

If you need this material in a different version, please email us at research@ot.govt.nz and we will provide it for you.

Citation guidance:

This report can be referenced as Aikman, Pounamu Jade (2023). *Evaluation of Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence: Whakamana Tangata in Practice*. Wellington, New Zealand: Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children.

Copyright:

This document *Evaluation of Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence: Whakamana Tangata in Practice* is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Please attribute © New Zealand Government, Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children 2023.

Disclaimer:

Oranga Tamariki has made every effort to ensure the information in this report is reliable, but does not guarantee its accuracy and does not accept liability for any errors.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to mihi to the staff at Whakatakapōkai, who showed our team great manaaki in visiting their residence. Making time in busy schedules is not easy to do, and we acknowledge the time and effort you and your teams contributed to the kōrero that follows. Ō mātou mihi maioha rawa ki a koutou katoa e ngā rangatira.

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	5
Research questions and report outline	6
Methodology	6
Whakatakapōkai: Context	8
Whakatakapōkai	9
How has Whakamana Tangata been implemented in practice, at Whakatakapōkai?	15
Culturally-appropriate models of restorative practice	16
What is Whakamana Tangata?	16
In practice: Insights from Whakatakapōkai	19
Conclusion: What lessons can be learned?	25
In summary	26
Insights & lessons	27
Bibliography	29
Glossary	31
Glossary of Māori terms	32
Appendices	34
Appendix 1: Oranga Tamariki Māori Cultural Framework	35



Executive Summary

This report provides research and evaluation insights into Whakatakapōkai, an Auckland-based Youth Justice Residence, and how the residence has utilised Whakamana Tangata, a tikanga- and kaupapa-Māori informed model of restorative care in practice. Whakamana Tangata emphasises that good practice involves:

- Respecting and acknowledging one's **Mana**, including recognising both achievement and responsibility;
- Being aware of the boundaries and **Tapu** surrounding everyone's mana, and the consequences of transgressing those boundaries;
- Enabling rangatahi to express **Mauri Ora**, their fullness of life;
- Building, nurturing, and restoring connection – **piringa** – through kanohi-ki-te-kanohi practice, ultimately seeking resolution to breaches of tapu.
- Knowing what is right and appropriate to do in fluid and dynamic situations, giving expression to **Ara Tikanga**. This is about "...having the strength to do the right thing in difficult circumstances and the courage to move forward" (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, p. 5).

This research builds from earlier work commissioned by Oranga Tamariki to evaluate the model/s of care being implemented at Whakatakapōkai (Phase 1). This report, Phase 2, explores:

1. How has Whakamana Tangata been implemented in practice, through the Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence?
2. What lessons can be learned for others trying to implement Whakamana Tangata in their practice, based on insights from Whakatakapōkai?

Our findings show kaimahi at Whakatakapōkai are embedding Whakamana Tangata into their everyday practice, both with rangatahi, and other kaimahi at the residence. Qualitative data gathered emphasises the importance of adopting the principles of Whakamana Tangata, and the strongly positive impact this can have on rangatahi.

Three case studies of 'Whakamana Tangata in action' were explored with kaimahi at Whakatakapōkai, including:

1. The minimal use of secure care
2. Positive relationships within youth justice residences; and
3. Whānau connection and relationships.

Summarised below, the case studies offer suggestions and insights for others looking to adopt similar practice in their own Youth Justice Residences. Thus, based on data collected from Whakatakapōkai, **minimal use of secure care**, through the lens of Whakamana Tangata can look like:

- Developing self-regulation plans with rangatahi to identify how they regulate themselves and their emotions during crises (such as if a fight breaks out). Rangatahi self-regulate in their own way – some need a cup of tea, and others



want to throw a ball at a wall – and giving them a say on how to self-regulate shifts power from kaimahi back to rangatahi themselves. Relationships founded on trust and rapport are the critical enabler to this, and must be prioritised. “Better rapport = better relationship.... When they are ready to talk, they will.”

- Consider the WARM model for supporting rangatahi through the crisis, which is a way of understanding what happened from their perspective:
 - **W:** What happened, in their opinion?
 - **A:** Who was affected? And how?
 - **R:** How can we repair the harm that was caused? What are some options in front of us?
 - **M:** Moving forward. Out of those options, what are some suitable ones?
- Consider also the ‘Sorry Bridge’ model, which ‘digs down into the pit of mamae’ to identify the core issue, and work with the rangatahi to build a way out of that mamae or pain.

Based on data collected from Whakatakāpōkai, **positive relationships within youth justice residences**, through the lens of Whakamana Tangata can look like:

- Modelling tuakana-teina across the team, within and amongst the leadership and frontline staff. We can all learn from each other, and while hierarchy is important, so is paddling together on the same waka.
- Involving on-the-floor kaimahi during decision-making regarding incident management, after a crisis like a fight occurs. Those kaimahi are with the rangatahi for the majority of the time and know them best, which means it is important to take heed of what they say.
- Being open about your own state of mind/mauri, and voicing when you are ‘having a bad day’. Working in a restorative way means being settled in yourself first, lest you ‘do more harm than good.’

Based on data collected from Whakatakāpōkai, **whānau connection and relationships**, through the lens of Whakamana Tangata can look like:

- Prioritising whānau involvement and connection from the outset. Youth justice facilities can disempower rangatahi, and maintaining this connection – even if it is fractured – provides a sense of control and continuity beyond the residence.
- Being flexible to whānau timetables, so that they can visit their tamariki at times most convenient to them. This means ensuring whānau have easy access to the facility to visit their tamariki as and when needed, working in with whatever is most convenient for whānau timetables.

Introduction



Introduction

Oranga Tamariki commissioned this report to evaluate how Whakatakapōkai, an Auckland-based Youth Justice Residence, has implemented Whakamana Tangata, a tikanga- and kaupapa-Māori informed model of restorative care. With legislative emphasis on enacting the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi under section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act, Whakamana Tangata speaks specifically to “[e]nsur[ing] that policies, practices and services have regard to mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga.”^{1,2} The purpose of this report is to provide research and evaluation insights into Whakatakapōkai, and how the residence has utilised Whakamana Tangata in practice, through three site-specific case studies.

Research questions and report outline

This report responds to the research questions:

1. How has Whakamana Tangata been implemented in practice, through the Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence?
2. What lessons can be learned for others trying to implement Whakamana Tangata in their practice, based on insights from Whakatakapōkai?

The second question appears as the conclusion and summary, based off insights gathered under question one.

Methodology

We conducted a literature review of relevant information, both published and internal material, to gain a strategic and operational understanding of the context within which both Whakamana Tangata and Whakatakapōkai are situated. Then, with guidance from Oranga Tamariki, we interviewed key staff at the Whakatakapōkai residence in Auckland, working with them to unpack what their day-to-day mahi looks like, and then how Whakamana Tangata has been implemented ‘on the floor’. Kōrero from those staff, in conjunction with the review of literature, formed the basis of this report.

In what follows, we introduce Whakatakapōkai, before exploring Whakamana Tangata, and what this looks like in the ‘everydayness of mahi’ for staff at Whakatakapōkai. Based off kōrero from staff at Whakatakapōkai, we describe this through rangatahi journeys in the three case study areas, which include:

1. The minimal use of secure care;
2. Positive relationships with leadership in Whakatakapōkai itself; and

¹ Oranga Tamariki, 2023. ‘Section 7AA – What we do’. Available at <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/about-us/performance-and-monitoring/section-7aa/what-we-do-section-7aa/>

² A glossary of Māori terms is provided at the end of this report.

3. Whānau connection and relationships.

These areas give practical insights into how Whakamana Tangata has been implemented in practice, with the hope of offering guidance and support for other staff working in youth justice residences across Aotearoa.

Whakatakapōkai: Context



Whakatakapōkai: Context

This section provides some context for Whakatakapōkai, including the admissions process, rangatahi pathways through the residence, and current statistical snapshots of the facility.

Whakatakapōkai

Whakatakapōkai is an Auckland-based secure youth justice residence, that provides round-the-clock managed care for up to 15 rangatahi. It is one of five Oranga Tamariki youth justice residences in Aotearoa. Located on the site of a previous youth justice centre in operation since 1973, and before that a training centre for girls since 1967, the current iteration of the residence opened in 2006. This followed Child, Youth and Family's strategic shift to split care and protection from youth justice facilities (Beca, 2019, pp. 5, 13).

The overall aim of Oranga Tamariki residences is to “provide a safe, secure and supportive environment for tamariki/children and rangatahi/young people who are at risk so they can improve their prospects for the future” (Beca, 2019, p. 7). In addition, the Environment Court Decision *Minister for Children v Auckland Council* [2020] NZEnvC 49 (the decision) stipulates that Whakatakapōkai creates a ‘normalised’ environment to what currently exists in other Oranga Tamariki residences. This includes structured interventions and programmes to address individual needs of vulnerable populations in the care of Oranga Tamariki as well as cohorts of children or young people that require a different approach that are unable to develop in our existing youth justice residences (p.29).

The residence was the first to incorporate Māori models of care, and the facility itself includes a marae and on-site accommodation for whānau visitors (Beca, 2019, p. 8).

What's in a name: Whakatakapōkai

We spoke with the Kaiwhakaue (restorative practice lead) at Whakatakapōkai, who explained the name Whakatakapōkai was gifted in 2006 by John Turei (Tuhoe) with the blessing of Mana whenua. Whakatakapōkai “...references falling into a pit, a pōkai, and then getting out of the pit. It represents when our young people fall into a hole, and how we can best get them out of there” (Law, personal communication, 2023). Other kaimahi shared that the name Whakatakapōkai was gifted decades earlier. A team of social workers who had been a part of the Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū advisory described Whakatakapōkai as relating to the role of a navigator of the Department of Social Welfare, circa 1980.

Embedded in the residence's name is an emphasis on navigating out of the darkness, with the help and support of kaimahi around rangatahi at the facility. As

the Kaiwhakaue explained, “We teach our new kaimahi about this”, for understanding the whakapapa and meaning behind the name is a critical part of working at Whakatakāpōkai. Whakatakāpōkai, therefore, is equally name and practice. This is another point of difference for Whakatakāpōkai, in terms of its connection to, and support from, mana whenua.

Admission process

The pathway for rangatahi into Whakatakāpōkai is based on a complex screening and admission framework (The Decision, pp. 26–28). Rangatahi are screened against four criteria, including:

1. **Propensity for aggressive behaviour:** Understanding the agreed Summary of Facts for the offence the child or young person has been charged with;
2. **The risk of absconding:** Previous behaviour while in an Oranga Tamariki residence;
3. **Attitude to treatment:** Engagement in care and treatment plans; and
4. **Peer associations:** Dynamics with existing peer group at Whakatakāpōkai.

Because of the complexities that can arise during clinical screening, the unique presentation of rangatahi, and lower number of beds, there are lower numbers of rangatahi admitted to Whakatakāpōkai than other Youth Justice Residences. This allows Whakatakāpōkai to focus on development of individual care plans that are inclusive of the goals of rangatahi, whānau and community-based services that cannot be easily applied in larger residence settings.

Findings from Phase 1 of this research highlighted the mana-enhancing ways rangatahi are admitted into Whakatakāpōkai, where whānau and other professionals can be involved during the interview and assessment process. Once rangatahi are admitted, they are then welcomed to the residence through mihi whakatau. This is unique to Whakatakāpōkai, and those interviewed described how the admissions process differs significantly from other facilities, where the process is similar to that when being received into a custodial setting like a prison, and where manaaki and the mana of the rangatahi is not necessarily the focus of the engagement.

Pathways through Whakatakāpōkai

Whakamana Tangata, a Māori-informed restorative practice approach and model of care, is embedded in practice at Whakatakāpōkai as their lead strategy, *Pathway for Change* (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.b). The mana of rangatahi is embedded in the moemoeā and aspiration of *Pathway for Change*, in which Whakatakāpōkai is to provide rangatahi with:

“...a positive environment that supports self-expression, enables healing and restores mana through the development of helpful and respectful relationships. This way of being will provide skills and social connections to transform rangatahi way of life and reduce the likelihood of continuing on an offending supportive path” (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.b, p. 1).

Part of this restorative pathway to change involves education programs for rangatahi at Whakatakapōkai. External educators support rangatahi in gaining relevant NCEA credits, across arts, physical education, and numeracy and literacy in general. Phase 1 of this research emphasised that delivery of education support needs to align with the values of Whakatakapōkai and Whakamana Tangata. Part of this necessarily involves linking rangatahi care plans and goals with education staff. Nevertheless, other rangatahi programmes are also provided for rangatahi off site, such as adventure-based learning.

After rangatahi leave Whakatakapōkai, it is envisioned that they will be healthy; connected to their whānau, iwi, and support services, and be strong in their whakapapa and identity (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.b, p. 2).

Whakatakapōkai: A statistical snapshot

In 2022, rangatahi Māori comprised the majority of those admitted to Whakatakapōkai (43.9%), and the duration of stay at the residence averaged just under two months (Oranga Tamariki, 2022b). Most rangatahi admitted have identified as tāne. As of December 2022, admissions data is as follows (Oranga Tamariki, 2022b):

WHAKATAKAPŌKAI ADMISSIONS DATA	
TOTAL ADMISSIONS	57
DAYS OF PLACEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum days: 209 • Minimum days: 1 • Average days: 59.68 • Total days of all rangatahi: 3402
GENDER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 86% male • 14% female

Oranga Tamariki incident data (Oranga Tamariki, 2023) across all youth justice residences shows an overall lower rate of health and safety incidents at

Whakatakapōkai (see Figures 1, 2 & 3). Nevertheless, there were 18 recorded assaults in 2022 at Whakatakapōkai, with 2023 data thus far showing 11 (and a variety of other incidents recorded (such as mental stress, self-harm, and so forth). Assault is, in general, the highest reported incident across all residences, and future evaluation and research is needed to explore what has contributed to lower health and safety incidents at Whakatakapōkai, and any causation between implementing Whakamana Tangata and those outcomes.

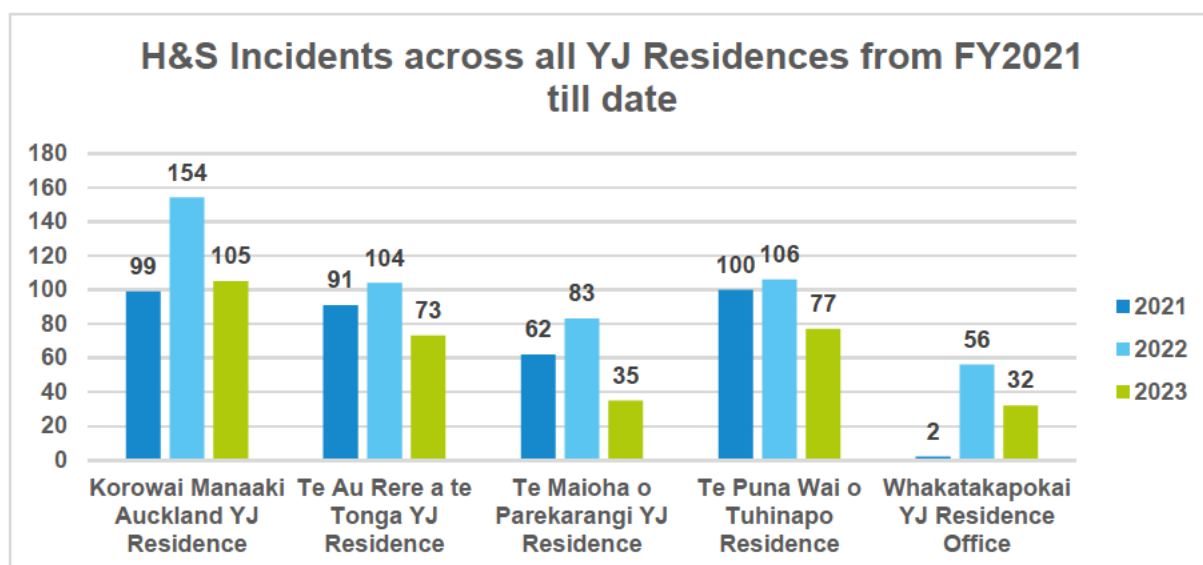


Figure 1: Health & safety incidents across all Youth Justice Residences, from 2021 (Oranga Tamariki, 2023)

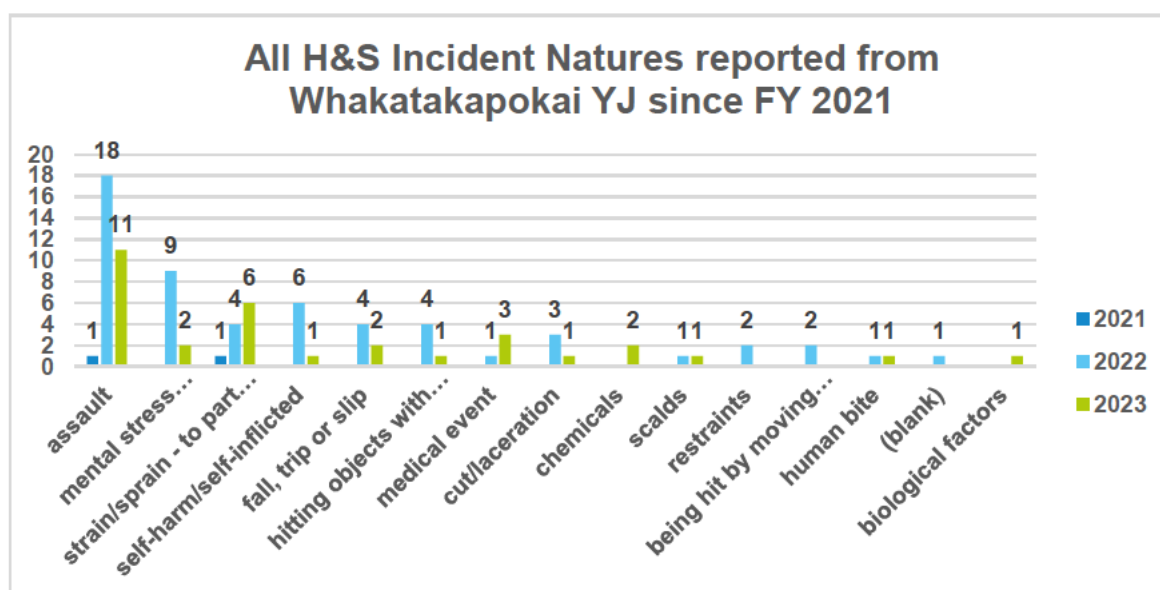


Figure 2: All health and safety incident natures reported at Whakatakāpokai, since 2021 (Oranga Tamariki, 2023)

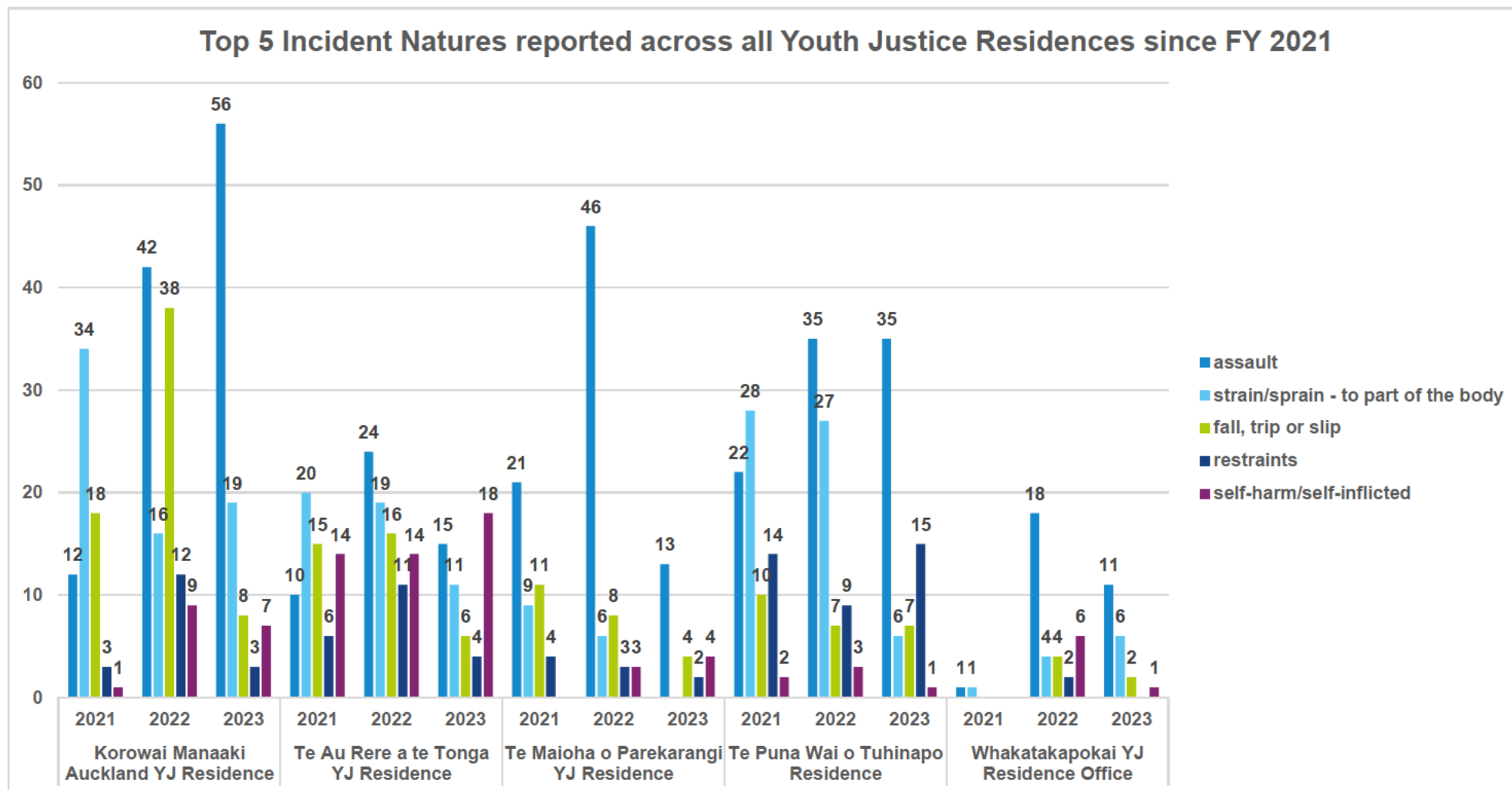


Figure 3: Top 5 incident natures reported across all Youth Justice Residences, since 2021.

**How has
Whakamana
Tangata been
implemented in
practice, at
Whakatakapōkai?**

How has Whakamana Tangata been implemented in practice, at Whakatakapōkai?

This section responds to the following question:

1. How has Whakamana Tangata been implemented in practice, through the Whakatakapōkai Youth Justice Residence?

Culturally appropriate models of restorative practice

The need for Māori informed models of care in such residences is critical, especially given the majority of rangatahi admitted to Whakatakapōkai are Māori. A recent evaluation of community-based remand homes has similarly emphasised the need to embed kaupapa and tikanga Māori into care facilities. The evaluation found the remand homes work responsively to the needs of rangatahi, “encouraging rangatahi to look positively towards their future and pursue their dreams” (Pipi et al., 2022, p. 5). While the degree to which each home had embedded te ao Māori approaches varied, the evaluation:

“...highlighted positive examples of remand homes being explicitly Māori, immersed in te ao Māori values and approaches. In these examples, rangatahi connection to self, whānau and community is strengthened, and tikanga-ā-iwi and mātauranga Māori drive support and service delivery” (Pipi et al., 2022, p. 5).

As the report highlighted, there is a pressing need for “tikanga Māori [to be] recognised as a central and legitimate practice framework” (Pipi et al., 2022, pp. 5–6). Together, these insights underscore the need to incorporate and embed mātauranga and tikanga Māori into the design and delivery of youth justice services. This approach rests at the heart of Whakamana Tangata.

What is Whakamana Tangata?

Whakamana Tangata is described as a ‘way of being’, an “...intention to build and embed processes that facilitate the restoration of people’s Mana, promoting their wellbeing in holistic and culturally relevant ways” (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, p. 2). The Māori informed restorative model encourages ways of behaving and thinking that inform the interactions between staff and rangatahi, and staff and staff, within youth justice residences. As a form of tikanga informed practice, and expressing the intent of Section 7AA, Whakamana Tangata aligns with broader cornerstone frameworks such as Te Whare Tapa Whā, Te Toka Tū Moana, and the Oranga Tamariki Māori Cultural Framework, the Practice Framework, and Trauma Informed Practice (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, pp. 2, 11). The model was developed in 2018,



piloted at Te Maioha Parekārangi (a sibling youth justice residence in Rotorua) in 2019, before being implemented at the other four facilities from 2020 (Law, personal communication, 2023). An earlier evaluation of Whakamana Tangata (Pāroşanu & Wehipeihana, 2021) found that the design and implementation of Whakamana Tangata was well implemented and embedded into service delivery. With any new approach, it takes time to build confidence and embed practice. This report provides insights of service delivery at Whakatakapōkai and builds on the previous report as Whakamana Tangata was rolled out across Youth Justice Residences.

Within the Māori Cultural Framework (see Appendix 1), for example, Mana Tamaiti, Manaakitanga, and Whakamana Tangata are central domains (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.a, p. 1). Of relevance are the following areas and associated practices:

- “Mana Tamaiti
 - Participating confidently in powhiri, whakatau, whakaeke marae and hui Māori.
 - Performing a basic mihi, waiata, himene, and karakia.
 - Applying Māori concepts (Te Whare Tapa Whā), values, and practices to our work.
- Whakamana Tāngata
 - Strengthen[ing] tamariki and their whānau autonomy and control over decisions that impact on them.
 - Promot[ing the] value of Māori culture.
- Mana Motuhake
 - [Working] in partnership and consultation with Māori (whānau, hapū, and iwi) to support tamariki Māori needs, interests and control over their lives and circumstances” (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.a, p. 1).

Enabling the mana of our rangatahi, therefore, rests at the heart of Whakamana Tangata. Whakamana Tangata encourages staff to adopt a relational and whanaungatanga-informed method of practice, built on mutual respect. The model stipulates that kaimahi:

“...create relationships of social connection and reconnection in the hope that rangatahi begin to practice a new way of relating and a new way of expressing and earning respect. The goal is that on leaving the residence rangatahi will take these principles and skills into their whānau and communities, helping them as they navigate a future without offending” (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, p. 2).

Whakamana Tangata: Navigating with the stars

Drawing on the metaphor of voyaging, Whakamana Tangata details the journey rangatahi and kaimahi take as they chart their pathways within and beyond their



residence. This journey, like waka out on the open ocean of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (see Figure 4), is guided by cardinal whetū above, and include (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, pp. 4–5):

- Respecting and acknowledging one's **Mana**, including recognising both achievement and responsibility;
- Being aware of the boundaries and **Tapu** surrounding everyone's mana, and the consequences of transgressing those boundaries;
- Enabling rangatahi to express **Mauri Ora**, their fullness of life;
- Building, nurturing, and restoring connection – **piringa** – through kanohi-ki-te-kanohi practice, ultimately seeking resolution to breaches of tapu.
- Knowing what is right and appropriate to do in fluid and dynamic situations, giving expression to **Ara Tikanga**. This is about "...having the strength to do the right thing in difficult circumstances and the courage to move forward" (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, p. 5).



Figure 4: Visualisation of Whakamana Tangata.

Whāinga Whetu: Whakamana Tangata, Kete Tuatahi is a resource document that details each of these whetū, as well as describes what is meant by restorative justice and practice in the context of Whakamana Tangata (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, pp. 7–8). As it describes, “Whakamana Tangata [as a practice approach,] focuses on

maintaining an environment that enhances the Mana of rangatahi.” (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, p. 9). A rangatahi involved in the development of the model illustrated this point in the following:

“Like swearing at someone is like taking their Mana, or disrespecting someone, or like walking into your Marae with your shoes on or something, breaking the rules of your Marae, or your ancestors” (Oranga Tamariki, 2022a, p. 9).

Relational practice + uplifting mana

Relational practice is at the core of Whakamana Tangata, with the core intention of “building the Mana of rangatahi” (Oranga Tamariki, 2020, p. 5). *Whakawhiti Moana: Whakamana Tangata, Kete Tuarua* supplements *Kete Tuatahi* by offering some practical guidance for what this looks like in practice. It lays out the following as critical guiding questions:

“Are you:

- Using the stars to encourage rangatahi to explore their rich culture?
- Thinking about how every interaction is an opportunity to respect and enhance the mana of rangatahi and your colleagues?
- Explaining to rangatahi how these values can help them when they return to whānau?” (Oranga Tamariki, 2020, p. 6).

With its emphasis on building, nurturing, and sustaining relationships, *Kete Tuarua* also explores the Social Discipline Window, a “...tool for reflecting on the quality of relationships with rangatahi and responses to attitudes and behaviour” (Oranga Tamariki, 2020, p. 7). The restorative quadrant of this model presents a way of working that prioritises manaaki, working together to find solutions, being responsible for actions, and working respectfully. “This acknowledges the Mana of those involved, Tapu can be reset and Mauri Ora balanced.” (Oranga Tamariki, 2020, p. 7).

In practice: Insights from Whakatakāpōkai

Building from and complementing *Kete Tuatahi* and *Kete Tuarua*, we now explore what Whakamana Tangata has looked like in practice at Whakatakāpōkai. In April 2023, our team met with kaimahi and Kaiwhakaue from Whakatakāpōkai. That kōrero formed the basis of a fictionalised scenario, which appears as ‘a typical day’ in the life of kaimahi at Whakatakāpōkai (the complete transcript of kōrero is provided in Appendix 2). Our journey follows Rangi and Mere³ on a day’s shift at Whakatakāpōkai, based around:

³ Fictionalised names.

1. The minimal use of secure care;
2. Positive relationships with leaders in Whakatakapōkai; and
3. Whānau connection and relationships.

A typical day at Whakatakapōkai

Living and breathing Whakamana Tangata

Rangi and Mere are kaimahi at Whakatakapōkai, and have been working there for the past two years. Whakamana Tangata is a way of life for them both, not just words on a page, but something they practice both in their personal and professional lives. “It’s about maintaining self-worth, settling boundaries, and knowing when you’re ready to communicate – and importantly, when you’re not”, describes Mere. For Rangi, it begins and ends with mana, and guides his everyday interactions with rangatahi on the floor:

“Was I caring for the mana of each person? If so, how, if not, why not? It’s about respecting the mana of each rangatahi we work with, rather than stomping over it.”

Rangi explains how he puts Whakamana Tangata into practice through the analogy of rugby.

“In rugby, there are no head-high tackles. When this tikanga is breached, when there are head knocks, injuries, etc, it’s a breach of **tapu**. And there are multiple consequences, like a broken neck, being sent off, etc. With a broken neck, your **mauri** is upset and you can’t participate fully anymore; your own **mana** feels trampled on. But you get surgery or bandages to help you rest and recover, which is restoring you to full health: this is what **piringa** looks like. The rongoa that helps heal your mamae is part of the **ara tikanga**. But I’ve had a role in deciding what that rongoa should be, and so involving me in decision making is really important. Once the rongoa is finished, the breach in tapu is resolved, and my mauri is much better and settled. And I’m happy because I was part of the decision-making process.”

Tikanga and te reo Māori are cornerstones of Whakamana Tangata, and as Rangi and Mere started their morning shift, they often used Māori terms and phrases over their radios. This was common practice at Whakatakapōkai, and for them was about normalising te reo, and also exposing rangatahi Māori to positive experiences around te ao Māori. As Mere explained,

“Our rangatahi Māori are intrigued to learn te reo, because what they know of ‘being Māori’ is often destructive. It’s helpful to disconnect this: we don’t expect them to be fluent, but it shows them another way of what ‘being Māori’ looks like. We started doing phrases of the month, for example ‘pai te tūtaki’ (nice to



meet you), or ‘haramai ki...’ (come to the...) We’re trying to break down those barriers for those who are uncomfortable to use te reo in their everyday kōrero.”

Barriers to implementing Whakamana Tangata

But sometimes putting Whakamana Tangata into practice can be challenging. As Mere explained, “when we’re short staffed, we take a more direct approach, and don’t involve the rangatahi in making plans of action.” Further, external partners also need to adopt the same approach when working with rangatahi, “otherwise they undo all our hard work”.

Case study 1: Minimal use of secure care

Today, Rangi and Mere are working together on the floor, and just after they started, a fight broke out between two of the rangatahi at Whakatakapōkai (Rangatahi A & Rangatahi B). They know they have secure care as an option, but for them, “secure care is meant to be a preventative measure, not a punishment.” After the conflict, they took each of the rangatahi aside, and implemented each of the **self-regulation plans** of rangatahi (see below).

“Other facilities use secure care more often, we do things differently”, Mere explained. This is mainly due to investment in an operating environment that is driven by rangatahi needs and individual behavioural drivers. For Whakatakapōkai, there were eight rangatahi admitted to secure care in 2022, and in 2023 there have been two so far. Further evaluation is needed to explore if Whakamana Tangata-informed practice is reducing rates of rangatahi sent to secure care. For Rangatahi A & B, secure care was again avoided, as Rangi explains:

“We separated Rangatahi A and Rangatahi B and sat them down to kōrero. We used the ‘WARM’ approach to find out what happened from their perspective:

- **W:** What happened, in their opinion?
- **A:** Who was affected? And how?
- **R:** How can we repair the harm that was caused? What are some options in front of us?
- **M:** Moving forward. Out of those options, what are some suitable ones?

Then we had a follow up and check-in. WARM is black and white: we made sure we had a warm environment to kōrero in, and didn’t do it in the room they were fighting in. This is also a reminder as to what type of environment we are trying to create, and how to structure that kōrero to get each rangatahi in the ‘thinking chair’. We call these ‘kōrero whakapiri’: one-on-one kōrero. A lot of our kids want to say sorry. The one-on-ones acknowledge the apology, but we still make sure to ask those other questions, and Rangatahi A and Rangatahi B were both eager to participate in their own way.



And we used the ‘sorry bridge’ (similar to our name, Whakatakapōkai). The ‘sorry bridge’ is how we get from A to B, where:

- **A** is after the incident; and
- **B** is the restorative moment.

It’s not about going over the bridge but digging right down into the pit of mamae. From there, it’s about getting rangatahi to think of ways they can pull themselves out of it. So, it’s not about building the bridge, but going to the bottom of the pit, and working together to build out of it. And that’s what we did with both Rangatahi A and Rangatahi B and avoided use of secure care in the process.”

But critical to resolving the situation, and working in a restorative way, meant having a solid foundation of rapport and whakawhanaungatanga with each of the rangatahi. This is where the self-regulation plans came in, which are plans rangatahi develop alongside staff that detail how they like to self-regulate themselves and their emotions in times of crisis. This is about developing Ara Tikanga – appropriate ways of addressing the incident, with Rangatahi A and Rangatahi B involved from the beginning. As Mere explained:

“No-one can have a conversation when they’re heightened, so we help rangatahi to self-regulate their emotions. When they’re calm, and in a mauri tau space, we work with them to develop a self-regulation plan. What this looks like varies between rangatahi, so for Rangatahi A, he likes to tap a beat to self-soothe, and Rangatahi B likes to have a cup of tea and throw a ball at a wall. Teaching them how to effectively communicate is key. But you have to spend time building rapport and strong relationships with the rangatahi. Better rapport = better relationship. And once they’ve told you their self-regulation approach, you have to ask if they are ok with you sharing their self-regulation process with other kaimahi. A lot of this needs to be done proactively, rather than in the moment. We’d done this a long time ago for Rangatahi A and B, and then we put their self-regulation plans into action straight away after the fight happened.”

As we can see, good relationships are the foundation for Whakamana Tangata, which resulted in neither Rangatahi A nor Rangatahi B being sent to secure care. As Rangi concluded:

“If you haven’t invested time and energy into whanaungatanga, it’s going to be quite difficult to be restorative. If you’re not holding everyone’s mana in high regard, if you’re not holding tapu, not making decisions collectively, not holding people to account, then you can’t work in the restorative space and enact Whakamana Tangata.”

Case study 2: Positive relationships with leadership in Whakatakapōkai

As they were helping each of the rangatahi to self-regulate after the fight, other senior kaimahi were involved in developing plans to work through the mamae that had occurred, through incident management. As Mere and Rangi had worked with Rangatahi A & B to develop their self-regulation plans, and were present during the fight and aftermath, it was important to involve them in decisions on next steps. As Tāne, one of the senior kaimahi noted, involving on-the-floor kaimahi in decision making in this way is critical, and is what positive relationships look like with leadership in Whakatakapōkai. As Tāne explained, this is about tuakana-teina:

“Tuakana-teina is important everywhere, not just kaimahi and the kids, but also with and amongst the leadership, and kaimahi ourselves. So, in terms of tuakana-teina, when you’re talking about incident management, you have people from everywhere contributing to the decision-making for the next steps, like after the fight that happened today. We take what Mere and Rangi say seriously, because they were there, and know the dynamics of the rangatahi. Our team leaders/kaiahi normally make these decisions, but involving kaimahi in this process is really important. It’s our kaimahi who are on the floor every day, and so we listen to them. In other residences, it is heavily hierarchical, but this is different in Whakatakapōkai. This helps us a lot more with communication across teams and helps us be more collective in our decision making.”

During lunchtime, Rangi and Mere were able to sit down and decompress, coming back to a space of mauri tau after both rangatahi had calmed down. Mere emphasised that to ‘do’ Whakamana Tangata, her own mauri has to be calm and settled. “When you’re mauri rere, being restorative just won’t happen”, she explained. “We want to be in the restorative space, but when our own internal mauri is off, we can’t expect ourselves to be restorative angels.”

But for both her and Rangi, communication is key with all kaimahi at Whakatakapōkai. Positive relationships amongst leadership at the residence is built on trust and being comfortable telling other kaimahi that “I’m not having a good day”. “This mahi is quite draining”, Rangi explained, “and so it’s important to let others know when you’re drained, so they can take the lead where needed. Otherwise, I might do more harm than good.”

Case study 3: Whānau connection and relationships

Throughout these examples, whakawhanaungatanga has been the foundation. This is equally apparent in involving the whānau of rangatahi. As Rangi explained, rangatahi often feel disempowered in residences, and “naturally feel they are stripped of a lot of control.” Rangatahi have to ask permission for everyday activities, from going to the wharepaku, or getting outside. Whānau offer a sense of control and



continuity, “as it’s the one space when they can have control in terms of their family dynamic.” Even if rangatahi have strained connections with their whānau, Rangi and Mere will still try to involve and connect with their whānau, and this is done right from admissions. Whānau connection and relationships are critical throughout, and right to the departure from Whakatakapōkai. This was the case with a new admission, Rangatahi C, who had just arrived on site that day. As Rangi explained:

“During the admissions process, we actively involved Rangatahi C’s whānau, and this helped us see if they were the right fit for Whakatakapōkai which they were. We started with this connection early – it’s really important. While their whānau members were with us, we made sure they knew they could visit their tamariki whenever they wanted – day or night, whatever suits them. For this whānau, they work night shifts and weekends, and are based quite far away, but we repeated that they could come visit at any time that suited. But the one thing we asked is that they let us know in advance, because effective communication is as important for our rangatahi as it is for their whānau. Our door is always open, because we are here for Rangatahi C and her whānau.”

In the past, Mere said, they’ve even flown whānau in from the far south “because that’s how important whānau are.” As she went on to say,

“We find the more access our rangatahi have to whānau, the better their mauri is when they come back to the unit. We have an open-door policy for our residence – you don’t need to book an appointment.”

As they welcomed Rangatahi C into Whakatakapōkai, Rangi and Mere bid farewell to their whānau, but knew it wouldn’t be the last time they’d see them.

Conclusion: What lessons can be learned?

Conclusion: What lessons can be learned?

By way of summary, this section summarises the findings of this report, as synthesised from question one above, and then responds to the below:

2. What lessons can be learned for others trying to implement Whakamana Tangata in their practice, based on insights from Whakatakapōkai?

The insights below offer guidance for others seeking to implement and embed Whakamana Tangata into their own practice at other youth justice residences in Aotearoa.

In summary

Kaimahi at Whakatakapōkai are embedding Whakamana Tangata into their everyday practice, both with rangatahi, and other kaimahi at the residence. Qualitative data gathered emphasises the importance of adopting the principles of Whakamana Tangata, and the strongly positive impact this can have on rangatahi. The residence is a 'sum of its parts': it has a strict admissions process that ensures rangatahi are 'the right fit' with the style of leadership and care provided by the residence, and then staff are practicing Whakamana Tangata with strong guidance from their Kaiwhakaue.

Oranga Tamariki incident data shows Whakatakapōkai has an overall lower rate of health and safety incidents, but assault remains, in general, the highest reported incident across all residences. Future evaluation and research is needed to explore what has contributed to lower health and safety incidents at Whakatakapōkai, and any causation between implementing Whakamana Tangata and those outcomes.

Kōrero gathered from Whakatakapōkai kaimahi therefore emphasises how Whakamana Tangata:

- Is a relational model of restorative practice, with the core impetus on building, enhancing, and restoring the mana of rangatahi. It encourages a joint journey between kaimahi and rangatahi, guided by the five cardinal whetū of Mana, Tapu, Mauri Ora, Piringa, and Ara Tikanga. The whetū together express the importance of maintaining self-worth; setting boundaries and having the ability to do so; and recognising when you are not ready to communicate with others in a mana-uplifting way.
- Should be thought of as a lifestyle, and a way of being – not a tool or framework that exists only in the workplace, but something which reaches all aspects of one's life.
- Is premised upon whakawhanaungatanga and building trust and rapport. This needs to be prioritised both with rangatahi and other kaimahi around you, to



ensure everyone's mana is being held, uplifted, and supported. "If you haven't invested time and energy into whanaungatanga, it's going to be quite difficult to be restorative."

- Is grounded in place by effective communication, which is key to supporting rangatahi on their journey through the residence, and nurturing and resotring their mana throughout.
- Encourages self-reflection in everyday practice. As kaimahi, knowing your own boundaries, and what to do when your own mauri is unsettled, is key. Some guiding questions to help in these reflections include:
 - 'How can I use the whetū to encourage rangatahi to explore who they are, what's important to them, and where they're from?'
 - 'Was I caring for the mana of each person today, both rangatahi and kaimahi? If so, how, if not, why not?'
 - 'Where is my default when I am tired or drained? What can I do to mitigate this, to ensure the relationships with rangatahi are maintained?'
- Can also look like normalising aspects of te ao Māori, like the everyday use of te reo through kōrero between on-site staff, having whakatau and mihi for visitors, and treating whānau as manuhiri who are always welcome. This can help show rangatahi Māori another way of 'being Māori' beyond negative experiences some have had in the past.
- Can be challenging to implement when you are short-staffed. Communication and good rapport with rangatahi is key to mitigating this when such situations arise.

Insights & lessons

Three case studies of 'Whakamana Tangata in action' were explored with kaimahi at Whakatakāpōkai and can offer suggestions and insights for others looking to adopt similar practice in their own Youth Justice Residences.

Based on data collected from Whakatakāpōkai, **minimal use of secure care**, through the lens of Whakamana Tangata can look like:

- Developing self-regulation plans with rangatahi to identify how they regulate themselves and their emotions during crises (such as if a fight breaks out). Rangatahi self-regulate in their own way – some need a cup of tea, and others want to throw a ball at a wall – and giving them a say on how to self-regulate shifts power from kaimahi back to rangatahi themselves. Relationships founded

on trust and rapport are the critical enabler to this, and must be prioritised. “Better rapport = better relationship.... When they are ready to talk, they will.”

- Consider the WARM model for supporting rangatahi through the crisis, which is a way of understanding what happened from their perspective:
 - **W:** What happened, in their opinion?
 - **A:** Who was affected? And how?
 - **R:** How can we repair the harm that was caused? What are some options in front of us?
 - **M:** Moving forward. Out of those options, what are some suitable ones?
- Consider also the ‘Sorry Bridge’ model, which ‘digs down into the pit of mamae’ to identify the core issue, and work with the rangatahi to build a way out of that mamae and pain.

Based on data collected from Whakatakāpōkai, **positive relationships within youth justice residences**, through the lens of Whakamana Tangata can look like:

- Modelling tuakana-teina across the team, within and amongst the leadership and frontline staff. We can all learn from each other, and while hierarchy is important, so is paddling together on the same waka.
- Involving on-the-floor kaimahi during decision-making regarding incident management, after a crisis like a fight occurs. Those kaimahi are with the rangatahi for the majority of the time and know them best. Take heed of what they say.
- Being open about your own state of mind/mauri and voicing when you are ‘having a bad day’. Working in a restorative way means being settled in yourself first, lest you ‘do more harm than good.’

Based on data collected from Whakatakāpōkai, **whānau connection and relationships**, through the lens of Whakamana Tangata can look like:

- Prioritising whānau involvement and connection from the outset. Youth justice facilities can disempower rangatahi and maintaining this connection – even if it is fractured – provides a sense of control and continuity beyond the residence.
- Be flexible to whānau timetables, so that they can visit their tamariki at times most convenient to them. This means ensuring whānau have easy access to the facility to visit their tamariki as and when needed, working in with whatever is most convenient for whānau timetables.

Bibliography

Beca. (2019). *Alteration to Designation 3800 Care and Protection Residential Centre – Social Impact Assessment*. Oranga Tamariki.

Minister for Children and Auckland Council, Decision No. [2020] NZEnvC 49 (Environment Court April 24, 2020).

Law, S. (2023). *Kōrero: Whakatakapōkai, Whakamana Tangata* [Personal communication].

Oranga Tamariki. (2020). *Whakawhiti Moana: Whakamana Tangata, Kete Tuarua*.

Oranga Tamariki. (2022a). *Whāinga Whetū: Whakamana Tangata, Kete Tuatahi*. Oranga Tamariki.

Oranga Tamariki. (2022b). *Whakatapaokai Youth Justice Residence: Admission information and demographics*. Oranga Tamariki.

Oranga Tamariki. (2023). *Youth Justice Data, Whakatakapōkai incidents* [Internal document].

Oranga Tamariki. (n.d.a). *Our Māori Cultural Framework*.

Oranga Tamariki. (n.d.b). *Pathway for Change: Whakatakapokai*.

Păroșanu, D., & Wehipeihana, N. (2001). *Evaluation of Whakamana Tangata- Enriching the Culture of Youth Justice Residences*. Wellington, New Zealand: Oranga Tamariki-Ministry of Children.

Pipi, K., Spee, K., Were, L., Porima, L., Marama, M., & Hamilton, A. (2022). *Evaluation of Community Based Remand Homes*. F.E.M. (2006) Ltd & Associates, Oranga Tamariki.

Glossary

Glossary of Māori terms

Ara Tikanga	Knowing what is right and appropriate to do in fluid and dynamic situations
‘Haramai ki...’	‘Come to...’
Kaiwhakaue	Restorative practice lead
Kaupapa Māori	Māori approach/customary practice/Māori principles
Kōrero	Conversation, discussion
Kōrero whakapiri	One-on-one kōrero
Mahi	Work
Mamae	Pain
Mana	Authority, prestige, dignity, integrity
Mana Motuhake	Autonomy
Mana tamaiti	The intrinsic value and inherent dignity derived from a child's or young person's whakapapa (genealogy) and their belonging to a whānau, hapū, iwi, or family group, in accordance with tikanga Māori
Mana whenua	Local iwi and hapū with ancestral rights over a given area
Manaakitanga	Generosity, hospitality
Marae	Community plaza of ancestral significance
Mātauranga	Māori knowledge systems
Mauri Ora,	Fullness of life
Mauri rere	Be panic-stricken
Mauri tau	Be settled and calm
Mihi whakatau	Welcome
‘Pai te tūtaki’	‘Nice to meet you’
Piringa	Building, nurturing, and restoring connection
Pōkai	Pit

Glossary of Māori terms

Rangatahi	Youth, young person
Tāne	Man/male
Tapu	Boundary, sacred, restricted
Te ao Māori	The Māori world/s
Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa	Pacific Ocean
Te reo Māori	The Māori language
Tikanga Māori	Māori customs and protocols
Tuakana-teina	Dynamic of older sibling-younger sibling; relationship based on working collaboratively
Whakamana Tangata	A tikanga- and kaupapa-Māori informed model of restorative care
Whakapapa	Ancestry, genealogy
Whānau	Family
Whanaungatanga	Ethic of relationship building based on family
Whetū	Star/s

Appendices



OUR MĀORI CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Five overarching cultural principles for action

Mana Tamaiti
Manaakitanga
Whakamana Tāngata
Mana Whenua – Kaitiakitanga
Mana Motuhake – Rangatiratanga



KEY MĀORI VALUES, PRACTICES AND CONCEPTS

We will KNOW:

- Names and meaning of four components of Te Whare Tapa Whā.
- Meaning of key practices and values – tikanga, kawa, tika, pono, whakapapa, mana, aroha, tapu, noa, whakanoa, pōwhiri, te reo Māori.
- Key roles and practices of whakaeke marae, whakatau, hongī, hariru, mihi, whakatau, karanga, whaikorero.

We will RECOGNISE the significance of:

- Identity, belonging and connection.
- Inheritance of mana/whakapapa dignity.
- Personal and collective responsibility within te ao Māori.
- Appropriate social behaviour and wellbeing within te ao Māori.

KEY EVENTS AND EFFECTS ON MĀORI

We will KNOW:

- Key terms:
- Colonisation, racism, institutional racism, alienation, oppression
- Key events:
- Principles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) Participation, Protection and Partnership.
 - Cultural perspectives within 1988 Puao Te Ata Tu.
 - Oranga Tamariki legislation including section 7AA.

We will be AWARE of impacts and effects on Māori:

- Loss of mana and autonomy, loss of land and economic base, decline in population, loss of mana for Māori women, Māori resistance.
- Urbanisation, cultural erosion, impact on Māori women and children, disparity/inequality, negative stigma, mistrust/anger and fear.

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISIONS

We will KNOW:

- The meaning and role of mana whenua as kaitiaki.
- The meaning of mana motuhake and rangatiratanga.
- Key iwi, hapū, runaka/runanga, papatipu, marae or Māori organisation(s) in the location where we work.
- Oranga Tamariki obligations to Te Tiriti O Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi).
- Oranga Tamariki legislative obligations S7AA and S208.

We will be AWARE of:

- Significance of key sites, landmarks, events and experiences of mana whenua in the location area where we work.
- The expectations and aspirations of local iwi and Māori.

Mana Tamaiti (Tamariki)

We will DEMONSTRATE:

- Respect of tamariki Māori and their inherent right to their culture and whakapapa (whānau, hapū, iwi, whānaunga).
- Positive cultural identity, belonging and connection for tamariki Māori.
- Application of tikanga Māori that reflects the mana and dignity of tamariki Māori including:
 - Participating confidently in powhiri, whakatau, whakaeke marae and hui Māori.
 - Performing a basic mihi, waiata, himene, and karakia.
 - Applying Māori concepts (Te Whare Tapa Whā), values, and practices to our work.

Manaakitanga

We will DEMONSTRATE:

- Hospitality and respect of all people through expressions of aroha, mana, tapu, tika, pono, empathy and responsible caring.

Whakamana Tāngata

We will DEMONSTRATE:

- Bi-cultural practice in our work.
- Strengthen tamariki and their whānau autonomy and control over decisions that impact on them.
- Promote equality, justice, equity and fairness.
- Promote value of Māori culture.
- Awareness of personal bias and privilege.
- Trauma informed and aware of short and long-term impacts of personal actions and decisions we make.

Mana Whenua (Kaitiakitanga)

We will DEMONSTRATE:

- Effective and meaningful working relationships with mana whenua as kaitiaki.
- Apply key tikanga and kawa as guided by mana whenua.
- Seek knowledge of local sites of significance, key experiences, needs, expectations and aspirations.

Mana Motuhake (Rangatiratanga)

We will DEMONSTRATE:

- Partnership: work in partnership and consultation with Māori (whānau, hapū, and iwi) to support tamariki Māori needs, interests and control over their lives and circumstances.
- Protection: ensure the rights and interests of tamariki and their whānau are actively protected.
- Participation: ensure tamariki, whānau, hapū and iwi are appropriately informed, engaged and participate in all decisions that impact on them.

☑ Tick the areas you feel confident with > More info on Te Pae



Appendix 1: Oranga Tamariki Māori Cultural Framework

[Our Māori Cultural Framework | Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#)