

Transition Mentor Service

Service Specification

Publication details

Publication status

Service specifications will be updated as required – depending on the nature of the update, it may or may not require a contract variation. While Oranga Tamariki will make best efforts to inform all relevant partners of any updates, it is safest to check back to the list of service specifications published on the website, to ensure you are using the current version. All current specifications are published under [Service providers/Information for providers and partners/Service Specifications/Guidelines](#).

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Section 1: About this service specification

1.1 What is the purpose of this service specification?

This service specification is for agencies (partners) partnered with by Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) to provide the transition mentor service (service) as part of the military-style academy programme (MSA).

This service specification forms part of the Outcome Agreement with Oranga Tamariki. It sets out the mutual responsibilities, overarching principles and minimum outcomes for the support. The way that partners achieve these outcomes will depend on their philosophy, their unique approach, and the needs of the young people they support.

Note: This specification is about the voluntary MSA programme being run by Oranga Tamariki before any enactment of the Oranga Tamariki Reducing Youth Serious Offending Act. Oranga Tamariki makes no commitment to continuing to purchase the service or any similar service when the current contract ends.

1.2 Working together

Both the partner and Oranga Tamariki bring valuable expertise to this working relationship. The parties acknowledge the relationship principles included in the Outcome Agreement Terms and Conditions, which include the commitments to:

- act honestly, reasonably and in good faith
- communicate with each other openly and in a timely manner

1.2.1 Escalation

If either the partner or Oranga Tamariki has a question or concern about whether the other party has met a responsibility outlined in this service specification or about whether the actions of the other party are best suited to the support of the young person, they should escalate it by applying the above relationship principles.

Step one of escalation is to discuss and handle the matter promptly at the local level by discussing directly with the people involved. Only then if needed, step two is for either party to escalate the discussion to their supervisor.

If the question or concern is about the safety of anyone involved in the service, including young people, this should be raised and handled immediately. (See also Section 5: Incident reporting.)



1.3 Definitions

Word or phrase

mentor

MSA

programme

service

social worker

young person

Definition and comments

Short for “transition mentor”. This is the professional youth worker provided by the partner to deliver this service by working directly with young people.

Short for the “military-style academy programme”

Short for the “military-style academy programme”

Short for “Transition Mentor Service”

The Oranga Tamariki social worker

Young person aged between 15- and 18-years-old (up to their 19th birthday).



Section 2: About the service

2.1 Context: the military-style academy programme

The transition mentor service plays a crucial role within the MSA programme.

The mission of the programme is: “to deliver a military-style academy that inspires sustained change by providing a therapeutic and mana-enhancing experience, that results in stronger rangatahi, whānau and community, and reduces re-offending.”

The residential phase of the programme offers both a secure and therapeutic environment where young people are made to feel safe, valued and supported to thrive. During this phase, a group of around 6 to 10 young people participate in a structured group programme providing an opportunity for stability, mutual experience and support.

The structured group programme maintains an emphasis on therapeutic intervention to interrupt the offending pathways, along with a strong focus on education and vocational skills training, supported by physical and military-style activities.

Young people are provided with opportunities to plan and build new non-offending and more pro-social life pathways with a focus on responsibility, empathy and maturity.

During the remaining 6–12 months, the young people are in a community setting with a focus on their transition to successful reintegration into their communities. It includes the support they need to engage in a positive main activity such as education, employment, vocational training or volunteering, alongside ongoing therapeutic support. Throughout this whole phase, the young person receives multi-disciplinary support to develop and realise their transition plan.

2.2 About the mentor service

Where there is an identified need, each young person is assigned a mentor.

The mentor works alongside the Oranga Tamariki social worker (social worker), in-person with the young person as a consistent and pro-social role model.

The mentor’s overarching purpose is to support the young person’s reintegration back into the community and into a supported environment that enables the young person to achieve the goals and commitments detailed in their transition plan.

The service is designed to proactively offer caring, consistent and relevant support that meets the circumstances, preferences and full range of needs of the young person.

The young person is supported in ways that uphold and enhance their mana, rights and hauora (health and wellbeing). Needs are considered holistically, to include physical, mental and emotional, spiritual, family and social needs, and according to cultural and indigenous models such as Te Whare Tapa Whā.

For more details about the mentors themselves, and the expectations of how they are to carry out this role, see Section 3.2: The mentors provided by the partner.



2.3 About the young people

The MSA programme is designed for some of the most complex young people in our custody. Young people issued with an MSA Order will often have histories of trauma (physical, emotional and sexual) and exhibit serious behavioural challenges, mental health issues, neurodevelopmental disorders, intellectual disabilities, language impairments and disengagement from education.

At the same time, they are a group of individuals who have potential to dramatically change the trajectory of their lives with the input of caring, consistent and supportive adults around them.

The young people on the programme, and therefore receiving this service, will have been assessed as meeting all the following criteria:

- They are male and aged between 15- and 18-years-old (up to their 19th birthday)
- They have carried out at least two separate and proven offences that carry a 10-year maximum imprisonment penalty or higher
- They were aged 17 or under at the time of offending
- They are considered likely to re-offend seriously and/or repeatedly
- There is evidence of previous interventions that have failed to reduce offending
- They are subject to a Supervision with Residence Order (SWR)
- They are considered an appropriate fit within the cohort of young people going through the programme together

2.4 Outcomes of the service

2.4.1 Overarching objective

The service sits within the programme. One overarching outcome of the programme is to “Make a difference” – that is, to create both immediate and long-term positive outcomes for the young people, their whānau, and for communities resulting from the residential and community components of the programme.

For the community and wider society, including the victims of crime, the long-term objectives are:

- improved community cohesion and trust through enhanced public safety, reduced crime and perception of fair and restorative processes
- greater community trust in the criminal justice process
- longer term healing of whānau, communities and society, by reducing the intergenerational effects of crime

The service is an integral part of the programme and therefore an integral aspect of achieving the overarching “Make a difference” outcome.

2.4.2 Specific outcomes of the service

For the young person:

- Engaged in education, training, or employment



- Engaged in positive activities
- Increased cultural/spiritual connections
- Improved relationship with whānau
- Improved/increased pro-social outlook and a reduction in offending
- Improved physical health/wellbeing



Section 3: Roles and responsibilities of the partner and Oranga Tamariki

3.1 The partner

3.1.1 Organisational management

The partner needs to meet [Social Services Accreditation](#) Level 2, as managed by [Te Kāhui Kāhu](#), and to maintain this approval level. As per this accreditation, the partner has full responsibility in managing its own organisation, including:

- policies and procedures
- general financial responsibilities, including day-to-day costs and insurances
- applying all relevant legislation
- recruiting, vetting, training, managing and reviewing its staff, ensuring that mentors who deliver this service meet the minimum skills, knowledge and attitudes outlined in Section 3.2: The mentors provided by the partner
- providing a safe practice environment for its staff and ensuring that the service is delivered by appropriately trained, experienced and supported youth workers
- actively maintaining strong working relationships with other agencies and community supports within its region, to be well equipped to refer and connect young people to additional supports that are right for them

3.1.2 Contractual obligations

The partner has full responsibility for:

- meeting the requirements of the Outcome Agreement, which includes all the information in this service specification
- monitoring and recording its performance under this contract, reporting to Oranga Tamariki in the methods and timings detailed in the Outcome Agreement and this service specification (see Section 4: Reporting)
- raising or escalating any concerns to Oranga Tamariki at any point in time as considered necessary for any reason

3.2 The mentors provided by the partner

3.2.1 Competencies

Mentors delivering this service need to have the following minimum skills, knowledge and attitudes. These can be demonstrated in part by holding a relevant and recognised Youth Work qualification or by demonstrating their depth of experience.

- Suitably qualified and experienced youth worker, professional mentor or coach. Examples of suitable qualifications include the New Zealand Certificate in Youth Work (Level 3 or 4), a Bachelor of Youth Development, or a similar qualification in a Māori context



- Skilled and experienced in working with high-risk young people with offending behaviour
- Experienced in offering therapeutic support, helping young people resolve their emotional, behavioural and psychological issues, and facilitating self-awareness, self-expression and personal growth
- Responsive to all core aspects of identity, which may include culture, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and expression, any cognitive or physical disability, migrant experience and religious or spiritual beliefs
- Experienced in personal dysregulation management, regarding how people manage or control their emotions, impulses and behaviours. This involves strategies to help young people develop emotional regulation skills and adaptive coping mechanisms
- Experienced in modelling and supporting pro-social behaviour, in terms of the connections and social relationships that the young person builds to give them a sense of belonging to a community that promotes moral and ethical values
- Experienced in working with complex family dynamics
- Offer trauma-informed practice, recognising the impact of past or present exposure to traumatic experiences on the young people and their behaviour. This approach aims to empower the young person, foster positive relationships, and ensure that interventions are sensitive to individual needs and experiences, to reduce the risk of re-traumatising

3.2.2 Time and travel commitments

Mentors delivering this service need to be able to meet the following commitments.

All these commitments include the mentor organising their own hours to suit the circumstances and needs of the young person, which means that they must be available to work outside standard business hours. They may need to work evenings, weekends and public holidays. They might also be called on at very short notice.

For example, whānau members might only be available in evening or weekends, and the young person may have a regular high-risk period such as Friday afternoons and evenings.

Note: Contact hours/time means the time the mentor spends with the young person (including face-to-face, via technology etc).

3.2.3 Tasks

During the first six months of the community phase, the mentor:

- takes on the role of a trusted “go-to” and support person for the young person
- works with and supports the social worker to act as the face of the multi-disciplinary team responses
- is accountable for any commitments made in the young person’s transition plan that require the support of the mentor role to action/complete
- works alongside and supports Oranga Tamariki to meet statutory obligations



- supports the young person to comply with Court requirements and achieve their goals and commitments as expressed in their transition plan
- holds the young person accountable using strengths-based approaches to keep them engaged and working towards their goals. While each plan will be tailored and individualised, this may include supporting:
 - essential life skills development, particularly those identified as skills to sustain or those identified as requiring support and/or practice;
 - links to education, training or employment;
 - maintenance of fitness, adventure, or hobby aspects learnt in the residential component such as attending the gym, martial arts, sports or other activities;
 - encouraging cultural, spiritual and other pro-social activities that foster a sense of self, identity, belonging and connection;
 - fostering emotional and holistic wellbeing, including supporting mindfulness practices the teenager may have developed through the residential component;
 - encouraging building of social skills and development of positive/pro-social relationships with whānau and peers;
 - revisiting learnings captured in plans and discussing these with the young person, including their identified triggers and coping strategies.
- encourages mutual young person and whānau engagement
- supports the young person if they re-offend, aiming to get the young person back on track
- meets and/or communicates with the local multi-disciplinary team and social worker, as required – this could be daily, because risk of re-offending is reduced through information sharing, review/update supports, and providing coordinated and immediate responses to emerging risks and needs
- communicates very frequently, potentially daily, with the social worker and local multi-disciplinary team about the young person's engagement and progress with their plan and goals
- appropriately responds to, and urgently notifies the social worker, about any reoffending or breaches of conditions
- keeps records of outcomes achieved and any barriers as required

During the remaining months of the community component, the mentor:

- continues the above activities but to a less intense level – the focus is now on offering stable, wrap-around support to ensure the young person's enduring success in the community

Throughout the service, the mentor should also be open to engaging in any professional development opportunities that arise within the context of the service.

3.3 Oranga Tamariki

3.3.1 Organisational management

Oranga Tamariki will carry out its roles and responsibilities according to the operational policy and practice guidance, which partners are welcome to view on the [Oranga Tamariki Practice Centre](#).

3.3.2 Contractual obligations

Oranga Tamariki has full responsibility for:

- providing the financial commitment detailed in the Outcome Agreement
- reviewing the partner's reports and raising any requests for further information
- responding quickly to any matters of escalation, or to any reported allegations of harm or of critical or serious incidents that arise during and as a direct result of participation in this service
- raising or escalating any concerns to the partner at any point in time as considered necessary for any reason

In general, Oranga Tamariki is always available and willing to work in partnership with the partner for any sharing of learnings, or additional discussions or guidance as requested by the partner.

Section 4: Reporting

Reporting ensures accountability to Government for the funding provided under an Outcome Agreement. The contractual reporting outlined below is necessary to meet the obligations set out in the Outcome Agreement for this service, and to report what has been achieved.

Partners should note that the mentor will also be involved in more frequent operational reporting, including through their regular meetings with the multi-disciplinary team and the social worker.

Partners should also note that there will be evaluation requirements. While the details are yet to be finalised, it is expected that the contracted evaluator would interview the mentor for likely no more than two hours.

Please note:

- The layout of the below reporting material is indicative – an electronic contractual reporting format will be provided
- A separate report needs to be filled out for each young person supported by the partner
- To maintain privacy and confidentiality, refer to the young person by their first initial and age, eg John aged 14 is referred to as J14
- Contact hours are defined as the time that the mentor spends with the young person (including face-to-face, via technology etc)

Table 1: Contractual reporting overview

Timeframe			
	Supplied by the partner electronically using the template attached as Attachment 2	By the 1 st of the next month	Each month from 01 July 2026 to 30 June 2027
	1) Supplied by the partner electronically	10/10/26 05/12/26 10/4/27 10/7/27	Preceding quarter and upcoming quarter
	2) Reconciliation Report, as per the Funding and reconciliation provisions of the OA Terms and Conditions	10/10/26 05/12/26 10/4/27 10/7/27	Preceding quarter
	Audited annual financial statements and the Auditor's report prepared in accordance with	Within 6 months of the balance date (end of	Preceding 12 months, or annual financial reporting period

Timeframe	Reporting	Due	Period covered
	International Standards on Auditing (New Zealand)	accounting year)	

Table 2: Quarterly reporting content and format

1.	Has the young person remained engaged in the service? (Y/N)
2.	Has the young person reoffended? (Y/N)
3.	Describe (briefly) the actions taken by the mentor to support the young person to maintain their commitments outlined in plans. What commitments have been achieved?
4.	Describe (briefly) the actions taken by the mentor to support the young person to achieve their goals identified in plans. What goals have been achieved, or what are the successful steps the young person has taken towards achieving their goals?
5.	Have any of the following outcomes occurred for the young person? Please answer Yes or No to each and provide a brief explanation. If some of this is covered in your response to questions 3 and 4, you can say refer to the above. – Engaged in education, training, or employment – Engaged in positive activities – Increased cultural/spiritual connections – Improved relationship with whānau – Improved/increased pro-social outlook and a reduction in offending – Improved physical health/wellbeing
6.	If the number of contact and non-contact hours differs from the number that is contracted, explain the reasons for this difference.

Section 5: Incident reporting

The mentor might be the first person to become aware of an allegation that a young person in the service has been harmed, or that a critical or serious incident has occurred involving the young person. Or, the mentor might have been trying but unable to contact the young person for a longer time than feels usual.

Harm is defined as: “ill-treatment, abuse, neglect, or deprivation. This includes, but is not limited to, actions or omissions that cause emotional, physical or sexual harm, or sexual harassment.”

Critical or serious incidents include death; suicide attempt; hospitalisation; assault; involvement in the manufacture, cultivation or supply of controlled drugs; wilful property damage; inappropriate sexual behaviour; the use of alcohol or possession or use of Class C drugs; hunger strikes or other serious eating-disorder-related incidents; occasions that involve calling on emergency services for assistance, eg needing the Fire Service to gain access to a rooftop or a locked room; the young person is missing or absconded.

If the mentor is the first person to become aware of any of the above, their responsibility is as follows.

Immediately:

- support the young person’s safety and wellbeing through any essential urgent and appropriate response
- phone and speak to the social worker. It is the social worker’s statutory role to carry out the correct processes from that point
- if the mentor cannot get through to the social worker urgently, they should speak to someone at the Oranga Tamariki national contact centre, which is open 24 hours on 0508 FAMILY/0508 326 459

In the short and medium term:

- work with the social worker as required to plan and carry out a coordinated response to protect the young person, their whānau, and anyone else at risk.

Document ends