ORANGA TAMARIKI
Ministry for Children

Military-Style Academy 2.0 - Community Phase Update

To Hon Karen Chhour, Minister for Children			
Date	**4 September 2026**	**Deadline**	**Not applicable**
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Key contact	Dean Winter, DCE Youth Justice Services and Residential Care	**Contact number**	s9(2)(g)(ii) [redacted]
Security	In-confidence		

Purpose

1 The second Military-Style Academy Programme (known as 'MSA 2.0') is currently in the community phase. This briefing is to provide you with an update on how the early stages of the community phase are progressing, along with an overview of the residential phase following a 'lessons learned' process and receiving preliminary findings from an independent evaluation.

Executive Summary

2 The residential phase of MSA 2.0 ran from 9 March to 9 July 2026.

3 Overall, the residential phase of MSA 2.0 was a significant improvement on the previous Pilot programme. Kaimahi observed positive outcomes for rangatahi, stronger whānau engagement, improved transition planning and meaningful therapeutic gains. The main challenges were operational, rather than programme design issues.

4 MSA 2.0 has demonstrated that an integrated therapeutic programme can achieve meaningful change for rangatahi, but that future success depends on having a right sized and right skilled workforce, strong leadership during the residential phase, team collaboration and clearer social worker engagement.

5 The rangatahi who finished the residential phase are now in the community, on supervision orders ranging from 8 to 12 months depending on the individual.

6 The first six weeks of the MSA community phase have been largely positive, with strong engagement from all eight rangatahi and encouraging progress. The newly introduced Step-Up Home model has been well received, providing a safe, stable and supportive environment for rangatahi transitioning from residence.

7 The MSA clinical outreach service has also proven valuable, providing ongoing therapeutic support through regular individual and group sessions. Enabling the rangatahi

to maintain relationships with familiar clinical staff has supported continuity, trust and early identification of emerging risks, while reinforcing learning from the residential phase.

8 Early results indicate that the combined support of the Step-Up Home model, clinical outreach, mentors and social workers is contributing positively to community transition outcomes and provides a strong foundation for continued progress.

Overview of the Residential Phase

9 The residential phase operated for 18 weeks, an increase of six weeks on the MSA Pilot programme. This included two initial weeks of assessment.

10 This additional time with rangatahi enabled the clinical team to embed learnings and reinforce coping strategies. It also meant that more time could be spent on vocational activities, transition planning and life skills development.

11 A total of seven off-sites occurred during the 18-week programme, including an overnight stay in a marae.

12 A highlight of the residential phase was the addition of the Life Skills Whare at Te Au rere a te Tonga youth justice residence. Working with an occupational therapist, the rangatahi used the whare to learn important life skills such as cooking, shopping, budgeting, home maintenance etc.

13 Several new providers delivered valuable programme work including Educate-Whakaako, who worked alongside the rangatahi to landscape the grounds of the Life

Skills Whare.

14 Kaimahi fatigue was an issue during MSA 2.0 (as it was during the Pilot, albeit that was a shorter residential phase), due to the intensive nature of the programming, so thought is being given to different roster patterns and less intense programme activity across the weekends in future.

15 As the programme is operating under current legislative settings, participation in MSA 2.0 is voluntary. During week 13, two of the rangatahi withdrew their participation consent and exited the programme. This decision was worked through with their whānau, social workers, the MSA leadership and the operational delivery team. They were transferred to elsewhere in the youth justice residential network for the remainder of their supervision with residence orders.

16 The other eight young people have remained well engaged with the programme.

Current Status of the Community Phase

17 Six rangatahi are currently living in Step-Up Homes owned and operated by Oranga Tamariki, while two rangatahi have returned to live with whānau.

18 All the rangatahi are participating in their primary anchor activity (generally courses), attending the gym and participating in therapy support as required.

19 As to be expected, there have been some minor issues during this transition period, but as at the time of writing, there has been no re-offending from any of the rangatahi, which is a significant achievement.

Voluntary Living in a Step-Up Home

20 The Step-Up Home model is a new component of the MSA programme. Rangatahi reside in these homes under section 140 arrangements (under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989), with participation requiring the consent of both the rangatahi and their whānau.

21 Early indications suggest this model is proving highly beneficial. Following their transition from residence, these rangatahi require a safe, stable and supportive environment to help them achieve their goals and successfully reintegrate into the community.

22 Feedback from the six rangatahi currently living in the Step-Up Homes has been overwhelmingly positive. Several have commented that they have "*felt supported to make the right decisions, even when it's hard.*"

Two Rangatahi Returned to Whānau

23 Two rangatahi returned to live with their whānau following completion of the residential phase. s9(2)(a) [redacted]

[redacted]

MSA Clinical Team Outreach

25 The MSA clinical team outreach is another new element of the programme and has been well received by both rangatahi and social worker kaimahi.

26 The clinical team continues to work with all eight rangatahi in the community, providing fortnightly 1:1 and group sessions (for those in the Step-Up Homes), alongside phone-based support as required. This work complements the ongoing involvement of mentors and social workers and helps ensure a coordinated support approach.

27 The clinical team has reported that community-based engagement provides valuable opportunities to reinforce and embed learning from the residential phase. Rangatahi have also commented positively on maintaining relationships with familiar clinical staff, which has helped support continuity and trust during the transition back into the community.

28 From a programme perspective, the continuity provided by the clinical team has proven particularly valuable. Their ongoing involvement enables regular monitoring of engagement, early identification of emerging risks or issues and informed advice regarding plan implementation and any further therapeutic supports that may be required.

29 Overall, the first six weeks in the community have been encouraging. The absence of re-offending by any of the rangatahi, combined with strong engagement in plans, positive decision-making and the effectiveness of the Step-Up Home and clinical team outreach components, provides a strong foundation for continued progress and successful reintegration.

Next steps

30 The Responding to Serious Youth Offending (RYSO) bill remains at the Committee of the Whole stage with the expectation it will proceed through to the third Reading and Royal Assent before the House rises for the 2026 Election.

31 Development of the next MSA programme is underway. This will be the first programme to operate under the RYSO legislation. We anticipate the first cohort beginning in late February 2027, however this dependent on timing of the legislation as it will take several months for the cohort to build (the eligible offending needs to occur before any sentencing) and for the workforce of kaimahi to be appointed, trained and in place.

32 There are currently no proactive public communications planned regarding MSA 2.0.

Sign-off
Oranga Tamariki



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Date signed: 28 August 2026

Minister comments

Satisfaction
Please select your level of satisfaction with this Aide Memoire ☐ Outstanding ☐ Good ☐ Acceptable ☐ Poor ☐ Unacceptable