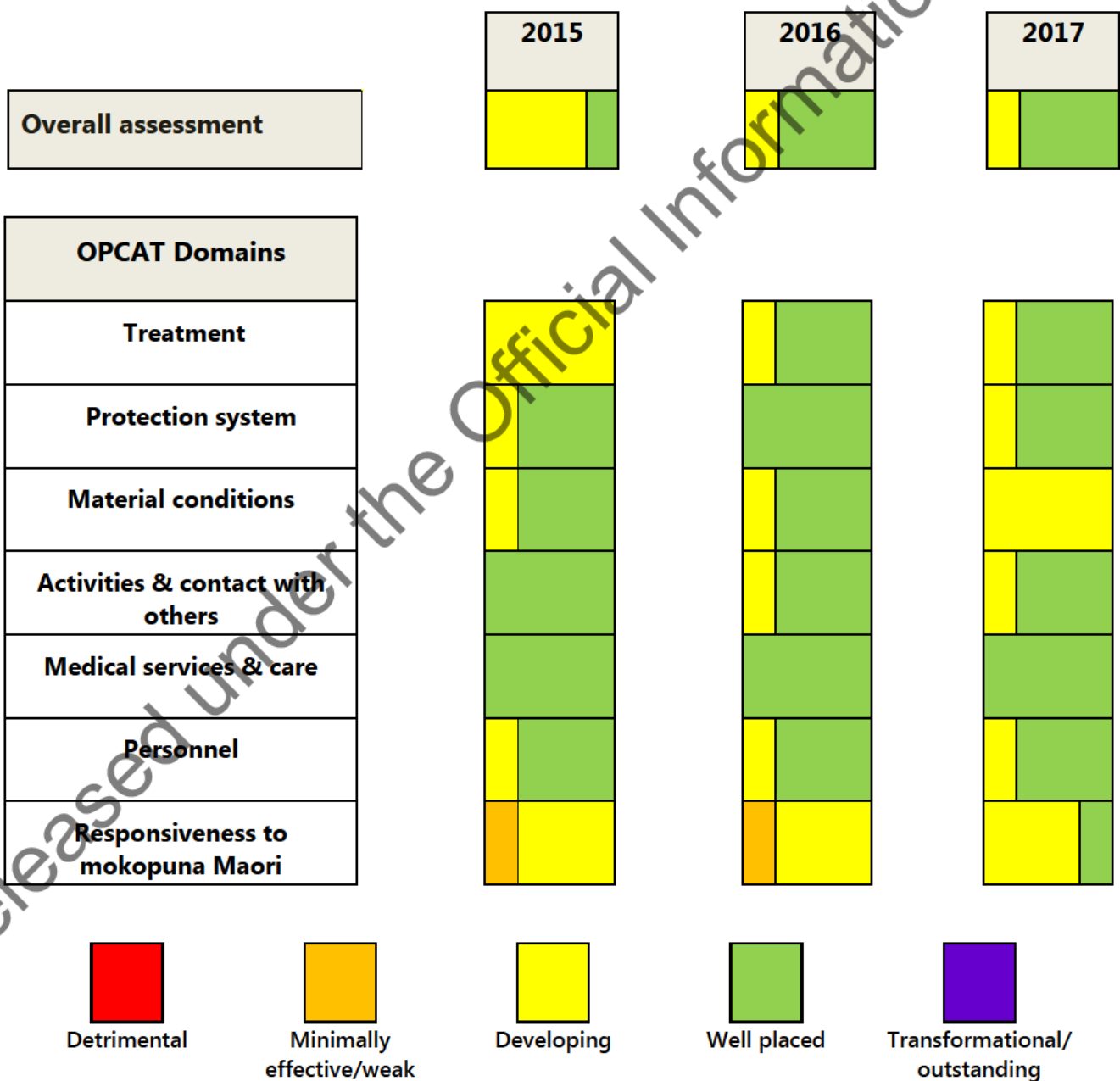


Oranga Tamariki Residence Visit (Announced OPCAT Visit)

Epuni (Care and Protection Residence), Lower Hutt, Wellington

Visit date: s 9(2)(a) OIA 2018. Report date: 14 June 2018



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Introduction

Purpose of visit

1. On s9(2)(a) OIA 2018, s 9(2)(a) OIA and s 9(2)(a) OIA from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) conducted a pre-arranged monitoring visit to Epuni, Lower Hutt, Wellington. The purpose of our visit was to assess the quality of Oranga Tamariki's services against the six domains relevant to our role as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT – refer to Appendix 1 for more detail). These domains are: treatment, protection system, material conditions, activities and contact with others, medical services and care and personnel. As with every monitoring visit, we also focused on responsiveness to mokopuna Māori and the voices of young people.

Mana Mokopuna

2. As from 2018, Mana Mokopuna is the indigenous approach we are using to monitor the experiences of children and young people who are in contact with Oranga Tamariki. One change we've made to our residence monitoring this year is to interview all children and young people first, followed by residence staff and stakeholders.
3. In the interviews with young people we use engagement tools, based on Mana Mokopuna, which cover all aspects of the OPCAT domains. The information from interviews with young people informs our subsequent OPCAT focused questions to residence staff and stakeholders.
4. The concept of 'Mana Mokopuna' is aligned to the new concept in the new Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, 'mana tamaiti'. Both are embedded in the Māori concept of mana, which approximately translates into English as, 'respect, acquired knowledge, control, intrinsic value and dignity, influence'.
5. As part of Mana Mokopuna we have identified six key principles that, when supported, will continue to enhancing the mana children and young people resulting in them having positive life-long outcomes. The principles and the definitions for them are outlined in Appendix 2.
6. These principles reflect and expand on what we have described as the three pou (supporting pillars) in the new Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 – whakapapa, whanaungatanga, and mana tamaiti. We note that the new provisions in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 will come in to full effect on 1 July 2019. Each Mana Mokopuna principle is supported by the new legislation as well as the rights for all children and young people set out in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). Some examples of this are shown in the table in Appendix 2.

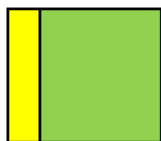
Structure of this report

7. This report shares the findings from our visit to Epuni care and protection Residence and makes recommendations for actions to address the issues identified. For the convenience of readers, we first list our key findings and recommendations. We then describe our findings for each of the six OPCAT domains.
8. For each OPCAT domain, we provide a statement that summarises our overall finding for that domain. We then highlight, in a text box, young people's experiences and voices. This helps to show young people's experiences in relation to the OPCAT domains. Then, we provide the evidence for our overall domain finding as a list of strengths and areas for development.
9. The rest of this report is structured as follows:
 - Appendix 1 - we briefly outline the legislative background to our visit
 - Appendix 2 - contains information about Mana Mokopuna lens and its relationship with the Oranga Tamariki Act
 - Appendix 2 - contains information about the interpretation of ratings
 - Appendix 3 - we describe the interviews we conducted and the information we accessed.

Context

10. Epuni is a 10 bed care and protection residence for male and female children and young people aged between 9 and 16 years old. Our last monitoring visit to Epuni was on [redacted] 2017.
11. At the time of our most recent visit there were 10 young people staying at Epuni Care and Protection Residence, [redacted] s 9(2)(a) OIA There was also a young [redacted] s 9(2)(a) OIA who was staying at Epuni in an emergency bed. This young [redacted] s 9(2)(a) OIA arrived the night before we visited Epuni and transitioned to [redacted] caregiver the next day.
12. At the time of the visit, 80% of the [redacted] young people in the residence were recorded as Maori.

Key findings and recommendations



Well placed with developing elements.

13. Our overall rating for Epuni care and protection residence is well placed with developing elements. We believe young people are safe from harm and there is no evidence of torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

14. This year, the rating for one individual OPCAT domain has significantly improved:

- **Responsiveness to mokopuna Māori** - We commend the residence for moving from *developing with minimally effective elements* to *developing with well-placed elements*. This change has been fostered by a number of key Māori staff and specifically by the creation of a dedicated role responsible for developing the residence's responsiveness to Māori. We congratulate the residence for making developments in this area in such a short timeframe.

15. The ratings for two individual OPCAT domains deteriorated:

- **Protection system** received a rating of *well placed with developing elements*. This is a shift downwards from last year when the residence received a rating of *well placed*. While we found that young people know how to make a complaint, and the residence continues to have reliable grievance administration processes, young people told us that they would not engage in the process if they had a serious matter to complain about. There are a number of barriers which contribute to young people having little faith in the complaints process. For example, young people still have to request complaint forms from staff, young people feel the timeframe to receive any outcome is too long, and they also feel uncomfortable having certain staff members investigate their complaints. These are on-going systemic problems which apply to all residences across the country. It is important to note that Epuni is doing what they need to do for the young people within the limitations of the existing complaints system. Therefore, we encourage national office to explore alternative ways of improving Whaia te Maramatanga. Please refer to recommendation eight for some examples of improvements.
- **Material conditions** moved from a rating of *well placed with developing elements* to *developing*. While residence staff work hard to ensure that the physical environment is well maintained and clean for the young people, the physical design of Epuni is not conducive to the child-centred, therapeutic environment that the residence is trying to achieve. As long as residences remain in a run-down state and until Oranga Tamariki ensures the design of future care settings effectively meet the needs of

different groups of young people, residences will not succeed in creating the physical foundations necessary for a therapeutic environment. Many residences have significant design defects, such as placing ten young people in one unit and the state of secure care units, which have serious implications for children and young people who have likely suffered serious trauma. We expect that the work Oranga Tamariki is currently doing to design a greater range of placement options will improve conditions for children and young people who are in need of care.

16. The ratings for all other individual OPCAT domains remained the same. We commend the residence for continuing to ensure that young people are provided with excellent primary health care. Although the **treatment** domain received the same rating as at our last visit, there were some significant improvements partly due to the introduction and successful implementation of a model of therapeutic care (the Alert Program), which young people told us is already achieving positive outcomes. However, a key area for development is the level of support that Oranga Tamariki sites provide to young people who are transitioning out of the residence.

17. The residence has many strengths. We found that young people at the residence:

- have good, trusting relationships with some staff
- eat well
- have regular contact with their families and whānau
- participate in a range of activities and programmes
- have excellent access to primary and specialist health services
- have meaningful opportunities to be exposed to Te Ao Māori
- are learning their own self-regulation skills through the Alert Program
- Like the opportunity to earn rewards through the Behaviour Management System (BMS).

18. We also identified a number of areas for development that, once addressed, will ensure greater consistency in the quality of care provided to young people. Key areas for development include the need to:

- Improve conditions for children and young people who need care and protection by developing a greater range of placement options (including whānau placements), improving the current design of residences and the level and consistency of support from sites to ensure young people have smooth transitions back into the community
- Recruit and maintain independent grievance advocates
- Provide regular professional and cultural supervision for care staff
- Formalise the current temporary role put in place to improve responsiveness to mokopuna Māori by making it a permanent full time role
- Increase the variety of BMS rewards available for young people

- Improve young people's view of and trust in Whaia te Maramatanga
- Improve support from Oranga Tamariki sites for young people's transitions out of the residence.

Recommendations for the residence

- Rec 1:** The residence's leadership team takes further steps to increase the range of BMS rewards available to young people, including increasing the range of motivating rewards for young people when they remain on level 3 for an extended period of time.
- Rec 2:** The residence manager and grievance coordinator take steps to recruit independent grievance advocates who will actively fulfil their role.
- Rec 3:** The residence manager ensures there is demonstrated Māori leadership within the leadership team to ensure that mokopuna Māori are actively engaging with their culture and to strengthen the residence's relationship with mana whenua.
- Rec 4:** The residence manager and programme coordinator, in consultation with the young women currently at Epuni, develop more tailored programmes and activities that are better suited for young women.

Recommendations for national office

19. Most of the recommendations for national office relevant to this monitoring visit are covered in our report - *State of Care 2017: A focus on Oranga Tamariki's secure residences*. The most relevant recommendations are reproduced below, for ease of reference, along with updated comments and suggestions.
20. We look forward to being updated on national office's progress in addressing these recommendations at our next meetings with the general managers of youth justice and care and protection residences, respectively.

- Rec 5:** The DCEs Services for Children and Families North and South should provide clear national guidance (to sites) about the standards expected for supporting young people's transitions from residences (**State of Care action point 3**).
- Rec 6:** The DCE Care Services should work with the Ministry for Social Development's property services to enhance the environment of existing residences to make them more youth friendly (**State of Care action point 8**).
- Rec 7:** The DCE Care Services must urgently design and develop a broader range of community-based placement options, including whānau placements, for young people who need care and protection (**State of Care action point 11**).

Rec 8: The DCE Care Services should allocate more resources to increase the availability of high quality professional supervision and coaching to residence staff (**State of Care action point 17**).

Comment: The DCE Care Services, DCE Youth Justice Services and Office of the Chief Social Worker should work together to ensure the new professional supervision policy and standards, including the 'use professional supervision' standard in the new practice framework, are understood by residence managers and staff and that residences have the capacity to implement these policies and standards.

Rec 9: The DCE Care Services should provide clear, consistent guidance to residences about a best practice therapeutic model, and provide the training and support needed to enable all residences to adopt and implement a consistent national model (**State of Care action point 2**).

Comment: Although residences need flexibility to determine the optimal therapeutic model for their residence, we encourage national office to define the foundational elements which should underpin all residences' therapeutic approach to understanding and supporting young people's behaviour, for example, attuned responding to young people, reducing young people's stress levels, and teaching young people self-regulation.

Rec 10: The DCE Care Services needs to immediately ensure that each residence has access to the cultural advice, supervision and support needed to integrate and embed the principles of Te Toka Tūmoana into practice and deliver culturally responsive services to mokopuna Māori. A clear national focus on consistently implementing this framework needs to be prioritised. It cannot remain an optional component of residential practice (**State of Care action point 18**).

Comment: We are aware that Care Services are planning significant shifts in the care and protection system. We believe residence staff will need additional sources of cultural support and advice to strengthen their practice with mokopuna Māori, for example, a cultural leadership role that sits within the leadership team of each care and protection residence.

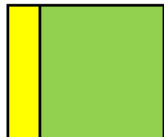
Rec 11: The DCEs Care services and Voices of Children should partner with VOYCE-Whakaronga Mai to address the negative and inhibiting culture associated with making a grievance, so that when young people in residence have genuine fears or concerns, there are safe, easy ways for them to be heard and supported (**State of Care action point 7**).

Comment: Alternative ways of improving Whaia te Maramatanga to improve young people's trust in the process should be explored, for example:

- introducing digital devices at residences that young people can access instead of paper forms
- introducing paid advocates throughout all residences, in consultation and collaboration with VOYCE Whakaronga Mai
- introducing standardised grievance procedures, across all residences, for example, a clear policy on which staff members should be investigating grievances and the role of the grievance coordinators.

Findings for each OPCAT domain

Domain 1: Treatment



Well placed with a developing element.

21. All young people feel physically safe at Epuni and have good relationships with some staff. The introduction of the Alert Program has resulted in improved handling of challenging incidents, and restraint levels and secure admissions are low. We commend the residence for successfully introducing and embedding the Alert Program and we look forward to seeing further progress at our next visit. However, a key area for development is the level of support that Oranga Tamariki sites provide to young people who are transitioning out of the residence.

Young people's experiences

Young people experience positive relationships with some staff.

"Some staff are alright. Some staff I really hate."

"[team colour] team are cool because they never break a promise, they are better than other teams because they stick to their word."

Young people feel that the rewards for BMS need improving.

"That's good [BMS]. It's a better way to earn and to look forward. Level 3 is meant to be rewarded but it's not. Level 3 is nothing here"

"BMS got shit – they should give us late nights here – the lolly bags are rubbish."

"They should change the lollies, I'd change the singlets too, they are just plain black ones."

"They should get us a facebook room, and only level 3's can access it, staff can watch over us...yeah. And we should get more video calls."

Young people feel supported by the Alert Program.

"It's cool [Alert Program] – it's something about engines, oh yeah your engine levels – there's high, just right and low. That's how they get you from where ever you're at to just right. You're hot when you're playing up – I like the sushi roll. They roll you up in a yoga mat and then put a weighted blanket on you and put pressure on."

Strengths

- **Relationship between staff and C&YP.** All young people that we interviewed were able to identify key youth workers they have strong relationships with and feel comfortable going to for help and assistance.
- **Use of restraints and secure care.** We were told by staff that the time young people spend in secure is decreasing. The recent residence manager reports show that for the month of December there were two secure admissions, for January there were three and for February there was one. Staff explained that a factor contributing to the reduction in challenging incidents has been the introduction and successful implementation of the Alert Program.
- **Model of therapeutic care – Alert Program.** Over the last six months, the team leader clinical practice, with the support of a speech language therapist (provided through the school), occupational therapist and a contracted clinical psychologist have adapted an American model of therapeutic care called the Alert Program. The Alert Program focuses on teaching young people self-regulation skills. Young people learn the idea that their body is an engine. Using the engine analogy helps young people to tune in to what is happening with their bodies, and whether it is running 'high' or 'low'. Young people then learn what to do if they are in a non-optimal state of alertness. The Alert program teaches young people that there are five ways to change how alert they feel: put something in the mouth, move, touch, look, or listen. Clinical staff conduct sensory assessments for all young people at Epuni. These assessments help to determine young people's sensory preferences and form the bases of individualised sensory toolkits. The Alert Program also focuses on supporting young people to use their self-regulation tools when they transition out of Epuni. All care staff are trained in the program and young people have a set time every week to learn about the Alert Program and be reminded about the sensory tools available to them. Most young people at the residence are engaged with the Alert Program and a number of them were able to articulate clearly to us their preferred sensory intervention.

We encourage national office to define the foundational elements which should underpin all residences' therapeutic approach to understanding and supporting young people's behaviour, for example, attuned responding to young people, reducing young people's stress levels, and teaching young people self-regulation. That way, residences can ensure they select a therapeutic model that aligns well with the foundational elements (*recommendation 9, page 8 refers*).

- **Involvement of children and young people.** Young people have a range of forums to have their voice heard, including Multi Agency Meetings (MAT) once a month and unit assemblies which take place once per week. However, most young people told

us that if they have an issue or suggestion, they prefer to talk directly to a trusted staff member direct or they would talk directly to the residence manager.

- **Involvement of whānau.** Case leaders described how they regularly attempt to contact whānau and invite them to contribute their views at MAT meetings. However, staff acknowledged that involving whānau is an on-going challenge. Staff are committed to ensuring whānau are kept informed about young people's transitions and involved with young people's plans. Case leaders told us that they find whānau can be more responsive to text messages, therefore they often use this way to communicate.
- **Behaviour Management System (BMS).** The majority of young people have a good understanding of the BMS and believe that the BMS is applied fairly. At the same time, most of the young people interviewed told us that they wish to have more variety in rewards for BMS. Young people and staff agree there are insufficient incentives to go from level 2 to level 3 and there is little incentive to remain on level 3, as the rewards do not vary over time. We encourage the residence to increase the variety of rewards and specifically to identify rewards that can be offered to young people when they remain on level 3 for an extended amount of time (*recommendation 1, page 7 refers*).

Areas for development

- **Transitions between and from care.** There is still insufficient support from Oranga Tamariki sites for young people transitioning out of residence. Staff spoke to us about the huge lack of appropriate placements for young people when leaving the residence. Staff told us that the state of transitions for young people in residence is the worst it has ever been. Staff told us that the needs of young people staying at Epuni continue to be more and more complex and suitable caregivers are difficult to find. [REDACTED] young people at the time of our visit had been staying at Epuni for one year. Staff described that there can be pressure from national office to release young people. However, there is nowhere for them to go or there are no suitable placements available.

Epuni staff are aware that national office has increased funding for a stronger focus on transitions, they are disappointed that they haven't seen improvements to young people's transitions in the past year since the establishment of Oranga Tamariki. Some staff believe that Oranga Tamariki national office may not have the relationships required with providers to implement the right transitions, and that some of the current providers don't have the skills and resources to provide the appropriate transition support (*recommendation 5, page 7 refers*).

Photo 2. Open unit.



Photo 3. Outdoor area.



Domain 2: Protection system



Well placed with developing elements.

22. The protection system at the residence continues to operate well. However, we have rated this domain as well placed with developing elements as there are currently no active independent grievance advocates in place. There is also the greater issue of young people not wanting to engage in the Whaia te Maramatanga process for serious issues. There are a number of barriers which contribute to young people having little trust in the complaints process, and these are outlined below.

Young people's experiences

Young people know how to make a complaint.

"Whaia te Maramatanga, it's alright. Because you have to go through these people first and a complaint, it has to go higher. Shouldn't have to go through people here because of course they will side with the people here. It should go to national office or somewhere where people will listen to us."

Young people feel that approaching staff direct about their complaints is better than using Whaia te Maramatanga.

"I don't use that, I've never had to use it. It puts people [staff] in a bad situation if it's a bit too far - they could lose their job - cause one of the umm staff here lost their job - I don't like doing that"

"If I had a problem I would talk to them [staff] about it, I'd rather talk to them about it than put one of those [complaint form] in, cause they will wana know why you put it in anyway, so you should let them know."

"I don't really do grievance, like even at [residence name] I'd just tell the staff if I had a problem and if they didn't listen to me I'd just go to the manager."

Young people feel safe at Epuni.

"Yeah, I feel safe, cause staff are always watching around what's happening, they are always on what's going to happen, so they are always there to click on and stop it."

Strengths

- **Young people's understanding of the rules.** Young people told us they learn about residence rules when they first come to Epuni and also during "core programme" which takes place once per week.
- **Administration of the Whaia te Maramatanga complaints process.** The residence continues to be compliant with timeframes and grievance investigations are complete and detailed.
- **Youth people's understanding and use of the Whaia te Maramatanga.** Young people told us that they generally feel safe to make a complaint and recent grievance panel reports confirm that young people are making complaints. However, all of the young people told us they would not use Whaia te Maramatanga for anything serious, as the process takes too long. Most young people said they would rather address any issues or serious complaints directly with a trusted staff member or with the residence manager.
- **Grievance panel.** One of the grievance panel members visits young people approximately weekly. The panel review the grievance register each week and raise any concerns directly with the grievance coordinator. Alternatively, they leave messages in a note book that is in place specifically to enable communication between the panel and the grievance coordinator.

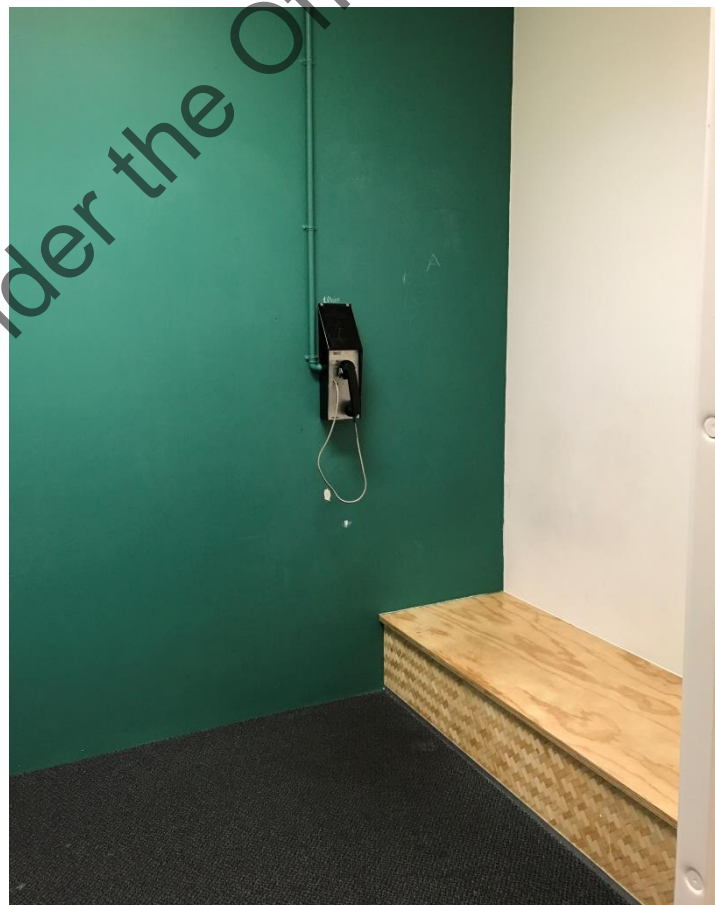
Areas for development

- **Grievance advocates.** The residence has not had active independent grievance advocates since November 2017. Epuni has reached out to Community Law (who were providing independent advocates) a number of times, however Community Law no longer have the capability to provide this service. We suggest that national office support Epuni to find effective ways of engaging with independent advocates who are committed to providing advocacy as recommended in the Oranga Tamariki Grievance Advocacy Manual 2016 (*recommendation 2, page 7 refers*).
- **Systemic problems.** There are greater systemic issues of young people not willing to engage with Whaia te Maramatanga for serious issues. There are a number of barriers which contribute to young people having little trust in the complaints process. For example, young people have to request complaint forms from staff, staff investigate the complaints, and the timeframes for young people to receive outcomes to their grievances are lengthy. We encourage national office to explore alternative ways of improving Whaia te Maramatanga to ensure that the process is more youth friendly (*recommendation 11, page 8 refers*).

Photo 4. Hallway “the link” between units.



Photo 5. Telephone room for young people.



Domain 3: Material conditions



Developing.

23. The physical environment of the residence is well maintained and staff are proactive in addressing substandard conditions. However, in common with most other care and protection residences, the physical design of Epuni is not conducive to the child centred, therapeutic environment that the residence is trying to achieve. Despite some improvements where the unit has been freshly painted, Epuni continues to have an institutional feel that is not youth friendly or 'home-like'. As part of the new care framework, Oranga Tamariki is planning to design a range of community based alternatives to care and protection residences. We hope this will address the long standing issue related to residence design that are outlined in our State of Care Report 2017.

Young people's experiences

Young people didn't like the food.

"oh it's [food] horrible, its actually really yuck, when we have like mash potato [chef] doesn't mash the potato properly, coming down from [residence name] and having all the really nice food and then coming here, its shit."

I told [chef], I was like your cooking is horrible, they said, ohh I try to cook it with love. I don't think any of the kids here really like the food; staff don't really like it either."

Young people had many suggestions to improve their bedrooms.

"They should change the bedrooms [in secure], they should like put a mirror in there put a better shower in there put better beds in there. The bed is on concrete."

"We should get mirrors on our bedroom walls, we should get a TV in our rooms – so we can play games. That's what they should do – put a tv in our room with a game and then they can turn it off at like 2030-2130 or if we have late night 2030-2200."

"The boys here they spit a lot everywhere – they leave food in a lot of plates, when I first came here it had a strong stink smell of spit and rotten food and like boogers. I couldn't handle it. It was really gross. So the place isn't cared for. But they could do a lot better than what they're doing they could start with food, and they could make the bedrooms nicer so it's not like a cell..."

Strengths

- **Inside environment.** Overall the residence is clean and well looked after. The main open unit remains relatively graffiti free. However some young people's bedrooms have a significant amount of tagging on the walls. Most young people told us that they don't like their bedrooms and the base of their beds are hard.
- **Secure care.** The secure unit has been repainted with youth friendly murals on the walls as well as youth friendly bedding sheets and duvet covers. The increased colour has improved the secure unit and made it less intimidating. We commend the residence for the work done to improve the overall look of the secure care unit.
- **Outside environment.** The residence has a rugby field available for the young people, basketball courts and a large and flourishing community garden that the young people look after throughout the week.

Areas for development

- **General condition of the building.** As we noted in our previous report, the building is old and some areas are no longer fit for purpose. There continue to be difficulties ensuring all areas are consistently heated or cooled. The air conditioning is an old system that requires regular maintenance (*recommendations 6 and 7, page 7 refers*).
- **Food.** Most of the young people told us they didn't like the food. However when we discussed this further with the young people and the leadership team it appeared that the young people had based their opinion on their relationship with one of the chefs. We encourage the residence manager to support the chef to improve their relationship with the young people.

Photo 6. Mural of Oranga Tamariki value 'Aroha'



Photo 7. Secure bedroom one



Photo 8. Secure bedroom two



Photo 9. Secure bedroom three



Photo 10. Secure bedroom toilet



Domain 4: Activities and contact with others



Well placed with developing elements.

24. While there are a diverse range of activities available for young people at Epuni, the young women told us that the programs are more tailored to the young men. Young people at Epuni are strongly encouraged to keep regular contact with their families and whānau. Due to the activities and programmes not being tailored enough for the young women we have rated this domain well placed with developing elements.

Young people's experiences

Most young people liked existing activities, particularly off-sites.

"I like playing games. Like PlayStation the best...Offsites – I like going for rides, swimming at the wharf, bike riding, H2O, bombing."

"Boxing – yeah, I go to s 9(2)(a) OIA boxing academy. It is all good, good exercise."

All young women wanted more programmes tailored for them.

"The boys will go to the gym and we will do nothing. They say we will do activities but we just sit around and talk. I want to do cooking programmes, I can do a better job than the staff. They should let us cook instead of moaning all the time. At [residence name] there were more things to do."

"Boys get away with more stuff. They get the TV in the weekend and not us. They play the game so we don't. We can't even watch a movie together. They get more off-sites and more programmes than us. Girls aren't allowed to do it (mau rākau) but girls should get to do something. I think it's sexist."

Most young people want increased contact with whānau.

"I see my whānau like once a month, needs to be more, but that's my [site] social worker who is meant to suss that. That's her problem."

"Contact is shite, because you don't have video calls...mums only been here once since I've been here. They haven't found a placement for me yet. I was with mum before Epuni and on the street oh I was at the family home...but I hated it. It was shit...being here is okay... better than family home."

Strengths

- **Young people's participation in activities and programmes.** Young people, both young men and women are taken off-site for boxing and swimming lessons. One young woman had began attending s 9(2)(a) OIA every day during the week and one young man was going off-site most week days to attend a course at s 9(2)(a) OIA. Staff are dedicated to ensuring that young people are given opportunities to participate in the activities which are set out in their ICP. There is a big focus on building relationships with community organisations to ensure there a range of activities on offer inside and outside of the residence. For example, the residence continues to have a strong relationship with the s 9(2)(a) OIA, whose staff assist the residence with the maintenance of the vegetable garden. The SPCA provides animal therapy volunteers who bring specially selected animals to the residence for an hour every fortnight.
- **Young people's contact with family and whānau.** The residence works hard to ensure that young people and their whānau see each other as often as possible. This includes whānau visits to Eponi, phone calls to approved whānau members, young people going off-site to visit whānau and whānau therapy. Eponi have converted an old administration office into a flat where whānau can stay when visiting young people. One young person arrived at Eponi the day of our visit, his mother was staying at the on-site accommodation while her son settled in to Eponi. One young person spoke of being able to hang out with his mother and siblings while they stayed on-site at the flat. The residence manager supports whānau to come and visit the young people by providing petrol vouchers, flights and accommodation. Despite the huge efforts staff make to ensure young people have regular and meaningful contact with their whānau, young people still expressed the desire to have more contact with whānau and some told us how hard it can be for them being away from their familie

Areas for development

- **Lack of tailored activities and programmes for young women.** The young women at Eponi told us that there are not enough activities and programmes tailored specifically for them. The leadership team agreed that this is an area for development that needs to be addressed (*recommendation 4, page 7 refers*).

Photo 11. Vegetable garden.



Photo 12. Vegetable garden.



Domain 5: Medical services and care



Well placed.

25. Young people have excellent access to both primary and specialist health services at Epuni. Young people's health needs continue to be properly identified and addressed. Our last report identified that there were problems with the transfer of health information from the NZ health database to Oranga Tamariki regional hub. Health staff at Epuni told us that this is no longer an issue as young people's health information is now received electronically.

Young people's experiences

Young people feel they have good access to primary health care services.

"Yeah, they're [health team] cool, they're actually faster than the one down at [residence name], I asked them I've been having trouble sleeping so they're going to try me out on melatonin, they are going to trial that out and if that doesn't work then maybe put me on a prescription"

"If I want to see them I just ask the staff and they will sort it out. But I haven't needed to".

"They talk a lot – but it's all good!"

Strengths

- **Young people's access to primary care services.** Most of the young people told us they have good access to health care at Epuni and their needs are addressed promptly. The [REDACTED] on-site health team continues to be well resourced with three nurses available on-site. A General Practitioner (GP) visits twice a week. The health team have a very holistic approach when assisting young people with their health needs. The health team's goal is to ensure that every young person has a positive experience when accessing health care at Epuni. The health team spoke of one young [REDACTED] who refused to see any nurse or doctor due to past negative experiences with health practitioners. The health team spent time building rapport with the young person until enough trust had been gained for the young person to agree to see the health team. Nurses were able to do a blood test with this young person so that they

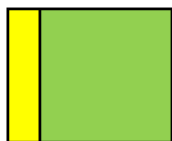
could provide [REDACTED] with the right treatment. Health have a good relationship with residence staff and have no problems taking young people off-site for health appointments. Young people who need to see a doctor outside of the usual hours that the on-site GP is available, are supported to see a doctor at [REDACTED] or at the emergency after hours.

- **Young people's access to specialist mental health and alcohol and other drug (AOD) services.** The young people continue to have good access to mental health and AOD services at Epuni. A psychiatrist visits the unit fortnightly and Epuni have a relationship with [REDACTED] Services who are available to come in at any time to provide specialist AOD counselling, assessments and interventions.

Photo 13. Young person's bedroom.



Domain 6: Personnel



Well placed with developing elements.

26. Staffing levels are sufficient to provide adequate care to children and young people. There is good communication within the leadership team, and most of the staff we spoke to respect their residence manager. In our last residence visit report from August 2017 we identified that the frequency of supervision for staff was insufficient. This continues to be an issue, specifically for care staff. The rating for this domain has therefore remained well placed with developing elements.

Strengths

- **Staff recruitment.** As the culture and direction of the residence has become clearer there have been further opportunities for more targeted recruitment, to better meet the needs of young people. Some of these recruitment initiatives have been to focus on increasing Māori staff and creating relationships with tertiary providers. To support recruitment efforts, the residence has been trying to influence the way in which the community views Epuni so that they can recruit the right people to work with and support young people. Prior to December 2017 Epuni hired a number of newly qualified casual staff who are settling in well.
- **Staff training.** Staff continue to receive training in key areas, such as MAPA, Circle of Courage, operational practice, structured day and strengthening engagement. Some staff received training in the Alert Program in December 2017 and a second training was held for the remaining staff in February 2018. The Alert Program is about early intervention and promoting young people's self regulation, "*it is ensuring that we connect with the young people before their engine gets high.*" Staff we spoke to said they can already see the benefits of using the Alert Program approaches with young people. Staff are using the tools they learnt with young people and report already being able to see changes in young people's behaviour.
- **Staff levels.** At the time of our visit, Epuni had a total of 32 permanent positions and a total of 15 casual staff. Of the 47 staff, 23 are female and 24 are male. Staff ethnicities include: pākehā/NZ European, Māori, Cook Island Māori, Tongan, Samoan, South African, Scottish, Chinese and Tokelauan. There were no job vacancies at the time of our visit. Epuni also has a psychology intern who works alongside the clinical team.

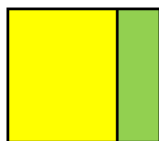
Areas for development

- **Staff supervision.** Registered social workers at Epuni have access to external supervision. Care staff have access to supervision with their Team Leader Operations (TLO) when they request it, and the TLOs told us they have an open door policy. However, there continues to be a lack of formal professional supervision where care staff have the opportunity to reflect on their practice. To ensure that the Alert Program is embedded at the residence and consistently implemented, it is important for the care team to have regular access to professional supervision. We are aware that a new Professional Supervision Policy is being implemented across all residences over the next couple of months. We look forward to seeing progress in this area at our next visit (*recommendation 8, page 8 refers*).

Photo 14. Time out space for young people.



Responsiveness to mokopuna Māori



Developing with well-placed elements.

27. The residence's responsiveness to mokopuna Māori has improved significantly since our last visit. This has been fostered by a number of key Māori staff and specifically by the creation of a dedicated role responsible for developing the residence's responsiveness to Mokopuna Māori. Young people at Epuni have multiple opportunities to see their culture positively portrayed and to develop a sense of pride in their culture. We commend the residence for making developments in this area.

Young people's experiences

All mokopuna Māori enjoy the opportunities to be connected to their culture

"Learning how to speak reo. Learning stuff like taiaha – I love mau rākau. I love this stuff. We get to do mau rākau every week with [insert name], I've been doing kapa with another staff member, I did waka odyssey too with [insert name] we went out on water, so its right up there!"

"mau rākau and kapa haka are mean. Love doing them."

"I like what we do on Fridays [waiata], its mean"

All mokopuna Māori feel proud of their culture.

"I'm so proud of my culture, hard out, would like to do more stuff"

"I'm pretty confident in telling people where I come from, yeah I'm [iwi name]!!!"

Strengths

- **Valuing and use of tikanga Māori.** All mokopuna Māori told us they are proud of their culture and where they come from. The residence held a mihi whakatau for us when we arrived. Prior to our visit the residence informed us they would be following kawa in accordance with Te Atiawa iwi. Not only did all of the young people at the residence take part in the mihi whakatau, two young people also spoke to welcome us. Young people stood proudly as they sang waiata and told us where they are from.
- **Access to cultural advice and support.** Since our last visit in Out of scope 2017, the residence manager approved one youth worker to come off the floor and dedicate

his time to developing the residence's responsiveness to mokopuna Māori. This role has enabled a significant increase in cultural programmes for all young people, cultural support for staff, an improved relationship with mana whenua and improved relationships with external kapa haka groups and Māori organisations.

- **Young people's participation in cultural activities and programmes.** All mokopuna Māori told us they enjoyed the opportunities to be connected to their culture and would appreciate further opportunities. Young people can participate in a number of cultural programmes and activities at Epuni. These include: kapa haka (which takes place every Friday during school hours); te reo Māori; raranga (weaving); and mau rākau (Māori martial arts, which focuses on developing confidence and leadership). There has also been an increase in tailored cultural activities for individual young people. For example, one young [s 9(2)(a) OIA] regularly went off-site for waka ama training with a youth worker in the build-up to paddle on a waka during the waka odyssey event at the NZ festival. This same young [s 9(2)(a) OIA] who is of [s 9(2)(a) OIA] descent, also goes off-site to connect with a local kapa haka group which has strong connections to [s 9(2)(a) OIA].
- **Relationship with mana whenua and vision for mokopuna Māori.** Since our last visit the residence manager and youth worker (dedicated to leading this mahi) met with local mana whenua, Te Runanganui o te Atiawa, and local kaumatua. The aim of this meeting was to strengthen the residence's relationship with mana whenua and also to gain access to cultural support and advice. The kaumatua has been providing advice to Epuni on local tikanga and kawa which the residence has since implemented through pōwhiri and mihi whakatau. The kaumatua has also made it possible for Epuni to have relationships with other iwi incorporations located in the Wellington region. Staff told us that it is important to strengthen relationships with other iwi so that the residence can call on them to provide support to young people who are from their rohe (region). Staff emphasised the importance of ensuring that the residence's responsiveness to Māori is sustainable.

Areas for development

- **Cultural supervision.** Cultural supervision is not yet on offer at Epuni. Staff told us that they believe they would benefit from receiving cultural supervision, especially as the residence's responsiveness to Māori is developing. With the new practice standard, Whakamana te Tamaiti, being implemented across residences we would expect national office to be encouraging and resourcing residences to provide cultural supervision to staff. The residence manager told us that while they are focusing on lifting their responsiveness to mokopuna Māori, they are still in the development phase and they want to ensure they put in place the right cultural supervision to support the residence's direction. Staff explained that the youth worker in the dedicated role has been a great support for them when it comes to

implementing cultural programs and planning for young people. Staff also commented on how well this person is leading the residence on their cultural journey and how he has the skills to bring everyone along at the same time (*recommendation 10, page 8 refers*).

- **Implementing Māori leadership to support responsiveness to Māori.** Given the success so far of the dedicated role at Eponi, we encourage the residence manager to ensure there is demonstrated Māori leadership within the leadership team to better support mokopuna Māori to actively engage with their culture and strengthen the residence's relationship with mana whenua (*recommendation 10, page 8 refers*).

Photo 15. Mural of Oranga Tamariki value 'Whakapapa.'



Appendix One: Why we visit (legislative background)





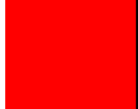
28. The Children's Commissioner has a statutory responsibility to monitor and assess the services provided under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Specifically, section 13(1) (b) of the Children's Commissioner Act 2003, states that the Commissioner must monitor and assess the policies and practices of Child, Youth and Family and encourage the development of policies and services that are designed to promote the welfare of children and young people.
29. In addition, the Office of the Children's Commissioner is designated as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Crimes of Torture Act (1989). This Act contains New Zealand's practical mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT), which was itself ratified by New Zealand in 2007. Our role is to visit youth justice and care and protection residences to ensure compliance with OPCAT.

Appendix Two: Mana Mokopuna and its relationship with the Oranga Tamariki Act

Principle	Definition	Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
Whakapapa	Children and young people know of, and are able to connect to places, ancestors, events and stories related to their whakapapa.	s4(1)(g) states that the purpose of this Act is to promote the well-being of children, young persons, and their families, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family groups by recognising whakapapa for children and young persons who come to the attention of the department.
Whanaungatanga	Children and young people have meaningful and life changing relationships with their families, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group and with the people around them and the people that matter to them.	s4(1)(h) states the purpose of the Act is to maintain and strengthen the relationships between children and young persons who come to the attention of the department and their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family groups.
Aroha	Children and young people feel loved and cared for and are capable of receiving love and giving love to others. They know that the people around them believe in their potential.	s4(1)(e)(i)(ii) states where children and young people require care under the Act, they have a safe, stable, and loving home from the earliest opportunity; and support to address their needs.
Kaitiakitanga	Children and young people are safe and healthy in all aspects of their holistic wellbeing and are thriving in safe and healthy environments.	s5(1)(i) states that children and young people's rights set out in UNCROC must be respected and upheld and they must be protected from harm and treated with dignity and respect at all times.
Rangatiratanga	Children and young people and their families, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family groups, have a voice in decisions that impact on them. They know their rights and can exercise those rights and are assisted to take the lead in decisions about their lives.	s5(1)(a) makes explicit children and young people's right to participate in decisions that affect them. Section 5(1)(c)(iv) states the child or young person's sense of belonging, whakapapa, and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group should be recognised and respected.
Mātauranga	Mokopuna Māori experience learning that enables them to walk confidently in both Te Ao Māori and Te Ao Pakeha. Children from other cultures have meaningful and life changing opportunities to learn about their culture and the culture of tangata whenua.	s5(1)(vi)(A-H) states that a holistic approach should be taken that sees the child or young person as a whole person which includes the child or young person's developmental potential, education and health needs, whakapapa, cultural identity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability and age. UNCROC articles 29 & 30 make it explicit that education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full and that children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families.

Appendix Three: Interpretation of ratings

30. The Table below provides a quick reference to the meanings of ratings given in the report.

Rating	Assessment	What it means
	Transformational/outstanding	Exceptional, outstanding, innovative, out of the norm
	Well placed	Strong performance, strong capability, consistent practice
	Developing	Some awareness of areas needing improvement; some actions to address weaknesses, but inconsistent practice; pockets of good practice
	Minimally effective/weak	Low awareness of areas needing improvement; lack of action to address weaknesses; significant concerns exist
	Detrimental	Actively causing harm, negligent, ignoring, rejecting, undervaluing, undermining practice

Note: For more detail on the meanings of each rating, or the individual sub-domains assessed, refer to our evaluative rubric: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Publications/RUBRIC/Evaluative-Rubric-FULL.pdf>

Appendix Four: Interviews conducted and information accessed

Our visit to [residence name] included interviews with:

- Young people (eight interviewed)
- Residence Manager
- Team Leaders Operations (TLOs)
- Team Leader of Clinical Practice (TLCP)
- Care (or residential) team
- Case managers
- Health team
- School teacher
- Māori Leadership group
- Kitchen staff
- Programme Coordinator

The following sources of information also informed our analysis:

- Visual inspection of the residence
- Residence profile
- Most recent Oranga Tamariki audit report
- Grievance quarterly reports and electronic register
- Residence management reports (for three months prior to the visit)
- Training register (for 12 months prior to visit)
- Young people's files at the residence (including Individual Care Plans and Operational Plans)
- Secure care register, secure care log book, and unit log books