



Oranga Tamariki Action Plan: Supported Accommodation review

October 2023

Ngā ihirangi

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Section One

**Background to the Supported
Accommodation review**



Background to the Supported Accommodation review

Purpose

In 2019, the Transition Support Service (TSS) was established. Two objectives of the TSS are for more care-experienced young people transitioning to independence to have safe and stable living arrangements and the life skills they need to thrive as adults. The supported accommodation programme aims to support these objectives.

This report outlines the findings from the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan: *Supported Accommodation review (the review)*. The review focuses solely on the Oranga Tamariki supported accommodation service and was commissioned through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (the Action Plan) report: *Prioritising housing services for young people moving to independence from care and youth justice settings - in-depth assessment*.

The review of supported accommodation considers key findings from:

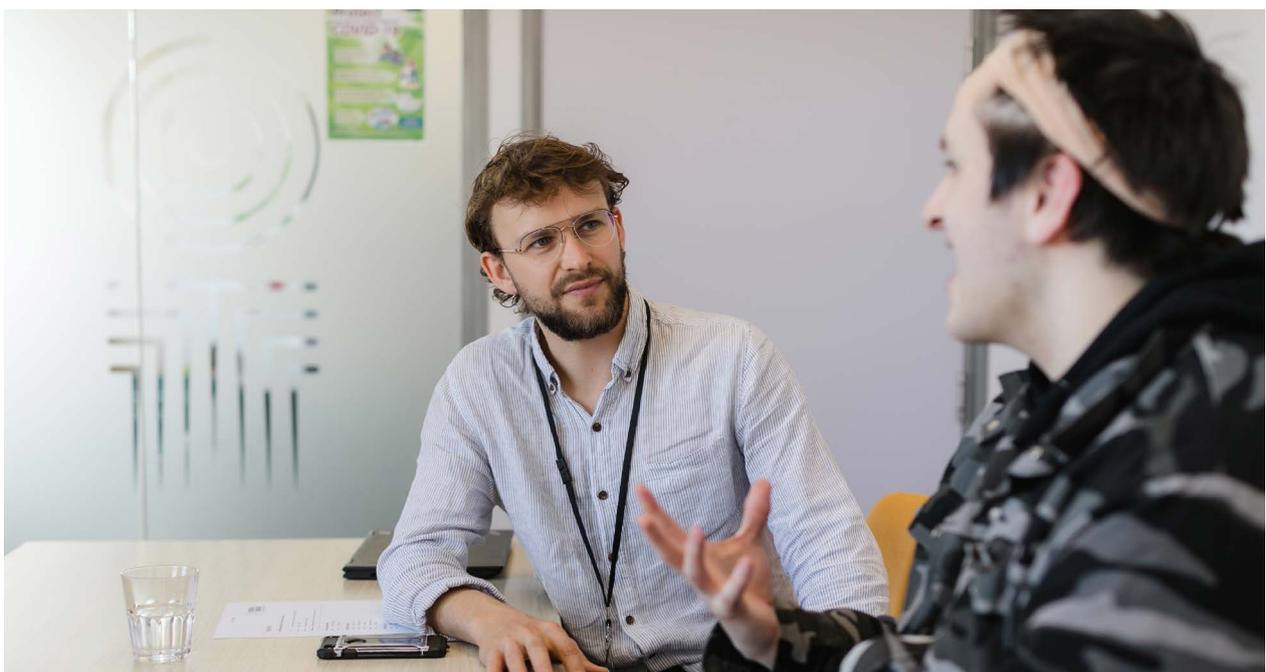
- internal Oranga Tamariki engagement
- engagement with other government agencies
- engagement with some transition partners
- the 2023 Malatest International evaluation of supported accommodation¹
- operational information.

Young people transitioning out of care have challenges non-care experienced young people do not face

Evidence shows young people transitioning out of care or youth justice settings² have challenges, and experience worse outcomes than their non-care experienced peers.

A 2018 Integrated Data Infrastructure analysis of the 2001 birth cohort shows young people transitioning out of care are:

- up to 80 times more likely to be involved in serious offending
- up to 20 times more likely to be involved in low-level offending
- up to 7 times more likely to be on a benefit
- up to 30 times more likely to access substance abuse services
- up to 4 times more likely to be hospitalised
- half as likely to achieve a tertiary qualification.



¹ This evaluation was commissioned by Oranga Tamariki. Malatest International (June 2023): Evaluation of Supported Accommodation

² 'Young people' in this report refers to young people transitioning out of care or youth justice settings.

Young people transitioning out of care need different housing and supports depending on their circumstances

The challenges faced by care-experienced young people can limit their housing options and mean they often require tailored support from multiple agencies when transitioning to independence. Securing a safe, stable place to live is a top priority, however, many can find it difficult to achieve this goal. In a competitive housing market, young people often have limited housing choices due to perceptions they are less-desirable tenants, a lack of references and low incomes.

In addition, some of these young people are not able to live independently due to their life experiences and lack of experience living alone or with others. Some need tailored support in addition to a safe and stable home.

Young people require different types of housing and supports depending on their circumstances and stage of life. The diagram below describes the types of housing supports a young person may require, ranging from light touch to more intensive support.

A safe and stable home

Young people can live independently but need support to find and afford a home.

Supported accommodation

Young people require a home and support to develop the life and interpersonal skills to be able to live independently.

Supported living

Young people require supported (supervised) living arrangements with access to on-call support.

Staffed care

Young people require intensive health and social support which is provided within the home.

Oranga Tamariki supported accommodation aims to address the needs of care-experienced young people transitioning to independence

Eligibility for the supported accommodation service

Supported accommodation is for 18 to 21-year-olds who are transitioning from care or youth justice settings to young adulthood. To be eligible, young people will have been in one or more of the following, for a continuous period of at least three months after the age of 14 years and 9 months:

- a care and protection placement
- a residential youth justice placement (including remand) or Police custody
- under remand or a prison sentence in the adult system before turning 18.

Some 16 and 17-year-olds who are still under the care or custody of Oranga Tamariki may be referred to receive supported accommodation. This can occur if the Oranga Tamariki site has assessed and approved an independent living arrangement. Consideration can also be given to include young parents, siblings, and partners.

Supported accommodation providers

Supported accommodation is delivered by community partners who provide a home and facilitate the development of life and interpersonal skills needed for independent living.

Specifications for the supported accommodation service

Supported accommodation partners assist eligible young people through the delivery of:

- safe accommodation
- goal setting to identify the skills young people need to develop or build on
- youth workers, mentors or support workers to support young people to meet their goals and facilitate the development of life skills
- services that consider the changing needs of young people.

Supported accommodation partners support young people to:

- increase their knowledge and skills in how to live independently
- have opportunities to try, test and learn in a safe environment
- learn how to manage a tenancy
- find accommodation when it is time to leave the service.

The supported accommodation service specifications are intentionally broad to allow partners to deliver services which reflect the needs of transitions young people and their communities. This extends to the specific eligibility for their service. For example, all TSS eligible young people are eligible for supported accommodation. However, partners can decline referrals if they determine that the young person would not be the right fit for their service.

Provider Requirements

Partners are required to employ and support their supported accommodation worker (Support Worker).

The Support Worker's role and capabilities

Support Workers take a youth-led approach that empowers young people to take increasing responsibility for themselves.

Support Workers should have:

- experience working with young people
- the ability to engage with young people
- the ability to build rapport and trust with young people, their family and whānau

- the ability to build and maintain positive relationships with professionals to support access to services for people
- an understanding of the impact of trauma, adolescent brain development, and youth development approaches
- an understanding of disability, mental health, substance abuse, and the impact these can have on the life of young people
- cultural competency and demonstrable knowledge and skill about kaupapa Māori, te reo Māori, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Pacific protocols
- behaviour management, conflict resolution/de-escalation skills
- Police and Oranga Tamariki vetting check/clearance.

Supported accommodation locations

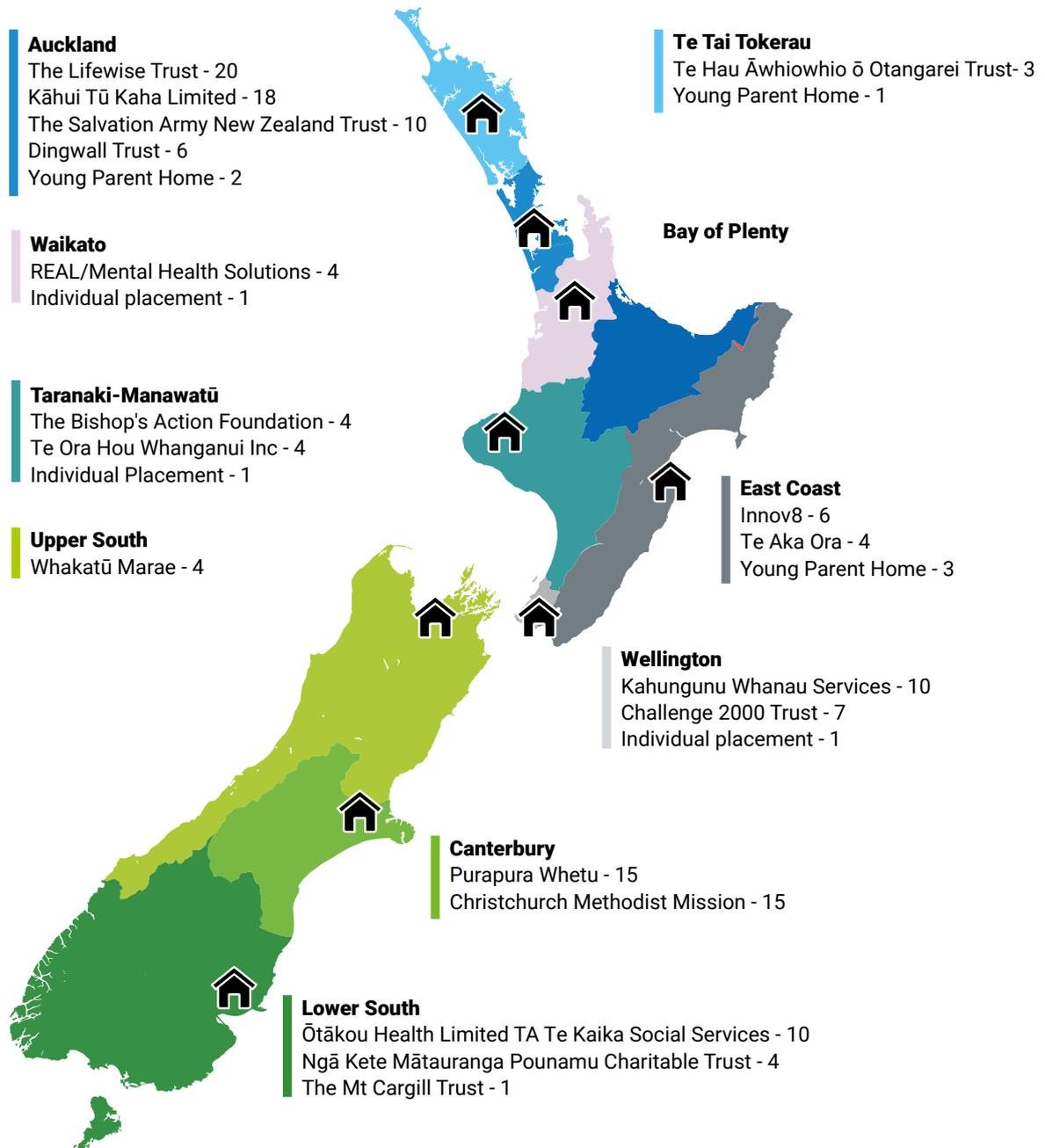
As at 30 June 2023, there were 18 supported accommodation partners. Eight of these were kaupapa Māori organisations, with five being iwi-led kaupapa Māori organisations.³ The remaining 10 partners were tauwi-led 'mainstream' providers. There were no Pacific providers.

Supported accommodation availability is variable across the country, and some rural areas have no supported accommodation partners. The map below shows the number of placements by location.



³ Figures are based on self-reporting by partners.

Supported accommodation locations as at 30 June 2023



Section Two

Supported accommodation
review findings



Supported accommodation review findings

The home and supports provided vary in ways that reflect the needs of the young people and the capabilities of providers

The home and supports provided to transitions young people through supported accommodation vary. They range from young people living in flat-like accommodation with regular check-ins from a youth worker or social worker to more intensive support where staff and their children live on site with the young person.

Young people often receive support with:

- education or employment
- life skills (including budgeting, cooking, rubbish management, flatting and tenancy management, and support to gain a driver's licence)
- managing social dynamics within the living situation
- reconnecting with whānau or family
- accessing adult services such as health services (including mental health services), and alcohol and other drug counselling.

The 2023 Malatest International evaluation found no evidence that any one supported accommodation model worked better than another. The defining factor of effective supported accommodation models are that they are tailored to the young person and their support needs.

Kaupapa Māori partners provide te ao Māori and tikanga Māori support

Several partners are kaupapa Māori organisations providing tikanga-based support which includes developing connections to whakapapa and whānau, and:

- the values of the organisation being grounded in manaakitanga and their fostering and maintenance of important relationships with iwi and community
- utilising Te Whare Tapa Whā⁴ as a framework to assess the needs of young people to ensure a holistic understanding of the type of support they require
- utilising a Whānau Ora approach⁵ which provides a model of health and social wellness.

Supported accommodation may not always address the needs of non-Māori Oranga Tamariki priority groups

Pacific young people

The Malatest International evaluation did not evaluate the effectiveness of supported accommodation for Pacific young people. Feedback provided during consultation on the review stated that supported accommodation is not seen as something that is typical for Pacific people. Young Pacific people are likely to be in care placements with family and will most likely continue living with their family after turning 18 years old.

Disabled young people

In the Malatest International evaluation partners voiced that often they are not able to meet the needs of disabled young people. This is for a range of reasons such as a partner's lack of capability of supporting young people with Autism, Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Rainbow young people

Rainbow young people experience higher rates of homelessness than their straight and cis-gender peers and are less likely to access housing services due to past negative experiences.⁶ Non-binary and transgender people are often misgendered, referred to by their birth name when accessing housing supports or placed in housing with people who are not their gender.

The Malatest International evaluation did not discuss how supported accommodation partners respond to the specific needs of rainbow people and the communities who make up the rainbow umbrella.

⁴ [Te Whare Tapa Whā | Mental Health Foundation](#)

⁵ [Whānau Ora \(tpk.govt.nz\)](#)

⁶ Including their experiences with Oranga Tamariki

Supported accommodation is achieving great outcomes for young people and should continue

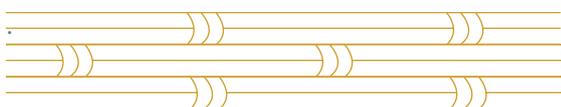
The review found that supported accommodation creates safety, stability, and improved outcomes for the transitions young people who use it. Due to the success of supported accommodation, and its continued alignment with the objectives of the TSS, it should continue.

Malatest International found **supported accommodation achieves the transition outcomes in the following ways:**

More young people have safe and stable living arrangements

Supported accommodation provides young people a safe place to live. It also gives them the skills to find and live in their own place when they are ready to move on.

“I've never had this kind of stability in my life before. And this was definitely the place to be.”
(Young person)



More young people have the life skills they need to thrive as adults

Supported accommodation teaches young people valuable life skills such as cooking, cleaning, recycling, and how to look after themselves. It also teaches them tenancy management.

“I've struggled with communication with people because I would just go and do it, I wouldn't tell them where I'm going... but they've helped me with working on my communication skills. So, like every single time I'm leaving, I'm like, 'oh, no, I need to write on the whiteboard saying where I'm going'.” (Young person)



More young people are healthy and recovering from trauma

Supported accommodation provides young people with a safe place to set goals and links them up with the right adult support and services to continue processing their trauma. The social workers and youth workers can support young people to fulfil some of their wellbeing needs.

More young people have a trusted adult in their lives and are engaged with family, whānau, cultural, and community groups

If a young person chooses to reconnect or to live with whānau, some partners support them to do so while providing a safe place to return to if needed.

The service supports rangatahi Māori to connect with te ao Māori, tikanga Māori, and their whakapapa. It supports non-Māori young people to connect with their community.

“That [connection with whānau has] already happened since I've been here, because I'm getting a break from [mother and boyfriend], instead of them being in my face all the time. I've actually built a better relationship with my family being away from them than if I had been around them all the time.”
(Young person)



More young people are in education, training, employment, or volunteering

Supported accommodation partners help young people to work towards their ambitions. For example, where appropriate, encouraging young people to enter study rather than working part time for minimum wage. In rural areas with limited employment opportunities, partners encourage young people to undertake volunteer work.

Reduced disparities in outcomes and experiences for rangatahi Māori, and their whānau

All providers support rangatahi Māori. Support for rangatahi Māori to connect with tikanga and their whakapapa is more effective when provided within a kaupapa Māori context where the organisation support is embedded in mātauranga Māori.

“You don't realise actually how much a Māori organisation actually helps you. But if you look at it in the bigger picture, if it was like, another organisation that didn't really care, they wouldn't have helped you as much. A Māori organisation, they help you a lot more, and they'll create the stepping stones that you need. That's way more helpful.”

(Rangatahi Māori)



Young people feel more listened to and understood

Supported accommodation is led by the young person's needs. All partners undertake processes to understand individual circumstances, strengths, and goals. These assessments are then reflected in the level and type of support they provide.



There are areas in which supported accommodation can be improved

The supported accommodation service is meeting its intended outcomes. However, there are areas where the service could be improved.

More consistent availability of supported accommodation

Currently, supported accommodation placements are concentrated in the main centres of Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. Regions such as the Bay of Plenty, Waikato, and Te Tai Tokerau have few or no placements. As shown in Table 1, the current distribution of placements is not reflective of where young people live when they are transitioning out of care.

Table 1: Supported accommodation locations at 30 April 2023 by number of TSS eligible young people

Region	Number of TSS Eligible Young People aged between 18 and 21	Number of Supported Accommodation Places	% of places by number of young people eligible
Auckland	465	56	12%
Bay of Plenty	161	0	0%
Canterbury	175	30	17%
East Coast	146	13	9%
Lower South	111	15	14%
Taranaki-Manawatu	141	9	6%
Ta Tai Tokerau	108	4	4%
Upper South	43	4	9%

Region	Number of TSS Eligible Young People aged between 18 and 21	Number of Supported Accommodation Places	% of places by number of young people eligible
Waikato	160	5	3%
Wellington	108	18	17%
Total	1,618	154	10%

The data suggests potential gaps in the location of supported accommodation placements relative to the location of young people who may be eligible for the service.

We know that some transitions young people move out of the region where they were in care for a variety of reasons, including to access education, training, and employment, and to be with friends and whānau. But they may also need to move to access housing and other supports as well.

A 2021 survey of young people and partner reporting found that 10 - 14 percent of young people are homeless at a point in time. This number is likely an under-representation as contacting young people living rough is challenging.⁸ The indicative homelessness rate and the number of current supported accommodation places suggests that between 20 - 25 percent of transitions young people require some level of housing support (whether that is a house or supported accommodation).

Due to the current limited housing supply and the stigma young people experience in the housing market, supported accommodation provided by Oranga Tamariki is often the only housing option available for some young people transitioning out of care. It is likely that the best option for the young people who are homeless is supported accommodation.

⁷ Note: Since 30 June 2023, Canterbury has reduced its placements to 20

⁸ [Just-Sayin-Survey-of-rangatahi-eligible-for-a-Transition-Worker.pdf](#) (orangatamariki.govt.nz)

Recommendation 1

As a result of the review, we recommend:

The Transition Support Service works towards providing supported accommodation placements:

- for 20 percent of the eligible young people, and
- across the range of places and regions that reflect the location of the young people.

Increased availability of kaupapa Māori services

About 66 percent of the young people transitioning out of care are rangatahi Māori. At 30 April 2023, almost half of the placements were provided by iwi Māori partners.⁹

Partnering with iwi Māori and kaupapa Māori partners enables Oranga Tamariki to work towards acting in accordance with the Te Tiriti o Waitangi articles related to tino rangatiratanga and kawanatanga. This is achieved through the flexibility of the services which enables partners to support rangatahi Māori in a way that is responsive to their specific needs through:

- providing opportunities where possible for rangatahi Māori to reconnect with whānau
- utilising Te Whare Tapa Whā as a framework to assess the needs of young people to ensure a holistic understanding of the type of support that is required
- supporting whānau alongside the individual young person
- exposure to te reo Māori, wānanga, and other aspects of mātauranga Māori.

Recommendation 2

As a result of the review, we recommend:

The Transition Support Service works towards prioritising partnership with kaupapa Māori providers to ensure the number of kaupapa Māori supported accommodation places is reflective of the number of Māori transitioning out of care.

Partner and regions to collaborate on a new referral process

Partners shared that they do not always receive the right type and level of information during the referral process to their services. This limits their ability to accurately determine whether their respective service is fit-for-purpose for the young person. To make this determination, partners usually consider:

- how the support needs of a young person fit with the supported accommodation model offered. For example, if a young person needs intensive wrap-around support then an independent flatting scenario is not likely to meet their needs
- the young person's fit with other young people the organisation supports. This might include culture, gender, or age
- any safety issues for other young people using the service

This feedback from partners contrasts with Oranga Tamariki staff saying there can be too much information provided to partners, such as information about the young person's childhood. This suggests that either the information provided to partners is interpreted differently by partners compared to Oranga Tamariki staff, or that partners receive irrelevant information in some areas, and not enough in other areas.

The review found that the referral process worked best when one Oranga Tamariki staff member managed the referrals for a region. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the service, the type and level of information required for an effective referral, and improved matches of young people to service providers.

Recommendation 3

As a result of the review, we recommend:

The Transition Support Service works with partners to develop a new referral process for supported accommodation.

⁹ These 76 of the 154 placements are based on partners' self-identified ethnicity data at the point of first contracting and includes individual placements and Young Parent Homes

¹⁰ [Transition-Cohort-Needs-Assessment-Stage-2-Survey-Results.pdf \(orangatamariki.govt.nz\)](#)

Greater trauma-based, mental health, disability and support, and strengthened relationships

Providers find most young people entering supported accommodation have mental health conditions (including substance uses issues) which are not at a level that require in-patient treatment. This is consistent with previous analysis on this population.¹⁰ Some young people damage property or undertake risky behaviour as a trauma response or due to a disability.

Some partners have stated they are unable to adequately support these young people. In some cases, this leads to the young person exiting supported accommodation. This suggests that partners and Support Workers could be better supported to deal with the issues that young people experience. This may be the case even though the service specifications require Support Workers to:

- have an understanding of the impact of trauma, adolescent brain development, and youth development approaches
- have an understanding of disability, mental health, substance abuse, and the impact these can have on the life of young people.

Where supported accommodation is working well, it is due to strong relationships between partners and Oranga Tamariki staff. This is evident throughout the process from the referral stage, where one Oranga Tamariki staff member within the region handles all referrals, to Oranga Tamariki providing guidance to partners on how to best support individual young people, and to Oranga Tamariki meeting with partners to discuss options if a young person breaches the accommodation agreement.

Recommendation 4

As a result of the review, we recommend:

- a) Establishing and fostering strong regional relationships between Oranga Tamariki and partners by re-establishing the Transition Support Service Senior Advisors in each region.¹¹ This role would be responsible for supporting all transition partners and supported accommodation partners in their region.

Their role could involve:

- ensuring the partner is receiving the right level of support
- regular catch ups between Oranga Tamariki and partners
- developing processes and procedures to encourage further collaboration and troubleshooting between Oranga Tamariki and partners.

b) Offering trauma-informed and disability training for partners, with the aim of improving their ability to work effectively with disabled people and those who are experiencing a mental health crisis or exhibiting trauma-based behavioural responses.

Partners' knowledge of and access to adult services

Some partners find it difficult to support young people to access adult services such as housing, employment and income supports from Work and Income, and health and disability services. This is for a range of reasons, such as a lack of awareness of the available services, complex processes to access adult services, long wait times, not meeting assessment thresholds, and lack of availability of services in their region. Partners who were also health providers found it easier to access health services.

Recommendation 5

As a result of the review, we recommend the following actions:

- a) Establishing regular regional catchups between partners and adult services, such as Work and Income, disability support services, mental health services and Oranga Tamariki to support partner awareness of the available adult services in their region.
- b) Fostering strong relationships between the Oranga Tamariki Regional Disability Advisors and partners to support greater understanding of the health and disability system.
- c) Partnering with supported accommodation providers who have expertise in the health, disability, or housing system.

¹¹ This role would be different than the Māori, Communities and Partners' advisors, who will continue to manage contracts with TSS and supported

There are wider factors that limit the effectiveness of the supported accommodation service

Limited housing supply

There are limited housing options for young people when they are ready to leave supported accommodation

Supported accommodation is intended to be temporary until a young person obtains the skills to live independently. Due to limited housing supply, it is difficult for young people to find a safe and stable home when they are ready to exit the service. This creates two issues:

1. Young people currently in supported accommodation are unable to progress towards living independently.
2. New young people who require supported accommodation are unable to access the service.

Communities want to partner with Oranga Tamariki but find it difficult to find accommodation for young people

Limited housing availability also affects partners. Community organisations and iwi want to partner with Oranga Tamariki but find it difficult to find appropriate housing options in which to provide supported accommodation. Some partners have chosen to rent properties from private landlords, and in one case a local investor bought a property which Oranga Tamariki now leases to a partner.

Limited housing and support options for young people who are outside the supported accommodation target cohort

16 and 17-year-olds

Supported accommodation is intended for 18 to 21-year-olds. Sixteen and 17-year-olds require different housing supports to those young people who are older than them.

Supported accommodation is intended to be a temporary intervention to teach young people the life and interpersonal skills they require to be able to live independently. For 16 and 17-year-olds, supported accommodation is being used as a housing solution as there are limited housing options for them. The most notable barrier in Aotearoa New Zealand is that a person must be over the age of 18 to sign a tenancy agreement, leaving limited housing options for them.

In addition, 16 and 17-year-olds are often still at school, and so require more supervision and boundaries than those who are older.

Young people who require intensive supervision or care

Supported accommodation is not intended to meet the needs of some young people who require intensive supervision, such as some disabled young people. There are limited support options for this group as often they do not meet the threshold for funding under Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination. In other cases, their disability is not included under existing disability funding models. An example of this is FASD.

Partners also found their models were not right for young people who require more intensive support such as short-term residential-based mental health care including for substance use. Partners found that availability of these supports for these young people was limited as demand outstrips the number of places.

Some young people exiting youth justice facilities also fall outside of the supports which supported accommodation is intended to provide. The transition from a youth justice facility to supported accommodation can be difficult for some young people. Often, they are from a different region to where they were placed in a youth justice facility. They may have limited positive support networks and are influenced by the people they have met while in the youth justice facility. They often require extra support to reintegrate into the community which is outside the purpose of supported accommodation.

Section Three

A summary of the recommendations



Recommendations

As a result of the review, we have proposed five overarching recommendations to improve the supported accommodation service.

Agreement and implementation of these recommendations are subject to budget decisions and agency priorities. These recommendations are short-term and only focused on the supported accommodation service provided by Oranga Tamariki.

Opportunities to address the wider factors that limit the effectiveness of the supported accommodation service will be explored through further work.

More consistent availability of supported accommodation

Recommendation 1: The Transition Support Service works towards providing supported accommodation placements:

- for 20 percent of the eligible young people, and
- across the range of places and regions that reflect the location of the young people.

Recommendation 2: The Transition Support Service works towards prioritising partnership with kaupapa Māori providers to ensure the number of kaupapa Māori supported accommodation places is reflective of the number of Māori transitioning out of care.

Establishing and fostering strong regional relationships between Oranga Tamariki and supported accommodation partners

Recommendation 3: The Transition Support Service works with partners to develop a new referral process for supported accommodation.

Recommendation 4(a): Establishing and fostering strong regional relationships between Oranga Tamariki and partners by re-establishing the Transition Support Service Senior Advisors in each region.

Increasing the capacity and capability of supported accommodation partners

Recommendation 4(b): Offering trauma-informed and disability training for partners, with the aim of improving their ability to work effectively with disabled people and those who are experiencing a mental health crisis or exhibiting trauma-based behavioural responses.

Recommendation 5(a): Establishing regular regional catchups between partners and adult services, such as Work and Income, disability support services, mental health services and Oranga Tamariki to support partner awareness of the available adult services in their region.

Recommendation 5(b): Fostering strong relationships between the Oranga Tamariki Regional Disability Advisors and partners to support greater understanding of the health and disability system.

Recommendation 5(c): Partnering with supported accommodation providers who have expertise in the health, disability, or housing system.



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